Promoting Clergy Gender Equity:

A Mixed-Methods Analysis of an Egalitarian Evangelical Denomination

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By

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I certify that I have read this manuscript and that, in my judgment, it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dedication

To my dad, Dr. Herbert E. Kierulff.

Thank you for being my first benevolent male advocate.

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Abstract

Scholars and practitioners endeavoring to explain why women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions generally fall into one of two camps: Choice Argument proponents claim that these disparities stem from aspirational, educational, and experiential differences between men and women while Barrier Argument advocates maintain that women face societal and organizational obstacles to equity. I engaged both of these perspectives as I studied senior leadership attainment within the Free Methodist Church, USA, an Evangelical denomination that espouses egalitarianism. Using a transformative emancipatory mixed-methods design, I gathered both survey and interview data to explore three primary research questions: First, to what extent, if any, do clergy differ along gender lines in the positions to which they aspire? Second, to what extent, if any, do FMC-USA clergywomen turn down ministry opportunities more often than clergymen, and, when they do, what factors influence their decisions? Finally, what are common elements in the stories of clergywomen who have attained senior leadership positions in the FMC-USA? I discovered that disparities result from a complex interplay of women's choice and organizational, cultural, and congregational barriers. Based on my data and the available literature, I offered six recommendations that could assist the denomination in moving toward clergy gender equity.

Keywords: clergywomen, gender equity, leadership, egalitarianism

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Chapter I

Promoting Clergy Gender Equity: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of an Egalitarian Evangelical Denomination

I set my sermon notes on the pulpit and looked out over the congregation. The typical hundred faces looked back at me, almost all regulars with the exception of a visiting couple with a baby. I noted one glaring absence in the fourth row on the right side: Lois. It seemed as though nothing kept Lois from church. I remembered the infamous Valentine's Day Storm from a few years earlier. The snow started about dinnertime Saturday and left 29 inches of flakes in its wake. My husband and I spent almost half an hour digging a path between our home and the front door of the church building, a distance of about two hundred feet. We had 13 hearty souls at the service that day. Lois was one of them.

Lois was a lifelong believer, "born in the church," she would sometimes say. (I always wondered in what pew this blessed event took place, but could never muster the courage to ask.) She devoted herself early on to Christian service, working as a nurse vocationally but volunteering many hours a week at her church in the small Indiana community where she settled after college. Lois never married, although she had been engaged in her final year of school. Her fiancé died when the small plane he was piloting crashed en route to deliver medical supplies to a remote missionary outpost in Chile. Despite this devastating loss, Lois's commitment to God never wavered.

When Lois heard that a group of young adults from her congregation was going to start a church in an impoverished urban core on the West Coast, she packed her bags and

relocated in order to be a part of this pioneering work. Her devotion to both God and the church earned her the respect of the new congregation. Just as she had in Indiana, she jumped into church work with both feet, teaching Sunday School classes for kids and leading a mid-week Bible Study for women. By the time my husband and I were hired at the church, Lois was the de facto spiritual matriarch.

Although the congregation seemed to embrace us, I heard through the grapevine that Lois was resistant. Her reticence was not personal; rather, Lois had theological issues with the ordination of women. This surprised me, given her longstanding devotion to the denomination, which had endorsed clergy gender equity several decades earlier. When asked about this, she stated that the church was ordaining women only because of pressure from the feminist movement. She argued that the denomination's position on this issue was not Biblically correct, and as such, she could not support it.

Nonetheless, Lois took the high road with me. She could have easily spearheaded an effort to have me relocated. Given her influence among church members, she could have fostered division behind the scenes. Instead, Lois chose to protest my hiring in one quiet way: On Sundays when I was scheduled to preach, she stayed home.

Leadership Impingement

Women have faced challenges related to leadership for millennia. Throughout the bulk of recorded history women who attained influence did so as a direct result of their relationships with men: They were wives, mistresses, or mothers of male leaders (Asproth, 2014; Rhode, 2003). Professional women faced limited opportunities to attain leadership positions. Up until the 1960s, the typical American woman had only three job

options: teacher, nurse, or office worker (Collins, 2009). The 1970s Feminist Revolution led to increased alternatives for women: Although they were still teachers, nurses, and office workers, women also became principals, doctors, and administrators. American women have traveled to outer space, served in combat zones, and represented their nation in high-level government posts. They play on professional athletic teams, operate heavy equipment, and produce Academy Award-winning films. A woman's presence can be found in virtually every imaginable career field.

Despite the removal of many overt obstacles for professional women, the literature suggests, career options for women are still limited, particularly when it comes to senior leadership positions. Rhode and Kellerman (2007) observed, "The percentage of women in leadership roles is substantial and is increasing dramatically. . . . But they are still grossly underrepresented at the top and overrepresented at the bottom of the most influential leadership hierarchies" (p. 2). In the U.S. labor force in 2011, women filled 46.6 percent of all jobs and 51.4 percent of managerial, professional, and related positions. In the same year, they occupied a mere 14.1 percent of executive positions and 16.1 percent of board seats in Fortune 500 companies (Catalyst, 2012). At the 10 most valuable companies in the United States in 2011 — ExxonMobil, Apple, Microsoft, IBM, Chevron, Google, Walmart, Berkshire-Hathaway, AT&T, and Proctor & Gamble — only 21 out of 110 board members and 4 out of 57 named executives were women (McIntyre, 2011). Furthermore, as of February 2013, only 21 women served as Chief Executive Officers of Fortune 500 companies, a paltry 4.2 percent (Kantor, 2013). And, as Anderson (2013f) reported, in companies where women are CEOs, there are fewer

women in the pipeline to elite leadership positions than in companies headed by men. Although women compose about half of the general workforce and midlevel professional positions, they are dramatically underrepresented at the senior leadership level. Lennon, Spotts, and Mitchell (2013) summarized, "Women are overperforming, underrepresented and underpaid" (p. 9).

Researchers disagree about the cause of this gender-based inequity. Some trace the disparities back to the personal and professional choices women make. Because of these choices, men are disproportionately represented in leadership pipelines, which means many more qualified male candidates than female candidates are produced for senior leadership positions. Another camp locates the blame in structural obstacles, contending that deeply embedded attitudinal or organizational biases and assumptions form a glass ceiling that impedes women from attaining parity at all levels of leadership (Carnes, Morrissey, & Geller, 2008; Naff & Thomas, 1994). I will address these perspectives in the following section, delineating them into two main camps: the Choice Argument and the Barrier Argument.

The Choice Argument. The dominant narrative at the top of professional hierarchies is that glass ceilings do not exist and the days of gender discrimination have passed (Carter, 2011; Tomlinson, 2006). Proponents of this rationale point to women in senior leadership positions and assert that their presence means the organizational structure is free of gender bias (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Silvestri, 2006). They contend that any income and attainment disparities between men and women result from

choices women have made, particularly around decisions related to human capital factors like education and experience (Lynch & Post, 1996).

Education. As a group, women are now better educated than men. They earn between 55 and 66 percent of all bachelor's degrees, 54 and 71 percent of master's degrees, and 51 and 65 percent of doctoral and other advanced degrees, depending upon their race (Bousquet, 2012). However, the fields in which women earn the majority of degrees don't pay as much as and lack the prestige of fields to which men tend to gravitate: education, public administration, literature and ethnic/cultural studies versus engineering, physical sciences/science technologies, mathematics, and business management and administration (Lynch & Post, 1996). In response to allegations that these pay differentials reflect society's devaluation of traditionally feminine work, Lynch and Post (1996) argued that the cause is supply-and-demand, not sexism. Because a significant number of women have entered fields like teaching and social work, the overall supply of workers has increased, leading to a reduction in wages.

Women surpassing men in educational attainment is a fairly recent phenomenon, the result of legislation overturning many common discriminatory practices (Rhode, 2003). The aftereffect of these biased policies persists, however, as job pools for prestigious senior leadership positions still contain an oversupply of qualified men and an undersupply of equipped women. Lag theorists argue that this gap that will close now that the leadership pipeline for women has expanded (Lynch & Post, 1996). Research in fields like engineering (Morgan, 1998) and academic publishing (Wilson, 2012) appear to support this claim.

Experience. Another factor influencing the attainment gap between men and women is cumulative and uninterrupted years of full-time work experience. In their review of the literature, Lynch and Post (1996) found that women took more breaks from work and, when employed, worked fewer hours per week than their male colleagues. Kaufman and Uhlenberg (2000) confirmed this finding, noting that women with minor children were less likely to be employed than women without children and that when they were employed they worked fewer hours than their childless counterparts. Lynch and Post argued that these differences in experience play a significant role in vocational attainment.

Ambition. Based on these findings, Choice Argument proponents also claim men and women have different career aspirations and that these gender-based ambition differences fuel the decisions women make. They argue that men are naturally more competitive whereas women are innately compelled to care for children (Dickins, 2000). This maternal instinct prompts women to leave senior leadership-track positions (Carnes et al., 2008; Morgan, 2000; Slaughter, 2012) or to voluntarily select lateral or downward moves on the career ladder for family-related reasons (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Women who wish to succeed vocationally, on the other hand, have chosen career over family, as evidenced by studies showing that women in senior leadership positions are less likely to be married or to have children (Chaffins, Forbes, Fuqua, & Cangemi, 1995).

The Barrier Argument. In contrast to the Choice Argument, proponents of the Barrier Argument contend that women face constrained opportunities; conscious and unconscious stereotyping, prejudice, and bias; corporate outreach and recruitment

processes that exclude women; hostile organizational climates; and pipeline obstacles that impact their advancement (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). Obstacles to women manifest across a broad swath of careers. In education, administration women are unjustly underrepresented as public school superintendents (Skrla, 2000) and as deans and department chairs in clinical psychology programs (Schenk, Gathercoal, Peterson, & McMinn, 2010). They face pervasive marginalization and devaluation as faculty in academic medical centers (Carnes et al., 2008). The gendered nature of information technology jobs (Demaiter & Adams) and sexism in media professions (Newsom, 2011) limits women's opportunities.

Despite attaining high levels of education and experience, having a mentor, networking, working long hours, relocating, following proscribed career paths, receiving high job performance ratings, self-advocating, and accumulating seniority — all criteria for professional success stated by the Choice Argument — women consistently lag behind men in attaining senior leadership positions (Carter & Silva, 2010; Hendelman, 2013b; Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013; Lennon et al., 2013; Naff & Thomas, 1994; Yellin, 2014). The Barrier Argument asserts that claims that women lack ambition or derail vocationally because of children lack merit (Anderson, 2013f; Carter & Silva, 2010, 2011). Carter and Silva (2010) summarized, "When considered as a whole, the findings are clear: even when women stay on a traditional career path and do 'all the right things,' they're unlikely to advance as far or earn as much as their male counterparts" (p. 13) while Carli and Eagly (2007) concluded that "impediments to women's leadership still exist and slow women's advancement to positions at the highest levels of power and

authority. Women who advance must work harder and negotiate a more challenging path to leadership than men do" (p. 127).

Eagly (2012) suggested the image of a labyrinth to describe the challenges women face in attaining workplace equity:

> A labyrinth contains twists and turns and may entail puzzling reverses. It would be better for women to traverse a straight road toward their career goals, but women generally encounter the greater complexity symbolized by a labyrinth. Making one's way through a labyrinth requires special effort and careful thought about potential pathways and pitfalls. (p. x)

This framing helps explain how some elite women manage to successfully master the maze and reach the upper echelons of organizational leadership while others get lost in the process (Forbes Berthoud, 2012). Ruminski and Holba (2012a) viewed this image as more helpful than that of a glass ceiling, which could imply that once one person had shattered the barrier, all other women could follow through the equity hole she had created. They further noted that the labyrinth metaphor shifts the discussion away from helplessness in the face of an immovable obstacle and toward opportunity, as leadership development initiatives can help women learn how to navigate these pathways (Ruminski & Holba, 2012a, 2012b).

Second-generation gender discrimination. The labyrinth imagery recognizes the ways in which resistance to women in leadership has changed. Decades of legislation and shifting social sentiment have eradicated much of the overt, no-females-allowed bias that previously constrained women. This bias has been replaced by covert, second-generation gender discrimination: subtle-yet-potent challenges to women in leadership,

particularly senior leadership, that reside in cultural assumptions about gender as well as organizational systems, structures, interactional dynamics, and practices that benefit men while marginalizing women (Carter, 2011; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Ibarra et al., 2013). The subtlety of this discrimination makes it difficult to recognize.

> Second-generation bias does not require an intent to exclude; nor does it necessarily produce direct, immediate harm to any individual. Rather, it creates a context — akin to "something in the water" — in which women fail to thrive or reach their full potential. (Ibarra et al., 2013, p. 64)

Second-generation gender discrimination manifests in myriad ways, such as:

- school advisors disproportionately directing women toward less prestigious academic paths and vocational counselors and family members discouraging them from seeking management positions (Chaffins et al., 1995);
- equally qualified mothers hired less frequently, promoted less often, and paid less money than childless women (Belkin, 2013; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000; Rhode, 2003; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007) or men who employers perceive as requiring the money to support their families (Kaufman & Uhlenberg; Lennon et al., 2013; Naff & Thomas, 1994);
- managers overlooking women for challenging assignments or directing them to what they consider less stressful jobs based on their assumptions about female workers' family needs (Naff & Thomas, 1994);

- women continuing to bear a disproportionate load of domestic responsibilities in households (Eagly & Carli, 2004; Mardell, 2013a; Prichard, 1996; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007); and
- social, legal, and political climates that subtly penalize workers who request affordable high-quality childcare, adequate parental leave policies, and flexible working hours (Aujla, 2009; Bousquet, 2012; Demaiter & Adams, 2009; Naff & Thomas, 1994; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Silvestri, 2006).

These actions derail women in leadership development pipelines, slowing their progress and funneling them down detours that dead-end at times (Ruminski & Holba, 2012a).

The opt-out narrative. Second-generation gender discrimination also shows up in essentializing assumptions about women's innate proclivity to nurture (Weedon, 1997). These presuppositions find expression in the opt-out narrative, the conviction that young women's career commitment "vanishes into thin air the moment children arrive" (Sools, Van Engen, & Baerveldt, 2007, p. 427). The opt-out narrative has become the default assumption to explain why women quit high-intensity jobs, despite workplace retention studies showing men and women leaving for the same reasons (Anderson, 2013c; Lennon et al., 2013). Merrill-Sands, Kickul, and Ingols (2005) called literature from this perspective "disturbing and, indeed, dangerous" (p. 1), noting that "underpinning these arguments is the assertion that women are ambivalent about leadership and power and are willing to sacrifice these to invest in their families" (p. 1). In response to this narrative, Rhode and Kellerman (2007) asserted:

> What is too often missed or marginalized in discussions of women's "different choices" is the extent to which the choices are socially constructed and constrained. What drops out of the opt-out narrative are the complex forces that drive women's decisions. Equally noticeable for their absence are the choices that men make, as spouses, policy leaders, and employers that limit the choices available to women. . . . Explanations focusing solely on women's preferences understate the subtle, often unconscious, biases that both shape the priorities of those who opt out and limit the opportunities for those who opt in. (p. 6)

When Merrill-Sands et al. (2005) deconstructed the opt-out narrative, they found that the studies used to support it relied on small samples of largely white, affluent executives and managers, certainly not a representative demographic. Rather than opting out, they argued, women are leaning in:

> Women responding to our surveys are pursuing, not shunning, power and leadership. Even more important, they are pursuing leadership and power for goals much broader than their own personal gain and career advancement. They are seeking to strengthen their organizations and make constructive contributions to their communities and society. They are also redefining traditional models of leadership and power, moving from individualistic and hierarchical models of power *over* others to more collaborative models of inclusion and expanding power *through* others. (Merrill-Sands, Kickul, & Ingols, 2005, p. 1)

Unrealistic expectations. In addition to overcoming false perceptions about their career aspirations, women may also face a presumed lack of competence, meaning that they need to demonstrate more potential than men to be given a chance and need to continue to prove themselves as leaders more than men (Anderson, 2013d; Carli & Eagly, 2007; Driver, 2014b; Lehman, 1993b; Nason-Clark, 1985; Rhode, 2003). If they succeed,

> they are viewed as having some special stroke of good fortune — a wonderful mentor, a lucky break, being at the right place at the right time. Their success is treated as a happenstance, an outcome over which they had no particular control. (Barnett, 2007, p. 157)

If they fail, however, it is because they are defective (Demaiter & Adams, 2009; Rhode, 2003; Spar, 2013a). This failure extends not only to them as an individual but also to all women (Barnett, 2007; Nesbitt, 1997c; Reed, Anderson, & McKenzie, 2004/2010; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). The increased scrutiny and high stakes that come from being a visible woman in leadership can produce risk aversion, a tendency to micromanage, and vocational paralysis, all of which negatively affect career development (Ely et al., 2001; Ibarra et al., 2013; Kay & Shipman, 2014).

Gender equity advocates argue that society and business operate from a faulty ethical framework, one that rewards men for sacrificing their families on the altar of work and leaves women with the impression that they must choose between career and children. These organizational norms stem from uncontested definitions of ambition that constrain both men and women, perpetuating unhealthy and gendered work-family balance dynamics (Sools et al., 2007). Slaughter (2012) opined:

> Ultimately, it is society that must change, coming to value choices to put family ahead of work just as much as those to put work ahead of family. If we really valued those choices, we would value the people who make them; if we valued the people who make them, we would do everything possible to hire and retain them; if we did everything possible to allow them to combine work and family equally over time, then the choices would get a lot easier. ("Marry the Right Person," para. 8)

Moving toward equity will require intentional effort. Although some argue that parity will happen on its own as a generation accustomed to working mothers moves into positions of power, several studies have shown traditional views on gender roles persisting among the Millennial Generation. A recent Pew study (as cited in Anderson, 2013b) found that 60 percent of young adults agreed that women who worked outside of the home were negatively affecting their children. Wittenberg-Cox (2013a), an international business trainer, observed that the young men with whom she had contact "are mired in personal perspectives, in ideas about who has children, in their own preferences for wives who will take care of life while they shine professionally" (para. 7). Dhawan's (2012) research on Harvard MBA candidates mirrored this notion. While the women in her sample had 10-year plans to address what they assumed would be pressure to work long hours with heavy workloads — plans that included choosing workplaces with supportive policies for parents, living closer to extended family, and having children later in life when they were more financially stable — the men claimed their partners would make concessions in their careers to be their families' primary childcare providers.

Interestingly, both the men and women in Dhawan's (2012) study tacitly accepted that they would need to work long hours and carry a heavy workload in order to be successful. Such unquestioning acquiescence highlights how deeply engrained the unbalanced assumptions of workplace culture have become. As Slaughter (2012) put it, "The culture of 'time macho' — a relentless competition to work harder, stay later, pull more all-nighters, travel around the world and bill the extra hours that the international date line affords you — remains astonishingly prevalent among professionals today"

("Changing the Culture of Face Time," para. 2). Altering this mindset may be just as challenging as overcoming gender bias.

A Framework for Gender Equity: Women's Leadership Studies

Ruminski and Holba (2012a) suggested a multidisciplinary approach to addressing gender equity, merging aspects of communication studies, leadership studies, and women's studies into what they deemed "women's leadership studies" (p. 2). Theory and language from all of these fields help to capture the dramatic shifts that have taken place in recent decades:

> Work on women's leadership acknowledges that organizational cultural change concerning women in leadership has shifted from a change in gender consciousness in society and gender order in its organizations; now, personal empowerment mixed with institutional savvy as well as an ability to flex between agentic and collaborative leadership styles are key to deconstructing the glass ceiling phenomenon. Rather than 'break though' and locate a position of leadership that is fixed, women are 'navigating' because leadership itself is less hierarchically perceived and more recognized as a transformational process of personal navigation within a network of opportunities. And navigation is only possible through communication and persuasion. (Ruminiski & Holba, 2012, p. 11).

Burk, Laff, and Payseur (2012) observed that although these three fields are distinct, they share the common conviction that process is product.

> Through gender, we come to know the social construction of reality; through communication, we make meaning in this world; and, through leadership, we come to know ourselves consciously as humans and then become capable to connecting with others in meaningful, difference-making endeavors. (p. 37)

Leadership studies dissects what has been labeled the more traditionally masculine hierarchical and transactional approaches and the so-called more traditionally feminine collaborative, transformational, and improvisational strategies; women's studies explores politics and discrimination; and communication studies provides insight into the savvy necessary for leaders functioning in a media-saturated context, particularly given the tendency for media to focus on the superficial where women are concerned (Burk, Laff, & Payseur, 2012; Ruminski & Holba, 2012a; Ruminski, Whalen, & Branam, 2012; Stephenson-Abetz & Wood Alemán, 2012). Collaboration allows them to mutually inform women's leadership studies and to more effectively capture the complexity of the leadership labyrinth.

Clergy Gender Equity

The focus of my research is clergy gender equity: the freedom for both men and women to operate equally at all levels of ordained ministry leadership, including senior leadership (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, 1983; Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998). For that reason, I have added religious studies into the interdisciplinary mix that is women's leadership studies.

Opposition to gender equity in ordained church leadership is pervasive. America's two largest Christian organizations, the Roman Catholic Church and the Southern Baptist Convention (National Council of Churches, 2010), both cite theological opposition to women as priests or pastors, leading them to place restrictions on positions available to clergywomen. Even in church organizations that formally espouse gender equality in leadership, female clergy have faced inequity in practice (Rhode &

Kellerman, 2007). In his study of the Episcopal Church in the United States, Sullins (2000) discovered that "women clergy are over-represented in subordinate positions and those having lower status; this inequality is remarkably constant and undiminished over time and throughout the clergy career" (p. 243). This finding parallels what Sullins identified in his broader research: "The more responsible, prestigious, and superordinate church positions in virtually every female-ordaining denomination fall disproportionately to men" (p. 244). In their interviews with seminary graduates, Cormode et al. (2012) found a similar dynamic: men ordained and working in the denominations of their youth while women served in subordinate, part-time roles or were unable to secure a ministry position despite their efforts to find one.

During the 1990s, approximately 5 percent of senior pastors in Protestant churches were women; by 2009, that number had doubled to 10 percent (Barna, 2009). While some may see this increase as a sign of significant progress, note that women still held only one in 10 senior pastor positions. The majority of these high-attaining clergywomen — 58 percent — served in the mainline branch of Protestantism, leaving evangelical churches substantially less likely to be led by a clergywoman (Barna, 2009). Taken at face value, however, this jump in representation contributes to what Lummis and Nesbitt (2000) called a "false consciousness, among both women clergy and denominational leaders, that a liberal feminist agenda of equal opportunity and access has been completed merely because women are being ordained in growing, equal, or greater numbers than men" (p. 450). This lulling effect promotes the assumption I mentioned earlier, that since a few women have attained senior leadership positions by breaking

through the proverbial stained glass ceiling, any woman can, and if a clergywoman does not advance, it's because of her own choices, not any organizational barriers.

Ramifications of inequity. Gender inequity has both external and internal implications. Fiedler (2010) pointed out that perpetuating discrimination within church leadership sends a contradictory message: Theoretically men and women are equal, but in practice they are not. This incongruity opens the door for the general public to continue to treat women as second-class citizens:

> Religious institutions are highly influential in society at large. They are arbiters of right and wrong. What they teach about gender roles is quoted everywhere. Their practices offer models for the rests of society. When religious institutions exhibit injustice of any kind, they give tacit permission for everyone else to do it. (Fiedler, 2010, p. xvi)

Internally, evidence suggests that the absence of clergywomen in senior leadership posts adversely influences church attendance (Robert, Robbins, & Hill, 2006). According to research from the Barna Group (Barna, 2012), women are leaving the church at an alarming rate: Between 1991 and 2011, women's attendance at weekly church services dropped by 20 percent, and their participation in Sunday school classes decreased by 29 percent. In the past 2 decades, the proportion of women in the United States considered unchurched rose by 94 percent, with more than one-third of all women stating they had no connection with a church (Barna, 2012). When women leave, the men and children in their households follow (Henderson, 2012).

Upon interviewing those who have stayed, Henderson (2012) observed a growing disillusionment among some as they realize that the church will use them to raise the next

generation of male leaders but will deny them positions of authority. Henderson described this dynamic as part of the background singers' phenomenon: Women are allowed to be on the stage with the main act but only if they don't steal the spotlight. He stated that although some are content serving as behind-the-scenes advisors for men, those for whom such invisibility is not acceptable must contend with accusations of being prideful, unwilling to submit, and having a lust for power (Henderson, 2012). Wessinger (1996) found that many women are "defecting in place" (p. 12) by continuing to attend a traditional church while participating in groups that endorse feminist spirituality, hoping to bring some of these more progressive viewpoints into their other church. This confirmed Winter, Lummis, and Stokes's (1994) argument:

> Whether out of loyalty or determination, or because of habit or friendships or family ties, or simply because there is nowhere else to go to be part of that which the church represents these women have decided to remain affiliated, many in fact for the long haul, others at least for the present. (p. 58)

Women in ministry leadership appear to face senior leadership barriers on two fronts. On the one side, they fight overt resistance grounded in a theology that claims it is God's will for men to lead and women to follow. Top-down organizational mandates that ban women from certain leadership positions mirror the type of first-generation gender discrimination largely overturned by legislation in secular workplaces (Chaves, 1997). Even in denominations that espouse an egalitarian theology, Huber and Stanley (1999) observed, a rising fundamentalist influence threatens the acceptance of women clergy. This bottom-up resistance has grown in recent years as restrictive voices have

dominated evangelical Christian radio, publishing, and other media (Bessey, 2013; Chaves, 1997; DeMuth, 2013; Van Biema, 2009; Witherington, 2012; Woodiwiss, 2013).

On the other side, clergywomen also seem to face covert, second-generation gender discrimination, including questions about their qualifications and assumptions about their ambition. Like their counterparts in the secular marketplace, they face the opt-out narrative, perceptual double-binds, and differential access to mentors and networks because of their gender. They wrestle with a lack of support at all levels in the organization and subtle barriers that push them to the margin, struggle with the perception of female deficiency produced as a byproduct of this bias, and must work through subsequent issues related to leadership identity formation.

Existing research. A handful of researchers have explored different aspects of the barriers clergywomen face. In the early 1980s religious sociologists began documenting the experiences of women who entered vocational ministry in response to the wave of denominations that endorsed clergy gender equity for the first time in the mid-1970s. The primary focus of these studies was descriptive: How are clergywomen's careers unfolding relative to those of their male counterparts? As statistics began rolling in showing attainment differences, these researchers began asking a different question: Why aren't women ministers moving into senior leadership positions at the same rate as male cohort members? Various components of the Choice and Barrier Arguments emerged in these studies.

In my literature review, I discovered five primary pools of peer-reviewed cross-denominational data on women in ministry leadership. These appear repeatedly

throughout the published works on clergy gender equity and, according to Lehman (2002), are widely regarded as the major sources of what is known about clergywomen and their experiences in American churches.

The Hartford Seminary studies. With the support of Hartford Seminary, Carroll, Hargrove, and Lummis (1983) conducted structured phone interviews with 636 clergywomen evenly representing nine mainline Protestant denominations. The researchers also gathered data from clergymen, laity, seminary faculty, and officials in these denominations to understand the systems in which these clergywomen functioned. This data gathering included telephone interviews and paper-and-pencil questionnaires. Carroll et al. published the results of this study in the book *Women of the Cloth*.

Zikmund et al. (1998) revised, expanded, and replicated this original study, publishing their findings in *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling*. This work relied on a multistage sampling design of male and female clergy from 15 Protestant denominations that the researchers clustered into three groups based on theological and structural bent: institution-centered, congregation-centered, and Spirit-centered. They built their sample using names randomly drawn from gender-stratified lists of nonretired ordained clergy provided by the participating denominations. Out of the approximately 4,900 respondents, the researchers conducted more than 300 structured follow-up interviews. In addition, the researchers spoke with personnel executives from each of the 15 denominations to gather information used to interpret the quantitative data.

Lehman's study of attitudes toward clergywomen. Lehman (1985, 1986, 1987, 1993a, 1994, 2001) researched clergy and congregational receptivity toward women in

ministry leadership, basing his work on a survey tool he developed to measure respondents' attitudes on a continuum of acceptance or rejection in three dimensions: respondents' thoughts about clergywomen (cognitive), the extent to which they liked or disliked the notion of women in ministry leadership (affective), and the degree to which they were willing to discriminate against a woman pastor (behavioral). Lehman subdivided cognitive attitude into two components: how much study participants projected unflattering, stereotypical characteristics like emotionalism, weakness, indecisiveness, and dependence on clergywomen, and how much these notions influenced their view of clergywomen's professional capabilities. Lehman measured affective attitude based on whether respondents preferred a clergyman, a clergywoman, or either to perform a list of typical ministry functions. He defined affective receptivity as a willingness to have both clergymen and clergywomen in these roles. To assess behavioral attitude, Lehman asked about subjects' willingness to leave a congregation, cut back on attendance, withhold funds, or resist a clergywoman working at their church. He also asked whether they would consider female candidates for open pastoral positions, whether they would vote for or against hiring her, and whether they would withdraw their support for a woman if they sensed the congregation was opposed to it.

Lehman first used the tool in a 1980 study for the United Presbyterian Church; he reported his results in the book *Women Clergy: Breaking Through Gender Barriers* (1985). In 1983–1984 he replicated the study in the Church of England, Methodist Church, Baptist Union, and United Reformed Church in Britain, publishing his conclusions in *Women Clergy in England: Sexism, Modern Consciousness, and Church*

Viability (1987). Lehman used this instrument again in 1991, surveying samples drawn from the Anglican Church and the Uniting Church in Australia. He circulated the outcome of this work in *Women in Ministry: Receptivity and Resistance* (1994). Data from these studies also appeared in subsequent journal articles he authored and addresses he delivered.

Lehman's study on ministry style. Lehman (1993b) shifted focus in later work to explore two questions: "Is there a demonstrable feminine style of ministry (in contrast to a masculine approach) among clergy, and do we in fact observe this orientation to ministry more among women than among men?" (p. 19) To answer these queries he interviewed 517 ordained solo, senior, and co-pastors drawn from four Protestant denominations — the American Baptist Churches, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church — to determine whether these local church pastors conceptualized their work in sex-specific ways.

Using telephone interviews, Lehman (1993b) asked subjects to indicate the extent to which each of 48 statements was like them. These statements reflected nine dimensions of ministry style: willingness to use coercive power, striving to empower congregations, desire for formal authority, desire for rational structure, ethical legalism, general interpersonal style, orientation to preaching, criteria for clergy status, and involvement in social issues. Lehman delineated responses as feminine or masculine using criteria developed by maximalist religious feminists. According to Lehman, maximalists claim that clergymen and clergywomen have leadership styles that are fundamentally different from one another and that these differences are rooted in their

biology. For example, feminine preaching emphasizes shared feelings and experiences whereas masculine preaching tells people what to do. A masculine orientation to clergy status focuses on budget size and attendance as a means to compare oneself to ministry colleagues while a feminine stance pays little attention to such matters. Lehman triangulated his subjects' self-reports with data provided by both male and female representatives of their congregations.

Lehman described the results of the clergy self-report portion of his research in the book *Gender and Work: The Case of the Clergy* (1993a) and recounted them in his Presidential Address in *Sociology of Religion* (1993b). In 1997 he published an article comparing clergy statements on their ministry style with their lay leaders' perceptions of it.

Chavez's study of denominational policies and structures. In 1992, Chavez began collecting quantitative data from 100 American denominations. Using event-history analysis, he explored the likelihood of different denominations' supporting women's ordination based on such factors as the extent to which they were sacramental, their stance on inerrancy, the degree to which they were centralized, and the presence or absence of a viable women's missionary society. He also used qualitative data from denominational and other scholarly sources to explore disconnects between denominations' stated policies about women's ordination and their practice, identifying both cultural attributes and organizational structures that inhibited women in certain groups. Chavez (1997) discussed his findings in *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*.

Nesbitt's longitudinal look at Episcopal and Unitarian-Universalist clergywomen. Using published denominational directories cross-checked with other resources, Nesbitt developed a database of occupational biographies for more than 1,000 Episcopal priests (299 female and 843 male) and 140 ministers affiliated with the Unitarian-Universalist (UU) Association. She selected her samples by ordination year, amassing nine clergy cohorts reflecting 10-year increments between 1920 and 1950 and 5-year increments from 1970 through 1990. She updated these biographies through 1993. In addition, in order to better understand how clergy were deployed, Nesbitt conducted 25 interviews with a demographic cross-section of Episcopal and UU clergy, officials from both denominations, and representatives of other faith groups.

Nesbitt created a nine-level hierarchal job structure based on the degree of denominational authority and autonomy inherent in each position. She designated Levels One–Three as lower- and entry-level jobs. Level One positions included internships and general parish staff posts; Level Two included program leadership jobs like youth directorships and religious education oversight; and Level Three included assistant and associate rector/ministers. Nesbitt considered Levels Four–Six to be mid-level positions. She deemed interim rectors/ministers Level Four; vicars and extension ministers, Level Five; and rectors/ministers responsible for a self-supporting parish with fewer than 500 members, Level Six. Nesbitt reserved the senior-level distinction for jobs in Levels Seven–Nine. Level Seven ministers were ministers/rectors responsible for a parish with more than 500 members; Level Eight clergy were seminary or cathedral deans; and Level Nine ministers served as bishops or denominational executives.

Nesbitt published extensively in the mid-1990s (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1997b), including the book *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organization Perspectives* (1997c). She used this data pool to explore such diverse matters as tokenism; the effect of dual ordination tracks on clergy career development; and the influence of age, gender, and marital and parenting status on career attainment.

Gaps in the literature. These studies, which are the most commonly cited in the literature as representing the experiences of clergywomen, were all conducted using data gathered before 2000. They primarily reflect the experiences of women ordained more than 20 years ago. In my research I was unable to locate any significant published work based on new multidenominational research from this millennium. Books and articles published since 2000 have been primarily case studies, theoretical works, non-peer-reviewed autoethnographic essays, or studies rooted in just one or two denominations.

Beyond this, the literature on women in ministry leadership has concentrated primarily on clergy in mainline denominations. Almost all of the contemporary journal articles on clergy gender equity focus on these more liberal churches. Among the Big Five data pools, Nesbitt and Lehman studied only nonevangelical groups. The first Hartford Seminary study (Carroll et al., 1983) used nine denominations, all mainline. The second Hartford Seminary study (Zikmund et al., 1998) included data from evangelical traditions but split these in their analysis, enfolding the Southern Baptist figures with other denominations with a congregational polity and grouping the other five evangelical denominations under the Spirit-centered heading. This grouping proved valuable as the researchers discovered that women in Spirit-centered churches reported

experiences that were significantly different from those of their mainline or Southern Baptist counterparts.

Such distinctions highlight an important division within the evangelical world: Although all denominations within it share a moderate or conservative theology, they are split on the issue of gender and leadership. This crucial difference has been largely overlooked in the literature. Even Chaves (1997), who analyzed more than 100 denominations, gave only passing mention to Holiness and Pentecostal traditions that are both evangelical and egalitarian, opting instead to focus on fundamentalist evangelicals who oppose women's ordination because of their views on Scriptural inerrancy.

Research Purpose

The purpose of my dissertation is to promote clergy gender equity in the Free Methodist Church, USA (FMC-USA),[1] an egalitarian evangelical denomination. I have furthered gender equity by questioning the dominant storyline used to explain the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions, a version of the Choice Argument that states clergywomen have different career aspirations from their male colleagues that are largely determined by work/family balance issues. Using data drawn from a denomination-wide survey, I asked, "To what extent, if any, do clergy differ along gender lines in the positions to which they aspire?" I have also explored the opt-out narrative with my survey data to discover to what extent, if any, FMC-USA clergywomen turned down ministry opportunities more often than clergymen and to examine the factors

[1]Prior to 2011, the Free Methodist Church in the United States was identified as the Free Methodist Church of North America (FMCNA); since that time it has changed its name to the Free Methodist Church, United States of America.

that influenced these decisions. Results and implications of these inquiries appear in Chapter IV. Additionally, I have identified a number of factors common to clergywomen in senior leadership positions in the FMC-USA that appear to connect with their success in navigating the leadership labyrinth. These factors overlap with components of the Choice and Barrier Arguments, including aspiration, human capital, mentorship, and leadership identity formation. This discussion appears in Chapter V. Finally, in Chapter VI, I present strategies based on the aforementioned data that may assist the FMC-USA in moving toward clergy gender equity.

In many ways, my approach overlaps with action research, an iterative process whereby a researcher gathers data, analyzes it, recommends policy from it, implements these policies, and then evaluates the outcomes by gathering data, analyzing it, and recommending further adjustment (Noffke & Somekh, 2005). This dissertation could be considered the first step of an action research project; completing a full cycle is beyond the scope of this work.

The FMC-USA is one of the Spirit-centered churches included in the second Hartford Seminary study. In 1974, organizational leaders in this group extended full ordination to female clergy, a decision that, in theory, elevated women to equal status with their male counterparts. More than 2 decades later, women continued to lag behind men, prompting this official statement:

> Within the denomination there is growing concern over the fact that, though women officially have access to full ordination and any role in the church, few women are in leadership positions. At a time when women are entering formerly male-dominated professions in increasing numbers and providing community

> leadership, the percentage of women among Free Methodist pastors, especially senior pastors, and in church and conference leadership roles, is not growing as would be expected. (FMCNA, 1995, p. 1)

Despite organizational efforts to combat inequity, women continue to be underrepresented in positions of senior leadership within the denomination. A woman has yet to serve in the church's most influential position: bishop. Only one woman has ever served as a superintendent in one of the church's nearly two-dozen recognized annual conferences, and in 2015, women filled a mere 7 percent of senior and solo pastor positions (J. Duncan, personal communication, April 20, 2015).

My hope is that in time I will be able to expand my research to include other egalitarian evangelical denominations. From that vantage point, this dissertation serves as a pilot test of sorts for the hypotheses I hold.

Overview of Research Methods

I used a mixed-methods research strategy rooted in a transformative emancipatory framework. The approach encourages dialectical discoveries that aid in deconstructing knowledge claims that are often infused by dynamics of power. It highlights difference and advances "enhanced, reframed, or new understandings" (Greene, 2007, p. 69). A transformative emancipatory posture allows researchers to function on behalf of an underrepresented or marginalized group, to take some liberties out of consideration for the needs of the population for which they are advocating, and to use methods that produce results that are useful to community members and are credible to stakeholders and policy makers. (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). This approach creates optimal conditions to advocate for justice. This emancipatory component promotes freedom "for

all people subjected to hegemony in its various forms" (Quigley, Holden, & French, 2012, p. 183). In my specific case, I wanted to address ways in which both clergywomen *and* clergymen are adversely affected by inequity.

Transformative emancipatory research adopts an advocacy posture. Creswell (2009) described this stance as follows: "The research contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life" (p. 9). Such research presses for just reform, addresses societal problems like patriarchy, emphasizes empowerment from unjust structures, and is both practical and collaborative (Creswell, 2009). This collaboration engages both women and men in walking into the spaces Foucalt's (as cited by St. Pierre, 2000) theory of discourse creates, conversations that allow them to contest discourses of domination. As St. Pierre (2000) counseled, "Once they locate and name the discourses and practices of patriarchy, they can begin to refuse them" (p. 486). In so doing, women realize that they do not need to accept a reality that is patriarchal. To reject this reality, and to assist others in rejecting it, is to rebalance power relations. In this way, power can be redirected toward liberty and away from domination (St. Pierre, 2000).

Practically, I wanted as many voices as possible to be included in this conversation; a broadly distributed survey would allow for this, but such a tool felt cold and clinical to me. Encountering gender bias is a visceral experience; I wanted to sit down face-to-face with these clergywomen and listen to their stories, to provide a space to honor their experiences and struggles. Although I am a researcher, I am also a pastor. I wanted to do what I could to help these women know that they were important and

valuable, that someone was listening to their experiences, and that by sharing their stories they could help make the way easier for those coming after them. Even though I could not personally interview all 426 clergywomen in my tradition, I knew that reaching a handful would make a difference. News would carry through the grapevine that these interviews were happening, that someone was paying attention, and that perhaps now something might happen to address this problem. I also knew that because of the small size of the denomination, I would need to be mindful to guard confidentiality; this consideration became particularly salient when I opted to focus on women in elite leadership positions. I interviewed five of these women in September and October 2014.

At the same time, I knew that quantitative data would speak more loudly to policy makers in my denomination. If I wanted to promote change that would benefit women — a hallmark of the feminist orientation that has informed my efforts (Burns & Walker, 2005; Crotty, 2003) — I would need statistics as these would afford credibility for my conclusions and recommendations (Lummis & Nesbitt, 2000). In keeping with this, I conducted two surveys. The first was a survey of FMC-USA clergywomen in June 2011. As I began processing data from this survey, I realized that the analysis would be more compelling if I could compare women's responses with men's. I developed a parallel survey for clergymen in English and Spanish (at the request of a denominational leader) that I conducted March–May 2012.

Philosophical Assumptions

As I pressed in to this work, I kept in mind the oft-told Hindu fable in which several blind men encounter an elephant and each vociferously argues that his assessment

of the creature's appearance, based on what he felt, is correct. One touched the elephant's ear and insisted the beast was like a fan. Another grasped a leg and claimed the animal must be like a tree. A third seized the tail and insisted the elephant was like a rope. In his version of the story, American poet John Godfrey Saxe moralized,

> And so these men of Indostan
> Disputed loud and long,
> Each in his own opinion
> Exceeding stiff and strong,
> Though each was partly in the right,
> And all were in the wrong!
>
> So, oft in theologic wars
> The disputants, I ween,
> Rail on in utter ignorance
> Of what each other mean,
> And prate about an Elephant
> Not one of them has seen! (Saxe, 1872)

These words dovetail with several key assumptions that guide my work, ones that reflect both my deepest convictions and the philosophical traditions that have informed them. First, knowledge is partial and situated. Second, all researchers, including me, are limited and biased. Third, people and problems are inherently complex. Finally, the work of justice is a moral imperative. As I discuss each of these more fully in the coming pages, I will note how these convictions reflect the undergirding influences of Critical Feminism, American Pragmatism, and Poststructuralism on my thinking.

The limitations of knowing. On this side of eternity, all knowledge is partial and situated, and all data is partial and incomplete (Crotty, 2003; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

The Apostle Paul alluded to this in his letter to the church in Corinth, writing, "For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears" (1 Cor. 13:9-10, NIV). Just as the blind men in the Hindu myth had only a limited understanding of the elephant, I recognize that I will only be able to grasp clergy gender equity and the dynamics associated with it to a degree.

This stance resonates with a pragmatist view of reality that holds that there is an external world independent of human construction, but that we are unable to definitively grasp and explain that world (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). This view further dovetails with poststructural thought as expressed by Derrida, who claimed all knowledge and constructions are contingent and partial (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), and Foucalt, who shifted emphasis away from trying to find the *Truth* to diagnosing how power intersects with knowledge and the body to create what is deemed *normal* (Burrell, 1988). Poststructuralism calls for a continual re-evaluation of truth claims (St. Pierre, 2000), refusing to assert what truth is but helping to identify when a person is making assertions of truth that cannot responsibly be made (Caputo, 1997). To those who contend that this deconstructive stance leads to relativity, meaninglessness, or an endless cycle of building up only to tear down, Caputo (1997) responded:

> The misbegotten notion that deconstruction is some kind of random intellectual violence, a merely destructive and negative assault on anything still standing, arises from a failure to see what deconstruction *affirms*, a failure to see that every deconstructive analysis is undertaken *in the name of something*, something affirmatively *un*-deconstructible. (p. 128, emphasis in original)

Viewing knowledge as partial and situated shifts the emphasis away from research as "a systematic tracking down of a truth that is hidden but may be found" (Spivak, 1997, p. xix). Acquiring understanding becomes more of a conversation, one that requires a broad representation of voices, which is a key component of both pragmatism and feminism: "Pluralism is a central value for pragmatists, who understand that knowledge is shaped by multiple experiential viewpoints. As such, women's experiences are an essential part of a truly pragmatist philosophy" (Whipps, 2010, Pragmatist Feminism, para. 1).

In response to those who argue that this stance on the limitations of knowing produces paralysis — if truth cannot be known, why bother trying? — Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) noted that although knowledge is partial and situated, it is still knowledge. Responsible scholarship simply calls for a continual questioning of this knowledge, recognizing the ways in which entities such as power influence what researchers claim to know. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) summarized:

> A recognition of the limits of our received practices does not mean that we reject such practices; instead, we work the limits (and limitations) of such practices. . . . We accept in our research . . . that the data are partial, incomplete, and always in a process of a re-telling and re-membering. (p. ix)

The myths of omniscience and neutrality. My ability to know is incomplete in part due to my limitations as a knower. As Dewey pointed out, I cannot objectively stand outside of the research that I do as an unbiased spectator (Mowles, 2012). Shaw (2002) described it this way in her discussion of systems approaches to change:

> Demanding as it does a whole system overview as a basis for effective intervention in that system, it sustains a conundrum at its very core. We are asked to think how we might be able to regulate the very process we are invited to understand ourselves as regulated by. (pp. 133-134)

Shaw further deconstructed the myth of omniscience, stating, "Our blindness to the way we participate in fabricating the conversational realities of organizing is compounded by the difficulty we have in *thinking from within, in thinking as participants, in thinking in process terms,* above all, *in thinking paradoxically*" (p. 20, emphasis in original). Strauss (1993) echoed this notion of limitation, writing, "Mere mortals can only know the world out there in some constructed sense" (p. 27).

No matter how much I have read, no matter how many clergy I have interviewed and surveyed, no matter how much personal experience I have as an ordained woman, my grasp of clergy gender equity will always be partial. As Strauss (1993) observed,

> Even scientists must negotiate their constructions of reality, must claim no final picture of it, need to discuss and negotiate and debate their provisional constructions — and yet must act on them, being directed in their action by their tentative constructions, and must judge their consequences. (p. 29)

This call to act regardless of one's inherent limitedness resonates with Pillow's (2003) notion of "uncomfortable reflexivity" (p. 188). I recognize that who I am has influenced all aspects of the research process, including the way I conceptualize the issue of gender equity and ministry leadership, how I frame questions, and how I interpret what I read and experience. My understanding is limited and contextual, influenced by taken-for-granted assumptions and power relations that influence my ways of asking, thinking, and meaning-making. While I aspire to transparency, such transparency is impossible

(Jackson & Mazzei, 2008). Rather than settling into a narcissistic obsession with self-reflectivity, however, I choose to seek to know who I am as best as I can and to disclose how this has influenced my research. I research diligently but present my perspective and conclusions with the full knowledge that they are partial and incomplete.

The inherent complexity of life. A contributing factor to the limitations in both knower and knowing is complexity. Thinking back to the tale of the blind men and the elephant, I recognize that the sheer size and intricacy of the beast defied their efforts to understand it. This complexity is magnified when considering social issues (Greene, 2007; Strauss, 1993), wherein power and relationships often construct what is accepted as normal and what is not (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Unraveling this intricate web of interrelatedness belies simplistic approaches; to overlook this connectedness in research can result in the often-unwitting reproduction of oppression (Crotty, 2003). Deconstruction becomes a valuable tool to bring into the open the power relations that built the structures and to help pull them apart to identify how they are put together, what them holds in place, and what they produce (St. Pierre, 2000).

Complexity and pragmatic philosophy co-exist in Peirce's work (Mowles, 2012). By rooting insight in the interplay of theory and practice and by encouraging researchers to hold their conclusions loosely, Peirce created space for an ever-changing, ever-constructing, ever-deconstructing, and ever-reconstructing reality. This stance also allows room to recognize the multiple factors that shape social issues like gender discrimination. Haslanger, Tuana, and O'Connor (2011) alluded to this convolution when they wrote, "Women as a group experience many different forms of injustice, and

the sexism they encounter interacts in complex ways with other systems of oppression" (sec. 2.2, para. 10).

Oversimplification can contribute to unhealthy essentialism. In the case of my work, reducing gender discrimination in ministry leadership to a simplistic men-versus-women dynamic presupposes

> that women as a group can be usefully compared against men as a group with respect to their standing or position in society; and this seems to suggest that women as a group are treated in the same way, or that they all suffer the same injustices, and men as a group all reap the same advantages. (Haslanger et al., 2011, sec. 2.2, para. 10)

St. Pierre (2000) picked up this theme, critiquing the humanistic assumptions underlying it:

> Much of the work of humanism has been to define the essence of things, to get at that single, unique factor that enables one to identify something or someone and group it with others of its kind in various structures, thus producing, and even enforcing, order out of randomness, accident, and chaos. (p. 480)

St. Pierre argued for a more nuanced understanding of issues that open up conversations rather than truncating them:

> Poststructural feminists argue that the struggles of women are local and specific rather than totalizing. Relations of power are complex and shifting. Resistance and freedom are daily, ongoing practices. Humanism's totalizing understanding of power, resistance, and freedom seems to allow less room to maneuver, fewer possibilities for social justice than that of the poststructural critique. (p. 493)

This is how I attempted to approach my work on clergy gender equity.

Further, I lean toward a hopeful view on men, viewing them as potential allies in creating more equitable systems and structures. This posture reflects a hybrid of feminist and pragmatist stances. As Sullivan (2011) observed, among some feminists men are portrayed as the enemy while pragmatism on its own can be naively optimistic. A mix of the two provides a useful balance:

> Contemporary pragmatist feminists have tended to be more skeptical than most canonical pragmatists of the category of Other because they recognize it as a means of domination. Yet, influenced by pragmatism, those feminists tend not to construe the Other in as alienating and foreboding way[s]. (Sullivan, 2011, "Section 6.2 The Concept of the Other," para. 1)

The moral imperative of justice. The compulsion toward justice is a common theme in the theoretical perspectives that informed my work. Haslanger et al. (2011) defined feminism as "both an intellectual commitment and a political movement that seeks justice for women and the end of sexism in all forms" (para. 1). Whipps (2010) described the convergence between feminism and pragmatism as "activist-oriented philosophies, dealing with problems of embodied living in a social organism" (Pragmatic Feminism, para. 3). Critical theory similarly maintains a bent toward active justice:

> Critical inquiry keeps the spotlight on power relationships within society so as to expose the forces of hegemony and injustice. It is at all times alive to the contributions that false consciousness makes to oppression and manipulation and invites researchers and participants (ideally one and the same) to discard false consciousness, open themselves to new ways of understanding, and take effective action for change. (Crotty, 2003, p. 157)

St. Pierre (2000) offered, “Poststructural feminists believe that the comfort of imagined absolutes and deep structures allows us, women and men, to avoid responsibility for the state of the world” (p. 484). She continued by noting that all contribute to maintaining or contesting the structures around us; because of this, all share a moral responsibility to ensure they are just (St. Pierre, 2000). It is from this place of responsibility that I write.

I also write from a place of optimism. I fully recognize the surreptitiousness of second-generation gender discrimination; maintaining a deconstructive view on church policies and practices seems prudent in light of this. This same deconstructive stance recognizes the ways in which the mere presence of the marginalized other — in the case of my research, clergywomen — creates opportunities to shake up the status quo and move toward transformation (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). To me, this is a hopeful outlook; deconstruction carries with it the possibility of reconstruction (Spivak, 1997).

Terms

For clarity at this point, allow me to define a few terms that I have used and will continue to use throughout this work. According to Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, and Vanneman (2001), a glass ceiling is a specific type of gender inequity, one in which differences in attainment persist even when controlling for human capital, skill, or aspirational differences, and where incongruities intensify as a person moves higher up in the hierarchy. If disparity persists across all levels of an organizational hierarchy, the larger problem of gender discrimination as opposed to the specific issue of a glass ceiling would be indicated. That being noted, I use the term *glass ceiling* interchangeably with *gender discrimination, inequity, inequality,* and *bias*.

Although I acknowledge that there are significant differences between the notions of sex and gender, and that for some these are contested terms (Alcoff, 2006; Butler, 2004; Sullivan, 2011), in this project I use the terms female/woman and male/man interchangeably. Additionally, though I recognize that different traditions have their own vernacular when speaking of ordained ministers, I use the terms clergy, minister, pastor, and priest synonymously.

Structure of the Dissertation

I begin Chapter II by reviewing the components of the Choice Argument and juxtaposing them against research done on clergy. This approach includes looking at human capital factors, supply and demand issues, and aspirational differences. Then I consider the Barrier Argument, focusing specifically on perceptual, congregational, and organizational barriers clergywomen may face that would hinder their ascension to senior leadership positions. Within this discussion I highlight potential complicating factors that reside within the evangelical culture. I also consider some ramifications of the Choice Argument, especially the ways in which it impacts women in ministry leadership.

In Chapter III I explore the research methods I used. This examination will include unpacking what a convergent mixed-methods study from a transformative emancipatory framework looks like, in terms of both its rationale and its practical implementation. I also consider ethical matters stemming from both my methodology and my role in the FMC-USA.

I use Chapter IV to present the results from my surveys and process my interview data in Chapter V. In Chapter VI, I discuss the ways in which the survey and interview

results interact with each other and then offer concrete recommendations, based on the discussion, that include both policy changes and suggestions for future research.

A Bit More About Me

I am an ordained clergywoman in the Free Methodist Church, the denomination I researched for this dissertation. When I began my doctoral studies in 2009, I contacted the denomination's Board of Bishops and asked what I could explore on their behalf. I suggested several choices: approaches to optimize leadership transitions; strategies for reaching bicultural immigrants; or ways to diversify our senior leadership ranks, including more effectively deploying younger ministers, ethnic minority pastors, and clergywomen. The final sub-point of the last option connected with them, as no one was investigating this issue and it was a stated priority for the denomination.

I have approached this dissertation with one significant concern: that I would be viewed as having a chip on my shoulder. I was worried that bringing up the subject of gender discrimination would prompt my colleagues to label me a rabid, angry feminist. Such a perception is tantamount to professional suicide in evangelical circles. To illustrate, Ingersoll (2003) described feminism as "the f-word" on some Christian college campuses, and Bessey (2013) observed that "using the word *feminist* is the equivalent of an f-bomb dropped in church — outrageous, offensive" (p. 12). Even in more progressive contexts, feminism has been associated with an antiquated era of man-hating (Fiedler, Hunt, & Plaskow, 2009/2010; Stephenson-Abetz & Wood Alemán, 2012). Nonetheless, I realized in the course of my research that I had a moral imperative to explore this subject: It was a matter of social justice. Framed in this way, I *had* to write

about it. Given the significant role of fear that undergirds injustice, I cannot allow fear of others' opinions of me to silence what I have to contribute.

Chapter II

Literature Review

In the previous chapter I introduced the two primary schools of thought used to explain the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions. To review: According to the Choice Argument, women lag behind men because they earn degrees in less lucrative career fields. When put head-to-head with men in the same field, women advance more slowly because they step in and out of full-time work, giving them fewer years of cumulative, uninterrupted, full-time experience. More men than women have accumulated the kind of training and experience needed for senior leadership positions, creating supply-and-demand differentials. Additionally, women may not aspire to these types of positions, as their choices indicate other priorities: namely, children.

Proponents of the Barrier Argument claim that women are pushed out of senior leadership tracks because of organizational assumptions about women's vocational aspirations and questions about their commitment to their careers. Women face stereotypes, double-binds, and differential access to resources, including mentors and networks. An underlying factor in these barriers is a traditional career development system predicated on unhealthy expectations that require those who wish to advance to do so at the expense of their families.

In this chapter I engage the Choice versus Barrier debate as it applies to clergy careers. I explore key views of the Choice Argument: that human capital factors, supply and demand issues, and gender-based aspirational differences are the source of attainment variances between men and women in ministry leadership. I juxtapose these against the

case presented in the Barrier Argument: that perceptual, congregational, and organizational barriers constrain clergywomen.

At the heart of the debate between the Choice and the Barrier perspectives lie varying perceptions about the extent to which individuals have control over their career attainment outcomes. Drawing from sociology of religion research, Lehman (1985) and Nesbitt (1997c) presented two possible models to explain clergy vocational trajectories. According to the socialization model, individual ability, academic performance, credentials, values, expectations, and ambition determine whether an individual succeeds or fails vocationally. Such a perspective aligns with the Choice Argument. In the allocation model, social structural barriers like racism and sexism influence a person's career achievement. Based on their research, both Lehman and Nesbitt argued that an allocation model depicts clergy job placement realities more accurately. Lehman (1985) noted:

> The data indicates that the greater success of men than women in finding placement in ministry jobs is basically *unrelated* to their SES [socioeconomic status] backgrounds, levels of academic performance, theological orientations and academic credentials, all of which are variables associated with the socialization model. On the other hand, variables associated with the allocation model are consistently predictive of male–female differences in placement outcome, i.e., the women were *not allowed* fluid access to positions in ministry. (p. 250, emphasis in original)

This research, coupled with most of the studies I read, presents a compelling case that a stained glass ceiling constrains clergywomen in their careers. However, as I noted previously, the literature on clergywomen is neither current nor inclusive. All five major

studies were done before 2000 and draw on the experiences of clergy ordained in the mid-1990s. They disproportionately focus on women serving in mainline denominations; contemporary evangelical clergywomen may have very different experiences (Ingersoll, 2003; Zikmund et al., 1998). Nonetheless, using what is available from this literature coupled with the previously discussed research on secular environments, I will draw tentative conclusions that may be applied to female-ordaining evangelical churches, setting the stage both for the research questions in this dissertation and for potential future studies.

Human Capital Factors

As more denominations began ordaining women in the mid-1970s, the attendance of women at Protestant seminaries swelled (Carroll et al., 1983; Chaves, 1997). Clergywomen finally exceeded their male colleagues in educational attainment, with studies from recent years showing that more than three-quarters of clergywomen have seminary degrees compared with less than two-thirds of their male counterparts (Barna Group, 2009; Henderson, 2012; Zikmund et al., 1998).

In terms of accumulated professional experience, some researchers have argued that gaps between men and women have little to do with ministry career outcomes. When he clustered clergy by ordination cohort to control for education and experience, Sullins (2000) found that clergywomen consistently held lower-prestige positions in church leadership. This inequity started with women's first placement and got progressively more defined throughout their careers. Nesbitt (1997c) made a similar discovery. In her research, male ministers were found to be significantly more likely than

women in their seminary cohorts to have full-time entry positions; this trend held constant throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Nesbitt concluded that among Episcopal clergy,

> the advantage of male gender cannot be explained away by year of ordination, age, education, prior secular work, marital status, or ordination status. . . . These results suggest that little permanent headway has been made in occupational equity among equally qualified women and men at the outset of their careers. (p. 55)

These gendered attainment discrepancies persisted throughout the women's ministry careers. Nesbitt (1995b) found that years of experience had no correlation with achieving a senior leadership role. She explained, "Maleness — alone or in combination with marital status — produces the strongest likelihood of attaining rectorships or yet more elite positions" (p. 407). This finding resonates with Choi's (2010) comment that clergywomen in senior leadership positions in the United Methodist Church needed more education and experience than men to attain these posts.

Chang (1997) extended Nesbitt's work, discovering that regardless of denomination and human capital measures, women received their first parish jobs at a rate of 71 percent that of men. She noted,

> This finding provides an important insight for understanding how career dynamics may evolve differently for men and women. If it takes women longer to obtain a job than men, they may be more likely to settle for a suboptimal job because of financial and psychological pressures. This may have continuing effects for their long term career prospects if the first job has a greater propensity to determine career outcomes in the form of gaining skills, developing professional networks, and accumulating status rewards. (p. 622)

Even when women do hold the same positions as men in ministry leadership, they may face economic discrimination. Zikmund et al. (1998) found a 9 percent salary differential between clergymen and clergywomen who had the same education, type of training, and years of experience working in the same jobs in similarly sized churches in the same denomination. Zikmund et al. concluded, "The gender wage gap cannot be explained by differences in education, experience, position, and denomination" (p. 73). The Barna Group (2009) provided more tangible figures, reporting that the average salary package for clergywomen in senior pastor positions was $3,300 less than for senior pastors who were men at $45,300 versus $48,600. In their sample, part of the disparity was found to correlate with church size: Typical weekend attendance at clergymen's churches was 103 as opposed to 81 at clergywomen's (Barna Group, 2009).

Perl and Chang (2000) considered the influence of education on career attainment for clergy within Spirit-centered denominations, a cluster that includes the Southern Baptist Convention and Wesleyan-Holiness churches like the FMC-USA. Organizational leaders within these groups historically placed education secondary to a sense of divine calling and equipping for ministry. By the same token, they wrestled with maintaining appropriate professional standards for ordination. One way they kept up these standards was to offer multiple pathways to ordination, including seminary degree programs, online or correspondence courses tracks, and apprenticeship models. Perl and Chang discovered that women who earned a Masters of Divinity (MDiv) degree in these traditions were paid 97 percent of what men with an identical education received. They put forth two possible explanations for the more financially favorable climate for highly educated

clergywomen in these traditions. First, 17 percent of their sample worked as denominational administrators or seminary professors, positions that may have more equitable pay scales. Second, there were relatively few women in their sample who had earned MDiv degrees. Perl and Chang speculated that the relative paucity of women could result in their being perceived as less of a threat to the male-dominated status quo and thus as not needing to be held back socioeconomically. I raise a third possibility based on my analysis of Perl and Chang's sample: They used responses only from clergy working at least 30 hours a week for pay in a religious job. Given that women tend to cluster in part-time and volunteer positions in the church (Nesbitt, 1997c), I wonder whether the clergywomen in the sample represented the exceptional few in Spirit-centered denominations who have full-time, paid positions. Comparing the percentage of Spirit-centered clergywomen and clergymen with MDiv degrees who are working less than full-time at less than full pay might raise some additional questions about equity.

Supply and Demand Issues

For many years, American society viewed ministry as a prestigious career (Nesbitt, 1997a). A perfect storm hit in the 1960s that dramatically reshaped professional ministry. First, an oversupply of clergy caused wages and opportunities in ministry to decline (Chang & Bompadre, 1999). Second, expanded educational offerings shrank the intellectual gap between clergy and laity, a sharp change from an earlier time when a town's ministers were among the few individuals in a community who had an advanced education (Nesbitt, 1997a). Third, shifting social attitudes led to the decreased perceived need for a clergy member to mediate a person's relationship with God (Nesbitt, 1997a).

Clergy status plummeted, prompting young men to stop going to seminary and to start pursuing fields like management and psychology that offered higher financial, social, and professional incentives (Chang & Bompadre, 1999). As the supply of male ministers dwindled throughout the 1970s, women, who were being ordained in increasing numbers due to changes in denominational policies, filled some of the open positions (Chaves, 1997); however, since they were considered second-rate, female clergy were paid less than what a comparable male would have received (Nesbitt, 1997a).

Increasing socioeconomic constraints that began about the same time served as an additional factor influencing the supply and demand equation. As Nesbitt (1997a) reported, income went down. Churches that used to be the only nonprofit in town were now vying with hundreds of other organizations soliciting people's money. As older congregants who faithfully donated to the church passed away, a shrinking population of younger members did not step in to replace their giving. In the meantime, expenses went up. Older buildings from better days required significant maintenance and upkeep. Clergy health care and pension costs increased. Taken together, churches had a smaller pool of resources, leading them to rely increasingly on part-time and volunteer workers to fill subordinate staff roles (Nesbitt, 1997c). This shift affected the supply and demand discussion as churches began hiring fewer full-time, full-pay ministers.

When Chang (1997) examined this issue using data from the mid-1990s, she discovered that the job market for all clergy in obtaining their first post-seminary position had tightened significantly since 1980. For those graduating between 1970 and 1980, she reported that 85 percent of men and 70 percent of women in her sample were able to

secure a parish position within 2 years. Among subsequent MDiv recipients, only 60–70 percent were able to obtain parish employment within 2 years of graduation. Choi's (2010) research on the United Methodist Church revealed a similar dynamic, as the percentage of full-time pastors shrank from 89 percent in 1997 to 79 percent in 2008, while the percentage of non-full-time clergy increased from 3 percent to 17 percent.

Despite evidence of a swelling pool of ordained women and second-career men, church revitalization efforts of the mid-1990s announced a clergy shortage (Nesbitt, 1997a, 1997c). Denominational leaders bemoaned that the "best and brightest" and the "strongest leaders" had not pursued vocational ministry as a career, leading Nesbitt (1997a) to observe, "While the exodus of young men from the ordained ministry and priesthood has been strongly lamented over the last decade, nowhere has the arrival of second-career or women clergy been celebrated" (p. 105). She concluded that despite cries of concern about a lack of ministers, "the only substantive shortage seems to consist of *young male seminary-trained clergy*" (p. 142, emphasis in original).

Since that time, the average age of senior and solo pastors in Protestant Churches has steadily climbed: The majority of these leaders are more than 50 years old, and more than one-quarter are older than 60 (Barna Group, 2008, 2009; Hartford Institute for Religion Research, n.d.; National Congregations Study, 2008). As these predominantly male pastors retire, women have the opportunity to move into these positions, but perhaps only to a point (Nesbitt, 1997a).

Within the literature on the glass ceiling, Nesbitt (1997a) encountered the idea of a workforce "tipping point" (p. 586), a threshold of about 30 percent concentration of

women in a profession at which time "an internal restructuring occurs in the amount of authority, prestige, or compensation that an occupation commands, and in the jobs that constitute it" (p. 586). Nesbitt hypothesized that when women occupy approximately 30 percent of clergy positions, denominations increase hierarchical job segregation by gender, form gender-differentiated job pools, and restructure in a manner to deskill jobs disproportionately held by women. Such a finding "would reinforce an American religious tradition of women providing the labor — voluntary or paid — over which men have governed" (p. 587).

Nesbitt's (1997a) research confirmed her hunch. Her data evidenced both a tipping point at the 30 percent concentration level and subsequent occupational deskilling. She also discovered a profound level of gender segregation by job title in the traditions she examined. She found that more than half of the positions held by her research subjects were completely gender-segregated, occupied by men only or by women only. Furthermore, 81 percent of the 69 distinct positions she identified by job title among Episcopalians and 78 percent of the 27 titles within the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) were excessively distributed to one gender, meaning they had a two-thirds or greater concentration of one sex filling them. In addition, men filled a disproportionate majority of the higher-prestige roles while women occupied most of the lower-level positions. Nesbitt concluded, "These patterns suggest that gender segregation has increased in [a] manner sensitive to the occupational feminization ratio" (p. 591). She also found that the Episcopal Church was redeploying retired male clergy to fill

interim and part-time positions, the very positions that allowed clergywomen to get their feet in the proverbial door.

Nesbitt (1997a) summarized her study as follows:

> That both denominational samples show some occupational shifts associated with feminization trends supports a hypothetical linkage between an increased ratio of women clergy and the development of occupational practices that effectively suppress the prospects for gender parity. . . . It seems that both religious organizations, headed and dominated by men, effectively have accommodated the influx of women clergy in a manner that poses little challenge to the organizational power and the resultant influence on religious doctrine, polity, and practice. Concerns of women "taking over" organized religion appear unrealistic given the systemic nature of their marginalization from leadership. Neither are concerns supported that clergy feminization has adversely affected opportunities for men. (p. 596)

Aspirational Differences

Throughout their careers, clergywomen appear to work in smaller churches than their male colleagues (Fiedler & Andrews, 2003/2010; McDuff & Mueller, 1999; Mueller & McDuff, 2002; Nesbitt, 1995b). According to the compensating differentials argument, these smaller churches offer significant fringe benefits to compensate for the low pay and benefits they are able to provide, benefits that some have argued appeal to clergywomen (McDuff & Mueller, 1999; Mueller & McDuff, 2002). Mueller and McDuff (2002) discovered evidence to the contrary: In addition to higher salary and benefits packages, larger congregations provide clearer job descriptions; enhanced professional development opportunities; and more job security, autonomy, decision-making freedom, and task variety (Mueller & McDuff, 2002). That being said, they also

discovered that clergywomen serving in small congregations receive more social support than male colleagues working with similarly sized congregations (McDuff & Mueller, 1999). This included informal benefits like gifts, meals, and invitations to congregants' homes; support from denominational superiors in the form of recognition for performance and encouragement during difficult times; and help from colleagues, both practical and moral support for their ministry work. Nonetheless, they determined that these social rewards did not compensate for the absence of material rewards for most of the clergywomen they surveyed (McDuff & Mueller, 1999).

Seminarians' goals. So what do clergywomen want? To what positions do they aspire? In her review of the literature, Finlay (1996) found evidence suggesting that women in ministry leadership were less interested in upward mobility and church administration and were more inclined to positions offering interpersonal engagement and opportunities for mercy-based service to the congregation and the community. Translated into ministry placements, these aspirations would be consistent with positions in smaller churches, whether in rural areas or in the urban core. Because these posts have fewer operational demands, they would provide more chances for substantive face-to-face interaction with the needy, the community, and people in the church. In contrast, this literature speculated that men would want to be in high-status or up-and-coming suburban churches with the greatest likelihood for advancement, as this positioning reflects their higher ambition levels.

Finlay (1996) explored these ideas with Presbyterian seminarians, asking them to rate a variety of ministry jobs according to how likely they would be to accept a job if it

were offered to them: very desirable, would consider seriously, would consider if other options not available, and would probably not consider it. She clustered the positions into four groups: those serving high-status clientele, those working with low-status clientele, posts in small communities/ churches, and jobs with a high degree of interpersonal contact.

Finlay (1996) found that women were significantly more likely than man to accept lower-status opportunities: solo pastoring a small urban church in a minority/working class community, general ministry among the poor, urban community ministries, and prison chaplaincy. Men were almost twice as likely as women to gravitate toward the high-status positions: solo pastor of a large and growing suburban church and campus minister at a large state university. Additionally, they were slightly more likely than women to express an interest in the high-status job as an associate at a large- or medium-sized suburban church.

In terms of a preference for smaller churches and communities, women again rated these positions more favorably: solo pastor of a small suburban church, solo pastor of a small-town church, and solo pastor of a small rural church. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to desire a solo pastorate at a medium-sized suburban church. Finally, with regard to interpersonal settings, both women and men expressed high interest in associate positions with responsibility for counseling, while women's interest significantly outpaced men's for chaplaincies in hospitals or retirement communities (Finlay, 1996).

Considered globally, Finlay (1996) found, three jobs stood out for men, garnering a positive interest rating of at least 60 percent of the sample: counseling associate, associate in a large/medium suburban church, and solo pastor of a medium-size suburban church. Using the same 60-percent-of-the-sample criterion, women selected twice as many options favorably. Out of the 14 options given, women seemed hesitant about only three: Two of these were from the high-status category and the third was prison chaplaincy.

Finlay (1996) cautioned against making broad statements about clergy gender and aspiration based on these results, given that they could be interpreted in multiple ways. Some could argue that women prefer to work in smaller, highly interpersonal settings based on their preference for these and their relative aversion to the less-personal high-status posts. Others could say men's preferences indicate a more strategic, stepping-stone perspective on ministry with the goal of high-status pastorates in view. Such contentions would support the Choice Argument perspective that states clergy career development choices are guided by gender-based differences in ambition. By the same token, a person could make an equally valid case that seminary women are more realistic about the options they will likely have once they graduate given the stained glass ceiling's constraining effect on their careers. Because of the barriers they will encounter, women are more flexible about the roles they will consider, including opportunities outside the traditional four walls of the church building. Such a contention would be reinforced by Zikmund et al.'s (1998) finding that across denominations, clergymen tend to be in traditional and conventional congregational jobs while clergywomen are more apt to

pursue flexible, mixed, and diverse career paths. It would also resonate with McDuff and Mueller's (2002) discussion on women being entrepreneurial and bivocational to intentionally challenge traditional notions of success. Being employed in a secular context allows women to link their ministry calling with those who would not step into a church building. For those who opt to work in a small church, success becomes about engaging deeply with people, a qualitative measure, as opposed to the quantitative standards most commonly accepted in the church world (Fong, 2012; Henderson & Casper, 2007).

Part-time ministry roles. Some of this flexibility involves working part-time. Choice Argument adherents claim women select part-time positions in order to have maximum flexibility as they balance work and family demands (Carnes et al., 2008; Morgan, 2000; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Slaughter, 2012). However, to say clergywomen want to work part-time contradicts Nesbitt's (1995b, 1997c) research showing that both married and single clergywomen were likely to hold secular jobs in addition to part-time or uncompensated ministry positions to have a full-time career. Nesbitt argued that women work these part-time jobs because these are the only types of positions they can secure. If they were offered full-time jobs, those jobs typically required that the women relocate to work in a small church with a low salary. For married clergywomen, the prospect of full-time work did not outweigh the financial impact of disrupting their husbands' more lucrative careers. Logic, rather than desire, prompted clergywomen to decline these positions and accept posts with part-time pay (Nesbitt, 1997c). Unfortunately, these decisions are sometimes cited as proof of the opt-

out narrative rather than as a reflection of socioeconomic barriers to advancement, since women who work part-time, regardless of the reason, encounter the perception that they are not committed to their careers (Marder, 1996).

Gendered ministry enactment. As I discussed earlier, this opt-out narrative is part of a larger essentializing perspective that claims men and women have gender-based differences that influence their career aspirations and compel their decision-making. Lehman (1993a, 1993b) explored two aspects of this assumption. First, he following up on a discovery he made in previous research: that despite the appearance of humility, clergy desire status. To assess the essentialist argument, Lehman asked whether male clergy were more status-seeking than females, whether they would pursue churches with larger budgets and higher attendance while clergywomen focused more on a feminine ideal of sacrificial giving and perseverance in the face of hardship that would translate into their serving underresourced churches, pouring themselves into younger clergy, and investing in the surrounding community. Lehman (1993b) determined that there was no connection between clergy sex and striving for either prestige or sacrifice.

He then explored whether clergymen demonstrated more traditionally masculine attributes in their interpersonal leadership by being more aggressive, defensive, dominant, and authoritarian, and whether clergywomen behaved in more traditionally feminine ways by being comparatively passive, vulnerable, subordinate, and egalitarian (Lehman, 1993a, 1993b). A gendered distribution of these attributes would reinforce the view of men as hypercompetitive and driven, traits consistent with ambition, and women as cooperative and collaborative, characteristics not typically associated with senior

leadership aspirations. Based on clergy self-report, Lehman (1993a, 1994b) found little difference between clergymen and clergywomen in their interpersonal styles; rather, he discovered that both sexes favored more feminine relational approaches.

Perl (2002) explored the differences between how male and female clergy use their time to see whether there was a correlation between enacted ministerial style and gender. He noted that the assumption had been that women would gravitate toward interpersonal activities while men would be more attentive to activities that would enhance their professional status. This would manifest itself in women's spending more time in visitation and counseling while men would spend more time in supervision and administration. Perl discovered that men did indeed spend more time in church administration and supervision, but this reality was due not to personal style but to the nature of their positions, as men were more likely to serve in senior pastoral posts that required such functions. When controlling for job title, the gap between clergymen and clergywomen faded.

Women spent more time than clergymen counseling, but less in visitation (Perl, 2002). Perl (2002) dug into this distinction more and found that the greatest difference came when analyzing the time usage of women clergy with small children. He asserted that these women had less domestic support, and although they could bring their kids to work with them or work from home doing many pastoral responsibilities, taking children along for hospital or in-home visitation didn't work.

Taken as a whole, these studies present a murky picture on the relationship between clergy gender and ambition: Finlay's (1996) and Perl's (2002) work paints

distinct differences between men and women in this regard, whereas Lehman's (1993a, 1993b) research highlights similarities with a leaning toward what has traditionally been considered feminine ways of being. Not factored into these researchers' studies, however, were the cultural aspects of evangelicalism that profoundly shape expectations for men and for women.

Ambition and evangelical culture. Career-minded women in the business world need to be humbly self-promoting and communally independent (Barnett, 2007; Carli & Eagly, 2007; Chamorro-Premuzic, 2013; Eagly & Carli, 2004). They must put in the time at the office to show that they are motivated, but not so much time that they come across as selfish mothers who have neglected their children (Barnett, 2007; BBDO Guerrero, 2013). Ambitious women need to show confidence without cockiness, warmth without weakness, and assertiveness without abrasiveness or aggressiveness (Ibarra et al., 2013; Kay & Shipman, 2014; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). They have a narrower range of "appropriate" behavior within which to operate, particularly pertaining to their career aspirations (Rhode, 2003; Stephenson-Abetz & Wood Alemán, 2012; Wessinger, 1996).

The perceptual minefield evangelical clergywomen face appears to be even more challenging than the one navigated by their sisters in the corporate world. Ingersoll (2003) noted that essentialist views on gender and gender roles serve as a point of pride for evangelicals; they consider these delineations to be timeless and clear from the Bible. Thus, all of the aforementioned corporate rules seem to apply to clergywomen and to be heightened by the cultural norms of the evangelical world. Ingersoll (2003) reported several of these: "Ambition is not considered appropriate to Christian character,

especially to feminine Christian character" (p. 78). Rather, good evangelical women are supposed to find ultimate meaning in their role as wife and mother, leaving men to pursue their God-ordained jobs as leaders and providers. Regarding those women who work in the church, the assumption is that their innate nurturing nature will find its best expression in roles as children's ministers or administrators helping (male) pastors. Hence, as Ingersoll found, clergywomen who are hired at traditional evangelical churches often face pressure to take on traditionally female roles in the church even if fulfilling those roles was not what they were hired to do. Additionally, women in clergy couples, even if they are called a co-pastor, are given less status, less influence, and lower salaries than their husbands (Ingersoll, 2003). These cycles continue in part because a lack of role models in visible, high-status roles inhibits other women from pursuing these positions (Fiedler, 2010).

Some may ask why clergywomen put up with this. Two possible reasons are as follows: First, Smith (2013) observed that often clergywomen don't ask; they are accustomed to taking what they are offered and making do, even if this acceptance means they are paid less, put in unhealthy churches, and limited in their professional opportunities. While others may say that it's reasonable for a clergywoman to want pay and opportunities commensurate with her education and experience, women in ministry leadership have been socialized to feel guilty about such desires and to believe they are being willful and displaying ungodly ambition if they ask for more (Ingersoll, 2003; Smith, 2013). Furthermore, as Ingersoll (2003) noted, evangelicals ascribe to a view of submission as empowerment: surrendering to God's control by allowing men to lead is

good Christian discipline, whereas anger over perceived gender inequality must be glossed over because of the expectation to forgive.

A second reason evangelical clergywomen may stay in what are sometimes unhealthy ministry situations is the cost of leaving. Zikmund et al. (1998) found that women who go to seminary from Spirit-centered traditions are more likely than those from other traditions to have both a strong faith and a specific career in mind; unfortunately, an MDiv degree has limited marketability outside the church. This reality, coupled with the women's commitment to God's call, may compel them to work in ministry, even if in a suboptimal position (Mueller & McDuff, 2002). Beyond this, evangelical culture weaves throughout many of these women's lives: Often their family and friends are part of the church, they may have attended college at institutions associated with it, and they were likely married within its walls. Ingersoll (2003) observed that when evangelical women leave this tradition, some are ostracized by their parents and family while others face the dissolution of their marriages. Wessinger (1996) speculated that in some cases religious institutions "resort to the spiritual and psychological violence of exclusion or excommunication" (p. 10) to keep these women in line.

Ingersoll (2003) noted that a separation from conservative Evangelical culture manifests in a continuum of responses that includes joining another Christian denomination that welcomes women at all leadership levels, leaving Christianity altogether for more woman-centered spiritual expressions, or cynically dismissing religion altogether. Clergywomen who choose to stay, Ingersoll noted, "live their entire

lives striving to be accepted by a subculture that constantly minimizes their worth, their calling, and their participation" (p. 115).

Despite all of this minimization, clergywomen on the whole have reported vocational satisfaction (McDuff, 2001). Within the evangelical world, Ingersoll (2003) speculated that clergywomen, particularly those in the first generation to be ordained, simply wanted to live out their calling and were happy to have any opportunity to serve after facing numerous obstacles. Satisfaction among second- and third-generation clergywomen may be another matter.

Perceptual Barriers: Gendered Leadership

Cultural, organizational, and social factors influence perceptions of effective leadership (Lord, Brown, Harvey, & Hall, 2001). In the United States, these qualities have traditionally included assertiveness, independence, decisiveness, self-confidence, and authoritativeness — traits that align more closely with perceived masculine qualities (Eagly & Carli, 2004; Ely et al., 2011; Ibarra et al., 2013; Rhode, 2003). Women, on the other hand, have typically been viewed as selfless, caring, friendly, and kind (Eagly & Carli, 2004; Ely et al., 2011; Ibarra et al., 2013). The incongruity between leadership qualities and women's traits and the alignment between these attributes and the perception of men has led to the assumption that men make better leaders (Bosak & Sczesny, 2011; Carly & Eagly, 2007; Chaffins et al., 1995; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Ruminski, Whalen, & Branam, 2012); this perception persists in the Christian nonprofit world (Prior, 2012). Therefore, women must learn to walk a delicate line between

culturally feminine and culturally masculine leadership approaches, mindful of the implicit double binds (Eagly, 2012).

That being stated, some fields are becoming more receptive to traditionally feminine leadership approaches. For example, Malkowski (2012) determined that higher education has shifted its standard for "good" teaching to include culturally feminine measures for successful academic advising as a counterpoint to the culturally masculine standards often used to assess pedagogical competence. Beyond this, researchers are increasingly troubling the masculine/feminine leadership style divide. Harden Fritz (2012) challenged this "false binary," offering instead an "enriched complementarity" that would free leaders to appropriate whatever strategy would be effective for the context without concern for masculine or feminine labels (p. 22).

Gendered leadership. Despite preconceived notions about gender and leadership, a wealth of social science data have pointed to only minor differences, if any, between men's and women's leadership styles (Barnett, 2007; Carli & Eagly, 2007; Harden Fritz, 2012; Rhode, 2003; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Barnett (2007) observed:

> We persist in gendering leadership. Why? . . . The underlying reason is the unspoken but firmly held belief that there is a natural order in which males are innately and uniquely endowed to take charge, whereas females are innately and uniquely endowed to take care. (p. 151)

This gendering of leadership sets in motion what Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb (2011) called a

> vicious cycle [wherein] people see men as better fit for leadership roles partly because the paths to such roles were designed with men in mind; the belief that men are a better fit propels more men into leadership roles, which in turn

> reinforces the perceptions that men are a better fit, leaving gendered practices intact. (p. 478)

From this cycle comes organizational hiring and promotion processes based on the false premise that women are less effective leaders (Eagly & Carly, 2004; Frankforter, 1996).

Nonetheless, Bosak and Sczesny (2011) found reason for hope. In their research, they discovered that as women move into traditionally masculine fields, people's perceptions about them shift. They begin to project masculine traits — including those positively correlated with leadership effectiveness — onto women. Study participants explained this phenomenon by asserting that women's leadership styles are dynamic, not static. This contention helps to challenge the essentialist notion that feminine and masculine traits reflect innate gender differences.

Since the ministry has been a traditionally masculine field, to what extent do essentialist notions about leadership style and perceived effectiveness persist? Lehman (1993a, 1993b) explored whether such a thing as a feminine style of ministry truly exists, and if it does, whether clergywomen enact it more than men and whether it is more or less effective. He operationalized nine dimensions of ministry leadership style — willingness to use coercive power, striving to empower congregations, desire for formal authority, desire for rational structure, ethical legalism, general interpersonal style, orientation to preaching, criteria for clergy status, and involvement in social issues — and deemed whether ministers' self-reported engagement with each were feminine or masculine. To illustrate, a feminine approach to preaching would view it as an

opportunity to share feelings and experiences while a masculine tactic would be to use it to tell people what to do.

When considering the responses of his sample clergy as a whole, Lehman (1993b) determined that both men and women used a more traditionally feminine leadership approach. He speculated that social desirability may have had an impact on how clergy answered these questions, leading to this feminine slant, noting,

> The traits that cultural feminist literature had identified with a "masculine" orientation were often characteristics that one would not see in the "ideal minister." The supposedly masculine attributes were deviations from the ideal. So it is understandable that as a group the ministers preferred to portray themselves more in line with that ideal than as persons deviating from it. (Lehman, 1993b, p. 181)

When controlling for gender, Lehman (1993b) discovered that clergymen were slightly more likely to use coercive power over their congregations, to prefer rational approaches to decision making and problem solving, and to demonstrate ethical legalism, all deemed masculine leadership traits, while clergywomen were somewhat more likely to empower congregants to manage the church, a so-called feminine attribute. The remaining five dimensions showed no significant gender-related split. However, when Lehman broke down these findings by additional demographics like race, role, and ordination year, he noticed that the differences that had appeared were more a reflection of cultural, structural, and biographical conditions than of gender.

Next, Lehman (1997) explored the extent to which laity and clergy perceived the pastor's ministry style in the same manner s/he did. Lehman discovered that the lay

leaders' perceptions were fairly consistent with ministers' self-images. That being said, he did note some differences based on gender: Lay members' perceptions of their male ministers matched these clergy's self-assessment significantly more often than did lay members' perceptions of female ministers. Additionally, male lay leaders tended to describe their pastors through a masculine lens, regardless of their pastor's gender, while female lay leaders were more inclined to note feminine attributes. Lehman speculated that the gender-specific biases toward citing masculine leadership styles (for men) and feminine ones (for women) were produced, in part, by socialization: Men value masculine attributes, and hence they will be sensitized to these traits in leaders; and even if they are not there, they may project their presence out of the desire to maintain a cognitively consonant masculine image of their minister. The same notion holds for lay women and their bias toward the feminine.

As far as the greater discrepancy between lay leaders' assessments and clergywomen's self-perceptions, Lehman (1997) ventured that this resulted from a social-desirability bias he noted among lay responses. Lehman wrote,

> Lay members probably skewed their portrayals of their minister in what *they perceived* as a more socially desirable direction — indicating very little "meddling" with the congregation, not excessively ambitious occupationally, not a "do-gooder," highly rational and structured in work, and using the "correct" criteria for making moral decisions. (p. 218, emphasis in original)

These biases were slanted toward the traditional image of pastoral ministry, which Lehman described as "relatively masculine" (p. 229). Because clergywomen do not fit

the traditional mold, lay leaders have a harder time understanding them as leaders. Lehman claimed that

> Congregations are very comfortable dealing with traditional male clergy, but the female clergy may not have been around long enough for the laity to settle down and deal with them in the same taken-for-granted way. In the absence of that clear structure for routinized interaction, the lay members may turn to cultural definitions of what pastors *should* be doing in their efforts to describe what their pastor in fact is doing. (p. 229)

Minister = man? Lehman's (1985) work on congregational perceptions of clergywomen also unearthed significant concern from the pews about women clergy's ability to balance work and family demands: Fifty-three percent of respondents agreed that "women who try to be both full-time ministers and wives and mothers are likely to have emotional problems due to all the demands placed on them by both jobs," and 53 percent did not agree that "a woman minister who is married can fulfill her responsibilities as wife and mother just as well as if she were not working full-time" (p. 31). This concern surfaced repeatedly in subsequent studies he did, leading him to conclude, "This pattern is probably in part an artifact of traditional assumptions that 'women's place is in the home' and not in the workplace" (Lehman, 1994, p. 112).

Despite these concerns, Lehman (1985) discovered two dominant cognitive patterns in the ways in which congregations viewed women. First, few church members stereotyped clergywomen in conventional, limiting ways. Second, the vast majority of respondents (more than 80 percent) thought that a female pastor could meet her personal and the church's collective needs as well as a male pastor. This information prompted

Lehman to assert, "*No matter how the question is posed . . . most church members think clergywomen have the ability to function effectively as pastors*" (p. 39, emphasis in original).

Lehman (1985) then analyzed laypeople's affective attitudes by asking study participants whether they preferred a male pastor, a female pastor, or either to fill common ministry roles or perform certain pastoral activities. He discovered congregants preferred women over men for two roles — as Ministers of Education and Ministers of Music — although about eighty percent expressed the opinion that either sex would be fine for these positions. Lehman argued that this inclination likely stemmed from the fact that women had been serving in these two roles for many years. Respondents indicated a resounding preference when it came to the senior/sole pastor post: Sixty percent wanted a man to fulfill this role, compared with 39 percent who had no preference and 1 percent who wished for a woman.

When Lehman (1985) pressed further into this issue, he discovered that the functions of the pastoral role could be divided into three categories: the sacramental, the organizational, and the subordinate. Sacramental functions included preaching, baptizing, and conducting funerals; organizational functions involved coordinating staff, addressing personal problems, and planning budgets; and subordinate functions were those performed by ministers of education and ministers of music. Lehman determined that congregants' preferences for a male pastor clustered around the organizational functions, those day-to-day duties associated with running the church. He concluded from this understanding that congregations' preference for men as pastors was not rooted

in theology; if it were, the sacramental arm would have been strongly male-inclined. Since most laypeople agreed that women could capably fulfill the responsibilities of a pastor, and most didn't mind whether a man or a woman performed the functions of a pastor, there was something about the title *pastor* that was associated with the masculine for the majority of his subjects; as Lehman noted, "'Pastor' should be a man" (p. 41).

Lehman (1994) delved further into this notion of language in a later study. Again, though most respondents did not hold stereotyped opinions about women clergy and the vast majority expressed no gender-preferenced feelings for who performed various clergy tasks, a significant proportion of his sample stated that they wanted a man to serve in the position of parish priest/minister. So while a majority of congregants had no problem with women doing the work of the senior pastor, they were apt to have issues with their holding the title. The line appeared to be drawn between senior leadership and subordinate roles, with twice as many people preferring men in these positions than in the less powerful positions of assistant priest/second-in-team or deacon/elder.

This same linguistic stained glass ceiling manifested in Sullins's (2000) research on the Episcopal Church. Using a formula based on the ratio of women to men ordained in the denomination since 1977, he calculated what would be an equitable proportion of each of the church's four titled positions that should be held by clergywomen. He discovered that women filled their fair share of positions as vicars, who pastor smaller, poorer churches, and were overrepresented by half in the subordinate positions of associate and assistant priest. However, women held less than half of their statistical share of the most senior parish position, Rector, leading Sullins to state, "Parishes are not

resistant to the ministry of women priests on the whole, but only women priests . . . as rectors . . . the most authoritative, prestigious, and common of parish positions in the church" (p. 253).

These linguistic associations persist. In their 2012 work, Cormode et al. found that even in seminaries that claim to prepare both men and women for ministry, the default assumption among both faculty and the student body is that the male pastor is the standard. Lehman (1985) speculated that some of these linguistic associations had to do with history: Religious institutions trace their origins back hundreds of years, and most have deep and firmly entrenched views that influence their perspective on who can and cannot lead. Lehman asserted, "One need not claim to be called by God to enter the fields of accounting or carpentry. The concept of ministry, however, is cloaked in layer upon layer of Scripture, interpretation, tradition and church law" (p. 229).

Another factor was more practical: fear. Lehman (1985) posited that laypeople were concerned about threats to the church organization that would result from having a woman senior or sole pastor:

> One of church members' major concerns when thinking about recruiting a pastor is keeping the local congregation alive and well. Members typically prefer to avoid issues and arrangements that threaten the solidarity of that community. Since clergywomen are viewed by some members as objects of controversy — and hence to be avoided — this dynamic could be an important factor in those members' preferences for male pastors. (p. 45)

Interestingly, these strong views about gender and church leadership were disconnected from firsthand experience with women ministers. For instance, in one of

his sample groups, almost one-third of the members had never met a clergywoman, more than 60 percent were from churches that had never considered a female candidate for minister in the past decade, and only 29 percent had ever been in a church pastored by a woman (Lehman, 1994). This lack of exposure to clergywoman may shape people's views on what a minister should look like. Henderson (2012) described the situation this way:

> Whether people realize it or not, who stands up front behind the pulpit raises the issue of symbolism. When the same person stands behind the same piece of sacred furniture week after week, month after month, and year after year we subconsciously begin to assign special status to that person and that specific location in our sacred room. We assign a separate status to those who *don't* stand in that spot. The sheer absence of certain types and classes of people says something symbolically profound to us. While the actual words may never be uttered in public, the imagery does the preaching. (p. 83)

The contact hypothesis. Lehman (1985) explored how firsthand experience with women in ministry leadership affect congregants' perspectives. Based on the contact hypothesis, he speculated that personal experience with a woman minister would reduce an individual's bias against her. He used the framework of his previous research, exploring congregants' proclivity to stereotype, preference for men in pastoral roles, and willingness to discriminate against clergywomen.

Based on the data he gathered, Lehman (1985) found a link between having a clergywoman serve at a person's church and that person's reduced levels of stereotyping. He also determined that this contact produced increased cognitive and affective openness to women in ministry leadership. However, mere exposure to a woman performing

pastoral duties was not sufficient to reverse resistance. For instance, simply attending a funeral conducted by someone else's clergywoman or hearing a female pastor speak at an event did not correlate with increased receptivity to women as pastors. Rather, congregants with higher levels of interaction with women pastors demonstrated the highest levels of change in their openness to clergywomen; depth of relationship and quantity of time spent together served as the primary vehicles for this attitudinal shift. To the argument that pre-existing attitudes influenced congregants' willingness to develop a personal relationship with their pastor, Lehman responded, "There was no statistically significant correlation between quality of relationship and any dimension of prior receptivity to clergywomen" (p. 201). In other words, it was the specific relationship with a particular pastor that led to changed attitudes toward clergywomen as opposed to any prior affinity for women in ministry leadership.

Lehman (1985) also observed a perceptual shift in respondents' perspectives on gender and ministry leadership. As mentioned earlier, Lehman (1985) subdivided the pastoral role into three main categories: sacramental functions like preaching and baptizing, organizational activities like budgeting and overseeing facilities, and subordinate roles like music ministry and Christian education. He had previously found the strongest preference for male leadership in the organizational realm, leading him to posit that concerns related to leadership ability and organizational viability undergirded resistance to women in ministry more than theological issues did. After people had contact with a clergywoman, the roles that had been clearly delineated grew muddy, and the preferences for who filled these roles became less firm. Lehman reasoned,

> *This kind of change probably amounts to a decline in institutionalized sexism* — male/female distinctions in gender-preferences are no longer shared on as much of an "of course" basis, precisely the kind of change anyone positively concerned about the interests of clergywomen would want to observe resulting from the contact situation. (p. 215, emphasis in original)

Contrary to the doomsday forecasts held by many, Lehman (1985) found that when a church has a woman pastor on staff, "predictions of organizational decline do not materialize, and the clergywoman's congregation exhibits normal functioning and growth" (p. 163). This finding directly contradicts the underlying fears many congregants use to justify discrimination against women pastors: that having a clergywoman would produce conflict and cause people to leave the church. In fact, in the churches Lehman studied, the overall impact of having a woman pastor was positive, with about 58 percent of respondents in these churches reporting increased attendance and three times as many reporting higher financial support as reporting decreased giving. Lehman summarized:

> The more personally members get to know the female minister, the more they change their minds about clergywomen, the more they alter their preferences for men in most clergy roles and the more they depart from previous willingness to discriminate against female candidates. (p. 200)

When he replicated the study in a different context, Lehman (1987) discovered that clergywoman contact led to both decreased institutional sexism and increased cognitive complexity associated with congregants' perspectives on clergy roles and gender. Parishioners realized that fears of a church collapse resulting from having a woman pastor were not realistic; rather, they discovered that very few people left the

church and that both attendance and financial giving stayed about the same. Finally, Lehman learned that having once had a woman as pastor, a church may be more receptive to future women in the role, but that overall, *minister* is still defined in masculine terms. He observed:

> While the next woman candidate won't be starting at "scratch" when she applies for the position, she will still have to prove herself as another exception to the dominant pattern of assumptions that the ordained ministry is really a man's job. (p. 325)

Winslow (2005) highlighted this theme when she suggested that one of the challenges clergywomen have faced in the FMC-USA is lack of congregational exposure to them. This lack of firsthand experience with clergywomen leads many church attenders to default to an all-male image of pastoral leadership. Wessinger (1996) similarly noted that within the Catholic tradition, exposure to women serving in pastoral roles increased receptivity to women's religious leadership.

In the absence of firsthand contact with a women pastor, Lehman (1987) found, exposure to women in traditionally male roles in the secular workforce — particularly in high-status positions — led to increased acceptance of women clergy. Purvis's (1995) research echoed this sentiment. In her case study of two women serving as lead clergy in their churches, she discovered that the presence of a trusted woman in leadership in the church's history, whether clergy or lay, played a key role in creating a climate supportive of the women she profiled.

Zikmund et al. (1998) raised a cautionary flag related to the contact hypothesis in evangelical churches. They discovered that

> having a woman pastor as an assistant or part-time pastor (which is often the case in these Spirit-centered denominations) does little or nothing to lessen the lay resistance to women clergy. In most of the other denominational clusters, exposure to a woman pastor has been a positive experience and has predisposed laity to receive women pastors more easily. (p. 65)

Given this finding, further research into the impact of firsthand experience with clergywomen on receptivity among evangelicals seems warranted.

The maintenance motif and "divisive" clergywomen. Lehman's body of work highlights a particularly powerful barrier clergywomen face in attaining senior leadership positions: the fear that having a woman in this role will harm the church. Some resisters claim that having women in these positions will make men less likely to engage in church life. One of Henderson's (2012) subjects put it this way:

> When women lead, it demotivates men from becoming what they are supposed to be. God has given a man certain qualities. He is the one God has equipped for leadership. Putting a woman in leadership over him is almost like whipping him. (p. 45)

The rationale suggests that demoralized men will stop coming to church altogether and will take their money with them (Lehman, 1985; Nesbitt, 1997a). Smith (2013) picked up on this idea in her discussion of African-American churches, noting that that culture's history of oppression makes its members hesitant to continue the subjugation of African-American males by allowing women to step into leadership positions in the church.

Despite evidence showing that congregations do not decline in attendance or giving when a woman becomes the senior leader (Lehman, 1985, 1987), the myth

upholding these diminishments seems to persist. Lehman (1985) quantified the impact of this false perception by presenting subjects with the following survey item:

> If in fact there were conflicts and tensions in a congregation because a woman had been recommended [to fill a pastoral position], which of the following actions do you think the pastor nominating committee (search committee) should take? Do you think they should:
>
> 1. try to convince the congregation to call[2] the woman they recommended,
> 2. take a neutral position and let the congregation decide, or
> 3. withdraw the woman's name and recommend a man? (p. 49)

Lehman conceptualized gender discrimination as an affirmative response to either the second or third option above. He argued that withdrawing the woman's name was tantamount to active discrimination while going with a majority-rules perspective amounted to passive prejudice. Although allowing the congregation to decide might seem democratic, such an action violated the denomination he was studying's equal opportunity policies. Given this definition, Lehman found almost two-thirds of laypeople were willing to discriminate against a clergywoman in order to prevent controversy: Eleven percent stated they would withdraw her name, and 52 percent would defer to the church.

Lehman (1985) presented the maintenance motif as a possible contributor to resistance against clergywomen, explaining that organizations favor patterns of thought and behavior that promote self-perpetuation. Particularly in the case of volunteer

[2] A "call" refers to the practice of extending a pastoral job offer to a candidate.

organizations, those most invested in the survival of the organization must work especially hard to maintain group norms and sustain group values. Given that volunteers provide the bodies, brawn, and bucks to make the congregation function, any threats to organizational viability become particularly dire.

Lehman (1985) posited that clergy gender equity was perceived as a divisive issue for church members. Compounding fears about men leaving the church, some linked the infiltration of women clergy to a larger feminist agenda; accepting a woman pastor could be construed as approving of other feminist stances. In general, lay people expressed a preference to avoid stirring up the water in their local churches out of concern for congregational viability. Pressing into this idea a little further, Lehman learned that the more an individual perceived hiring a woman pastor as tension-inducing within the church, the more likely that individual was to resist it. For instance, Lehman found a strong correlation between respondents' perceptions that a clergywoman would advocate for gender-inclusive language and their opposition toward her. Beyond this specific matter, Lehman uncovered a more general fear of a female pastor's being divisive than a particular concern about such things as a decrease in tithes or attendance.

In summarizing his assessment of organizational concerns and their link to the maintenance motif, Lehman (1985) noted that a minority of members could effectively block a woman from being hired as their pastor if they made it clear that they opposed such a move. Although his research discovered that most congregants were receptive to the idea of a woman pastor, it also showed that their receptivity was trumped by fear of intrachurch conflict. Lehman stated this dynamic as follows:

> The majority of members manifested high levels of receptivity [for female pastoral candidates]. *However*, an equally clear majority of members perceived the introduction of clergywomen into the life of their church as disruptive. If they then follow organizational norms to act in such a way as to protect the viability of the congregation (and denomination) as the first priority, they are likely to have little enthusiasm for seriously considering the clergywoman's candidacy. The interests of the congregation, *as they are perceived by most members*, would most likely be served by sticking with traditional male leadership. (p. 136)

What is most striking is that this resistance is rooted in perceptions of conflict rather than actual proof that calling a woman pastor would decimate a church. Further, this opposition is external to the individuals themselves:

> Wanting to prevent other members' withdrawal from church life in protest over a woman minister, they decide to placate the negative minority by rejecting the clergywoman themselves. It is not their own attitudes toward women clergy that make them act this way, but rather it is their love of their congregation and their perceptions of the attitudes of others that lead them to resist. (Lehman, 1985, p. 286)

Breen (2011) provided a contemporary spin on this maintenance motif, noting how the American church has given in to a culture of celebrity, consumerism, and competition: Celebrity seduces pastors to try to build big churches while consumerism tries to keep everyone happy, and competition embraces growth even if it comes at the expense of luring attenders from neighboring churches. Assuming this is the case, church hiring boards may be hesitant to support a "divisive" woman in leadership, as doing so could derail growth (Hiatt, 1996). Smith (2013) extended this concern to male clergy who turn a blind eye to gender discrimination for fear that advocating for female

colleagues might lead to a congregational split or uprising. Further, within evangelical circles, hiring a woman challenges the traditional cultural norms. Henderson (2012) opined:

> I believe men get preferential treatment over women in evangelical churches because (1) they believe more men will come if men hold positions of influence; (2) they believe women will follow (or lead) those men into this kind of church; (3) men are still seen as the head of the house and the high priest of the home. Churches want to reflect their support for that in their hiring policies and in the amount of money they pay men and women leaders on staff. (p. 86)

Higher up the organizational chain, if numeric growth is a top priority for denominational leaders, they may be hesitant to enforce policies to promote equity, particularly if putting these into effect might alienate those unsupportive male clergy who are bringing in the money and the members. That being said, according to Sullins's (2000) research, systemic obstacles for women in ministry appear to reside primarily at the local level. Sullins's study of mainline congregations showed that "resistance was found to be located entirely in congregations and not at all in the decisions of the church hierarchy or other clergy" (p. 261). Sullins continued, "Male/female inequality among the clergy is not due to formal institutional discrimination but is a result of embedded cultural values, values that are particularly resident in congregations" (p. 261).

Congregational Barriers

Researchers have identified demographic similarities among congregations receptive to women in ministry leadership and those who resist. Smith (2013) observed that congregations who accept a woman pastor tend to constitute urban churches in

underserved communities who can't afford a male pastor; small churches with an elderly, declining membership where women have stepped in as lay leaders until they can get a pastor; and churches a married male pastor with kids wouldn't take because of socioeconomic factors, lack of prestige, or significant challenges that would take too long to fix — all issues that could potentially derail his career advancement. She added that sometimes suburban churches will hire a woman pastor, as they are more accustomed to women leading in the community (Smith, 2013). Lehman (1985) noted that large, affluent churches tend to be the least likely to hire a clergywoman, perhaps because they have the financial resources to attract men.

However, just because a church accepts a clergywoman it does not mean that its congregants are supportive of women in ministry leadership; they may simply be desperate to keep their doors open in the face of declining budgets (Lehman, 1985). In Lehman's research, certain populations within churches stood out as being more or less favorable toward women clergy. Younger, married, more highly educated progressives with a global worldview tended to be more welcoming to women than older, single, less-educated conservatives whose perspective in life had been shaped solely by their local community (Lehman, 1986, 1994). Men, particularly those prejudiced against racial and ethnic minorities, displayed more resistance than women, though both were equally likely to discriminate against a female candidate to prevent possible congregational disharmony (Lehman, 1985, 1994). Additionally, those who self-reported as the most traditionally religious — operationalized in terms of regular church attendance, financial giving, and personal devotion — were the most likely to oppose a woman pastor, perhaps because

she posed a threat to the institution in which these individuals were significantly invested (Lehman, 1994).

Some specific dynamics within evangelical congregations may additionally complicate matters for women clergy. Prior to the late 1800s, proponents of a woman's right to preach framed their case around the exceptional giftedness of individual women (Chaves, 1997). With the first wave of feminism in the late 1800s and early 1900s, their argument began revolving increasingly around the principle of gender equality; for example, they noted how women as a group had been given charisma to lead and inspire (Mesaros-Winkles, 2012; Wessinger, 1996). Opponents countered by claiming gender-equity efforts weakened the family and destroyed the home (Chaves, 1997). With the passage of the 19th amendment in 1920 and liberal sentiment among some denominations growing, previously loosely affiliated conservative churches formed interdenominational associations to propagate their views. Foundational to their bond was a shared view on Scriptural inerrancy: that the Bible "is the authoritative source for every aspect of social and organizational life, and it can contain no internal contradictions" (Chaves, 1997). As the literal, infallible Word of God to humankind, prohibitions against women in ministry leadership rooted in it could not be questioned. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, gender restrictiveness in this so-called Fundamentalist branch of the church grew, spawning policies that limited clergy and lay leadership roles to men only (Chaves, 1997; Ingersoll, 2003; Zikmund et al., 1998). An undergirding influence to this movement was strong antiliberal sentiment, the same kind of thinking that led to the statements decades earlier about gender equity weakening families and destroying homes (Shaw, 2008).

Pentecostal and Holiness groups, like the FMC-USA, maintained a peripheral association with the Fundamentalists, influenced by its rhetoric but not fully invested in it. Chaves (1997) observed, "Pentecostal and Holiness denominations, in short, are not fully embedded in the dominant Protestant anti-liberal subworld, and we should therefore expect their gender policies to be less completely responsive to that world" (p. 114). Although the Pentecostal and Holiness groups did not formally change their more-receptive policies toward women in ministry leadership, in practice the number of women serving in titled pastoral roles in these denominations plummeted as Fundamentalist power grew (Ingersol, 1994). This shift paralleled a similar cultural dynamic in the United States as women moved from the workplace back home after World War II (Ingersoll, 2003).

The feminist movement in Evangelicalism grew in the 1970s and 1980s. While it advocated for clergy gender equity, it endorsed heterosexual marriage and remained largely outside the debate on gender-neutral language and gender-inclusive terminology for God (Ingersoll, 2003). Nonetheless, Fundamentalist rhetoric linking these feminists to the demise of the family resurged. Traditionalists perceptually joined those who ascribed to gender equity with the pro-gay, pro-choice movements. Women within evangelical churches that refused to ordain them framed their desire for denominational endorsement not as a collective justice issue but as a response to God's individual calling on their lives, much as their sisters in the 1800s had done before the first wave of feminism (Chaves, 1997; Ingersoll, 2003). Outside the church, shifting cultural sentiment viewed this matter through an equity lens. Denominations felt pressure to

address this external force; stated policy became a way of signaling their orientation to this broader culture. Those who moved to endorse clergy gender equity during this time faced the accusation that they were not truly committed to Biblical authority and that they had "sold out" to accommodate worldly standards (Chaves, 1997; Ingersoll, 2003). Leaders within these groups, however, pointed to a less dogmatic view of Biblical authority than the inerrantists and leaned into pragmatic matters related to doing the work of ministry (Chaves, 1997).

Unfortunately, the sellout mindset persists in the pews of many Evangelical churches, including those within denominations that ordain women (Dale, 2014; Ingersoll, 2003). These congregants react strongly to anything associated with liberal feminism, viewing it as the slippery slope to being pro-choice and pro-gay rights, both anathema to conservatives (Bessey, 2013; Chaves, 1997; Cramer, 2013; Ingersoll, 2003; Shaw, 2008). According to Ingersoll (2003), clergywomen who work in antifeminist churches need to go out of their way to calm fears about what they might represent. He explained that "women who create the perception that their presence as leaders would not challenge any other aspect of the cultural system face much less difficulty than women who, either intentionally or inadvertently, are controversial on other points as well" (p. 127). Being married with children helps in that it demonstrates a commitment to the traditional family and is "an indication that the person is 'safe' and does not represent a threat to the moral order of the community" (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 41; see also Hiatt, 1996 and Shaw, 2008).

The inclusive language debate is another hot button, particularly within Spirit-centered denominations (Zikmund et al., 1998). The less controversial aspect of this issue calls into question the traditional practice of using male pronouns as a default in Scripture translations. Proponents of inclusive language call for translators to replace *man* with *human*, *men* with *humanity*, and *brothers* with *brothers and sisters* when the original language is gender neutral (Ingersoll, 2003). The more contested aspect of the debate relates to gendered language for God. More liberal inclusive language advocates argued that the use of gendered pronouns in the Bible created an errant presumption of maleness attributed to God (Steele, 2013). Johnson pointed out that using male pronouns for God "puts the female psyche at a distance from God because if God is only male, women cannot intuitively grasp themselves in the image of God" (Fiedler & Johnson, 2003/2010, p. 79). In an interview with Fiedler and Williams, Ruether linked this language to a larger ideological pattern "in which ruling class men see all of these categories of women, working classes, slave people, and the earth as property and as tools to be employed" (Fiedler, Ruether, & Williams, 2004/2010, p. 73). Some suggested using nongendered alternatives: *Creator*, *Redeemer*, and *Sustainer* instead of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Spirit* (Ingersoll, 2003). Plaskow extended this conversation to include imagery as well as language, tracing the need to do so back to Genesis 1, where "God created human beings in God's image. . . . For women to fully experience ourselves in the image of God, there needs to be female as well as male imagery" (Fiedler, Hunt, & Plaskow, 2009/2010).

This battleground over language and imagery feeds in to modern traditionalists' arguments against clergy gender equity: Jesus was male, Jesus prayed to God as "Father," men are leaders in Scripture, Christ called twelve males as disciples, and, they contend, the Bible teaches that men have headship over women and wives should submit to their husbands (Chaves, 1997; Haddad, 2013). Considered under the umbrella heading of *complementarianism*, this influence in the pew has grown in recent years, even in churches from egalitarian denominations, in part because of its strong presence in mainstream Christian and social media (Bessey, 2013; Chaves, 1997; DeMuth, 2013; Huber & Stanley, 1999; Van Biema, 2009; Witherington, 2012, Woodiwiss, 2013). Reflecting on this matter, Zikmund et al. (1998) summarized:

> It is ironic, from the standpoint of history, that significantly more lay leaders in the Spirit-centered denominations than in the other two denominational clusters are ambivalent or opposed to ordaining more women in their denominations. These laity actively resist seeking a woman pastor to fill a vacancy, using inclusive language [for humans], and appointing equal numbers of lay women and lay men on their church governing boards. (p. 65)

Even though these denominations have official policies endorsing clergy gender equity, some of them in place for decades, congregations have not internalized the egalitarian spirit behind them.

Women from within these complementarian traditions often struggle with deeply ingrained convictions about the appropriate roles for women. Dale (2014) and Henderson (2012) articulated some of these:

- Women can lead only through the influence of her husband or under the covering of a man.
- Women cannot lead in the church because they are more likely to go astray. After all, Eve was a woman and she's the one who was deceived in the Garden of Eden.
- Because God created Adam before Eve and made Eve to be his helper, women are supposed to follow men.
- A woman's place is in the home raising children.
- Women can serve in many places, like children's ministry, women's ministry, and prayer ministry. To aspire to senior leadership is to have a prideful spirit.
- The only time a woman can lead is if a man is not available for God to use to do the job.

This intense socialization can make women some of the most resistant when their sisters rise up to lead (Henderson, 2012).

Organizational Barriers

> Despite Sullins's (2000) contention to the contrary, Zikmund et al. (1998) proclaimed:
>
> We are convinced that patterns of institutional discrimination continue to limit the ministries of women. Although increasing numbers of women are in seminaries, and many of them are seeking ordained status in Protestant denominations, congregations and denominational systems consistently, whether overtly or unconsciously, thwart the ministries of women. (p. 7)

Nesbitt (1997a) highlighted the unconscious component of organizational bias, noting that "gender discrimination normally refers to outcomes rather than intention" (p. 597). In her review of the literature, she discovered that male ministers' ambivalence about having women as pastoral peers, congregations socialized to the default assumption of

male senior leadership, and a lack of appropriate mentors factor in to clergy gender imbalances (Nesbitt, 1993). She further speculated that structural issues within denominations related to identifying, training, and deploying leaders might also play a role (Nesbitt, 1993).

Identifying and developing future ministers. In discussing clergy recruitment efforts of the mid-1990s, Nesbitt (1997c) noted that denominational leaders bemoaned the "decline and fall of the young male cleric" (p. 102), widely considered to be the ideal ministerial candidates (Chang & Bompadre, 1999; Nesbitt, 1997a), perhaps because they so closely resembled these senior leaders early in their careers (Hendelman, 2013a; Ibarra et al., 2013; Nesbitt, 1995a). These young men self-identified earlier than women in all three clusters in Zikmund et al.'s (1998) study: Within the Spirit-centered denominations, 74 percent of clergymen identified a call to ministry when they were 21 or younger, and 35 percent shared this call with a denominational official before they turned 22; only 49 percent of clergywomen reported receiving a call by the same age, and less than one-third (16 percent) made it known to their minister or a denominational representative by age 22. Men were also less likely than women to need the affirmation of others to pursue vocational ministry; women tended to seek validation for their calls through successful volunteer church work and feedback from other ministers (Nason-Clark, 1987). This reticence may be why 55 percent of clergywomen from Spirit-centered denominations stated that their decision to enter the ordained ministry involved both a one-time experience — a call — coupled with a gradual awareness of that calling, and why 40

percent of clergywomen first approached officials to talk about pursuing ordination when they were in their mid-30s or older (Zikmund et al., 1998).

Women and second-career men who waited to start their ministerial credentialing journeys faced penalties from the outset (Cormode et al., 2012). In her interviews with denominational placement officials, Nesbitt (1997a) unearthed negative perceptions about second-career and older seminarians based on what she called "occupational stereotypes" (p. 97). These included the perception of second-career clergymen as workforce failures or disillusioned idealists looking for fulfillment in ministry, and of women as housewives looking for something to do since the kids had grown up or long-term church volunteers who figured that they had enough experience in the church that they could run it.

Career development norms. In addition to these perceptual hurdles, these older ministerial candidates may face career development challenges because they violate traditional career-stage model expectations (Cormode et al., 2012). Nesbitt (1995a) articulated one of these normative ministerial life cycle models: In stage one, *preparation*, individuals in their early twenties attend college and seminary. Stage two, deemed *entry level*, lasts for the first 3 to 5 years post-graduation and occurs during the minister's late twenties to early thirties. This stage is followed by *advancement*, a stage that extends through the thirties and forties and consists of steady linear progress from smaller to larger congregations. Somewhere between the late forties and early sixties clergy reach the fourth stage, *maintenance*, where their careers level off at what will be their maximum level of occupational attainment. The final stage, *decline*, starts

anywhere from the late fifties through the seventies and is marked by reduced responsibilities and formal retirement.

Slaughter (2012) argued that these normative career sequencing models reflect "the mid-20th century, an era when people had kids in their 20s, stayed in one job, retired at 67, and were dead, on average, by age 71" ("Redefining the Arc," para. 1). Nesbitt (1995a) deconstructed this expected pathway, noting that "expectations for completing major career advancement shortly after age 40 directly conflict with gender-related constraints that women disproportionately face, particularly during child-bearing years, including their greater responsibility for child-care" (p. 156). Given that many women take their first steps toward vocation ministry after age 35 — including 40 percent of women from Spirit-centered traditions in Zikmund et al.'s 1998 study — such normative expectations automatically marginalize them.

Nesbitt (1997c) raised concerns about specific aspects of denominational development processes for clergy. In her research, she found that efforts to create objective norms for ordination in an attempt to remove bias created greater obstacles for women. Increased requirements for formal education devalued the life experience older women had acquired. Denominational officials gave individual dioceses the authority to approve candidates if they failed certain portions of objective exams but established no formal procedures for doing so. Nesbitt noted that these exams appeared to screen for feminist leaning and that psychological assessments used in the process produced questionable results that appeared gender biased. She concluded:

> While some steps ostensibly benefit women . . . the very clarification of the process has added bureaucratic layers that not only have made ordination a more rigorous rite of passage but the objective nature of the formal requirements can be utilized to exclude unwanted candidates, including women. At the same time, denominational gatekeepers have retained some ability to modify or short-circuit the process for particularly desirable candidates. (p. 150)

Because of these obstacles, Nesbitt (1997c) noted, some women opt out of ordination altogether, choosing instead to marry male clergy, seminarians, or ordinands. Nesbitt explained, "Under the 'shadow occupation' of minister's wife, they effectively have gained opportunities to co-pastor while not having to confront ambivalence or outright hostility within their congregations or denominations, much less their own personal hesitancies, or friction from their husbands" (p. v). This marrying-into-the-ministry theme transected denominational lines and recurred throughout the literature on women in ministry (Blevins, 1996; Prichard, 1996; Zikmund, 1996).

Dual ordination tracks. As an alternative to the traditional seminary route, some denominations have created dual ordination tracks in which candidates receive training through their local church. Nesbitt's (1993, 1997c) research suggests that these alternative ordination tracks may adversely affect clergywomen in several ways. First, Nesbitt found that women were disproportionately directed toward these nontraditional pathways with the assurance that they could still conduct the ministry they sought without doing all of the work associated with the traditional track. What they were not told was that these tracks did not lead to senior leadership positions. Once a woman had chosen such a track, her ability to transition to the traditional pathway became

increasingly curtailed (Nesbitt, 1993). For this reason, women may have settled for a role not commensurate with their capabilities and calling simply because of the structural barriers they faced to developing their full career potential.

Second, Nesbitt (1993) claimed that seminaries tend to be more ideologically liberal, including being more supportive of clergy gender equity. By removing ministerial candidates from seminaries and training them in local parishes, denominations perpetuated more conservative views on women's roles. This move made these home-grown ministers less of a threat to a male-dominated leadership hierarchy and created tension between conservative and liberal clergywomen. Nesbitt (1993) observed:

> The counterpositioning of women . . . who hold traditionalist versus progressive orientations can allow organizational management to express perplexity over their divided views, a tactic that effectively permits a dominant group to absolve itself from taking direct action. Thus, pressure for negotiating occupational, inclusive language, and other gender-related issues can be circumvented when having women clergy hold sharply divergent perspectives. (p. 26)

Third, since the vast majority of these alternatively trained ministers were women, deploying them in subordinate ministry roles created the illusion of equity while perpetuating the traditional gender-stratified norm (Nesbitt, 1993). Senior leaders, almost exclusively male in evangelical traditions (Barna, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003), could then oversee a pool of part-time and volunteer workers, often women (Nesbitt, 1997a). In the meantime, denominational reports offered statistics on the significant number of women working in parish positions, ignoring how many of these clergy were trapped on secondary career paths.

Finally, Nesbitt (1993) found that seminary-trained women had to contend with these alternatively trained, low-cost, low-threat ministry workers for the entry-level positions they needed in order to get the professional experience necessary to move to more lucrative and prestigious roles. Putting these workers in the same job pool led to occupational conflation, which lowered the perception of clergywomen's suitability for advancement (Nesbitt, 1997c). Occupational crowding created conditions in which clergywomen were unable to find jobs, particularly because those locally trained ministers commanded lower salaries (Chang & Bompadre, 1999). In addition to producing discouragement, frustration, and the increased likelihood of leaving the ministry, this situation also blocked ordination for those in traditions requiring ministerial candidates to secure a job prior to credentialing them (Nesbitt, 1993).

Leadership identity formation. The obstacles clergywomen encounter during the development process may hinder them as they form their leadership identity, which Ibarra et al. (2013) defined as the sense one has of being a leader. This inner confidence takes time to develop and can be derailed by resistance and lack of opportunity. Leadership identity is often tentative at first, easily undermined by fear of failure and personal insecurity. This hesitance may be due to the *imposter phenomenon*, the tendency for highly accomplished women to attribute their successes to external circumstances or attributes unrelated to their professional talents rather than embracing their competence and talent (Langford & Clance, 1993). Negative feedback from others can crush a budding leader's self-confidence and set her up to be labeled as lacking the capacity for future senior leadership (Ibarra et al., 2013). Overcoming this assumption

with organizational gatekeepers proves difficult as this not-good-enough branding feeds in to pre-existing gendered stereotypes about women and leadership. As Barnett (2007) put it,

> When women and men believe that women cannot lead, women renounce leadership positions. Then their absence from leadership positions is taken as proof that they don't have the right stuff. Those who do succeed are marginalized; their successes are explained away as chance phenomena. (p. 169)

These stereotypes about men and women in leadership can create what Rhode and Kellerman (2007) described as a "psychological glass ceiling" (p. 8), prompting women to question their capabilities and diminishing their confidence, further hamstringing them professionally (Rhode, 2003). More specifically,

> Expectations affect evaluations, work assignments, and other career development opportunities. In effect, biased assumptions adversely affect performance, which reinforces the initial assumptions. Those in leadership positions are less likely to support and mentor women who appear unlikely to succeed. Women who are not supported are less likely to succeed and more likely to leave. Their disproportionate attrition then reduces the pool of women mentors and role models and further perpetuates the assumptions that perpetuate the problem. (Rhode, 2003, p. 11)

Women who lack confidence also appear to steer clear of risk for fear of failing (Ely et al., 2001; Ibarra et al., 2013; Kay & Shipman, 2014). For some women, getting comfortable with taking risks — such as pursuing a ministry career — may require overcoming socialization that began early in their lives. Kay and Shipman (2014) observed that women are socialized to be nice and to behave well as early as elementary school. They are applauded for this behavior and so replicate it. Boys, who tend to be

rowdier, end up being disciplined more often. As a result they learn how to handle correction, risk-taking, and failure. In the rough-and-tumble world of boydom, they learn how to celebrate their victories and to let their failures slide off their backs. This playground mentality of competition for boys helps as they enter the work world. Kay and Shipman noted that girls who played competitive team sports learned some of the same resiliencies into which boys are socialized. These girls ended up being more likely to graduate from college, be employed, and work in male-dominated fields than their non-sports playing female peers. Unfortunately, Kay and Shipman also discovered that girls tend to step out of competitive sports during their teen years, the exact time when they could be learning valuable lessons about handling failure and taking risks, leading the researchers to conclude:

> What a vicious cycle: girls lose confidence, so they quit competing, thereby depriving themselves of one of the best ways to regain it. They leave school crammed full of interesting historical facts and elegant subjunctives, proud of their ability to study hard and get the best grades, and determined to please. But somewhere between the classroom and the cubicle, the rules change, and they don't realize it. They slam into a work world that doesn't reward them for perfect spelling and exquisite manners. The requirements for adult success are different, and their confidence takes a beating. (para. 48)

According to Ely et al. (2011), developing a strong sense of leader identity requires a deep sense of purpose, of connecting the ways in which a person leads to his or her deepest convictions; this vision produces authenticity and drive that are less likely to waver in the face of obstacles or negative feedback. Ely et al. noted that organizations help foster such visions by providing opportunities for a developing female leader to take

reasonable risks. This strategy has two effects: First, it communicates the organization's confidence in a woman's abilities and helps her to know that the powers-that-be are in her corner as she grows as a leader. Second, it lets those whom the woman is leading know that she has the respect and the backing of the organization, and that those in power expect them to support her leadership as well. Ibarra et al. (2013) observed:

> It's not enough to identify and instill the "right" skills and competencies as if in a social vacuum. The context must support a woman's motivation to lead and also increase the likelihood that others will recognize and encourage her efforts — even when she doesn't look or behave like the current generation of senior executives. (p. 62)

Confidence and leadership identity formation extend into the church context, particularly when thinking about ministerial authority. Stanley (1996) viewed prophetic authority as coming directly through evidence of God's hand on a leader that produces effectiveness while priestly authority comes from institutions through granting clergy formal offices. She observed that in the early years of the Wesleyan-Holiness Movement,[3] women served more freely under prophetic authority. With increasing institutionalism, priestly authority took precedence. Those who sought to earn titles and positions faced obstacles erected by the organization, leading to a decreased number of women clergy in these denominations. Blevins (1996) identified a similar trend in the Baptist church, particularly as the filter of men's experiences became more significant through institutionalism. She wrote, "The impediment to ministry for Baptist women has been Baptist culture, not Baptist theology" (p. 164).

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[3] The Wesleyan-Holiness movement consists of a cluster of denominations tracing their histories back to the ministry and teachings of John and Charles Wesley, 18th century clergymen.

Finn (1996) viewed authority as coming from three primary sources: an interior, spiritual sense of call; the call on all Christians to minister that is associated with baptism; and a call stemming from other people's confirmation of pastoral giftedness. She noted that ordination and appointment serves as that third source of authority. In her interviews with nonordained women in church leadership, she found that while these women still engaged actively in ministry, they longed to have their calling and competence validated by the institution. They spoke of sensing something missing without this validation and described hurt, anger, and a sense of insecurity in their roles because they lacked official recognition in them. This need for external validation of call seems particularly salient for women, more so than for men (Cormode et al., 2012). Given this dynamic, it would seem that subtle you-don't-belong messages from a religious institution would undermine women's confidence both in their calling and in their competence as ministers, pushing some out of formal, titled ministry leadership tracks.

Retaining young women. Zikmund et al. (1998) discovered that younger clergywomen were the most likely to consider dropping out of ministry leadership. The common factors reported by those who left were frustration at the local church and a perceived lack of support from those in their denomination. Many of these women served in part-time ministry positions, particularly in their first placement (Nesbitt, 1997c; Zikmund et al., 1998), and required a second job to make ends meet. When they experienced greater appreciation, better pay, and more opportunities at this second job, they tended to leave their parish positions. Half of these clergywomen eventually stepped

back in to ministry, but by that time they were already far behind their peers who had logged continuous years of service. McDuff (2008) discovered another factor that may prompt young women to leave the ministry: Out of all the populations she studied, unmarried, career-oriented young clergywomen serving in conservative churches experienced the highest levels of sexual harassment and accompanying decreased job satisfaction levels.

Generational dynamics may also play in to this. The younger women in Zikmund et al.'s (1998) study were part of the second wave of clergywomen. Brown (2002) observed that although the first wave of ordained clergywomen anticipated opposition, those ordained subsequently were not as well-prepared for obstacles. They had been socialized in the myth of equal access; when they couldn't get a job or encountered obstacles, they were more likely to think that something was personally wrong with them (Brown, 2002; Zikmund et al., 1998). As Brown (2002) reported, "The failures and obstacles of these later-ordained women were more quickly internalized as a negative reflection on their personal pastoral ability and not [as] the result of a sexist system" (p. 39). This perception made these younger women at much higher risk of dropping out of ministry altogether (Zikmund et al., 1998).

Nesbitt (1997b) also observed generational differences between clergywomen. Groundbreaking clergywomen brought exceptional qualities to their positions, often in the form of elite educational attainment and publications. They followed different pathways than men to attain their positions. Some perceived these women as not belonging because they violated the norms; this perception undercut the groundbreaker's

authority and produced resistance among the majority group members to promoting future minority candidates. Those who followed these pioneers in the next generation of clergywomen were more likely to mirror male career development pathways and standards, making them seem less different from, and thus less of a threat than, the male majority.

Benevolent male advocates. Allow me to quickly add that not all males are threatened by women; many actively work on behalf of gender equity. Although I use the terms mentor, sponsor, champion, and advocate interchangeably, Hewlett (2011) challenged the notion that they are synonymous. She argued that sponsors use their clout to actively support their protégés' promotion through the organization by "expanding the perception of what the protégé can do; making connections to senior leaders; promoting his or her visibility; opening up career opportunities; offering advice on appearance and executive presence; making connections outside the company; and giving [general] advice" (Hewlett, 2011, para. 5). Semantics notwithstanding, sponsors play a critical role in securing leadership opportunities for developing leaders, chances to take reasonable risks that will help boost confidence and contribute to leadership identity formation (Ely et al., 2011; Rhode, 2003; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). They also assist women in navigating the twists and turns of the leadership labyrinth (Forbes Berthoud, 2012).

Hewlett (2011) found that women were half as likely as their male colleagues to have a sponsor while Hendelman (2013a) discovered that women's mentors tended to have less clout in organizations than men's. Highly influential men may not invest in a female apprentice because they don't resemble them — the principle of homophily — or

they may hesitate for fear of how colleagues might view the cross-gender relationship (Anderson, 2013a; Chaffins et al., 1995; Rhode, 2003; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). As a reaction to this fear of perceived impropriety, some organizations — including many churches — have instituted strict policies that constrain men from mentoring women (Driver, 2014a; Ingersoll, 2003). This stricture creates a tension for these would-be apprentices as they are forced to seek mentoring from a more-senior woman. Given the paucity of such women in some fields, this restriction severely constrains their options (Hendelman, 2013a). The few senior women who are in an organization may be in high demand. Within the church, for example, Perl (2002) found that senior women often served on multiple denominational boards and committees as the token female; such a situation affects women's availability to invest in protégés.

Furthermore, not all senior women want to advocate for junior colleagues. Some resist because they think that since they had to fight for their success, others should have to do the same. Others hesitate to take on an advocacy role for another woman for fear they will be penalized in their own careers for being confrontational or feminist (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). At the same time, some ambitious junior women prefer not to be mentored by a woman because they see the disconnect between women and senior leadership in the organization and don't want to be associated with female colleagues or superiors for fear that such an association would draw attention to their womanhood and adversely affect their chances for promotion (Ely et al., 2011; Ibarra et al., 2013).

For women pursuing ministry leadership, mentors play a critical role (Cormode et al., 2012). Ingersoll (2003) noted, "Young women who perceive a call on their lives

from God and then face conflicting messages about its legitimacy often find that the single most important factor determining whether they pursue that call is the availability of supportive mentors" (p. 87). For Ingersoll's subjects, these mentors were often males, men in positions of authority who opened doors for them. Smith (2013) discovered the same thing: The recommendation and support of an outgoing male pastor paved the way for a female candidate to be hired in his place. Nesbitt (1997c) also quantified the value of an advocate: Even in denominations with seemingly objective computerized candidate-position matching programs, the recommendation of a key insider, like an influential clergyperson or a denominational official, opened placement doors. Unfortunately, in her interviews only men acknowledged having a benevolent male advocate assisting them.

Networks. Involvement in networks with other female leaders assists with leadership identity formation (Ely et al., 2011) and can prove vital for developing clergywomen (Ingersoll, 2003). Beyond internal growth, these networks can play a functional role, one that Ely et al. acknowledged was difficult for many women; they noted that tapping into these networks for professional opportunities can feel inauthentic to many women, as if they are using people to move up corporate ladders. Hewlett (2012) confirmed this feeling and added that because this type of scenario is so distasteful for many women, they will intentionally avoid networking and rely on high performance to get noticed and promoted. Hewlett called this "the tiara syndrome" (para. 5), a version of wishful thinking.

Nesbitt (1997c) discussed the importance of professional networks for clergy career development. She noted that these often develop in seminary housing, college

fraternity houses, or other gender-segregated settings. Since women don't have access to these influential networks, they must rely upon a benevolent male advocate to act as a bridge to them. Trying to make these connections without a male sponsor will backfire, leading Nesbitt to conclude, "Women not only are disadvantaged, then, from a lack of powerful informal networks but also can be penalized if they attempt to utilize the same job-seeking flexibility as men" (p. 128).

Lehman (1985) quantified the value of networking for clergy careers, showing that women who networked had more leads and interviews than did those who limited themselves to established denominational pathways for finding jobs. Depending too heavily on avenues outside the recognized system backfired, however. Once the clergywoman has interviewed for a position, Lehman observed, it was her effective interaction with the local ministerial relations committees, typically made up of men, that influenced whether she received a job offer; at this level, informal contacts appeared to have no effect. Clergywomen walked a fine line of using both formal institutional structures and informal contacts. Lehman summarized:

> *First, women seeking positions as ordained ministers need effective advocacy if they are to succeed at all*. . . . [Second,] *to ignore the formal denominational placement system places the clergyperson in a situation of most likely alienating the network of decision makers most likely to be in positions to help.* (pp. 265-266, emphasis in original)

Deployment and the hope of a better job. As Zikmund et al. (1998) noted, the hope of securing a better job keeps younger women engaged in ministry when discouragement tempts them to throw in the towel. For second-career clergywomen,

ageism layered on top of sexism produces a significant challenge (Cormode et al., 2012). Unfortunately, both groups of women fall short in the eyes of hiring committees and appointment boards when it comes time to deploy newly ordained clergy for open positions. Married men, particularly first-career married men, top the hiring desirability list (Chang & Bompadre, 1999; Nesbitt, 1995b, 1997a, 1997c). Chang and Perl (1999) found that they made 20 percent more income than never married clergy even if education, experience, and denomination were held constant while Nesbitt (1995b) discovered they were significantly more likely than single men to work full-time in their first three ministry placements and to be on an upwardly mobile career trajectory. In explaining this phenomenon, Nesbitt (1995b) postulated:

> A congregation of married laity would be more likely to identify with married clergy; and in a male dominant theological tradition where male clergy have been the norm, marriage and male gender would be perceived as implicit criteria for clergy leadership. (p. 411)

Chang and Perl (1999) suggested that marriage made clergymen more desirable than single candidates because it connotes maturity and stability to hiring committees and appointment boards. Particularly when clergymen had children, gatekeepers assumed they would be more committed to doing a good job because of the responsibility they carried for supporting their families (Chang & Perl, 1999). On the other hand, clergywomen faced the assumption that motherhood would make them less committed to their ministry careers (Prichard, 1996).

Role merger. Nesbitt (1995b) pointed to role merger as another possible explanation for why married men functioned as the norm for ministry. Role merger takes

place when people fuse theological fatherhood with actual fatherhood, creating a stereotyped image of a priest that does not fit women and single men. Although single men still have the possibility of being able to one day conform to this picture, women do not. Nesbitt (1995b) reported:

> The persistence of androcentric language in the presence of women clergy . . . accentuate[s] role conflict and the perception that they theologically, symbolically, and categorically could not fulfill the criteria for equality with men beyond service in lower-level, subordinate positions. (p. 412)

Greider (1990) echoed these sentiments, noting that the idea of priest tends to fuse with the traditional clergy functions that have masculine overtones, such as representing Christ in the Eucharist and mediating between humanity and God.

The value of a pastor's wife. Another significant benefit of marriage is the proverbial pastor's wife, deemed a "utilitarian asset value in terms of potential labor contribution within the congregation" (Nesbitt, 1995b, p. 412). Nesbitt (1997c) encountered the widely held assumption that a male minister's wife would work for free, "not unlike a co-pastor but without the recognized authority, title, or financial compensation of such a position," (p. 412). She would decorate the church, lead Bible studies, teach Sunday School, coordinate nursery care, provide secretarial assistance, and so on while also carrying the lion's share of household and childcare responsibilities in order to free up her husband to focus on church work. Chang and Perl's (1999) research reinforced this dual-role expectation for pastors' wives. Pastors' husbands, on the other hand, were not expected to be involved to this degree. Chang and Perl explained that in

many traditional church circles, a career is still considered optional for women while it is assumed that a clergywoman's spouse will work outside the home.

The impact of parenting status. Unlike clergymen, married women faced ministry career deployment challenges related to their parenting status. Both Nesbitt (1995b) and Chang and Perl (1999) found that clergywomen of childbearing age fought the assumption that they would decide to have babies and leave ministry or cut back to part-time. Those who were already parents had a harder time than their male counterparts convincing hiring boards and appointment committees that they could be a successful pastor with young children at home (Zikmund et al., 1998). Women who had children within the first 5 years of ordination experienced some negative impact on their career deployment trajectories, although Zikmund et al. (1998) determined that their gender had a far greater effect on their eventual attainment.

The first two placements. Consistent with queue theory, married men in Nesbitt's (1997c) study had the highest entry-level placements, followed by single men, and then women. Their first jobs were more likely to be full-time and to be associated with upward mobility. Women were more apt to have entry-level jobs outside the senior-leadership trajectory, such as chaplaincies, internships, and minister-in-residencies as well as denominational support staff posts (Nesbitt, 1997c). Looking retroactively at the careers of women who ended up attaining senior leadership positions, Nesbitt (1997b) discovered that their entry-level positions were higher than those of their sisters whose careers stalled at lower levels.

In Zikmund et al.'s (1998) work, two-thirds of clergymen received first placements as solo pastors of small churches or associate/assistant pastors, positions considered transitional assignments used to gather experience in order to eventually move on to a senior leadership position. Half of the women in the study had one of these transitional posts as their initial ministry job. Women were almost twice as likely as men to receive nonparish jobs, such as missionaries, chaplains, and professors, or to work in a secular workplace. Additionally, they outnumbered clergymen in specialized ministries like music and Christian education, 16 percent to 6 percent. Men, on the other hand, were three times as likely to have their first job be as the solo pastor of a congregation averaging over 150 people or to be designated the senior pastor of a church with additional ministry staff.

By the time Nesbitt's (1997c) sample clergy moved to their second ministry assignments, women most often received assignments commensurate with entry-level posts — Level Three on her nine-level prestige hierarchy — while men ordained the same year at the same age with the same education, continuity of employment, and comparable first placements received significant promotions, most often to Level Six posts. Women were much more likely to be serving in specialized ministries lacking both influence and authority, hierarchal dead-ends that effectively stalled their career development. In addition, these positions were more likely to be part-time, necessitating that these clergywomen secure additional secular employment in order to make ends meet. This arrangement pulled them away from full participation in denominational events, further isolating them from the mainstream. Clergywomen's marital and family

status had no correlation with their attainment at this point, contradicting the commonly held belief that women choose husband and children over career (Nesbitt, 1997c).

Advancement. As clergy moved to subsequent placements, clergymen continued to receive higher-prestige posts than clergywomen (Nesbitt, 1997c). Nesbitt's (1997c) regression models showed that male gender was the only consistent predictor of this higher level of attainment. Based on 2 decades of data on attainment from ordination cohorts, Nesbitt (1997a) found that being male more than tripled the odds of attaining higher-level positions within the Episcopal Church, "suggesting a persistent 'glass ceiling' constraining women's leadership attainment" (p. 591). When holding years of post-ordination experience constant, almost twice as many men as women from any given ordination cohort had attained senior leadership positions — 43 percent compared with 24 percent (Nesbitt, 1997b). Choi (2010) found that women tend to follow nonlinear career development paths in the United Methodist Church, stepping out of full-time ministry for a variety of reasons, including lack of support and family-related factors. This path limits their ability to gain seniority in the denomination. Woods (2002) suggested that one reason women might struggle in subsequent appointments is that denominational officials focus their energy on getting women in the door with a first placement but neglect to consider their next steps.

Looking across the board at their sample, Zikmund et al. (1998) found that clergywomen were underpaid and underemployed compared to men and were continually tracked into less powerful and influential positions. While clergymen dominated the primary job market — full-time, good pay, promotion-friendly opportunities to develop

skills and gain access to better jobs — women were segregated into the secondary job market. These jobs were part-time, were less secure, offered less pay, and provided fewer opportunities for growth and advancement because they were isolated from the primary job market (Zikmund et al., 1998). According to their research, women stayed stuck in this subordinate career track. Tucker's (1996) research found the same: Women disproportionately worked in smaller churches with fewer resources and in subordinate roles.

Some of this may be rooted in what Nesbitt (1997c) called the rational-choice assumption that a normal ministry career follows a steady upward trajectory from entry-level assignments to those with increasing autonomy and influence, typically in churches with larger budgets and higher membership numbers or in positions of denominational leadership. Those who fail to follow this template allegedly lack ambition or possess substandard ministry leadership skills. Nesbitt pointed out that women's clergy careers do not develop along these clear lines; women have a much higher likelihood than males of forced, lateral, or even downward job mobility. They face gender-rooted barriers to attaining full-time, full-pay jobs. Their limited options, Nesbitt argued, are behind these differences in career development, not incompetence or low ambition.

Leadership roles in large churches appear unattainable for most clergywomen. Choi (2010) reported that in the United Methodist Church, which is considered the most gender-equitable denomination, 99 percent of large churches (those with more than 1,000 members) were led by white men. Both Lehman (1985) and Smith (2013) described the types of churches clergywomen pastored when they were given the opportunity as sole

pastors: underresourced, struggling churches in small communities, rural areas, or racially transitional neighborhoods of larger cities with attendance that is static or declining. Lehman (1985) noted that for men, accepting a call to one of these marginal churches is "but a temporary stage in career development" (p. 241) while for women, these churches represent a vocational black hole. Lehman further observed:

> When most of the clergywomen we studied leave their work in these churches, *they tend to leave the pastorate*. . . . The tendency is to report either feeling "locked in" to their present charges or resigning and seeking more education or to enter another form of ministry. The door to a "normal" career as a pastor really doesn't seem to be open as yet. (p. 241)

Settings like these may be called glass cliff environments: high-risk turnarounds in which failure seems highly probable (Ely et al., 2011).

Non-traditional ministry. Clergywomen from the second Hartford Seminary Study sample were significantly more likely than clergymen to be working outside the traditional, brick-and-mortar-church pastorate: 40 percent of women versus 24 percent of men (Chang & Bompadre, 1999; Zikmund et al., 1998). Both male and female respondents stated that they chose these nonparish positions for a variety of reasons: They suited their gifts better, they enabled them to maintain better boundaries between professional and personal life, they provided a better income. However, women were more than twice as likely as men — 32 percent compared with 14 percent — to admit that it was at least somewhat accurate to say that they were working outside of the parish because they could not get a parish position in their area and they were not able to relocate (Zikmund et al., 1998).

Relocation. The expectation that workers must relocate in order to secure a first pastorate or to advance to a higher level post can create additional obstacles for women. Men may have an advantage in this area, as research has consistently shown that wives are more likely to uproot their careers in deference to their husbands than husbands are to do the same for the sake of their wives (Ibarra et al., 2013; Marder, 1996; Prichard, 1996; Zikmund, 1996; Zikmund et al., 1998). Nesbitt (1997c) noted that a married clergywoman's career relocation decisions tend to default to her husband, largely because his income is primary for the household. Interestingly, relocation challenges proved to be an issue for many clergymen as well. Zikmund et al. (1998) reported that of the ministers not currently working in a parish position, 41 percent of women and 30 percent of men cited the inability to relocate as an issue.

This inability to move for the sake of a ministry job may impede movement to senior leadership. Nesbitt (1997b) found that frequent job mobility was tied to elite clergy occupational attainment for both men and women. Those who held more jobs gained both diverse experience and visibility among their peers, factors that Nesbitt speculated contributed to their ability to climb the organizational ladder.

Clergywomen's perceptions of organizational obstacles. When Lehman (1985) asked clergywomen to indicate what obstacles, if any, they overcame to attain their current ministry position, four primary themes emerged. The first involved resources: Twelve percent pointed to such things as time, experience, and education. Another 17 percent identified personal attributes like devotion and attitude. Eighteen percent named family-related obstacles like spouse occupation and children. The vast

majority of respondents, 53 percent, cited matters that grouped under the label *sexism in the system*. That being stated, Lehman did not establish any connection between perceived sexism and problems finding a job; in fact, the opposite held true. He discovered that women who pointed to systemic sexism as an obstacle in the job placement process had more contacts from potential employers, more interviews, and more job offers than those who identified other barriers. He reasoned that because these women had more interaction with the system, they had more opportunities to experience sexism.

Nesbitt (1997c) related that many of her respondents were questioning their denominations' commitment to gender equity, noting that their equal employment and affirmative action programs had succeeded in providing only entry-level positions for women while mid-level and higher placements remained on the other side of a stained glass ceiling. Those pioneer clergywomen who had attained senior leadership positions encountered overt and covert hostility, bore the responsibility of representing the whole gender in everything they said and did, and experienced profound isolation, which made fighting both active and passive discrimination difficult. As tokens, they reported that although they had been given a position, they lacked power commensurate with it (Nesbitt, 1997c).

Hiatt (1996) uncovered a tendency among clergywomen to overlook organizational bias once they overcame their initial obstacle to admittance: "We fight to enter patriarchal institutions and are so overcome with gratitude on our admittance that we fail to continue to work to change and humanize the institution" (p. 223). This failure

can help to perpetuate injustice because clergywomen are more likely than men to blindly accept the pay, titles, and benefits they are offered in a ministry position rather than negotiate (Choi, 2010; Prichard, 1996).

Lack of support from clergymen. Lehman (1985) uncovered significant ambivalence toward women clergy among the male pastors in his study, including both individuals serving as local church pastors and those in organizational roles like seminary professors and regional leaders. Though less apt than laypeople to carry stereotypes and prejudices against clergywomen, 46 percent of the male pastors and 32 percent of the organizational leaders expressed a preference for men to serve in senior or sole pastor positions. Lehman observed, "As occurred with the laity, the positions involving the most power are those for which males are preferred most often" (p. 71). When analyzing the specific components of these roles, Lehman discovered that approximately one-third of the clergymen expressed an aversion to women in many key pastoral functions. This distaste pointed to mixed feelings Lehman found concerning:

> With about 90 percent of them asserting that women can perform as effectively as men, and yet one-third of them saying that they really prefer a male in ministerial roles, we have evidence of ambivalence that could turn into resistance under certain circumstances. In effect these clergy are saying, "Yes, a woman can perform clergy roles as well as a man, but I am not ready to fully accept a woman in that way." *The situation represents a "soft spot" in the denomination's support for women in ministry*. (p. 73, emphasis in original)

Increased age was the most strongly predictive factor in terms of stereotyping and of a general preference for men in pastoral positions. To the extent that these older males set policy and played gatekeeping roles within denominations, Lehman (1985) speculated

that they could have set the tenor for an entire generation of clergy. Additionally noteworthy on this point is that 30 percent of clergywomen in Zikmund et al.'s (1998) study expressed that they couldn't get a job because of lack of support from denominational officers or leaders, a significantly higher number than that of clergymen making the same claim.

In a subsequent study, Lehman (1994) unearthed a significant connection between ministerial and congregant attitude, noting that "church members tend to follow denominational and local norms in developing attitudes toward women as priests and pastors" (p. 120). Denominational, regional, and local leadership influenced those in the churches, with the attitudes of local male priests having a particularly powerful impact. As Lehman put it,

> The strongest and most consistent predictor of attitudes toward women in ministry is the member's perceptions of the attitudes of the priest/minister. Although many pastors disclaim having much influence on their flocks, these data suggest that their influence is heavily determinative of their members' attitudes toward female clergy. (p. 83)

Lehman used a multiple regression analysis to discern what factors influence congregants' attitudes toward women in ministry leadership. He determined that "no other factor was as consistently predictive of members' attitudes as was leader opinions" (p. 107).

In her research, Nesbitt (1997c) located negative perceptions about clergywomen among male religious leaders across denominations. These men speculated that the influx of ordained women would cause declines in attendance and giving; inhibit young

men from entering the ministry; and lead to radical changes in the church's doctrine, theology, language, and mission. They raised doubts over women's abilities to effectively lead in high-crime neighborhoods and postulated that they would sexually tempt male colleagues. Some pointed to theological concerns about women in ministry leadership while others isolated ethical matters related to men's "religious responsibility" to lead, an argument tied to the belief in male headship. Men argued that a flood of ordained clergywomen would add to a supply that already outstrips demand, particularly for full-time, full-pay positions, despite evidence showing that the supply-and-demand challenges male clergy blamed on the influx of clergywomen were actually attributable to factors preceding women's ordination (Nesbitt, 1997c).

Finally, McDuff and Mueller (1999) found that clergywomen reported high levels of tangible and moral support from male colleagues as long as they were paid less and had less experience than the men. Once their experience and pay surpassed clergymen's, the support dropped off. McDuff and Mueller speculated that the change in orientation came about because the clergywoman began to be seen as a competitor for more desirable positions.

Henderson (2012) offered an intriguing frame through which to view the discussion of organizational obstacles to clergy gender equity within evangelical denominations. He observed, "Evangelicals are passionate about personal sin — swearing, adultery, gossip, drunkenness, lust, anger, and so on. They have significantly less interest in systemic sin — racism, greed, selfishness, and repression of women" (p. 21). Given this emphasis on personal decisions, perhaps the Choice Argument becomes a

natural way for the organizational system to displace responsibility for second-generation gender discrimination.

Impact of the Choice Argument

The Choice Argument may contribute to the mindset that the days of gender discrimination have passed. Rhode (2003) stated, "Gender inequalities in leadership opportunities are pervasive; perceptions of inequality are not. A widespread assumption is that barriers have been coming down, women have been moving up, and equal treatment is an accomplished fact" (p. 6). She and Kellerman (2007) asserted that the just-world bias fuels this perception: People "want to believe that, in the absence of special treatment, individuals generally get what they deserve and deserve what they get" (p. 9). Therefore, if women lag behind, their performance must be substandard. This perspective manifested across the literature on workplace gender equity as both men and women made sense of the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions through a "neo-liberal discourse of individuation" (Moreau, Osgood, & Halsall, 2007, p. 247) that emphasized personal deficits, human capital shortcomings, or the decision to opt out over bias or politics.

Barrier Argument proponents claim that women already tend to diminish their capabilities (Chaffins et al., 1995), question their qualifications (Kay & Shipman, 2014), and overlook structural bias, particularly if they are immersed in a male-dominated field (Demaiter & Adams, 2009). They then hear a steady stream of advice from the Choice Argument perspective urging them to "lean in" (Barnard, 2011); to "put in extra time and effort, advertise your abilities, cultivate allies, and actively seek opportunities" (Inman,

1998, p. 35); to do more, try harder, and push since they should have everything and be able to balance it all (Spar, 2013a). Ely et al. (2011) summarized:

> Women are left with stereotypes, reinforced by popular media, to explain why they as a group have failed to achieve parity with men. . . . These messages tell women who have managed to succeed that they are exceptions and those who have experienced setbacks that it is their own fault for failing . . . . The implication is that women need simply to learn the rules of the game and change their behavior accordingly. This advice is misguided, however, because it fails to take into account how gender bias can give rise to double binds and double standards. (p. 486)

The perception of deficiency undercuts women's confidence levels and hinders their development of a healthy leadership identity (Ibarra et al., 2013).

Some Final Thoughts

In 1987, Nason-Clark identified five obstacles clergywomen faced: formal barring from ministry by denominations, difficulties receiving a placement, resistance from congregations, resistance from fellow clergy, and traditional symbolism and liturgy in the church that has a male bias. A decade later, Nesbitt (1997c) predicted a backlash to the influx of women clergy that would include overt attacks on the legitimacy of women's ordination as well as covert assaults like the proliferation of multiple ordination tracks, the devaluation of women's educational credentials, the growth of gender-related job segregation, the use of tokenism as a means to grant ideological concessions to supporters of gender equality while isolating tokens in a manner so as to limit their opportunity to make substantive change, and the strategic deployment of women with traditionalist views to counter those with progressive commitments to feminist ideological and social

change. Almost twenty years have passed since Nesbitt's forecast. Women continue to be underrepresented in senior leadership positions in churches, particularly in evangelical churches. Some claim clergywomen face no systemic obstacles to attaining senior leadership in those denominations that have formally endorsed it. They assert that women who aspire to these positions need only get an education, work hard, have a mentor, build their networks, do an effective job, and say "Yes" as the opportunities to climb the organizational ladder appear. Others claim that although clergywomen's choices may have some impact on how their careers unfold, a multifaceted web of subtle barriers complicates the process for them. These barriers — societal, local, and organizational — add twists and turns to an already complicated leadership labyrinth.

I locate myself firmly in this latter camp. In the survey component of my research I attempted to trouble the Choice Argument, showing how this rationale fails to account for the gender differences in senior leadership attainment in the FMC-USA. Beyond simply deconstructing, however, my wish was to reconstruct a more equitable organizational system. Analyzing interview data from clergywomen with an eye toward what has aided them in attaining senior leadership positions helped to accomplish this goal. My hope is that this mixed-methods approach will contribute to a deeper and broader understanding of the complex issues related to clergy gender equity.

Chapter III

Methods

To reiterate, the purpose of my dissertation is to promote clergy gender equity in the FMC-USA, an egalitarian evangelical denomination. This advocacy stance is consistent with a transformative emancipatory research framework informed by feminist, poststructural, and pragmatic philosophies. As I described in Chapter I, transformative emancipatory research focuses on freeing study participants, institutions, and researchers by identifying and challenging injustice (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This injustice manifests in tangible problems; in the case of this project, the problem I identified was a disproportionate lack of women in senior leadership positions in the denomination.

To define this problem, I followed Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), who recommended searching the literature to learn about the issue, paying specific attention to the voices of those most affected by the injustice, building trust in the community, focusing on assets within that population, looking for both the positive and the negative, and orienting the research questions around matters that produce transformative answers. As I noted in Chapter II, I pinpointed two primary lines of thought used to explain women's underrepresentation in senior leadership in the church. Barrier Argument proponents contend that clergywomen face bias rooted in perceptual, congregational, and organization dynamics whereas Choice Arguments claim that imbalances are the results of clergywomen's decisions.

My first set of research questions explored this debate, asking to what extent, if any, FMC-USA clergywomen opted out of senior leadership roles and pathways, and if and when they did, what factors influenced their decisions. My subsequent question, which tapped into the strengths of my population, was: What enabled women to successfully navigate the denomination's leadership labyrinth and obtain senior leadership positions?

A hallmark of transformative emancipatory research is involving the affected population in framing the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Although rooted in the literature on gender discrimination, all of the questions I explored also flowed from my experience as a clergywoman, from conversations with peers, and from discussions with denominational policymakers. As word of my research spread in the FMC-USA, female colleagues began to share their stories with me. They caught me during breaks at denominational events or sent me e-mails. A group of male and female church leaders in Southern California invited me to spend a day with them dialoguing about clergy gender equity in their region. My area bishop expressed his perspective on the matter and offered some insight into the matters with which he and the other bishops had wrestled. Listening to these voices early on helped to shape my research agenda. Additionally, it built trust, both with the marginalized population and with those holding policy-making authority, which is a key trait of transformative emancipatory research.

Mixed Methods Design and Transformative Emancipatory Research

I opted to use a mixed-methods research design, in part because of its compatibility with a transformative emancipatory framework. Studies using mixed

methods started appearing in the literature as early as the 1950s, and this approach gained intellectual traction in the late 1980s when a surge of writers from multiple disciplines began publishing works on its use (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This increased acceptance translated into significant expansion in practice by the second half of the 1990s (Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark, & Clegg Smith, 2011). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), arguments about its legitimacy have largely faded, in part due to clearer definitions and standards associated with its appropriation.

Creswell et al. (2011) defined mixed-methods research as an approach or methodology

> focusing on research questions that call for real-life contextual understandings, multi-level perspectives, and cultural influences; employing rigorous quantitative research assessing magnitude and frequency of constructs and rigorous qualitative research exploring meaning and understanding of constructs; utilizing multiple methods (e.g., intervention trials and in-depth interviews); intentionally integrating or combining these methods to draw on the strengths of each; and framing the investigation within philosophical and theoretical positions. (p. 4)

A mixed-methods approach allows researchers "to use all methods possible to address a research problem" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 13); this openness to access all tools available to accomplish the mission extends to mixing approaches that may seem philosophically incompatible. This potential clash did not faze Greene (2007), who noted, "Leave to the philosophers the challenges of incommensurability. And meanwhile, get on to the work of applied social inquiry by intentionally and thoughtfully employing the full extent of our methodological repertoire" (p. 53).

Such a stance is consistent with my mental models, which I discussed in Chapter I. To reiterate, Greene (2007) defined mental models as "the set of assumptions, understandings, predispositions, and values and beliefs with which all social inquirers approach their work" (p. 12). One key point of resonance for me is that mixed-methods research allows for multiple voices in multiple forms across multiple philosophical paradigms reflecting multiple worldviews (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). A mixed-methods approach "rests on the assumptions that there are multiple legitimate approaches to social inquiry and that any given approach to social inquiry is inevitably partial" (Greene, 2007, p. 20). An outgrowth of welcoming multiplicity is healthy discourse:

> The core meaning of mixed methods in social inquiry is to invite multiple mental models into the same inquiry space for purposes of respectful conversation, dialogue, and learning one from the other, toward a collective generation of better understanding of the phenomena being studied. (Greene, 2007, p. xii)

This multiplicity allows for creativity, new perspectives, and thinking in ways that a sole approach squelches. It also allows for social inquiry in which people actively and meaningfully engage with difference and complexity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, 2007). According to Greene, it is this engagement that protects a mixed-methods approach from extreme relativism. Rather than retreating to opposing, entrenched ways of seeing the world, researchers who use mixed-methods thinking are able to live in an epistemological tension. This tension, present for those who acknowledge multiple ways of knowing, is inherent in the awareness that each way provides only a partial picture of the whole. Yet "the engagement is not intended to be a contest or competition, but more

of a conversation," Greene (2007) pointed out. She added, "The point is to see not who wins, but what can be learned, one from the other" (p. 27).

Within this conversation are opportunities for "unsettling the settled; probing the contested; challenging the given; [and] engaging multiple, often discordant perspectives and lenses" (Greene, 2007, p. 21). The emphasis is on greater understanding as opposed to explanation, attendance to the practical issues of justice that arise, and opportunities for richer dialogue flowing from the research. This perspective helps to challenge the binary thinking associated with assessing inference quality that is inherent in post-positivist perspectives, like particularity versus generalizability, micro- versus macro-perspective, and representativeness versus extreme case. Such a posture is consistent with transformative emancipatory work (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Practically speaking, mixed-methods research is a useful approach for building both a broad and a deep understanding of research problems, beyond what either a qualitative or a quantitative strategy could accomplish on its own (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). It compensates for the weaknesses of using either approach solo (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Having both qualitative and quantitative data produces results that are credible across a broader spectrum: By gathering both statistics and stories, a researcher is better positioned to advocate strategically and intelligently for change (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; du Gay & Vikkelsø, 2012).

Ethics. Mixed-methods design resonates with transformative emancipatory research in that it allows the voices from the margin to be actively involved in the

conversation and insists that this dialogue take place in ways mindful of the needs of the participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Such a posture addresses the concern Seidman (2006) raised:

> Research is often done by people in relative positions of power in the guise of reform. All too often the only interests served are those of the researcher's personal advancement. It is a constant struggle to make the research process equitable, especially in the United States where a good deal of our social structure is inequitable. (p. 13)

Transformative emancipatory researchers espouse high ethical standards, exceeding the Hippocratic "do no harm" by orienting adherents toward doing good. This value manifests in "the commitment to act in behalf of the cared-for, a continued interest in his [or her] reality throughout the appropriate time span, and the continual renewal of commitment over this span of time" (Noddings, 2003, p. 16). In this way, the work of the transformative emancipatory researcher dovetails with that of the servant-leader, whose criteria for ethical behavior include affirmative answers to the following:

> Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? *And*, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not be further deprived? (Greenleaf, 1977/2002, p. 27, emphasis in original)

The transformative emancipatory commitment to do good by advocating for justice partners with the pledge to do no harm: Researchers guard confidentiality, provide informed consent, allow subjects to stop participating in a study at any time with no penalty, and provide information on how to receive results from the research.

Validity, generalizability, and reliability. To some, transformative emancipatory research evokes methodological questions because it lacks specific protocols for implementation (Creswell, 2009). Greene (2007) stated,

> The process of developing a thoughtful and appropriate mixed methods design is less a process of following a formula or a set of prescriptive guidelines and more an artful crafting of the kind of mix that will best fulfill the intended purposes for mixing within the practical resources and contexts at hand. (p. 129)

In the absence of strict step-by-step instructions, researchers who follow this approach use procedures from other designs to accomplish the study's purpose and heed the standards of quality for each (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, 2007). This strategy also predicates a shift in the discussion on validity and reliability.

Babbie (2007) defined validity as "a term describing a measure that accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure" (p. 146). This statement carries a set of assumptions within it, some of which are incompatible with the mental models that drive my work. Primary among these is that concepts are concrete entities that can be measured; rather, I view these as amorphous constructs. Another is the idea of accuracy. Instead of taking an all-or-nothing view of accuracy, I perceive it as being on a continuum. The goal then shifts from knowing the capital-T truth about something to fostering dialogue that promotes increasing measures of clarity about an ever-changing idea.

From this vantage point, validity takes on a different appearance. In this dissertation I have attempted to paint as clear a picture as possible of a complex phenomenon based, in part, on the limited snapshot provided by my data. In considering

the validity of my work from the vantage point of the mental models I have appropriated, I ponder whether I asked the optimal questions and gathered the appropriate data to determine to what extent, if any, clergywomen's aspirations, motivations, and experiences differ from clergymen's. Consistent with these mental models, I acknowledge that any picture I paint will be partial. Rather than trying to create the definitive answer to these questions, I am content to start a conversation about what may or may not influence clergy gender equity in the FMC-USA and how to address these matters in a way to promote it.

The transformative emancipatory framework and my mental models also affect my approach to generalizability. Greene (2007) argued that the debate about generalizability versus particularity is a holdover of post-positivist binary thinking. Translated to my research, although my goal is to promote clergy gender equity in the FMC-USA specifically, I also want to spark conversation about and advocate for change in other egalitarian denominations. Dialogue is at the heart of this effort; therefore, I have presented my conclusions on the FMC-USA in this project tentatively and invite those from other denominations who are interested to join the discussion and take from my work what seems appropriate to their contexts.

Using mixed methods addresses questions raised by another post-positive construct, reliability, which Babbie (2007) defined as "that quality of measurement method that suggests that the same data would have been collected each time in repeated observations of the same phenomenon" (p. 143). Gathering different data on the same topic from different angles allowed me to triangulate my findings to identify points of

convergence (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Consistent with a dialectic stance for mixing methods, I also used the data to expose differences and disagreement (Greene, 2007). Greene (2007) described these elements as having complementary and initiative purposes; these enabled me to analyze different facets of complex phenomena to "elaborate, enhance, deepen, and broaden the overall interpretations and interfaces from the study" (p. 101) while still looking for divergence or dissonance. Using large quantitative sample sizes, pursuing qualitative saturation, and fostering dialogue between my two data sources also strengthened the reliability of my work.

Study Overview

I followed the procedures developed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) for a convergent mixed-methods study. To begin with, I designed my study tools and then gathered qualitative and quantitative data concurrently but separately. Next, I analyzed these data pools separately using the appropriate protocols for the method I used. Finally, I interfaced the results, interpreting the merged results in the context of seeking to understand "to what extent and in what ways results from the two types of data converge, diverge, relate to each other, and/or produce a more complete understanding" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 79).

The quantitative component. I chose to use a survey for the quantitative portion of my study because self-completed questionnaires are a cost-effective way to gather a breadth of data from a large number of respondents living across a sizeable area (Babbie, 2007; Lewin, 2005). Such methodology is consistent with a transformative emancipatory framework as it enhances participation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

I based my survey on an instrument that was developed previously by the Free Methodist Department of Higher Education and the denomination's Committee on Women in Ministry (Bates, Stonehouse, & Ellis, 1997). This paper-and-pencil survey consisted of 23 open- and closed-ended questions that assessed clergywomen's education, experience, aspiration, ministry context, and satisfaction. It also solicited respondents' feedback on a broad range of ministry matters, including barriers they had faced and opportunities they had received. With the consent of the denomination, I made modifications to this tool to reflect additional insights I had gleaned from the literature, particularly regarding matters related to second-generation gender discrimination. I incorporated feedback from an advisory panel of clergywomen and denominational leaders as well as academicians, including Cathy Stonehouse, who was part of the previous research team.

In keeping with recommendations from Babbie (2007) and Lewin (2005), I endeavored to make the questions clear and nonleading, to use language appropriate to my respondents, and to provide simple instructions for each section. After I created the survey items, I had several groups review the content to provide feedback; they included representatives both from the FMC-USA and from Gonzaga University. I determined the measurement scale in dialogue with the advisory team from the denomination and with my dissertation chair at the time, Lisa Mazzei. The physical construction was largely determined by my choice of survey host site, SURVS.com. This host site provided the option to strip e-mail and IP addresses from responses in order to ensure confidentiality; I selected this option as a way to enhance trust with my subjects.

I assembled the questionnaire using the professional templates available through the SURVS site; a team of five pilot testers representing the age and educational demographic of my population provided feedback on the aesthetic, clarity, and ease of use of the final product. A copy of the full 2011 Free Methodist Women in Ministry survey appears at http://survs.com/psurvey/84thujtsp1b/2.

I secured valid e-mail addresses for 360 of the denomination's 430 female ordained elders, consecrated deacons, and conference ministerial candidates. Although many had heard of me and my work through formal and informal denominational channels, I asked a highly visible female leader in the denomination to send out an official e-mail endorsing the survey with the hope that this would increase the response rate. I followed this communication with an e-mail that included the informed consent and a link to the survey website. I kept the survey open from June 3 through June 27, 2011.

Upon further reflection, I determined that my conclusions would be more compelling if I could compare clergywomen's responses to clergymen's. Consistent with Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) discussion of emergent mixed-methods designs, I developed a parallel survey for clergymen, adapting the language when needed and eliminating gender-specific items. Out of respect for my bishops' wishes, I sent a cover letter and e-mail link to this survey through regional superintendents for distribution to the male clergy and conference ministerial candidates in their areas. Despite my having a letter of support from the senior-most leader in the FMC-USA, some of these gatekeepers did not pass these messages along right away. I relied on relational networks within the

denomination to prompt these superintendents to act, shoulder-tapping colleagues who knew various nonresponders and asking them to personally advocate on my behalf. This allowed my subjects to play an active role in the data-gathering process, a move consistent with a transformative emancipatory framework (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). After 2 months, demographic data showed that all 25 regions had at least one clergyman finish the survey.

As a full analysis of all 32 of the survey questions was beyond the scope of this dissertation, I focused a subset of items that addressed aspiration and the opt-out narrative to determine the extent to which the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions in the FMC-USA stems from choices they make.

Aspiration. As I discussed in earlier chapters, some argue that women opt out of senior leadership pathways because they do not aspire to higher-level positions. To explore this variable with my sample population, I asked them to indicate in which of the following positions they would be willing or wish to serve:

Assistant/Associate pastor	Denominational service
Bishop	District leader/Asst. superintendent
Chaplain	Ministry administration
Child care provider	Missionary
Children's ministry/Christian ed.	Music minister/Worship leader
Church planter	Professor
Campus/College ministry	Senior pastor with ministry staff
Conference superintendent	Solo pastor
Co-pastor	Teacher
Counselor	Youth minister

I also provided space for them to fill in other job titles.

These options reflected Finlay's (1996) hypothesis about women's ministry aspirations: that they have a greater interest in interpersonal engagement and service to the congregation and community than in a desire for upward mobility. These delineations also roughly aligned with Nesbitt's (1995b) notion of a hierarchal job structure based on the degree of denominational authority and autonomy inherent in each position. The positions within the FMC-USA that corresponded with Nesbitt's senior-level delineation included bishop, conference superintendent, district leader/assistant superintendent, and senior pastor with staff members. These individuals have the highest levels of influence and autonomy in the denomination.

I intentionally framed this item by asking respondents to indicate in which positions they would be *willing to* or *wish to* serve. Expressing a willingness to serve if asked allowed my respondents to get around the double binds related to self-promotion and the shaming associated with ambition in evangelical culture (Ingersoll, 2003; Smith, 2013). A willingness to say *yes* if asked could be understood as submission to authority, a much more acceptable option within these circles than a move seen as motivated by self-aggrandizement.

I used SPSS to run a Pearson Chi-Square Goodness-of-fit test on each of these variables. Chi-Square tests compare nominal data to analyze differences between groups, juxtaposing estimated versus actual proportions of responses to determine statistical significance. In the case of my data, it allowed me to analyze the expected versus observed proportion of clergymen and clergywomen expressing a willingness or desire to

serve in each of the aforementioned positions. Results of this analysis appear in Chapter IV.

The opt-out narrative. As I discussed at length in chapters I and II, the opt-out narrative asserts that women choose to step out of senior leadership tracks in order to focus on different priorities, namely children. I explored this variable with two items from the survey. The first assessed reasons for working in positions that were not full-time/full-pay. My survey directed respondents who were among those working in such roles to indicate which of the following described their situation:

- I choose not to be in a full-time paid ministry position now because of the age of my children
- I choose not to be in a full-time paid ministry position now because I am a student
- I prefer to be bi-vocational
- I am a church planter[4] and funds are not available
- I serve in an established church that lacks funds to pay me a full-time salary
- I serve with my husband [or wife for clergymen's version] and our church pays only one salary, or one full- and one part-time salary
- I believe that a full-time paid position is not God's will for me at this time
- My husband's [or wife's, for clergymen's version] income is enough that I don't need a full-time salary
- A full-time paid position is not open to me although I desire one
- I am retired

[4] Church planters start new congregations.

I also provided a fill-in-the-blank option labeled "Other, please specify."

The second item asked those who had declined positions to indicate which of the following fit their situation:

- It would require me to relocate
- The financial package was not sufficient
- I was concerned for my children
- Accepting the position would impact my husband's job
- I wanted a part-time position and this position was full-time
- I wanted a full-time position and this position was part-time
- I was content with the position I already had
- I didn't feel the position was right for me

As I had done on the previous question, I provided a fill-in-the-blank option labeled "Other, please specify." Respondents could also note if the question did not apply to them, and the clergywomen's version of the survey also included the option "I perceived congregational resistance to having a woman in this position." On this and the previous item, respondents could select as many statements as they wished.

Responses to these two items helped identify whether reasons consistent with the opt-out narrative proved accurate for my subjects: that women make job-related decisions based on concerns for children. I used Chi-Square tests in SPSS to compare the relative frequency of clergymen and clergywomen citing each response. I also ranked the responses given by each gender for both questions. Although rank ordering this particular data did not lend itself to statistical analysis, viewing the narrative that emerged

proved insightful. I looked for points of convergence and divergence between the responses of clergywomen and of clergymen, and I also analyzed the top explanations for each gender in light of the opt-out narrative, the Choice Argument, and the Barrier Argument. This was a more qualitative analytic strategy, made possible by using a mixed-methods approach. Results of these analyses appear in Chapter IV.

The qualitative component. I drew heavily on Kvale (1996) and Seidman (2006) for this portion of my research, building, as they suggested, on the literature review and the conceptual framework that I discussed in chapters I and II. I decided to interview women who had attained senior-level leadership positions in my denomination, defined as those who were or had recently been bishops, superintendents, district leaders/assistant superintendents, senior pastors of churches with paid ministry staff, and denominational executives. These designations roughly aligned with Nesbitt's (1995a) Level Six through Level Nine positions. Unfortunately, the population for this group was quite small. Even after I expanded my definition of denominational executives to include individuals serving in positions with significant regional leadership, my female colleagues in the FMC-USA and I could identify only a handful of potential interviewees.

***Participants*.** I mentioned receiving help from fellow clergywomen to identify eligible study participants. In keeping with Seidman's (2006) recommendation that researchers should establish peer access to interview subjects as a way to promote equity between the interviewer and the potential interviewee, I solicited participants via a social media site that has served as a communication hub for FMC-USA clergywomen. After defining the criteria for participants, I invited my colleagues to suggest people I should

contact. Respondents could electronically "tag" others, thereby looping potential interviewees into the conversation string. My request was seen by 71 people who provided 13 names to explore, including some who self-identified as senior leaders. I followed up with several of the individuals I did not know personally to determine whether they were eligible. Although some were, many were not; even though they were senior pastors of churches, they did not have paid staff members serving under their leadership.

I purposely targeted five of these individuals because they served in a cross-section of the eligible positions and represented different regions of the country. To avoid potential distortions resulting from power-related concerns (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), I selected individuals with whom I had no formal structural relationship: At no point in our careers had I reported to them or vice versa. Additionally, the likelihood of our having this type of relationship in the future seemed very small. That being said, I had worked alongside several of these women as peers over the years. Although having prior acquaintance with study participants can be complicating (Seidman, 2006), it proved beneficial for the purposes of this study. Because of the limited pool of subjects and the potential professional ramifications of speaking about one's experience as a woman in ministry leadership, it was crucial that these interviewees trust me. Additionally, being a fellow woman in ministry leadership helped to address a concern Ingersoll (2003) raised: a high need to protect the Church and God from looking bad. This consideration leads evangelical clergywomen to swallow their frustrations rather than sharing them openly. Ingersoll noted:

> Given the emphasis conservative Christians place on making a positive witness of their faith, there are significant forces that obfuscate tension, conflict, and disagreement. . . . Women have reasons to tell their stories in ways that deemphasize gender conflict, and it is likely that there are issues not visible to an "outsider" researcher. (p. 6)

Interview design. I developed a semistructured interview guide that I pilot tested with three clergywomen outside of my target population. Using feedback from this test, I settled on six items:

1. Tell me about how your ministry career has unfolded.
2. Who has influenced you in your development as a leader? How did they impact you?
3. Who, if anyone, have been your greatest supporters as a woman in ministry leadership? With whom, if anyone, have you faced resistance?
4. What obstacles, if any, have you experienced in ministry that you think are tied into your gender?
5. What opportunities, if any, have opened up to you that you perceive as tied to your gender?
6. What else do you think would be valuable for me to know?

Data collection. Seidman (2006) observed, "Striving for equity is not only an ethical imperative, it is also a methodological one. An equitable process is the foundation for the trust necessary for participants to be willing to share their experiences with an interviewer" (p. 110). I drew both from a transformative emancipatory framework and from Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) lead to create as equitable a data collection process as possible. I asked participants to select the date and the time for the interviews. For the

two interviews that took place face-to-face, I deferred to the interviewees to establish a location. With the three video-conferenced interviews, subjects had the option to converse from the place of their choosing. Prior to each interview, I e-mailed the participants the consent document and the interview guide, and before starting each conversation, I highlighted the essentials of the informed consent document to ensure that my subjects were comfortable with having the interviews recorded and transcribed. I contracted with a professional transcriptionist with no ties to the FMC-USA to protect my interviewees.

The interviews took place during September and October of 2014; each lasted 60–90 minutes. Following Seidman's (2006) advice, I asked participants in my interview opening to tell me their ministry career story. I found that they would often talk at length in response, answering the other questions without my needing to ask them. I occasionally asked follow-up or clarifying questions (Seidman, 2006), but for the most part, the interviews unfolded at the lead of the subject. This development, too, was consistent with the transformative emancipatory commitment to allow the population under study as much control over the research process as possible (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). I extended this notion of control by sending the women copies of their transcripts for review and offering to let them read a draft of my fifth chapter, in which I discuss interview results, prior to my submitting it to my committee. None of my interviewees responded with any changes to her transcript.

Data analysis. In order to keep from artificially imposing meaning from earlier interviews onto the later ones, I conducted all of my interviews prior to doing any in-

depth analysis (Seidman, 2006). I then followed Seidman's (2006) analysis protocol by reading each transcript multiple times and then reducing the text by highlighting passages that caught my attention. This technique allowed me to set aside extraneous material that did not appear to relate to my research questions. Although some may criticize this technique as being arbitrary, member-checking my final document helped to ensure that I had not overlooked something important to my participants.

After reducing the data, I identified themes (Seidman, 2006) using a SWOT analysis. Although a SWOT analysis is typically used in business to identify a company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, it has also been appropriated to assess schools, churches, and couples in marriage counseling (Armstrong & Kierulff, 2000). In the business context, strengths and weaknesses are internal characteristics that provide either an advantage or a disadvantage for the organization, while opportunities and threats focus on external elements that could benefit or hinder the company (Weihrich, 1982). When I applied this concept to my interviews, I was able to delineate the personal strengths and weaknesses my subjects brought to ministry leadership, such as human capital factors and demographic attributes,that tied into the literature. The SWOT analysis also helped to identify external opportunities and threats that influenced the participants in their career development. Although a SWOT analysis relies on binary categories that are incongruent with my mental models, I appropriated this as one of several tools to interact with my data and intentionally counterbalanced it in my next step by considering what did not fit in these boxes. Such an approach resonates with the pragmatism of mixed-methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, 2007).

Next, I merged the data from all five interviews according to the four SWOT categories and asked myself the following questions, adapted from Seidman (2006):

- What connective threads are there among the experiences of the participants?
- How do I understand and explain these connections?
- What do I understand now that I didn't understand before the interviews?
- What has surprised me?
- What has confirmed my previous instincts?
- How have my interviews been consistent with the literature? Inconsistent? How have they gone beyond? (pp. 128-129)

By asking these questions, I helped mitigate the danger associated with coding as described by Jackson and Mazzei (2012). These researchers expressed concerns about coding becoming a closed system that doesn't allow for other ways to view the data:

> We argue that qualitative data interpretation and analysis does not happen via mechanistic coding, reducing data to themes, and writing up transparent narratives that do little to critique the complexities of social life; such simplistic approaches preclude dense and multi-layered treatment of data. Furthermore, we challenge simplistic treatments of data and data analysis in qualitative research that, for example, beckon voices to "speak for themselves," or that reduce complicated and conflicting voices and data to thematic 'chunks' that can be interpreted free of context and circumstance. (pp. vii-viii)

Rather, Jackson and Mazzei encouraged researchers to pause to consider the deconstructive snags, those notions not represented in the codes. They observed, "Going back to the data again and again, we are compelled to attend not simply to themes and

patterns in the narratives, but to those places of inconsistency, of uncertainty, and of productive rending" (p. 31).

In a nod to Foucault, as I considered my data I also paid special attention to the ways in which the women I interviewed experienced power relations and the ways in which power circulated in the process of defining the norms of the organization, both within individual congregations and in the denomination nationally (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). In what ways did these women, as being outside of the norm, participate in deconstructing it? In what ways did the norm shape their sense of identity, particularly in relation to others? Did any of them have a sense of being an outsider? How, if at all, did this sense change when they attained senior leadership positions? Following Butler (as appropriated by Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), how did these women have to give an account of themselves as different from the norm? How did my interviewees navigate all of the expectations placed on them by those above, alongside, and below them on the organizational chart?

Finally, as Seidman (2006) recommended, I wrestled with my own place in the analysis. How did my experiences as a clergywoman influence how I came to these interviews? What was the experience of these conversations like for me? How did I make sense of what I heard, and how might my history have influenced this analysis?

Representation and interpretation. My interpretation of the interview data appears in Chapter V. While working on this step, I was mindful of the need to protect the identities of both my participants and any individuals they described in their stories. When I deemed it necessary, I changed names and nonessential details. I also sent this

chapter to the women I interviewed to solicit their feedback. Not only did this step ensure that I protected their confidence, but it also increased my credibility.

I was also attentive to the dangers of representation as articulated by Jackson and Mazzei (2012). They suggested conducting

> a rethinking of an interpretive methodology that gets us out of the representational trap of trying to figure out what the participants in our study "mean," and helps us to avoid being seduced by the desire to create a coherent and interesting narrative that is bound by themes and patterns. (p. viii)

I intentionally highlighted points of convergence and divergence between the interviewees' experiences and the literature and leaned into Clarke's (2005) admonition to avoid an "oversimplification in research reports such as strains toward coherence and commonalities" (p. 15). I considered the snags and the places that did not make sense, in keeping with Clarke's suggestion that researchers "complicate our stories, represent not only difference(s) but even contradictions and incoherencies in the data, note other possible readings, and at least note some of our anxieties and omissions" (p. 15). Clarke further advised:

> We need to find ways of discussing that which we have in the past scraped or trimmed off or somehow left behind in our research process while still telling coherent analytic stories. We need to address head-on the inconsistencies, irregularities, and downright messiness of the empirical world — not scrub it clean and dress it up for the special occasion of a presentation or a publication. (p. 15)

By acknowledging these points of confusion, I pointed to my own fallibility and to the partiality of my knowledge (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

This posture also allowed me room to acknowledge my inability to fully capture and represent the experiences of the women I interviewed, a move consistent with my mental models and the philosophies underlying them. Feminist and poststructural scholars have skewered this presumption of omniscience, labeling it as "arrogant, vain, unethical, and politically illegitimate" (Alcoff, 2009, p. 117; see also MacLure, 2003; Mazzei & Jackson, 2009; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Van Maanen (1988) also addressed this notion in his discussion of the components of a realist tale, which includes a narrator who claims personal neutrality and professional impartiality, an impersonal conduit passing along "more-or-less objective data in a measured intellectual style that is uncontaminated by personal bias, political goals, or moral judgments" (p. 47). Underlying much of the representational realist approach is the belief that it is possible to capture another's point of view. Leaning upon a mining metaphor, Kvale (1996) depicted qualitative research as the process of extracting data and meaning out of interviewees' experiences, purifying them as they are transcribed from oral to written media and then shaping them into their definitive form through analysis. "The value of the end product, its degree of purity," offered Kvale, "is determined by correlating it with an objective, external, real world or to a realm of subjective, inner, authentic experiences" (p. 4). Such an approach relies upon convictions incompatible with my own, especially when it comes to the partiality of knowing and understanding.

This is not to say that interpretation is impossible; the impossibility lies in its being complete. Ellis (2001) provided me some assurance that the whole prospect was not doomed from the start, stating, "You have to live the experience of doing research on

the other, think it through, improvise, write and rewrite, anticipate and feel its consequences. In the best of situations, all of you feel better at the end" (p. 615). I concluded that any approach I used to represent my interviewees' experiences would be flawed in some way; the challenge was to press ahead anyway, to refuse to allow the reality of working in a flawed medium to paralyze me, and to present what I observed as ethically as possible.

Validation. As I noted previously, traditional notions of validity are contested notions. Seidman (2006) argued,

> The researcher's task is to present the experience of the people he or she interviews in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects. (p. 51)

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) offered two aspects of validity specifically linked to qualitative research. The first, *external validity,* is the extent to which the conclusions a researcher draws from interviews are generalizable to others. The second, *internal validity,* involves confirming one's conclusions by more than a single method of analysis by looking at the consistency of these conclusions with other research (triangulation) and eliminating rival explanations or internal contradictions. Both of these forms of validity reflect a bias toward tidiness, one that I eschew in favor of conversation. Dialogue can be messy, in part because of the limitedness of our understanding and the time- and context-bound nature of data. I am comfortable with this.

Limitedness can also extend to a researcher's time and resources; this reality played a factor in my decision to interview only five clergywomen. Flyvbjerg (2004)

addressed concerns about small sample sizes like this in his work on case-study research. He noted that most arguments against small samples are rooted in oversimplifications about social science research, such as: General theoretical knowledge is more valuable than context-specific knowledge; generalizability is crucial for valid scientific development; individual stories have limited usefulness for hypothesis testing and theory building; and research with small sample sizes is biased to confirm the researcher's preconceived ideas. Even as he disputed these notions, Flyvbjerg affirmed the value of mixed-methods approaches as a way to counterbalance the limitations of small sample sizes.

Some address concerns about the quality of qualitative research by replacing validity with credibility. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) noted that even this strategy rests on debatable premises: To whom are the conclusions credible? to the person being studied? to other researchers? Nonetheless, Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) recommended a number of ways to enhance credibility. First, they suggested using prolonged engagement in the field to establish scope and persistent observation to provide depth. These techniques enhance information gathering. Because I'm a clergywoman and have been for quite some time, I had insider knowledge of what to ask. I also had a measure of trust as "one of us."

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) also advised using triangulation techniques. The advisability of doing so is disputed among postmodern thinkers because of the underlying assumption that there is a capital-T truth to be triangulated. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) advocated instead for researchers to use crystallization, which "combines

symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach" (p. 963). Richardson and St. Pierre continued,

> Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of "validity"; we feel how there is no single truth, and we see how texts validate themselves. Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know. (p. 963)

The assumptions of crystallization are much more compatible with my mental models and fit well with Greene's (2007) work on using mixed methods for broader purposes than just triangulation.

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) presented peer debriefing and member checks as tools to enhance credibility. As I mentioned earlier, I sent my Chapter V to those I interviewed to solicit their feedback. Additionally, given the broad interest in gender equity in both ministry and secular organizational settings, I had many opportunities to discuss my research with leaders in the denomination as well as with people outside of it. Each of these conversations furthered my thinking.

Kvale (1996) offered pragmatic validity as an alternative construct in evaluating qualitative research. He described pragmatic validity as the usefulness of the interpretations in bringing about action, noting that "with the emphasis on instigating change, a pragmatic knowledge interest may counteract a tendency of social constructionism to circle around in endless interpretations and a plunge of postmodern

analyses into infinite deconstructions" (p. 248). This approach resonates with Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), who suggested asking the following series of questions to assess qualitative research:

- To what extent does the research make a substantive contribution to the overall understanding of social life? Does it appear to be a credible account?
- To what extent does it offer a satisfying aesthetic? Does it open up conversation? Is the text rich, complex, satisfying, and engaging?
- To what extent has the author wrestled with her subjectivity? Does she include self-reflection?
- To what extent is the piece impactful? Does it challenge the mind and the heart? Does it produce new questions or inspire new action?

Given both my mental models and my transformative emancipatory agenda, these questions seemed well suited to assess my work.

Finally, negative case analysis increases credibility (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In the future I could strengthen my work by interviewing FMC-USA clergywomen who have not attained senior leadership positions. Furthermore, interviewing clergymen in senior leadership positions would have provided a valuable counterpoint to clergywomen's experiences, along the lines of what I found with my survey data.

Integrated analysis and validation. Consistent with Greene's (2007) dialectic stance, I wanted to establish a dialogue between my qualitative and my quantitative data. To do this, I gathered and analyzed the data independently before blending them for the purposes of complementarity and initiation. Practically speaking, I developed an understanding of aspiration and opting-out from my survey data that I used as a

framework from which to consider my interview data (Caracelli & Greene, as cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Additionally, I took the insights that emerged from my qualitative analysis and considered how these might be assessed in future research using either the quantitative data I already had or data I would gather at a later date. In doing this, I attempted to refrain from artificially narrowing the lens of my inquiry, indulging in silent dissonance, or privileging one type of data over the other.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) offered four validation concerns for mixed-methods researchers who choose to mix the data at the interpretation point. First, they referred to the danger in not resolving divergent findings. As I have stated throughout this proposal, convergence is not my goal; therefore, messy conclusions are fine. As Greene (2007) contended,

> Convergence, corroboration, confirmation — of the results from one method with the results from a different method — is overrated. Such convergence, reflecting the time-honored mixed methods purpose of triangulation, is an important component of the mixed methods repertoire. Yet it is one component. Equally important is the generative potential of divergence, dissonance, difference. (p. xii).

Second, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) expressed the need to keep the mixed-methods research questions at the forefront. I intentionally revisited these questions in the discussion section at the same time that I held them loosely so that other questions could emerge. Third, these authors reminded researchers of the need to equally weight both forms of data rather than privileging one over the other. I tried to be mindful of this caution. Finally, valid mixed-methods research in the transformative vein must produce

interpretations in light of the transformative goal. To keep this idea front-and-center, I regularly revisited the original research problem that spurred my research: the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions in the FMC-USA. By doing so, I kept my eye turned toward opportunities to offer insight and recommendations to address this injustice.

Additional Ethical Considerations

All researchers need to be aware of the temptation to report incomplete data or to compromise data in order to produce compelling results (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). I had the additional dynamic of organizational politics to keep in mind. Although I have experienced broad support in my work, I had to wrestle with the question of what I would do if my analysis uncovered significant bias on the part of the denominational hierarchy. Was I willing to face potential vocational backlash if I reported what I found honestly?

I also needed to be mindful of the ways in which my position as a clergywoman could potentially bias how I interpreted my data. In many ways I was functioning as an analytic autoethnographer: one who is a reflexively engaged member of the research setting who is involved with informants, who exerts a visible narrative presence in the text, and who attempts to deepen understanding of a social issue (Anderson, as cited in Denzin, 2006). Pillow (2003) described this reflexivity:

> Self-reflexivity acknowledges the researcher's role(s) in the construction of the research problem, the research setting, and research findings, and highlights the importance of [the] researcher becoming consciously aware of these factors and thinking through the implications of these factors for her/his research. (p. 179)

Pillow continued:

> A self-reflexivity that is predicated upon the ability of the researcher to know her/his own subjectivity and to make this subjectivity known to the reader through disclosure is limited and limiting because such usages are necessarily dependent on a knowable subject and often collapse into linear telling that render the researcher and the research subject as more familiar to each other (and thus to the reader). (p. 184)

Thus, self-reflexivity is inherently complicated.

Jackson and Mazzei (2008) highlighted a danger facing researchers who also could act as subjects of their studies, noting that

> those who rely on experience, such as authoethnographers, take for granted that they "know" what their experience "means" — they use their own experience to offer critical analyses of injustice, pain, emotions, suffering. . . . And while autoethnographers do emphasize the constructed, partial, mediated nature of their experiences, transparent meaning that is easily understood and becomes *shared* remains the goal. . . . For there to be evocative attachments with research participants and readers, autoethnographers seek dimensions of experience that will engender connection and recognition in the midst of complexity. (pp. 302-303)

Because of my position in relation to the topic, I could easily read my own experiences into the experiences of these other women. As Holman Jones (2005) bluntly noted, "This collapsing of me into you and you into me can work to shut down engagement and responsibility."

Jackson and Mazzei (2008) observed:

> Our main critique of authoethnography rests on this notion of a coherent, explanatory subject who gathers up meaning and reflexively lays bare the process

> of knowledge-production, as if that process is self-evident, with no confrontation of the power plays in the non-innocent game of interpretation. (p. 303)

One way to deal with this danger was to allow space for messiness, fluidity, contradiction, not only in my engagement with other's stories but also in my analysis of my own. In so doing, I could live in the acknowledgment of how partial and contextual, how influenced by taken-for-granted assumptions and power relations my ways of asking, thinking, meaning-making, and understanding were. I had to hold my representations loosely. And although I aspired to privilege their own experiences and voices, I recognized that such transparency is impossible (Jackson & Mazzei, 2008). My goal, then, was to be as responsible as I could be with the data I had and to allow room for a complex, rich, messy picture to emerge, one that opened up different ways of seeing and knowing, all of which were — and are — partial.

As I mentioned earlier, I began by analyzing my data separately. In Chapter IV, I discuss the survey results tied to my research questions on aspiration and opting-out. In Chapter V, I report on my interview data, leaning specifically in to matters related to encouraging and assisting clergywomen with senior leadership attainment. In Chapter VI, I explore how these outcomes inform each other, asking, "How do the survey results help me to understand the interview data and vice versa?" I present this discussion in the context of specific recommendations for both organizational policy and future research that may promote equity. In the end, my hope is that this work will contribute to a deeper and broader conversation that moves my denomination, and perhaps others, toward a more fully enacted egalitarianism.

Chapter IV

Presentation and Discussion of Quantitative Findings

As I wrote in Chapter I, the purpose of my dissertation is to promote clergy gender equity in the FMC-USA, an egalitarian evangelical denomination. In the literature I found that the Choice Argument is often used to justify women's underrepresentation in senior leadership positions. I explored two dimensions of this standpoint in my survey of FMC-USA clergy: that women do not aspire to senior leadership positions and that they voluntarily opt out of senior leadership career tracks, often because of their children. I examined aspiration by comparing the relative frequencies of the rates at which clergymen and clergywomen, respectively, are willing/desire to serve in various ministry positions. Then I assessed the opt-out narrative by describing the rationale clergy gave for working less than full-time and for declining positions that had been offered to them. I compared men's and women's responses on these two items to see whether there were significant differences between them. I focused particularly on reasons involving domestic responsibilities to see whether women were more likely than men to prioritize their children over their careers.

Subjects

Of the 360 clergywomen for whom I had valid e-mail addresses, I received usable responses from 239. This number represented 66.4 percent of those with e-mail addresses and 55.6 percent of the entire population. Out of 2,172 eligible men in my population, 604 completed the survey items I analyze here, a 27.8 percent response rate. In total, I received usable data from 33.3 percent of survey-eligible clergy.

Some may question whether this is an acceptable response rate. Babbie (2007) noted that there is no widespread agreement on what is ideal, observing that while many social science researchers identify 50 percent as adequate, 60 percent as good, and 70 percent as very good, these figures lack statistical support to justify them. Considered in light of my previous discussion on validity, reliability, post-positivist research bias, and the impossible quest for capital-T truth, I argue that the notion of an optimal response rate is contestable.

My participants served in a variety of positions, as Table 1 illustrates.

Table 1
Positions filled by survey respondents

Position	Males (n=604)	Percentage of male respondents	Females (n=239)	Percentage of female respondents
Assistant/Associate pastor	83	13.7	75	31.4
Bishop	2	0.3	0	0
Chaplain (hospital, military, or prison)	57	9.4	24	10
Child care provider (day care, preschool)	1	0.2	7	2.9
Children's ministry/Christian education	28	4.6	33	13.8
Church planter	28	4.6	20	8.4
Campus/College ministry	25	4.1	13	5.4
Conference superintendent	9	1.5	1	0.4
Co-pastor	20	3.3	19	7.9
Counselor	49	8.1	38	15.9
Denominational service	35	5.8	23	9.6
District leader/Assistant superintendent	35	5.8	6	2.5
Ministry administration	36	6	16	6.7

(Table 1 continued)

Position	Males (n=604)	Percentage of male respondents	Females (n=239)	Percentage of female respondents
Missionary (domestic or international)	26	4.3	22	9.2
Music minister/Worship leader	51	8.4	26	10.9
Professor	33	5.5	16	6.7
Senior pastor with ministry staff members	136	22.5	16	6.7
Solo pastor	162	26.8	21	8.8
Student	20	3.3	19	7.9
Teacher (elementary, middle, or high school)	18	3	16	6.7
Youth minister	36	6	19	7.9
Total	890	147.2	430	179.7

The totals exceeded 100 percent because it is common for clergy to serve in multiple roles. For example, an associate pastor may be responsible for leading music, prompting him to mark both categories, or a solo pastor may augment her income by teaching at a local school.

I found it striking that men clustered in traditional pastoral roles, with senior, solo, and associate/assistant garnering the three highest percentages of response, followed by chaplaincy, music ministry, and counseling in the 8- to 9-percent range. All other responses received 6 percent or less. Women's roles played out much differently. Aside from the large contingent in associate/assistance pastor roles, women were much more evenly dispersed among the various roles. These numbers align with Finlay's (1996)

research showing that female seminarians were open to a wider range of ministry jobs than their male classmates and with Zikmund et al.'s (1998) discovery that women followed mixed and diverse career paths whereas clergymen followed traditional and conventional ones. Additionally, this breakdown of job titles corresponds with Nesbitt's (1995b) research that showed male gender to be correlated with senior leadership attainment.

Aspiration

Results. As I noted in Chapter III, I asked respondents to indicate whether they were willing to or wished to serve in a variety of ministry-related positions. Of the surveys I received, 485 clergymen and 211 clergywomen provided answers to this item. These responses, delineated by gender and accompanied by Chi-Square analysis, appear in Table 2. I opted to set my significance level at $p = .01$ for this and all subsequent statistical analyses in this work primarily because this would communicate more powerfully to the stakeholders in my denomination. Such an approach is consistent with the transformative emancipatory agenda fueling my work.

Table 2
Desire/willingness to fill leadership positions

Position	Males		Females		Chi-square	df	p-value
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed			
Assistant/Associate pastor	229.3	212	90.7	108	7.401	1	0.007
Bishop	50.9	58	20.1	13	3.848	1	0.050
Campus/College ministry	125.4	127	49.6	48	0.093	1	0.761
Chaplain	152.6	146	60.4	67	1.352	1	0.245

(Table 2 continued)

Position	Males		Females		Chi-square	df	p-value
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed			
Child care provider (day care, preschool)	10	6	4	8	5.821	1	0.016
Children's ministry/ Christian education	60.9	45	24.1	40	16.287	1	0.000
Church planter	139	145	55	49	1.187	1	0.276
Conference superintendent	101.7	118	40.3	24	11.021	1	0.001
Co-pastor	191.3	183	75.7	84	1.860	1	0.173
Counselor	119.7	99	47.3	68	15.681	1	0.000
Denominational service	144.7	141	57.3	61	0.446	1	0.504
District leader/Assistant superintendent	141.1	148	55.9	49	1.531	1	0.216
Ministry administration	95.3	92	37.7	41	0.477	1	0.490
Missionary (domestic or international)	141.1	128	55.9	69	5.638	1	0.018
Music minister/Worship leader	75.9	77	30.1	29	0.059	1	0.808
Professor	167.7	167	66.3	67	0.013	1	0.911
Senior pastor with ministry staff	275.1	319	108.9	65	45.311	1	0.000
Solo pastor	201.3	238	79.7	43	35.330	1	0.000
Teacher (elementary, middle, or high school)	75.9	72	30.1	34	0.828	1	0.363
Youth minister	60.9	63	24.1	22	0.284	1	0.594

Not included in the table are the observed and expected values for not desiring said position.

Significant gender differences at the $p = .01$ level appear in six of the job titles. Men were more likely to express the desire/willingness to be a conference superintendent, senior pastor with ministry staff, and solo pastor. Women were more likely to express the desire/willingness to be an assistant/associate pastor or a counselor, or to work in children's ministry/Christian education.

Viewing these differences through the lens of Nesbitt's (1995b) nine levels of ministry leadership, bishops would occupy the highest position, Level Nine. They have the most autonomy and the greatest decision-making power in the FMC-USA. Clergy of both sexes expressed no significant difference in their willingness/desire for this position at the $p = .01$ level.

The denominations Nesbitt studied had no position comparable to the Free Methodist's conference superintendent or district leader/assistant superintendent; however, considered in light of the criteria she used throughout her work, these individuals would likely be Level 8. Clergymen were significantly more likely to express a desire/willingness to serve as conference superintendents, $\chi^2(1) = 11.021$, $p = .001$. No statistically significant gender-related difference appeared at the $p = .01$ level for the district leader/assistant superintendent role.

Nesbitt (1995b) identified Level Seven clergy as those individuals responsible for a parish with more than 500 members. She portrayed this level as being perceptually normative for male clergy. The FMC-USA is a much smaller denomination than those used in her work; few churches would reach the membership threshold she used. Based on the perceptual criterion she offered, however, being a senior pastor with ministry staff would be a comparable designation within the FMC-USA. Clergymen's desire/willingness to serve in this role significantly outpaced clergywomen's, $\chi^2(1) = 45.311$, $p = .000$.

Nesbitt (1995b) considered clergy at levels Seven through Nine to be in senior leadership whereas those in levels Four through Six were mid-level. Level Six clergy

were responsible for self-supporting parishes with fewer than 500 members. Solo pastors fit this category when I scaled Nesbitt's standards down to make them appropriate to the Free Methodist context. Once again, clergymen exceeded clergywomen at a statistically significant level in their desire/willingness to fill these positions, $\chi^2(1) = 35.330$, $p = .000$.

Level Four and Level Five ministers in Nesbitt's (1995b) work held titles that did not translate into the Free Methodist hierarchy; however, individuals in those positions had authority, autonomy, and upward mobility similar to that held by FMC-USA Assistant/Associate pastors. Clergywomen expressed a significantly higher desire/willingness to serve in these roles, $\chi^2(1) = 7.401$, $p = .007$.

Entry-level positions in Nesbitt's (1995) research included several of the specialized ministry jobs that I included in my survey. Those who work in these fields often remain in them for the duration of their ministry careers (Nesbitt, 1997c). In two of these categories a statistically significant difference in desire/willingness between men and women surfaced. Clergywomen were more likely to affirm positions in children's ministry/Christian education, $\chi^2(1) = 16.287$, $p = .000$, and as counselors, $\chi^2(1) = 15.681$, $p = .000$.

Discussion. Based on the results of my survey, a person could argue that clergymen aspire to senior leadership roles more than their female counterparts do, and that clergywomen are more content than males to serve in subordinate positions. Furthermore, the jobs to which my female respondents disproportionately gravitated can all be construed as traditionally feminine, "helper" roles: Assistant/associate pastors support the ministry of their senior pastors; counselors aid people who are struggling with

their mental, emotional, and relational health; and those working in children's ministry/Christian education nurture the spiritual development of kids.

I recognize this construal as one way to interpret the data but contend that another option may be equally valid considering the extent to which aspiration is constrained by current reality. To assess this I went back and conducted Chi-Square analyses of the positions my respondents held at the time they completed my survey. Results appear in Table 3.

Table 3
Positions held at the time of the survey

Position	Males		Females		Chi-square	df	p-value
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed			
Assistant/Associate pastor	113.2	83	44.8	75	34.984	1	0.000
Children's ministry/ Christian education	43.7	28	17.3	33	21.460	1	0.000
Counselor	62.3	49	24.7	38	11.219	1	0.001
Senior pastor with staff	108.9	136	43.1	16	29.004	1	0.000
Solo pastor	131.1	162	51.9	21	32.770	1	0.000

Women were significantly overrepresented in subordinate and serving roles, filling a disproportionate number of assistant/associate pastor, children's ministry/Christian education, and counselor positions. Additionally, they were significantly underrepresented in higher-level leadership roles as their male colleagues dominated in senior pastor with ministry staff and solo pastor roles. The data were insufficient to allow me to analyze the conference superintendent and bishop variables because the sample sizes were too small. This is not surprising, considering that only one

woman has ever served as a conference superintendent and the FMC-USA has never had a female bishop. Could it be that Free Methodist clergywomen do not see these more influential positions as being in the realm of possibility for them?

Another way to read these results is that although clergywomen in the FMC-USA may not aspire to all senior leadership positions to the same degree as clergymen, there are still women who want to or are willing to serve in them. More than a dozen women stated that they would serve as a bishop, and two dozen reported that they would be superintendents if asked. The numbers go up from there: Forty-nine would be district leaders/assistant superintendents, compared to the six serving in that role at the time of the survey, and 65 would be senior pastors with ministry staff, a significant increase from the 16 who actually were. The figures for solo pastor more than double: Twenty-one were serving in that position while 43 wanted to or would be willing to serve in that way. So although there may be a higher supply of interested men than women for higher-level leadership roles, there *are* women who would fill them. The denomination may need to look a little harder to find them.

I am also intrigued by two of the variables in which no statistically significant difference appeared: church planting and youth ministry. In my observation, church planting in the FMC-USA is a highly entrepreneurial endeavor. Starting a church from scratch allows the minister tremendous autonomy. S/he does not need to fit the mold of a previous pastor when leading one of these congregations, because there was no previous congregation or pastor! I have noticed church plants using creative, nonhierarchal leadership models, especially team pastoring. This approach opens the door for women

to serve alongside men as equals; it also allows both sexes to work out of their greatest strengths. I recall looking through the denominational directory near the beginning of my research and noticing that many church plants were led by couples. They were often listed as co-pastors. Among my survey participants, 28 men and 20 women identified as church planters, and 20 men and 19 women marked that they were co-pastors. Perhaps many of these were the same individuals. Regardless, church planting may be a fruitful avenue for the denomination to explore as a way to promote women to senior leadership. Developing a ministry from the ground up with a woman in senior leadership would allow all involved to bypass the congregational resistance that is rooted in the fear that bringing in a female pastor will destroy the church.

In terms of youth ministry, as I reflect on my 3 decades as a part of the FMC-USA, I recall that youth pastors were once almost always college-aged men who viewed this role as a stepping-stone to senior pastoral leadership. It was a way for them to get experience and pay their bills while working on their schooling. The youth formed a mini-congregation within the church: The youth director preached to them every Wednesday night (or whenever the group met), provided pastoral care, developed student leaders, and oversaw the teens' spiritual formation. If someone was successful in this endeavor — if the youth group grew numerically, for example — then denominational leaders could have some assurance that this individual would be able to lead an entire church. It seemed as though every senior pastor I knew until recently — mostly men — would sprinkle their sermons with "war stories" from their youth ministry days. Granted, this is simply my recollection: A full statistical analysis of my data could show how

many current FMC-USA leaders identified youth ministry as a position they held in the past. Nevertheless, at the time my survey was conducted, a higher percentage of female respondents than male respondents called themselves youth ministers, 7.9 percent to 6 percent. The Chi-Square analysis of future desire/willingness showed an almost even split between the sexes: Comparing expected / actual, the figure for clergymen was 60.9 / 63 and 24.1 / 22 for clergywomen. Future research could assess whether the clergywomen who lead youth ministries aspire to senior leadership. Perhaps intentionally identifying and investing in some of these women could be one way in which the denomination could move toward greater gender equity in senior leadership.

The Opt-Out Narrative

As I discussed in Chapter II, Choice Argument proponents claim that women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions because they place their career second to their families. This choice prompts them to opt out of full-time work to care for younger children or elderly parents and to refuse positions that may advance them in the organization, particularly if they require relocation, because of concerns about how these promotions would affect their families. I posed two queries on my survey related to these career development dynamics.

Why not full-time, full pay? The first item assessed reasons for working in part-time or volunteer positions. I analyzed each of the variables using Chi-Square tests; results appear in Table 4 on the following page.

Table 4
Reasons for working less than full-time, full-pay

Reason	Males		Females		Chi-square	df	*p* - value
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed			
Age of my children	14.3	3	5.7	17	32.364	1	0.000
Student	14.3	8	5.7	12	10.102	1	0.001
Prefer to be bi-vocational	31.5	27	12.5	17	2.418	1	0.120
Church planter/no funds	18.6	13	7.4	13	6.190	1	0.013
Established church/no funds	136.1	130	53.9	60	1.258	1	0.262
Serve with spouse/no funds	17.2	6	6.8	18	26.464	1	0.000
Not God's will	48	34	19	33	15.655	1	0.000
Spouse's income enough	26.5	12	10.5	25	29.299	1	0.000
No position but want one	65.2	46	25.8	45	22.357	1	0.000
Retired	40.8	47	16.2	10	3.515	1	0.061

Table includes observed and expected values for affirmative responses only.

As I considered the number of responses to this item, I observed that 251 out of the 604 clergymen who took the survey answered this item, 41.56 percent of this group. In contrast, 73.64 percent of the clergywomen — 176 of 239 — offered a response. Future research could assess whether women outnumber men in less-than-full-time, full-pay positions to this great of an extent in the FMC-USA. If so, this data would support previously conducted research showing that clergywomen cluster in part-time and volunteer jobs in the church (Nesbitt, 1997c) where male senior leaders oversee their work (Barna, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003; Nesbitt, 1993; Tucker, 1996).

Significant differences between the sexes appeared in six categories. Female subjects disproportionately cited the age of their children as a factor, $\chi^2(1) = 32.364$, $p = .000$, and were more likely than clergymen to claim that they wanted a full-time position but could not obtain one, $\chi^2(1) = 22.357$, $p = .000$. They were significantly more likely than males to indicate that they did not need to work full-time with full pay because their spouse's income was sufficient, $\chi^2(1) = 29.299$, $p = .000$. Women in clergy couples had a disproportionately higher likelihood than their pastor-husbands of being underemployed, $\chi^2(1) = 26.464$, $p = .000$. Female respondents were more likely than males to state that they were not employed full-time with full-pay because of God's will, $\chi^2(1) = 15.655$, $p = .000$. Finally, women were significantly more likely to attribute their employment status to being a student, $\chi^2(1) = 10.102$, $p = .001$.

Discussion. These statistics paint a complex and multifaceted picture. One the one hand, explanations consistent with the Choice Argument seem plausible, particularly since clergywomen were much more likely than clergymen to link their employment status to the age of their children. Along these same lines, Choice Argument proponents could claim, based on the data, that women voluntarily select these part-time or volunteer positions because they do not need the income; their husband's paycheck is large enough that they don't have to work full-time with full pay.

On the other hand, Barrier Argument advocates could point to enculturation and bias for the gender disparities. They could argue that the FMC-USA's organizational cultural aligns with evangelicalism in its support of traditional gender roles (Henderson, 2012). In this framework husbands are the primary breadwinners and wives, if they

choose to work outside of the home, have flexibility in what they do and how much, if any, money they make since their income is considered supplemental. Church boards may choose not to pay a woman a full-time salary because they assume her husband brings home a decent paycheck. Free Methodist clergywomen may accept these arrangements because of their socialization: They are used to making do with what they are offered (Smith, 2013), they are committed to following God's call regardless of what they are paid (Mueller & McDuff, 2002; Zikmund et al., 1998), they know they have limited ministry options so they will take what they can get (Zikmund et al., 1998), and they have been encultured to not negotiate their compensation (Choi, 2010; Prichard, 1996). That the clergywomen were much more likely than clergymen to express that they wanted a full-time position but one was not available to them lends credence to the limited-ministry-options rationale. The explanation may be both/and rather than either/or: Some women opt out while others try to lean in.

The organization may practice gender bias, particularly given what I found in this study about clergy couples. Local church boards in the FMC-USA bear the responsibility to establish salary packages for parish-appointed pastors; they hold the power to set hours and pay. For them to employ and compensate a minister-wife less than her pastor-husband perpetuates the disparity Ingersoll (2003) documented in the broader evangelical world. In her work, this injustice went so far as to include couples deemed *co-pastors*. Although both spouses had the same title, women performed the lower status tasks and received less income (Ingersoll, 2003). Based on the data from this study, Free Methodist clergywomen married to other pastors may experience similar bias. By the

same token, these disparities may not be entirely in the hands of the church board: Clergy couples may also be complicit. For example, when I joined my husband's staff as an assistant pastor, I recognized that the church did not have financial resources to pay me. I was content to be a titled volunteer. My husband would not stand for this, telling me that a paycheck equated to respect among men. Compensating me would remind the church that I was a competent professional worthy of my wages. In order for me to receive compensation commensurate with my education, experience, and duties, my husband insisted that the board cut his salary and pay me that money instead. To what extent do Free Methodist clergy husbands advocate for their wives to be treated equitably? And to what extent do these wives self-advocate?

These are complex questions, made more complicated by layering on spiritual explanations. Clergywomen in my study were more apt to state that it was not God's will for them to be employed full-time. This response could indicate resolution — that they have intentionally chosen not to be in a full-time, full-pay position — or it could indicate resignation — that if God hadn't opened the door for them to be fully employed, then it must be God's will that they remain employed part-time. I cannot determine which of these explanations, if either, is more accurate based on the data I have available.

What I *can* determine is that women in my study were underemployed for complex reasons; attributing this phenomenon primarily to maternal instinct fell short, particularly when I rank-ordered the variables. The top explanation cited by clergywomen was that they served in an established church that lacked the money to pay them a full-time salary (n = 60). In terms of frequency, this explanation was followed by:

- A full-time ministry position is not open to me although I desire one (n = 45)
- I believe that a full-time paid position is not God's will for me at this time (n = 33)
- My husband's income is enough that I don't need a salary (n = 25)

Comparatively speaking, only 17 women stated that they did not choose to be in a full-time paid ministry position at that time because of the age of their children. This explanation tied for sixth with "I prefer to be bi-vocational," just behind "I serve with my husband as a clergy couple and our church pays only one salary, or one full-time and one part-time salary" (n = 18). Put another way, four times as many women were underemployed because of a lack of money at their church — whether an established church or a church plant — than were part-time or unemployed because of their children's age. Three times as many women claimed that they wanted to be in a full-time, full-pay position than opted out for kids. Therefore, I argue that lack of opportunity, which is tied to both available positions and the money to fund them, is a greater barrier to women's progressing in their ministry careers than choices they make because of their children. A traditional view on gender and breadwinning may also be a factor, but further research would need to be done to explore this possibility.

Interestingly, when I rank-ordered clergymen's reasons for not being in full-time, full-pay jobs, a less complex narrative emerged. Male pastors were most likely — by far — to mark that they served in an established church without funds to pay them a full-time salary (n = 130). A much lower number of clergymen stated that they were retired (n = 47), they wanted a full-time position but one was not available to them (n = 46), it was

not God's will (n = 34), or they preferred to be bi-vocational (n = 27). Factors related to their children or their marital status barely registered; rather, lack of money was the most significant obstacle of those listed.

Why decline a position? The second survey item, related to the opt-out narrative, gleaned explanations from those who had declined positions. The ratio of respondents by gender favored men on this item. Of the 477 male subjects who replied to this, 257 marked that this did not apply to them, meaning that 220 of the clergymen (36.42 percent) *had* declined a pastoral position at some point during their careers. For clergywomen, 191 of the 239 replied to this item, with 140 saying it didn't apply, which meant that for 51 (21.34 percent) it did. When I conducted a Chi-Square test to assess this disparity, I found statistical significance: A disproportionate number of clergywomen reported that they had not been offered a pastoral position that they subsequently declined: $\chi^2(1) = 18.498$, $p = .000$.

One way to interpret this data would be that clergymen were more likely to be offered positions than clergywomen. Because of the abundance of opportunity, they had the freedom to decline jobs they did not wish to take. Conversely, one could argue that women are less likely to decline positions because they receive better offers than men; however, such an assertion contradicts the literature. Additional research could explore this idea more fully, perhaps connecting it with the findings in the previous section that showed women's desire for full-time positions but lack of opportunities to secure one.

Although most of the variables appeared on both surveys, only clergywomen had the option to select that they decided to turn down a job because they perceived

congregational resistance to having a woman as pastor there. Responses to all of the rest of the variables, along with Chi-Square tests, appear in Table 5.

Table 5
Reasons for declining pastoral positions

Reason	Males		Females		Chi-square	df	*p* - value
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed			
Does not apply	280.9	257	116.1	140	18.498	1	0.000
Required relocation	45.3	49	18.7	15	1.160	1	0.281
Insufficient pay	38.9	41	16.1	14	0.418	1	0.518
Impact on kids	45.3	55	18.7	9	7.927	1	0.005
Impact on spouse's job	36.1	34	14.9	17	0.448	1	0.503
Wanted part-time, this was fill-time	2.8	1	1.2	3			
Wanted full-time, this was part-time	19.8	22	8.2	6	0.865	1	0.352
Content with current job	73.6	86	30.4	18	8.563	1	0.003
Didn't feel it was right	118.2	142	48.8	25	22.303	1	0.000

Table includes observed and expected values for affirmative responses only.

In addition to the "Does not apply" response, which I discussed earlier, three variables reached statistical significance at the p =.01 level that I have been using, all disproportionately oriented toward men: "I didn't feel the position was right for me," $\chi^2(1) = 22.303$, $p = .000$; "I was content with the position I already had," $\chi^2(1) = 8.563$, $p = .003$; and "Concerns for my children," $\chi^2(1) = 7.927$, $p = .005$.

Discussion. I was surprised by these three significant results. The emphasis on gut-level intuition that I associate with the "I didn't feel the position was right for me"

response initially led me to think women might be more apt to select this option whereas men might be more likely to refuse a position for more concrete reasons, such as insufficient pay level or the job not advancing their careers. Perhaps this assumption flows from some essentialist bias in my mind that continues to label women as driven by emotion and men guided by intellect. Nevertheless, in retrospect I see that I did not have a specific item that addressed lateral, dead-end, or downward career moves on this survey, so perhaps this option became a catch-all to include reasons like these. In future iterations of this research it would seem wise to consider adding some additional options for respondents to select in order to provide clarity.

I was similarly caught off guard by the two additional significant findings. Men were disproportionately more likely to state, "I was content with the position I already had," and "Concerns for my children." Given my earlier statistical analysis about aspiration and what I had read in the literature about women tending to being more satisfied with their work (McDuff, 2001), I had expected men to have been less content with the status quo and more inclined to make a job change. Perhaps part of this notion is rooted in the assumption that the opportunities they were given and had declined would advance their career rather than being a lateral move or a step down. Clarification of this item for future surveys seems prudent. Men's concerns for their children related to a job change, which outpaced women's, directly contradicts the Choice Argument's claims about gender, career, and family. Again, providing greater clarity in future iterations of this survey about the types of jobs declined might shed additional light on this matter. Women are more likely than men to select downward or lateral career moves for the sake

of their children because these changes often result in greater autonomy or flexibility that aids with work-family balance challenges (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Perhaps men declined these types of job offers because of the financial or long-term career development implications, ones that would affect their children and thus could be framed as concern for them.

When I rank-ordered the responses by gender, I saw that the emerging narratives looked very similar:

Men	Women
Didn't feel it was right (64.55%)	Didn't feel it was right (49.02%)
Content with current job (39.09%)	Content with current job (35.29%)
Impact on kids (25.00%)	Impact on spouse's job (33.33%)
Required relocation (22.27%)	Required relocation (29.41%)
Insufficient pay (18.64%)	Insufficient pay (27.45%)

For men, impact on spouse's job was sixth on the list whereas for women, impact on kids ranked sixth, one response higher than "I perceived congregational resistance to have a woman as pastor there." Given these lists and the results of the Chi-Square analyses, it seems men's and women's reasons for declining pastoral positions are very similar. This finding contradicts the Choice Argument.

I end this discussion with more questions than answers. At one level, it does not seem that women opt out of senior leadership tracks any more than men do. My subjects' reasons for declining positions did not support traditional Choice Argument explanations; if anything, they challenged them, with men more apt to decline a job and to attribute it to concerns for their children. Similarly — tying this back to my discussion on reasons that

ministers were employed less than full-time/full-pay — the top reason both clergymen and clergywomen cited for being underemployed was a lack of financial resources. Clergy of the two sexes reported experiencing this obstacle to a similar degree. That being said, women reported experiencing obstacles to full-time, full-pay church employment more frequently than men did. Some of these obstacles could connect with gender discrimination, particularly when the wife of a clergy couple is paid less, or not paid at all, because the church pays the husband a full-time salary instead. Others of these obstacles could connect with women's choices: Women were more likely to be students and more apt to attribute their employment status to the age of their children. This interpretation, of course, assumes that they *want* to have fewer hours because of these circumstances, a conclusion called into question by their disproportionate representation among those wanting to be full-time, full-pay but not having a position open to them.

The question of what women want long-term raised additional questions for me. On the surface, traditional gender roles and Choice Argument statements seem supported given that women were significantly more likely than men to express a willingness/desire to fill subordinate, nurturing roles, like assistant/associate pastor or counselor, or to work in children's ministry/Christian education. This desire contrasted with that of men, who disproportionately aspired to higher-level leadership: solo pastor, senior pastor with ministry staff, and conference superintendent. At the same time, my respondents did not express a significant difference related to the district leader/assistant superintendent role or the bishopric, which represents the highest level of leadership in the denomination.

Additionally, the differences expressed in future aspiration virtually mirrored present reality, leading me to wonder to what extent my subjects' vision for the future was simply a reflection of their organizational socialization. I also wonder how significantly these aspirations relate to age. Processing these data by both gender and age, and by a combination of the two, might unveil significant generational differences between pioneer clergywomen and the second- and third-generations. Comparing the responses of clergymen credentialed in different decades could also be insightful. Finally, delving into the fill-in responses provided by those who selected "other" on these three survey questions may also prove valuable.

New research could also unravel some of these complexities. I have noted limitations related to my survey instrument throughout this section; refining these could provide additional clarity. Increasing male participation would also strengthen the results. Coupling an improved survey with one-on-one and small group conversations may be the most valuable way to begin to untangle these multiple strands. These qualitative interviews could span demographics, including both clergymen and clergywomen; full-time, part-time, and unemployed ministers; full-pay, part-pay, and volunteer pastors; and those who are young, middle-aged, and retired/near retirement.

In the next chapter I begin this type of conversation with a small segment of Free Methodist clergy: women who have attained senior-leadership positions within the denomination. I explored a different line of inquiry with these women than I did with the survey questions addressed in this chapter, focusing on how their careers unfolded and what assisted them along the way. That being said, in the final chapter of this work I

explore ways in which my interviews inform what arose from the survey and vice-versa. Both data pools will inform a list of recommendations for the FMC-USA that, if appropriated, will ideally move the denomination toward greater gender equity in senior leadership.

Chapter V

Presentation and Discussion of Qualitative Findings

In my interviews with women who had attained senior leadership positions in the FMC-USA, I sought to identify common ground regarding how their careers developed, recognizing that these commonalities could help inform denomination-wide equity initiatives. In keeping with my mental models and philosophical underpinnings, I also recognized the discrepancies in their stories as these differences highlight the complexity of this issue. The five women I interviewed were serving or had served in the year prior to the interviews in positions comparable to Nesbitt's (1995b) levels 7 through 9: senior pastors of churches with paid ministry staff, district leaders/assistant superintendents, superintendents, or denominational executives. They held significant influence, authority, and autonomy in contexts ranging from the local to the international.

Due to the exceedingly small number of women who met these criteria — about a dozen — I am limiting the amount of demographic information I provide to guard their identities. My interviewees were in their late 40s through mid 60s when they spoke with me. They have served across the United States: North, South, West, Central, and East. For the purpose of this study, I refer to them using pseudonyms: Mary, Nancy, Susan, Jan, and Barb. I randomly chose these names from the Social Security Administration's (2014a, 2014b) list of top baby names from the 1950s and 1960s.

This chapter revolves around four primary themes from the literature that intersect in varying ways with the women's stories: aspiration, human capital, benevolent male advocacy, and leadership identity formation. I begin with aspiration and human capital

because these two areas figure strongly in the Choice Argument, with proponents contending that gender-based differences in these areas explain why women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions. Benevolent male advocacy is a term I use to describe the type of relationship my subjects had with supportive superiors. Although mentoring was a component of their interactions, I noticed a deeper commitment to both gender equity and advancing their protégés that went beyond how this role is typically defined. Finally, I have referenced leadership identity formation at a few prior points in this work, noting how second-generation gender discrimination and evangelical culture can hinder women in this area. As I read through my transcripts I could not ignore the salience of this topic, particularly in light of my ultimate goal in Chapter VI: to offer recommendations to help the FMC-USA move toward clergy gender equity.

Aspiration

To what did the women I interviewed aspire? Did they know from an early age that they wanted to be senior ministry leaders? How did motherhood influence their career longings? In this section I explore two main components of aspiration: work–family balance and the desire for senior leadership.

Work–family balance. Parental status is one of the dominant themes in the literature about women and leadership aspiration. Those representing the Choice Argument claim that children have a significant influence on the vocational choices women make, including the decision to step out of senior leadership tracks, to accept part-time roles while children are young, or to pursue entrepreneurial positions that better

accommodate their family responsibilities (Carnes et al., 2008; Dickins, 2000; Morgan, 2000; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Slaughter, 2012). Barrier Argument proponents counter that women's career choices have been artificially constrained by preconceived and essentializing notions about what women want and why they make the career decisions they do (Anderson, 2013c, 2013f; Carter, 2011; Carter & Silva, 2010; Lennon et al., 2013; Marder, 1996; Merrill-Sands, Kickul, & Ingols, 2005; Naff & Thomas, 1994; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sools, Van Engen, & Baerveldt, 2007; Weedon, 1997).

Despite the energy invested in debating this matter in the literature, parental status barely registered on the radar when I asked my interviewees to tell me how their ministry careers unfolded. One explanation for this dynamic was that not all of the women were mothers; among those who were, pursuing vocational ministry did not enter their minds until after their children were older. Although all of the clergy-mothers mentioned factoring in their school-aged children's needs as they figured out how to fulfill the academic and experiential requirements for ordination, none mentioned opting out of the process until their kids were out of the home. The only impact mentioned across all of my interviews came from Susan, who spoke of staying at her secular job while also working at her church because her family needed the added income for the children's educational expenses. At no point did any of the women talk about declining a position because of their children, perhaps because these opportunities did not arise until after these mothers had empty nests.

My interviews contradicted studies linking women's senior leadership attainment with being single and childless (Belkin, 2013; Chaffins et al., 1995; Kaufman &

Uhlenberg, 2000; Rhode, 2003; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). One of my interviewees who fit this profile speculated that the evangelical church's worship of marriage and procreation creates greater obstacles for these women. This line of thinking is consonant with the literature on the Fundamentalist influence on evangelicalism and the way it has linked being single or childless with feminism: Unmarried women without kids often face underlying congregational and organizational questions about their sexual identity, political orientation, and commitment to the traditional family (Hiatt, 1996; Ingersoll, 2003; Shaw, 2008).

Another factor that seemed significant related to work–family balance was that all of my married interviewees described their husbands as being demonstrably supportive of their ministry work. They told me about how their husbands shared the domestic load, relocated for the sake of their wives' careers, and encouraged their wives to go to school while carrying the financial weight of the family. I heard about men who were not threatened by their wives' success. One of my respondents described her marriage this way:

> When [husband's name] and I got married, that was one of the commitments we made to each other — that we would recognize the gifts that we then had and the gifts that God would keep on giving to you, and that we would show love to each other by doing whatever it took so that each of us could encourage in the other the spiritual and other gifts that God had given us. And so we have sacrificed a ton so that the other could use — in my case, his gifts — and he, [husband's name], has sacrificed so that I could use my gift.

A functionally egalitarian marriage seemed crucial for these senior-leadership-attaining women.

Desire and the gradual evolution of calling. In ministry, aspiration links inexorably with calling: the supernatural nudge to be a pastor that is confirmed or denied by the faith community's assessment of a person's gifts and graces for this vocation (Finn, 1996; Stanley, 1996). The FMC-USA, like most Wesleyan-Holiness denominations, has traditionally relied upon men and women self-identifying as called to ministry at the outset of the ordination process (Zikmund et al., 1998). This practice can create challenges for evangelical women who have been taught to be modest (Ingersoll, 2003). Do they speak out and say, "God has called me to lead," or do they wait for someone else to recognize their giftedness and suggest that perhaps they are called?

During the ordination process and in the years that follow, clergy consider another aspect of call: To what role(s) are they called to serve? Are they meant to be a senior pastor of a church or a worship leader, youth minister, or other specialized staff-level pastor? Should they explore non-parish or entrepreneurial options like being a pastoral counselor, engaging in social activism, or starting a new church? Ministry calling may also include the context in which they are meant to minister: urban, suburban, or rural church? Large, medium, or small congregation? Mono- or multi-cultural? Finlay's (1996) research suggests that males preparing for vocational ministry have more concrete career aspirations than female seminarians; these ambitions revolve around higher-status positions in brick-and-mortar church buildings located in more desirable geographic areas. Fiedler (2010) hypothesized that the lack of women serving in high-status, visible roles means women are less likely to think they can attain these jobs. This dearth of role models coupled with being socialized not to ask for what they

want, particularly if those desires involve more power or prestige, may prompt clergywomen to be content to get whatever they can get, even if this means taking subordinate roles in suboptimal settings for their capacity (Ingersoll, 2003; Smith, 2013).

None of the women I interviewed aspired from the outset to be pastors, let alone senior leaders in the FMC-USA. The pattern I saw in their stories was that faithful and effective service as laypeople followed by a gradual sense of calling. This initial call to ministry was sometimes evident to others before it became clear to them. Nancy explained that she had volunteered at churches and worked in nonministry staff positions for 2 decades until her husband finally asked her when she was going to become a pastor. Mary described leading a neighbor to faith, initiating a 3-month chain of events that resulted in 70 new converts "who were hungry for Christ and they were calling me pastor even though that was not the way I saw myself."

Even in situations in which these women sensed a direct call from God to lead, they often wrestled with it. Susan had been an active lay leader for many years until she experienced a "horrible pastor situation [with] a 2-year guy that just kind of destroyed the church." During this experience she "started feeling a call to more ministry" but struggled to understand how to respond to it. She explained:

> I kept doubting myself thinking, "Is it because this guy is so bad and I want to save my people and do better?" You know? And so that was very real. So I didn't say anything to anybody for a year.

Barb was also an engaged, long-term volunteer leader at her church. She repeatedly spoke of "having a sense" that she should pursue positions of increasing authority in her ministry career; yet despite this divine nudge, tentativeness marked the

language with which she described her leadership ascension. When she wanted a more formal ministry position, she framed her request to the powers that be as, "I think I'd like an appointment." When she felt a supernatural prompting to pursue a more prestigious post, she contacted her ministry supervisor and said, "Please just tell me to sit down and shut up and go home and just run my own local church." Her understanding of both her calling and her capability evolved as male colleagues affirmed these elements in her and provided her with opportunities to lead:

> And I served — that was part of my journey through understanding my own leadership. . . . I had this sense like the Lord said, "No, I've called you. I want you visible and I want you to take this position. I want you to understand I need your leadership." So that's when — that's how that all kind of happened. It was more — not just even a call. It was the sense of my own skill set. My own, um, leadership potential that would have been unformed — or more ill formed. More uninformed than anything. I just didn't know that I had it in me. I just didn't understand that. Um, not in the church. I don't know why but I just wasn't there. . . . I had leadership that I needed to bring to the table but I didn't, I didn't know that. Or, I mean I knew who I was I thought, but I guess I never identified myself as a leader.

Susan's understanding of her leadership calling similarly evolved over time. After spending many years as a staff pastor at one church, she recognized it was time to move to something different, even though she wasn't altogether sure what a transition would mean tangibly:

> When I left, I just — you know there was nothing necessarily wrong. God just started preparing me several months ahead that I needed a different experience.

> And so, about [date], I sat down with [lead pastor] and [superintendent] and said, "I have no idea where God wants me but I need a different experience."

Stepping out in this manner put Susan on a trajectory that eventually resulted in her having a senior leadership role.

Like Susan, Nancy never aspired to senior leadership:

> I had this sense — I thought — I had this sense from the Lord that this was always to be my place: in second chair because that supporting, equipping kind of thing, always having the other person's back, that was always kind of my — that's kind of where I thought I was going to be in ministry.

She noted that sometimes she would think about how she would lead if she were given the opportunity to be a senior pastor, but she never pursued it. It wasn't until a high-ranking male colleague recommended her for an open senior leadership position and urged her to consider it that she availed herself of the opportunity.

As was the case with Nancy, several of my interviewees spoke of having their shoulders tapped for ministry leadership. Jan observed, "Everything I've done has been because I've been asked to. And that's a huge part of how I've gotten into it." Being asked helped these women to navigate the double-bind between self-advocating in pursuit of their calling and humbly waiting for someone to recognize their competence. Susan articulated this dilemma:

> You really teeter on the edge of — talking about not feminine — you're always balancing, "Oh, does this cross over into the 'B' word?" You know? And guys kind of don't have to worry about that unless they're a total mess and out there just screwing things up. They don't have to worry about that. Because they're supposed to be — you know, decisive.

Mary framed her career development as being driven by something other than ambition. She explained that she had been given chances to acquire knowledge and experience that most other people had not been as fortunate to receive. Her decision to move into increasingly powerful leadership positions within the FMC-USA was about making the most of these privileges: "God has given me opportunities and I have the responsibility to — without being obsessive-compulsive about it — it is part of my worship to God that I do my best with whatever opportunities God gives me." This posture shifts the aspiration conversation away from what one wants — whether for oneself or for women as a population — and toward stewardship. Considering my subjects as a group, attaining senior leadership positions was not about their own wishes but about steady obedience to what they perceived God calling them to do.

Human Capital

The Choice Argument links gender-related attainment differences to men's and women's educational and experiential backgrounds. Proponents of this argument claim that women are more likely to earn degrees in less-prestigious, "family-friendly" fields and to step in and out of career tracks while men accumulate cumulative years of experience, pursue challenging work assignments, self-advocate for promotions, and take advantage of networking opportunities (Lynch & Post, 1996; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000). In this section I will explore how my subjects' careers unfolded with an eye toward the roles of education and experience.

Education. When I first reviewed my interview transcripts, I discovered education played a largely peripheral role in the conversations. My subjects said so little

about their schooling that I had to follow up with all of them to gather additional information: With four out of the five I had to ask in what fields they had earned degrees, and with the fifth I needed to clarify what the nature of her formal education had been. To retain confidentiality, I must refrain from disclosing specifics; that being said, the women had undergraduate training in five distinct professional arenas, none of them explicitly related to ministry. Four of the five went back to school later in life for graduate studies: some in theology, some in other fields. Their return to the academy took place after they had already served for years in volunteer or non-credentialed ministry positions. The impetus for some was to earn a degree that would allow them to be ordained while for others it was stewardship of their intellect.

Nancy experienced significant professional insecurity about her nontraditional educational development, despite having completed a graduate-level ministry program that included classes taught by top ministry thinkers and practitioners. She confided:

> I think that's been probably the greatest source of self-doubt, has been the lack of seminary-type training, knowing that, that it's so needful and so helpful. It doesn't solve everything. It doesn't ensure that everybody's going to come out on the other side of that fully equipped and able to lead a church. I get that. So I try not to go too far the other way but I think that's probably been the greatest source of self-doubt. I've had incredible training, incredible people speaking into my life and my journey, but it doesn't look like it's supposed to look.

Nontraditional career development pathways. At multiple points in our interview Nancy compared herself, usually unfavorably, to the younger generation of woman leaders she saw coming up through the ranks, women who were following more linear and traditional pathways to senior leadership by accumulating human capital in

their 20s and juggling ministry with childrearing (Nesbitt, 1995a). She called herself a "slow learner" and "late to the game" for starting the credentialing process second-career; she repeatedly talked about "a lot of hesitation" and a "high level of self-doubt" due to her age and her lack of formal training in some areas. Although Nancy's ministry leadership looked similar to that of all of the other women I interviewed and to what has been documented in the literature (Nesbitt, 1995a, 1997c; Zikmund et al., 1998), her sense that her pathway to senior leadership didn't look "like it's supposed to look" points to the perceptual power vested in a traditionally masculine, linear career development model.

Out of the five women, only Jan had worked in ministry her entire career, and most of her roles had been outside the traditional brick-and-mortar, preaching-and-teaching pastor realm. Consistent with the literature (Chang & Bompadre, 1999; McDuff & Mueller, 2002; Nesbitt, 1997c; Zikmund et al., 1998), all of the women cited experience in nonparish roles intermingling with their service in the FMC-USA; they had held jobs in higher education, the not-for-profit/parachurch[5] sector, consulting, and the helping professions, to name a few. Sometimes these jobs were concurrent with working in the local church as volunteers, staff, or appointed pastors. Several of the women noted that these roles shielded them from some of the gender-related resistance they faced when they served in local church leadership. These positions allowed them to develop as leaders without the same preconceived — and perhaps masculine — assumptions about how they should lead. Both Mary and Jan talked about being allowed to write job

[5] Parachurch organizations are faith-based entities that operate independently of any single denominational structure.

descriptions tailored to maximize their giftedness. By the same token, operating outside of the traditional denominational structures and pathways created some challenges. One interviewee observed that as a ministry entrepreneur, she received pushback as a result of the "threat" she posed to both the existing hierarchal power structures and the brick-and-mortar local church.

Listening to these women's stories brought to mind some of the tensions I encountered in the literature between first- and second-generation women leaders. According to Nesbitt (1997b), first-generation female senior leaders in organizations typically have exceptional qualities that allow them to ascend the corporate ladder and bypass traditional, linear routes to the top. Men within the organization perceive these women as receiving preferential treatment and put pressure on the next generation of female leaders to pay their dues in order to get promoted, prompting these second-generation women to adopt more traditionally masculine ways of leading and to follow more traditionally masculine pathways to senior leadership.

Coming up in the shadow of successful first-generation women leaders can produce stress for those who follow. Jan described experiencing this tension firsthand when she attended a gathering of ministry leaders:

> There's a table of younger women . . . and I realized I hadn't met them and we were at a meal and I kind of walked up and introduced myself. I said, "Hi, I'm Jan." And they're like, "Oh, we *know* who you are." And it was like, Whoa! And I felt like, oh how? You know?

Jan went on to explain that they were serving in a region adjacent hers and that a leader in that area had said:

> "Yeah, I want you all to be successful like Jan." Like basically that was kind of held over them in a really unpleasant way. And they didn't want to know me. Because basically I had been used to bludgeon them in terms of productivity or efficacy or . . . whatever. Which was a huge bummer for me.

Role models, mentors, and networking. Jan's experience highlights a theme that came up in several interviews: the isolation of being a woman in ministry leadership. Part of the isolation stemmed from the paucity of role models and mentors, a dynamic well-documented in the literature (Fiedler, 2010; Henderson, 2012; Wessinger, 1996; Winslow, 2005). Nancy, Susan, and Jan all mentioned that they did not see women in ministry leadership as young people. Jan described coming to faith in a parachurch organization as a teen: "I never saw women do anything . . . other than singing the echo part of songs. [Pause] And run my small group." Nancy recalled meeting only two women leaders in the FMC-USA early in her ministry career: One was actively serving in senior leadership as an entrepreneur, and the other had just announced her intention to pursue ordination. Susan noted,

> I remember coming up through the ordination process and actually reaching out — which is hard for me because people of, you know, that are up there in influence and scholarship and all this kind of stuff — I'm a little timid to [say], "Hey, I need this" or whatever. But I did ask a few people and I know people are busy and there was nothing that ever connected as far as a female mentor, um, coming up through the ranks.

All three of these women discussed choosing to intentionally invest in the next generation of female leaders in the denomination so that these women could have something my research participants lacked.

Using relationships as a springboard to develop professional networks is a common practice for those wanting to move up in the corporate world; however, many women find this kind of networking distasteful and choose not to cultivate these types of strategic alliances (Ely et al., 2011; Hewlett, 2012). From the earliest points of their Free Methodist ministry careers, four out of the five women I interviewed worked directly alongside influential men: pastors of prominent churches as well as current and future bishops, superintendents, and denominational executives. Although some of these men ended up advocating for them along the way, none of my interviewees talked about networking in these terms. In fact, intentionally cultivating a specified career trajectory seemed far from any of these women's minds. As I mentioned in the previous section, these leaders appeared to be guided by a commitment to make the most of the leadership gifts they felt God had entrusted to them. Instead of operating with a clear view of their ultimate destination and making strategic career decisions toward that end, the path they followed often seemed to appear one step at a time.

Networking did serve a purpose, however. For Barb, it was a way to deal with the challenges of being a woman in senior leadership: "It's for survival. No, it's for thriving. It's for thriving. . . . If you want to put me where I'm best, you'll let me be in my social setting with strong women." Staying connected with other high-attaining female leaders helped Barb develop confidence:

> Other people who have been significant have been the women, the strong women in our lives. You know, and there have been different women throughout the course of time, who you just know they accept you for who you are. They believe in you so that allows you to believe more in yourself, and to take more leadership.

For Mary, networking was less about personal encouragement and more about professional growth. She explained that in addition to having a prayer team "that asks me the very rough questions" and a couple of people who regularly critiqued her leadership, she was on the lookout for those who could help her improve in her weak areas. She spoke of going to lunch with colleagues the week before our interview and realizing that one of her companions

> is brilliant. And he's brilliant in ways that I wish I could have a blood transfusion from him. So as we were saying our goodbyes, I said to him — I looked at him into his eyes and I said, "This is very serious and this is not just a goodbye. You have gifts that I don't have. And I invite you to speak into my life of ministry. And that means you can call me; here is my cell number. Give me feedback."

She went on to say that she had had this type of conversation with about twenty people during the course of her life, intentionally networking to fuel her development as a leader.

Competence. Rather than emphasizing their formal education or intentional career planning, my interviewees all highlighted the ways in which they demonstrated exceptional competence. Jan talked about strong self-discipline that manifested in her performance in high school:

> I lettered in everything. You know, everyone else had a part-time job at McDonald's; I worked at a bank. . . . So I was always kind of on that track, always put in charge of things, you know. Ran the senior prom and captain of the tennis team, and yadda, yadda.

Mary received prestigious awards throughout her academic career, consistently ranking at the top of her class. These women, together with the others, spoke of the skills they honed, both in the secular world and in the church, that enabled them to ascend the

ministry leadership ladder: They were good communicators, people followed them, and they established positive working relationships with men.

A number of the women spoke of earning their congregants' confidence by serving skillfully in subordinate positions; in several cases, members of these congregations lobbied for them to be considered for the senior pastor role at their churches when it came available. Others reported working capably in failing ministries — so-called glass-cliff environments (Ely et al., 2011). As an example, one of the women described being recruited to work with teens in a small group "that was on life support. It was dreadful. It was a mess. . . . So it wasn't any big compliment to be asked to take it over." Within a year she had turned it around. Her competence in this challenging work caught the attention of her superiors and paved the way for her advancement.

I received a mixture of responses when I asked, "What opportunities, if any, have opened up to you that you perceive as tied to your gender?" Nancy stated that she didn't think she had received any opportunities simply because of her gender; rather, her years of life and ministry experience allowed her a seat at the table. Barb had the opposite viewpoint. She explained that her movement toward senior leadership started when she was asked to fill a designated "clergywoman" seat on a significant conference-level board. As she proved her competence in that role, she was given greater and more visible opportunities to lead.

> Sometimes doors have been open because they're looking for the quota. [Laugh] I just walked into those. I just said, "You know what? You're looking for a

> quota. I'll be the quota because I just believe — I mean yes, I would love to be asked to be here because of my great skill set but I'll come in and be the quota just because you've got to have a woman here. . . . So I think what happened was that, once I got on as a token, they found out that I could produce what I said I could do. And that I was good. You know — good.

Barb's experience resonated with Mary, who stated,

> I think that I have had doors open to me because I was a woman. And I think I have been invited to participate in conversations — well, I can tell you this. They have invited me at time because they realized they needed a woman. . . . And then they realized once they made me part of the conversation, that they could not stop me from thinking like a woman. . . . And that changed the conversations.

Although having designated spots for clergywomen on high-level boards and committees created chances for Mary and Barb to have a voice, Susan expressed concerns about relying on quotas. She recalled attending a women's clergy conference in 2000 and hearing someone ask one of the Free Methodist bishops when they were going to appoint a woman as a superintendent. She reported, "He said, 'When there is one that's qualified and called by God, we'll have one.' And that's how I feel."

Jan's experience speaks to Susan's concern about incompetent women being moved into positions of power solely because of their sex. She explained that it's often a both/and of gender and competence instead of an either/or:

> I think I have gotten opportunities by being female. So, in that I think people are really aware of me, because I'm successful — in quotes — and I'm a woman. So, "Oh yeah, we should get more women involved. Oh, Jan could do it!" You know, because I'm successful in the traditional ways. I'm productive. I'm good up front. I know how to speak. I'm quick on my feet. I've got experience.

That being said, being a competent woman in high-level ministry leadership has its downsides. Jan continued:

> I remember being told right before I would go out on stage for something, a guy grabbed my shoulder and he says, "Hey, go out there and prove that women are funny." And he thought that was a really empowering statement. And I said to him, I said, "The whole gender?" [Laugh] And he just didn't get it.

Benevolent male advocates. Competence alone was not sufficient for these women to attain senior leadership positions. All of them reported having *benevolent male advocates* (BMAs), men with clout in the FMC-USA who recognized their abilities and helped them step into and advance through the denominational leadership ranks. In this way these BMAs acted as sponsors and champions (Henderson, 2012; Hewlett, 2011), putting their names on the line for the sake of these promising women and providing them with support to overcome congregational and peer resistance (Ibarra et al., 2013). Their investment stood out because not only did it contradict the principle of homophily — the tendency for people to gravitate toward those who look, sound, and act like them (Chaffins et al, 1995; Rhode, 2003; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007) — but it also countered the typical fear-based avoidance of cross-gender mentoring (Anderson, 2013a; Driver, 2014a; Ingersoll, 2003; Nesbitt, 1993).

I found that BMAs engaged at three different levels with the women I interviewed. At the first level, which I call *identifying and investing*, these men called out and helped develop their protégés' leadership potential. Jan spoke about a male leader who saw her abilities and encouraged her to apply these to entrepreneurial ministry. Nancy explained that her BMAs saw her aptitude for vocational ministry long

before she did. With their encouragement, she pursued ordination; along the way, they assisted her in clarifying her calling. Leadership coaching was another component of this advocacy. Given the dearth of female ministry role models available to my interviewees — something Jan, Susan, and Nancy all mentioned — they largely relied on men to socialize them into senior leadership. This guidance enabled them to navigate the FMC-USA leadership labyrinth with greater sophistication than women who lacked such guidance (Forbes Berthoud, 2012).

The second level of advocacy I observed in the women's stories involved *opening doors*: lead pastors hiring women in subordinate ministry positions or bishops and superintendents using their influence to recommend them for senior leadership positions in the denomination. Anderson (2013e) stated that these door-opening men serve as champions for their protégés' career advancement by putting their names on the table for promotions, recommending them for special assignments, and speaking highly of them in discussions with colleagues and superiors. All of my interviewees cited examples of this type of advocacy. Jan noted:

> I went to a church that supported women in leadership. And then it became a very clear issue in my life but in every step of the way, I got the positions I got because there were men saying, "We want you to do this."

Susan similarly described being pursued by a male senior leader who recognized her gifts and wanted her to serve on his staff. Nancy and Barb discussed FMC-USA leaders who put their reputations on the line to open the senior leadership door for them, and both Jan and Mary had stories of denominational leaders who endorsed, titled, and funded them for out-of-the-box endeavors. Having the support of a BMA facilitated trust building at

the local, regional, and national levels. At times these advocates served as a buffer between the women interviewees and resistant congregants. Susan observed that when she ascended to the lead role in her local church, a handful of parishioners opted to change churches: "These people that left — they didn't even talk to me. They talked to [my BMA]. Which I was glad they talked to somebody."

The third level of advocacy, *sharing power*, was the rarest but most concrete method by which BMAs helped to bring about greater gender equity. Susan described how this championing played out with the lead pastor who hired her:

> He, from the beginning, introduced me to the church and kept telling the church, "She and I have the same credentials. Exactly the same credentials. She's not my fill-in." . . . I had jobs to do but he would want me to preach when he was here because he said, "They need to know that you're not my fill-in." He was just very generous with the pulpit. He said, "If you want to do series, do a series. Whatever." So it was a really awesome relationship.

This pastor "poured into" her, bolstering her confidence and building her up in the eyes of the congregation. As she increasingly demonstrated her competence, he released more authority to her, eventually promoting her from being his associate to being his co-pastor.

Barb's ascension to senior leadership played out in a strikingly similar way: She was hired as an associate, and although she was never officially named a co-pastor, she functioned as one, overseeing most of the church's day-to-day operations while her male counterpart focused on preaching and board leadership. As was the case with Susan, when her BMA left, she transitioned into the lead role.

The pattern of men standing aside so that women could step up was a recurring theme in Mary's career as well. She identified this selflessness as critical for the denomination to move toward greater gender equity:

> I think that to move forward — it isn't that we don't have women in leadership. I mean, it isn't that we don't have women who are good leaders. It isn't that we don't have women who have the right spiritual gifts. I think that we are now at a point where there will have to be men at [the] superintendent level and other levels, where they will say, "I will give up my powerful position because there are women who will only be able to use their spiritual gifts in our denomination if I move out."

Benevolent male advocacy at this level requires both personal security and an infinite view of power. These men do not feel diminished when women in whom they have invested equal or surpass them. They willingly release power, recognizing that they don't lose power by doing so.

Unfortunately, these perspectives seem exceptional (Lehman, 1985). Several of the women talked about lead pastors who gave them tremendous behind-the-scenes authority and were verbally supportive of their leadership but rarely allowed them to preach. One described multiple cases of BMAs turning adversarial:

> I've had advocates for sure. It's almost every time turned on me though, which has been weird. . . . In my past experiences I've had different guys promote me to leadership saying, "We want you to do it." That's been the theme. I've been asked to do it rather than aspire to it or ask for it. And then eventually I get influence and then they are threatened.

Another shared this dialogue:

> I was with [colleague's name] . . . and he made the comment to me, he said, "Barb, you intimidate me." I said, "Oh [name]! You've been a pastor for 35, 40 years" — whatever it was. I said, "*You* intimidate me. Let's get rid of the language. You're a powerful, wonderful leader." He says, "No, you need to understand. For every woman who makes it, they had to be far better than any man who is out here in order to have made it."

This complex ambivalence adds a challenging component to the leadership labyrinth women moving toward senior leadership must navigate.

Leadership Identity

One interviewee admitted:

> I am so tired of insecure women. . . . It's all confidence. I just can't stand it when they're so insecure. And I don't want us to walk in the door and be like roller derby, you know. But it's like — I mean men don't function that way. So if we come in and we're very self-deprecating or we don't volunteer or we don't look people in the eye or we can't tell a good joke or whatever, then we're never going to make it, you know, and I can be mad all the live-long day about the fact that — all the opportunities — I mean, I think we shoot ourselves in the foot so often because we're so freaking insecure. And I see it theologically. I mean, that's Genesis 3, right? "Your desire will be for your husband and he will have rule over you." We need male approval so badly. But — and that's our weakness — so then I only want to work with women who have done business with God and done the hard work of counseling and realize, "I like me. I like who I am. I don't need you to tell me whether I'm OK or not." Then I can — all the other stuff just gets figured out. But unfortunately, I just don't get many women who do that.

As this interviewee so powerfully articulated, confidence can be a struggle for women as they form their leadership identity. This battle intensifies for evangelical women, who face not only the standard female tendency to default to self-diminishment

(Chaffins et al., 1995; Kay & Shipman, 2014) but also the cultural expectation to be modest and accommodating (Ingersoll, 2003; Smith, 2013). As I conducted my interviews with senior leading women in the FMC-USA, I heard issues related to confidence surface often. At some points I heard convergence; in others I discovered that these women were at very different places in making peace with their own insecurities. In the coming pages I describe their individual journeys.

Mary. Mary came from a long line of leaders. As a young girl she was exposed to men and women in her extended family who served out of their giftedness and competence rather than out of adherence to traditionally defined gender roles. She spoke of watching her father share power and publicly affirm her mother's ministry abilities, and she talked about seeing her mother capably step into opportunities she was given to use her skills. This affirmation of gift-based ministry extended to Mary. She talked about being socialized in confidence as a woman and as a leader, both at home and at school. This early confirmation started a pattern for her life: "In my family I was affirmed as a woman leader. In my marriage I have been affirmed as a woman leader. In my denomination I have been affirmed as a woman leader." Mary also described a deeply spiritual encounter in which she sensed God calling her to step into a specific ministry assignment and empowering her for it. This experience added to what I perceived to be an unshakeable interior resolve.

The combination of spiritual authority and Mary's positive socialization contributed to a self-assurance that manifested tangibly in her leadership. Mary described a gathering at which a young man stood up and publicly challenged her for

being a woman in leadership, saying, "You don't have the right to be teaching me anything about the Christian faith." Rather than taking his verbal assault personally and becoming defensive, she calmly but firmly explained to him that she was part of an organization that had hired her for her role and that she would be glad to connect him with her direct report should he want to discuss this issue further.

Mary could not identify any other instances in which she faced resistance as a ministry leader resulting from her gender. She speculated that this was the case because she had always served on ministry teams or in entrepreneurial positions that could not be interpreted as "usurping" the role of a male. From my perspective, I saw her confidence playing a role in her experience. She diffused opposition by having the strength to point out inconsistencies between what the denomination said about women in ministry leadership and the ways its theology was enacted by its leaders and policies. When she was invited to serve on boards and committees as the token woman, Mary chose not to quell her identity in order to fit in with the guys; her boldness ended up shaping the conversations that took place. At one point she was appointed to a position with poorly defined parameters; rather than staying in it out of fear or a sense of obligation, she had the confidence to leave and pursue another opportunity in a different field.

Mary's well-defined sense of her leadership identity freed her from the compulsive need to receive assurance from others. Another manifestation of her confidence was her willingness to ask for what she needed, whether it was for feedback related to her professional growth or for personal encouragement. Mary articulated these

points when I asked her if she had experienced pushback from male pastors because of her gender:

> I may have experienced it and was clueless because there are so many people I get affirmation from that if that person doesn't give it to me, what about that person? Another piece of it is that I have come to realize — and this may have something to do with it all — I have come to realize I have a very low need for external affirmation, that I just need two or three people who are godly, who are close to me, who affirm me. I don't have the high need for people to say, "Great job, Mary." . . . If it is important for me to hear someone tell me, "Well done, good and faithful servant," I'd let them know. And so then it happens.

Jan. Like Mary, Jan exuded a healthy sense of self-assurance when we spoke. This trait may have come from her childhood. Early on her parents pushed her to take responsibility for her growth: "I grew up in this home where . . . you're going to make yourself, don't count on anyone to help you. Do everything yourself. And, be self-made. And so I have a very good internal drive mechanism." She, too, was socialized as a leader in school and experienced success in these roles. Her skills, and the accompanying confidence, carried over when she became a Christian as a teenager. Although her first ministry experiences came within a complementarian context, her effectiveness prompted the organization to flex its policies to accommodate her. In her mid-20s she had the opportunity to take seminary courses taught from an egalitarian perspective and to spend time with high-capacity ministry leaders from other minority populations; these experiences helped to expand her understanding of being a woman and a leader.

Jan spent many years serving in team leadership at a church not affiliated with the FMC-USA. What began as a supportive environment for her gradually turned toxic as

the male founding pastors began to lean into writings by complementarian theologians and to implement more corporate, hierarchal leadership models. Not one to conform to traditional evangelical gender roles, Jan felt increasingly marginalized within the church. She also began to sense that her male bosses felt threatened by both her confidence and her effectiveness. In time, the ministry environment became so hostile toward her that she resigned.

Although leaving this church was personally hurtful, Jan retained a strong sense of who she was as a leader and pressed into roles that maximized these competencies. She pursued entrepreneurial endeavors that eventually connected her with the FMC-USA. Jan found that when she operated outside of the traditional brick-and-mortar church structure, male clergy were less apt to view her as an adversary, perhaps because they did not perceive her as being in competition for their jobs.

Reflecting back on her ministry career, Jan observed that she led in traditionally masculine ways at the beginning. She attributed some of her style to being mentored by men and some to her own preferences. Gradually she found her own way of leading, one that retained some traditionally masculine components but was uniquely hers. She discovered that her confidence in leading this way, coupled with her track record of effectiveness, allowed her to work well with male colleagues. However, she noted that sometimes the power structures of the denomination didn't know what to do with her because she operated outside its typical boxes. She also observed that as a confident woman in high-level leadership, she appeared to make s her male co-workers' wives

uneasy at times. She thought that their discomfort might have stemmed from their fear of having a strong woman working closely with their husbands.

Barb. Barb experienced a similar challenge: She reported that her greatest opposition in senior leadership came from women, not men. She speculated that they saw her living into her ministry call with confidence and that this self-assurance triggered their insecurity and jealousy. By the same token, Barb's journey to discovering her leadership identity featured some men who were unsupportive. Two incidents in particular stood out when we spoke.

The first took place prior to her pursuing ordination. Ever since she was a teenager, Barb had served in volunteer ministry at her church. For years she held a specific public leadership position; she said that this post largely defined her sense of self and ministry. When the church hired a new staff person to oversee this ministry area, he dismissed her from her role. He provided no explanation and Barb could see no reason why he would fire her, given that she had performed effectively. Being arbitrarily sidelined from this ministry ushered in a painful season during which she learned to hear from God regardless of whose voice was coming from the pulpit.

This ability to differentiate God's voice from humans' served Barb well when she first sensed God nudging her toward the pastorate. She relayed her pastor's response when she told him she felt a call to ministry: "Oh no, you don't. No, you can't." Barb had the confidence to respond to his resistance by thinking, "You know what? You're not going to tell me that because I am." Her socialization might have also played a role in her resilience; like Mary, Barb grew up with a father who supported her as a ministry

leader. In addition, she described how her grandfather, who did not believe women should lead in the church, was directed by God to pass a mantle of spiritual authority from him to her.

After working through the obstacles presented by these unsupportive men, Barb sensed God telling her it was time to move from being a submissive follower to embracing her leadership identity. This next phase in her development was an intentional process of growing into who she had been made to be:

> This is all part of the journey now, of having gone through all those years of — sat with this lid on — and then taking the lid off and now being able to live inside of a person who is just trying to figure it out. . . . I think I knew leadership but it was rather intuitive. I had no intentional training to be a leader. I didn't even have the language of leadership in my — yeah. I didn't have the language. And as I began now to read and I started doing Maxwell seminars and stuff like that, I began to learn that I did indeed have leadership but as you would understand — it was being formed by the language of the men that were popular at the time. And if wasn't until I was in this [senior-leadership] job that I began to understand that there was another language base to explain the — my gender-based leadership.

When she first moved into senior leadership, Barb thought everyone around her had the same finely developed sense of intuition that she did. Gradually it dawned on her that they didn't and that her ability to lead from her gut was a divine gift. She described what it was like to get comfortable in her own leadership skin:

> To own yourself so thoroughly — I mean, as best as we can obviously. But to say, "This is where it is and I can't change any of that." And I can't deny it either. You know, I can't say, "I don't have this. I'm not this person." No, I *am*

> this person and it can be tempered or honed, smoothed by the Spirit, but it still is — this is still who I am.

For Barb, growing in self-understanding and confidence in her leadership had been a continual process. She spoke of relying heavily on prayer and leaning on Scripture and the hymns of the church for strength. She talked about gaining self-assurance through the positive feedback of supervisors and those she led. She mentioned confidence begetting more confidence: that building a track record of effective leadership helped bolster her as she stepped into the next challenge.

Yet as Barb described her journey, I could hear her wrestling with tentativeness, despite a clear sense of divine authority to lead and high external validation of her capabilities. As I discussed in the section on aspiration, when Barb sensed God leading her to a formal, titled position, she presented her request as "I think I'd like an appointment," and when she felt a God-inspired nudge to move into a more powerful position, she expressed her inclination to her supervisor and then said, "Please just tell me to sit down and shut up and go home and just run my own local church." Underneath her tentativeness I heard battle wounds, perhaps the residual effects of being one of an elite cadre of senior-leading women in the denomination. This pain and isolation could be why she expressed such a strong need to be in relationship with female peers:

> You don't ever have to explain any part of this crazy, odd journey that says, "But I stepped in and I did this in that situation." Or "I declared this to be . . ." They get the fact that inside this strong exterior casing and — you know, full of leadership — is still a little girl who just wants to be loved and appreciated for who she is. You know, even if you [have] a great job.

Susan. Unlike Mary and Barb, Susan did not come from a family of ministers and was not raised in a household that supported women in ministry leadership. Susan explained that her mom had always said, "I don't know if I could go to a church with a woman pastor." Her upbringing might have contributed to the more-than-a-year-long arguing match she had with God when she first sensed a call to ministry leadership. Yet when she finally broached this subject with her mother, she received her unflinching support. Her mom's approval added to the chorus of internal and external voices that confirmed Susan's ministry giftedness throughout her ordination process.

Susan discussed feeling as if she didn't have anything to prove as a professional woman in ministry leadership: She knew that she was called and that leading was how she lived out that calling. At the same time, she wrestled with some personal insecurity. Working in tandem with a nondefensive lead pastor helped her with her self-doubt:

> He wasn't in competition. He wasn't trying to prove anything himself — like he was the leader. And he always — he would defer to me. He would — he just — I needed that for my — the way I'm made anyway is a little bit insecure. So I needed that for that. And, the church needed to see that. That he's not threatened and this is what we believe.

This pastor helped build her confidence by publicly affirming her.

> I would say sometimes, "Are you just blowing smoke or are you trying to — are you really talking to me or are you trying to make a point with the conference?" But he really was trying to put me out there to say, "This is competent female leadership." And he did. I heard from people that, "[Lead pastor's name] just thinks you're over the moon." Blah, blah, blah — you know, as far as pastoring and I had a hard time believing all that. But that's my issue and — so he promoted me a lot.

Susan's budding confidence manifested in a willingness to self-advocate. When she sensed it was time for a change to a different ministry environment, she approached her superintendent to talk about options. She was assertive about the positions she would take, refusing one job that wasn't an appropriate match for her gifts, and spoke honestly with the conference leadership, explaining that she did not want to be given an opportunity solely on the basis of her gender:

> I made it really clear with [my superintendent] in the very beginning that I don't want to be placed anywhere because I'm a woman. And on the other hand, I don't want to be stuck in Podunkville with a dying church.

Susan recalled a significant conversation that took place on the day her colleagues learned she was being appointed to her first lead pastor role. This announcement took place at a conference-wide gathering of ministry colleagues. Afterward a respected pastor known for his spiritual discernment approached her, saying that he had received a message from God affirming her as the one to carry the mantle of spiritual authority for the church to which she had been appointed. These words echoed a conversation she'd had shortly before the interview with her spiritual director about the mantle of senior leadership. She interpreted this exchange as a divine confirmation that she was indeed living out her ministry calling, which imbued her with confidence.

At the same time, Susan confided that she still wrestled with apprehension, despite the years that her BMA had spent grooming her to step into a lead role: "As a woman, fear is right up there. A constant. And so I was very fearful of what would happen." One of her greatest concerns revolved around the church's men's ministry; to her delight, the men "rallied around" her:

> The men's group — like 15 guys — took me out and said — for a dinner and presents and flowers and, "We're so happy you're our pastor." That was super significant to me. From a bunch of men. That was — that group was my biggest fear. Not that they dislike me or anything but what do I have to offer them?

In the months following her appointment as a lead pastor, Susan encountered two primary types of resistors, both of whom operated from faulty or uninformed theology. The first type was willing to talk about the topic with her or with another leader. Susan spoke of keeping a ready supply of books and other resources that explained the Free Methodists' egalitarian stance. The second type steadfastly held a complementarian stance and refused to look at anything counter to it. The resistance of this type tended to play out in passive ways. One couple stopped coming to the church when Susan was appointed the lead pastor, choosing to complain about the decision to the former senior pastor rather than talking with her about it. A Baptist pastor in the community's ministerial association stopped coming to meetings when Susan and another clergywoman started attending. In another situation, an extended family member opposed her officiating at the funeral for a deceased relative yet would not talk openly about his perspective; rather, he kept trying to undermine her behind her back, triangulating another family member to try to force his way. With people like this man, Susan had the confidence to hold firm to her identity as a senior leader, the resilience to laugh about their unhealthy passivity, and the insight to recognize that there was nothing she could do to change these people. I saw this strength on display as she spoke about one particular parishioner:

> There was a very elderly man that went to the church who — I knew he loved me — but he would always make comments about — [Husband's name] and I showed up to pray with him once in the hospital, and he said something about wearing pants in the family or something. You know. I would just let that go.

Nancy. Nancy demonstrated remarkable resilience in her journey to senior leadership. During one season in which she was second-in-command, her church experienced multiple senior pastor changes in a few years' time. In each transition Nancy provided stability for the congregation despite the continual upheaval in her role, the result of each new lead pastor re-envisioning her job description. She used this tumultuous period to broaden her skill set; the proficiencies she acquired during this time equipped her with a wide range of abilities that served her throughout her career.

Nancy's flexibility did not appear to stem from a fear that she would be left without vocational options, as she was willing to walk away if a position was ill-suited for her. I saw her resolve clearly when she described the impact of a family relocation on her church involvement. She was still in the pastoral credentialing process when her husband's job took them to a new city. In order to be ordained she needed to accumulate 3 years of full-time equivalent service on a church staff, but when she contacted the Free Methodist church in their community, she discovered that

> there was really not a position at the church available at the time. I didn't — well there was one and it was to be the office manager. And I just didn't see that — I don't mean this in some kind of a snooty way at all but it just — it wasn't where I needed to be in terms of moving forward.

Rather than accepting any ministry position out of fear that she would never have another opportunity to serve on a church staff, Nancy had the confidence to pursue professional

experience outside of the local church that would be commensurate with her abilities. Some months later, a more appropriate role for her giftedness opened up and she returned to a formal parish ministry position.

Nancy had to similarly hold firm to who she knew she was when she accepted her first lead pastor position. As an associate she had faced very little resistance, which she attributed to having always served under the "covering" of a male pastor, a complementarian notion that allowed women to lead in limited ways in the church as long as they were in positions in which they were subordinate to a man. In her new role at the top of the local church hierarchy, she discovered that people who were well aware of the FMC-USA's egalitarian stance — including some who carried ministry credentials from the denomination — resisted it in practice. She speculated that their opposition had as much to do with their culture and traditions as it did with their theology:

> I think this was more an affront to their particular culture in the home . . . than it was an affront to their theology because it messed with the hierarchical models that to the best of my knowledge, as I listened to them or to their closest friends, their model in the home was the male was the head of the home. And to see me in the pulpit, would just mess with that particular culture. And they just didn't have categories for that.

This threat to their understanding of family structure hit especially close to home for young families in the church. Their exodus was difficult for Nancy to watch as she saw it affecting the next generation of leaders: "They were telling their children — they were telling their daughters, 'You can't do this.'"

Nancy disclosed that during this time she relied on a deep internal sense that God had called her to the role she was in. Her faith allowed her to not take the resistance personally. In addition, her identity was not wrapped up in attaining a senior leadership position; much as Susan had mentioned, Nancy didn't feel as though she had to prove herself. She was content to operate as part of a ministry team, less focused on titles and more attuned to using her abilities for the good of the whole.

Factors influencing leadership identity formation. Several threads surfaced as I reflected on my subjects' process of coming into their own as senior leaders. First, socialization had an impact: Those who were raised with supportive fathers and women role models in ministry leadership seemed a step ahead of those who had to carve a path on their own. Second, a strong interior sense of God's call sustained these women even during times when they lacked external support. For those whose leadership identities were shaky to begin with, receiving affirmation from BMAs took on more importance than it did for those with higher levels of self-assurance. Third, all of these women experienced transformational crises that helped solidify their calling to and capacity for senior leadership. Although these crucible moments looked different — some were internal, some were external, and some were both — each proved essential to shaping their leadership identity. Fourth, courage played a vital role in keeping these women on the path to senior leadership and sustaining them when they arrived. Several refused staff positions that did not fit their giftedness, daring to walk away from the local church for a season rather than accept a job that wasn't right for them. Finally, once they were in

senior leadership, confidence in God's call freed them from the need to defend themselves, even in the face of complementarian resistance.

In the next chapter, I connect these discoveries with both my findings from Chapter IV and the literature. I frame this integration in the form of six recommendations to the FMC-USA that I contend will assist the organization in moving toward greater clergy gender equity.

Chapter VI

Recommendations

As I have mentioned throughout this work, my purpose in writing it has been to promote clergy gender equity in the FMC-USA. In Chapter I, I introduced the two major viewpoints used to explain women's underrepresentation in senior leadership positions: the Choice Argument and the Barrier Argument. I presented three primary research questions that guided my thinking throughout this work: First, to what extent, if any, do clergy differ along gender lines in the positions to which they aspire? Second, to what extent, if any, do FMC-USA clergywomen turn down ministry opportunities more often than clergymen, and, when they do, what factors influence their decisions? Finally, what are common elements in the stories of clergywomen who have attained senior leadership positions in the FMC-USA?

In Chapter II, I discussed the human capital, supply and demand, and aspirational issues that comprise the Choice Argument. I also addressed aspects of the Barrier Argument: perceptual, congregational, and organizational obstacles; second-generation gender discrimination; and evangelical culture. I showed how these factors impact clergywomen's leadership identity formation and set in motion cycles that perpetuate inequity. In Chapter III, I presented the design for my research: a mixed-methods study rooted in a transformative emancipatory framework. In Chapter IV, I conveyed my survey data, which showed the complex relationships between clergy gender, career development, aspiration, and the opt-out narrative. I relayed my interview data in

Chapter V; this material added ideas about stewardship, competence, advocacy, and confidence to the conversation about senior-leadership attainment.

As I anticipated, wrestling with my research questions helped shed light on the interplay between clergywomen's choice and the perceptual, congregational, and organizational barriers they face when it comes to attaining senior leadership positions in the FMC-USA. In this final chapter I consolidate what I have discovered through my reading and my research and offer six recommendations that could assist the FMC-USA in moving toward enacted egalitarianism.

Providing these suggestions serves to fulfill the purpose of transformative emancipatory research, which is to advocate for justice (Creswell, 2009). This objective runs parallel to the action-orientation of critical theory, feminism, poststructuralism, and pragmatism, particularly in the ways it speaks up for those on the margin (Crotty, 2003; Haslanger et al., 2011; Whipps, 2010). I have identified some of the barriers that prevent clergy gender equity; now, as I move from deconstruction to reconstruction (Spivak, 1997), I acknowledge that even in my attempts to help build a more just structure what I propose must be deconstructed to ensure that it does not reproduce oppression (Crotty, 2003; St. Pierre, 2000).

I also recognize that movement toward equity "will require strategies on the individual, institutional, and societal levels" (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007, p. 20). Nevertheless, I hesitate to focus first on the individual level for fear of perpetuating the blame-the-woman dynamic referenced throughout the literature as undergirding second-generation gender discrimination. In addition, a full discussion about and

implementation of social reform exceeds both the scope of this project and the practical reach of my voice. These two factors coupled with the receptivity I see among my denominational leaders prompts me to target my suggestions at the organizational level.

Organizational Change Dynamics

Before I offer these recommendations, it seems prudent to address some of the challenges implicit in implementing them. Executing the organizational changes necessary to promote equity is a complex endeavor reflecting adaptive rather than technical challenges. Heifetz et al. (2009) articulated the differences between these, stating that technical problems

> have known solutions that can be implemented by current know-how. They can be resolved through the application of authoritative expertise and through the organization's current structures, procedures, and ways of doing things [whereas] adaptive challenges can only be addressed through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties. (p. 19)

Adaptive challenges manifest in four basic patterns (Heifetz et al., 2009). In the first, a gap exists between an organization's espoused values and its behavior. Put another way, the organization, or those within the organization, neglect to practice what the organization preaches, often in subtle ways. The underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions in the FMC-USA, despite its expressed egalitarianism, is a prime example of this phenomenon.

The second pattern involves competing commitments. As Heifetz et al. (2009) explained, "When an organization's commitments are in competition with one another, people in authority can resolve the situation perhaps only by making decisions that

generate losses for some groups and gains for others" (p. 81). Some in the FMC-USA may construe leadership in the church in these either/or terms: that advancing clergywomen means constraining clergymen. Further, the divisive-woman argument comes into play here as well: the fear that enacting egalitarianism may offend congregants and prompt them to leave, producing losses in both attendance and financial giving (Lehman, 1985; Nesbitt, 1997a).

A third pattern in adaptive challenges comes in "speaking the unspeakable" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 82). Heifetz et al. (2009) described the dominant public discourse in an organization that "consists primarily of polite banter or debate that falls short of naming, let alone resolving, conflict" (p. 82). Such discourse refuses to acknowledge the proverbial elephant in the room for fear of stirring conflict or tension. To honestly discuss gender discrimination within the FMC-USA may necessitate some uncomfortable conversations.

The final pattern is work avoidance: diverting attention and displacing responsibility as ways "to prevent the discomfort that comes when the prospects of change generate intolerable levels of intensity" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 84). Relying solely on Choice-Argument explanations for clergy gender inequity diverts attention from systemic bias, displacing responsibility onto clergywomen in a manner that allows the organization, and individuals within it, to turn a blind eye to the barriers erected.

Moving toward equity in the FMC-USA will necessitate nondefensive and courageous self-evaluation by those who are part of the organizational system: national, regional, and local leaders as well as members of the local church. Such introspection

can be difficult, as Heifetz et al. (2009) noted: “Over time, the structures, culture, and defaults that make up an organizational system become deeply ingrained, self-reinforcing, and very difficult to reshape” (p. 51). Part of the reason for this dynamic lies in the reality that the maladaptive processes include a human component, given that “problems themselves cannot be abstracted from the people who are part of the problem scenario itself” (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 69).

Changing external behaviors appears to be the easier path. The FMC-USA could enact a series of equity-focused policies and programs, such as quota systems and fast-track leadership identification and training programs for women. In the absence of efforts to address internal barriers, however, these efforts will likely fail. To illustrate, a woman appointed to a church because of an affirmative-action-style mandate may fail because of congregational resistance. Addressing these internal obstacles creates a challenge for organizations because they have limited agency (Emirbayer, 1997). As Shaw (2002) noted, they must wrestle with “the paradox of being ‘in charge but not in control’ as [they] strive to play out creatively the evolution of [their] interdependent and conflicting responsibilities and aspirations, forming and being formed in the process” (p. 117).

Mowles (2012) picked up on these themes, noting that the context, history, and specific practices of those within an organization pose a significant limit to a linear, one-size-fits-all approach to management. In this context, organizational change cannot solely be mandated from on high; rather, as Shaw (2002) asserted, “the activity of

conversation itself is the key process through which forms of organizing are dynamically sustained and changed" (p. 10). Shaw continued:

> If organizing is understood essentially as a conversational process, an inescapably self-organizing process of participating in the spontaneous emergence of continuity and change, then we need a rather different way of thinking about any kind of organizational practice that focuses on change. (p. 11)

Efforts to foster equity in the FMC-USA must focus on the ways in which people make sense of the situation they are in, recognizing that it is in this iterative sense-making process that deep organizational change can emerge.

This process is not easily controlled, and the outcomes cannot be predicted, producing a messiness with which some are uncomfortable, particularly given that most organizational change efforts strive for group harmony, alignment, and equilibrium (Mowles, 2012). Shaw (2002) noted, "Self-organizing emergence is intrinsically uncontrollable in the usual sense and unpredictable in the longer term" (p. 93). It cannot be denied, however, that such uncertainty allows creativity to flourish. As Shaw put it,

> The experience of acting into the known is engineered — participants know what they are here for, know what they should do and know what the outcome should be [whereas] under-specification increases the experience of diversity and multiplicity, disturbing routinized responses and increasing the potential for novelty. (p. 32)

If organizations have limited power to bring about lasting, internal transformation among the individuals within them, why should they bother implementing recommendations for change? I still think that these external efforts can nudge the system forward incrementally. Policies and practices can help move the denomination

toward equity at a surface level; enacting these with an eye to shifting paradigms has the potential to take that shift to a deeper level. Meadows (2008) explained:

> So how do you change paradigms? Thomas Kuhn, who wrote the seminal book about the great paradigm shifts of science, has a lot to say about that. You keep pointing at the anomalies and failures in the old paradigm. You keep speaking and acting, loudly and with assurance, from the new one. You insert people with the new paradigm in places of public visibility and power. You don't waste time with reactionaries; rather, you work with active change agents and with the vast middle ground of people who are open-minded. (Meadows, 2008, p. 164)

Changing paradigms about clergy gender equity will require long-term, sustained effort (Cox, 2001) along the lines described by my colleague, Jason Morriss. During his youth, he had a next-door neighbor who kept a large dog inside his fenced yard. This neighbor set the fenceposts securely in concrete, making them so sturdy that even if someone were to pull on them with a chain attached to a truck, they wouldn't budge. Jason observed that every day, that big dog leaned against the same corner post. Its constant, gentle pressure over time caused that fencepost to shift. My hope is that the recommendations that follow will contribute to leaning-dog change in the FMC-USA, that denominational leaders will use them to apply gentle but steady pressure to move hearts and minds toward clergy gender equity.

Alter Unhealthy Norms

Hatch (2006) observed:

> The essence of culture is its core of basic assumptions. This core manifests as values and behavioral norms that are recognized, responded to and maintained by

> members of the culture who, in turn, use them to make choices and take action. Finally, culturally guided choice and action produce artifacts. (p. 185)

Hatch (2006) further observed that basic assumptions are unspoken, unwritten, and typically beneath conscious awareness and that "values specify what is important to the members of a culture [while] norms establish what sorts of behavior to expect from one another" (p. 187). Norms show up in processes at work within the organization, processes that organizations are not always vigilant about reviewing to ensure that they are equitable (Haslanger et al., 2011).

Acker (1992) highlighted four processes that contribute to gender discrimination. First, work is gender-segregated, with men clustered in certain positions and women in others. Second, organizations create "symbols, images, and forms of consciousness that explicate, justify, and, more rarely, oppose gender divisions" (Acker, 1992, p. 452). These ways of thinking and doing, often expressed in an organization's artifacts and language, both reinforce culture and perpetuate it among new members (Cook & Yanow, 1993; Prichard, 1996; Schein, 1993/2005; Weedon, 1997). Third, interactions between individuals model dominance/subordination and alliance/exclusion (Acker, 1992; see also Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Finally, individuals in the system choose to adapt to the biased norms rather than contesting them (Acker, 1992). Schein (1993/2005) alluded to this acquiescence when he defined culture as

> a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the

> correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (pp. 364-365)

I recommend that the FMC-USA's leaders examine whether the organizational culture and norms in the denomination create a hospitable climate toward clergywomen. What are the accepted norms for leadership, especially senior leadership? What does it mean to be a *good* pastor? To what extent, if any, do these norms and expectations privilege men? What policies and procedures within the organization may constrain women? What do our rhetoric and artifacts communicate about gender and leadership?

Exalted empire-building. In the 1980s, the Church Growth Movement (CGM) gained traction, particularly among Protestant leaders, as a way to counteract decades of institutional decline (Fong, 2012). The CGM emphasized personal evangelism, missional strategies, and *seeker sensitivity*, the application of sociological concepts to create congregational environments that were less threatening to non-churchgoers. Pastors assumed roles comparable to those of CEOs, appropriating business principles to grow and expand their ministry empires. Fuller Theological Seminary, the largest and arguably the most influential seminary in the United States, served as the hub of this strategic ministry-building philosophy, but principles from it permeated ministry training programs during the 1980s and 1990s (Church Growth, Inc., n.d.). Considering that the vast majority of senior and solo pastors in American Protestant churches are in their 50s and 60s, it would follow that the CGM philosophy dominated their educational experience as they were preparing for ordination (Barna Group, 2008; Barna Group,

2009; Hartford Institute for Religion Research, n.d.; National Congregations Study, 2008).

The CGM philosophy significantly influenced the definition of what it means to be an effective pastoral leader. Fong (2012) stated that congregation size, numerical growth, and peer influence were the primary measures he observed. Henderson and Casper (2007) delineated what they deemed the *three Bs of pastoral success*: buildings, budgets, and butts in seats. Quantitative growth became the litmus test of effectiveness. Evangelical culture reinforced this notion by celebrating "successful" pastors with book deals, magazine profiles, and invitations to speak at national leadership conferences (Brown, 2002; Outreach Inc,, 2014). When staff positions that could lead to senior leadership opportunities came available in these highly visible ministry settings, hiring boards typically overlooked women in favor of first-career married clergymen, creating a predominately male pipeline to pastoral superstardom (Chang & Bompadre, 1999; Nesbitt, 1995, 1997a, 1997b; Zikmund et al., 1998).

Fong (2012), who was indoctrinated into the CGM as a Fuller graduate student, articulated some of the dangers of this "building an empire for Jesus" ministry philosophy, pointing out that every empire in history has relied upon "war, bread, and circus" to survive. A growing empire requires resources; when it exhausts its own, it goes to war with the neighbors to take theirs. Fong described the battle among churches for congregants, likening his church to a newly opened WalMart that puts the Mom-and-Pop stores out of business with its bigger and better programs and services. Ministers refer to this process as *sheep stealing*: One church lures believers from another church.

Statistics confirm that this dynamic has been at play: Despite attendance increases at mega-churches, overall participation in the institutional church has declined (Halter & Smay, 2008; Halter, 2010).

As Fong (2012) noted, soldiers fighting to build an empire need bread. The bread he fed his troops — his sermons — typically revolved around how-to themes that provided simplistic formulas for dealing with the challenges of their lives. "I think my sermons were all children's messages to grown-ups: obey your Father, share your toys, stop hitting," Fong stated, adding, "And the real tragic thing about that is the grown-ups in the congregation were fine with that"

Finally, Fong (2012) observed that troops need entertainment, some form of distraction from the battle. Like a circus, he noted, worship services at his church digressed into productions designed to entertain people enough so that they would come back the next week. This keep-the-customer-happy orientation to ministry leadership produced rampant consumerism in the pews. Halter and Smay (2008) opined:

> Church can be a huge consumer trap. We provide large, comfortable worship centers, encourage pastoral staff to give us everything we need spiritually, and, at the end of the day, we don't have any money or time left to extend blessing and resources toward mission. (p. 152)

Sustaining ministry built on this premise demands long hours from pastoral staff. In my informal conversations with FMC-USA leaders, I have encountered the assumption that in order to be a good pastor, particularly if one is a senior pastor, one must work 60–80 hours a week. In her interview, Nancy confirmed that a typical week for her involved 10-hour work days, 6 days a week. This sort of workaholism is praised in the church

world, perhaps even expected (Greer, 2013). Despite the autonomy and flexibility associated with pastoral ministry, the consumeristic assumption that a minister should be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, can make it difficult for a pastor to stay physically, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally healthy.

The responsibility for this expectation does not solely rest on congregations, though. Clergy can perpetuate it, too, with what Marder (1996) likened to an almost pathological need to be needed: "Being overworked appears to be a point of honor with most, and those who are clearly not workaholics do not advertise this fact to their peers" (p. 274). Anxiety plays into this as well; clergy fear that if they do not meet their congregants' needs, their people will go somewhere else and their attendance numbers will suffer. On the darker side, ego can be another driving force compelling pastors to build their ministry empires. Fong (2012) confessed: "Underneath all of that evangelistic fervor was a lot of ambition. . . . My drug of choice is called *hubris* [and] I work for an institution that rewards hubris." This compulsion to build an empire can produce pressure for clergy to mask weakness, imperfection, and their fear of failure (Briggs, 2012). The Dalai Lama (1999) deemed this inauthenticity a side effect of "the contemporary rhetoric of growth and economic development which greatly reinforces people's tendency toward competitiveness and envy. And with this comes the perceived need to keep up appearances — itself a major source of problems, tensions, and unhappiness" (p. 8). Fong described many ministers, himself included, as being like rats who don squirrel costumes in order to appear more attractive to others, while Irvine

(2006) likened these image-management efforts to the brand-building work of advertising executives:

> Because we care very deeply about what other people think of us, we go to considerable trouble and expense to create and project a certain image of ourselves. . . . In conversation we are careful what we do and don't reveal to others. . . . We try to project an image of happiness even if we are miserable. (p. 39)

The pressures associated with attaining success in a CGM-infused organizational culture contribute to unhealthiness for all clergy, both men *and* women. Briggs (2012) challenged the church to redefine success in ways other than in terms of attendance, buildings, and cash, noting that this obsession with success can border on idolatry: Mega-church pastors are exalted and become the standard against which other ministers' work is measured. Brown (2002) observed:

> If we continue to articulate the notion that bigger congregations are better or that being Senior Pastor in a staff ministry is the ultimate in successful pastoring, then we must be prepared to see the majority of our congregations consolidate or close because pastors seeking what the church understands as "upward mobility" won't want to serve these calls. (p. 40).

Clergywomen can face particular challenges due to the CGM mentality. To be good pastors, they need to put in long hours to meet the congregations' needs, but to be good mothers, they are told not to work long hours because their family needs to be their first priority (Anderson, 2013c; Ingersoll, 2003). Hunt linked this double bind to the larger issues working women face, asserting, "Ministry as currently conceived could be considered a recipe for women's jobs in patriarchy: the long hours and endless nurture,

the low pay, the endless availability" (Fiedler, Hunt, & Plaskow, 2009/2010, p. 66). Meanwhile, Hitt (2002) troubled the underlying notions of success stemming from the CGM:

> There is within our denominations and our churches a clear career ladder of success, and women are not faring as well as men in climbing that ladder. If we are going to hold to a career-path model of ministry, it is, of course, essential that we find ways to move women along the path of success. But is that really the best we can do? Must success in ministry be defined in terms of upward social mobility? (p. 43)

Rhode and Kellerman (2007) similarly questioned traditional notions of success in their discussion of contemporary self-help books and magazines for women in leadership:

> A further problem with these pop publications is their unquestioned acceptance of prevailing definitions of success. The assumption is that women value, or should value, the same things as men. . . . Almost never do these publications acknowledge the possibility that women could, or should, have a different set of priorities than pay and perks: more humane hours, better work–family and childcare policies, greater support for community service, and so forth. Rather, the emphasis is on enabling women to score higher under rules not of their own making. (p. 26)

Promote health. I urge the FMC-USA to shift away from CGM-based norms and to embrace health as the organizational ideal. Although numeric growth may be a component of this measure, health extends far beyond nickels and noses. One place to start would be to promote healthy work–family balance, recognizing that clergywomen and an increasing number of clergymen desire such equilibrium (Wessinger, 1996). Many options implemented in the corporate world, such as parental leave and flex

scheduling, apply more to traditional clock-hour jobs (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). In the FMC-USA church world, organizational leaders can both promote and model Sabbath-taking. They can educate pastors and congregations on the value of a weekly day of rest as being both Biblical and practical: As Holba (2012) found, constant work and hyperproductivity do damage to the leader's soul, whereas regular breaks allow time for self-reflection and the development of one's interior life. Holba argued, "Leisure disciplines one to engage the world around them in such a way that promotes community, communion, and conversation. Leisure creates a good leader — a leader engulfed with the attributes of communicative leadership" (p. 204).

Denominational leaders can also actively advocate for pastors to take sabbaticals. In some cases, they may need to educate local churches about the necessity and benefits of funding their pastors' time away. For churches facing socioeconomic challenges, the denomination could step in with funding for pulpit supply. These short-term Sabbatical-related openings could also provide a prime opportunity to expose churches to capable clergywomen. Although research on the contact hypothesis has produced mixed results in terms of whether it affects congregational attitudes (Lehman, 1985; Woods, 2002; Zikmund et al., 1998), providing women with these opportunities may be formative in their development.

Another aspect of health is living out expressed organizational values. In my interviews, informal conversations, and personal experience, I have encountered a disconnection between the denomination's stated egalitarianism and its daily practice. This schism extends from the pew to the superintendency. Women in my survey clearly

expressed the desire to serve in full-time, full-pay positions, and many articulated their willingness/desire to serve in senior leadership positions. Yet clergywomen have told me about superintendents who would not appoint them to churches because of their fear that the congregation "wouldn't accept a girl." This gender discrimination is rooted in the divisive-woman narrative I discussed in Chapter II, the assumption that having a woman pastor will destroy a church by driving the men — and their wallets — away (Lehman, 1985; Nesbitt, 1997a). Ministerial candidates have been credentialed within the FMC-USA and appointed to churches without a thorough assessment of their views on women in ministry, let alone a consideration of whether they have ever developed a female leader. In her interview, Nancy talked about credentialed men who opposed her, including one who undermined her before she even started in senior leadership by telling the congregation — a church he'd previously served — that there was no way the denomination would appoint a woman there. Given Lehman's (1994) finding that local pastors' attitudes toward women in ministry leadership held the greatest influence over congregational perspectives, allowing these nonegalitarian voices in our pulpits perpetuates inequity. Nevertheless, the FMC-USA has recruited pastors from other traditions with complementarian theologies because of their ability to make churches grow numerically. I have heard these hires defended with statements like, "They are open to looking at the matter," a stance that at best produces passive egalitarians who think it's enough to hire women to be children's directors and women's ministry leaders. Despite the FMC-USA's connectional and appointment-based structure, local church senior pastors and hiring boards regularly fill open ministry staff positions based on their

personal networks; these tend to consist of other males. Some overlook female candidates under the guide of ensuring "staff chemistry." Church leadership boards — the members of which often have little to no training in Free Methodism, much less a commitment to the denomination's stance on gender equity — turn a blind eye to these injustices. Gatekeeping lapses such as these hinder egalitarian efforts in the denomination (Ingersoll, 2003).

Health extends to perspective as well as practice. Wessinger (1996) discovered that church organizations that support clergy gender equity view God as having both masculine and feminine qualities. Linking this issue to Acker's (1992) discussion on language reinforcing culture, I urge the FMC-USA to use gender-inclusive translations of Scripture and to re-evaluate the use of exclusively masculine pronouns to refer to God. In my experience, most people within the denomination speak of God in terms of *he*, *him*, and *his*. This language may perpetuate an unconscious view of God as male that plays into the default assumption that pastors, especially senior pastors, should also be male (Cormode et al., 2012; Lehman, 1994; Sullins, 2000).

Wessinger (1996) also found that equitable organizations hold a broader view of gender roles, resisting the essentializing stereotypes that disproportionately route women to terminal posts in children's ministry or to subordinate, "helping" roles. As I found in my research, women's ministry aspirations evolve over time and can be significantly shaped by feedback from others. Despite expressing an interest in working in a broad range of ministry positions, my survey respondents disproportionately clustered in

traditionally feminine roles. Organizational culture may have influenced this eventuality. McDuff (2008) painted an alternative picture when she determined that churches

> that are able to offer their clergy significant levels of autonomy, formal and informal support in their work, fair rewards, and clear job expectations, and that are open to changing gender roles, will establish themselves as good places to work for both female and male clergy. (p. 311)

These churches are often in step with a wider social climate that supports women's education, encourages women's economic earning rather than pressing them to stay in the domestic sphere, values daughters as much as sons, validates a woman's right to have property and inheritance, promotes her right to self-determination, and affords her status apart from her male relatives (Wessinger, 1996). These comments resonate with the issues Nancy faced as a woman trying to lead a church in a community that held patriarchal values. Her position in the lead role threatened traditional male headship.

One final note on norms: As I mentioned earlier, organizations often pressure individuals to accept the group's norms in order to retain their membership; those who refuse to conform are expelled, either by formal mandate or through informal marginalization (Cook & Yanow, 1993; Cox, 2001). Deleuze's work on desiring silence sheds light on this matter. Desire is about what someone wants, something "that is generative and seeking, resulting in the production of privilege, power, and voice" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 91). This desire is at times held in check by desiring silence, which functions to "keep/maintain/produce smooth social, familial, and professional relations (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 86). Women sometimes keep silent in order to maintain harmony: They don't want to be accused of pulling the gender card or

being seen as divisive by pointing out sexism. They fear being penalized organizationally for speaking up. I recall a conversation I had recently with a clergywoman who had served on a major policymaking committee in her denomination. She noted that she was not reappointed to this board after raising a challenge similar to one I listed above. Was this coincidental, or was she being punished for making waves? This incident effectively silenced her voice, both at a policy level and personally. In order to promote clergy gender equity, the FMC-USA will need to encourage people to speak up about it, rather than subtly stifling them.

Amplify Female Voices

Meadows (2008) observed:

> The bounded rationality of each actor in a system — determined by the information, incentives, disincentives, goals, stresses, and constraints impinging on that actor — may or may not lead to decisions that further the welfare of the system as a whole. If they do not, putting new actors into the same system will not improve the system's performance. What makes a difference is redesigning the system to improve the information, incentives, disincentives, goals, stresses, and constraints that have an effect on specific actors. (p. 110)

Even slight enlargements of bounded rationality — such as providing a little more information — can bring about significant and substantive change for a system. One way to expand what is known is to increase the diversity of informational inputs by placing women in positions where they can speak into the system.

Building on a theme from my previous recommendation, I suggest that people need to see and hear women in positions of power and influence in the FMC-USA. I recognize putting women in these positions involves complexities. There is a much

larger pool of qualified men for some of these roles; identifying competent women willing to serve will require additional effort. Some positions are elected, not appointed; in such instances, it will be necessary to work intentionally with nominating committees to ensure that women's names appear on ballots. Yet as Mary's experience demonstrated, having a woman's voice on denominational boards and committees helped to change the types of conversations these groups had. Amplifying women's voices in positions of influence will expand the denomination's ability to think equitably.

Consistent with Grindal's (1996) and Prichard's (1996) counsel, I urge the denomination to set tangible goals for gender representation on boards, committees, task forces, and other governing entities that exceed token levels, and to lead the way in modeling these standards. At this point the national denominational leadership does not reflect the gender equity it espouses. For example, looking at the Leadership tab on the FMC-USA's website, I found highlighted three male bishops; one male Chief Operating Officer; 23 superintendents, all male; 21 men and 4 women on the Board of Administration; and seven men and one woman on the Study Commission on Doctrine (Free Methodist Church, USA, 2014a). Women fill just over 8 percent of these key leadership seats. Of the 12 position papers featured on the Study Commission on Doctrine's website as representing work from 2011 to the present, 11 were written by men and the twelfth has no author listed (Free Methodist Church, USA, 2014b). Such a disparity between what is said about the value of women's voices and what is shown creates dissonance.

In keeping with the literature on the contact hypothesis (Lehman, 1987; Purvis, 1995; Wessinger, 1996; Winslow, 2005), exposing the denomination to competent women leading in significant and visible ways can help deconstruct the assumption that senior leadership is reserved for men only. Beyond having women on prominent boards and committees, the FMC-USA could increase congregations' exposure to leading women in other ways. They could create a list of recommended speakers for national and regional events and include capable FMC-USA women on it, be they clergy, professors, authors, or industry leaders. They could also lean into the resources of the Global Wesleyan Alliance, a partnership between the Free Methodists and other like-minded denominations, and add competent women from other traditions in order to have a critical mass of viable options from which event organizers could draw.

Empowered women in public positions can serve as advocates and examples for other capable women coming up through the leadership pipeline. This will address a point raised by several of my interviewees: that they lacked ministry role models, both in their youth and as they were stepping into leadership as adults. They can also demonstrate, in partnership with male colleagues, what it looks like for men and women to work as equals. I address this notion at length in a later section of this chapter.

Support Innovation

Some press for quota systems or affirmative action programs to promote gender equity, but far too often these measures create a new set of problems for women. Women who attain leadership positions when these programs are in effect face the assumption that they got their jobs without earning them, which can undermine their authority

(Rhode, 2003). In addition, organizations may overlook mismatches between ability and placement in an effort to hit numeric representation goals, leading to leadership implosions that reflect not only on the woman leader but also on the whole gender (Gino, 2014). This is why throughout the previous section I intentionally emphasized placing competent women in visible and significant leadership positions.

Another option to consider is intentionally building high-performance meritocracies that prioritize gender balance (Wittenberg-Cox, 2014). Such an approach requires organizational gatekeepers to be mindful of gender role stereotyping, the principle of homophily, and the "old boys'" network to create a system more hospitable to gender balance (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Wittenberg-Cox, 2014). Further, it requires that promotions be based not on assumptions about potential future performance, which can be biased toward males, but on past performance, which allows a woman's track record of effective service to come into play (Gino, 2014; Lennon et al., 2013; Yellin, 2014).

Unfortunately, both of these approaches rely upon fitting women into pre-existing roles that are based on models that some argue are not a good fit for many women. Nancy raised this issue in her interview:

> Women with families, still in the home. . . . I see that as a major obstacle for some women to move forward in their calling, because we do not — or at least not that I'm aware of — we do not have sufficient safeguards and policies in place that will allow them to do both simultaneously: to raise a family, to serve a church.

Nancy went on to explain that in her experience, the nature of the call to be a church's lead pastor requires 60-plus-hour work weeks. She was careful to distinguish this demand from expectations for definitions of success, attributing the long hours more to the nature of the job as a lead pastor. She added that she did not expect her ministry staff members to adhere to the same schedule:

> It's the nature of the call, at least for me here, in this particular role. . . . I do not expect that of the rest of my team. I don't. In fact, they have young families. I will not allow that for the rest of my team.

Perhaps this traditional hierarchal structure that places such high demand at the top contributes to women's remaining clustered in subordinate roles in the FMC-USA.

To address this concern, the denomination could embrace alternative ministry structures, such as strengths-based team leadership (Leadership Network, 2011). Unlike a single senior pastor who develops vision, communicates it, and oversees a staff who implements it, strengths-based team leadership approaches feature collaboration and cooperation among a group of senior leaders. Working as a team releases any one person from having to put in the 60–80 hour work week demanded of those in the top position of the traditional hierarchal model. In addition, in contexts like these that de-emphasize traditional titles and hierarchal structures, "women are more likely to be invited to lead according to their gifts, talents, and capacities" (Diss, 2014, p. 83). Churches that adopt these practices could release women from the gender-stereotyped pigeonholing that presses them into nurturing roles (Ingersoll, 2013; Nesbitt, 1997c).

Another option is to promote ministry entrepreneurship. Bessey (2011) encouraged women leaders to do the business of the Kingdom outside the traditional

structures, referring to an "open source church" (para. 7) approach to ministry leadership. In a later work, Bessey (2013) observed, "Sometimes, by celebrating the evangelical heroes of the faith, we have inadvertently communicated something false: if it's not big and audacious and officially sanctioned, it's not good enough for God" (p. 154). Bessey continued,

> I'm through wasting my time with debates about women-should-do-this and women-should-not-do-that boundaries. I'm out. What an adventure in missing the point. These are the small, small arguments about a small, small god.
>
> Our big and good God is at work in the world, and we have been invited to participate fully — however God has gifted and equipped and called each of us. One needn't identify as a feminist to participate in the redemptive movement of God for women in the world. The gospel is more than enough. (p. 171)

Henderson (2012) captured this entrepreneurial spirit as he evaluated research on women leaders who had left the church, noting that these individuals "often invent new ways to express themselves spiritually, even self-funding their spiritual enterprises while keeping their day jobs" (p. 126). Finding alternative ways to "do church" allows these leaders both autonomy and the ability to work within their calling, factors highly valued by the clergywomen McDuff and Mueller (2002) studied.

What might supporting innovation look like within the FMC-USA? Reflecting on my interviews, I found precedent for creating leadership roles for competent women in which they wrote job descriptions that maximized their gifts. These positions may operate parallel to the traditional local church, which is often the site of the greatest resistance for clergywomen, both from congregants and threatened colleagues.

Supporting innovation may also mean providing financial resources to women as they start new congregations. My survey showed many women already serving as church planters, often in tandem with their pastor husbands. A lack of funding and possible gender bias prevented many of these women from being able to do this work full-time. Financially investing in competent entrepreneurial clergywomen would not only increase their representation in higher-level leadership but may also produce church growth. One of my interviewees described the success she experienced planting churches. Because many of her congregants were new Christians, they did not hold preconceived notions about what a pastor should look like or sound like based on prior church experience. A significant population in her church was women who had been sexually assaulted; these individuals were reticent to attend a church led by a male pastor because of their history of abuse at the hands of powerful men.

Implement Women's Leadership Development Initiatives

Browne (2013) and Rhode and Kellerman (2007) advised equity-minded organizations to identify high-performing women, equip them for leadership, provide them with opportunities to lead, and monitor their progress. Translating these suggestions to the FMC-USA, I encourage the denomination to intentionally discern, develop, and deploy women in ministry leadership to increase the pipeline of female clergywomen and eventually produce more who are capable of serving in senior-leadership positions.

Discern. Nason-Clark (1987) and Zikmund et al. (1998) contended that women tend not to self-identify for vocational ministry and are likely to rely on external feedback

to validate their internal sense of call. I observed this phenomenon in my interviews. Although all of the interviewees were highly competent women, several described wrestling with their call to ministry: Mary was called *pastor* by the group of neighbors she led to faith before she realized what it meant, Nancy didn't pursue ordination until her husband encouraged her to, Jan stepped into ministry through the opportunities men extended to her, and Susan labored for more than a year trying to understand her call. Even Barb, who was proactive in her career development, struggled for a time with the opposition she experienced when discussing her call with her pastor. Given that women's ministry calling evolves over time and with the input of others (Zikmund et al., 1998), local church pastors and denominational officials may need to pursue potential women leaders.

Results from research conducted by Ernst and Young and by the Oppenheimer Fund (Catalano, 2014) suggest the advisability of looking for these future leaders on the sports field or court. Among women in senior leadership positions in business who participated in these studies, 90 percent played sports in high school, college, or beyond. Among female CEOs, the number rose to 96 percent. Team sports help develop the skills necessary for leadership success, such as teamwork, risk-taking, and learning to fail and learn from failure. This resilience appears critical given that risk aversion and fear of failure plague many women (Ely et al., 2001; Ibarra et al., 2013; Kay & Shipman, 2014). Working as part of an athletic team also teaches discipline, assertiveness, communication, and collaboration while enhancing participants' emotional intelligence (Catalano, 2014). I did not find similar research exploring other extracurricular activities such as debate,

music, or theater, which involve many of the same interpersonal dynamics, but looking for teen girls engaged in these sorts of activities may be a starting spot for local churches.

Churches may also want to look at their existing volunteer pools: Three of my interviewees spent years serving in noncredentialed roles at local churches, and another served in a parachurch organization prior to stepping toward vocational ministry in the FMC-USA. Potential senior leading women may already be serving in churches under the shadow occupation of pastor's wife (Blevins, 1996; Nesbitt, 1997c; Prichard, 1996; Zikmund et al., 1998). When I scanned FMC-USA personnel directories, I noticed many clergy couples were serving together. Typically the wife was ordained years after her husband. Since women tend to start the ordination process later than men, often in their mid-30s (Zikmund et al., 1998), taking a closer look at this population seems prudent. Perhaps some of these pastors' wives have the gifts and graces for senior leadership but are hesitant to step forward because of dynamics with their husbands (Diss, 2014).

At the same time, the organization can encourage women to grow in self-awareness so that they can understand both their vocational calling and what they are willing to do to pursue it (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). A common denominator among many of my interviewees was the courage to speak up for themselves; once they embraced their call to ministry, they did not passively wait for someone to notice them. This process of taking responsibility for their calling looked different for each of them, and confidence appeared to play a role. Not surprisingly, bolstering confidence is one of the major developmental tasks for women moving toward senior leadership.

Develop. Ruminski and Hobla (2012b) defined leadership development as "the process of navigating a labyrinthine context across time with the aim of personal, professional, and relational development as well as intellectual, emotional, and spiritual reflection" (p. 210). Because of differences in socialization and the effects of second-generation gender discrimination, women in leadership generally face different developmental tasks than men. For example, Dale (2014) observed that women can become conditioned to limitation and constraint; training can assist women in developing a greater sense of agency (Ely et al., 2011). Looking specifically at the FMC-USA, all of my interviewees spoke of an internalized sense of God-given authority that helped them when they faced opposition or other challenges. This confidence enabled them to realize that they belonged at the senior leadership table. Their self-assurance developed in various ways: Socialization from an early age helped, but for the majority, confidence grew as they experienced success in ministry and received affirmation from benevolent male advocates. Intentionally addressing this matter could help keep women in the leadership pipeline. This may particularly be the case with younger women, who are more likely to step out of church leadership due to reduced resilience in the face of obstacles and disappointments (Zikmund et al., 1998).

Ely et al. (2011) pointed out that many programs designed to train women for senior leadership positions err in one of two ways: Either they take the same materials designed to train men and reproduce them without consideration for the different dynamics facing women leaders or they try to re-socialize women on how to lead, typically from a masculine norm. This approach shows no regard for the competencies

and resiliencies many women have and further problematizes them. Ely et al. concluded, "While both approaches may impart some useful skills and tactics, neither adequately addresses the organizational realities women face nor is likely to foster in participants a sustained capacity for leadership" (p. 475). Instead, women would benefit more from personalized mentoring to help them walk through hostile environments, to navigate the leadership labyrinth, to prepare them for concrete situations they will face, and to debrief experiences they've had (Taylor, 2011).

In the coming pages I recommend topics that this training could include.

Visualizing senior leadership. In Chapter IV, I discussed aspiration among FMC-USA clergywomen and pondered whether socialization and a lack of role models constrained my subjects' view of their leadership potential. Finn (1996) addressed this issue as it manifested among Roman Catholic women serving as lay ministers, noting: "If suitable education and formation are missing, the needed confidence and self-esteem to interiorize aspirations may never develop" (p. 259). In the corporate world, Ely et al. (2011) found that isolation and restricted vision keep women functioning below their capabilities:

> The fewer women in the organization's upper echelons, the more vulnerable a woman may feel to the possibility of failure. She may, therefore, have a particularly hard time relinquishing the hard-won recognition she receives in her current role or the feeling of being indispensable to those who have come to depend on the role she has mastered. (p. 485)

Addressing inequity. Because many women are unaware of the narratives and structures that undergird bias, they may unwittingly perpetuate them. For example,

corporate women tend to limit workplace negotiation to work–family balance matters like flex-time; this focus perpetuates traditional Choice Argument narratives that constrain women (Ely et al., 2011; Monson, 2013). Leadership development efforts could assist women in using their negotiating skills to more effectively counter second-generation gender discrimination. To illustrate, rather than framing workplace equity as a justice-for-women issue, they could learn how to focus on how bias harms both men and women whereas gender balance benefits the organization (Ely et al., 2007).

Developing courage and confidence. These attributes can assist clergywomen in embracing their God-given authority regardless of the fear that may come from uncertainty about whether males will respect that authority (Taylor, 2011). Confidence enables women in ministry leadership to focus on their competence instead of worrying about likeability, which was a tension that surfaced in my interviews as well as in the literature (Monson, 2013). In addition, courage helps women to ask for what they want and need, whether that's seeking a different ministry assignment (Carter & Silva, 2010), requesting a salary increase (Choi, 2010; Forbes Berthoud, 2012), developing professional networks (Carter & Silva, 2010; Chang, 1997; Hewlett, 2012; Monson, 2013), or aligning with a benevolent male advocate for mentorship (Ely et al., 2011; Forbes Berthoud, 2012; Monson, 2013).

Contextualizing their leadership. Both in her interview and in subsequent conversation, Barb told me how crucial it is for women moving into senior leadership positions to be aware of their ministry context and to adapt accordingly. She pointed out that in first-generation settings — churches that have never had a female pastor —

something as simple as the sound of a woman's voice coming from the pulpit will be challenging for some. She explained how she counseled clergywomen walking in to these settings to adopt some traditionally masculine approaches in their work to ease this transition, like modulating their voices and toning down their volume if they tended to be loud or boisterous. She also advised them to walk the fine line of retaining their femininity while doing making these modifications, recognizing that the congregation would sense something was wrong if their woman pastor appeared too masculine.

Although this path can be difficult to navigate, both Barb and Jan talked about learning how to walk it. Training clergywomen in this area seems prudent; at the same time, as Ibarra et al. (2013) noted, women in leadership cannot allow themselves to spend so much time trying to deal with double binds like these that they neglect purpose, competence, and networking.

Increasing competence. Frostburg State University created a competency-focused interdisciplinary course for aspiring leaders drawing from their Women's Studies, Communication, and Leadership Studies departments (Ruminski, Whalen, & Branam, 2012). Using discussion, personal reflection, and assessment tools, participants grew in both self-understanding and communication competency, recognizing that "communication is central to leadership development: such skills include self-monitoring, listening, framing, persuasion, delegating, conflict management, meeting facilitation, teambuilding and organizing strategies, and offering constructive feedback" (Ruminski et al., 2012, p. 89).

My interviewees similarly reflected that the ability to communicate well is a fundamental skill needed for senior leadership in the church. At the congregational level, the most visible task of a pastor is preaching. Bishops, superintendents, and other senior-level leaders often address large audiences through their speaking and their writing. For this reason, communication proficiency is a vital competency for clergywomen to develop.

A developmental model. Burk, Laff, and Payseur (2012) described a leadership development curriculum for women at Columbia College in South Carolina that incorporates many of the points listed above. The program revolves around equipping high-capacity women in the 4Cs: courage, commitment, confidence, and competence. The courage module focused on accepting risk and developing the willingness to be afraid and act anyway. Bolstering participants' courage enabled them to see the ways in which they had been encultured, to understand how they visualized themselves as leaders and as women, to grasp how they shape and are shaped by their relationships with others, and to start developing their voice. The commitment component of the course prompted participants to appropriately apply courage to embrace their values. This involved articulating what mattered to them so they could direct the voice they had started discovering in the previous unit toward it. By owning their beliefs, the women shifted their decision making to being values based. The confidence unit compelled participants to seize opportunities to courageously live out their values. Burk et al. noted that this was the sticking point for most women, as they tended to self-limit; instructors introduced mentoring at this point as a way to address this inhibition. Class members' growing

confidence enabled them to start influencing others using their voice and beliefs. The final module focused on competence, which included developing insight about how the participants acted to allow them to evaluate what they did and to grow in their effectiveness. Students implemented feedback loops and self-evaluation protocols, learned to process and accept failure, developed perseverance in the face of delayed rewards, and celebrated success. The course designers intentionally placed the unit on leadership competencies and strategies after the ones on developing courage, commitment, and confidence, recognizing that these qualities were vital to undergird the participants' leadership capabilities. Although this program was not focused specifically on ministry settings, it presents a valuable framework that FMC-USA could use to create a training program for women's leadership development.

Deployment and ongoing development. In the corporate world, Ibarra et al. (2013) found that some high-talent women who were promoted failed because their superiors did not attend to the systemic and personal obstacles these leaders encountered. As a result of the women's struggles, the organization labeled them as incapable of senior leadership, setting in motion a defeating cycle that stalled their upward progress and adversely affected their confidence. Rhode (2003) traced this negative spiral: Diminished confidence and lower expectations for success lead to fewer opportunities and poorer performance, which reduces the likelihood of being supported by the organization or being mentored, which increases the probability of the woman leaving, which contributes to fewer role models for the next round of up-and-coming women. In addition, this cycle perpetuates the assumption among some men that women lack competence (Barnett,

2007) and strengthens among some women the belief that they can't lead, which Rhode and Kellerman (2007) deemed a *psychological glass ceiling*.

Ibarra et al. (2013) urged organizations to mitigate this pattern by preparing these women for common issues they will face post-promotion, such as the mismatch between perceptions of leadership and women's qualities, anxiety that may come from being given additional responsibilities, and resistance they may face. In addition, they encouraged supporting an iterative process of leadership identity supported by champions who not only will mitigate external resistance but also will speak encouragement to the newly deployed leader. This positive cycle boosts confidence, emboldening women to take more risks and to live into their strategic visions, two areas of leadership in which women are often rated lower than their male counterparts (Gavett, 2013).

Rhode and Kellerman (2007) encouraged ongoing leadership coaching, mentoring, and networking for women on senior-leadership trajectories to assist them in making career development decisions. Ely et al. (2011) counseled that connecting with advisors can also help women to evaluate the informal responsibilities they often assume in the workplace, either because the work needs to be done and no one else has stepped up to do it or because these tasks are personally gratifying. At times these roles limit women's time, availability, and energy for more strategic work (Ely et al., 2011). Dialoguing about these scenarios with others can aid women in declining the good for the sake of accepting the better and can equip them to deal with the anxiety surrounding things not getting done. Looking back at my interviews, I found that several of the women turned down or stepped out of jobs because these roles were not the best fit for

their gifts or did not move the women in the direction they perceived as correct for them. This focus prevented them from getting stuck in suboptimal positions, a common occurrence for women in ministry leadership (Nesbitt, 1997c; Tucker, 1996; Zikmund et al., 1998).

Ely et al. (2011) additionally recommended that senior leading women request 360-degree feedback in group training with other women, citing three specific benefits. First, this training allows group members to become aware of their blind spots while seeing and working through the often contradictory messages women get about their leadership as a result of double-binds. Second, gaining practice in group training provides them with the opportunity to learn how to present this paradoxical feedback to their superiors and gives them a more objective tool that they can use to self-advocate on the job. Finally, this evaluation can be a useful reality-testing mechanism to help them identify whether some of their career limitations stem from areas of personal deficiency for which they need to take responsibility. Browne (2013) reinforced Ely et al.'s counsel, noting:

> People who are at, or near, the top rungs of business face much scrutiny, which can have an inhibiting effect on those whose manner is regarded as unconventional. Thus, providing high-talent women with a safe environment for coaching, experimentation, and discussing double binds, communication style, and other knotty issues is critical to developing their identities as leaders. ("Creating a Safe Place," para. 1)

Ruminski and Holba (2012b) linked ongoing development opportunities back to the image of the leadership labyrinth. They observed:

> A labyrinth metaphor helps to support that philosophy of contemplative, intentional educational development. Learning to confront and resolve double binds as possible rather than resisting them will keep us on the path — rather than bursting through glass to make a rapid rise to the top, navigating a labyrinth implies we are embedded in a context and cannot simply rise up and out of that experience without losing sense of connection and purpose. This view encourages patience — a virtue of both humanity and leadership — to respond with timely, fitting responses. (p. 214)

Moving slowly and intentionally through the senior leadership labyrinth, being mindful of the developmental tasks along the way, can thus help women and organizations to avoid perpetuating cycles of defensiveness and reactivity.

Contextualizing this notion to the FMC-USA may help the denomination move toward greater clergy gender equity. As I consider the stories of the women I interviewed, I recall how each experienced transformational crises that helped solidify her calling to and capacity for senior leadership. In most cases, the women described having people with whom they could process what they were facing. Although these crucible moments looked different, all of them proved essential to shaping these women's leadership identity.

Create a Center for Gender Equity

Nesbitt (1997c) observed that post-feminist era women have taken a more individualized approach to challenging gender discrimination. This strategy focuses on the local and specific, bringing about organic, grassroots change that may evolve more slowly than the broader revolutionary efforts commonly associated with the feminist movement. Such a tactic makes sense when the dynamics of second-generation gender

discrimination are considered. In addition, this approach is less likely to bring about widespread backlash because it is perceived as less threatening (Nesbitt, 1997c). That being said, collective action makes sense at the organizational level (Ely et al., 2011). Rhode and Kellerman (2007) opined that for organizations desiring gender equity, "the most important factor in ensuring equal access to leadership opportunities is a commitment to that objective, which is reflected in workplace priorities, policies, and reward structures" (p. 27). This commitment includes developing an intentional and broad plan to promote diversity and then providing the staffing, structures, and resources to bring it to pass. Such an effort would need to go beyond educational endeavors; as Gino (2014) discovered, passive efforts like diversity training do not appear to produce gains in women's representation in senior leadership. What did make a difference were active efforts, like establishing a committee dedicated to promoting diversity and creating designated high-level staff positions for women.

The FMC-USA could create a national office, or a position within a national office, devoted to this purpose. The denomination could draw from other churches with such infrastructure, such as the United Church of Christ and their Center for Women in Church and Society (Zikmund, 1996). One of the Free Methodist's sister denominations, the Wesleyan Church, has a Center for Women in Ministry (n.d.) whose objectives — advocacy, deployment, education, networking, and research — overlap with much of what I present below.

Resourcing. A Center for Gender Equity could act as a hub for materials that present the theological case for egalitarianism, including resources geared toward both

congregations and ministerial candidates. These tools could counterbalance the complementarian voices that have dominated the evangelical landscape (Bessey, 2013; Chaves, 1997; DeMuth, 2013; Huber & Stanley, 1999; Van Biema, 2009; Witherington, 2012, Woodiwiss, 2013). The Center could connect denominational leaders with pre-existing books, videos, articles, and other media and could develop additional materials based on denominational need. It could gather information about best practices related to women's leadership development and policy from local and regional practitioners both within and outside the denomination (Madell, 2013a; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Consolidating these resources in one place would assist conference and national leaders in their work.

Assessment. The Center for Gender Equity could facilitate the norm-naming exercise I discussed earlier by evaluating recruitment, retention, and appointment processes as well as performance evaluations, mentoring structures, and work-family policies, searching for subtle biases that may constrain women (Ibarra et al., 2013; Rhode, 2003; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Turo, 2014). As part of the assessment process, this office could also conduct regular studies on FMC-USA clergywomen to assess progress and identify growth areas (Zikmund, 1996). Broadcasting these results would add a layer of accountability to the denomination in working toward clergy gender equity, particularly if this publicity were partnered with annual, publicly reported goal setting in this area (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007).

Support. A Center for Gender Equity could identify clergywomen to fill open church positions and maintain a database of capable female clergy and lay leaders to

serve on boards, task forces, committees, and other decision- and policy-making entities in the FMC-USA (Nesbitt, 1997c). It could also work in tandem with the ministerial credentialing office to address matters associated with women's leadership development. Furthermore, the Center could actively support networking among women in ministry leadership. Such connections may improve retention rates for up-and-coming female leaders (Madell, 2013b) and would help provide the role models so many of my interviewees said they lacked when they were in the early stages of their ministry careers. Networking would also raise awareness of, and provide language to describe, the challenges women face as they navigate the leadership labyrinth (Stephenson-Abetz & Wood Alemán, 2012). Given the overwhelming importance of peer networks, role models, and same-sex mentors for women in leadership, prioritizing this at a national level seems prudent (Choi, 2010; Ibarra et al., 2013; Ingersoll, 2002; Kammerer, 2002; Ruminski & Holba, 2012a; Turo, 2014). Furthermore, by tying networking into the larger organizational goals for clergy gender equity, women may be less apt to view it in negative terms: as manipulatively using someone else to further their own career (Ely et al., 2011).

Encourage Benevolent Male Advocacy

In Chapter V, I discussed Benevolent Male Advocates (BMAs): men with power in an organization who help promising female leaders advance through the leadership labyrinth. I described three levels of advocacy: men who call out and identify potential, men who use their influence to open doors, and men who share power with women. I noted how all of the senior-leadership-attaining women in my study had at least one, if

not multiple, BMAs who played significant roles in their career formation. Henderson's (2012) interviews revealed a similar dynamic: capable business women seeking leadership in the church found they needed to attach themselves to an influential man in order to gain any traction. This also resonated with Surratt's (as cited by Taylor, 2011) conclusions: "The majority of women in executive positions attribute their position to their senior pastor or other male pastor identifying their leadership gifts and encouraging them to use their strengths to benefit the church" (p. 5-6). These male champions help ease churches' fears about women in ministry leadership (Kammerer, 2002) and can speak up about systemic sexism in ways women can't (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Their support helps to increase retention rates for young clergywomen (Zikmund et al., 1998).

Men in prominent national positions in the FMC-USA can model advocacy by citing female authors when they speak, enlisting women as mentors, attending conferences on women's leadership development, inviting women to share speaking time with them at events, networking capable women with other BMAs, opening the inner social circles of the denomination to women, publicly affirming capable females, and asking them to serve on strategic national committees, boards, and task forces (Ely et al., 2011; Frost, 2014; Ibarra et al., 2013; Spar, 2013b; Yellin, 2014). They can incentivize advocacy by advancing men within the denomination who have a track record of building gender-balanced teams (Wittenberg-Cox, 2014). They can contradict binary rhetoric that essentializes women (Frost, 2014) and point out the subtle sexism women face, as Henderson (2012) did when he wrote, "Let me ask my male readers this question: when was the last time the word *allow* was used to describe what you could do in church for no

other reason than that you are a man?" (p. 22) Advocacy efforts could also involve the organization intentionally partnering high-performing women with senior-leading men to work on a leadership development agenda that would promote equity (Browne, 2013).

National leaders can initiate more balanced conversations about gender and equity among male peers. In her interviews with corporate leaders who were BMAs, Wittenberg-Cox (2013b) discovered that these men allowed open debate about this subject and then talked about their own process of wrestling with the issue, including how hard it was to understand it as a male. They discussed the benefits of diversity for the organization and what it would take to create a new culture where all employees could excel rather than trying to compress women into an existing mold of the ideal worker that biases toward the masculine. By framing gender equity as a leadership issue rather than a women's issue, they allowed the conversation to open up in new ways (Wittenberg-Cox, 2014).

The denomination can also engage BMAs at the conference and local level, as these men may be able to move the organization toward greater clergy gender equity in grassroots ways the national leadership cannot (Lehman, 1994). Teaching them to do so may involve some training and permission giving; as Spar (2013b) found, many men want to see women succeed, but they do not know how to help. In addition to the recommendations listed above for national leaders, conference-level and local church leaders may benefit from guidance on how to assess women under their tutelage and how to debrief these evaluations with them. Such guidance might include learning to keep an eye out for bias in performance reviews, particularly given research showing that women

tend to receive more personal criticism and less constructive feedback than their male counterparts on these assessments (Davis, 2014). In light of studies showing that men tend to soften criticism out of fear of hurting women's feelings, Spar (2013b) suggested training men to correct female subordinates professionally while Yellin (2014) urged women's mentors to move beyond hand-holding, noting that this approach does not help capable women to advance.

Based on my research, I see two specific ways in which the denomination can increase the number of women in senior leadership. One is to custom design senior leadership positions around capable female leaders, creating posts based on these individuals' gifts and availability. This strategy helps to address some of the work–family balance and geographic mobility issues some women face. A second option is for men to vacate existing senior leadership positions in order for women to step into them. Kammerer (2002) suggested, and my interviews confirmed, that an ideal way to do this at the local level is gradually: A BMA identifies a capable woman, invites her to share power with him, and walks alongside her as she settles in vocationally and the church gets accustomed to her; then he transitions out and she stays and leads. A similar approach could work for regional and national positions.

For these partnerships to work, women need to be willing to work with men and to allow freedom for them to make mistakes along the way (Diss, 2014; Nesbitt, 1997c). Third-wave feminism paves the way for this accommodation, as its acknowledgement that patriarchy damages both men and women has created a less hostile environment for BMAs than they perceived during previous manifestations of feminism (Stephenson-

Abetz & Wood Alemán, 2012). Unfortunately, popular thought, particularly that propagated by the media, continues to be dominated by second-wave feminist notions that foster animosity between men and women, not collaboration (Quigley Holden & French, 2012). If women and men work together intentionally and graciously, they can help to create new collaborative models for gender equity (Burden, 2013).

Even more significantly, men and women need to define and model what it means to be colleagues. For too long the fear of sexual impropriety has dominated discussion about cross-gender working relationships, particularly in the evangelical world (Burden, 2013). Driver (2014a) stated:

> There is plenty of teaching that says men can't be expected to have healthy friendships and working relationships with women, and vice versa. The message communicated with this advice is that we are too weak, vulnerable, immature, sinful, and at the whim of every commercial Satan sends our way. (p. 93)

Driver countered this argument using the Bible story of Barak and Deborah, in which a male military commander worked with a female judge to conquer an enemy army. Other authors (see especially Viola, 2014) pointed to Jesus's example of actively engaging with women, including his unprecedented decision to include female disciples in his traveling entourage. Frost (2014) opined, "I prefer to assume that the modeling of good, healthy mentoring relationships across the genders is more important than buying into the anxiety about the presence of women in your life" (p. 221).

The evangelical world has had difficulty finding ways to think about women that are not tied to sex. In an effort to desexualize relationships with women, male clergy are sometimes encouraged to think of older women as mothers, comparably aged ones as

sisters, and younger ones as daughters. Unfortunately, these labels still define women according to their relationship with someone else. They also run the risk of de-professionalizing them: One of my interviewees talked about experiencing younger men's "mommy issues." In my career I have experienced older male supervisors portraying themselves as father- or uncle-figures, demonstrating overprotective attitudes and behaviors toward me that came across as patronizing.

At the other end of the spectrum has been the *Smokin' Hot Wives* trend from the early and mid-2010s, in which evangelical male pastors took to social media to publicly comment on how attracted they were to their spouses. This fad paralleled a surge of books on sex from Fundamentalist authors that advocated male dominance and female submission. These authors painted "good Christian wives" as being responsible to pleasure their husbands lest they push them to commit adultery (DeMuth, 2013; Hoag, 2013). Hoag (2013) deconstructed the Smokin' Hot Wives movement, seeing it not as well-meaning affirmation but as part of the ongoing subjugation of women. He argued,

> This obsessive male Christian mentality *can't exist* where women are speaking and preaching and leading in the same roles as men, mutually submitted to Christ and each other. Such an environment literally [*sic*] chokes out these misogynistic habits or at least exposes them for exactly what they are — objectifying and dehumanizing to women. And make no mistake, that's what this is, because as soon as a woman is thought of as *a thing* — a thing like a "smokin' hot Christian wife" — she becomes less of *a person*. (para. 14, emphasis in original)

Woodiwiss (2013) tied this dehumanizing trend into a larger cultural backlash against women in the Christian church, asserting that "the stories that fail to treat women seriously are the kinds of narratives that lead to manipulation, devaluation, and sexual

abuse of these very women" (para. 4). Because men still hold narrative power due to their positions in the church, they can choose to use it to elevate women as colleagues, instead of diminishing them as sex objects.

Men in the church can learn from corporate BMAs how to model collegial relationships. A regional lay leader in the FMC-USA who serves as the second-in-command for a healthcare-related organization vividly described to me how her BMA did this on the job:

> The president of my company, my boss (colleague and friend), consistently defers to me in meetings in a number of nonverbal ways that I think are important. The two of us run our organization and it is clear to everyone this is the case. Our offices are next to one another; most of the time we sit next to each other in meetings; he makes eye contact with me on items we've discussed together to acknowledge that we are on the same team when he communicates this, and depends on my confirmation head nod or response before continuing.
>
> In discussing decisions, he affirms that "[Name] and I discussed" in nearly every meeting we have whether it be with our managers, staff, or male-centric surgeon partner meetings. I always feel like more than a peer and instead [like] a key decision-maker and influencer. His elevation of me has allowed my voice and influence to matter with narcissistic surgeons who tend to be very male dominant.

What's next?

St. Pierre (2000) asserted:

> Just as multiple and diverse power relations can be strategically codified into states of domination, so too can multiple and diverse points of resistance be codified into a revolution. Revolution, however, is a totalizing attempt to overthrow power once and for all and establish freedom from oppression.

> Poststructural theories of power and resistance doubt that this is possible and believe instead that the analysis of and resistance within power relations must proceed on a case-by-case basis. . . . Resistance is generally local, unpredictable, and constant. (p. 492)

This perspective is consistent with the organic, evolutionary change I described earlier in this chapter. The issue of clergy gender equity cannot be solved but must be continually engaged. We cannot be liberated from power of men over women, because power is not an object to be freed from. Rather, those of us in the FMC-USA can wrestle with the ways in which women are being produced as leaders. Women are not any one thing, as the descriptive data show. We cannot be essentialized. Nor can men. For that reason, we have to open up our idea of what it means to be a minister — and of what it means to be successful as one. This includes troubling a definition of success that marginalizes women (or men) who pursue a God-given call to serve in subordinate clergy roles; these positions must not be viewed as "second class" or "junior varsity."

As I mentioned earlier when writing about organizational complexity, change initiatives spearheaded from the top of an organization are inherently limited. Shaw (1997) pointed out that organizations have both a formally recognized system and a shadow system that influences the direction of the organization. The legitimate system operates on the surface and is more easily defined and manipulated while the shadow system is informal, underlying, less visible, and thus less easily diagnosed, controlled, and managed. The presence of both operating simultaneously in an organization creates complexity that is further muddied by contextual factors outside the organization's control. Therefore, any attempts to intervene must involve humility and the ability to

contain anxiety in the face of uncertainty. To use a metaphor, organizational change is more like a dance than a cause-and-effect machine, with the music continually shifting in response to the context that is created, in part, by the interactions of the dancers. It is highly paradoxical and, at times, chaotic. This unpredictability is what sets the stage for change. As Shaw (1997) explained:

> Iterative processes of both amplifying and dampening feedback propagate through the system to produce islands of patterned order which arise and dissolve in a sea of disorder. New patterns emerge unpredictably, through the unfolding logic of self-organizing forms of control and without any single governing set of rules or schemas. (p. 238)

One of the tasks of senior leadership, then, is to control what is within their purview in the legitimate system and to release what is not.

How will we know we have attained equity?

Since I began this research nearly 6 years ago, one question has haunted me: What do I mean by clergy gender equity? As someone who has led innumerable discussions on goal setting, I know that a person has to determine the desired outcome in order to set a course to attain it. I think of Browne's (2013) counsel that high-level leaders need to set and articulate clear, concrete goals for equity and then provide regular public updates on progress regarding these goals. So what would clergy gender equity look like in the FMC-USA?

Stone's (2012) work offers an intriguing take on equity. She described bringing a chocolate cake to her public policy course and asking students how to distribute it equitably. The first and most obvious answer was to divide it equally according to the

number of individuals present in the classroom. Stone noted that some raised objections to this solution, however. Some argued this course of action wasn't fair to those who were absent from class that day and to those who would have enrolled in the class had they known they would have the opportunity to enjoy chocolate cake. Others thought the cake should be used to reward merit: She should give the students a pop quiz and those who received high grades should get bigger pieces than those who scored poorly. A contingent of men argued that they traditionally lacked access to cake because they were forced to play football while girls learned how to bake in home economics. For this reason, they claimed that they should split half the cake among themselves — despite representing only one-third of the students — while the two-thirds of the class who were women shared the other half. A passing colleague suggested that equity would mean distributing the cake by hierarchy, with department chairs, for example, receiving large wedges with extra frosting; assistant professors getting slivers; and undergraduates, crumbs. The debate raged: Students who had eaten smaller lunches should get larger pieces; those who disliked chocolate should surrender their portions to those who loved it; everyone's name should be put in a hat and the student whose name was drawn should get the whole cake. Stone concluded:

> Here is the paradox in distributive problems: equality often means inequality, and equal treatment often means unequal treatment. The same distribution may look equal or unequal, depending on where you focus. I use the word "equality" to denote sameness and to signify the part of the distribution that contains uniformity — uniformity of slices, or of meals, or of voting power, for example. I use

> "equity" to denote distributions regarded as fair, even though they contain both equalities and inequalities. (p. 41)

So what is a fair distribution of senior leadership roles for women in the FMC-USA? I cannot answer that question. What I can say is that perhaps we'll know we've arrived at equity when we no longer assume that a woman baked the cake.

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PROMOTING CLERGY GENDER EQUITY: A MIXED-METHODS ANALYSIS OF AN EGALITARIAN EVANGELICAL DENOMINATION

Beth K. Armstrong

Scholars and practitioners endeavoring to explain why women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions generally fall into one of two camps: Choice Argument proponents claim that these disparities stem from aspirational, educational, and experiential differences between men and women while Barrier Argument advocates maintain that women face societal and organizational obstacles to equity. I engaged both of these perspectives as I studied senior leadership attainment within the Free Methodist Church, USA, an Evangelical denomination that espouses egalitarianism. Using a transformative emancipatory mixed-methods design, I gathered both survey and interview data to explore three primary research questions: First, to what extent, if any, do clergy differ along gender lines in the positions to which they aspire? Second, to what extent, if any, do FMC-USA clergywomen turn down ministry opportunities more often than clergymen, and, when they do, what factors influence their decisions? Finally, what are common elements in the stories of clergywomen who have attained senior leadership positions in the FMC-USA? I discovered that disparities result from a complex interplay of women's choice and organizational, cultural, and congregational barriers. Based on my data and the available literature, I offered six recommendations that could assist the denomination in moving toward clergy gender equity

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