

Leadership Integration Project  
Navigating the Labyrinth of Gender Inequities for Women in Leadership:  
A Call to Action

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### Executive Summary

The rise of women in leadership has progressed and grown throughout the past several decades. The history of women in leadership is a rich one, full of work of women in the past who have cleared the path and shattered the so-called glass ceiling facing them, putting into place a new era of women in the working world (Anyikwa, Hodge, & Wells-Wibon, 2015). Yet, despite this navigation and progress, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions, specifically in the educational context. In their article on women mentoring women, Block and Tietjen-Smith state, "although the numbers of women achieving advanced degrees is outpacing men, women are still underrepresented at the top levels of higher education administration" (2016, pg. 306). This research is well supported in a variety of studies, showing that there are still barriers in place that are preventing women from easily navigating the straight path to leadership in higher education. This is especially true Christian higher education, with only six of the 118 Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in the United States having female presidents (Dhalvig & Longman, 2014).

In the past, research showed a glass ceiling existed, which limited women in how far they could move in their working world, primarily where positions of leadership were concerned. Through the work of the women in history who have battled before us, this glass-ceiling shattered, but there is an argument for using "a new metaphor, the labyrinth, for better capturing the current challenges that women face as they navigate their way into leadership positions" (Lafreniere & Longman, 2008, pg. 389). Although this is present in all contexts, it is especially prevalent in situations of Christian higher education.

We must consider the idea that "male-normed leadership structures and theological commitments that influence dominant views of gender roles in faith-based institutions combine

with the multiple cultures that function within a college or university" to create barriers (Longman, Daniels, Bray & Liddell, 2018, p.2). These come in the form of both benevolent and blatant gender harassment, stereotyping, and prejudice toward both female staff and students (Longman, Daniels, Bray & Liddell, 2018). Accepted second-generation gender biases, combined with societal structures that have become norms, are limiting women's advancement into leadership in Christian higher education. Galatians 3:26-28 states:

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (New International Version)

If the Christian higher education community is to adhere to this scriptural truth and allow everyone to see women as one in the body of Christ and as fit for leadership roles, we must first determine what is leading to the gender inequities in all settings. This must start at the base level through the identification of gender bias, social structures, and the inaccurate justification of sexism.

These gender inequities for women run deep and wide across multiple career and cultural platforms. The root causes of these inequities start much earlier and at a broader scope than we realize. Identifying the gender biases and beliefs that exist is essential, but it is perhaps even more important to identify where and when they begin. Increasing evidence suggests the biases, beliefs, and harassment regarding gender roles and stereotypes start in the earliest years of learning. It is only through addressing these issues and redefining the roles people play, regardless of gender, that we will truly create change for gender equity in the future. In their

report on career-related learning in primary schools, Chambers, Kashefpakdel, Rehill, and Percy (2018), quoting Paul Whiteman, share

The importance of appropriate exposure to the world of work at the primary level cannot be understated. Children form stereotypical views of the world from an early age. Biased assumptions lead to a narrowing of career aspirations and an inability to relate learning to a world beyond school. (p. 6)

Implementing a variety of role models into early career education, in combination with the development of programs such as gender inequity awareness, equal pay and benefits, and mentorship for leadership and career growth will help create gender equity, not just in leadership, but in career pathways in general. As Chambers et al. (2018) state, "Early interventions can bring a lasting impact on children's development and perceptions of different occupations, and of the subjects enabling access to them" (p. 8). Real change in gender equity requires a thorough analysis of all of the root causes and systematic addressing of necessary changes from the earliest years of learning.

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## **Chapter One: The Current Situation of Women in Leadership in Education**

The situation of women in the workplace is changing. Women are returning to work more often after raising children, asking for different roles, experiencing a shared balance in the household chores, and becoming more represented in the workplace (Lau Chin, 2011). Although a shift in gender roles is taking place, researchers found that “little has changed in the representation or pay of women leaders in higher education” (Longman & Anderson, 2016, p. 25). What is the root cause of this continued imbalance in the representation of women over men in higher education?

### **The Picture of a Contemporary Leader**

In the past, women found it difficult to break through the glass-ceiling into leadership. Historically, leaders were seen as "individuals who make history through the use of power and resources," and the traditional leaders would "come to their role through social conventions" (O'Donoghue, 2017, p. 153). The system seemed to call for educational leaders who fit a specific prototype: top-down, patriarchal, hierarchal, self-assertive, motivated, and charismatic (Lau Chin, 2011). Leadership ability was often determined through a series of personality traits rather than actual skill, as well as assessing and meeting the needs of the people. Contemporary leadership calls for a different type of leadership, and the question is: can women meet that call?

Contemporary leadership is trending towards leadership that is transformational, collaborative, and people-based. In a study for her doctoral dissertation, Alessaundra Mills found that the qualities that people seek in 21<sup>st</sup>-century leaders include being “discerning, authentic, facilitative, collaborative, and communicative” (2016, pp. 91-92). This new model is fundamentally transformational servant leadership. Servant leadership must be the grounding component for 21<sup>st</sup>-century educational leaders because our mandate is to develop our most

valuable resources, human beings, to be able to contribute to and serve the world within which they live. Servant leadership "seeks to involve others in decision making, is strongly based in ethical and caring behaviour, and enhances the growth of workers while improving the caring and quality of organizational life" (Spears, 2010).

### **Transformational Servant Leadership**

To understand what this kind of leader looks like and if women can fill these roles, one must break down the various elements of this leader for further understanding. The Trinity Western University *Leadership Integration Project Manual* sets out nine leadership competencies that make up the transformational servant leader. These are: "visioning and strategic thinking, adaptability and change, results, team leadership, people development, innovation, service and quality orientation, relationships and collaboration, and planning and organizing" (2017, pp. 7-9). Further studies show that

Transformational leaders have tendencies that include: (a) projecting confidence and optimism about goals and followers' abilities, (b) providing a clear vision of institutional goals and mission, (c) encouraging creativity through empowerment and rewarding experimentation, (d) setting high expectations, (e) creating meaningful and satisfying work environments, and (f) establishing personal relationships with followers. (Webb, 2008, p. 19)

The development of these competencies and tendencies result in a transformational servant leader who can fulfill the qualities that Mills describes.

O'Donoghue discusses a theory of leadership called distributed leadership, which is embedded in the qualities of a transformational servant leader. A leader practicing distributed leadership can bring their team on board to assist in "setting directions, developing teachers,

organizing and building a culture in which colleagues are motivated by moral imperatives and structuring, building relationships, and promoting collaboration" (2017, p. 155). Such a leader utilizes the distributed leadership theory to "involve all members of the professional staff in a consistent and intentional focus on the core work of the school, namely the quality learning and human development of the young people" (Staratt, 2011, p. 132). The qualities of building community, listening, healing, awareness, empathy, and commitment to the growth of people are the ones that allow the leader to come alongside those on the front lines, empowering and enabling them (Spears, 2010). With such a leader in place, staff see a person who is committed to serving them for the greater good of the school, and they seek to do the same. In the end, this approach leads to "the development of a human life that has meaning and value and purpose" (Staratt, 2011, p.1). In a system where current presidents and other leaders are ageing out and retiring, the time for a change is now (Ballenger, 2010). Women are more than capable of being a part of that change.

### **The Abilities of Women**

Women are well equipped to fill the role of the leader, as previously outlined. Women are known for their empathy, their positive response to the needs of others, their ability to develop the skills of the people with whom they are serving, and their ability to collaborate. In a study identifying the qualities of the ideal modern leader, researchers found that "our data show that many of the qualities of an ideal modern leader are considered feminine. Most importantly, the responses show that we seek a more expressive style of leader, one who shares feelings and emotions more openly" (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014, p. 8). This authenticity is what Mills discusses in her model of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century leader. It also fits with the "shift from individual-

centred leadership to an others-centered perspective" that infiltrates both businesses and higher education institutions (Lowe, 2011, p. 319).

Lowe also describes a concept biblically known as *allélon*, which is defined as a reciprocal way of serving and collaborating with others (2011, p. 323). In such an environment each person is committed to the well-being of all others involved, and "one person does not perform all of these behaviours for others, but everyone adopts an *allélon* perspective with the net result that everyone benefits holistically from the interaction" (Lowe, 2011, p. 324). This concept fits well with the people development and relationship aspects of the transformational servant leader. Lowe adds that the nurturing nature of women and their ability to connect with people both within the team and outside of it makes them natural leaders. She states that for educational institutions to succeed, they must "consider leaders who are relationship builders, place high value on networks, and intuitively seek to bring others into the organization," namely women (2011, p. 326).

### **The Ideal Versus the Reality**

With the paradigm shift in the style of leadership in education and the expansion of women in the workplace, the number of women in leadership should be reaching parity with men. This is not, however, the reality. Although "significant changes have taken place in the context of higher education, including women surpassing men's enrollment at bachelors, masters, and doctoral levels, and women's proportion of faculty roles more than doubling between 1969 and 2009," women are still not entering into administrative leadership positions a level equal with men (Broido, Brown, Stygles & Bronkema, 2015, pp. 595-596). Many factors contribute to this inequality in higher education leadership: adherence to old hierarchical structures, similarity-attraction, and a lack of gender equity.

**Hierarchal structures.** In secular education, there are many hierarchal leadership structures from the past that are still in place today. Although the current evolving work and learning environment needs transformational, collaborative, people-oriented, team-based, and servant-driven leaders, the old-type leader is still hired. Many researchers suggest that an "ideal worker" concept is causing this. This ideal worker is one who "has characteristics that are more often found in men than in women, in particular, a spouse who has responsibility for managing a household and raising children" and who can focus entirely on their given role (Broido et al., 2015, p. 596). Although many women are now part of two-income families, with families in situations that make it possible for both parents to work and still be a family unit, it is rare to have a stay-at-home spouse. This would allow the woman to focus entirely on her work without any familial obligations pulling her away from her responsibilities, much like men often had and still have today. The lack of in-house support systems put into place to undergird women in the integration of family and work means that fewer women can be this "ideal worker" and fill those top positions.

As Eddy and Ward (2015) found in their research, "Choices such as opting out of full-time positions to care for children or choosing not to go up for promotion to full professor in the interest of maintaining greater balance between work and home can have long-term consequences for academic career advancement" (p. 7). Women who make these choices find themselves falling behind and unable to catch up. While some would say it is the woman's choice to take risks associated with advancement in her career and that she needs to just do it, it often feels like no choice at all. The promotion of women into the highest levels of leadership in education is not merely a matter of trying harder or making hard choices. The infrastructure of

support and archaic levels of hierarchy makes it nearly impossible for women to do what they want to do in their career pathway.

Women are easily able to find a place in the world of higher education in the positions commonly feminized, such as secretarial work and administrative assistants. Where a deficiency is apparent is at the next level. "The academic pipeline begins to leak at the associate-professor level: The number of women associate professors dips to an average of 42 percent, and by the time they become full professors, women comprise only 29 percent of those at the top of the faculty pipeline" (Eddy & Ward, 2015, p. 8). Women are sometimes able to progress into full professor roles in the areas of humanities and social sciences. Still, they are severely underrepresented in STEM, business, and those commonly categorized as male-oriented areas, like senior leadership (Broido et al., 2015). What other factors could be contributing to this under-representation? Some would point to the idea of similarity-attraction in conjunction with adherence to past hierarchal structures.

**Similarity attraction.** Similarity attraction is the concept that those in positions of leadership are most likely to replace themselves with someone like themselves. If the current administration and the hiring team are mostly composed of white males who adhere to the past structures and ideals, they will be more likely to replace leadership positions with the same. Ballenger (2010) found evidence to support the idea of a "good old boy network," which "found that most men managers tended to sponsor other men because they were attracted to and tended to prefer those similar to themselves" (p. 12). This good old boy network is a limitation that is continually mentioned by women who have attempted to break the glass ceiling of leadership in education. The network refers to the male-dominant circle of activities and circumstances that women find difficult to break through. Although they could be a part of the leadership circle

work environment, "the good old boy networks are not welcoming and/or inviting to women, e.g., going out for drinks, golfing, hunting, fishing, etc.," which are often activities that women are perceived as uninterested in, creating an excuse not to invite them (Ballanger, 2010, p. 12).

This "club" can also result in "unwanted physical contact, and expectations to fulfill traditional gender roles and perform lower status work," which women are not willing to be a part of (Broido et al., 2015, p. 608). In discussing this with an educational peer in leadership, one of the things she mentioned was making a conscious choice to participate in activities like "heading to the pub for drinks after the professional development session" (T. Stobbe, personal communication, November 2018). She knew it would lead to networking opportunities and business discussions, which was worth it. For other women, this is one more obstacle that they are not willing to overcome.

**A lack of gender equity.** The reality that men and women are different and therefore experience life differently is the premise behind gender inequality. Women face issues like a double standard regarding their behaviour, and the undervaluing of their skills, thus creating obstacles in their path to leadership. Because their reality is so different, and men have never experienced the barriers that women consistently face, "they therefore do not identify gender as an interpretive lens because they presuppose that their perspective transcends what they might identify as the localized contingency of gender" (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009, p. 120). This inability to identify the variances in treatment due to gender makes it even more difficult for women attempting to bring the inequalities to light.

**Double standards.** Despite the challenges that women face, many of them have managed to navigate the labyrinth and move into positions of leadership in higher education. However, they still find themselves facing a double standard in their expected actions and the roles that

they are supposed to play. They find themselves stuck between being asked to follow the direct leadership styles of men of the past--very formal and top-down--yet being considered too harsh or unladylike when executing these behaviours.

In one case concerning the University of Virginia, the sitting board chair--another woman--orchestrated the removal of UVA's first-ever female president, citing "Sullivan's lack of strategy and occasionally informal wardrobe selection" as some of the reasoning for the removal (Eddy & Ward, 2015, pp. 9-10). President Sullivan stated "that her consensus-building, incremental approach to change was at odds with the board leadership's desire for faster responses to financial and other pressures," showing the continual double standard that women face in leadership in higher education (Eddy & Ward, 2015, p. 10). Women must be innovative and on board with the new type of leadership called for, yet when a woman fills that role, her behaviour is often at odds with whom they are used to. After facing outrage from university constituents and the general public, Sullivan was reinstated in her role, but the damage had already occurred (Eddy & Ward, 2015).

The double standard does not stop at the actions of the women. It can also carry into their wardrobe choices. There seems to be a standard and history of what the ideal white male leader looks like, wears, and acts. Women who do not conform to that standard and dress in more feminine styles are seen as too weak or too soft (Lau Chin, 2011). This standard can also carry over into how a woman speaks and carries herself, with those with a softer voice or presence being considered weak. Yet women who try to overcome this stereotype and present themselves as stronger through dress, voice, and carriage are then considered to be too domineering (Lau Chin, 2011). This confusion over the expectations of the behaviour and dress of women leads them to feel that the obstacle may be too much to overcome.

*Undervaluing of women's abilities.* Women also often experience "gender segregation" and find themselves funnelling into the traditionally female roles, such as clerical and secretarial work (Broido et al., 2015). When women do advance, they often find themselves "far more likely to be associate deans, directors, deans, vice presidents or provosts" without opportunity for moving into positions such as president (Ballenger, 2010, p. 3). Research supports the concept that at "times positions have been created within the ranks of senior-level leadership teams to bring greater diversity (in terms of gender and racial/ethnic representation) to the team without replacing the existing male leaders" (Longman & Anderson, 2016, p. 33). This makes it seem like women are advancing when, instead, women are being placed into token positions to show a progression that is not an actual reality.

### **The Situation of Women in Christian Higher Education**

The kingdom of God is full of a variety of unique and talented individuals. Christ calls for us to be different and to show his love through his command, "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8, New International Version). With this command in mind, is it not the call of those in higher education to present a different picture than the current one for women in leadership? As Ballenger (2010) states in her article, "A social justice perspective allows one to emphasize moral values, justice, respect, care and equity" (p. 4). Looking at this situation through the lens of social justice means that every individual has access to the same rights, freedoms, and opportunities as others. This means that "persons with similar abilities and skills should have equal access to leadership positions in higher education administration," and the world of Christian higher education should be leading the way for women in leadership (Ballenger, 2010, p. 4). Instead, women find themselves facing additional

archaic thinking, with theological reasoning and the improper use of scripture to justify the poor treatment of women.

### **Archaic Thinking**

The picture of women in Christian education is not much different from that of women in the secular realm. Despite changes in women's roles in the working world, studies have found that "most Americans and Canadians believe that women's sphere is appropriately different from that of men. Women should be more concerned with private and domestic life," and this concept seems to be especially prevalent thinking in the Christian world (Lowe, 2011, p. 315). The reality exists that "in spite of egalitarian theology rooted in the conviction that we are all creatures of a common Creator, the habits of theological education remain highly patriarchal" (Lowe, 2011, p. 327).

There is the expectation in place and commonly adhered to, that women should still be fulfilling the domestic and traditionally feminine roles, and men should fill the leading and administrative positions. The issue of similarity-attraction in the broader framework of higher education seems to exist on an even deeper level in Christian education. There is a "presence on Christian campuses of a theological and political homogeneity that militates against the full agency of female" (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009, p. 116). What does this mean? It means that although women are gaining degrees at a higher level and a faster rate than men, are working toward integrating themselves into the staff, and have spousal and family support, they are still not moving into leadership and receiving the same benefits as men.

### **Theology and Scripture as Justification**

Christian educational institutions are exhibiting all of the same obstacles for women that educational institutions in the secular framework exhibit, yet they use theology and scripture to

back up the choices they are making, sometimes seeming to justify it even to the women who are held back. Theology can be one of the most influential factors in the advancement of women in leadership, and "gender persists as a central, salient and effective element of the boundary work that maintains evangelical subculture and identity" (Longman, Daniels, Lamm-Bray, & Liddell, 2018, p. 6). Having some traditional theological background often leads to the belief that women should fill the more traditional roles. Women who try for more are often viewed as strange or unusual or do not fulfill the biblical position that God has put before them. One person interviewed even stated, "I simply was viewed as an oddity. I should be home taking care of my children. I mean I got openly very, very rude comments and I know it hindered my time at [institution] . . ." (Longman et al., 2018, p. 7).

Men would not experience someone telling them they are not fulfilling the role God has for them by attempting to move into a position of leadership, nor would women in secular educational institutions. Although they might face opposition and people inferring that their role is to be at home, the use of theology and scripture would not justify this opinion. Seeing scripture utilized for this kind of reasoning is the opposite of what Jesus would ask for us to do and serves as a barrier in progress, for it sets up a specific underlying culture. "These cultural dynamics can create challenges for women who aspire or advance into leadership, including the problem of wage inequities and lack of supportive workplace priorities, policies, and reward structures" (Longman et al., 2018, p. 4).

Another issue that women face in the Christian context is that of men being unused to having women fill a role in leadership. With the theological idea of men being leaders in the church and home as the cultural basis for many male staff members, men find it difficult to conform to a situation in which they directly report to or interact with a woman in a leadership

position. One participant in the study by Longman, et al. (2018) stated, "I've had someone say to me, 'I've never had to report to a woman before. I just don't think I could do that'" and another stated that she was told she had "no business being in charge of men at all" (p. 11).

This is an example of common cultural barriers women in the Christian context face, and one they find challenging to combat when scripture is used out of context to support these theological ideas. Women face many other barriers in their journey through the labyrinth to positions of leadership. A close examination and discussion of these barriers is necessary to begin creating lasting change for gender equity.

### **Chapter Two: Contributing Factors to Barriers for Women in Leadership**

Examples of the contrary set of ideals and expectations for women show the consistent biases and unrealistic expectations that women in Christian higher education face. As Bryant & Mckinney, quoted in Tangenberg (2013), show, "research indicates that many female students on Christian college campuses confront a complex, often contradictory set of social, spiritual, and professional values related to gender roles and expectations" (p. 204). Not only are the students receiving different sets of expectations placed upon them, but as Eliason et al. (2018) show in their study, "As parts of ambivalent sexism, both hostile and benevolent sexism function to enforce and justify patriarchy and traditional gender roles," which confuse and hold back both female students and staff (p. 346). A review of current limiting societal structures on Christian education and gender bias and harassment on Christian campuses will create lasting change. It will expose the imbalance in female representation in leadership.

#### **Gender Bias, Harassment, and Limiting Social Structures in Christian Education**

Numerous studies have been completed on the glass ceiling that women have battled against for years. Many obstacles and challenges have been overcome in the area of women in

leadership, but "The significant underrepresentation of women in positional leadership is one of the most persistent challenges facing the movement of Christian higher education as it seeks to create a relevant and sustainable future" (Longman & Anderson, 2016, p 25). Although women recently obtained some high-visibility presidencies such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University, and the University of Michigan, it must still be noted that "only 14% of the public doctoral universities and 7% of the private doctoral universities nationwide are currently led by women" (Longman & Lafreniere, 2012, p. 46). Although the leadership pipeline seems to be full of capable, educated women and mentoring programs have been put in place to develop leadership skills; the numbers are not reflected in the leadership roles. What is the cause of this? Research into the barriers limiting women in this context shows that, as stated by Myerson and Fletcher in a study by Longman and Lafreniere (2012),

It's not just the ceiling that's holding women back; it's the whole structure of the organizations in which we work: the foundation, the beams, the walls, the very air. The barriers to advancement are not just above women, they are all around them... We must ferret out the hidden barriers to effectiveness and equity one by one. (p. 47)

This means identifying the issues of gender bias, harassment, and limiting social structures on Christian education campuses, taking a look at how they impact and affect female staff and students, and starting the process of creating solutions for removing them.

### **Identifying Limiting Social Structures and Beliefs**

Women in religious, educational institutions face a variety of gender inequities that have been in place for many years. As Longman and Lafreniere (2012) showed through their research, In short, gender inequities have become subtly institutionalized, woven seamlessly into the daily, unquestioned workings of the school—hence the invisibility of sexism on

campus, as indicated by our data—reinforced by a theological, political, and social campus climate that has become normative and therefore functionally homogenous.

(p. 48)

These gender inequities can range from gender role stereotypes presented to the students or subtly imposed upon the staff, to a lack of mentoring or sponsorship opportunities.

In a combined study of women in leadership roles in both the educational and religious sectors, Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) identified a series of 27 different gender-based leadership barriers. These barriers could be “organized according to three levels of society in which they generally operate: macro (societal), meso (group or organizational), and micro (individual)” (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016, p. 187). Some of these 27 gender-based barriers include issues such as gender stereotypes, cultural constraints on women’s choices, a lack of awareness among women that they are even in a situation of inequity, both blatant and benevolent harassment, and general leadership perceptions that take place both in the social structure of faith-based cultures and the more specific areas of religious organizations, such as Christian colleges and universities (Dhiel & Dzubinski, 2016).

Identifying and naming these barriers is vital in making progress towards creating change for women. Female staff and students cannot understand what is holding them back, develop mentorship programs that give women practical help rather than trying to assimilate them to male norms, and help create change for women coming after them unless they can name and identify the issues themselves.

In a review exploring the impact of religion on the views and attitudes of Christian university students towards gender, Aune and Guest (2019) found that students utilize religion as a resource from which to draw understanding, and that they create "everyday theologies that

integrate religious resources with other social resources, generating divergent egalitarian and conservative interpretations" that allow them to create a sense of order and give legitimacy to the thoughts they have regarding the role that gender plays in their world (p. 1). The issue with this is that both students and staff are entrenched in the societal structures of women playing certain roles. With a historical use of theology to back this, they are not able to identify the roles that women should be able to occupy. Students and staff, both male and female, feel the push and pull of egalitarian and essential beliefs impacting their view of women and are not sure where to stand. They hesitate to connect with anything that could be seen as feminism due to theological pushback against such ideals. Research found that students' "Assertions of gender traditionalism were cloaked in egalitarian language, perhaps because students thought such views might be seen as socially unacceptable" (Aune & Guest, 2019, p. 15). Christian educational institutions must implement programs, structures, and language that both identify the gender inequities that are present and begin addressing these issues in a manner that leads the way toward a true biblical understanding of social justice for women.

Although Christian education should have this social justice stance toward women in leadership, "The patriarchal history of the church, gender-related denominational doctrines, and scriptural interpretations all impact gender-role understanding," creates barriers that are difficult to understand and identify (Longman et al., 2018, p. 7). Although this is not the case for all evangelical institutions, female staff and students often referenced gender role prejudices and stereotyping when discussing what could be keeping them from advancing in the professional realm. A faculty participant in a study on gender issues on Christian campuses stated,

I don't know that we nurture women professionally in the same way. I look at the majors that women on our campus go into and how big our education and nursing [programs]

are... We tend to socialize women into those fields in theologically conservative Christianity. (Longman et al., 2018, p. 9)

These historical social structures, gender prejudices, and stereotypes are too complicated for students and staff to overcome. Research shows "Most women are unaware of having personally been victims of gender discrimination and deny it even when it is objectively true and they see that women in general experience it" and "male professors were twice as likely as female professors to believe there was equal treatment of both male and female faculty and students on campus" (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013, p. 63, & Longman & Anderson, 2016, p. 29). Christian educational institutions must implement programs and classes that both identify the gender inequities that are present and begin to address these issues in a manner that leads the way.

### **Gender Bias and Harassment**

Two of the most prevalent issues impacting female students and staff in Christian education are second-generation forms of bias and gender harassment. Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) 27 different gender-based leadership barriers all fall under the broader categories of gender bias and harassment. Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb (2011) refer to "second-generation forms of gender bias, the powerful yet often invisible barriers to women's advancement that arise from cultural beliefs about gender, as well as workplace structures, practices, and patterns of interaction that inadvertently favor men" as a significant cause for the underrepresentation of women in leader roles (p. 475). These barriers can be subtle, like a professor in a course telling the students that women are more suited for particular gender-based roles, a male student not giving a female professor the respect she deserves, or a statement reflecting women as unsuited for positions of leadership within the church. Sometimes a woman taking on a leadership role

can be seen as "a violation of gender norms," and these women are then held to a higher standard or put into high-risk situations to push back and perhaps force failure (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2011, p. 477).

**Unconscious gender bias.** Another form of gender bias is that which is unconscious. This "occurs when a person consciously rejects gender stereotypes but still unconsciously makes evaluations based on stereotypes" (Madsen & Andrade, 2018, p. 62-63). These unconscious forms of gender bias are particularly detrimental to women because they are a significant part of how women form their own leadership identities. Not only that, but these second-generation gender biases can develop the identity of an entire company, campus culture, or workplace regarding the perceived abilities of women in leadership (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013).

This can be quite prevalent in religious institutions, where a significant component of the students and staff believe a certain way regarding things such as women in leadership without contextual theological backing for such beliefs. They may not have taken the time or had the opportunity to examine these gender schemas that are in place, but unconsciously follow them because they have always been there. Ideas such as women should submit to men in all things, women should not hold leadership roles within the church, preaching is a role that should be held by a man, men are listened to better than women and should, therefore, be in positions of leadership are accepted as theological truths and societal norms, often without conscious biblical research to back them. As Hall, Christerson, & Cunningham (2010) found in a research study, "when encounters with discriminatory gender schemas are perceived to be motivated by religious belief systems, worldviews, or biblical interpretations about gender, the resulting negative effects, such as the perception of a non-supportive work environment, may be accentuated" (p. 182).

Many students and staff may have a deeply rooted emotional connection to the theological arguments, and with "the power of religious symbols, language, and experiences, there is an implied finality or non-negotiability about the discriminatory behavior" (Hall et al., 2010, p. 182). The use of out of context verses and socially accepted theological norms leave the targets of these gender biases feeling that they have no choice but to accept the harassing behaviour because the offender implies that "God is in my corner" (Hall et al., 2010, p. 182). The concepts of complementarianism and egalitarianism can come into play when trying to define one's own beliefs regarding the roles of women for those in the Christian education context. As outlined in Tanenberg's (2013) research study,

Complementarianism emphasizes gender distinctions and male headship in families and churches. In contrast, the egalitarian view articulated by Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) in their key document entitled Men, Women, and Biblical Equality (1989) asserts that men and women were equally created in God's image, thus encouraging mutual submission and support for women to use their God-given gifts at all levels of ministry. (p. 206)

The ideas addressed above, such as the husband being the head of the home, women needing to stay in specific roles in the church and workplace at large, women running the household, and being a supportive "helper-wife" fit into the complementarianism point of view. Most of those who participated in graduate school and moved on to professional careers held more egalitarian beliefs (Tagengberg, 2013). Both the unconscious and conscious forms of gender bias are likely contributing to this, showing how important it is to identify and analyze the root of these beliefs and clarify what one truly believes.

**Gender harassment.** Gender harassment is a significant issue that is sometimes categorized under sexual harassment, but, especially in the case of Christian education, it must be seen as a problem. Because of the beliefs and behaviours present on Christian education campuses, blatant sexual harassment may not be as evident, but women in these settings experience gender harassment. It is essential to define what gender harassment is. In their research study exploring sexism on Christian university and college campuses, Eliason et al. (2018) stated, "Gender harassment is not a method by which one attempts to gain sexual cooperation, but rather a behavior that conveys sexist attitudes about a gender" (p. 346). Gender harassment can consist of: "sexual objectification, gender role prejudice and stereotyping, or demeaning and derogatory comments" (Eliason et al., 2018, p. 346). These are all contributing factors to the barriers that women face in Christian education.

Often, as stated previously, women have been brought up in cultures that justify these gender role prejudices and stereotypes and are in a situation where "both hostile and benevolent sexism function to enforce and justify patriarchy and traditional gender roles" (Eliason et al., 2018, p. 346). This gender harassment impacts students and staff in their overall psychological well-being, ability to see themselves as capable of taking on leadership roles, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization within which they work. It also increases opportunities for the development of depression, anxiety and other significant psychological issues (Eliason et al., 2018). These negative impacts are generally perceived to be even stronger when connected to Christian beliefs or biblical worldviews because there are conflicting ideologies and expectations placed upon women. There is a need to take away hierarchy, study norms established on scripture within its context, and take them back to the root of what Jesus taught. He taught that

all believers, regardless of gender, are needed to answer the call of God and spread our faith throughout the world.

In a study of Asbury Theological Seminary, a Wesleyan Methodist institution, Lisa Weaver Swartz found evidence of this exact process. It is the fundamental belief in the Wesleyan tradition that "In order to accomplish the goal of spreading the gospel throughout the world, Wesleyans, both historical and contemporary, feel obligated to marshal every resource at their disposal including their sisters and daughters" (Weaver, 2018, p. 3). On this campus, gender stereotypes and prejudices are identified, analyzed in the context of the scripture, and found to be in error. As one student, Paul, explained, "a woman must not be denied leadership positions simply because she is a woman. She should be given the same rights and opportunities as a man simply because she is human and, therefore, made in God's image" (Weaver, 2018, p. 3). This study is evidence that change is possible and Christian education can return to its historical roots. In fact,

Christian religions contain a wealth of resources that could be invoked in addressing sexism, foremost of which are the concepts of love of neighbour, compassion, and putting the needs of others before one's own needs. Historically, evangelical Christianity was a powerful force in encouraging women's progress in higher education. (Hall et al., 2010, p. 185)

It is not enough, however, to recognize this at the adult, Christian higher education level. Young children are developing some very defined gender stereotypes regarding future careers and opportunities available to them, and it is something that must change. We must look at why children are developing these biases and stereotypes for true gender equity to develop. Olsson and Martiny (2018) show, "first and foremost, children are exposed to gender roles in their

immediate environment through their parents, siblings, relatives, neighbors, peers, and teachers, but also through educational resources, media, and popular culture" (p. 2). It is not just essential for us to expose children to a greater variety of options for their future careers, but it is imperative to remove gender expectations and stereotypes modelled and taught to our children to create real gender equity across all platforms.

### **Chapter Three: An Overview of Gender Inequity and Gender Roles**

#### **The Worldwide Condition Regarding Gender Inequity**

Currently, there continues to be a general inequity of women in leadership roles, pay, and career choice worldwide. We are, however, on the cusp of change. According to Longman (2018), "Survey research involving 64,000 participants in 13 countries that was conducted by Gerzema and D'Antonio (2013) identified widespread dissatisfaction regarding the male-normed models of those currently in power" (p. 1). There is a growing realization that this inequity in pay, leadership positions, and women in the workforce is no longer accepted and tolerated as normal on a worldwide platform. Gerzema and D' Antonio (2013), as quoted in Longman (2019), show

Universally, it seemed that people had grown frustrated by a world dominated by codes of what they saw as traditionally masculine thinking and behavior: codes of control, competition, aggression, and black-and-white thinking that have contributed to many of the problems we face today, from wars and income inequality to reckless risk-taking and scandal. (p. 7)

Historically there have been periods when women moved into the workforce and positions of leadership due to circumstances such as war or economic hardship. Following these times, "women were forced to return to the home so that jobs would be available, once again, for

men" (Webb, 2010, p. 3). In these situations, women "were expected to conform to their new role of homemaker without complaint or protest," but we are now reaching a critical stage of change in which this is no longer acceptable (Webb, 2010, p. 3). As educators amidst this change, we must continue the battle for balanced and skill-based leadership, careers, and income equality. Although it is a global issue, for this review, the focus will be on the North American context.

### **A North American Historical Context**

In North America, we are often frustrated by the inequity that still exists in leadership and income-base for women, and rightly so. In a first-world continent in 2020, we would expect to find a more balanced situation, and it is easy to become discouraged. However, it is important to look at the historical context and continual progress for women in the working world to help reframe our thinking. Assessing the gender-based battles of those women who have gone before us gives us the courage and stamina to carry on in this vital cause. We can also learn valuable lessons from those who have gone before.

**Social norms and cultural representations of women.** According to research completed by Joyce Webb (2010), there has been continual progress and change in the social norms that contribute to the roles women fill. Throughout history, these roles were impacted by the economic situation, the representations of women in media, and everyday social opinions of the people of the time (Webb, 2010). In her report on the change of women's roles in university and the workplace, Webb discusses the impact that popular culture and media have on the norms created within society. She references how the various television shows of the time created a sense of what the ideal family set up should be. Shows such as "Leave it to Beaver" (1957) and "Father Knows Best" (1954) "emphasized the perfect family life with the father working outside the home, the mother as homemaker and the children growing up in a pristine atmosphere of

caring and consideration,” and “dissatisfaction on the part of women led to the abuse of prescription drugs in order to cope with their new situation and expanding consumerism” (Webb, 2010, p. 3). She later shares how as the roles of women advanced and evolved, the way they were represented on television and in the media developed. Shows such as "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," (1970-1977) "Laverne and Shirley," (1976-1983) and "Murphy Brown" (1988-1998) reflected the changing attitudes and norms for women in North America, but not without pushback (Webb, 2010). Webb references the incident in which "The show drew criticism politically when, then Vice President Dan Quayle, publicly criticized the show for 'ignoring the importance of fathers by birthing a child alone'" (Webb, 2010, p. 6). Despite a more open acceptance of a change in the roles and expectations for women, there is a belief that women cannot simultaneously care for their children, be good wives, and do well in their chosen careers.

**Educational equity and gender role expectations.** Educational equity for women is also a historical factor in unequal access to jobs, leadership roles, and more. In the past, the expected roles of women were those of the homemaker and the wife, with little emphasis on the need for any education past the high school level. The focus in educational settings for women was on courses such as home economics, teaching young women to sew and cook, and enrolling few young men in such courses. Even when women were able to attain higher education, it did not translate to equity in the working world. In a report based on census data from 1950-1980, Jones and Rosenfeld (1989) found "different levels of educational attainment provide for labor for different types of jobs" and "women with higher education have credentials which allow them access to higher level jobs" (p. 668).

Despite this access, Jones and Rosenfeld (1989) found that “in the two decades after World War II, in fact, women with the highest level of educational attainment were the most

likely to stay home when they had younger children” and that women were often only “allowed increased access to valued economic activities when the relative supply of male labor for them is low” (p. 669). These traditional gender roles and realities continue to exist today, impacting the views our children. Women are still the ones most likely to stay home when having young children, whether through their own choice or an expectation placed upon them by their societal or cultural norms. Fritz and van Knippenberg (2018), found that “Although female leaders still depict a minority, it is expected that more women will occupy leadership positions at all levels in the future” (p. 855). Regardless of this, they also found that “women still face more domestic or household responsibilities than do men, which has been identified as an important barrier for their hierarchical advancement” (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2018, p. 855). This higher level of domestic responsibilities is modelled to children today as normal and expected, regardless of the work the woman is doing outside of the home.

**Small changes toward equity in education.** Through her research, Webb discusses several factors that impacted the rise of women in the working world through the decades. These include considerations we can learn from and apply to educate our children in regards to the roles women can and should play. The efforts of women and men to create equal access to education and jobs resulted in laws such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Title IX Act of 1972, and the Women's Educational Act of 1974 (Webb, 2010; Conrad, Dixson, & Sloan Green, 2014). Title IX and the Women's Educational Act were introduced by female congresswoman Patsy Mink, and

centered on establishing women’s equal access to education, with the understanding that greater access to educational opportunities would result in a range of opportunities

opening for women across society, including increasing their access to employment in both the public and private sectors. (Conrad, Dixson, & Sloan Green, 2014, p. 3).

While these acts did not completely solve the problem of gender equity in education, they did put into action the creation of policies and provision of funding that would at least move lawmakers and educational institutions in the right direction. This act “went beyond focusing on the absence of legal restrictions on participation. Instead, it focused on providing the funding to remedy the exclusion of women from curriculum materials, address the biases of teachers and administrators, and so on” (Conrad, Dixson, & Sloan Green, 2014, p. 5).

Webb (2010) references the importance of these steps, quoting then President Barak Obama in his 2010 proclamation for Equal Pay Day, in which he stated

Throughout our Nation's history, extraordinary women have broken barriers to achieve their dreams and blazed trails so their daughters would not face similar obstacles. Despite decades of progress, pay inequity still hinders women and their families across our country. National Pay Day symbolizes the day when an American woman's earnings finally match what an average American man earned in the year. Today, we renew our commitment to end wage discrimination and celebrate the strength and vibrancy women add to our economy. (p. 1)

The broken barriers Obama refers to should be celebrated and used as an example for us all. According to Webb (2010), “in 1900, less than 5.6 percent of married women worked outside the home” (p. 1). Fast forward to 2017 and research shows women make up “5.0% of CEOs, 21.2% of Board seats, 26.5% of Executive/Senior-Level Officials and Managers, 36.9% of First/Mid-Level Officials and Managers, and 44.7% of total employees” (Longman, 2018, p. 1).

Although these numbers are far from showing gender equity, what they do show is progress and a situation of change that we need to continue.

### **Continued Barriers**

**Law and policy enforcement and support.** Despite these changes, the battle for equity is not over. While policies and acts such as Title IX exist, they are still not executed properly. In a review of the current realities of the role of Title IX coordinators in United States public schools, Meyer, Somoza-Norton, Lovgren, Rubin, and Quantz (2018) found that often there is a lack of a clear job description for the Title IX coordinator, with the coordinators sometimes not knowing the position was a part of their overall job. Coordinators often do not receive proper training to know how to enact the law, and the overall decisions regarding how to enact gender equity in education often come down to the personal decisions of the administrative team, with no follow-up or repercussions for schools not implementing proper gender equity in education (Meyer, et al., 2018).

**Pay equity.** Pay equity continues to be a problem, as well. Trotter, Zacur, and Stickney (2017) show that the “implementation of Executive Order 13665 opened a door to greater pay transparency for millions of federal contract workers beginning in 2016” (p.529). However, pay gaps still exist. The authors share that “the gender wage gap is defined as the difference between male and female earnings, with female earnings expressed as a percentage of male” (Trotter, Zacur, & Stickney, 2017, p. 529). Their research shows “when compared to white, non-Hispanic males, white women working full time earn 80% of what men earn in the U.S., implying a gender pay gap of 20%” (Trotter, Zacur, & Stickney, 2017, p. 530). Women do not seek equal pay for unequal work, instead what they hope for and fight for is equality in compensation for similar work input and level of commitment.

**Mentorship and gender equity support systems.** There also continues to be an apparent lack of mentorship and leadership support for women. London, Bear, Cushenbery, and Sherman (2019) discuss the idea that “fair treatment (organizational justice) is associated with individual performance, satisfaction, tenure, and gender diversity is positively related to team and organizational performance” (p. 418). Despite many company policies and programs promoting gender equity in leadership and working environment, they find these are not actually put into practice. Their research shows a clear relation between the goal orientation of the current leaders to the supports in place and the follow-through on implementing these supports (London et al., 2019). This is a common finding that must be examined and changed on a fundamental level, with children at the youngest ages of learning, to create real change.

### **What Can Be Done**

As a woman contemplating a future in leadership in Christian education, as well as the mother of a brave, independent, strong five-year-old daughter, I want to create lasting change. I can see how these factors impede women’s career paths not only in my sector, but also across multiple platforms. I want a better future for my daughter. Although Christian education should be a representative for everyone else to look up to, “Research on this sector of faith-based higher education confirms that women are significantly underrepresented in all senior leadership roles” (Longman & Lafreniere, 2012, p. 48). Our call to action is a large one. It has many levels and will take perseverance. We must set new standards of what is acceptable, use a social justice lens to develop our approach to creating change, and start from the beginning by unpacking gender inequities at the beginning stages of learning.

## **Chapter Four: A Call to Action**

### **Setting New Standards Through Analysis and Structural Changes**

What is our call to action? How can we move forward in this situation that sometimes feels overwhelming and unable to be changed? According to Elton-Charlcraft, Kendrick, & Chapman (2018), we need to take a social justice approach to leadership development, including “critically analyzing the structural changes necessary” to enable women and minorities to move into leadership (p. 177). This critical analysis involves the removal of the idea that we need to simply “fix the women” (Dhiel & Dzubinski, 2016, p. 198). This approach of fixing the women is a simple approach that includes methods that, in their own right, are not necessarily wrong, yet have led to women internalizing the idea that they are in the wrong and must somehow change who they have been created to be to move into leadership roles. The idea that women must “assimilate, adopt masculine behaviors, and get training in assertive leadership and decision making” has been the standard protocol for mentorship and leadership programs in the past (Dhiel & Dzubinski, 2016, p. 198).

This continues to be a case of moulding women to fit into a societal structure that favours men and their innate nature and therefore does not actually create the structural change that is needed to provide equal opportunity for all people. Instead, it is crucial not just to train our women, but instead to train our organizations to develop strategies and protocols that force them to identify the forms of gender bias and harassment. These are both blatant and unconscious and are in place in the organizations. We must then implement both simple and complex approaches to “revise work practices, processes, and norms ‘in ways that are less gendered and more effective” (Dhiel & Dzubinski, 2016, p. 198-199).

A transformational servant leader has “The ability to provide strategic leadership and direction and communicate the vision to encourage alignment within the organization” (Leadership Integration Project Manual 2017-2018, 2017, p. 7). A large part of that is implementing this change regarding the development of women in leadership within our institutions. Although strategic leadership and vision are often associated with visioning and development of programs, the valuing of women and the ability to seize the leadership potential that lies within an organization is an equally important element of strategic leadership and vision. This theory is backed by research, where “Studies show that gender diversity in organizations’ top offices and in the boardroom is not just a matter of social justice and advancement, but a smart business move as well” (Teague, 2015, p. 2).

Women are able to bring a different point of view to the table, showing that “Leaders with a diverse set of experiences, viewpoints, and backgrounds are crucial to encouraging different perspectives, broadening an institution’s world views, and fostering innovation particularly important at colleges and universities responsible for educating and training future leaders, workers, and citizens” (Teague, 2015, p. 2). All organizations can start with three simple steps to equalize the roles of leadership: “(1) educate women and men about second-generation gender bias, (2) create safe “identity workspaces” to support transitions to bigger roles, and (3) anchor women’s development efforts in a sense of leadership purpose rather than in how women are perceived” (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013, p. 63).

While these are important steps for organizations to take, until we are in a situation where our children are allowed and able to pursue the future they want without the need to navigate a labyrinth of inequality or unfair stereotypes to get there, we must continue to look at the root causes of the inequities and search for new ways to address them. To create genuine, lasting

change in the areas of women in leadership and gender inequities as a whole, it is clear that these issues of inequity must be addressed and challenged from the earliest stages of learning.

### **Educating Our Youth Regarding Gender Inequities**

We must challenge stereotypes, incorrect theological stances, and social norms to create a new path. This trend of creating gender role stereotypes continues to exist today, impacting our current and future young women and men hoping to fill the jobs and leadership positions they dream of. Without seeing an equal representation of genders in a variety of career and leadership positions, receiving equal pay for similar work, and proper implementation of policies and programs, children will continue to see this as the acceptable norm. In their meta-analysis examining gender-science stereotypes, Miller, Nolla, Eagly, and Uttal (2018) share "because gender is a particularly salient social identity, children actively search their environment for cues to what activities are considered appropriate for boys and girls" (p. 1944). We must create an environment in which our children see it appropriate for anyone, regardless of gender, to rise into positions of leadership, receive equal pay for equal work, and work in their chosen career.

### **Challenge Stereotypes and Provide Positive Role Models**

We can continue to address these issues and create fundamental change by modelling a new behaviour in the earliest years of learning. The research done by London et al. (2019) shows

The potential role of leaders—both male and female—to support gender equity makes characteristics and behavior of leaders all the more important. In other words, leaders potentially have the power and authority to close these persistent gender gaps seen across organizations. (p. 419).

This shows the importance of teaching positive leadership characteristics in young children from the start. What they see modelled in their earliest years will be the way that they

lead and interact in the future. London et al. (2019) argue, "communally-oriented individuals have social responsibility goals, whereas exchange-oriented individuals seek to maintain current norms and power levels. On average, we predict that leaders with communal orientations will support gender equity, within group and within person differences notwithstanding" (p. 419).

Educators at all levels need to teach social responsibility, working in a community with others, and seeking to serve others. This can be modelled in many ways. In her article on working to prevent gender bias, Shafer (2018) shares several simple methods for helping to prevent gender bias and create socially responsible children-leading to socially responsible adults. Some of the ideas she presents include one of the most important, which is to "Check your own biases. Be mindful of the language you use, the way you treat people of different genders, and even the perspectives you hold on your own abilities and traits" (Shafer, 2018, p. 1). This may seem simple, but it is one of the most common issues. As educators, do we unknowingly show preference to one gender over another? Do we treat boys differently than girls? We can consider the toys we provide for play-based scenarios, the literature we share with our students, and even the discussions we have. As an elementary teacher, sharing stories about people succeeding in non-traditional gender roles, having conversations about the roles each gender plays in their own homes, and encouraging play outside of traditional gender roles for girls and boys is a start (Shafer, 2018). In later years, engaging students in historical research of the traditional roles people have played over the years, why this happened, and how they have changed creates awareness of gender inequities (Shafer, 2018). Giving an equal opportunity for both genders to speak, lead a team, listen, and collaborate also creates more social responsibility and the "communally-oriented" individuals referred to by London et al. (2019).

In our Christian schools, we can implement programs that teach children and young adults what the Bible says about women, in context. We can do this with small steps such as: educating them regarding taking verses out of context, teaching them the skills needed to research the truth for themselves through inquiry, modelling the value of women as leaders by bringing in women to speak in chapels or classes, and hiring women into leadership roles when they fit the requirements as well as men. We can also develop leadership courses for our young men and women that teach biblical concepts aligning with valuing all human beings as a reflection of God, remembering the truth "So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27, New International Version). The same elements could be translated into the education of students on our Christian university and college campuses.

In addition to the need to develop a more servant-oriented leader, the idea that "certain theological traditions within Christianity [which] have historically limited the role of women in leadership" must also be addressed and challenged in the Christian perspective (Longman, 2018, p.2). In a study of the impact of faith on gender harassment and roles, Hall, Christerson, and Cunningham (2010) noted that "research has shown that evangelical Christians as a whole are more conservative in their views about gender roles than the general population, although there is also considerable within-group variation in these views" (p.182). These conflicting representations of the traditional roles of women to children in these homes continue to limit the possibility of true gender equity. At the home and early school level, it is important to

Explain the importance of listening to and appreciating both genders as matter of basic decency. Ask kids to think about what might be challenging about being a person of

another gender, or a person who is transgender. Work on developing empathy. (Shafer, 2018, p. 2)

Jesus Christ was the very model of empathy. He daily communed with the outcasts of society and loved everyone, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, gender, or age. Focusing on his example can teach empathy, compassion, and a deeper level of living in community. At a higher level of Christian education and community, it is important to consider the idea that training could be provided on how to address religiously motivated statements about women that are perceived to be derogatory, given that they may be experienced as immutable. Training could also be directed toward diffusing and understanding defenses related to feelings that theological beliefs are threatened and toward helping individuals clarify the distinction between their theological convictions and the discriminatory practices that occur, thus helping to sensitize more conservative individuals. (Hall et al., 2010, p. 185)

### **Addressing Gender Inequities at the University Level**

Christian universities and colleges can also work to create change. This can be done by modelling the behaviour and philosophies of programs such as those of Asbury Theological Seminary, whose school moral code reflects their attitude toward human beings and what they may be called to accomplish, stating:

With God's help we will exercise the freedom of joyful obedience in being faithful stewards of our minds, bodies, time, gifts, abilities, possessions, and finances as expressions of God's good creation. We will renounce those attitudes and actions that resist the work of the Spirit, divide Christian community, and impede human flourishing .  
(Weaver-Swartz, 2018, p. 7)

By including the idea that all human beings are called to use their giftings to help the Kingdom of God flourish and create a cohesive Christian community, they allow their students and staff the freedom to explore God's calling of them. This is regardless of their gender, ethnicity, age, or any other element that has been used as a barrier in the past. This code is "articulated in statements of ethos, taught in classrooms, and embodied every time one of the institution's female faculty members preaches a sermon, officiates communion, and makes an administrative decision" (Weaver-Swartz, 2018, p. 3). For those universities that are ready to establish the next step, courses on gender issues could be added to the curriculum, allowing students to study this important topic through the lens of a biblical worldview.

### **Identifying and Naming the Issues**

Another vital element of educating both men and women regarding second-generation bias and harassment is to identify and name the accepted norms and actions that are acting as barriers. This could involve the development of formal or informal surveys within our educational context, which ask questions such as those in a study on gender harassment which asked the following:

(1) Have you overheard or been told of insensitive or disparaging comments about women made by faculty? (2) Have you overheard or been told of insensitive or disparaging comments about women made by students? (3) Have you overheard or been told of comments that suggest women are unsuited for certain roles, that stereotype women, that assume women have different interests than men, or that express a double standard for men and women? (Hall et al., 2010, p. 183)

With the use of these three questions as an anonymous survey, including opportunities to include examples of comments or actions made against women in these ways, results could be

used to shed light on what is happening on our Christian school campuses and in our religious organizations. These results could be used to begin discussions and develop professional development and leadership programs examining the comments. Staff and students could go through workshops in which they have opportunities to work together to create ways to research the basis for the comments both biblically and socially, and then begin to overcome them with simple strategies.

These strategies could involve simple things such as a professor and students creating classroom principles outlining comments that are seen as disparaging and provide frameworks for class discussions giving equal opportunity to all students, despite gender. At an administrative level, it could involve the board of the school taking a look at the gender representation in their group, and what protocols are in place for the selection of board members, including a look at gender equity. Just beginning the discussion through a simple survey is a start in the right direction, for "understanding and working to eliminate these gender-based leadership barriers is of great practical interest because of the promise it holds for improved organizational performance" (Dhiel & Dzubinski, 2016, p. 197).

Implementing these important steps to address gender inequities with our students at the early levels will lead to a new way of thinking. The next important element of action is providing the support needed by women who are already in place in these positions of leadership or currently working to navigate the labyrinth.

### **Providing Support for Women to Succeed**

#### **Create Safe Spaces for Transition to Bigger Roles**

In order for women to truly develop and transition into leadership roles, there must be safe spaces for them to discuss the barriers they experience, the ability to flourish and grow

while learning from mistakes, and the opportunity to have mentors and sponsors. It is essential to create the safe spaces for women to develop, because "Research shows that organizations with gender diverse leadership teams outperform organizations with homogeneous leaders" (Dhiel & Dzubinski, 2016, p. 197).

One way to develop a safe space for transition is through the process of performance feedback. Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb (2013) found, "Research has amply demonstrated that accomplished, high-potential women who are evaluated as competent managers often fail the likability test, whereas competence and likability tend to go hand in hand for similarly accomplished men" (p. 63). Their research showed that women often receive contradictory feedback on performance evaluations, with praise for their task-related performance, but low ratings for relational performance. Examples include giving women opposing information such as the need to be "be tougher and hold people accountable," but at the same time to "not set expectations so high," leading women to feel that they are not able to trust or use any of the feedback for growth (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013, p. 63). Creating feedback sessions in which women can work with similarly positioned women—even from other companies—to evaluate their feedback in a safe, coaching environment would allow women actually to learn from their results. The opportunity to discuss their findings with someone who understands their struggles and barriers gives them a real chance to develop personal growth targets. It also gives them a chance to identify gender-based bias or harassment. These findings, uncovered in this safe space, could then "be shared with bosses, direct reports, and peers to counter gender stereotypes" (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011, p. 481).

### **Develop Women in Leadership with Purpose Rather than Perception**

Another important part of the process of supporting women currently trying to break into the realm of leadership is to see them for who they are as women and to allow them to function as that person in their positions. For so long, women have been told that to develop as leaders, they must learn how to perform in a man's world. They have been taught that they need to carefully determine how they are perceived regarding their attitude, their relationships, and even how they dress, and then become more like their male counterparts to succeed. This leads to a sense that something is wrong with women and they must be "fixed" to succeed. Then come feelings of defeat and an overwhelming sense that they will never truly be able to become leaders who reflect and speak their values, but rather the values that have been imposed upon them.

Because of this, women are not creating a leader identity based on purpose, but rather on their failures and the things that they must change to fit the male-normed culture. Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb (2011) present a different option. In their framework for leadership development in women, they suggest "showing how gender shapes women's path to leadership without either victimizing or blaming women, while at the same time cultivating in women a sense of agency" (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011, p. 475). In other words, they focus on why women should become leaders and how they can create identity based on that, rather than how others are perceiving them. They have found that "When leaders become overly focused on being seen in a certain way to advance their careers, they become excessively concerned with meeting others' expectations, unable to step outside their comfort zones, and disconnected from their core values" (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011, p. 476). Therefore, an essential part of developing women as leaders is to create leadership programs that do not fix the women and make them more like men, but rather, help women to identify their core values, understand the value that women bring to the table, and allow them to create their purpose for wanting to move into leadership roles.

These leadership programs could include opportunities for research, or the presentation of research findings such as those in this literature review, teaching women the facts about what they bring to organizations as leaders. They could also involve opportunities for women to complete self-assessments such as the Birkman Method, which would teach them more about their personalities and how that translates into how they interact with others, both as a leader and as someone who is part of an overall organization.

These programs could also help them to develop a network of other women who can support one another. They could investigate case studies featuring women as change agents, which could “help participants identify and recognize themselves as leaders” (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011, p. 484). An analysis of these female leaders, who have remained true to themselves, would remind women that their unique qualities can allow them to lead in new ways that include a stronger emphasis on things like empathy, collaboration, and connection than a male leader might have. Through this process, their purpose for becoming a leader becomes less about becoming more like men and focused on what others think of them and more about what they have to offer and how they can be a part of creating change.

### **Addressing the Work-Life Interface**

Another way to create change is by addressing “the observation that lower aspiration among women is strongly associated with the work–life interface” (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2018, p. 856). In their research, Fritz and van Knippenberg (2018) found that “as more Generation Y employees are entering the workforce, work-life balance rises in importance because this age cohort values an equilibrium between the private and the work life more than previous age groups” (p. 856). This is an area that must be further explored. One of the greatest barriers to gender equity in leadership, career aspirations, and the general working experience for

women continues to be imbalanced work-life balance expectations. We need to address this in an educational context, but organizations need to address this on a business-wide model as well.

Research shows that “Women classify the availability of work–life initiatives as a kind of organizational support, leading to an increase in their organizational attachment or loyalty” and the ability to serve better the company they work for (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2018, p. 857). When asked to identify the most impactful work-life initiatives, “The five different work–life initiatives categories were information-based (i.e., trainings regarding work–life initiatives), job-design (i.e., flexible work arrangements), time-based (i.e., leave of absences), direct-service-based (i.e., on-site child care) and financial- based initiatives (i.e., tuition reimbursement)” (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2018, p. 358). Introducing company-wide support such as part-time work from home, childcare subsidies or programs, flexible scheduling to allow for needs such as doctor appointments, dental cleanings, and more to ensure that women feel the support needed to balance the work-life interface. Providing the same support and structure for male employees seeking to play a more substantial part in family life sets the tone of equal access to work-life initiatives and creates a new norm.

To relate this back to educating our children at their earliest stages of learning, providing evidence and examples of businesses and companies implementing strategies like this to students in career education training is equally important. Students in high school who are looking into future careers should be encouraged not just to look at potential salary, job outlook, and education required, but also to investigate work-life support in place in a career or company they are studying. A student as young as five could be asked to think of ways both parents support the success of their family unit or asked to complete a questionnaire with their parents discussing work-life supports in place in their families.

Gender-typical stereotypes should also be challenged. For example, teachers could do a unit on cooking a simple meal such as spaghetti, asking students who does most of the cooking in their household, and providing examples of both male and female successful chefs. They could then explore the possibility of what meals each child might like to learn to cook for their families and encourage them to ask both parents to help them make the meal. Older children could also be asked to examine what a traditional day in the life of each of their parents looks like, creating a schedule and detailing tasks that are completed by each. They could follow up with a family discussion around who completes which domestic tasks, creating awareness for both the parents and the children as to the realities existing for them. At a senior level, students could survey the work-life balance of adults they know, analyze the results, debate whether or not they think the outcomes are fair and create possible solutions for change.

#### **The Example Set by the Christian Education Sector**

Although it should be evident that as Christ-followers we would lead the charge in championing equity with the understanding that we are all created in the image of God, this is not always the case. Christian education sometimes seems to go in the opposite direction, bound instead by archaic, patriarchal norms. Instead of leaning into these past norms, Christian education instead needs to set the standard of the higher education world. This goal can be accomplished by implementing data-driven new standards for leadership positions, and all programs across the organization.

These can be things such as ensuring that hiring boards have an equal representation of men and women and that they have a variety of diverse voices. This change will lend to "collective intelligence," which "correlates the average social sensitivity of group members, the equality in the distribution of conversational turn-taking, and the proportion of females in the

group" (Longman & Anderson, 2016, p. 34). Administrative teams can also ensure that mentors are available to encourage women to move into the roles of leadership and provide the time and financial support to interact with these mentors. Mentorship has been found to be one of the critical components in the success of women, as it allows those in the mentor role to tap into potential future leaders through the development of the mentor relationship and therefore the skills and confidence of women (Eddy & Ward, 2015).

Christian higher education must also lead the way in supporting women who choose to still honour their commitment to their family while pursuing leadership opportunities. This approach means not punishing them for taking family-related leave and allowing them to retain senior roles upon their return. Considering them for more than just supporting roles and not devaluing them by creating other positions to keep current male leaders in place is another step. Men must also support the idea of utilizing the natural ability of women to work for the good of the community at large, as they "have the ability to connect to inside- and outside-the-organization stakeholders using collaborative strategies, creating networks based on internal and external contacts, and establishing networks of teams within an organization" (Lowe, 2011, p. 315). It is imperative that those who claim to follow Jesus and see every life as valuable be the ones who lead the way in this transformation. We must act on the words that we speak.

### **Chapter Five: Concluding Discussion**

There is still much to be done to change the future for women wishing to advance into positions of leadership, yet we are on the cusp of a generation that is ready to make that change. This review is a necessary step as a study of the current situation of women in leadership situations in North America, but it met some limitations.

#### **Limitations**

One of the most significant limitations was finding a breadth and depth of research around the circumstances of women in Christian education in North America, particularly in Canada. Perhaps this a reflection of the times we live in, where women are still clearly in the midst of a battle to be seen as equal, especially in the circles of the Christian education sector. More research should be done around the paths of those who have managed to break into these roles. Of the research found, many articles and studies were completed by the same circle of scholars. These scholars have a passion for this area, but more work needs to be done by other people.

Other limitations came when trying to connect within Christian primary, middle, and high schools. While researchers are just starting to do the critical and necessary work of understanding and unpacking gender inequities among children and where they come from, there is little to no evidence of what this looks like in Christian schools, again particularly in Canada. These limitations have led me to consider further areas of research and writing that I can delve into as I continue my leadership journey.

### **Areas of Further Research**

Continued areas to research and address through journal articles and data-driven studies include the experiences of women in leadership not just in the leading Christian universities, but also in Christian schools in Canada in general. There are leadership and mentoring programs developing in Canada, as well as coaching workshops. An important element of these programs would be a routine survey or interview in which women are questioned in various areas. This could include their path to leadership, the barriers they felt they have come up against, the support they received while on that path, and their future plans.

Another area for further research would be to connect with Christian schools in Canada through their parent networks, such as the Society of Christian Schools of British Columbia, the Association of Christian Schools International, and the Federation of Independent School Associations in British Columbia to see what kind of work is being done in their schools to address gender inequities and to work with their teachers and students to educate them in overcoming the stereotypes and assumptions that exist and must be overcome.

Finally, additional studies on influential female leaders who are moving into the public eye as a result of current societal issues are imperative. Women such as Dr. Bonnie Henry, the Provincial Health Officer for British Columbia, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who have all been praised for their recent ability to handle the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, should be studied. In a recent article, North (2020) stated, "women in power around the world, haven't just communicated effectively with their constituents during an unprecedented public health disaster — they've also responded swiftly and decisively, managing to keep case counts and deaths in their countries lower than those of their neighbors".

### **My Call to Action**

Personally, this study has caused me to do some serious self-reflection. I have a better understanding of my own experiences as a woman navigating the labyrinth to a leadership role. Even in my most recent evaluation with my administrator, whom I admire and see as a strong male voice for women in leadership, I was surprised to experience a double standard. He advised me to carefully consider how much I allowed my empathy to play into my position as a leader in our school in the coming year, as well as a note to let things "roll off my back more." At the

time, I found myself nodding in agreement, perhaps accustomed to hearing things like this in my journey throughout my career, but later I reflected on them and found myself troubled.

A few days later, I was called upon by him to help another leader in the school address an issue with a student, with the idea that my reasonable and empathetic approach allowed me to better relate to students than this other leader. I respectfully told him that I could not be asked to be both reasonable and empathetic, yet to also be less empathetic and let things "roll off my back." I either needed to be allowed to lead as the person that I was or needed to change. I could not be admonished for a trait and asked to change it and then later be asked to use it to help someone else perform the role that they should be doing. He humbly accepted that and agreed.

Before this study, I would not have even recognized that double standard, and definitely would not have challenged it. I hope to continue to challenge these situations as they arise in my own personal setting, and to study, research, and write more in order to change the narrative for the women beside me and coming behind me.

Another personal realization I had as a result of this research project is the understanding that the exposure to gender inequities starts at the earliest stages of learning, and I must help expose those and create better learning situations for the students in my school and beyond. I hope to put structures in place that will provide tools and lessons and create a new awareness of these as I further my career and move into new leadership positions. I also know that I need to start in my own home with my three children. My husband and I need to model the behaviour that we hope will become their norm as they grow older.

### **Final Thoughts**

Ultimately, Christian education and leaders must trailblaze the path to gender equity in leadership and life. As believers who claim to follow Christ, we must do that in all areas, living

out the commands that He gives us in His word. Doing so can and will lead to a better reflection of God's beautiful and diverse kingdom at work here on Earth.

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