

Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN LEADERS IN A CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE:  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

A clinical dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

by

Lorelei Greene

September, 2017

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I wish to thank God for always having my back.

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Interviews of a Legal Leader

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MOOC Research Project

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Engendering Trust

Motivation

## ABSTRACT

This research focused on women leadership within the Catholic Church and the women leaders' perceptions of their leadership effectiveness. The problem is that there is a lack of research that investigated perceptions of women and leadership within the Catholic Church. The purpose of the phenomenological qualitative study was to explore how women perceive themselves as leaders in the Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and how they see others' perceptions of them as leaders in the Catholic Church in the greater Los Angeles area. A qualitative methodology with a phenomenological research design was used because there was a need to explore the lived experiences of individuals to understand the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher addressed this purpose by conducting long interviews with 30 purposefully selected participants who currently work in ministry or administrative roles in the Catholic Church in the Los Angeles Archdiocese. The researcher used the feminist theory as a guide in conducting the data collection and analysis for the study. Analysis through the modified van Kaam method revealed themes of effectiveness, dedication, acceptance, servant leadership, calling, and a lack of resources. All participants reported perceiving gender-based barriers and a gender divide between them and male colleagues. Despite these obstacles, women accepted their roles as servants and leaders. Further study should be conducted to explore additional roles for women in the Church and to examine how gender-based obstacles and barriers might be effectively resolved both in the Los Angeles Archdiocese and elsewhere. Moreover, practical implication or recommendation for the study will be for the archdiocese to develop a formal mentorship program to prepare women to enter the leadership positions within the church. Also, the policy-based recommendation would be for representatives from the church, including women members, to write to the Archdiocese to promote awareness about the gender inequality

that exists in the church leadership. These interactions with governing body of the church can help promote policy reforms to make leadership more accessible to women. Through policy reforms, women can be trained to be involved in tasks of high-level positions in the church.

## **Chapter One: Overview of the Study**

### **Introduction**

Women continue to experience barriers to obtaining top leadership positions and hold only a small minority of CEO and board of directors' positions worldwide (Archard, 2013). Many researchers have found that the traits commonly associated with successful leadership, such as ambition and assertiveness, were associated with traditionally masculine roles (Bark, Escartin, & van Dick, 2014). Conversely, leadership traits that correspond with traditionally feminine roles, such as compassion and nurturance, have been considered ineffective (Bark et al., 2014; Cuadrado, García-Ael, & Molero, 2015). Social expectations of men and women based upon roles have been associated with perceptions of women as being less suited to leadership roles compared with men (Bark et al., 2014; Katila & Eriksson, 2013).

Within the Catholic Church, women experience similar barriers to top leadership positions (Kausner, 2014). As in the business arena, gendered perceptions of women's capacities for leadership adversely impact their power and influence within the Church (Carlson, 2016). Feminist Catholic scholars associated women's lack of access to power within the Church with beliefs that women's particular mission is to care for home and family (Kausner, 2014). Subordination of women within the Catholic Church has taken many forms, including ineligibility for ordination, public condemnation of women's theological writings as lacking in credibility, and lack of formal input and decision-making regarding Church practices and values (Carlson, 2016; Gervais, 2012; Imperatori-Lee, 2015). In spite of these barriers, however, Catholic feminists have continued to promote gender equality within the Church (Enke & Winters, 2013; Gervais, 2012). Exploring the phenomenon of women leadership in the Catholic Church contributed to the social awareness of the roles of women in the said religious

congregation and possibly serve as the basis for women empowerment in the field of leadership in religious institutions.

In this chapter, the details and background of the phenomenon and issue of the study were presented. As part of Chapter 1, a section was allotted for explaining the problem of the study. The purpose of the study was discussed in alignment with the problem of the study. The research questions were enumerated in chapter 1 as well. The theoretical framework and nature of the study were explained in chapter 1 as well. The major terms to be used for the study were enumerated and defined in this chapter. Assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations were enumerated and explained in this chapter. The significance of the study was also explained and presented in this chapter.

## **Background**

Gendered expectations of women have been associated with perceptions that they were less qualified for leadership in both the business arena and in the Catholic Church (Bark et al., 2014; Kausner, 2014). Researchers found that women leaders received negative judgment in response to leadership behaviors that elicited approval when enacted by male leaders (Sung, 2013). Bark et al. (2014) found that changing social conditions related to women's rights positively affected perceptions of roles in relation to leadership capacity. Researchers found that participants from cultures in which gender equality was legally protected expressed more optimistic expectations regarding women's opportunities to attain leadership positions in the future (Bark et al., 2014); however, Brown and Diekmann (2013) expressed a sense of caution in response to such optimism. Their findings suggested that the mere presence of women leaders, even if underrepresented, decreased perceptions of injustice in the current gender hierarchy; the



researchers suggested that such perceptions could inhibit active work toward gender equality (Brown & Diekmann, 2013).

In employment settings, the presence of other women in decision-making positions was associated with more positive perceptions of women's leadership abilities and a higher likelihood of promotion to leadership positions (Cook & Glass, 2014; Ko, Kotrba, & Roebuck, 2015). Perceptions of women as essentially maternal have been associated with expectations of women's leadership behavior; researchers found that feminine leadership traits reflected a communal orientation, and consisted of caring and compassionate approaches to leadership (Katila & Eriksson, 2013). On the other hand, masculine leadership traits were perceived as agentic and reflected ambition and assertiveness (Katila & Eriksson, 2013). Researchers found that participants were more likely to identify traditionally masculine traits as important for successful leadership in both male and women managers (Cuadrado et al., 2015).

Although a maternal or communal role was associated with perceptions of lower qualification for leadership in the working environment, this role has been associated with the explicit subordination of women within the Catholic Church (Kausner, 2014). The Catholic Church has endorsed a view of women as equal to men but fundamentally different (Kausner, 2014). In the Church's view, women have their own specific abilities and gifts that aid them in fulfilling their particular mission to take care of their families and share the teachings of their faith (Kausner, 2014). Despite the patriarchal nature of the Church, feminist scholars and religious women have worked to promote equal rights for women (Carlson, 2016; Enke & Winters, 2013; Gervais, 2012). Feminist Catholic scholars have protested the exclusion of women's perspectives as a form of hermeneutical or institutional injustice (Carlson, 2016; Imperatori-Lee, 2015). Advances in women's rights were reflected in a survey of Spanish

postgraduate students, which indicated that 86% were in favor of women being ordained as Catholic priests. Ross (2013) suggested that although women have achieved some advancement in terms of power and influence in the Catholic Church, the portrayals of women by the Church continue to emphasize a fundamental difference between men and women that are associated with a difference in roles. Although some research indicates that priests may influence the level of power and influence women exert in specific parishes (Ecklund, 2006), there is a lack of research related to perceptions of the effectiveness of women as leaders in the Catholic Church. The study addressed this gap in the literature by exploring Catholic Church women leaders' perceptions of their leadership effectiveness.

### **Problem Statement**

Women have experienced limited access to leadership within the Catholic Church, and are not eligible for ordination (Franco Martinez, Rodriguez-Entrena, & Rodriguez-Entrena, 2012). Feminist Catholic scholars have suggested that barriers to the highest levels of leadership stem from perceptions within the Church that women are meant to fulfill maternal or servant roles in relation to men and that the requirements of leadership are incompatible with the innate nature of women (Imperator-Lee, 2015; Kausner, 2014). Catholic women religious expressed frustration and resentment over being barred from higher levels of leadership within the Church and reported adverse reactions from Church leadership to their attempts to promote gender equality in the course of their work (Gervais, 2012). Women attending Catholic schools similarly experienced a sense of discrimination because of the Church's position on women in leadership (Enke & Winters, 2013); some women reported leaving organized religion altogether because of perceptions of its role in subordinating women (Aune, 2015).

In accordance with feminist theory, researchers suggested that gender equality within the Catholic Church requires that women exercise the same level of power and influence as men (Ross, 2013; Siara, 2013). Gender inequality in the Church deprives women of meaningful input and decision-making influence and inhibits the development of shared understanding of all members' perspectives by the Church as a whole (Carlson, 2016). Although one researcher found that women's power and influence varied across parishes in the reflection of parish cultures, few researchers have investigated perceptions of women and leadership within the Catholic Church (Ecklund, 2006). Further research is needed to explore perceptions of women leaders regarding their effectiveness as leaders within the Catholic Church (Neitz, 2014; Smyth, 2013).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore how women perceive themselves as leaders in the Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and how they see others' perceptions of them as leaders in the Catholic Church in the greater Los Angeles area. The researcher addressed this purpose by conducting long interviews with purposefully selected participants who worked in ministry or administrative areas as women leaders in the Catholic Church (WLCC) in the Los Angeles area. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Findings of this study provided insight into current attitudes toward women and leadership within the Catholic Church, which may aid efforts to promote gender equality within the Church.

### **Research Questions**

To address this study's problem and purpose, the researcher proposed the following research questions:

**Q1.** How do women leaders in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles perceive being a women leader in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles?

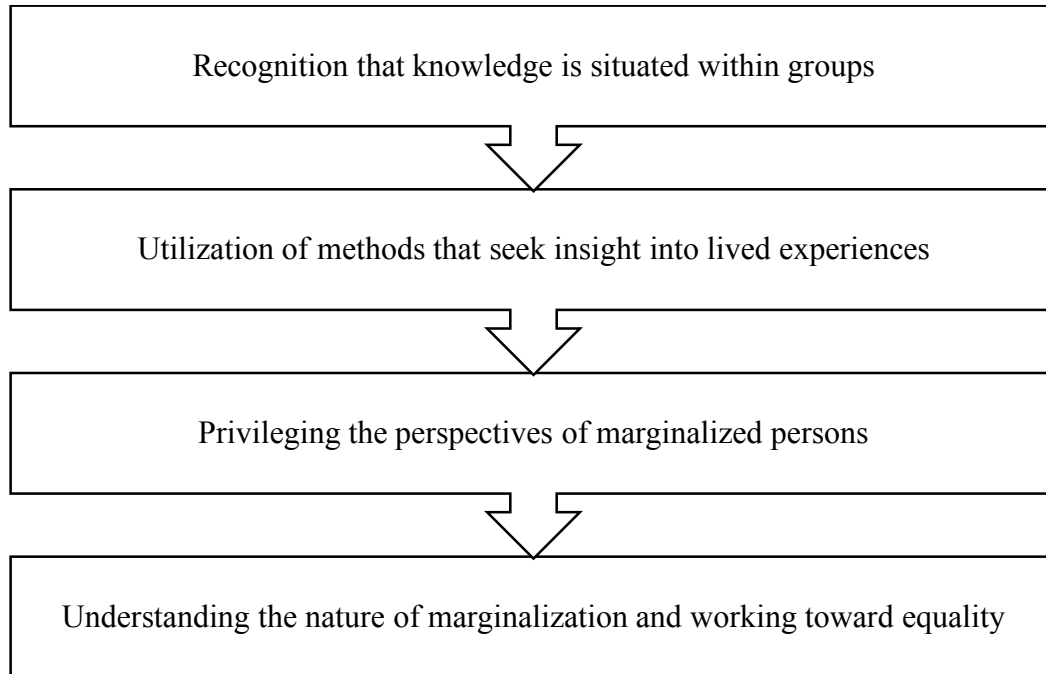
**Q2.** How do women leaders in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles perceive the effectiveness of the Church to attain women leaders?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study used feminist theory as its guiding framework. Proponents of feminist theory are concerned about inequality between men and women and use their work to address the marginalization of disempowered groups more generally (Crasnow, 2013; Siara, 2013). Feminist research promotes empowerment of marginalized groups by privileging their voices and perspectives, often through a plurality of research methods that provide participants the opportunity to share their lived experiences (Crasnow, 2013). Feminist theorists propose that knowledge is situated within specific groups of people and reflects their particular experiences; further, varying levels of access to social, cultural, and political power shape the perspectives of specific groups of people (Crasnow, 2013). Recognition and validation of multiple perspectives promote empowerment of marginalized groups by presenting viewpoints that may oppose dominant cultural narratives (Crasnow, 2013). The components of feminist theory (figure 1) below illustrate the components of the feminist theory.

Considered in the context of the study's research questions, the components of feminist theory (figure 1) model illustrates the applicability of feminist theory to this study. The researcher recognized that knowledge of the role of women in the Catholic Church was best understood by its members, and used in-depth interviews to seek first-person perspectives on this topic from Church members. Although the sample included both men and women, women participants may have more acute insights into gender discrimination; in accordance with

feminist theory, women's perspectives on marginalization would be privileged (Crasnow, 2013). Finally, obtaining perspectives from individuals who have direct experience with gendered practices within the Catholic Church allowed the researcher to understand how perceptions of gender in relation to leadership affect women's role in the Church. This understanding contributed to efforts to promote gender equality within the Catholic Church.



*Figure 1.* Components of feminist theory

Catholic feminists express concern about the marginalization of women within the Church, as indicated by rules prohibiting ordination of women and portrayals of women as essentially maternal or servile (Ross, 2013). Carlson (2016) suggested that women's subservient role in the Catholic Church resulted in women having little to no voice or decision-making influence within their own churches. Researchers have utilized feminist theoretical approaches to investigate questions of women's power within the Catholic Church. For example, Gervais (2012) conducted individual interviews with Canadian Catholic women religious to explore their perceptions of feminism in relation to their work in the Church. Because of their gender,

Catholic women religious experienced a sense that their gifts of leadership and ministry were undervalued or unwanted (Gervais, 2012). Many of the participants reported a sense of conflict between their own beliefs about women's capacities and the Church's treatment of women as being subordinate to men and incapable of higher levels of leadership (Gervais, 2012). The women described managing this tension in different ways, such as acknowledging and accepting their disagreement with the Church, avoiding Mass in favor of activities that promoted gender equality, and promoting the use of language and terminology that reflected gender equality (Gervais, 2012). Because the study is concerned with perspectives regarding women leadership within a religious context that marginalizes women, feminist theory provided a useful framework through which to interpret its findings.

### **Definitions**

Following are definitions of key terms used in this chapter:

**Catholic women.** This term refers to women who have taken vows to live in strict accordance with the Catholic faith, which includes vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience; the term includes nuns and Catholic sisters (Gervais, 2012).

**Feminine leadership traits.** Feminine leadership traits are commonly referred to as communal and include a demonstration of caring, nurturance, compassion, and emotional expressiveness (Katila & Eriksson, 2013).

**Leader.** A leader of a religious congregation refers to the different heads with duties that are non-ministerial or non-service in nature. Each diocese has its administrative arm.

**Masculine leadership traits.** Masculine leadership traits are commonly referred to as agentic and include assertiveness, control, independence, and ambition (Katila & Eriksson, 2013).

**Ordination.** Ordination refers to the consecration process that enables an individual to practice as a member of the clergy in an organized religion; in Catholicism, priests, bishops, and deacons are ordained roles.

**Role.** Roles are widely shared beliefs and expectations about men and women that are based upon socially constructed notions of gender (Tzinerr & Barsheshet-Picke, 2014).

**Roman Catholic Church.** Roman Catholic is the largest Christian church with more than 1.2 billion members. The head, which is the pope, is residing in the Vatican, where the central governing body of the congregation is located.

**Servant leadership.** Servant leadership is also a positive and effective style that leaders can use to improve followers' performance through proper motivation (Bromiley, Rau, & McShane, 2014; Rodriguez & Kiser, 2013).

**Volunteer.** A volunteer worker for a church is someone who renders service to the organization without being asked or contracted and without receiving any income from work performed.

## **Assumptions**

Specific assumptions were made to establish the foundation of the study and pursue the implementation of its literature and methodological processes. The first assumption was that women participants were willing to provide honest responses to the questions asked of them. This assumption had to be made because there was no certainty in controlling the preferences and willingness of participants, who were the sole data source for the study. Nevertheless, unwilling participants were informed that they had the option to decline to participate in this

study. The second assumption was that the participants in the study had the ability to recall information and describe their experience in adequate detail. Nevertheless, as part of the inclusion criteria for participation, the sample had to have recent (past 6 months) experiences of assuming a role in the chosen Church in the greater Los Angeles Archdiocese area. The final assumption of the study was that there was enough data gathered from participants to arrive at emergent themes that aligned with the research questions of the study. To support this assumption, the researcher designed the data collection instrument to be aligned with gathering data that were directly related to answering the research questions. Also, the researcher made sure to gather in-depth data for the study.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The research focused on the phenomenon of women leadership in the Catholic Church, which was directly aligned to the issue or problem addressed in this study. There were no other research theories that were used for the study. The population of focus for this study included individuals who worked as women leaders in ministry or administrative roles in the Catholic Church in the Los Angeles Archdiocese. These individuals were chosen to be the target for the study because they had enough experiences that were essential to providing relevant data to address the research questions of the study. All of the data was collected in one archdiocese. The interviews took place from November 2016 to January 2017. To address transferability of the information, the researcher provided detailed presentation and explanation of the results, findings, and implications of the study.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations refer to the weaknesses of the study. Identifying the limitations of the study help researchers improve the procedures to minimize the implications that the limitations may have to the study. This qualitative study was limited to a single diocese within the Catholic



Church. Participants were volunteers selected within a purposeful criterion sample (Suri, 2011) and may not represent the attitudes or feelings of the majority of women members in these positions. Many of the participants were at the top of their career level within the Church.

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles includes 288 parishes in 120 cities with 278 schools (The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Los Angeles, 2016). No male members of the Church staff or management were included for their views on the research topics within the study.

The researcher only gathered data through long interviews. This is a great tool for qualitative studies. However, it might have been better if the researcher used focus group discussions or even analyzed archival data so that there will be a triangulation of the data collected.

The first limitation of the study was the focus of the study to one population only. Nevertheless, the chosen population was aligned to the problem of the study. In relation to the first limitation was the lack of generalizability of the findings of the study beyond the population of focus of the study. To address this, the details of the methodology and findings were provided in complete and comprehensive form so that future researchers may replicate the study to other relevant and related populations.

The second limitation of the study was the use of a human interviewer who was central to generating data for the study. The interviewer (e.g., researcher) had personal biases that might have potentially affected the results of the study. To minimize the influence of biases, the researcher performed bracketing (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Tufford & Newman, 2012). In this manner, the researcher was cautious of any personal biases when conducting data collection and analysis for the study.

The third limitation was that the only data source was the interviews with participants of the study. To address this limitation, participants were urged to provide as much information as possible in their responses.

There are several areas that new research could explore on this topic including the branching out of women into priesthood through alternative routes; conflict resolution between women leadership and priests within the Catholic Church; and research with priests about their personal views of women leaders and their roles within the Church.

Future researchers could also expand the sample size to multiple dioceses in Los Angeles or to expand the geographic location. Future studies could also include male members to integrate with the experiences of the women leaders. Future researchers could also use a quantitative method or mixed method if there is enough knowledge about the subject already. Other instruments could also be used to gather data.

### **Significance**

The findings of the study may be relevant to advancing knowledge, practice and policy, and social changes. The findings may contribute to advancing knowledge in the field of feminism, women leadership, and Catholic Church by providing empirical data on the experiences in relation to the phenomenon of women leadership in the Catholic Church, which is an underexplored topic or area of research. Also, the findings and implications of the study may be the basis for future researchers in pursuing explorations that can expand the research base in any of these research areas. The findings of the study contributed to practical and policy developments by providing the basis for improving the current role of women and developing policy changes and programs that worked towards encouraging more participation among women in the leadership roles in religious institutions. Currently, women laypersons are

assuming the work and role of nuns. Finally, the findings of the study may contribute to positive social change by helping in promoting women empowerment and gender equality in the role of women and men in religious institutions, especially in leadership positions. Through the findings of the study, an improvement in social awareness may be achieved to influence the perceptions of individuals regarding the potential and abilities of women in assuming leadership roles in the Catholic congregation.

There is no direct benefit to the participants. The results of the study may benefit future subjects and the Catholic Community in general by offering insight into current attitudes towards women and leadership in the Catholic Church, which may promote gender equality within the Church.

### **Summary**

In summary, the phenomenon of focus of the study was women leadership in the Catholic Church. The issue of the research was that women have experienced limited access to leadership within the Catholic Church, and are not eligible for ordination. The purpose of the phenomenological qualitative study was to explore how women perceive themselves as leaders in the Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and how they see others' perceptions of them as leaders in the Catholic Church in the greater Los Angeles area. The research questions were: (a) how do women leaders in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles perceive being a woman leader in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles? and (b) how do women leaders in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles perceive the effectiveness of the Church to attain women leaders? The researcher addressed the purpose and research questions by conducting long interviews with 30 purposefully selected participants who worked as women leaders in ministry or administrative roles in the Catholic Church in the Los Angeles Archdiocese. The study contributed to advancing

knowledge, developing practice and policy, and promoting positive social changes. There was a gap in research related to perceptions of the effectiveness of women as leaders in the Catholic Church. In Chapter 2, existing literature and studies that are relevant to the phenomenon of interest will be discussed and analyzed to illustrate the gap that the study addressed.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Introduction

Worldwide, women continue to experience barriers to obtaining top leadership positions in organizations and hold only a small minority of CEO and board positions (Archard, 2013). Within the Catholic Church, women have experienced similar barriers to top leadership positions (Kausner, 2014). Women have experienced limited access to leadership within the Catholic Church, and remain ineligible for ordination (Franco Martinez, Rodriguez-Entrena, & Rodriguez-Entrena, 2012). The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore how women perceive themselves as leaders in the Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and how they see others' perceptions of them as leaders in the Catholic Church in the greater Los Angeles area. For this literature review, the following online databases and search engines were used: Taylor & Francis, Wiley Online, Elsevier, Oxford Journals Online, Hein Online, Springer, Sage, JSTOR, Google Scholar and ERIC. The key search terms used to search these databases alone and in combination included the following: *leadership, leadership traits, roles, Catholic Church, gendered perceptions, leadership capacity, gender equality, Catholic feminists, organized religion, women clergy, women's ordination, glass cliff* and *feminist theory*. To ensure that the most recent reports and studies were included, 72 works (96%) of the literature in the review were published between 2012 and 2016. The results were expanded to include 3 (4%) works not older than 2003.

The review of the literature provided a detailed background to the research problem discussed in the previous chapter. The first section discusses the theoretical framework of the study, which is feminist theory. The next section reviews the literature on women's roles and leadership. The following section examines contextual factors and women leadership. This is

followed by an examination of gender equality and organized religion. The chapter ends with a summary and the conclusions of the literature review.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was feminist theory. Feminist theory is concerned with inequality between men and women and addresses the marginalization of disempowered groups more generally (Crasnow, 2013; Siara, 2013). Feminist research promotes empowerment of marginalized groups by privileging their voices and perspectives, often through a plurality of research methods that provide participants the opportunity to share their lived experiences (Crasnow, 2013). Feminist theorists propose that knowledge is situated within specific groups of people and reflects their particular experiences; further, varying levels of access to social, cultural, and political power shape the perspectives of specific groups of people (Crasnow, 2013). Recognition and validation of multiple perspectives promote empowerment of marginalized groups by presenting viewpoints that may oppose dominant cultural narratives (Crasnow, 2013). The four components of feminist theory consist of a) recognition that knowledge is situated within groups, b) utilization of methods that seek insight into lived experiences, c) privileging the perspectives of marginalized persons, and d) understanding the nature of marginalization and working toward equality.

Catholic feminists have expressed concern about the marginalization of women within the Church, as indicated by rules prohibiting the ordination of women and portrayals of women as essentially maternal or servile (Ross, 2013). Carlson (2016) suggested that women's subservient role in the Catholic Church resulted in women having little or no voice or decision-making influence within their own churches. Researchers have utilized feminist theoretical approaches to investigate questions of women's power within the Catholic Church. In one such

study, Gervais (2012) explored the perceptions held by Canadian Catholic women religious of the relationship between feminism and their work in the Church. Catholic women religious experienced a sense that their gifts of leadership and ministry were undervalued or unwanted due to their gender (Gervais, 2012). Many of the participants reported a sense of conflict between their own beliefs about women's capacities and the Church's treatment of women as subordinate to men and incapable of higher levels of leadership (Gervais, 2012). The women described the different ways in which they managed this tension. The study was concerned with perspectives regarding women leadership within a religious context that tend to marginalize women, and feminist theory provided a useful framework through which to interpret the findings.

### **Review of the Relevant Literature**

**Gender role perceptions and leadership.** This section will discuss research into the relationship between socially constructed notions of gender and leadership, beginning with the exploration of the women role in relation to leadership. The focus will then move to research on the effect that perceptions of feminine and masculine leadership traits may have on perceptions of leadership capability. Finally, research related to the differential assessment of leadership behavior exhibited by men and women will be discussed.

***Women gender role and leadership.*** The discrepancy, which exists between the numbers of women and men in leadership roles within organizations has been referred to as "the glass ceiling" (Christo-Baker, Roberts, & Rogalin, 2012, p. 20). Using role congruity theory to analyze delineations of leadership and the glass-ceiling outcome, Christo-Baker et al. (2012) suggested that successful leadership is dependent on both context and culture. They indicated the necessity of considering how a number of forces which come into play, such as race, ethnicity, and gender,

are interconnected when developing effective instruments and programs aimed at smashing the glass ceiling.

Many researchers have agreed with Christo-Baker et al. (2012) that studies of gender and leadership can vary by culture and context and have located their studies within different cultures and contexts. Archard (2013) conducted focus groups with women secondary school students in Australia and South Africa to explore adolescent girls' perceptions of the impact of gender upon leadership opportunities. The response from the participants disclosed their belief that leadership positions were patriarchal in nature and that it was possible that women may not aspire to hold such positions. The students believed that access to positions of leadership for women was limited by gender stereotypes and social expectations that they would focus on home and family (Archard, 2013). Although the women respondents conveyed optimism that such limitations could be overcome in the future, the author expressed uncertainty whether this optimism was realistic or a reflection of naivety (Archard, 2013).

In a South African study, women in the position of the school principal or head teacher perceived the women role associated with motherhood to be an asset in their leadership roles (Lumby & Azaola, 2014). In semi-structured interviews with 54 women headteachers, over half of the respondents described their leadership style as mothering, with attitudes and skills which were either considered innate or acquired through the experience of motherhood, and suggested that their experiences with motherhood positively shaped their development as leaders (Lumby & Azaola, 2014). However, the promotion of a mothering style of leadership as a means of combating the prevailing perception of the superiority of male leadership styles, could be seen as a disservice to the 46% of respondents who did not take this approach to leadership and faced



being potentially reassigned to the group containing less effective leaders (Lumby & Azaola, 2014).

Other research also indicated that some women found that perceptions associated with motherhood detracted from their leadership experiences (Mäkelä, 2012). Interviews drawing on the individual narratives of five women who worked in leadership positions revealed experiences of perceived pregnancy-related discrimination, including having their work reassigned without their input, unnecessary alterations in their job descriptions, and exclusion from professional development opportunities. Further, perceptions of discriminatory practices during pregnancy were found to be potentially damaging to work relationships, which were considered to be of good quality (Mäkelä, 2012).

In a systematic review of theoretical and empirical research related to women and leadership, with particular weight given to a comparison of Spain with other European countries and the United States, Bark et al. (2014) found that changing social conditions which were related to women's rights could have a positive effect on perceptions of roles in relation to leadership capacity. Researchers found that participants from cultures in which gender equality was legally protected expressed more optimistic expectations regarding women's opportunities to attain leadership positions in the future (Bark et al., 2014). The question was raised as to whether a crisis, such as the economic crisis experienced by Spain, would provide the opportunity to extend gender equality or initiate a regression toward more traditional roles (Bark et al., 2014).

Expressing a note of caution in response to the more optimistic conclusions of some other studies, Brown and Diekmann (2013) suggested that, among elected officials, the mere presence of women leaders, even if an underrepresentation, could undermine efforts to redress gender

inequality by decreasing the perception of the continuation of gender-related injustice of the existing hierarchy. The researchers conducted three experiments to show the effect that the presence of a women political candidate can have on perceptions of the sociopolitical system. In the first experiment, 40 psychology students were asked to read about candidates running for leadership positions and rate their support both for the candidate and for the sociopolitical system; in experiment two, 69 psychology students also read about a male or women candidate and rate dependent measures related to legitimacy and future stability; in the third experiment, involving 84 psychology students, the participants were told that the candidates they were reading about and rating were running for the House of Representatives (Brown & Diekman, 2013). Results showed that where even small numbers of women were in highly visible leadership positions, initial successes could lead to perceptions that the current system was just and to increased satisfaction with the status quo. The resultant complacency could, in turn, inhibit active work toward achieving further gender equality (Brown & Diekman, 2013).

Context played a significant role in a comparison of psychological profiles of WLCC of England serving either in positions of the ordained local clergy or as mobile professional clergy (Francis, Robbins & Jones, 2012). Using psychological type theory, the authors sought to determine whether there were differences in the orientations (introversion and extraversion), judging process (thinking and feeling) and attitudes of the individuals who chose either of the two types of positions. The results showed no significant variation between the two groups with regard to orientations or the judging process. With regard to attitudes, there was found to be a notably larger percentage of judging types among the ordained local clergy than among the mobile clergy. The authors concluded that the sensing-judging temperament, which tends to be more detail orientated and practical, was a characteristic of a custodian, rather than pioneering,

style of ministry and that this was preferred by the majority of the local ordained clergywomen (Francis et al., 2012).

In a phenomenological investigation of the conceptual foundation of the authentic leadership theory of management, Gardiner (2015) considered how leadership, authenticity, and gender might be interrelated. She posited that the complexities around the idea of authenticity had not been sufficiently questioned, particularly in relation to situation or gender and that there existed an underlying presumption that authenticity had the same meaning for everyone, and was consistently manifested in the same way. Gardiner pointed out that this disregarded the effect that cultural contexts and the interconnections of identity had on the theory and practice of leadership and emphasized the universal over the particular. An exploration of the interactions of authenticity, leadership, and gender is able to illustrate the influence of social conformity on notions of leadership and leaders. Women were found to have shaped their conception of authentic leadership within a variety of contexts beyond that of an institution (Gardiner, 2015). The author concluded that the concept of leadership should be developed outside of hierarchical frameworks and should recognize that different circumstances require different types of leaders.

Based on existing research on the women's roles that relate to leadership, women have lesser representation and chances of achieving leadership positions. Several aspects of the community, organization, and culture play significant roles in the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. In relation to the general roles of women and men in relation to leadership, understanding the different factors that are involved in the given phenomenon enabled further clarity as to how such phenomenon applies to the Catholic Church. In the next subsection, the focus will be on the perceptions of feminine and masculine leadership traits and

capability, which may justify the phenomenon of underrepresentation of women in leadership positions.

***Masculine versus feminine leadership traits.*** Expectations of women's leadership behavior have often been associated with perceptions of women as essentially maternal; researchers found that perceptions of feminine leadership traits reflected a more communal orientation, and caring and compassionate approaches to leadership (Katila & Eriksson, 2013). On the other hand, masculine leadership traits were perceived to be more agentic, characterized by ambition, competitiveness, and assertiveness (Katila & Eriksson, 2013). Another study found that participants were more likely to consider traditionally masculine traits to be important factors for successful leadership for both male and women managers (Cuadrado et al., 2015). Adolescent girls who participated in focus groups on women participation as leaders in society reflected the perception of social bias toward masculine leadership traits in their responses, expressing the belief that stereotypes of women as weak or timid adversely affected their ability to attain leadership positions (Archard, 2013).

Other research produced evidence that indicated an adverse effect of gender bias upon women's opportunities to attain leadership positions. In their systematic review of the literature, Bark et al. (2014) found that women had been perceived as less suited than men to leadership as a result of gender attitudes and gendered expectations of behavior. Katila and Eriksson (2013) explored how gender affected Finnish business students' evaluations of male and women leaders' capabilities by analyzing stories the students composed to describe the performance of fictional male or women CEOs. In their analysis of the students' stories, the researchers found that participants were more likely to describe women CEOs as lacking in interpersonal skills, seemed to expect women CEOs to exhibit communal skills, in accordance with stereotypes of

women leadership, and judged them negatively when they failed to display these behaviors (Katila & Eriksson, 2013). On the other hand, participants were more likely to describe male CEOs as natural leaders, and as possessing many of the traits of transformational leadership. These findings illustrated a double-bind for women leaders in which, despite feminine leadership traits being considered inferior to masculine leadership traits, women may still be judged negatively for failing to exhibit behavior considered to be traditionally feminine while acting in leadership positions (Katila & Eriksson, 2013).

An investigation into the possible reasons behind the continuing underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in spite of the increase over previous decades in the proportion of women in leadership positions questioned whether women and men had different degrees of power motivation, defined as the desire to influence others, and whether possible gender variations in this motivation played a part in the disproportionate distribution of women and men in leadership roles (Schuh, Hernandez Bark, Van Quaquebeke, Hossiep, Frieg, & van Dick, 2013). The results showed that men consistently scored higher on power motivation than women and that the gender difference was relatively strong. The authors noted that this difference may not have weakened over the course of the preceding three decades and may be a factor in the promotion of a higher proportion of male leaders. However, they caution that power motivation is only one contributing factor to the gender inequality in leadership positions and that a sizeable proportion of the differences between genders in leadership roles can be attributed to other significant factors, including gender discrimination (Schuh et al., 2013).

There is a clear distinction between men and women in terms of attaining leadership roles in an organization. Aside from perceptions of the capabilities of women and men as individuals and their appropriateness and ability to match the responsibilities of a leader, there are other

important aspects that were considered to facilitate a better understanding of the phenomenon of women underrepresentation in leadership roles. In the next section, the assessment of leadership behavior exhibited by men and women will be discussed.

***Differential evaluation of male and women leader behavior.*** It has been argued that, through observation of the activities of men and women, members of a society develop corresponding views about their psychological traits, inferring that men and women are inherently different based on the expectations of shared gender stereotypes (Chizema, Kamuriwo, & Shinozawa, 2015). Citizens of that society are then socialized to have the traits, skills, and preferences that support a division of labor based on the collective belief of what is the appropriate role for each gender (Chizema et al., 2015). Multiple researchers have found that study participants judged men and women differently based upon their behavior as leaders. Bark et al. (2014) observed that participants judged women negatively when they displayed leadership behavior that was typically viewed positively in men, whereas leadership behavior, which was deemed to be congruent with expectations of the women gender was more accepted. In an exploration of the depiction of leadership and gender in the media, Sung (2013) found that the use of a mix of feminine and masculine communication styles by both a male and a women manager elicited different responses from their peers, with the women manager having her communication style criticized for being excessively aggressive. The male manager, on the other hand, received praise for communicating in ways that used the same mix of feminine and masculine styles, suggesting that male leaders may be permitted to use a wider range of verbal behaviors than is considered acceptable for women leaders (Sung, 2013).

On the other hand, a study using role congruity theory to examine prejudice toward women in leadership roles found that women leaders who were assertive and displayed agentic

behavior were considered by both men and women to be as likable and influential as their assertive male counterparts (Bongiorno, Bain, & David, 2014). However, the authors found evidence for a subtle type of prejudice directed towards women when, instead of being agentic in leadership roles, they exhibited tentative behaviors and were consequently judged to be less likable and influential than assertive women or men leaders who displayed tentative behavior. The evidence supported the conclusion that women who failed to show agency as leaders were swiftly singled out for disapproval while male leaders were not.

As the preceding discussion indicated, studies of men and women leadership traits tend to focus on the disadvantages experienced by women in pursuit of leadership positions. However, in a meta-analysis of 95 studies over 49 years, Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr (2014) addressed an emerging debate in both the press and in academic literature regarding the possibility of a women leadership advantage, in spite of the data that supports the perception that men are usually perceived to be more suitable and effectual in leadership roles than women. While there has been a tendency in the literature to oversimplify the advantages of gender with regard to leadership, the findings of this study indicated that the relationship between the two is moderated by several factors (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2014) found that the patterns of results were very different depending on whether self- or other ratings measured leader effectiveness. When all leadership contexts were taken into account, there was not found to be a difference in the perception of leadership effectiveness between men and women. On the other hand, when looking at other ratings only, women were regarded to be appreciably more effective than men. However, when only self-ratings were examined, men were found to evaluate themselves as considerably more effective than the evaluations women gave themselves. Characteristics of the organization in question also had an impact on outcomes,

with males being perceived to be more effective in male-dominated organizations such as government, while women were rated significantly higher in business and education (Paustian-Underdahl et al. 2014).

Perceptions of gendered authority and the acceptance of gender stereotypes can be swayed by the framing of gender dissimilarities through linguistic normativity in which groups are evaluated by contrasting one group, the effect to be explained, against another, the linguistic norm, with the group identified as the norm often seen as the more agentic and powerful of the two (Bruckmüller, Hegarty, & Abele, 2012, p. 20). The authors suggested that such perceptions could be a factor in the perpetuation of stereotypes, which are linked to status, as differences between the groups tend to be explained by setting groups with higher status as the linguistic norm. With regard to leadership, explaining differences in terms of how women are different from males added to beliefs that men held more power and status in society and increased acceptance of the legitimacy of existing inequalities (Bruckmüller et al., 2012).

Much of the literature on role perceptions and leadership suggested that successful leadership is dependent on both context and culture. In some contexts, women felt that they were limited by gender stereotypes and the social expectations that they would focus on home and family (Archard, 2013). While some women considered traditional women roles, such as that associated with motherhood was an asset (Lumby & Azaola, 2014), others found that perceptions associated with motherhood and pregnancy detracted from their experiences (Mäkelä, 2012). On the whole, researchers found that changing social conditions which were related to women's rights could have a positive impact on perceptions of gender and leadership capacity (Bark et al., 2014), but that the mere presence of women leaders could undermine efforts to redress gender



inequality by decreasing the perception of the continuation of gender-related injustice in the existing hierarchy (Brown & Diekmann, 2013).

It has been suggested that members of a society develop views about the psychological traits of men and women through observation of their activities and infer that men and women are inherently different based on the expectations of shared gender stereotypes (Chizema et al., 2015). Researchers have found that perceptions of feminine leadership traits reflected a more communal orientation, and caring and compassionate approaches to leadership (Katila & Eriksson, 2013). Conversely, masculine leadership traits were perceived to be more agentic, characterized by ambition, competitiveness, and assertiveness (Katila & Eriksson, 2013). Other researchers questioned whether women and men had different degrees of power motivation (Schuh et al., 2013) and suggested that male leaders may be permitted to use a wider range of verbal behaviors than is considered acceptable for women leaders (Sung, 2013).

Gender bias exists in leadership roles. Women tend to experience biases of society in terms of attaining leadership roles. The important factors that are involved in this phenomenon of women underrepresentation in leadership roles include societal perceptions of women as inappropriate to be a leader of a group of individuals. The perceived weakness of women is translated to favoring men to become leaders instead of women. These factors are societal in nature or based on other people's perceptions. However, there are other contextual factors that must be considered when dealing with women in leadership roles. In the next section of the literature review, contextual factors related to women leadership will be identified from existing literature and discussed.

***Contextual factors and women leadership.*** In addition to perceptions of individual leadership capacities, contextual factors can also have an effect on women's access to leadership

positions. Specifically, researchers have examined the impact, which gender diversity in both organizational and leadership contexts can have upon women leadership. Researchers have also investigated the relationship between organizational factors, such as nonprofit status and business stability, and women leadership. This section will discuss the findings of this research.

*Effects of gender diversity in leadership structure.* Researchers have found that the gender composition of the working environment did affect women's leadership opportunities (Cook & Glass, 2014). Focus groups of adolescent girls expressed the view that women have a harder time achieving promotion to leadership positions because of the male-dominated leadership structure (Archard, 2013). Cook and Glass (2014) found that the presence of women on boards of directors significantly increased the chances of women's promotion to CEO. Further, women's length of tenure was associated with proportions of women to men on boards of directors (Cook & Glass, 2014). Further, Ko et al. (2015) found that women leaders rated themselves more positively and received more positive ratings from others when they worked in women-dominated industries. These findings suggested that women's appraisals of other women's capacities enhanced their opportunities to attain leadership positions (Cook & Glass, 2014).

Multiple researchers found that men and women appraised women leaders differently. For example, Cuadrado et al. (2015) found that women participants were more likely to view women managers in favorable terms. Compared with male participants, women were more likely to describe women leaders as transformational, to report higher satisfaction with women leaders, and to express a desire to make an extra effort when working for women supervisors (Cuadrado et al., 2015). Similarly, Hansen and Kosiara-Pedersen (2015) found that women participants reported more positive perceptions of women political candidates and men participants reported

more positive perceptions of male candidates. In another study, women participants rated a women leader who confronted sexism more positively than men (Gervais & Hillard, 2014).

The wage disparity that exists between men and women inside their places of employment can be decreased when women occupy leadership roles (Tate, & Yang, 2015). Using unique worker-plant harmonized data to calculate differences in wage alterations of employees displaced from firms which were shutting down, Tate and Yang (2015) observed that there were greater shortfalls among women than men when workers transferred from the same shutting factory to the same new business were compared. However, they found an appreciably smaller disparity when the new employer had women leadership, particularly among women who were dislocated from plants with male leadership and from industries that were not as competitive. The results suggested a significant externality to women occupying leadership roles, in that they promote a culture that is more women-friendly cultures within their businesses (Tate, & Yang, 2015).

In an investigation of the effect of gender on policy results of local government in municipalities across the United States, Ferreira and Gyourko (2014) considered women in the executive branch of government, specifically mayors. Their results indicate that having a woman as chief executive had no bearing on the scale of local government, the make-up of its spending, rates of crime, long or short-term policy choices. They also found that having a woman elected as mayor had virtually no positive effect on the likelihood of other women being successful in running for political office (Ferreira & Gyourko, 2014).

Using feminist ethics literature and social role theory, Boulouta (2013) looked at the potential effect that women board directors could have on corporate social performance (CSP). An empirical analysis of 126 sample firms from the S&P500 group of companies over an

interval of five years indicated that board gender diversity (BGD) considerably influence CSP. The effect was dependent upon the social performance metric, which was being considered. Boards which had greater gender diversity exercised further influence on CSP metrics which concentrated on ‘negative’ business practices due to the capability those CSP ratings have the to encourage the elevated levels of empathic caring which appeal to women directors (Boulouta, 2013). Another study found that leadership qualities could have an impact on the mental well-being of subordinates, with respectful and supportive leadership being inversely related to levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout (Kane, 2014).

In the context of gender diversity within an organization or a group of individuals, the leadership roles within these entities tend to be aligned with the dominant gender of the group. Therefore, members of a male-dominated group tend to favor having male leaders. On the other hand, groups with a more diverse gender representation tend to become more objective in using performance matrix when evaluating candidates for leadership. However, diversity of gender is not the only contextual factor that has an important role in the underrepresentation of women or gender bias in leadership. In the next subsection, organizational context, such as type, stability status, objective, and the like, will be explored and discussed in relation to the leadership of women in organizations.

***Organizational context and women leadership.*** Researchers have also investigated the relationship between women leadership and different types of organizational context. Claus, Callahan, and Sandlin (2013) found that, in the European Union, women were more likely to hold positions of leadership in nonprofit organizations as compared with for-profit organizations. The researchers observed that nonprofit organizations typically serve social purposes, which may indicate the existence of a societal perception that there is a fit between feminine leadership traits

and nonprofit missions (Claus et al., 2013). The researchers also found that countries that were categorized as masculine, i.e., societies or cultures that stressed assertiveness, accomplishment, material rewards and competition, had a higher likelihood of having for-profit organizations, and that countries which were designated as feminine, with an emphasis on co-operation and family, had a higher likelihood of having nonprofit compared with for-profit organizations (Claus et al., 2013).

The glass cliff theory refers to another organizational condition that is associated with women leaders. According to this theory, women are more likely to be promoted to the board of director positions in organizations that are unstable and experiencing financial loss (Mulcahy & Linehan, 2014). Researchers who investigated the glass cliff theory found that when they examined changes in board diversity while considering the magnitude of the initially reported loss, there was a difference in patterns of promotion according to gender (Mulcahy & Linehan, 2014). Mulcahy and Linehan found that organizations that reported larger initial losses were more likely to promote women to board member positions; the researchers suggested that this pattern resulted in higher proportions of women in top leadership positions in organizations that had a higher degree of instability. Rink, Ryan, and Stoker (2013) investigated the glass cliff theory and found that when social resources were not available, participants were more likely to indicate that women leaders would be more successful in establishing acceptance. The researchers suggested that perceptions of women as possessing communal leadership traits influenced others to view them as more capable of managing the organizational crisis in the absence of social support in the workplace (Rink et al., 2013). Other researchers, however, could not establish support for the glass cliff theory (Cook & Glass, 2014).

The literature on contextual factors and women leadership indicated that the views expressed by women that they have a harder time achieving promotion to leadership positions because of the male-dominated leadership structure (Archard, 2013) are supported by researchers who have found that the gender composition of the working environment did affect women's leadership opportunities (Cook & Glass, 2014). Having women in leadership positions can have an impact on corporate culture: the presence of women on boards of directors significantly increased the chances of women's promotion to CEO (Cook & Glass, 2014); wage disparity between men and women can be decreased when women occupy leadership roles (Tate, & Yang, 2015); and board gender diversity can considerably influence corporate social performance (Boulouta, 2013).

Looking at the relationship between women leadership and different types of organizational contexts, researchers have found that, in the European Union, women were more likely to hold positions of leadership in non-profit organizations as compared with for-profit organizations (Claus et al., 2013) and that that countries that were categorized as feminine had a higher likelihood of having non-profit compared with for-profit organizations (Claus et al., 2013). In what has been termed the glass cliff theory, some researchers have found that women are more likely to be promoted to board of director positions in organizations that are unstable and experiencing financial loss (Mulcahy & Linehan, 2014, p. 20) and that organizations that reported larger initial losses were more likely to promote women to board member positions.

The status and type of an organization have been associated with the likelihood of women members to become leaders within the said institution. Non-profit and unstable organizations are examples of where women are most likely to become leaders. However, in all these studies and factors, the context of a religious institution or the church, has not been included and explored.

The focus of this study is women leadership in churches. In the next section, gender equality within the context of the church or religion will be discussed.

***Gender equality and organized religion.*** The structures, cultures, and norms in society, which limit access by women to positions of leadership, known as the glass ceiling, have a parallel in religious organizations where they are referred to as the stained glass ceiling (Ngunjiri & Christo-Baker, 2012). Consistent with the literature relating to women and leadership in general, research regarding women and leadership within organized religions, including the Catholic Church, indicated the continued existence of barriers to gender equality (Aune, 2015). Neitz (2014) suggested that examining religion can often enhance feminist and gender-related research because organized religions typically include explicit rules related to gender that clarify the implicit roles in society.

***Perceptions of organized religion regarding women.*** Religious groups construct mechanisms that regulate sexuality and gender relations and supply venues in which individuals and societies speak about moral culture and the definition of a good person or a good society (Neitz, 2014). Prohibitions on the ordination of women reflect explicit rules regarding gender and leadership that are only implicitly active within the broader societal arena (Neitz, 2014; Styhre, 2014). Although the Catholic Church continues to enforce this prohibition, the Church of Sweden began allowing the ordination of women in 1978. Styhre (2014) interviewed 14 pastors (seven male, seven women) of the Church of Sweden to explore gender attitudes. Participants reported a mix of gender attitudes toward women as pastors, with some pastors continuing to endorse a traditional male-dominant view, suggesting that putting women into pastoral roles was contrary to scripture (Styhre, 2014). The responses of the participants indicated that traditional

views had become the minority position, although more subtle forms of gender discrimination continued to be experienced by women pastors (Styhre, 2014).

Language and ideology can have a significant impact on the formation of perceptions of women's roles as church leaders. Shooter (2014) suggested that, in the Anglican Church, women's leadership was blocked by patriarchal theologies, which are averse to surrendering masculine metaphors for God, even when the central theological concept of the Trinity is viewed as an intimate connection rather than as gender. In a challenge to the domination of the view of the Trinity as male-gendered, the author proposed the use of the feminine word midwife for the Third Person of the Trinity, which would preserve personhood while representing non-gendered activity (Shooter, 2014, p. 20). The lengthy battle to have women ordained as priests in the Church of England, subsequent to agreement being reached that women could be ordained, has been attributed to evidence found that patriarchal ideology had twisted theology in such a manner that added to the bias against women which had been entrenched in the Church (Rees, 2014).

The scarcity of WLCC may, in part, be attributed to gender-role stereotypes, which operate very powerfully in a great deal of evangelicalism (Dzubinski, 2015). Using narrative analysis of the stories of women who held leadership positions at the executive level in such organizations, Dzubinski (2015) concluded that the power the women were able to employ was defined and restricted by the potency of tacitly accepted stereotypes regarding roles and by unexamined evangelical roles. Some success was possible for these women if they remained within prescribed norms, but divergence from the prescribed roles could lead to sanctions from their organizations. The prevalence of implicit assumptions about the proper position and



conduct of women prevents both women and organizations from wholly profiting from women's leadership abilities (Dzubinski, 2015).

The congregations' receptivity may also influence the efficacy of women leadership in religious organizations to women clergy/priests which, in turn, may be persuaded by two lines of reasoning put forward by theologians to contest women ordination (Smith & Stevens, 2003). The first is that the priesthood itself is required to be a masculine role, and the second is that the fitting role for women dictates their exclusion from the ordained clergy. The negative attitudes of the laity toward a women priesthood may be altered through the espousal of alternative theological arguments in favor of women ordination (Smith & Stevens, 2003).

Within the church, having women priests or preachers have not been fully allowed in all sectors and denominations. In the Catholic Church, women cannot be ordained as priests; such rule shows the explicit rules regarding gender and leadership. Nevertheless, there are special and specific roles allotted to women in these churches. In executive and non-ministerial roles of the church, women have held positions of leadership. Nevertheless, the proportion of male leadership is still higher than women leadership. As for the laity, there has been a tradition-based bias against women in the priesthood. In the next subsection, women agency will be discussed within the context of a religious denomination.

*Women agency within the context of organized religion.* Feminist research on women in organized religions which adhere to traditional definitions of roles can find a helpful tool in the concept of agency, in that a focus on the agency of religious women aids in perceiving the women as actors, as opposed to being merely acted upon by societal organizations that are dominated by men (Burke, 2012). In a review of the feminist research on the agency of women participants in religions with traditional views on roles, Burke (2012) explored four approaches

to understanding agency: resistance agency which focuses on those who try to question or alter some facet of their religion; empowerment agency, concentrating on the reinterpretation of practices or doctrine; instrumental agency which emphasizes non-religious beneficial results of religious practice; and compliant agency, which focuses on the numerous and various ways in which women conform to religious principles which are gender-traditional. The agency of women who participate in these kinds of traditional religions can appear to challenge the established view of what agency is, exhibiting abundant maneuverability within what can occasionally be severe restraints on their activities (Burke, 2012). The definition of agency can no longer be taken for granted as fixed or universal, nor can it be assumed that male-dominated structures entirely shape the lives of women.

Proper preparation can enhance the agentic success of women leaders. A study of the experiences of women bishops in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) emphasized the importance of preparing women, before they undertake the leadership role, to understand what the position of bishop entails and how to recognize the qualities of effective bishops (Tunheim & DuChene, 2016). At the time of the study, only 14% of the bishops ministering to the 70.5 million Lutherans worldwide were women, even though over 50% of the Lutheran church population consisted of women, whose gender and voices were not being represented in the upper echelons of the church. Research indicated that the majority of the women bishops in the ELCA who were interviewed had the main leadership competencies they needed and support from their spouses, but they also faced many challenges and had few women mentors (Tunheim & DuChene, 2016).

In African American Protestant churches, African American women have been found to be attaining positions of clergy leadership, although little research has been done on the

experiences of these women (Pearson, 2015). In a qualitative research study exploring the experiences of a sample of 16 African American women, Pearson looked at the obstacles that they met in gaining leadership positions and the facilitators or success strategies they employed to surmount those obstacles. The study indicated that African American women continue to meet with male dominance and gender bias in clergy leadership and that a degree of resistance, antagonism, denial, and competition persists when African American women undertake clergy leadership positions, but that the women in the study used the facilitators, including ministry training and higher education, effectively to obtain clergy leadership positions (Pearson, 2015).

In a case study of the experience of a community of women religious in an attempt to exercise agency, Farley (2013) attempted to address the understanding of, abuses of and challenges to power in the context of a Christian religious organization. The case involved the Religious Sisters of Mercy of the Union, a nursing order, who concluded that the integrity of their ministry required an amendment in their customary implementation of the Ethical Directives for Catholic Hospitals sent out by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and subsequently found themselves in conflict with the magisterium. In agreeing to be silenced in the end, the group took a number of things into consideration, including the general obligation of the sisters to continue their ministry of healing, concern for the best interests of community of sisters and the wider community of the Church, and the possible restriction or end of its healing ministry. Farley (2013) posited that, although the women's experience was one of powerlessness, they, themselves, did not view the experience primarily as powerlessness, but rather as a choice not to let their own power to be dispersed by the action of an external power.

In the concept of agency, women may be viewed as actors instead of entities being acted upon. In different studies, challenges of women as leaders of religious groups have been evident,

especially with the high levels of resistance from the laity and other church policies. In the next subsection, the traditional roles of women in the church will be discussed to have a deeper understanding of the present challenges that they experience in relation to obtaining leadership roles in their respective religious institutions.

***Traditional role of women in the Catholic Church.*** The Catholic Church has endorsed the view of women as equal to men but fundamentally different (Kausner, 2014). In the Church's view, women have their own specific abilities and gifts that aid them in fulfilling their particular mission to take care of their families and share the teachings of their faith. Catholic women, in some contexts, sought their own ways in which to reconcile the teachings of the Church regarding women with the secular feminist movement around them (Kausner, 2014). In Louisiana in the 1970s, many Catholic women's understanding of the idea of equal rights for women was at odds with the definitions that the feminist movement has put forward. Agreeing with the Church's teaching that women possessed special abilities, some Catholic women construed equal rights as equal opportunity in the workplace while still permitting legislation, which allowed for the diverse abilities and interests of women. They did not see equality as the right to be freed from the ideal family configuration espoused by holders of Christian values (Kausner, 2014).

Also feeling the constraints of gender expectations upon them, Polish women who had migrated to the United Kingdom conveyed that the Catholic expectation of them as women was to become a mother and take care of the household, rather than obtain employment and provide financial support for the household (Siara, 2013). Many of the women who migrated to the UK viewed such expectations as traditional and not suited to the contemporary world, and saw in migration to a different cultural context the opportunity for more choice and freedom (Siara,

2013). Students from a Catholic women's college similarly observed the influence of maternal or communal gender expectations in the programmatic requirements (Enke & Winters, 2013). Students noted that community service engagement programs were required for majors that were typically associated with women's career choices, such as social work, nursing, and education. On the other hand, they observed that traditionally male-dominated majors, such as math and science, did not require community service. These findings indicated a continued expectation by the Church that women fulfill roles characterized by compassion and service to others (Enke & Winters, 2013).

The historical context of expectations placed on women by organized religion and women's responses indicates that, in many instances, the situation is an evolving one. A study of the character and scope of, and attitudes toward the involvement of women in the Catholic Church in the Anglosphere nations, which have English as an official language and a shared cultural heritage, examined the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council with regard to the roles and duties of women in the Church, the key teachings advanced following the Council, and the implementation of those teachings by local Churches, with particular focus on the contemporary situation in the Church in Scotland (Cooke, 2015). The findings revealed that, although there was a steady flow of women's participation in the Church, this chiefly occurred at the grassroots level and was tied to the participation of the laity in general and so received limited recognition (Cooke, 2015).

Little research has been undertaken on the relationship between religion and feminism in the period following the winning of suffrage for women (Thurlow, 2014). The author of a study of the fight for the ordination of women within the Church of England during the 1940s and 1950s and the support given to it by feminist groups and individuals argued that, in order to fully

comprehend the feminism of the middle of the twentieth-century, the struggle by women to be represented in their churches must be taken into consideration. Although historians have frequently depicted this period as the low point of feminism in the twentieth century, the evidence indicates that feminists carried on their struggle for the rights of women and that their activism could be motivated by the question of their religious identity (Thurlow, 2014). As feminists in the 1940s and 1950s knew full well that voting rights did not equal full citizenship and continued to seek equality in all areas of their lives, including their church, an investigation of the issues of religious identity can contribute to the understanding of feminism in this period (Thurlow, 2014).

While Americans are seen to be comfortable with women in leadership roles, a fairly small percentage of women achieve top leadership positions as compared to their masculine counterparts (McIntyre, 2013). This trend is also found in religious organizations, where women constitute the majority of church membership, but researchers have found that the representation of women as church leaders is disproportionate to their numbers and that women have had a hard time moving into leadership positions in the church. The barriers which prevent qualified women from achieving their goals within their churches have been identified as the sexism which exists both within the church and in society, and the struggles which many women in different cultures have with the various roles expected of them within the family structure. Through the exploration of three facets of the theory of subordination: biblical theory, cultural theory, and pastoral domination theory, McIntyre (2013) developed a mentoring program, which enabled women to acquire the skills to deal with these challenges.

Women members of religious groups within the Church have found their own methods of responding to the situations they encounter. Catholic women religious, being uniquely situated

within the Church as both subjects and leaders, have been both subjected to, and agents of, specific modes of disciplinary ritual (Gervais & Watson, 2014). An investigation of corporal modes of discipline and resistance techniques employed by a group of 32 Catholic nuns demonstrated the extent to which the women resisted this corrective authority and how the perception they had discipline is associated with compliance and disobedience.

Researchers have found that the political opinions and behavior of congregants can be, to some degree, shaped by their clergy who are well situated to transform religious values into political values (Calfano, Oldmixon & Suiter, 2014). A study of the dynamics of clergy opinions, concentrated on the Irish clergy, considered the effect of psychological factors on attitudes towards economics and culture through the use of a survey questionnaire (Calfano et al., 2014). The findings indicated that the clergy were leaders enmeshed in their institutions, alert to the influence of crucial reference groups, their attitudes influenced by the ideology they perceived their institutional superiors to hold, in addition to their own individual ideology, all of which had an effect on the political attitudes they reported (Calfano et al., 2014). The authors observed an increase in the likelihood that the Irish clergy would take on a political role as circumstances changed in the Republic and Northern Ireland, with clear lines of demarcation in the political views espoused by different groups; clergy who were ideologically conservative were more apt to champion the positions held by the religious establishment, with Catholic priests more likely to be conservative in cultural matters and Presbyterians in Northern Ireland supporting the economic preferences of the religious organization (Calfano et al., 2014). The authors cautioned that the withdrawal of the clergy from the public debate could have a negative impact on the poor and marginalized members of their society for whom the clergy traditionally advocated and who would consequently lose their political voice (Calfano et al., 2014).

One contentious subject between the Church and feminists, both within and outside the Church, is that of women's reproductive rights and ability to make decisions about their own bodies. With regard to the recent debates between the Vatican and people at the United Nations pertaining to the deep differences, which remain over reproductive wellbeing and rights and the language of gender, Beattie (2015) questioned whether these concerns might be better addressed from the perspective of the language of dignity instead of rights. With particular emphasis on the maternal capability of women's bodies, the author considered the understanding of dignity in the teaching of the Catholic Church, which goes beyond any secular concept of rights or dignity because it views human dignity as ontological and not reliant on rights or citizenship.

Around the world, religious beliefs have a great impact on the way in which the reproductive rights of women are dealt with, with religions frequently viewing women's rights to be within the realm of their customary jurisdiction, raising the question of the extent to which religions should be able to sway lawmakers deciding which choices to make possible or impossible for all citizens (Gozdecka, 2012). Resistance to the idea of reproductive rights on the part of religion has barred resolute development in this matter in many parts of the globe as the Church invokes its conception of a universally binding natural law to justify its position (Gozdecka, 2012). In an exploration of the attempt of the Catholic Church in Poland to influence the regulation of assisted reproduction, Gozdecka (2012) identified the monopolization and politicization of the debate by a single religious group as the fundamental problem, with the emotional wording contained in the opinions issued by the Church being moved into the political and legal discussion.

In countering the criticism of the Catholic Church's stance on women and reproduction, Bachiochi (2013) argued that, while the reactions of secular feminists to the biological and



reproductive differences between men and women have intensified the resultant sexual asymmetry in which the possible consequences of intercourse are graver for women than for men, Catholic doctrine on issues of marriage, sex, contraception, and abortion is genuinely pro-woman. Supporters of contraception and abortion were said to have attempted to alleviate sexual asymmetry by disconnecting sex from procreation, thereby mitigating the consequences of sex for women (Bachiochi, 2013). The counter argument, according to Bachiochi (2013), attributes to women in relationships the ability to summon men to commitment and self-mastery, which would constitute the real completion of the ongoing crusade for sexual equality.

In line with tradition, women's presence and participation in the church has been encouraged. However, such participation has been limited and common at the grassroots level and was tied to the participation of the laity in general. Nevertheless, women's role has been evolving within the church. A part of the evolution was brought about by feminism in the church. In the next subsection, church and feminism concepts will be discussed based on the different existing and relevant literature in the field of women and gender studies.

***Feminism and the Catholic Church.*** Although some have perceived feminism and Catholicism as inherently contradictory, Catholic women have worked towards gender equality while remaining committed to their faith (Enke & Winters, 2013; Gervais, 2012). In writings by women religious in 1920s publications from the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto, Canada, Smyth (2013) found an endorsement of feminist attitudes and encouragement for women students to pursue intellectual development and employment at the same level as male students. Catholic women, and particularly women religious, were found to have negotiated complex paths, in which they found it necessary to deal with the academic patriarchy as well as

the patriarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, and to contend with the stresses, supports and prejudice coming from their religious, social and intellectual peers (Smyth, 2013).

Feminist Catholic scholars have protested the exclusion of women's perspectives as a form of hermeneutical or institutional injustice (Carlson, 2016; Imperatori-Lee, 2015). Carlson (2016) described the exclusion of women's perspectives from a pastoral letter, "The Role of Women and Society in the Church" (p. 5), due to perceptions of the low credibility of women who contributed. The 2011 condemnation of Elizabeth Johnson's "Quest for the Living God" (p. 20), by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) was presented as another example of hermeneutical violence toward women, with the author adding that mansplaining was a process of hermeneutical violence that functioned to discredit women's perspectives (Imperatori-Lee, 2015).

Women religious also protested the patriarchal practices of the Church and expressed tension and frustration related to their subordinate status in relation to men (Gervais, 2012). Some participants in a series of interviews of women religious from eight different religious communities, for example, reported feeling disregarded as leadership figures when in the presence of male leaders, as though their knowledge and abilities were less valued in comparison to those of men. The ban on women ordination was a particularly hurtful and troubling aspect of Catholicism for women religious and caused some to feel as though their gifts were not valued within their church. Despite their frustration and anger with women's subordination within the Catholic Church, however, participants expressed a continuing commitment to promote gender equality through their work (Gervais, 2012). As opposition to women ordination continues, authors draw on the explicit teachings of the Catholic Church to marshal arguments against the ordination of women, with heavy reliance on the argument of Tradition, which claims that Christ

and his successors did not confer the authority to ordain women upon the Church and, therefore, the leaders of the Church have no power to ordain women as priests, even should they wish to do so (Droste, 2015).

Data collected from questionnaires and qualitative interviews with 32 Canadian women religious was used by Gervais and Sjolander (2015) to investigate the alternative constructions of the Church that were brought about by their practices and to gather the insights of feminist women religious regarding their comprehension and experiences of the structures and practices of the Catholic Church which can be viewed as patriarchal and hierarchical, and the ways in which the women resisted them. The women built understandings and practices, which were more compatible with their own vision of the authentic Church (Gervais & Sjolander, 2015). The women moved away from the patriarchal nature of the Church in the advancement and practice of spirituality and activism, which was feminist.

Whereas the patriarchal structure of organized religion has often stifled the participation of women, the digital world has given women a means to have their voices heard (Messina-Dysert, 2015). The assorted kinds of social media have provided a space to women in which they are able to communicate ideas, claim power, and help mold their communities through a variety of social media platforms. Online technology has allowed feminism to interconnect with religion to traverse borders and enhance women's roles. Feminist scholars are no longer limited to academia but can partake of a global discourse that allows them to investigate many other perspectives and experiences of religion (Messina-Dysert, 2015).

Although the Second Vatican Council promoted unification and an inclusive clergy, women in the Roman Catholic Church continue to be excluded from the priesthood and other leadership positions (Fischer, 2013). Faced with the Roman Catholic Church's opposition to

women ordination, in some cases, Catholic women have gone forward with the ordination of women outside of the Church in what they refer to as independent Catholicism (Byrne, 2014). In the United States, the ordination of independent Catholic women has been occurring for fifty years (Byrne, 2014). Women in the Church have long used innovative tactics to resist the prevailing patriarchal and hierarchic structure, from Hildegard of Bingen in the twelfth century to the women associated with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in twenty-first-century America (Fischer, 2013). While the women have used very different tactics and strategies in responding to their diverse socio-historical contexts, they all reflect frustrations with the barriers to women's participation and seek to modify traditional religious symbols by reforming them in typological images which can assist in the integration of women identity and purpose into the Church. The efforts of the LCWR have encountered push back from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in Rome which accused LCWR members of trying to construct a radical feminist conflict between church doctrine and the illegitimate theological intuitions of a minority (Fischer, 2013).

Franks (2013) pointed out the difficulty of defining 'feminist social research' in light of the different cultural contexts in which research is being done and the complexity of the manifold viewpoints and positionalities of feminists from various backgrounds. The author suggested that, although their ideological frameworks may vary, all feminists, whether secular or religious, are in search of some form of gender justice and can, therefore, develop occasions of coalitions between standpoints based on specific issues, such as the concern among feminists in both the Christian and Islamic religions regarding the interpretation and transmission of religious texts (Franks, 2013). She recommended that feminists find ways of working together to create grass-roots means of compiling data and to develop common modes of analysis (Franks, 2013).

In an exploration of the recent attention given by Catholic bio-politics to a number of issues, Giorgi (2016) addressed assisted reproductive technologies (ART) and embryo stem cell research (ESCR) in particular to consider the Catholic neo-feminist discussion, with a focus on the reshaping of religious discourse with regard to feminism and gender rights and the opportunities and limitations of venues. In the field of Italian politics, the neo-conservative framing of maternity increased its profile within the context of the debate on surrogacy taking place in Italy by framing the debate in terms of the defense of embryonic rights (Giorgi, 2016). While feminist movements were able to re-introduce the rights of women into the discussion and national and international courts were able to change the venue of the debate, the Catholic Church continues, in Italy, to be able to exercise a societal veto to interact with the political system to contribute to the polarization of the issues. The Catholic Church was able to go further than presenting a concept of maternity as a sacrament to endorsing the idea of maternity as a right held despite societal pressures, used women's rights and feminist language to argue against secular feminism which was portrayed as commodifying women's bodies (Giorgi, 2016).

It has been suggested that, in Poland, feminism can be seen as a succession of paradoxes which began by denying the existence of the movement, employed tactics associated with third wave feminism to achieve aims usually associated second-wave feminism, and experienced a backlash before it made any feminist gains (Graff, 2003). Polish feminists had high expectations in regard to Poland's joining the European Union but were requested to abandon that optimism and not to speak on the issue of reproductive choice, so that the Catholic Church would not impede Poland's path to EU membership. Graff recommended that feminists in Poland become radicalized and be prepared to engage in open conflict with the Church and to face the resulting backlash from the public in order to have their voices heard in the struggle for women's rights.

Haker (2015) argued that the concept of Catholic sexual ethics needs to be recast as social ethics to address contemporary challenges such as sex trafficking and that such a change can be achieved without abandoning either Catholics' or feminists' moral obligations to protect human dignity and women's rights. With regard to the specific issue of sex trafficking, neither Catholic sexual ethics, which is based on a normative conception of sexuality nor feminist ethics, which supports the sexual autonomy of women, are prepared to deal with the moral issues raised (Haker, 2015). The Catholic judgment of sex work as sin adds a layer of moral blame to the injustice already experienced victims of trafficking. In order to resolve the dilemma, Haker proposed that the Church put aside its suspicion that feminist theory aspires to negate its religious and ethical foundations, make an attempt to understand the viewpoint of feminist theologians, and acknowledge that it may not be feasible for everyone to accept the normative concept of exclusively heterosexual marriage the Church endorses. Christian feminists, on the other hand, should play a part in the paradigm shift within Catholic ethics (Haker, 2015).

The concept of feminism has been central in the evolution of men and women's roles in the church. However, it has also brought about issues that have to be addressed, especially in terms of having women in leadership roles in the church. In the next section, the current attitude of the Catholic Church, its leaders, and its members, toward the different genders, especially women and their potential for leadership, will be discussed.

***Current gender attitudes in the Catholic Church.*** The advances, which have been made in women's rights, were reflected in a survey of 110 Spanish postgraduate students at the University of Granada in 2006, in which 86% of the respondents were found to be in favor of women being ordained as Catholic priests. Ross (2013) suggested that although women have achieved some advancement in terms of power and influence in the Catholic Church, the

portrayals of women by the Church continue to emphasize a fundamental difference between men and women that are associated with a difference in their relative roles. According to Ross (2013), the language used to portray women emphasized their receptivity, which was in contrast to the language that conferred notions of initiative and inspiration onto men.

In a rare example of research that explored attitudes toward women in leadership in the Catholic Church, Ecklund (2006) observed that priests appeared to set the tone regarding gender attitudes for their parishes. In progressive parishes, women in leadership positions were allowed to exercise more power and autonomy in their jobs compared with women leaders in traditional parishes. Priests in progressive parishes were more open to sharing power and invited contributions from leaders and lay members regarding organizational decision-making (Ecklund, 2006). In progressive parishes, the priest shortage was viewed as an opportunity for women to exercise a greater level of power and influence; however, in traditional parishes, women in leadership positions were viewed as placeholders who exercised limited power only until qualified men could be located to assume their roles. These findings indicated the influence of priests to shape gender attitudes and opportunities for women leaders within their parishes (Ecklund, 2006).

Research into the understanding of spiritual and gender identities of 21 students at two Catholic women's colleges in the American Midwest as it related to community engagement activities gave rise to a number of questions for the researchers regarding the reinforcement of traditional ideas of women, the gendered nature of service and particular majors, traditionally women tasks, and competing discourses about Catholic women (Enke & Winters, 2013). Within the milieu of Catholic women's colleges, the participants of the study appeared to frame their incentive for undertaking community engagement work by referencing ethics of care and justice

(Enke & Winters, 2013). Engaging with the separate concepts of Catholic social instruction and feminism allowed them to have recourse to a justice ethic with regard to their work in the community, and many students credited their identities as Catholic women for their ethic of care. To a large extent, the students considered their spiritual and gender identities to be integrated, but many needed to compartmentalize various facets of their identities and commitments occasionally, particularly when they were in direct conflict with each other, suggesting a certain fluidity in the identities related to context. This compartmentalization provided the participants with the capacity to navigate cognitive incongruities (Enke & Winters, 2013).

The movement within the Catholic Church for the ordination of women is considered by some to be an illustration of the paradox represented by disempowerment by an institution and personal emancipation working within the religious realm (Spence, 2014). Supporters of the movement are in search of acknowledgment as a legitimate religious construction as it pushes for more inclusivity in the Church (Spence, 2014). Using critical discourse analysis of a variety of social media and websites to investigate the efficacy of social media in helping women facing institutional religious oppression to connect with others like themselves globally, Spence (2014) found that social media was utilized by a number of groups supporting women ordination to undermine the prevailing positions regarding women within the Church and to offer an alternative mode of religious expression for Catholic women.

A South African case study of male education in Saint Joseph's Theological Institute (SJTI) which examined the issue of gender justice education for men within a patriarchal context legitimized by religion, using interviews and observation, drew attention to ideological rationalizations and internal norms which both sustained and resisted the subjection of women (Walton, 2013). The rationales put forth in favor of maintaining patriarchy were predominantly



cultural, while arguments against the subjugation of women tended largely to be drawn from Catholic teaching (Walton, 2013). There tended to be a mixture of antagonism and apathy toward large-scale change within the Institute, perhaps due to apprehension of discipline within the hierarchy or contentment with status quo, but there was also the impression that any spur to change coming from those seen to be outsiders, whether because of nationality, gender, race or religion, would be resisted. On the other hand, the findings indicated that these constraints were not static and that key instruction could have a transformative effect on students who undergo it (Walton, 2013).

The social and cultural context in which it exists can have a significant impact on the development of Catholic theology (Baum, 2013). In the United States, for example, the rapid entry of Catholic theologians into ecumenism has been explained by one researcher as resulting from the adaptation of religion in that country to needs of people occupying a vast territory and living in a society characterized by unprecedented horizontal and vertical mobility (Baum, 2013). In contrast to Europe, the churches in America made up a plurality of communities which were not identified as part of a whole and, in which, people could feel at home in any location in which they chose to reside (Baum, 2013).

Although there are still indications of problems with regard to the future of women in the Roman Catholic Church, progress appears to be continuing at the grassroots level (Roll, 2016). Supporters of the ordination of women deacons have been encouraged by modifications in canon law that limit the idea that ordained clergy act *in persona Christi* to priests and bishops, which could, in theory, allow women to become deacons. On the other hand, it is clearly implied that, even though baptized into the Body of Christ, women can never act *in persona Christi* (Roll,

2016). Roll postulated that the refusal of the Church to face the issue of women as active agents in the liturgy was driven by the existence of a deep level of contempt for, and fear of, women.

The literature on gender equality and organized religion indicated the continued existence of barriers to gender equality within religious organizations (Aune, 2015). Language and ideology can have a significant impact on the formation of perceptions of women's roles as church leaders (Dzubinski, 2015; Shooter, 2014). The congregations' receptivity may also influence the efficacy of women leadership in religious organizations to women clergy/priests (Smith & Stevens, 2003). Feminist research on women in organized religions, which adhere to traditional definitions of roles, can find a helpful tool in the concept of agency, which can help in promoting the perception of women as actors, as opposed to being merely acted upon by societal organizations that are dominated by men (Burke, 2012).

In the Church's view, women have their own specific abilities and gifts that aid them in fulfilling their particular mission to take care of their families and share the teachings of their faith (Kausner, 2014). Researchers have found that the political opinions and behavior of congregants can be, to some degree, shaped by their clergy who are well situated to transform religious values into political values (Calfano et al., 2014). One contentious subject between the Church and feminists, both within and outside the Church, is that of women's reproductive rights and ability to make decisions about their own bodies (Bachiochi, 2013; Beattie, 2015; Gozdecka, 2012).

***Women leadership in Los Angeles Archdiocese.*** There was a dearth of research about the current status of women in leadership roles in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. However, in some studies, there were references to the lack of representation of women in leadership roles in the different departments under the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. In the study of Barry (2010),

authorities are claimed to dominate laywomen in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Moreover, in the late 1960s, an instance involving teaching nuns of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) of California and Cardinal James McIntyre, led to the withdrawal of the nuns from their positions in parochial schools because of political issues with the persons in authority under the Archdiocese of Los Angeles (Barry, 2010). In another study, Haugeberg (2015) claimed that during the height of the anti-abortion campaigns in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, women were mostly part of the different anti-abortion organizations. Nevertheless, women were still underrepresented in leadership positions in these protesting groups.

Although some have perceived feminism and Catholicism as inherently contradictory, Catholic women have worked towards gender equality while remaining committed to their faith (Enke & Winters, 2013; Gervais, 2012). Many found the ban on women ordination to be particularly hurtful and caused some to feel as though their gifts were not valued within their church (Gervais, 2012). A number of Catholic women have chosen to investigate the alternative constructions of the Church (Gervais & Sjolander, 2015). Social media has provided to women a space in which they can communicate ideas, claim power, and help mold their communities through a variety of social media platforms (Messina-Dysert, 2015). Faced with the Roman Catholic Church's opposition to women ordination, in some cases, Catholic women have gone forward with the ordination of women outside of the Church in what they refer to as independent Catholicism (Byrne, 2014). Although there are still indications of problems with regard to the future of women in the Roman Catholic Church, progress appears to be continuing at the grassroots level (Roll, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

Gendered expectations of women have been associated with perceptions that they were less qualified for leadership in both the business arena and in the Catholic Church (Bark et al., 2014; Kausner, 2014). Researchers found that women leaders received negative judgments in response to leadership behaviors that elicited approval when enacted by male leaders (Sung, 2013). In employment settings, the presence of other women in decision-making positions was associated with more positive perceptions of women's leadership abilities and a higher likelihood of promotion to leadership positions (Cook & Glass, 2014; Ko et al., 2015). Although a maternal or communal role was associated with perceptions of lower qualification for leadership in the working environment, this role has been associated with the explicit subordination of women within the Catholic Church (Kausner, 2014). Despite the patriarchal nature of the Church, feminist scholars and women religious have worked to promote equal rights for women (Carlson, 2016; Gervais, 2012).

In accordance with feminist theory, researchers have suggested that gender equality within the Catholic Church would require women to exercise the same level of power and influence as do men (Ross, 2013; Siara, 2013). Gender inequality in the Church deprives women of meaningful input and influence on decision-making and inhibits the development of a shared understanding of all members' perspectives by the Church as a whole (Carlson, 2016). Although one researcher found that the power and influence of women varied across parishes as it reflected parish cultures, few researchers have investigated perceptions of women and leadership within the Catholic Church (Ecklund, 2006). While there is some research to indicate that priests may influence the level of power and influence women exert in specific parishes (Ecklund, 2006), further research is needed to explore perceptions of the effectiveness of women as leaders in the

Catholic Church (Neitz, 2014; Smyth, 2013). This phenomenological qualitative study addressed this gap by exploring how women perceive themselves as leaders in the Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and how they see others' perceptions of them as leaders in the Catholic Church.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

This study was to explore how women perceive themselves as leaders in the Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and how they see others' perceptions of them as leaders in the Catholic Church. To provide solutions and address the problem and purpose of the study, the researcher chose a qualitative phenomenological research tradition. The central phenomenon of interest for the study was women leadership in the Catholic Church. In this chapter, the comprehensive discussion of the methodology used and the research design that was implemented are provided. This chapter will address reasons for selecting phenomenology: (a) role of the researcher, (b) instrumentation, (c) processes for data collection, (d) plan for data analysis, and (e) ethical considerations. The end of the chapter contains a summary of the study.

The researcher conducted long individual interviews with 30 current women leaders of the Catholic Church who work in administrative and ministry departments in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The researcher maintained consistency across participant interviews by using a long interview guide that consists of two primary research questions with two to three sub-questions (Stuckey, 2013). Interviews lasted for about one hour and were held in private locations that are conveniently located for participants. Interviews were audio recorded to facilitate production of verbatim transcripts, which the researcher reviewed to identify themes within the data. The researcher used qualitative analysis software to aid coding and analysis. Specifically, to analyze the data, the researcher used Moustakas' (1994) steps for analysis of phenomenology, which is a modification to van Kaam's (1966) initial method for analysis. The researcher reviewed transcripts to detect emergent themes, and use a cross-sectional approach with an ultimate objective of identifying convergent and divergent themes within and across participant interviews (Malterud, 2012).

To address this study's problem and purpose, the researcher proposes the following research questions:

**Q1.** How do women leaders in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles perceive being a women leader in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles?

**Q2.** How do women leaders in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles perceive the effectiveness of the Church to attain women leaders?

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to address the research questions of the study. The phenomenon explored is the leadership roles and potential of women in the Catholic Church. A researcher can appropriately use a qualitative study if the data collected has to deal with explanation, exploration or description of experiences, and other data that may be observed but cannot be concretely measured (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). The qualitative methodology allows a researcher to explore individuals' perceptions and experiences in relation to a phenomenon of interest (Silverman, 2016). Moreover, qualitative methodology is used to enable researchers to analyze and explore different aspects of a phenomenon within its naturally occurring environment (Mitchell & Jolley, 2012). Based on this description of the use of qualitative methodology, the current research purpose and questions are aligned with this description; hence, this methodology is suitable for the study. The use of numerical rating survey questionnaire was also considered; however, it was found inappropriate for this study because the lack of need for quantitative or numerical data to address the research questions of the study.

The research design, or research tradition, for this study is a qualitative phenomenology. Using this research design is appropriate when the study deals with the deep exploration of participants' lived experiences, which is aligned with the objective of this study (Moustakas,

1994); hence, a phenomenology is suitable for the study. Moreover, when using phenomenology, the researcher can investigate on the lived experiences individuals in a specific group to collect evidence that enabled a structured analysis and meaningful reflection for insights from the data gathered (Vagle, 2016). Hence, phenomenology is chosen for this study because of the alignment of the purpose of phenomenology to the purpose and research questions of the study. Through the exploration of the lived experiences of individuals related to the phenomenon of interest, the researcher can sufficiently and appropriately address the research questions. Hence, a phenomenology is appropriate for this study.

There are other research designs that were evaluated for this study (e.g., grounded theory, narrative inquiry, and case study). A qualitative grounded theory research design is inappropriate for this study because the purpose of the study does not involve theory or model development from systematic and empirical data (Gentles, Jack, Nicholas, & McKibbin, 2014).

Phenomenology is preferred over a narrative inquiry because there is no need to explore and present the lived experiences in a chronological manner to address the research questions of the study (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013). A phenomenology is preferred over case study because the focus of this current study is on lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994); therefore, it would be difficult to complete secondary or tertiary forms of data collection within the population, as this topic is exploratory and foundational in essence. Phenomenology is the most appropriate research design for this study.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher served as the central research instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Silverman, 2016). During the data collection phase, the researcher conducted participant recruitment and interviews. For the analysis phase, the researcher analyzed the data from the



interviews based on Moustakas' (1994) steps for analysis of phenomenology. When recruiting participants for this study, the researcher ensured that she did not include any participant who belonged to her immediate social network (e.g., family, first to a third-degree relative, friend, colleague, neighbor, or previous acquaintances). This minimized the influence of familiarity to the output of the study. In the data collection and analysis, personal biases were set aside through the process of bracketing and the use of trained coders.

As innate in human beings, the researcher is vulnerable to the influences of personal preferences and biases. To minimize the impact of potential biases during the interviews and data analysis, she performed bracketing. This process is needed to aid in keeping the data and findings focused on the research by making sure to avoid the interjection of personal opinions into the conduct the research methodology and design (Chan et al., 2013; Tufford & Newman, 2012). Through the process of bracketing, the researcher listed any past experiences, beliefs, and attitudes that may be related to the study, while trying to set them aside as she conducted the participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis for the study (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Hence, for this study, the researcher had a list of experiences, beliefs, and opinions as a reference of what must be avoided and set aside to prevent the influences of personal biases. Through this process, the researcher can be aware of personal biases while analyzing the data and making interpretations of the data gathered for the study.

The researcher was qualified to conduct this study because of the experience and knowledge she has on the topic of feminism and parish work. The researcher worked in a parish for 5 years. The researcher also spent 12 years in Catholic school. The experiences gained in these years enabled her to gain knowledge related to the phenomenon being explored in this study. Moreover, the researcher finished her doctoral course work in education. Also, she has

been exposed to interviewing from running the family business. Therefore, she is experienced in terms of conducting scholarly works or research.

Aside from bracketing, the researcher used an interview guide while conducting data collection. With the interview guide, the researcher carried out long interviews that allowed her to be flexible when asking questions that are directed to addressing the problem of the study. At the same time, the researcher could keep track of the research questions and purpose of the study. The researcher used the interview protocol as a guide when asking questions during the interview sessions. Because the researcher has been conducting research on the topic for a long time, she has become very familiar with the phenomenon of interest. The researcher did not omit or alter any information purposefully (Harper & Cole, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This specific detail for data collection and analysis was certified through member checking (Harper & Cole, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), wherein the researcher provided copies of the transcripts and initial interpretations to the participants as a means of asking for their feedback about the accuracy of the transcripts and interpretations.

During interaction with participants, there were other ethical issues that the researcher addressed, such as confidentiality and risk minimization. The researcher kept all identification of participants confidential by using Numbers. Also, the researcher provided each participant with an informed consent to make them aware of their rights as participants of the study. In this manner, the risks to the participants were minimized.

**Population.** The target population for the study included women leaders who currently work as women leaders in ministry or administrative departments in the Catholic Church in the Los Angeles Archdiocese. This is the target for this study because of their relevant experiences and knowledge that can enable them to directly and reliably answer the questions in the

interview protocol, which are needed to answer the research questions of the study. The effectiveness of women and leaders in the Catholic Church may be identified and explored through the lenses of the leaders themselves; hence, they were the target population for this study. The geographical area of focus was Catholic Parishes in Los Angeles Archdiocese.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling. This sampling technique has been commonly used in the field of qualitative research because of the targeted method of selecting participants, who are fit to address the research questions of the study (Barratt, Ferris, & Lenton, 2015). Those who have been selected purposefully tend to be more capable and willing to provide detailed information because of their ability to relate to the phenomenon of interest in the study (Barratt et al., 2015). The best approach that can be used in recruitment that was aligned with the purpose of the qualitative research is to implement purposive sampling, which involves selection of participants with the relevant knowledge and experiences pertaining to the topic of the study (Barratt et al., 2015).

There were 30 participants for this study. In qualitative studies, the basis for making sure that there are enough samples for the study is the data saturation point. Data saturation refers to the point in data collection when there are marginal and insignificant changes in the data with the addition of a new samples or participants (Walker, 2012). Researchers of qualitative studies have shown that the sample size for these types of studies is usually about 30 in order to attain what we call data saturation, which is once the researcher has achieved enough rich and thick data that the collection of more data will not lead to additional information related to the research questions (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013; Walker, 2012). For the purpose of this study, at least 30 participants from the population were recruited and included in the data collection phase of this study.

From the purposeful selection of the population, the researcher recruited 30 participants who satisfy the following inclusion criteria: (a) women ministry or administrative leader of a Catholic congregation, (b) working in the Los Angeles Archdiocese, (c) must be working for the Catholic congregation for at least 5 years, and (d) must be working as a leader in within the Archdiocese for at least 12 months. The exclusion criteria are (a) those with a physical or mental disability, (b) pregnant women, and (c) those who have the intention to resign from their jobs in the next 30 days. The departments were purposefully selected by referral from women leaders in the archdiocese who were referred to the researcher by Dr. Anthony J. Galla, and by using the list of departments on the ACC website.

### **Instrumentation**

To answer the research question utilizing the phenomenological approach, a set of interview questions was created for this study. In-depth interviews are commonly used in phenomenological studies because this approach allows for in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Using survey or questionnaire methods for data collection are inappropriate for this study, as only long interviews allowed for more in-depth and rich data collection about relevant lived experiences of participants (Dixon, Singleton, & Straits, 2015). Hence, the main instrument for data collection was a long interview protocol or guide.

Each research question had at least three corresponding items in the long interview protocol. The interview questions were focused on the role of women parishes and its leadership positions. Researchers claimed that women were still underrepresented in leadership positions religious institutions despite being active in participating in the programs of these institutions (Barry, 2010; Haugeberg, 2015). By using the protocol, the researcher was guided when

conducting long interviews to remain aligned to the topic of the study. The average interview lasted 60 minutes. The protocol provided structure to the manner by which the long interviews were carried out. However, the researcher may ask at most three follow-up questions for each item in the interview protocol. This process enabled the researcher to gather deeper and more detailed information from the participant, as needed for the study.

The questions in the interview were developed to fit the needs of the study. To establish the validity of the data collection instrument, all items in the interview protocol were subjected to an expert review. The members of the expert panel were the members of the dissertation committee of the researcher. In the expert review, the experts evaluated the items in the interview protocol individually and holistically, based on the appropriateness of the structure, content, and wording. The overall correctness of the protocol items was evaluated in terms of their appropriateness in answering the different research questions of the study. The emergent comments and feedback from the experts were the basis for the iterations and alterations that were done to the interview protocol.

The researcher also did a pilot-test of the interview. The researcher recruited four individuals to be participants in the pilot test. These participants were composed of: a colleague from another Master's program, the researcher's husband, the researcher's lawyer friend, and a parent from St. Jude School. These participants were asked to answer the questions for the interview as if they were the actual participants of the study. At the end of the interview, the participants provided feedback about the structure of the questions and the possible changes that have to be made to make the questions easier to understand. The common comments were assessed to determine if changes have to be made to the interview questions.

## **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

**Recruitment process.** To facilitate purposive sampling, the researcher asked permission from the director of Catholic schools in the Los Angeles Archdiocese to access women leaders of Catholic congregation. In addition, the researcher received referrals for participants from Dr. Anthony J. Galla, Deputy Superintendent of Elementary Schools. The researcher sent out 23 initial emails to departments (Appendix B). In the email, the purpose and significance of the study were presented to the different heads to explain the implication of the study to social change and the possible contribution to policy and program development in the Catholic Church. The majority of email responses came back within two days from the day of sending out the request for participation. Moreover, emails were sent back and forth to schedule appointments on a daily basis, several times a day. Everyone recognized that there was a sense of camaraderie in scheduling, as all involved were busy women who work and/or had kids.

The respondents were glad that the researcher was doing the study. At least 90% mentioned this on the phone or through email. The researcher thanked each director after receiving a reply with a return email. It is important to note that the researcher did not contact any participant before IRB approval. The director suggested to use the Archdiocese website and contact the head of each department, which were listed on the right side of the Home page. The researcher initially got seven replies with 28 names. The researcher sent the list to Dr. Paul A. Sullivan for approval and suggestions. The researcher added the names given to her by Drs. Paul A. Sullivan, Anthony J. Galla, and Jack F. McManus. From the 28 participants, the researcher was able to schedule six appointments immediately. Other appointments were scheduled over the next two and a half weeks. Moreover, during collection, the researcher employed snowball sampling to receive more names of potential participants

**Participation.** From the list, the researcher contacted each recruit by phone or email, depending on the preference given to her by the receptionist or office manager or secretary. The researcher then sent out an invitation letter with a detailed discussion of the involvement of participants (Appendix C), and consent form (Appendix F) to the 28 names received from the directors. Through this method, the researcher was able to set up six appointments immediately.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling. This sampling technique has been commonly used in the field of qualitative research because of the targeted method of selecting participants, who are fit to address the research questions of the study (Barratt et al., 2015). Those who have been selected purposefully tend to be more capable and willing to provide detailed information because of their ability to relate to the phenomenon of interest in the study (Barratt et al., 2015). The best approach that can be used in recruitment that was aligned with the purpose of the qualitative research is to implement purposive sampling, which involves selection of participants with the relevant knowledge and experiences pertaining to the topic of the study (Barratt et al., 2015). The geographical area of focus was Catholic Parishes in Los Angeles Archdiocese.

Those who were willing to participate were asked a series of screening questions to determine their eligibility to participate in the study based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Those who were willing and eligible were asked to read and sign an informed consent to be aware of their rights and responsibilities as participants. Those who signed the forms were scheduled for an interview session during their preferred time. During the interview, the snowball effect took place, and the researcher got more names until she was able to reach the desired sample size for data saturation. Appointments took place from November 29, 2016, to January 17, 2017.

**Data collection process.** The researcher conducted a pilot test of the long interview with several colleagues, friends, and a parent from St. Jude School. She also used a committee panel of experts who tested for reliability and checked for validity. The researcher maintained consistency across participant long interviews by using a long interview guide that consisted of two primary research questions with two to three sub-questions (Stuckey, 2013). Long interviews ranged from 50 to 90 minutes and were held in private locations that are conveniently located for participants. Interviews were audio recorded to enable the researcher to produce verbatim transcripts, which were subjected to member checking and analysis to identify themes within the data. The researcher conducted the long interviews from November 29 to January 17. The interviews went smoothly; travel time was as expected. The participants were on time and were welcoming to the researcher.

During the day of a scheduled interview, the researcher arrived at the office of the participant 30 minutes before the time of the interview. The researcher prepared the materials needed for the interview (e.g., interview protocol, audio recorder, pens, and paper). The location was an empty and open room in the office of the participant to ensure convenience and comfort for the participant.

To begin the interview session, the researcher greeted the participants. The researcher provided an introduction to the interview by discussing the flow of the interview. During the actual interview, the researcher asked the questions based on the interview protocol. The researcher could ask up to three follow-up questions to each main item in the protocol. If the researcher desired further information about specific questions, she used probing follow-up questions, such as encouraging interviewees to cover areas she was unfamiliar with, ask the researcher for help if they did not know how to answer, or helped get them started answering the



questions. After all the questions had been exhausted, the researcher informed the participant that the interview was over. This was the time when the participant could ask and express any questions or ask for clarification. In this manner, the researcher was able to address the concerns of the participants. Afterward, she thanked the participant for taking the time to be part of the study.

After the interview phase, participants were informed that transcripts were member checked within the next two weeks from conducting the interview. Twelve people asked to see the results of the study. Nobody chose to quit the interview early, even though they had the chance to terminate the session. One respondent refused to answer some personal questions and was eliminated as a participant. One person's interview was lost due to a recording problem, so the researcher quickly referred to the notes taken during the interview and wrote everything out immediately.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

Ethical considerations for qualitative research are more complex as compared to quantitative research because of the more personal and intrusive nature of the interaction between researcher and participants in a qualitative study as compared to quantitative study. Using human beings as participants in a study entails addressing ethical issues as prescribed by the University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Before conducting any data collection or recruitment procedure, the IRB must first approve the procedures implemented in the study.

One procedure for addressing ethical issues is presenting participants with an informed consent form. In this form, the participants are informed about potential risks, purpose, participation, and rights of the participants. By signing the form, the participants signify their understanding of the information and their agreement to the conditions of participation in the

study. Because the issue and phenomenon of interest in the study do not involve extremely sensitive topics, the risks or re-traumatization or psychological implications to the participants are minimal. Physical risks (e.g., injury, violent environment, etc.) are also minimal.

Another ethical issue is confidentiality. To ensure that the identity of participants is kept confidential, numbers replaced their actual names in the researcher's files and transcriptions. The numbers were used in all data files and reports for the study. Also, all physical data were placed in a secured cabinet inside the private office of the researcher. All electronic data was kept on a password-protected flash disk that was stored in the secured cabinet of the researcher. All data will be kept for five years after completing the study. After five years, all data will be deleted through shredding and deleted on computer and electronic storage.

Participation was voluntary. No participant was forced to agree to partake in the study. There were no consequences for refusing to accept the invitation to participate. Also, even after signing the informed consent, the participants can still terminate their participation. However, any information gathered before the termination of participation may be used for the study analysis or reporting, if needed. Also, there were no incentives for participation. As employees, participants were not required to report any specific information about their employer or colleagues.

The researcher had no relationship with the organization. Her relationship with the organization, or lack thereof, should not impact any participant's willingness to answer, nor should it affect her answers. Participants were made aware that the researcher had no involvement with their organization, nor any incentive to receive biased or non-biased information, whether it was positive or negative information.

## **Summary**

In summary, a qualitative phenomenological research design was used to address the research questions and fulfill the purpose of this study. The target population where data was gathered includes individuals who currently work as women leaders in the ministry or administrative departments in the Catholic Church in the Los Angeles Archdiocese. Thirty women leaders were purposefully selected to participate in the study. The departments were purposefully selected by referral from women leaders in the archdiocese who were referred to the researcher by Dr. Anthony J. Galla, and by using the list of departments on the ACC website. All participants volunteered and completed the full interview.

The researcher conducted long interviews to gather data from participants. Data was analyzed using Moustakas' method for analyzing phenomenological studies. The researcher conducted member checking, bracketing, audit trails, and detailed explanation of findings were implemented to address the issue of trustworthiness. The next chapter shall address the analysis of the resultant data.

## **Chapter Four: Data Analyses and Findings**

The researcher used a qualitative approach to explore the perspectives of Catholic Church women leaders about their effectiveness. A qualitative methodology is appropriate because the researcher is interested in exploring the nature and range of participants' experiences and perceptions, and also because qualitative approaches are useful in examining phenomena that are not well understood (Maxwell, 2012). The researcher used a phenomenological research design or tradition; this approach was well suited to the objectives of the study, which seeks to explore the internal thoughts and perceptions of participants regarding women and leadership in the Catholic Church, based on their lived experiences (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). The phenomenon to be explored was women leadership in Catholic Church. This chapter will provide an overview of the data analysis and findings. This chapter will cover (a) data analysis of long interviews, (b) analysis of the sample population, (c) findings, and (d) the summary of major findings.

### **Data Analysis of Long Interviews**

The data included taped long interviews of 30 WLCC of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Five open-ended interview questions were used to gather the data. The data was analyzed through a process of collaborative coding by a group of trained coders followed by the use of NVivo software by a professional statistician.

After the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriber. Each transcription was given a number, and this number was used throughout the study as WLCC01...WLCC02... The transcriber agreed that all information be kept confidential. Additionally, he agreed that transcripts would be deleted from the transcriber's files upon delivery. Since the long interviews took 50 to 90 minutes, he reported that each transcription

took between two and three hours to transcribe. Each audio recording was sent to the professional transcriber one by one as the long interviews were conducted. The transcription of all the long interviews took roughly 60 hours to complete.

Once the transcriptions were created, seven trained coders were recruited by email from the researcher's doctoral dissertation seminar group. All coders volunteered for the task and were trained to code at the beginning of the session by the dissertation chairperson. An academic chair and the students were present in one long session.

To begin the coding process, each research question was written at the top of a large sheet of paper, which was hung on the wall of the coding room. There was a sheet of paper hung for each research question. Each interview transcript was printed and distributed to the coders who agreed to keep the information in confidence. The coders were given time to read the interview transcripts. After the transcripts were read, the researcher asked each research question, and each coder responded with the information they gathered from the interview transcripts they read. Each research question had roughly 30 numbered points as given by the coders. As this process continued, themes began to emerge from the data. Themes were developed as the progress went along, with the researcher asking questions and the coders providing feedback. Different themes were color coded with highlighters on the posters. It took about an hour to code the data for each research question.

After gathering the data from the coders, the researcher used NVivo 10, a qualitative data analysis software program, to further investigate the data. The themes gathered through the researchers' own exploration, with the support of NVivo 10, was compared to the themes identified by the coders. The prominent themes from both investigations are included in this chapter.

## Analysis of the Sample Population

Each participant was asked seven demographic questions. The titles of the participants related to coordinators and supervisory levels. The average number of years in this position was 11 with a range of two months to 33 years. All participants had obtained a high school diploma, two held an associate's degree, seven held a bachelor's degree, and 14 obtained a master's degree. Two had obtained a doctorate, and these two were nuns. A lay woman was working on a doctorate. A majority (60%) of the participants were married. Seventy percent had children, with a mode of three. Of the 30 participants, 30% had no children.

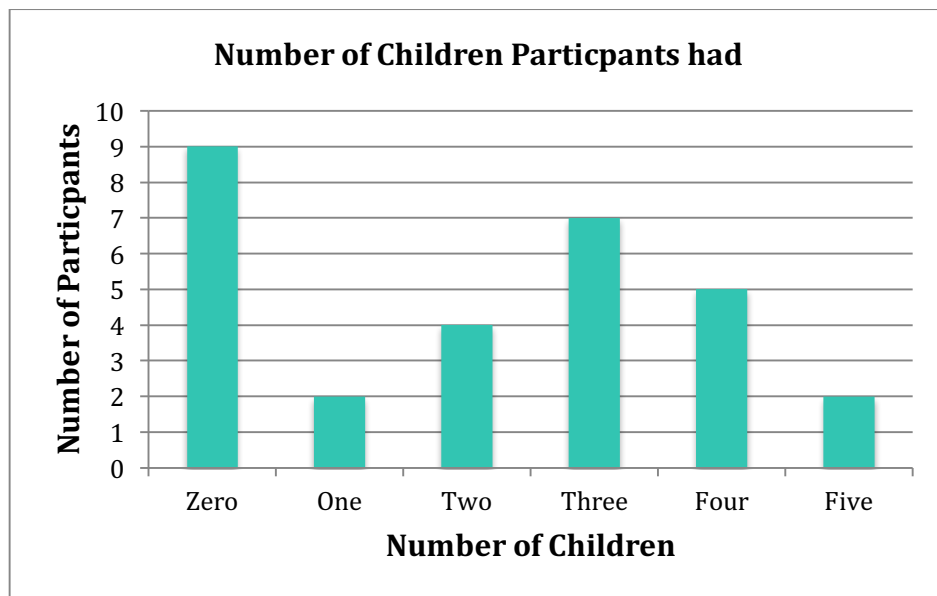
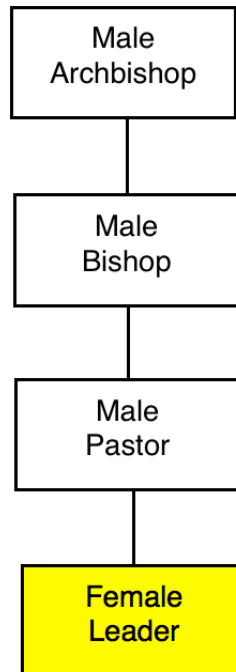


Figure 2. The number of children by participants

With a few exceptions, the participants were located four tiers down from the archbishop in the hierarchy of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.



*Figure 3.* The women participants' position in the hierarchy of the Archdiocese

Many participants indicated that they answered directly to their parish pastor. Participants who did not work for a parish, but rather worked for a larger territory, often indicated that they answered to a director who held a position in the hierarchy similar to that of a pastor.

Of the participants, 73.32% indicated that their direct supervisor was male. While several participants did not indicate the gender of their supervisor, and one participant specified that a woman supervised her.

### **Findings**

Data gathered from the 30 participants produced several themes common to many of the participants. The resultant themes from the coding process described the lived experiences of women in leadership positions within the Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The themes were developed based on the data collected from participants. After combining the words and codes to form a group or a theme, the researcher counted the frequency of the

occurrence of the theme within the code. The themes with the highest frequency of occurrence or mentions were considered as major themes.

While some women expressed fulfillment in their leadership roles, others expressed frustration about several aspects of their roles. Some experiences, however, ranged across the participants and gave insight into the commonalities of women in leadership positions within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Major themes to address these issues include *calling, dedication, lack of resources, mentorship, acceptance, and pioneering spirit*.

**Calling.** Seven participants noted that working for the archdiocese was, “more than a job.” For these women, their work was more of a calling. For some, this desire to work within the church felt like a calling, to the degree that some felt it was a calling from God. In the words of WLCC01, “I think people coming to serve in the church feel a call to serve in the church, it is not a job. It is a vocation.” WLCC17 is an example of a participant who felt like her pull towards the Church was a call from God. This participant said in relation to pursuing the education needed to take on a leadership role in the Church, “I started my Master's degree when I was forty...I was like, yes this is definitely what God's calling me to.” The same leader said:

I really felt the call to ministry in high school. A really good high school youth group retreat experience. I just really had that encounter with Jesus and then really wanted to serve him when I was a teen.

While 23.23% of participants indicated that they felt called toward eventual careers in the archdiocese, only one of the participants applied for their current job in the traditional sense. Most participants did not actively seek out employment with the archdiocese, and all participants reported that they were either asked to work in their current position or recommended to the job by an archdiocese employee in a leadership role. Rather than applying for leadership positions,



many participants were encouraged to take them by superiors who thought the participants showed an aptitude for the work. For instance, WLCC20 mentioned in regards to achieving her position, “I wanted to apply to that, but Sister Edith said, ‘I have something else in mind for you.’” WLCC25 says:

I didn’t do my Master’s because I wanted to be Parish Life of church. I didn’t even know it existed. But my location kind of grew over the years through the work I did with my Master’s degree. My faith deepened and I felt a call to do this role. To follow this vocation without even realizing it was possible.

WLCC18 said of her experience as a nun: “When the Vatican II came along we were asked by Rome, as communities to go back to your original documents and see why you were founded.”

WLCC27 made a subtle point when she referred to having a calling, “I’ve always been Catholic. I’ve always gone to Catholic school. I’ve always lived in this area.”

*Servant leadership.* When discussing their jobs and role within the archdiocese, 16.67% of participants spoke of their roles as a form of service. Rather than saying that they worked for the church, they said they served the church. This indicates that these participants saw their roles as a form of servant leadership. Other participants referred to their work as service to God.

WLCC17 indicated that even in her education, she was trained to serve, rather than to simply fill a job role. WLCC17 explained:

They're training people to serve in the church. I was accepted because I'm working for the church. Then, I love it because when I'm in class, it's not just about the academics. It's like, how are we going to serve the people?

WLCC21 indicated that she felt like it was important to stay focused on her true purpose when performing her job. She said focusing on being a servant leader helped her keep it in perspective. WLCC21 said:

I think you have to be strong enough to know your worth and to know how to effectively still be in ministry, and determine what's the most important ... What's my role? My role is to be of service to the people in the program.

**Dedication.** Many participants indicated that they felt great enjoyment in their work and dedication to the Church and the archdiocese. 13.32% of participants specifically said that they loved their job, with many more implying that they were dedicated to their jobs. Some participants indicated that they were dedicated to their work and the church despite the hurdles that were placed before them. WLCC02 indicated that her strict teachers did not at all deter her dedication to her faith and church when she was in school. In her words, “My education all comes from the meanest sisters in the world, but I love my faith, and I love my church.” Some participants, such as WLCC17 indicated that she wanted to work in the archdiocese despite the low pay. WLCC17 said in reference to being asked to take a job working in her parish, “They wanted me to do the job, but I lived on my own and I could not pay my rent.”

WLCC20 indicated that she felt that people respected and admired her dedication to her work, despite the hurdles that were placed in front of her. She implied that the lower pay associated with her job was acceptable because of the fulfillment she got from helping people. WLCC20 stated:

They always admire that I'm doing something that maybe we don't get paid as much as we should, we're doing something for the greater good. We're doing something that helps people and can be inspiring to a lot of people.

*Lack of control.* When participants indicated they were ineffective in their jobs, they often attributed it to a lack of control in their roles. This was an issue for participants regardless of their place in the archdiocese hierarchy. Even women with a lot of power among their parish spoke of feeling a lack of control due to their gender or non-ordained status. 26.67% of participants reported that this lack of control was an issue they faced in their jobs. WLCC01 worked as Director of the Office of Parish Life, so while she had a lot of control over her parish, she still felt like she lacked the power to hire the people she needed. WLCC01 stated:

That kind of thing is very, very frustrating to me. The other thing that is very frustrating that I have no control over, I have people coming to me, they feel a call to serve, they know there is a need, they can't do it at a salary, and I don't do placement. A pastor is the one who has the control over who he hires, and many of them ... we have difficulty. Some still aren't comfortable with this kind of leadership, lay leadership, particularly women.

This same participant went on to explain that while women can and do have a huge role to play in the Church, the perception is that women are still mostly powerless. This, in and of itself, can be detrimental to women seeking to make a difference in the Church.

The irony to me is we talk, we women talk, about wanting to be in the heart of the Church and the loose translation of that really is, "I want to be a priest." The reality is that we women have amazing roles, and authority, but we don't have what, certainly from the outside world, looks like where you need to be, to have a voice. And to a degree that is actually correct, but in another way, there are amazing opportunities for women.

Among the participants, there was the pervading idea that while women have a great deal of authority in their roles, they were ultimately unable to make the final decisions, and were

vulnerable to the will of the ordained men that filled the higher ranks of the archdiocese's hierarchy. In the words of WLCC11,

It depends on the hierarchy. Some of [the priests, bishops, and cardinals] really work hard to get women more involved, and then they leave, and somebody else comes in who doesn't want women around. It's really up to them. They dictate how it's going to be. You're at the mercy of whoever is in charge.

WLCC13 echoed the thoughts of WLCC11, indicating that women took a risk when they chose to work for the Church. With pastors often changing positions, the staff of the parish was ultimately subject to the preferences of the priest brought in to fill the vacancy. This left women especially vulnerable, as their position in leadership roles was still controversial. In WLCC11's words,

The other thing is there's a lack of stability. If a pastor changes, the second he walks through the door, everyone can be gone. There's not even a safety net of the archdiocese paying into unemployment insurance, for instance. Our pay is like, "Okay, you can kind of sort of get by," but it's really difficult to save money. So, when you've got no safety net, and it's hard to save money, it really puts us in a very vulnerable position.

WLCC23 experienced many of the same roadblocks felt by other participants in her career. She indicated that it would be possible to give women more power without completely changing the structure of the Church. In her opinion, the change could be subtle, as long as it was intentionally done with the idea of encouraging women to take on greater leadership roles.

I think the universal Church really has been talking about this to determine what role they want women to play in a more formal way because right now, in most of the Church throughout the world, women don't have access to any real power or authority in the

Church. They have influence, but they don't have power or authority. Until women have access to that, and right now that's really pretty much reserved for the ordained. They're not going to change their minds about ordaining women, so therefore they have to be intentional about creating opportunities for women to take on significant leadership roles. That's perfectly doable, but there has to be the will and the intentionality and the planning to do that.

*Returning to school.* For some participants, their dedication to serving the church led them to return to school long after they believed themselves to be initially finished with their formal education. Ten percent of participants indicated that they returned to school to pursue higher education to qualify for a position they desired within the archdiocese. While one of these participants indicated that the church helped them pay for their tuition, the other participants paid the cost of further education out of pocket, with no guarantee of a job once they graduated. One participant indicated that when she began her quest to become a leader in the Archdiocese she preserved, despite the seemingly daunting task of pursuing more education. She indicated that,

It's such an enormous project. I went back to school and got my Master's after I lost my first husband and I was ministering, and then I always felt called to minister; I just didn't know how on earth it was going to work. But somehow I had to go to work after John died, and I ended up working in a parish, and then I realized I really wanted a Master's. And I thought there was no way I could do that and how? I'm still getting my kids through college.

Another participant indicated that while she was excited to pursue her new career, the task of furthering her education while raising young children was challenging. This participant indicated that,

So one thing led to the next, and I went and interviewed, and this whole thing was blowing me away really quite honestly. And I was excited when they said: "The only problem is you have to have a Master's degree." I'm like, wonderful! And they're like... I go, I started my Master's degree when I was forty, but my kids were young, and I was like, yes this is definitely what God's calling me to do.

One participant indicated that she had a mentor who encouraged her to achieve all she could within the archdiocese. Part of that task included returning to school to gain a Master's degree. In the participant's own words,

The job was changing. Everything. That's my own personality. I take jobs and make them much bigger than they probably need to be anyways. [My mentor] had more dreams of this ... He had her of Parish Directors and all these things, and so he had done a lot of research, and he's like. "I want you to go back to school. I want you to get your Masters in Religious Education. I want you to start thinking ... there's a shortage of priests. Maybe some day, you know, there won't be a priest here. Maybe you'll be the person." All this kind of stuff. He started planting all these seeds. So I went back to school and everything. I got my Master's Degree.

**Lack of Resources.** Several participants indicated that a lack of resources negatively affected the archdiocese's ability to recruit and train women leaders successfully. 16.67% of participants indicated that a lack of resources was an issue for them in their job. WLCC01 indicated that while she would like to create an endowment fund to help people pay for the education they needed to take on a leadership role in the archdiocese, but was unable to do so due to a lack of resources. WLCC01 explained:

I would like to have an endowment fund for lay leaders who we require to be a pastoral

associate, a Master's of theology of pastoral theology because that is a very expensive program. And I do not have the money to help with the scholarship for people that want to prepare to serve in the church. And if this had not happened, I probably would be able to have created one.

*Advancement.* A lack of advancement opportunities was a resource that was unavailable to many participants. While participants rarely stated that they felt like they were stuck in their careers, there were many participants who had reached about as high as they could go in the Church, many of whom had many years left in their careers and spoke of a drive to create change and better their communities. As mentioned, the average participant was located four tiers down from the archbishop in the hierarchy of the archdiocese. Additionally, 73.32% of participants indicated that their direct supervisor was a man. This man was often their local pastor. Since women cannot hold the position of pastor, and certainly nothing higher than a pastor, this created an effective roadblock to women looking to advance in their careers. WLCC01 indicated that, unlike most jobs, working for the Church meant that there was often no path forward for advancement.

That's a really interesting question because again, it's not constructed the way a corporation is. And there aren't benchmarks, and there aren't this job leads to this job, leads to this one, if you're pretty good, you can even Segway over here and move there, [the Church] just isn't configured that way, at all. And that is a problem. That is a problem for people that kind of reach a certain point. They might be a director of religious education some place in a parish, maybe it's a big parish, maybe they are dealing with 2,000, 3,000 kids, it's a big, big job, plus all the volunteers they have to be in charge of just to make it all work. And then they get tired, and say, "you know I've done

this, what else can I do? What other opportunities are there?" Well, depends. There might not be a whole lot.

*Income requirements.* A livable income was a resource that was difficult for many participants to obtain. Ten percent of the participants independently suggested that it is often women who perform the lower income jobs in the archdiocese because it is not a salary that one can support a family on. Their idea was that men were expected to make enough money to support a family, and the less highly paid jobs were jobs that were suited to being a second income only, not a job one could have if one were the sole money earner of the family. WLCC01 stated that:

That is one of the single, that's probably the single, biggest issue and it's why, frankly, you see more women serving in the Church than men. There are a lot of men that would like to, but they can't support their families. But if the wife, if her husband's working, she can do it. She can do it, maybe. And they can get along with her salary as an assist, but that's not the main deal.

This idea was brought up several times by participants, and each time the income was listed as the limiting factor. WLCC17 seconded the assessment of WLCC01 by saying:

We don't pay really good salaries. For some families, and not to be stereotypical, because in some families the woman is the sole provider or the main provider. Those who are sole providers, main providers, whether they're women or men, can't necessarily take a role in the Church and provide for their families. Those of us who work for the Church and they're women; it's usually because there's somebody else in our family that's making a better income than us. You know what I mean? Whether it be male or women. I think we who work in the Church usually have somebody else that's also providing income that's



not working in the Church; also some do both work in a Church, but, boy, that's a tough road. I think that's a tough road.

WLCC15 agreed that the same basic gender breakdown was present in Catholic education. While there were many women working as elementary and middle school principals, there were more men working as high school principals. Rather than indicating that this was due to some bias keeping the women from overseeing the larger high schools, she thought that this could be because men felt like working for elementary and middle schools wasn't an option for them due to money concerns. In her words,

It's unusual to have a male Principal at Catholic elementary school level. Because the pay scale for elementary school is lower than high schools. So men who have families, gravitate to high schools, where it's still not a great living, but it's doable. It's not really doable at this level in southern California, or in this area.

**Mentorship.** Mentorship was one of the most helpful resources available to participants. Several women who held management roles in the archdioceses spoke fondly of a previous boss or another mentor who encouraged them to take on leadership roles. Occasionally, these mentor figures saw the participants in positions they never envisioned for themselves and played an instrumental role as a catalyst in the careers of the participants. Some participants shared a mentor, illustrating the huge impact one dedicated person can have in the careers of the people around him. WLCC15 spoke of the pastor who encouraged her to apply to be the principal of her school,

My children were in this school, and I wasn't happy with it. I didn't understand why you couldn't have everything. You're educating a child. Why can't you have excellence in faith, academics, spiritual, emotional, athletic, you know, I just didn't understand. So I

was the school counselor. One of my master's is in counseling psychology. So I had volunteered my services and was working part time as a school counselor. They put me on the board to select the new Principal, and midway through the process... it's three pastors ago... [the pastor] said, "I think you should be the Principal." I had been home [with my children] for 14 years, so I was terrified, and he talked to my husband. So [the pastor] saw something in me. So I would say, I owe it [that pastor], 21 years ago, who convinced me 20 years ago, that I could do it.

WLCC23 spoke of a similar experience she had with her pastor. She credited her success partly to her pastor who encouraged and supported her to try. Like WLCC15, WLCC23 experienced support from a mentor figure that helped set her on her career path. WLCC23 stated:

My predecessor, [the former pastor] who was the pastor here for 30 years, and he's been very supportive. This wouldn't have happened without him. He said he's still very active in the parish, and he's now the kind of Spiritual Director Pastor Emeritus and continues to be very supportive, but I end up playing a slightly different role. People see me more in an administrative role than necessarily in the spiritual role because I don't get to play that that often or be in that role.

WLCC01 also spoke of a pastor who helped and supported her in a leadership role in the archdiocese. As a non-ordained minister, WLCC01 held a position that was traditionally a male role. While she was effective in her role, she indicated that she had struggled to find a priest who wanted to minister to her. This was not the case with her previous pastor and mentor. She indicated that this man was always supportive of her. As said by WLCC01,

I really was blessed with [my previous priest]. [He] was my priest minister for 10 years.

He just left. He was elected provincial of his order, so he had to leave. It was very hard to find a priest to come because most of them want to be in charge.

Like other participants, WLCC17 had the guidance of an encouraging mentor. While WLCC17 indicated that she always felt the desire to minister, she did not know the role she was meant to play within the Church. After WLCC17 had declined to apply to a leadership position she was qualified for, a friend and priest approached her to discuss the goals she had, and where she envisioned herself in the Church. WLCC17 said:

And at the same time a wonderful priest friend [he] kind of kicked me and said, "What are you doing? Where do you see yourself in the Church? And why are you not applying for this position?" He wanted to know why I wasn't applying for the business position of the woman who was leaving. This was before they split up the job. I said "I already discerned that. I'm not the business gal." And he goes, "Good, I don't think you are either. But I had to challenge you." And then he basically started me on this track. And he asked me the question, "As a woman in the Church, where do you see yourself?" I'm like, "Right where I'm at." He said, "Wrong answer." He took the time to really challenge me. He introduced me to the concept of a Pastoral Associate. So I am a Pastoral Associate Candidate, the only thing I hadn't finished was my Master's degree.

**Acceptance.** 33.32% of participants indicated that they believed that their gender affected whether or not they were accepted in their job roles. For some participants, the difference afforded to them as women was subtle and for the most part, innocuous compared to the way their male counterparts were treated. Some participants, on the other hand, experienced

more detrimental prejudice that affected their advancement opportunities or their abilities to perform their job functions.

Participants who experienced more subtle forms of gender bias stated that while they were not treated overtly different than their male colleagues, expectations for them always seemed to be influenced by their gender. WLCC16 noted that while there were many women working in Archdiocese, there were few and fewer women at management levels, while there were many women working in positions lower on the hierarchy. WLCC16 said:

It's really interesting how in parishes it's... You see a lot of... It's women doing the work and then... But then by the time you get up to like, the people in our positions, it's less and less women, and it's more and more men. I don't know if that's unique to the Catholic Church.

WLCC11 reported that she experienced similar, perhaps even unintentional forms of prejudice. While she did not report experiences of overt prejudice, she found that people's expectations of her job role seemed to be informed by her gender. She found that people tended to assume she was not in a management position. WLCC11 said, "It does, I think because if I were a man, people would take this job more seriously, I think. Right now, a lot of people think I'm the secretary or the receptionist."

WLCC15 experienced similar phenomenon as WLCC13 that she attributed to the effects of gender. She indicated that many of the men in her position were given more credence than a woman might have been. She indicated that women often had to work a lot harder to be taken seriously and that their presence was often taken for granted. WLCC13 explained:

When you see a male Principal at the elementary level, in the Catholic Church, you're just indoctrinated, it's a male hierarchy. People behave differently. They just, they have an

automatic sort of gravitas by being male. And a woman is just another mom helping out. Especially if you have your kids in the school. So you have to work, I think, a lot harder. You have to present yourself better. You can't... Fewer mistakes. I think it's more difficult.

Other participants spoke of still more overt forms of prejudice where it was clear men were given privileges over their women counterparts. WLCC16 stated that she had seen men receive a job over a more qualified women applicant. WLCC16 reported:

What I've seen now in a lot of, not necessarily in our department, but on the other hand, the person who was named the head of the office of religion education is now a priest. I think in this case, I do think that the most qualified applicant did get the position, but I've seen in other cases where that's not the case. Where it's, "Well, there needs to be a priest that's head of this or doing this position," and so some of the women feel not respected and honored. [That we're not getting the job because we're a girl.]

*Effectiveness.* Only 6% of participants indicated that they did not feel fully effective in their job roles. Those who expressed ineffectiveness in their jobs explained that they had reservations due to their newness in the role, or because of recent conflict amongst the staff. Despite the challenges of their jobs, a small percentage, only 13.32% (excluding the 6% previously mentioned), indicated that they believed their effectiveness was being held back, either by the perception of their gender or because of the roles women were not allowed to fill in the Church. One participant, for example, felt effective in her role and supported by her colleagues, but indicated that there were some things she felt she could not do, either because of a lack of resources or because people were not ready for the changes she wanted to make.

Sometimes you run into walls that there's just nothing you can do about it. It's not a lack of being effective, it's just people aren't ready to change, or the economy is such that you can't do the things you'd like to be able to do, that kind of thing. But it's not a matter of my senses; it's not a matter of being perceived as not being up to the task, or having a dumb idea or whatever.

As Parish Life Director, WLCC23 held a great deal of authority in her parish, yet like WLCC01, WLCC23 still felt like aspects of ministry were barred to her. As a non-ordained minister, WLCC23 was not able to perform the sacraments in her parish. For this reason, she felt like she was not able to connect with her parishioners in a way ordained ministers were able to. WLCC23 stated:

I definitely feel there are some areas in which I can't be as effective as a pastor because I don't have the access to people at those crucial moments in their lives, at the time of the sacraments, so whether it's baptisms, or it's weddings, or it's death, funerals, where you're able to really reach out and touch people at the deepest core of who they are. Those opportunities to really make that kind of impact on people in the parish and beyond are not really available to a non-ordained person and therefore to a woman.

WLCC27 indicated that she had similar concerns as WLCC23. Both faced roadblocks, not necessarily because of their gender, but because of their status as a layperson. However, since their gender prevented them from being ordained, the two are inexorably linked. In the words of WLCC27:

It's not so much a women challenge as a layperson challenge again. I don't know how familiar you are with some of the weird rules that the archdiocese has, but a volunteer can sign a check, I can't sign a check.

**Pioneering spirit.** The dedication participants felt to their jobs was demonstrated by the way they embraced the “newness” of their positions of power. For many participants, their role in the Church was uncharted territory. While they may not be the first women ever to hold their positions, they were among the first, and because of that, they had the opportunity to shape the role that future women will hold in the Church. WLCC01 said that “Yeah. Never could have imagined. And none of this, we're pioneers, there were no role models. There aren't any. This is all new to the Catholic Church.” WLCC01 went on to say that many of the current leaders in the Church across the country started out as she did, in small positions that grew based on need, rather than on a conscious decision to include more women in leadership positions.

But there were no lay women anywhere, and slowly they became... as I did, help teach religious education to children who were not in the Catholic schools, came to the parish for religious education to make their First Communion, and Confirmation and that kind of thing, and it's just grown. Today, they're 80% of the ministry done, in the Catholic Church across the country, is done by lay people, and 80% of those lay people are women.

WLCC17 indicated that she did not feel frustrated by the barriers that still faced women in leadership positions of the archdiocese. Rather than the frustration, she indicated that she felt excited about the opportunities that were available to her and the opportunities that were continuing to open to women. WLCC17 stated:

I don't feel the same angst that maybe some people feel or expect that women would feel in the Church. I see it as a brand new frontier, and it keeps opening up. Pope Francis is opening that door wider for conversation. I don't know where it's going to lead, but I think it's a great time to be in the Church as a woman. Maybe being a woman in a

seminary has changed that for me too, because who would have thought it? I didn't think I would ever be attending a seminary.

**Divergent perspectives.** Many participants believed that part of the reason they were so effective in their role was the divergent perspective they brought to their jobs. 26.67% of participants indicated that they believed women brought a different perspective to traditionally male leadership roles. They believed that bringing women voices to the table produced new ideas, and represented the women parishioners that would have been under-represented in their absence. WLCC17 indicated that while in seminary class, she was often the only woman in the room. If she did not give her perspective, many of her classmates might never have heard a woman's perspective on what they were studying. WLCC17 explained:

That's the lens I look through, and it's a different lens than if I wasn't married if I wasn't a woman. I bring my feminine perspective to everything I do. It's just a different perspective, and we all have very different degrees of what that means. Being a student in an all-male seminary, I'm very aware of that. That's one of the blessings actually of being there; I absolutely love it. The purpose of having a lay student who is a woman at the seminary is they are very specific wanting to bring that feminine perspective because otherwise, it doesn't come out.

WLCC21 stated that the Church did not need to completely rework its structure to represent the perspective of women better. She indicated that if women were not to be priests, they could still bring a different viewpoint to the table. In her words:

Well, where is the voice of women in reflecting on the gospel? I think again; there is a perspective that is being missed. I'm not trying to say, so therefore we need women priests. What would be the problem of being open to reflections by women once a



month? Or whenever? You know? I think that that would be a valuable voice. We had our Christmas gathering the other day...It just was so striking; the entire procession was all male. The only two women engaged in that liturgy was the cantor and the person that proclaimed the first reading.

This same sentiment was offered by WLCC29 as was expressed by WLCC17. While she did not necessarily feel that women needed to be priests, she indicated that a lack of priesthood did not need to prevent women from speaking their mind. This is another example of a small, but powerful change that several participants felt were missing from the Church. In the words of WLCC29:

Are these women who are preaching during Mass? Or are they finding other opportunities to preach? The archbishop really doesn't want women to be preaching at Mass, but what could be other opportunities where women get a chance to preach or to offer reflections? I just think the Church, we need to not only have women doing the work but also speaking because we have our own experiences, our own perspective. Our voice needs to be out there.

**Respect.** According to participants, the respect afforded to them greatly affected their ability to be effective. While no participants said they felt categorically disrespected, only 33.32% indicated that they felt respected in their roles. For some participants, respect had never been an issue, for others it was something they had earned from their colleagues over time. For WLCC10, the respect of her colleagues was never an issue, and she had always been very happy in her role.

I'm extremely happy. I have worked in the Church for so very long and worked in many areas of teaching and roles of leadership, and I have had only the best experiences and the most respect, and so I have nothing, I have no negative feelings about it.

For WLCC29, earning the respect of her colleagues was not instantaneous. Time was a factor. People who did not want to work with a woman left, and the people that filled the vacancies were more accepting of a woman in a position of authority. WLCC29 explained:

I remember others' perception of this role. I work with a great staff. The people who maybe at the beginning were like, "I don't want to report to a woman," have left and I got to hire people that were excited to work with me.

WLCC13 indicated that rather than her gender, it was her leadership style that was hard for people to accept. Rather than being an authoritarian leader, WLCC13 took a more collaborative approach. She said this style of leadership was foreign to some of her co-workers and initially difficult for them to respect.

Some still have a little bit of a... I think there's always going to... be a problem with a woman having the position. I think it's people that are new and don't know me and don't know if I ... My style of leadership is collaborative. Most of these people are not used to collaborative leadership. They're used to the boss telling you, and this is what you do. For some, especially the men, they're not comfortable with collaboration.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

According to the 30 participants recruited for this study, the perception of being a women leader in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is strongly influenced by themes of calling, dedication, lack of resources, mentorship, acceptance, effectiveness and pioneering spirit. While all of the participants indicated that they possessed some degree of effectiveness in their roles and had the

respect of the co-workers, they still perceived gender-based barriers in their careers. No women, except one, was above the fourth level in the hierarchy of the archdiocese. On the surface, these women appeared accepting of their position. However, comments in the long interviews repeatedly mentioned their struggles to deal with the gender divide that existed between them and their male colleagues.

All of the participants showed dedication to their job. They all mentioned that they felt underpaid, yet all of them continued working for the archdiocese because they were dedicated to their purpose in the role. Participants showed dedication to their roles by indicating that they felt like pioneers, who, despite the challenges that they faced, would continue to work for the betterment of the Church. Despite the low pay, the lack of advancement opportunities, and the sometimes subtle, sometimes overt sexism they faced, many women had been working in their jobs for over a decade, and all indicated that they felt fulfilled and happy in their work.

Although the participants knew the limits of their promotion possibilities, they accepted their role within the present limitations of the Catholic Church. Through the respect that was shown to them by colleagues and members of the congregation, most participants indicated they felt respected in their roles. While participants did indicate they occasionally encountered an individual who would prefer a man working their job, all participants indicated that these people were a few bad apples in an otherwise respectful and accepting community.

All of the participants felt that their work was a calling, rather than just a job. Only two participants interviewed for their position, while the rest were asked to assume the position resulting from volunteer experience or from being singled out for their leadership potential. Most of the participants were mothers with children and viewed the Church and Archdiocese as an extension of their family. Many participants indicated that they had been involved in the Church

their whole lives, and from the time they were young, felt a calling to serve the Church and God. For some participants, this was a long path to their current positions. Many participants returned to school after their children were grown up and began second careers dedicated to serving the Church.

Servant leadership was a common theme among participants. They all felt as if they were leaders of people even though they did not have any direct subordinates. When discussing their roles and job tasks, participants indicated that they “served” the Church, God, or the congregation. Participants indicated that while they may perform other job functions, their primary job was meeting the needs of the congregation. They simultaneously served as both a leader and a servant to their Church and congregation.

A lack of resources influenced the participants' perception of the Church's effectiveness in attaining women leaders. Many participants indicated that they felt like they had poor advancement opportunities, and their salaries were more suited as a second income than a primary earner. However, these challenges were offset by a theme of strong mentorship. Many participants spoke of pastors who were influential in their careers and encouraged them to take on roles they had never imagined for themselves.

## Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

### Summary

**Problem and purpose.** This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of how women leaders have perceived their roles in the Catholic Church. The conceptual framework of feminist theory guided the study of gender issues within the Church leadership structure. Women have experienced limited access to high leadership within the Catholic Church because they have not been eligible for ordination (Franco Martinez, Rodriguez-Entrena, & Rodriguez-Entrena, 2012). This gender hierarchy appears to exist because women have not held a position equal to that of an ordained brother or priest in the archdiocese.

Feminist Catholic scholars have suggested that barriers to the highest levels of leadership have stemmed from perceptions within the Church that women were meant to fulfill maternal or servant roles in relation to men and that the requirements of leadership were incompatible with the innate nature of women (Imperator-Lee, 2015; Kausner, 2014). International scholars share similar perceptions of women in leadership positions in the Catholic Church (Gervais, 2012; Giorgi, 2016; Gozdecka, 2012; Styhre, 2014). In recent research by Gervais and Sjolander (2015), they reported that Catholic women had expressed frustration and resentment over being barred from higher levels of leadership within the Church. These women have reported discrimination from Church leadership in their attempts to promote gender equity in their work within the Catholic Church. As early as school-age, females attending Catholic schools similarly have experienced a sense of discrimination (i.e. serving as altar servers) because of the Church's position on women in leadership (Enke & Winters, 2013). Aune (2015) reported that women have left working in organized religious Catholic position altogether because of perceptions of its role in subordinating women.

In accordance with feminist theory, researchers have suggested that gender equality within the Catholic Church has required that women exercise the same level of power and influence as men (Ross, 2013; Siara, 2013). Gender inequality in the Church has deprived women of meaningful input and decision-making influence and has inhibited the development of shared understanding of all members' perspectives by the Church (Carlson, 2016). Although one researcher found that women's power and influence has varied across parishes in the reflection of parish cultures, few researchers have investigated perceptions of women and leadership within the Catholic Church (Ecklund, 2006). Further research is needed to explore views of women leaders, regarding their effectiveness as leaders within the Catholic Church (Neitz, 2014; Smyth, 2013).

This study selected the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, as this geographic area has been perceived by persons in other countries and states within America, as the location of the most *avant-garde* thinking regarding women holding a leadership position in the Catholic Church. The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore how women have perceived themselves as leaders in the Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and how these Women Leaders in the Catholic Church (WLCC) have perceived others' conceptions of them as leaders in the Catholic Church in the greater Los Angeles area. To address this study's problem and purpose, the researcher developed the following research questions:

1. How do women leaders in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles perceive being a women leader in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles?
2. How do women leaders in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles perceive the effectiveness of the Church to attain women leaders?

**Methodology.** To obtain in-depth understanding of WLCCs' perceptions, the researcher selected the phenomenological method to obtain in-depth, reflective thought of these leaders. Because there is a need to recognize that the knowledge is situated within the groups (Crasnow, 2013), the interviews included women working for the church or the archdiocese. The researcher personally conducted long interviews with 30 purposefully selected participants who worked in ministry or administrative areas in the Los Angeles area from mid-November, 2016 to early-January, 2017. Participants were selected through purposive sampling with support from the archdiocese personnel. The interviews by the researcher occurred at times and places convenient to the participants and lasted 40 to 90 minutes and were recorded with the researcher's iPhone and later transcribed by a professional transcriber.

**Findings.** From the demographic section of the interview, the WLCCs reported the title of their position, length of service, educational level, and family. All but one was at the fourth level leadership position from the highest level in the Archdiocese, the Archbishop. That woman was a senior nun and held a position at the third level of leadership. The mean length of service was 11 years. Two women possessed an associate degree; seven, a Bachelor's degree; 14, a masters' degree; and two, doctorate degrees (both nuns). Sixty percent were married, but 70% had children. Of those with children, the average family size was three.

The transcribed data was analyzed by seven trained doctoral level coders. These coders independently read transcripts and derived tentative themes. Together, they shared their findings with the researcher, working to determine the major themes from the participants' data. The results of the analyses revealed that the findings could be categorized into six themes. These six principle themes included:

1. Calling to their position;
2. Dedication to their work;

3. Lack of resources;
4. Mentorship;
5. Acceptance; and
6. Pioneering spirit.

Although all of these women commented that they felt called to do this work at the church and on their acceptance of their position, participants repeatedly mentioned their struggles to deal with the gender divide that existed between them and their male colleagues. All the participants indicated that they possessed some degree of effectiveness in their roles and had the respect of the co-workers; however, they still perceived gender-based barriers in their careers. They perceived that they handled the position with effectiveness and joyfully served church members and their male superiors.

Also, all participants expressed dedication to their job. They mentioned that they felt great enjoyment in their work despite the hurdles that were placed before them. Some women leaders felt underpaid, yet all of them continued working for the archdiocese because they were dedicated to their purpose in the role and they feel fulfillment from helping people.

Some of the participants espouse servant leadership. They are leaders who are serving the Church and the people. Some participants also refer to their work as service to God. One participant mentioned that she was trained in her education to serve God.

Participants felt a sense of pioneering spirit in their roles. Their roles were uncharted territories. While they may not be the first women ever to hold their positions, they were among the first, and because of that, they had the opportunity to shape the role that future women will hold in the Church.

### **Implications of Findings**

The study findings contributed to feminist theory literature with the perspectives of women in a variety of roles within the Catholic Church whose long interviews revealed levels of



conflict with male priests; limitations of roles within the church; lower levels of respect; and a feeling of a lack of control. Pearson (2015) indicated that African American women continue to meet with male dominance and gender bias in clergy leadership and that a degree of resistance, antagonism, denial, and competition persists when African American women undertake clergy leadership positions, but that the women in the study used the facilitators, including ministry training and higher education, effectively to obtain clergy leadership positions. Gender-based differences and bias were a factor for a third of the participants in the study. Power was often noted as an area retained by male leadership within the church organizations evidenced by an overall lack of control.

In 1995, Pope John Paul II challenged women with a letter declaring that:

women occupy a place, in thought and action, which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to promote a “new feminism” which rejects the temptation of imitative models of “male domination,” in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society, and overcome all discrimination, violence, and exploitation. (Johnson, Ruether, Cahill, & Smith, 2016, p. 3)

Johnson et al. suggested that this statement created a paradox where feminist theory clashes with Catholic teachings on a variety of significant issues. The Catholic Church has traditionally utilized a theory of complementarity (Allen, 2006) where there are differences noted between men and women beyond both biological and those that have been socially constructed. Allen suggested that the principle of gender complementarity incorporates both a fundamental quality along with significant differentiation of men and women (Johnson et al. 2016).

Johnson et al. (2016) maintained that there is a phenomenological philosophical perspective in use by many feminists who wish to explore the experiences of women as was

undertaken in this study. “We also all exist in a culture that has specific understandings of what are masculine and feminine traits” (p. 11). Allen (1992) noted that the concept of free will provides each person with the determination of how they will choose to be within the context of socially developed components of their identity.

In this study, the participants identified several key themes about their roles within the Catholic Church including substitution for the roles of missing nuns; barred from upward mobility; and sometimes, inadequate authority compared to an ordained role. At the same time participants viewed their work within leadership roles as having progressed in a pioneer fashion moving into uncharted territory. Participants were clearly concerned about the limitations for women to participate in management areas of the Church. Evidence of bias and prejudice was apparent within the interviews. Participants felt there was a general lack of ability to advance within their careers or roles within the Church.

Participants expressed concern about the education of clergy on the operations level of the Church, which was often the area most likely to have women members in positions to have a great deal of knowledge and skill. The lack of education of priests on the topics of operations such as those of school principals was perceived by participants as impacting Church effectiveness and was an additional reflection of the male bias and Church culture.

The main issue in this study is discrimination against women leaders in the Church culture. Catholic feminists express concern about the marginalization of women within the Church, as indicated by rules prohibiting ordination of women and portrayals of women as essentially maternal or servile (Ross, 2013). Women leaders and women parishioners are marginalized in the Church culture. In this study, the lived experiences of these women leaders were explored. Even though these women leaders have somehow broken the glass ceiling in the

Catholic Church, they are still far from being an equal to the male individuals in the Church. This study provided a look into their lives and how these problems can be solved by the institutions they are in as well as how the members of these institutions can help solve these problems.

As noted by Ross (2013) the movements for changes of the status of women within the Catholic Church were born from the dissatisfaction with the classic clerical church hierarchy. This includes the woman priest movement, including Roman Catholic Womenpriests, started in 2002.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of this study, the following six conclusions will be presented.

**First conclusion.** *Calling* - WLCC felt a calling to assume a servant leadership position in the church. The thirty participants expressed their perception that they were called by God to serve the Catholic Church in their present capacity. None of the participants applied for their current jobs in the traditional sense. Ninety-seven percent of the participants were asked to assume the position, resulting from volunteer experience or mentors. WLCC17 describes her calling:

I really felt the call to ministry in high school. A really good high school youth group retreat experience. I just really had that encounter with Jesus and then really wanted to serve him when I was a teen. So I was on leadership as a teen. And then I was asked for my parish to become the Youth and Young Development Minister; I think I was twenty-three, which is like just young enough to be stupid and crazy. To not know how much you don't know.

WLCC01 revealed that she believed her work was a service to God:

I was a pastoral associate. That was something I felt called to, and I ministered in a parish about nine years, and I loved every minute of it. And I was asked to take this job, and I just laughed and said no, didn't even think about it. And then I was asked a second time, and I said no, why would I ever do that? I love what I'm doing. And the third time that I was asked, I got down on my knees and said okay God, is this you? And it became clear that it was a call and so I came downtown, as we say, expecting I might survive two years, and much to my wonderment, it's been eight.

In the words of WLCC01, "I think people coming to serve in the church feel a call to serve in the church, it is not a job. It is a vocation."

One participant responded to an advertisement for the position, but the remaining 29 women were requested by a leader in the church to assume their current position. These respondents were asked by the leader because they had served as a volunteer in the church in similar or numerous capacities. WLCC17 is an example of a participant who felt like her pull towards the Church was a call from God. This participant said in relation to pursuing the education needed to take on a leadership role in the Church, "I started my Master's degree when I was forty...I was like, yes this is definitely what God's calling me to."

The participants demonstrated an aptitude for the position in their volunteer work. This aptitude was noted by the church leader. One example is WLCC27 as she states, "I was actually hired by the school just to do fundraising for a couple of years, and then I became this position after that." WLCC25 explains a similar experience, "But also my volunteer experience in the church, Being the motivator of the archdiocese's pastoral council. Being on various boards and groups and being very involved with my parish as well at the time. I think all those factored into it." WLCC29 explains:

Yeah, we have a really good working relationship. Part of the reason why it does work so well is he really wasn't that interested in becoming a pastor. He loves being a priest, and he didn't want to get assigned to a lot of administrative responsibilities, so when he accepted the job of pastor, which the Jesuits were asking him to do, he was the one that said, 'I'll do it if I have a pastoral associate and I'm really sharing the job.' Then he gets to do what he's great at, and then they brought me in, and I trained for these skills and continued to do ongoing training through the Archdiocese.

WLCC13 goes on to say, "They know the strengths and skills that I bring, and so I think that I've earned people's respect in the time that I've served at the diocesan level, both here within the archdiocese as well as across the country.

Seventy percent of these women were mothers and have viewed the Church or Archdiocese as their extended family. WLCC14 provides an example:

So for sure, a challenge that we have here is that we hire a lot of young women and it's wonderful, and then they want to have families. I would say probably the best thing that we could do is to really support them through probably more liberal family leave. We just need to do our own work in terms of do we care for them while they're pregnant, do we have places for them to do, pumping stations, do we have all of that stuff? A dream would be actually for us to have onsite childcare. That would be so phenomenal for us to be leaders in that and to be able to say you know what, we love you, we love your families.

WLCC17 expressed how satisfied she was with her experience in a seminary. Her classmates became priests, which put them side by side working together as if they were siblings in a family business. She continues to explain, "I am a resource for the parishes. I am their

resource. Whatever I can bring into them...I'm there, they call me, they need something, I'm a resource and a free resource, and that's because they don't pay me."

Revealing her impression of the Church as a family, WLCC27 in an interview stated:

'I've got to tell you something. You can't tell right now, but I'm pregnant. If I take this job, I'm not going to be able to afford daycare and everything.' So she let me...she's like, 'We're a family here.' She gave me a little office down on the lower school. I brought the baby. Eight days old, we were back here.

These women leaders felt they still brought value indicated a break with feminist theory. Garcia and Heywood (2016) suggested that the human capacity to learn and respond to social contexts, such as evidenced by this study, a reflection of adaptive behaviors responding to social and environmental stimulus. Within this study, it appeared that participants had identified areas for both hopes, along with evidence of change over time leading to improvement in their perceptions overall for their work within the Church setting. Francis et al.'s (2012) findings supported this conclusion. Francis et al. concluded that the pioneering style of ministry was preferred by the majority of the local ordained clergywomen rather than the sensing-judging temperament, which tends to be more detail orientated and practical, which was deemed a characteristic of a custodian.

**Second conclusion. *Dedication*** - These women leaders expressed their dedication to the larger community of the Catholic Church. They all mentioned that they felt great enjoyment in their work despite the hurdles that were placed before them. Some women leaders felt underpaid, yet all of them continued working for the archdiocese because they were dedicated to their purpose in the role and they feel fulfillment from helping people.

The participants' interviews revealed that many of them fulfill their leadership roles to sustain the Catholic faith for other people and generations. Several findings and quotes support this conclusion. WLCC20 indicated that she felt that people respected and admired her dedication to her work, despite the challenges she faced. According to WLCC20:

They always admire that I'm doing something that maybe we don't get paid as much as we should, we're doing something for the greater good. We're doing something that helps people and can be inspiring to a lot of people.

A reason that WLCC23 showed much dedication to her job was due to the personal fulfillment she received. In her own words:

I definitely feel there are some areas in which I can't be as effective as a pastor because I don't have the access to people at those crucial moments in their lives, at the time of the sacraments. So whether it's baptisms or it's weddings, or it's death, funerals, where you're able to really reach out and touch people at the deepest core of who they are.

WLCC08 described an instance when she was being mistreated at work, yet stayed because of her dedication to her faith and students: "I would work sixty hours a week. On a base salary, no overtime. I barely took a vacation; I didn't even know that you got paid for vacation." She goes on to say, "Yeah, so it can become all-consuming and I have seen it where women will do so much for their church, they forget their own family."

Carlson (2016) noted that there is an underlying resistance within the Church to change its stance toward the role of women. The difficulty for the Church appears to lie in resistance to change; a long cultural history regarding the role of women; and a lack of ability or desire by leadership to 'hear' the voice of a major group within its congregations.

While participants remained dedicated to their jobs, there were clear similarities between the literature on the feminist theory and the experiences of the study participants who have experienced a variety of levels of inequality. There was little evidence of acceptance of the concepts of complementarity (Failinger, Schlitz & Stabile, 2013) which suggest that differences between men and women are both deliberate and instructional. The challenge within the Catholic Church and the issues of inequality lie in recognition of secular versus traditional Church teachings about the role of women.

Within the Catholic Church a redefinition of the roles of men and women has led to a “fractional, rather than integral, model of complementarity” (Failinger, 2013, p. 17) that leads to conflict with the feminist theory of equality. The Catholic model rejects the essential foundation of feminist theory based on equality of the genders. The network of relationships that build community within the Church comes into conflict with the concepts of the complementarity model.

**Third conclusion.** *Lack of Resources* - WFCC is concerned about the lack of resources faced by the Catholic Church. These women perceive that these limited resources affect the church’s ability to provide similar salary levels as the private sector; ability to purchase needed equipment, supplies, travel and the like; and hire a sufficient number of employees to support church goals. Due to lack of resources, the archdiocese is not able to recruit and train more women individuals more successfully. Some individuals who would like to take leadership roles in the archdiocese cannot afford to enroll in courses that will help them develop the necessary knowledge and skills.

One participant wanted to develop an endowment program to help fund for expensive programs such as Masters of pastoral theology. WLCC19 explained:



You don't have to pay them. I've got a woman – two women, actually – who received their Master's degrees and then were laid off because the Church could no longer – they were told the Church could no longer afford to pay them. Yet they were encouraged to get this degree. They were told they needed this. We had an endowment here that would pay for any religious educator that's seeking a Master's degree, up to a quarter. So they were both beneficiaries of the endowment program. I don't know if their parishes paid, but they probably didn't, but they gave them time off and let them study, that kind of thing. I know one, I think the ink wasn't even dry on her degree and then laid off...and replaced by somebody free or cheaper.

WLCC08 shared the same opinion about education:

I think that...also, I think the benefits, giving benefits and giving proper pay for the positions that we have. I think those and education. I know that they used to pay something for the Master's in Theology, but they need to pursue.

The effectiveness of the Church's recruitment of women leaders is influenced by the lack of resources that also includes advancement and mentorship. This conclusion is supported by Tunheim and DuChene (2016). Tunheim and DuChene (2016) emphasized the importance of preparing women, before they undertake the leadership role, to understand what the position of bishop entails and how to recognize the qualities of effective bishops. Pearson (2015) also concluded that ministry training and higher education is needed to obtain clergy leadership positions.

Some participants noticed that as a women leader they had reached as high as they could go in the hierarchy of the Church. Most of the participants have male supervisors. Women

individuals cannot be a pastor, and a pastor is one of the highest positions in the Church. This created a roadblock to the career paths of the women individuals. WLCC01 states:

Today, [women] are 80% of the ministry done, in the Catholic church across the country, is done by lay people, and 80% of those lay people are women. Well, I was going to say, I think what has happened for me and maybe many other women, we often are the only women in the room or the first woman in the room... Particularly when you first come into this realm, you're working with clerics, there is a certain reserve as you kind of figure things out, and they have a chance to kind of get to know you. A lot of them are not necessarily comfortable with women, and then over time, I'm thinking of the priest personnel board particularly, that was really crashing through the glass ceiling and walking into a room where they just didn't know what to make of me.

WLCC09 mentioned that she felt her career was stifled not only because her male supervisors maintained the status quo, but because of her longevity:

Sometimes there are conflicting priorities with my job. Sometimes they want me to go and sub for teachers that call in sick. I am pulled by management to do special projects, to do behavioral issues that don't necessarily fall under my position, but because I'm a woman and I've been here for a long time, and I have experience and tend to be respected with my view on things, I do get called out a lot.

Most of the participants mentioned that a livable income was difficult to obtain. The women participants noted that women individuals perform the lower income jobs in the archdiocese. The idea is that men were expected to bring enough money to support the family; however, men in the archdiocese also have income that cannot support a family. This is a

limiting factor because even if men wanted to have a role in the archdioceses, they opt not to take one because of the limited income.

WLCC01, for example, felt effective in her role and supported by her colleagues, but indicated that there were some things she felt she could not do, either because of a lack of resources or because people were not ready for the changes she wanted to make. WLCC01 stated:

Sometimes you run into walls that there's just nothing you can do about it. It's not a lack of being effective, it's just people aren't ready to change, or the economy is such that you can't do the things you'd like to be able to do, that kind of thing. But it's not a matter of my senses; it's not a matter of being perceived as not being up to the task or having a dumb idea or whatever.

WLCC01 stated that the income is one of the biggest issues of women leaders. She was supported by another participant. In WLCC01's words,

We don't pay really good salaries. For some families, and not to be stereotypical, because in some families the woman is the sole provider or the main provider. Those who are sole providers, main providers, whether they're women or men, can't necessarily take a role in the Church and provide for their families. Those of us who work for the Church and they're women; it's usually because there's somebody else in our family that's making a better income than us. You know what I mean? Whether it be man or women. I think we who work in the Church usually have somebody else that's also providing income that's not working in the Church; also some do both work in a Church, but, boy, that's a tough road. I think that's a tough road.

The themes in feminist theory of disempowerment and marginalization (Crasnow, 2013; Siara, 2013) were reflected in participant feelings of lack of control and stability of resources. While knowledge was not withheld from the participants, in many cases authority was withheld. Women are marginalized through informal gender norms within churches (Audette, Kwakwa & Weaver, 2017). “Many churches are built around gendered beliefs that inform much of their structure and operation, all of which, in turn, perpetuates inequalities” (p. 5). Audette et al. suggested that churches could be one of the last types of institutions where we might find women who are empowered.

**Fourth conclusion. Mentorship** - The WFCC reported a lack of mentorship in their work. Only three of the participants could mention a mentor. In the words of WLCC21, “My predecessor, [the former pastor] who was the pastor here for 30 years, and he's been very supportive. This wouldn't have happened without him.” However, having a mentor appeared important to the women leaders, “I really was blessed with [my previous priest]. [He] was my priest minister for 10 years. He just left. He was elected provincial of his order, so he had to leave.” They also mentioned that there is no mentorship program for women individuals.

WLCC26 shared how a pastor helped and supported her in a leadership role in the archdiocese, “I started doing that. Then, he sort of became a mentor for me as well though, because he had bigger dreams than I had. I was just happy to come over and do this job and stuff.”

Having a mentor proved invaluable to WLCC17:

And at the same time a wonderful priest friend who was the Director of Vocations for the Archdiocese kind of kicked me and said, ‘What are you doing? Where do you see yourself in the Church? And why are you not applying for this position?’ He wanted to

know why I wasn't applying for the business position of the woman who was leaving...I already discerned that I'm not the business gal. And he goes, 'Good. I don't think you are either. But I had to challenge you.' And then he basically started me on this track. And he asked me the question that goes with your thing; he says 'As a woman in the Church, where do you see yourself?'

WLCC25 explains her mentorship-like experience:

So see my predecessor, who was the pastor here for 25-26 years, has been very supportive. This wouldn't have happened without him. He is still very active in the parish, and he is now the kind of spiritual director Pastor Emeritus and continues to be very supportive.

**Fifth conclusion.** *Acceptance* - WFCC perceived that their gender influenced their role in the church, their capability to serve as a leader, and their style of leadership. Acceptance of the way things are done in the Catholic Church did not deter women leaders from living out their calling.

An average number of years in this position was eleven, with a range of two months to 33 years. They all had obtained a high school diploma, two held an associate's degree, seven held a bachelor's degree, and fourteen obtained a master's degree. Two had obtained a doctorate, and a lay woman was working on her doctorate. Sixty percent of the participants were married. Seventy percent had children, with a mode of three.

A third of the participants believed that their gender affected whether they were accepted in their job roles. The participants knew that their gender would affect their jobs as they believed that their male counterparts were treated better. Some of the participants also mentioned that they experienced prejudice that affected the advancement of their careers. Some participants also

mentioned that their gender affected the expectations of people about them. For example, one participant cited that individuals would not expect them to be in a management position.

These women believed that their gender influenced their leadership, their roles, and their perceptions about their roles. One of the participants mentioned that their gender prevented women leaders from being ordained. She shared that,

It's not so much a women challenge as a layperson challenge again. I don't know how familiar you are with some of the weird rules that the archdiocese has, but a volunteer can sign a check, I can't sign a check.

Another participant shared that the Church did not need to completely rework its structure to represent the perspective of women better. In her own words,

Well, where is the voice of women in reflecting on the gospel? I think again; there is a perspective that is being missed. I'm not trying to say, so therefore we need women priests. What would be the problem of being open to reflections by women once a month? Or whenever? You know? I think that that would be a valuable voice. We had our Christmas gathering the other day...It just was so striking; the entire procession was all male. The only two women engaged in that liturgy was the cantor and the person that proclaimed the first reading.

One participant also mentioned that even as a woman leader, she sometimes feels the lack of control over the Church. One of the reasons for this is because of her gender and how some individuals are still not accepting of women leaders.

That kind of thing is very, very frustrating to me. The other thing that is very frustrating that I have no control over, I have people coming to me, they feel a call to serve, they know there is a need, they can't do it at a salary, and I don't do placement. A pastor is the

one who has the control over who he hires, and many of them ... we have difficulty. Some still aren't comfortable with this kind of leadership, lay leadership, particularly women.

WLCC23 held a great deal of authority in her parish but felt that there were aspects of ministry were barred to her. WLCC23 stated:

I definitely feel there are some areas in which I can't be as effective as a pastor because I don't have the access to people at those crucial moments in their lives, at the time of the sacraments, so whether it's baptisms, or it's weddings, or it's death, funerals, where you're able to really reach out and touch people at the deepest core of who they are.

When participants felt they were ineffective in their jobs, they attribute it to lack of control and stability. Women leaders cited that they felt the lack of control due to their gender or non-ordained status. These women leaders have the title and position; however, they perceive that they still do not have overall control over their parishes. They also mentioned that they were unable to make the final decisions and were vulnerable to the will of the ordained men that filled the higher ranks of the archdiocese's hierarchy. Women leadership positions are still controversial, and this might contribute to the women leaders.

WLCC17 felt that the higher ups who were men sometimes had an antiquated way of seeing women in the Church. This theory is evident in her comment regarding progress in spite of male leadership, "You know, I mean there's always going to be obstacles, there's always going to be things to hold us back." WLCC17 further goes on to explain the dissidence between men and women, "I love to go pray with a group of nuns. ...And they won't say the word, Lord, cause it's masculine."

Women are clearly able to handle the tasks of leadership as noted by Imperatori-Lee (2015) and Kausner (2014). The Catholic Church has endorsed the view of women as equal to

men but fundamentally different (Kausner, 2014). According to Kausner, women have their own specific abilities and gifts that aid them in fulfilling their particular mission to take care of their families and share the teachings of their faith. In line with this, women are capable of being leaders as they have their own specific gifts and abilities that can assist them in fulfilling their particular mission. Imperatori-Lee (2015) cited one of the reasons that hinder the leadership of women in the Church is the belief that the requirements of leadership are incompatible with the innate nature of women.

The conclusion regarding acceptance is supported by previous findings where researchers found that gender influenced the leadership roles of women individuals. Archard (2013) conducted focus groups with women secondary school students in Australia and South Africa to explore adolescent girls' perceptions of the impact of gender upon leadership opportunities. Moreover, Archard noted that the participants conveyed optimism that such limitations could be overcome in the future. However, Archard expressed uncertainty whether this optimism was realistic or a reflection of naivety. Mäkelä (2012) also stated that some women found that perceptions associated with motherhood detracted from their leadership experiences. McIntyre (2013) also noted that fairly small percentage of women achieve top leadership positions as compared to their masculine counterparts. One of the barriers which prevent qualified women from achieving their goals within their churches has been identified as the sexism which exists both within the church and in society. Similarly, Gervais (2012) stated that Catholic women religious expressed frustration and resentment over being barred from higher levels of leadership within the Church, and reported adverse reactions from Church leadership to their attempts to promote gender equality in the course of their work. Moreover, some women attending Catholic schools similarly experienced a sense of discrimination because of the Church's position on



women in leadership (Enke & Winters, 2013).

The effectiveness of women Church leadership is hindered by the restrictions placed on women within the Church structure. If the Church were to review the challenges of inequality within the leadership hierarchy, seriously it would “have to embrace some of the arguments of traditional feminism for supporting the presence of women in the public sphere” (Failing et al., 2013, p. 16). Participants clearly have concerns about their role in Church leadership, despite their feelings of being effective in their positions. The human spirit of striving for success and achieving excellence was clearly apparent from the long interviews with participants. Conflict over their roles within the Church and their desire to participate more fully as equals continue to be a major issue and concern.

As men traditionally held leadership positions in the Catholic Church, participants indicated that there was some remaining controversy about women occupying certain leadership roles. According to participants, a lack of available priests led to the creation of non-ordained ministers, and thus to the role of pastoral associates. While women can hold these roles, holding a position traditionally occupied by a man has drawbacks. According to WLCC01, who once held the position of a pastoral associate, “it can be difficult to find a priest who wants to work in a parish with a pastoral associate.” When WLCC01 discussed the challenge of finding a priest to work in her parish, she said, “It was very hard to find a priest to come because most of them want to be in charge.” Many priests may be accustomed to being the sole leader of their parish. According to this participant, there are priests who are reluctant to share the role.

Gender consciousness and identity is based on a variety of contexts and experiences including those within the Church. Biblical literalism is known to reinforce or normalize the beliefs about inequality between men and women (Cassese & Holman, 2016). Participants within

the study appeared not to be accepting of the concepts of inequality and sought answers to their status and ability to advance within the Church. Participants challenged traditional thought about the role of women within the Church hierarchy, partly due to the influences of their social environment where women's roles in the public sector have changed dramatically in the past few decades (Korpi, Ferrarini & Englund, 2013).

As noted by Carlson (2016) the inequality within the Church has continued to deprive women of a clear voice and equal participation in the overall management of Church activities. Evident from the interviews substantiated the continuance of a high degree of inequality at higher management levels within the Church. Carlson called for recognition of the mistakes within the Church regarding the role of women, however also noted that it is unlikely that the Church leadership will see this need for change as a moral obligation.

**Sixth conclusion.** *Pioneering Spirit* - A few WFCC espoused a strong sense of pioneering spirit. Four WLCCs shared their passion for changing the present situation of women in the Archdiocese and the Catholic Church. The conclusion is the best present by WLCC17 who affirmed:

I don't feel the same angst that maybe some people feel or expect that women would feel in the Church. I see it as a brand new frontier, and it keeps opening up. Pope Francis is opening that door wider for conversation. I don't know where it's going to lead, but I think it's a great time to be in the Church as a woman. Maybe being a woman in a seminary has changed that for me too, because who would have thought it? I didn't think I would ever be attending a seminar.

WLCC17 stated that bringing divergent perspectives is one of the reasons they were effective in their roles. WLCC17 shared:

That's the lens I look through, and it's a different lens than if I wasn't married if I wasn't a woman. I bring my feminine perspective to everything I do. It's just a different perspective, and we all have very different degrees of what that means. Being a student in an all-male seminary, I'm very aware of that. That's one of the blessings actually of being there; I absolutely love it. The purpose of having a lay student who is a woman at the seminary is they are very specific wanting to bring that feminine perspective because otherwise, it doesn't come out.

WLCC29 started off as a pastoral assistant, and within the year, due to her pioneering spirit and positive attitude, her pastor said to her:

You've got a lot of skills. Not just for ministry, but also for organizational skills and you seem to be good with numbers. You seem to have some administrative skills. You're actually a pretty good supervisor of volunteers. You could probably supervise staff.

She followed this message with "Unfortunately, you got good skills...you got to do everything."

There is still much to be learned about inequality within a religious organizational context where group norms are respected. As noted by Keister and Eagle (2014):

Change occurs when the individuals and the group drift apart. When the level of difference between individuals and the group on ideology or skills becomes intolerable to consequential individuals or to the majority of group members, the relationship will be perceived as imbalanced and change will occur. (p. 160)

The impetus for change within the Catholic Church may come only after there is significant and increased feelings of lack of control, stability, and frustration with Church policies and practices regarding women's participation in management.

## Recommendations

Based upon the previous six conclusions, the researcher offers the following six recommendations and recommendations for future research.

**First recommendation.** The researcher recommends that the present informal approach to recruiting women into leadership positions should be continued in every situation in which the apparent woman leader seems to be serving as an active and successful volunteer. The church leadership has direct experience with the applicant and has a high degree of confidence that the person will succeed. In addition, the applicant's commitment to the church has been witnessed. However, limits apply to this approach as the hiring leader may accept whoever is available. A more contemporary approach to hiring would be to establish an electronic approach to post job openings as well as seek out Catholic women at large for their positions.

WLCC10 suggests:

I think it's role modeling [and encouragement]. I think that's key. I think when they see women, many like myself, being out there talking with them, just doing what we do in these positions and encouraging, I think that women what we bring to roles is our intuitiveness, our compassion, our sensitivity to others and not that men aren't, but we have a totally different perspective when we're looking at situations. I think that lends itself so well to ministry, and I think that in and of itself is a very encouraging thing.

WLCC22 discusses presenting the Church in a positive light:

The other thing that I see as such a positive is trying to give the positive message out about the Church because we were so beat up during the sexual abuse. And yet the Church does tremendous good.

**Second recommendation.** The higher leadership of the Catholic Church should demonstrate ways to express appreciation to these women leaders for their untiring effort.

Recognition is important for job satisfaction. The ways that corporate leaders express their gratitude to employees should be utilized by religious leaders, too. Recognition may be an honored event of the person's work, such as years of service or completion of a major event or task. Other ways include small tokens of appreciation as flowers, lunch, written compliments, tickets to an event, and the like.

Other ways to encourage employees is to provide opportunities for professional development. These may include continuing education courses, pastoral management programs, and outside seminars.

A third suggestion is that a method of evaluation is established for these leaders. The women expressed that while they perceive that they are effective in their work, they do not receive an external critique of their job performance.

**Third recommendation.** With the persistent comments about the lack of resources, the researcher recommends that these women leaders be included in decision-making bodies. First, they need to understand the basis for the limited resources and then an opportunity to share their insights to utilize untapped resources. Also, these WFCC should meet so that they can cross-fertilize ideas, such as Together in Mission, in which wealthier parishes connect with a parish with little financial resources.

Another recommendation is to evaluate the salaries of the individuals in the Church. While it is true that a lot of their jobs are considered a calling and service to the Church, some of these individuals are also the breadwinners of the families. Some of the participants also

mentioned that they receive lower salaries because of the belief that men should be the one to support the whole family financially.

**Fourth recommendation.** One of the recommendations for practice based on the conclusions of the study is to provide mentoring programs in the Catholic Churches. Mentoring programs could offer women parishioners the opportunity to develop their leadership skills. This is one of the programs that the participants mentioned in the study that they think would benefit them. All leaders need to have a mentor so that they could be effective leaders in their respective organization or institution. The archdiocese can also develop a formal mentorship program to prepare women to enter the leadership positions within the church.

WFCC29 has had the support of a mentor friend which has helped her cope with the challenges of being a female in a male culture:

The other thing I will say is I am very intentional about getting good emotional support for myself. It's made a huge difference because if something does happen here that I feel super frustrated or I really have this experience of sexism or being treated less than, I have a safe place to go.

Since WFCC express a lack of mentorship, the Archdiocese mentorship program should consist of a person in the central office of the Archdiocese who is assigned this program. In this program, a new WLCC would be attached to a senior WLCC so that the senior person may pass on her wisdom to the new leader. The mentor should receive a brief professional development to acquire skills to serve as a mentor. Also, this mentor should work as geographically close as possible. The program should include opportunities and ways that the mentor and mentee connect. Both should maintain a log as a way to document the effective or ineffective ways of

this new mentorship program. The mentor should not serve as an evaluator but as a support for the new leader.

**Fifth recommendation.** WFCC have to unite and speak with a strong voice to upper leadership in the Catholic Church. WFCC are carrying on the daily work of the church without recognition and opportunity for advancement. The strength of the future of the Catholic Church lies in the leadership at the lower as well as the upper levels of the church. Advancement should be open to qualified individuals with the talent and dedication to serving God and the Catholic Church regardless of gender.

Lastly, the pastors and male individuals in higher positions should be the one promoting gender equality in their parish. Pastors and male individuals should initiate the practice of not discriminating women individuals who want to serve the Church or those who wants to attain leadership positions. Pastors and male individuals who have high positions in the hierarchy of the Church administration should promote programs so that the women leaders and women parishioners will not remain marginalized. These pastors can promote reforms in church policies. Representatives from the church, including women members, can write to the Archdiocese to promote awareness about the gender inequality that exists in the church leadership. Through policy reforms, women can be trained to be involved in tasks of high-level positions in the church.

**Sixth recommendation.** WFCC who possess a pioneering spirit will form the nucleus of the voice to the Catholic Church regarding the ordination of women and other ways to advance women in the Catholic Church. From within this group, a leader must emerge to carry the banner of future women leaders in the church. In the women's movement into the workplace, most women secured their advancement from a man. This man guided their activities so that they

achieved the requisite knowledge and skills to assume a position of higher leadership. Priests, Bishops, Archbishops and so on need to assume mentorship of women with a pioneering spirit willing to walk a path untrodden by other women.

Gender advancement and development need to rise to everyone's consciousness. For example, daughters and family members of current women leaders are sources for future leadership.

Another recommendation is that women should be allowed to take on significant roles in the different programs of the church, such as fundraising campaigns and volunteer work. Through these programs, women experience empowerment; thus, working toward equality in gender (Agadjanian, 2015; Crasnow, 2013; Siara, 2013).

WLCC28 suggested a means to embolden the pioneering spirit of women:

I think one big piece of providing more opportunities. I think for me it was inspiring when they said, 'We're letting you run with a ministry,' because I do think women have the ability to envision things that maybe are different than what the parish is currently doing. We have that ability; we just need to be able to own it and run with it.

Participants expressed pride in their roles within the Church despite frustration, lack of control and respect. Participants felt that they have a calling, which is why they are in their position right now. As leaders within their various domains, they seek and often succeed in becoming highly effective and competent within their roles, seeing themselves as pioneering a movement toward greater responsibility and equality.

The participants show their feminist side through breaking barriers, especially in the context of the Catholic Church. These women leaders prove that their gender is not a hindrance for them to be able to become effective and passionate leaders. They are pioneering individuals



as they could also serve as an inspiration to other women parishioners who have dreams of becoming a leader. They are at the forefront of the fight for gender equality in the leadership of Catholic Church.

Chapter five concludes this study.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Questions

a. Interview questions are organized by topic as an open-ended question with several probes underneath.

b. Questions included the following:

#### **i. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

1. *Present title*
2. *Years in present position*
3. *Highest level of education*
4. *Marital status*
5. *Number of children in home and outside of home*

#### **ii. YOUR POSITION**

1. Where does your position lie within the hierarchy of the Archdiocese?
2. How did you achieve this role?
  - a. *Prior achievement?*
  - b. *Church membership?*
  - c. *Prior experiences?*
  - d. *Educational attainment?*
  - e. *Mentors?*
  - f. *Being women/male?*
  - g. *Nun? Order?*

#### **iii. PERSONAL GENDER PERCEPTION**

1. How do you perceive that gender affects your behavior in this role?

- a. *Physical attributes?*
- b. *Marital status?*
- c. *Children?*
- d. *Perceived women behavior?*
- e. *Need for gender equity?*

**iv. PERCEPTIONS OF OTHERS**

- I. How do you perceive others' perceptions of you in this role?
  - a. *Decision-making capabilities?*
  - b. *Leadership attributes?*
  - c. *Faith attributes?*
  - d. *Women attributes?*
  - e. *Mother Superior?*

**v. PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS AS A LEADER**

- I. How effective do you feel in your present role?
  - a. *Decision-making opportunities?*
  - b. *Leadership skills?*
  - c. *Responses of co-workers?*
  - d. *Responses of subordinates?*
  - e. *Religious beliefs regarding women as leaders?*
  - f. *Ability to utilize talents in your position?*

**vi. CHALLENGES**

- I. What challenges keep you from being more effective?
  - a. *How can we get more women involved in the church?*



*b. What can we do to get women to stay in the church and move up?*

*c. How can we get women interested in leadership?*

*d. As we're losing nuns, what is a means to replace their efforts?*

2. Basically, how do we get women interested in this?

## APPENDIX B

### Request Letter for Individual Interviews

Dear xxxx,

My name is Lorelei Lewis and I am a doctoral candidate at Pepperdine University. I am doing my dissertation on the perceptions of women leaders in the Catholic Church.

I was referred to you by xxxxxx. I am writing to ask if you would like to participate in my study. It would consist of a short interview at your convenience.

I will come to you or, if you prefer, we can do it over the phone or via email.

I look forward to hearing from you and having you in my study.

Sincerely,

Lorelei Lewis  
Pepperdine University Doctoral Candidate

## APPENDIX C

### Detailed Letter of Involvement

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

Thank you for being so gracious and agreeing to take part in this research. Below I have noted information about the scope of my study, as well as a description of your involvement.

#### **Background and Purpose**

I am currently a Doctoral Student in the dissertation phase of my Educational Doctorate in Organizational Leadership at Pepperdine University.

The topic of my dissertation is “Perceptions of Women Leaders in a Catholic Archdiocese: A Phenomenological Study.”

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions women leaders feel about themselves, and the perceptions they feel others have about them.

The problem shows that women have experienced limited access to leadership within the Catholic Church, and are not eligible for ordination.

The goal of this study is to explore how women perceive themselves as leaders in the Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and how they see others’ perceptions of them as leaders in the Catholic Church..

You have been selected to contribute to this study due to your role as a women leader in your organization. I am interested in learning about your personal gender perception, perceptions of others, your personal effectiveness as a leader, and challenges you have faced in becoming more effective.

As a result of this study, I will provide suggestions for the Catholic Church to encourage more women to become interested in leadership positions in the Church, and also a means to provide opportunities for leadership by women in the Catholic Church.

### **Your Involvement**

Attached you will find an informed consent outlining my responsibilities related to your protection as a participant, as well as the guaranteed confidentiality of your answers. Upon signing the consent and agreeing to the terms, I will contact you via phone and email in order to schedule your interview.

This study involves the completion of two tools: 1) Personal history questions and ;2) Information outlining your experiences as a leader.

I assure you that all information collected by me, the researcher, will remain confidential and carefully protected. Identifying information will not be reported to anyone and the knowledge gained by the researcher during the process will be reported in dissertation format. A “code” number will be used to identify you.

The personal history questions should only take a couple of minutes of our interview. The other questions will consist of the remaining 20-30 minutes.

A mutually agreed-upon time will be confirmed via email.

Please know that your participation in this study is COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY and if, at any time, you choose not to participate you may leave this study without any penalty or consequence.

Your participation will not affect your employment in any manner.

A committee of professionals from Pepperdine University is overseeing my research: Dr. Diana Hiatt-Michael, Dr. Paul Sullivan and Dr. Jack McManus. If you have any questions, you may contact Dr. Michael or myself.

Thank you again for your participation.

All the best,

Lorelei Greene  
Doctoral Student of Organizational Leadership  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology  
Pepperdine University

APPENDIX D

Permission to Audio-record

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to being audio-taped during my interview with Lorelei Greene as part of her doctoral dissertation entitled: PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN LEADERS IN A CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY. I understand I will be informed when recording is taking place as well as when it has stopped.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Lorelei Greene  
Doctoral Student  
Pepperdine University

APPENDIX E

Observation Record

Interviewee (pseudonym): \_\_\_\_\_

Notable tone and content of interactions with staff or other persons in office:

Notable aspects of manner, dress, body language of interviewee:

Noticeable aspects of the company culture as indicated by office layout, style and frequency of interactions and dress standards:

Notable aspects of demeanor and attitude toward interviewer:

## APPENDIX F

### Informed Consent

Title of Project:

#### PERCEPTION OF WOMEN LEADERS IN A CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

This form explains the nature of the research study and requests your written consent to participate. The study involves research conducted by Lorelei Greene, doctoral student presently under the supervision of Dr. Diana Hiatt-Michael in the Graduate school of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. The overall purpose of this study is to explore how women perceive themselves as leaders in the Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and how they see others' perceptions of them as leaders in the Catholic Church in the greater Los Angeles area.

The subsequent information is provided to assist you in deciding where you wish to allow me to use the information gathered as a result of my conversation with you today as information to formulate my dissertation research at Pepperdine University. Upon your request, a copy of any published papers or professional presentations that take place as a result of this interview will be granted.

My participation will involve the following: A face-to-face, open-ended interview where I will answer as many as 10 main questions about my experiences as an individual, who currently works in ministry or administrative roles in the Catholic Church in the Los Angeles area. I



understand that if necessary, an over-the-phone interview can be arranged in lieu of face-to-face. In this case, an electronic consent will be emailed and signed electronically.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial) I understand that I have been selected to be a part of this study as a direct result of my role as worker in ministry or administrative roles in the Catholic Church in the Los Angeles area.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial) I understand that my participation in this study will involve the completion of an interview that could last for about 45 minutes to an hour to complete.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial) I understand that I can be referred to as only by a set of numbers (e.g., “code” number from a “generic organization.”) instead of my real name. I understand my identity and name of my organization will be kept confidential at all times during the course of this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial) I am aware that my participation is voluntary. I will not receive any incentive, monetary or otherwise, from my participation in this study. I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. Declining to participate will not affect my relationship with the researcher, or Pepperdine University.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial) I understand that my interview session will be audio taped upon my decision to participate in this study. The tapes will be used for the purposes of research only. All recorded information will be stored in a locked file cabinet maintained by the researcher and will be shredded after five years.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial) I understand that the potential risks of emotions may occur. I will be asked prescribed questions pertaining to my thoughts, perceptions and attitude toward my

experiences. This may cause irritation, excitement, boredom, or fatigue to occur. In the event of such an experience, I will be granted a rest break.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial) I understand that should physical injury occur from the research procedures, medical treatment may be provided at my own expense or at the expense of my health care insurer, which may or may not provide coverage. If I have questions, I should contact my insurer.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial) I understand that the researcher is willing to answer any questions I may have concerning the study herein described. I understand that I may contact the chair of this research, Dr. Diana Hiatt-Michael at (310) 663-1518 or [diana.michael@pepperdine.edu](mailto:diana.michael@pepperdine.edu) if I have other questions or concerns about this research. If there arises a concern regarding my rights as a participant, I can contact Kevin Collins, Manager of the Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University at (310) 568-2305 or [kevin.collins@pepperdine.edu](mailto:kevin.collins@pepperdine.edu).

\_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial) I satisfactorily understand the information regarding participation in the research. I have received a copy of this informed consent form, and I have read and initialed the communication. I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which in which the subject has consented to participate. Having answered all questions and given a full explanation, I am cosigning this form and accepting consent from this participant.

---

Lorelei Greene, Principal Investigator

---

Date

## APPENDIX G

### Archdiocese of Los Angeles Research Approval Letter



Ms. Lorelei Greene Lewis  
C/O Pepperdine University  
Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB)  
6100 Center Drive – 5th Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90045

RE: Request for Approval Letter to Conduct Doctoral Study

November 2, 2016

Dear Ms. Greene,

Thank you for your formal request to interview leaders in our elementary schools as part of your doctoral studies in organizational leadership, specifically in the area of PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE LEADERS IN A CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY.

This letter serves as written approval to conduct the research study on this topic with school leaders that are affiliated with the Archdiocese of Los Angeles (ADLA).

We wish you the very best in your work on this important area of study.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tony Galla  
Deputy Superintendent of Elementary Schools  
Archdiocese of Los Angeles

## APPENDIX H

### Names of Contacts Request

Dear XXXXX,

My name is Lorelei Lewis and I am a doctoral student at Pepperdine University. I am doing my dissertation on the perceptions of women leaders in the Catholic Church.

I am writing to ask if there are any women leaders in your department who you think would be interested in participating in my study. It would consist of a short interview at their convenience.

Please reply with their names and contact information, if you don't mind. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Regards,  
Lorelei Lewis  
Pepperdine University Doctoral Candidate

## APPENDIX I

### Participant Recruitment and Collection Steps

The following steps convey the process by which I recruited and collected data from participants:

1. I called the LA Archdiocese main office and spoke to the Director of Catholic Schools, as recommended by my chair, Diana Michael-Hewitt.
2. He suggested I use the archdiocese website and contact the head of each department (departments listed on right side of Home page).
3. I sent out 23 initial emails to departments. I thanked each director after receiving their reply.
4. I received seven replies.
5. From those seven replies, I received 28 names of potential participants.
6. After contacting those individuals, I was able to immediately set up six appointments.
7. Other appointments were scheduled over the next two and a half weeks.
8. During collection, I employed snowball sampling to receive more names of potential participants.
9. On my first visit to the archdiocese, I conducted five interviews when only two had been scheduled. One participant introduced me to two others, and one person introduced me to one other.
10. I conducted more interview appointments from November 29 to January 17.

## APPENDIX J

### GPS IRB Approval Notice



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

#### NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: November 28, 2016

Protocol Investigator Name: Lorelei Greene

Protocol #: 16-10-427

Project Title: Perceptions of Female Leaders in a Catholic Archdiocese: A Phenomenological Study

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Lorelei Greene:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair