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Intergenerational Women's Ministry:
Encouraging and Building Each Other Up

By
Lisa F. Turner

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry.

Saint Louis, Missouri

May 14, 2021

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how church directors of women's ministry (DWM) create intergenerational programs for women. This study, to the author's knowledge, is the first to be devoted exclusively to an examination of how DWM create an intergenerational women's ministry. The women's ministry can play a vital role in the church's overall ministry. If DWM are equipped to plan intergenerational programs while meeting the challenges that inevitably arise, they will be able to contribute in greater ways to the church's overall mission.

The study employed a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with six directors of women's ministry who lead an intergenerational women's ministry. Four research questions guided this study: (1) What planning process do DWM use to create intergenerational programs for women? (2) What are the outcomes for which DWM create intergenerational programs for women? (3) What challenges do DWM face in creating intergenerational programs for women? (4) What leadership strategies do DWM employ to navigate the challenges of creating intergenerational programs for women?

The literature review focused on three key areas related to the Biblical framework of relationships, intergenerational worldview differences, and leadership agility. On many levels, the literature, the research questions, and the data are inseparable throughout the study. They are woven together and intertwined in this exploration of how DWM create intergenerational programs where women of all ages can build meaningful relationships and grow spiritually.

The study found that it is extremely important to have an intergenerational leadership team in order to create an intergenerational ministry. A surprising finding was

the criteria some DWM use to measure success. Rather than utilizing attendance as the measure, one used how many women were involved in making the event happen. The study also found three major challenges that DWM must overcome when creating an intergenerational ministry: resistance to change, technology, and competition with other women's ministries. Another finding was that leadership agility is a necessity for DWM because in today's world change is inevitable and they must be ready to adapt to the unexpected. The study concluded with practical suggestions for DWM and recommendations for denominational leaders.

Contents

Acknowledgements

There's a saying that when you see a turtle on a fencepost, you know it didn't get there by itself. That's why we need to say thank you to those who have picked us up and helped us out along the way. Immediately, family comes to mind because they pick us up the most frequently. Our friends also pick us up over and over again. Likewise, God is kind and gives us others who will pick us up at different times and in different ways - pastors, coworkers, teachers, counselors, advisors, coaches, and many more. Because we constantly need one another, God gave us the Church. A special thanks to each one of you who have picked me up along the way and put me on the fence post. I could not have made it without you.

Abbreviations

BSF   Bible Study Fellowship

CBS   Community Bible Study

CEV   Contemporary English Version

DWM   Directors of Women's Ministries

ESV   English Standard Version

GW   God's Word Translation

KJV   King James Version

NASB   New American Standard Version

NIV   New International Version

NLT   New Living Translation

PCA   Presbyterian Church in America

TMSJ   The Master's Seminary Journal

Chapter 1

Introduction

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."[1]

According to the Pew Research Center only 31% of U.S. adults attend church at least once a week. Another 13% attend once or twice a month.[2] It wasn't long ago when some people looked forward to receiving their pin for perfect attendance on "Promotion Sunday" each September. A wide variety of available activities and faster paced lives now compete with church attendance.[3] Youth sports teams require frequent travel to out-of-town tournaments held on weekends. Leisure activities, private club memberships, and season tickets to sporting events or shows prevent people from attending church regularly on Sunday morning.[4] Weekend trips out of town or travel to spend time with family or friends lead to lower summer attendance. Working overtime to pay down student debt or to meet the demands of their job leave little time for attending corporate worship.[5]

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[1] 1 Thessalonians 5:11, (NASB).

[2] "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, October 17, 2019, accessed June 29, 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/.

[3] Vicky Goplin, *Across the Generations: Incorporating All Ages in Ministry: The Why and How* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 4.

[4] Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, "Average Hours per Day Spent in Selected Activities by Sex and Day," accessed July 7, 2020, https://www.bls.gov/charts/american-time-use/activity-by-sex.htm.

[5] Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville, TN: B & H Pub. Group, 2011), 129, Carey Nieuwhof, "10 Reasons Even Committed Church Attenders Are Attending Church Less Often," *CareyNieuwhof.Com*, February 16, 2015, accessed May 20, 2020, https://careynieuwhof.com/10-reasons-even-committed-church-attenders-attending-less-often/, and Christine Emba, "Why Millennials Are Skipping Church and Not Going Back," *Washington Post*, last modified October 27, 2019, accessed June 8, 2020,

Weekly church attendance is no longer the norm. It is only one of many activities from which to choose.

The first challenge Directors of Women's Ministry (DWM) face is an enormous competition for women's time and attention. The Tuesday morning Bible study in the fellowship hall is no longer "inked" in on women's calendars. Other activities compete for this time slot. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the percent of women participating in the workforce jumped from 37.7 percent in 1960 to 59.4 percent in 2020.[6] More women working means fewer women who have time to attend the women's program. In addition, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show women spend an average of five hours a day on leisure and sports activities.[7] If another church offers a famous teacher's video curriculum, some women will leave and attend that group. As a result of these competing activities, traditional women's ministries no longer automatically have a monopoly. DWM must create intergenerational programs where relationships can flourish so that women faithfully attend in spite of the competition for their time.

Though attendance may seem like the priority challenge that DWM face, there is a second challenge that must be addressed. "Dealing with five generations is now the

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-millennials-are-skipping-church-and-not-going-back/2019/10/27/0d35b972-f777-11e9-8cf0-4cc99f74d127_story.html.

[6] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, "Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate by Age, Sex, Race, and Ethnicity : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics," accessed July 6, 2020, https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/civilian-labor-force-participation-rate.htm and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *The Economics Daily*, "Changes in Men's and Women's Labor Force Participation Rates," accessed July 7, 2020, https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2007/jan/wk2/art03.htm.

[7] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, "Average Hours per Day Spent in Selected Activities by Sex and Day," accessed July 7, 2020, https://www.bls.gov/charts/american-time-use/activity-by-sex.htm.

biggest issue churches face, regardless of denomination."[8] What is true of the church is true of women's ministry. The differing core values and worldviews of women from up to five generations who attend the program present a major challenge for DWM. Most women who attend are looking for friends who share their faith and values, who will hold them accountable, and provide mutual support.[9] It is not an easy task to create a program that is flexible enough to appeal to members who range in age from their early 20's to those in their late 80's.

Beginning with Genesis and continuing through to Revelation, the Bible teaches about two types of relationships. First, God wants to be in relationship with His people, which is the vertical relationship. In what He called the Greatest Commandment," Jesus explained that this vertical relationship demands "total commitment." That is what Jesus means when He says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind."[10] The Bible also teaches that God cares about how His people interact with each other, which are horizontal relationships. Jesus said the second part of the command that describes this type of relationship is "love your neighbor as yourself"[11] The Greatest Commandment

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[8] Haydn Shaw and Ginger Kolbaba, *Generational IQ: Christianity Isn't Dying, Millennials Aren't the Problem, And the Future Is Bright* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 2015), 184.

[9] Sharon Jaynes, *Building an Effective Women's Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2005), 14.

[10] John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Luke 6-10* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 353 and Luke 10:27 (NASB).

[11] Mark 12:31 (NIV).

encapsulates what God's people are to understand and obey.[12] Women's ministry can be an ideal place to work on relationships with believers of all ages, while also growing closer to God.

In order for women to experience the blessings and benefits of intergenerational relationships through the women's program, DWM must provide opportunities for women to have meaningful interaction with members of other generations.[13] This means much more than just bringing them together in the same room. The hallmark of different generations is age. But that's not the problem. The issue is that each of the five generations has its own culture – with differing core values and expectations.[14] As a result, the interaction between generations in a women's program is like a cross-cultural encounter. They live in the same zip code. They shop at the same grocery. But, they have dramatically different worldviews.[15] It is a battle of competing worldviews with each thinking they know the best "way things should be done."[16] This can cause divisions to arise in a women's program that lead to it fragmenting along generational lines or

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[12] John Piper, "The Meanings of Love in the Bible," *Desiring God*, January 1, 1975, accessed July 9, 2020, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-meanings-of-love-in-the-bible.

[13] Elizabeth Buege, "5 Reasons We Need Intergenerational Relationships | First Evangelical Free Church," March 30, 2016, accessed June 15, 2020, https://www.firstefc.org/blog/2016/03/5-reasons-we-need-intergenerational-relationships.

[14] Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 10 and Peter Brinckerhoff, "Understanding the Different Cultures of Different Generations," *EJewish Philanthropy*, February 25, 2013, accessed May 18, 2020, https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/understanding-the-different-cultures-of-different-generations/.

[15] Peter Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church: Understanding Congregations from WWII to WWW.Com* (Littleton, CO: Mt. Sage Publishing, 2010), 50-52, 77-82, 104-114, 131-136 and Jonathan Morrow, "Only 4 Percent of Gen Z Have a Biblical Worldview," *Impact 360 Institute*, last modified January 23, 2018, accessed July 8, 2020, http://www.impact360institute.org/articles/4-percent-gen-z-biblical-worldview/.

[16] Paul White, "Viewing Generational Differences Through A Cross-Cultural Lens," *15Five*, June 27, 2018, accessed May 14, 2020, https://www.15five.com/blog/manage-millennials/.

disbanding altogether, preventing members from benefitting and being blessed by each other.[17]

A third challenge DWM face is how to provide leadership to bridge this cultural divide and create programs that will lead to loyal attendance and building relationships with members of other generations. DWM must recognize the rapid cultural changes that are taking place in society and be flexible in their programing choices. An increasing number of studies suggest ministry agility is a critical skill for members of the pastoral staff.[18] What is true of pastors is also true of DWM. This skill is crucial for them to be able to provide leadership for the program during these changing times.

A review of the literature suggests that faster and more dramatic cultural changes between the generations are on the horizon. In the next few years, Generation Z will begin to come of age. As they do, engaging ministries will require even more creativity on the part of DWM. Studies on business and organizational agility can provide them with ideas and strategies for adapting to the new "normal."[19] Frequent adaptations will be necessary if a truly intergenerational women's program is to continue to exist and be a place where the blessings and benefits of intergenerational relationships can flourish.

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[17] Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church*, 13 and Darwin Glassford and Lynn Barger-Elliot, "Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era," *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 8, no. 2 (November 2011): 364.

[18] Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Agile Church: Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2014), 1 and Chris Swain, "The Little-Known Attribute That Sets Great Ministry Leaders Apart: Ministry Agility - Part 1," *Replicate Ministries*, July 1, 2019, accessed April 22, 2020, https://replicate.org/the-little-know-attribute-that-sets-great-ministry-leaders-apart-ministry-agility-part-1/.

[19] Wouter Aghina and Aaron De Smet, "The Keys to Organizational Agility | Interview," last modified December 1, 2015, accessed May 21, 2020, https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-keys-to-organizational-agility and "Generational Differences in the Workplace [Infographic]," Purdue Global, accessed June 3, 2020, https://www.purdueglobal.edu/education-partnerships/generational-workforce-differences-infographic/.

Statement of the Purpose

"Do not merely look out for your own personal interests,
but also for the interests of others."[20]

The blessings and benefits of intergenerational women's programs could become a thing of the past unless DWM adapt to three pressing issues. They must address changing commitment levels and the growing cultural and worldview differences between the generations. In addition, they must develop leadership agility to enable them to provide direction and guidance to the program. An inability to navigate these challenges may lead to the loss of the blessings and benefits that come from having intergenerational relationships. Worse yet, the program might cease to exist altogether if it fragments along generational lines. Interviewing DWM who have created intergenerational women's programs can provide practical insight that will enable other DWM to develop similar programs at their church. These programs can provide a place where women of all ages can enjoy the blessings and benefits of obeying God's command to "encourage each other and build each other up."[21] Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how church directors of women's ministry create intergenerational programs for women.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study of how church DWM create intergenerational programs for women:

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[20] Philippians 2:4 (NASB).

[21] 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NLT).

1. What planning process do DWM use to create intergenerational programs for women?

2. What are the outcomes for which DWM create intergenerational programs for women?

3. What challenges do DWM face in creating intergenerational programs for women?

4. What leadership strategies do DWM employ to navigate the challenges of creating intergenerational programs for women?

Significance of the Study

This chapter identifies three major challenges DWM face: declining commitment among members, increasing cultural differences between the generations that hinder building personal relationships, and an increasing need for leadership agility to meet the rapidly changing times. These factors threaten to fragment women's programs along generational lines or render them obsolete. Intergenerational relationships are the biblical model: "One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts."[22] This study, drawing on the expertise of the interviewees, will provide resources for DWM to create intergenerational programs and adapt their current ones so women of all ages will attend. By providing strategies and ideas for creating and leading a successful intergenerational program, the findings of this study can help DWM

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[22] Psalm 145:4 (NASB).

establish women's programs that will bless and benefit the women who attend, as well their families, and the church as a whole.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, key terms are defined as follows:

Boomers (1946-1964): "The boomer generation experienced a changing culture and high expectations. They often pursue standards of excellence and business savvy in their churches. A key word for the Boomer generation and church is 'vision'."[23]

Director of Women's Ministry: The director creates, plans, and coordinates implementation of the women's ministry program.[24]

Generation: "A generation is a group of people who are connected by their place in time with common boundaries and a common character."[25]

Generation X (1965-1980): "Generation X reacted negatively to traditional religious experiences and is known for its absence at church. They tend to be spiritual (if not

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[23] Chris Hefner, "6 Areas Where Ministry and the Generations Collide," Facts & Trends, last modified January 26, 2017, accessed June 23, 2020, https://factsandtrends.net/2017/01/26/6-areas-ministry-generations-collide/.

[24] Chris Adams, ed., *Women Reaching Women: Beginning and Building a Growing Women's Ministry*, Rev. and expanded. (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2005), 113.

[25] Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 11.

always church-going) and pursue real relationships in church environments. A key word for Generation X and church is 'relationship'."[26]

Generation Z (1997-Present): "Generation Z is a hopeful generation. They're realists, influencers, transparent and hungry for something more than what they have. These have the best of the best at their hands, and they've had it their whole life. However, they're also seeking something more. [They] are completely reliant on technology."[27]

Intergenerational: A ministry "that intentionally cultivates meaningful interaction between generations."[28]

Intergenerational Women's Ministry: "Intergenerational ministry occurs when a congregation intentionally combines the generations together in mutually serving, sharing or learning within the core activities of the church in order to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community."[29] For the purposes of this study, this definition will be applied to women's ministry since it is a component of the church as a whole.

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[26] Chris Hefner, "6 Areas Where Ministry and the Generations Collide," Facts & Trends, last modified January 26, 2017, accessed June 23, 2020, https://factsandtrends.net/2017/01/26/6-areas-ministry-generations-collide/.

[27] Shane Pruitt, "10 Characteristics of Generation Z," ChurchLeaders, September 21, 2017, accessed June 23, 2020, https://churchleaders.com/outreach-missions/outreach-missions-articles/310160-10-characteristics-generation-z-shane-pruitt.html.

[28] Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 19.

[29] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 17.

Leadership Agility: Agility is the ability of an organization to renew itself, adapt, change quickly, and succeed in a rapidly changing, ambiguous, turbulent environment."[30]

Millennials (Generation Y) (1981-1996): "The Millennial generation is the technology generation embracing fast-paced advancement. Millennials involved in church want their faith to be active and making a difference. A key word for Millennials and church is "authenticity'."[31]

Multigenerational: "To have more than one generation make up the attendance at a particular church. In practice, multigenerational churches may not be intergenerational."[32]

Silent Generation (1928-1945): "Many in the Silent Generation experienced the Great Depression and World War II as children. They tend to be conservative and seek formal worship. A key word for the Silent generation and church is "sanctuary."[33]

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[30] Wouter Aghina and Aaron De Smet, "The Keys to Organizational Agility | Interview," last modified December 1, 2015, accessed May 21, 2020, https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-keys-to-organizational-agility.

[31] Chris Hefner, "6 Areas Where Ministry and the Generations Collide," Facts & Trends, last modified January 26, 2017, accessed June 23, 2020, https://factsandtrends.net/2017/01/26/6-areas-ministry-generations-collide/.

[32] Duane L. Fowler, "Intergenerational Preaching: Accounting for the Various Dynamics of Multigenerational Churches" (DMin diss., Covenant Theological Seminary, 2017), 14, http://covenantlibrary.org/etd/2017/Fowler_Duane_DMin_2017.pdf.

[33] Chris Hefner, "6 Areas Where Ministry and the Generations Collide," Facts & Trends, last modified January 26, 2017, accessed June 23, 2020, https://factsandtrends.net/2017/01/26/6-areas-ministry-generations-collide/.

Worldview: "The comprehensive system through and by which individuals interpret and apply gained knowledge, and subsequently orient themselves to the world around them."[34]

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[34] Joel David Hathaway, "Navigating Organizational and Leadership Challenges as an Assistant Pastor, Serving in an Interim Pastoral Role" (DMin diss., Covenant Theological Seminary, 2018), 13, http://covenantlibrary.org/etd/2018/Hathaway_Joel_DMin_2018.pdf.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore how church directors of women's ministry (DWM) create intergenerational programs for women. In order to understand the ways in which DWM create these ministries, three areas of literature were reviewed to provide a foundation for this qualitative research. First, the literature review begins with a study of Biblical relationships. It focuses on the *imago Dei* and the implications this has for human relationships. *Imago Dei* is Latin for "the image of God."[35] Second, the study explores literature about intergenerational worldview differences in the business world, the medical profession, and the military. An analysis of the different age groups using sources from anthropology, psychology, and generational cohort theory provides insight into why generations act and think the way they do. Third, the study examines leadership agility utilizing Ronald Heifetz's adaptive leadership theory.

Biblical Framework of Relationships

"What is man that you are mindful of him?"[36]

In 1898, Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch theologian and one-time prime minister of the Netherlands, delivered the annual Stone Lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary. In the series, "Lectures on Calvinism," Kuyper laid out a "life-system" or a Biblical worldview based on Calvinism. Kuyper wanted to dispel the notion that Calvinism was

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[35] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 442.

[36] Psalm 8:4 (NIV).

only a doctrinal system or ecclesiastical structure.[37] John Calvin was a French theologian and pastor. He constructed a system of theology that emphasizes the sovereignty of God, the sinfulness of man, and the doctrine of predestination.[38] Instead, through his lectures Kuyper demonstrated that Calvinism is a Biblical worldview that informs all of human life.

In the first lecture, Kuyper explored the three fundamental relationships of all human life: people's relationship to God, people's relationship to other people, and people's relationship to the world. This section of the literature review will examine how *"imago Dei"* applies to the first two of these relationships. Anthony A. Hoekema, long-time professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, and Daniel Doriani, a professor at Covenant Theological Seminary, have labeled these two types of relationships vertical and horizontal. The vertical relationship is between God and human beings. The relationship between people is the horizontal relationship.[39]

The first four of the Ten Commandments provide the structure for the vertical relationship between God and His people.[40] Kevin DeYoung, pastor and seminary

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[37] Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism: Six Lectures Delivered at Princeton University Under Auspices of the L. P. Stone Foundation* (1931; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 14-19.

[38] Donald T. Kauffman, ed., *Baker's Concise Dictionary of Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1967), 96.

[39] Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 80 and Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew Vol. 2: Chapters 14-28* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 201.

[40] "Westminster Confession of Faith." Presbyterian Church in America: Administrative Committee. Accessed August 25, 2020, https://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/WCFScriptureProofs.pdf, 84.

professor, compares the commandments to "guardrails."[41] He speculates that they are put there so God's people will know how to live in relationship with Him. God also intended for His people to be in relationship with each other.[42] Commandments 5-10 guide those relationships.

Theological Anthropology

The word anthropology is derived from two Greek words: *"anthropos"* means 'man or soul' and *"logy"* means 'the study of.' So, anthropology is the scientific study of people.[43] Theological Anthropology is the study of human beings from a Christian or Biblical perspective.[44] This area of scholarly inquiry seeks to find answers to questions very similar to those Kuyper posed in the Stone Lectures: What is man? Who is God?[45] Paul David Tripp, pastor, author and conference speaker, proposes that people's relationship with God is the most important one they have. He also contends that the more people cultivate this vertical relationship with Him, the more Biblical their horizontal relationships can become with others.[46]

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[41] Kevin DeYoung, *The Ten Commandments: What They Mean, Why They Matter, and Why We Should Obey Them* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 24.

[42] Exodus 20:12-17 (NIV).

[43] Nina Brown, Thomas McIlwraith, and Laura Tubelle de González, *Perspectives: An Open Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association, 2020), 5.

[44] Charles Cameron, "An Introduction to 'Theological Anthropology'" *Evangel* 23, 2 (Summer 2005): 53 and Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 13.

[45] Cameron, "An Introduction to 'Theological Anthropology'" *Evangel* 23, 2 (Summer 2005): 53-4 and Stephen J. Wellum, "Editorial: The Urgent for a Theological Anthropology Today" *SBJT* 13, 2 (2009): 2-3.

"Tselem" and "Demuth"

The foundation of both the vertical and horizonal relationships is the premise that all people are created in God's image.

> Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.'[47]

Over the centuries, theologians have debated whether the Hebrew words for image (*tselem*) and likeness (*demuth*) have the same meaning.[48] Although they did not agree on the details, the Church Fathers taught that there was a distinction between "image" and "likeness." A brief survey of these men shows most agreed that these terms meant different things, but they arrived at contradictory conclusions. For example, Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons during the second century, made a distinction between the words "*tselem*" and "*demuth*" in his reading of Genesis 1:26-27. He thought "*tselem*" pertained to the physical and "*demuth*" the spiritual part of people. He argued that people lost the "likeness" of God in the fall, but kept the "image."[49] Augustine believed the opposite. He contended that "image" included God's relationship to His people and could be lost. "Likeness," which is "metaphysical mental capacity," could not.[50]

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[46] Paul David Tripp, *New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional,* "September 10" (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), n.p.

[47] Genesis 1:26-7 (NIV).

[48] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 157 and 203; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 442.

[49] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 202 and Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Image of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129, no. 515 (1972): 237.

In contrast to Irenaeus and Augustine, the Reformers took a different position. For example, John Calvin did not distinguish between the Hebrew words "*tselem*" and "*demuth*." He pointed out that it was a Hebrew custom to repeat the same idea using different words. This occurs many times in the Psalms. Therefore, he rejected the notion that "image" and "likeness" differ in meaning.[51] Calvin was not alone in taking this position. Louis Berkhof, an American-Dutch Reformed theologian, agreed that although the words are slightly different, they are interchangeable.[52]

For the purposes of this study, though Calvin and Berkhof were not contemporaries, they agreed that "image" and "likeness" are interchangeable. This view will serve as the foundation for examining what "made in the image of God" means and how that influences vertical and horizontal relationships.

Imago Dei

Much like the debates that have raged over the centuries about the meaning of "image" and "likeness," the meaning of *imago Dei* has been much disputed by scholars as well. For such a foundational doctrine, it is surprising that there are only three passages in the Old Testament that specifically mention the "image of God."[53]

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[50] Douglas F. Kelly, *Creation and Change: Genesis 1.1-2.4 in the Light of Changing Scientific Paradigms* (Ross-Shire, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 1997), 218, and Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 33-35.

[51] John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Volume 1 Genesis*, trans. by John King (1847; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996), 93-4.

[52] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 203.

[53] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image,* 11.

Scholars have debated at length about what is enumerated and what is merely implied in the passages. The first instance where this term is found occurs in Genesis 1:26-27:

> Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.'[54]

Old Testament scholar Derek Kidner noted that, along with birds and animals, people were created on the sixth day of creation. However, the difference between everything else created that day and human beings was that Adam and Eve alone were made in the image of God.[55] Theologians Michael D. Williams and Michael Horton argue that when God made humans in His image, He created them so He could have fellowship with them. As such, He established a covenantal relationship with them and bestowed special blessings on them as a result.[56] According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, some of these blessings are an immortal soul, the unique ability to think, and fellowship with God.[57]

The next passage where this phrase appears is Genesis 5:1b-2 in a genealogy of Adam:

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[54] Genesis 1:26-7 (NIV).

[55] Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 54-5.

[56] Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2005), 60 and Michael Horton, *Core Christianity: Finding Yourself in God's Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 84.

[57] "Westminster Confession of Faith in Modern English l Evangelical Presbyterian Church," accessed September 30, 2020, https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/1-Who-We-Are/B-About-The-EPC/WCF-ModernEnglish.pdf, 10.

When God created humans, he made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female. He blessed them and called them humans when he created them.[58]

Kidner said that humans were made in the image of God. The fall did not ruin their physical likeness. In contrast, their spiritual likeness was destroyed because man's relationship with God was broken.[59] Hoekema disagreed with Kidner. He said that this passage still speaks of Adam as being made in the image of God. Since the fall had already taken place, these verses clearly establish that the image of God was not lost when they fell.[60] Calvin made a thought-provoking observation about this passage in his commentary on Genesis. He mentioned that "made in His image" implies a relationship between family members, specifically the way a son resembles his father.[61]

The final Old Testament passage where this phrase appears is Genesis 9:6:

Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.[62]

Like Hoekema, Scottish theologian John Murray and nineteenth-century American theologian Robert Lewis Dabney support severe penalties for those who kill another person. They reason that human beings still have the image of God after the fall into sin and rebellion. Therefore, murder is a crime against the *imago Dei*. This would not be so if humans had lost the image of God when Adam and Eve sinned.[63]

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[58] Genesis 5:1b-2 (GW).

[59] Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 55.

[60] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image,* 15.

[61] Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Volume 1 Genesis,* 228.

[62] Genesis 9:6 (NIV).

New Testament

The meaning of the term *imago Dei* expanded in Jesus' use in the New Testament. When the disciples were in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, Jesus explained many things to them. He said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."[64] New Testament scholar and pastor William Hendriksen explained that "As the image of the invisible God, the Son is God revealed."[65] Paul, the Apostle, speaks of Christ as being in God's image and of people becoming in the image of Christ. In Romans, Paul referred to Christ as being in God's image: "those He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son."[66] According to Calvin, Paul is teaching that believers are transformed into this renewed *imago Dei* by the Gospel.[67] Hoekema contends that the image of God was marred by the fall, damaging human's relationships with God and other people. Redemption restored the image of God and made it possible for people to relate to their Creator and fellow human beings. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the church.[68]

As believers grow in grace, they demonstrate the attributes of God, which glorify Him. Pastor and theologian James Montgomery Boice wrote that "becoming conformed

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[63] John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 36 and Robert Lewis Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 294.

[64] John 14:9 (NASB).

[65] William Hendriksen, *Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 71-2.

[66] Romans 8:29 (NASB).

[67] Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Volume 1 Genesis,* 94.

[68] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 95.

to the image of Christ" involves an ongoing process of developing these attributes.[69] The

Apostle Paul explained this idea in his letters to the Colossians and the Hebrews. His

repetition of this idea demonstrates its significance.[70]

Historical Ideas

Over the centuries theologians have pondered the meaning of the "image of God."

The answers can be summarized in three categories. The unique ability to think is the first

category. Many theologians have argued that the ability to reason proves people are

created in the image of God. This quality distinguishes people from the rest of creation.

Early church leaders such as Irenaeus and Augustine, as well as John Calvin, held this

view.[71] Grudem points to humans' ability to create art, literature, music and innovative

applications of technology as the distinguishing trait between people and animals.

Likewise, he adds that no animal has ever prayed for a friend or family member's

salvation.[72]

The second category is dominion. Theologians contend that the ability to glorify

God by exercising dominion over creation illustrates how people are made in the image

of God. Gregory of Nazianzus, a fourth-century theologian and the Archbishop of

Constantinople, and Douglas F. Kelly, late twentieth-century theologian and seminary

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[69] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 156, James Montgomery Boice, *Romans Vol. 2,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 920, and Leslie F. Church and Gerald W. Peterman, eds. *The NIV Matthew Henry Commentary in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 4.

[70] Colossians 1:15 (ESV) and Hebrews 1:3 (NIV).

[71] Richard L. Pratt, Jr., *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, Inc., 1990), 327.

[72] Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 446-47.

professor, both claim that people, being made in the image of God, are responsible for keeping order on earth, while still being submissive to God.[73] Calvin disagrees with Gregory and Kelly on this point. He thinks the likeness of God is not part of human dominion over creation. However, he does agree that man's dominion does partially reflect the image of God.[74] Hoekema adds a different dimension to the discussion on this issue. He emphasizes that angels are neither made in the image of God, nor have they been given dominion. Dominion is reserved for human beings.[75]

The third category is the ability to have relationships. As Kuyper argued in the Stone Lectures, the two principle relationships people have are with God and with one another.[76] Swiss theologian Karl Barth believed being made in the image of God is the basis for human being's relationships with God and others.[77] The Westminster Confession of Faith addresses both relationships Kuyper mentioned. All Christians have a relationship with Jesus. They also have fellowship with each other. Along with those relationships come obligations. Believers are obligated to care for each other's physical and spiritual needs.[78] Williams also contends that there is a moral dimension to all

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[73] Kelly, *Creation and Change*, 224.

[74] Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Volume 1 Genesis,* 43.

[75] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 18.

[76] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism,* 19.

[77] David Clossen, "What Does It Mean to Be Made in God's Image?," *Https://Erlc.Com/*, last modified May 4, 2016, accessed October 1, 2020, https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/what-does-it-mean-to-be-made-in-gods-image/.

[78] "Westminster Confession of Faith in Modern English l Evangelical Presbyterian Church," accessed September 30, 2020, https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/1-Who-We-Are/B-About-The-EPC/WCF-ModernEnglish.pdf, 45.

relationships between people. God requires that every act and thought toward others be morally upright. According to Williams, "without moral expectation and obligation, there would be no relationship."[79]

Summary of the Biblical Framework of Relationships

This section of the literature review investigated the Biblical framework for relationships. A review of works addressing this topic revealed that because everyone is made in the image of God, this has major implications for all human relationships. Abraham Kuyper argued the concept of *imago Dei* is the foundation for people's relationships with God and with each other. Anthony A. Hoekema and Daniel Doriani labeled these the vertical and horizontal relationships. According to Paul David Tripp, the more people cultivate their vertical relationship with God, the more Biblical their horizontal relationships can become with others. The next section of this literature review will examine intergenerational worldview differences, demonstrating how each generation functions like a different culture.

Intergenerational Worldview Differences

The second area of literature explores intergenerational worldview differences. Understanding these differences can prove useful to developing women's programs in the church. In his book, *Generational IQ,* author and consultant Haydn Shaw writes that in the past, only three generations were alive at the same time. This has changed dramatically. Today there can be up to five generations in a family, the church, and the

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[79] Williams, *Far as the Curse is Found,* 39.

workplace.[80] Improved healthcare and better nutrition has led to people living longer. In

1900, the average life expectancy was 47.3 years. By 1950, this had climbed to 68.2

years. In 2000, it was 76.8 years. By 2017, it had improved to 78.6 years.[81] Because

people are living longer, there are more generations interacting with each other.[82] This

poses both opportunities and challenges for churches, organizations, and businesses.

A search of the literature shows that intergenerational differences are a significant

issue in the fields of business and organizational management, the medical field, and the

military. Workers from the four generations who currently make up the workforce have a

variety of attitudes, behaviors, values, and characteristics. Companies, military branches,

and the medical workforce are striving to address these intergenerational differences in

order to be successful, make the best use of each generation's strengths, and avoid

conflicts between their team members.[83]

For the first time in military history, the Army has four generations on active

duty. This presents opportunities, as well as hurdles to overcome. The leadership must tap

into the experience of the Boomers and Generation X while utilizing the Millennials and

Gen Z's knowledge of technology. Training soldiers who will be ready to meet the

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[80] Haydn Shaw and Ginger Kolbaba, *Generational IQ: Christianity Isn't Dying, Millennials Aren't the Problem, and the Future Is Bright* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 2015), 13.

[81] Health, United States, 2018 – Data Finder, "Table 4. Life Expectancy at Birth, at Age 65, and at Age 75, by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: United States, Selected Years 1900–2017" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018), accessed October 21, 2020, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hus/contents2018.htm#Table_004.

[82] "The Generations Defined," *Pew Research Center*, March 1, 2018, accessed October 21, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ST_18.02.27_generations_defined.png.

[83] Charles H. Kraft, "Culture, Worldview and Contextualization," last modified 1998, accessed October 13, 2020, https://www.perspectivesonmission.com/resources/Session07_Kraft_CultureWorldviewContextualization.pdf, 1.

strategic changes that lie ahead requires flexibility and teamwork. Like businesses, the

military's goal is to balance the values and expectations of their workforce. Command

Sgt. Maj. Jerimiah Gan stresses the importance of communication that overcomes

generational differences to achieve this goal.[84]

Similarly, Julie A. Bell argues that the nursing profession faces the same issues.

She highlights the key role communication, knowledge of new technology, and teamwork

play in providing good patient care. In her study, she recommended adapting the methods

used to train nurses to account for the learning styles and background in technology that

comes with four generations of employees.[85] Although the military and nursing

professions would seem to have little in common, both experience similar dilemmas

navigating intergenerational differences.

The business sector has been the source of numerous studies on intergenerational

differences. Peter Brinckerhoff, a non-profit management expert, claims that to be

successful, managers need to understand that, "Generations are so different, they meet the

definition of being different cultures." He bases this assertion on their different values,

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[84] LaDonna Davis, "A Multi-Generational Workforce," *Pacesetter Magazine: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Southwestern Division*, 9, 3(Fall 2014), 13-14 and Command Sgt. Maj. Jerimiah Gan, "Communicating Across the Army," *Www.Army.Mil*, last modified October 8, 2019, accessed October 23, 2020, https://www.army.mil/article/228275/communicating_across_the_army.

[85] Jill M. Moore, Marcee Everly, and Renee Bauer, "Multigenerational Challenges: Team-Building for Positive Clinical Workforce Outcomes," *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing* 21, no. 2 (May 2016), http://ojin.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ANAMarketplace/ANAPeriodicals/OJIN/TableofContents/Vol-21-2016/No2-May-2016/Multigenerational-Challenges.html and Julie A. Bell, "Five Generations in the Nursing Workforce: Implications for Nursing Professional Development," *Journal for Nurses in Professional Development* 29, no. 4 (2013): 205–210.

traditions, and the events that took place during their formative years.[86] In an email to the

author, Brinckerhoff reiterated his premise.

> "Different generations see things so differently, and sometimes (unfortunately)
> disparage other generations (or hold generation-wide prejudices) for their views
> without first assessing why those views are there. This affects every sector,
> including the faith-based one."[87]

He proposes ensuring that any "generational divides" that are hindering members of

different generations from understanding each other or working together be addressed.

Looking for common ground is one way this can be accomplished.[88]

Generations are Distinct Cultures

Cultural anthropologists study factors that are common to different cultures,

whether seen or unseen.[89] The way they define culture is similar with only nuanced

differences. For example, Charles H. Kraft, anthropologist and seminary professor,

maintains that culture "consists of learned, patterned assumptions (worldview), concepts

and behavior, plus the resulting artifacts (material culture)."[90] Likewise, missiological

anthropologist Paul G. Hiebert defines culture as "the integrated system of learned

pattens of behavior, ideas, and products characteristic of a society."[91] Cultural

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[86] Peter Brinckerhoff, "Understanding the Different Cultures of Different Generations," last modified 2013, accessed October 13, 2020, https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/organizational-effectiveness/understanding-the-different-cultures-of-different.

[87] Peter Brinckerhoff, email message to author, October 18, 2020.

[88] Peter C. Brinckerhoff, *Generations: The Challenge of a Lifetime for Your Nonprofit* (Saint Paul, MN: Fieldstone Alliance, 2007), 116.

[89] Nina Brown, Thomas McIlwraith, and Laura Tubelle de González, *Perspectives: An Open Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association, 2020), 6.

[90] Kraft, "Culture, Worldview and Contextualization," 385.

anthropologists, Nina Brown, Thomas McIlwraith, Laura Tubelle de González, elaborated further by expanding on the specifics that "culture is a set of beliefs, practices, and symbols that are learned and shared together, they form an all-encompassing, integrated whole that binds people together and shapes their worldview and lifeways."[92]

Project management leadership expert Jamie Gelbtuch compares generational cultures to national cultures. In 1976, cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall used an analogy of an iceberg to explain culture. Hall reasoned that the culture of a society was like an iceberg; about ten percent of culture is visible or above the waterline. This would include actions and behaviors. The ninety percent beneath the surface is invisible. This includes facets of culture such as values, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions. Gelbtuch adapted Hall's analogy and applied it to differences in generational cultures instead of national cultures.[93]

In her iceberg model, she divides culture into the visible behaviors and invisible values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions that describe generations. She notes that the influence of historical events, motivations, communication styles, values, and behaviors on national cultures are the same ones found in generational cultures. Generations are defined less by age and more by common experiences and key events. Gelbtuch has applied this theory to the field of project management. She concludes that understanding

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[91] Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding Of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 16.

[92] Brown, McIlwraith, and de González, *Perspectives: An Open Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, 6.

[93] Jamie B. Gelbtuch and Conrado Morlan, "Successful Project Management Leadership in a Multigenerational Workplace," *PM World Journal* V, no. XI (November 2016), www.pmworldjournal.net and Jamie Gelbtuch, *The Role of Resiliency in a Global Lifestyle* (n.p.: [Kindle Direct Publishing], 2020), 2 and Jamie B. Gelbtuch, email message to author, October 16, 2020.

the differences between the five generations in today's work environment is essential. It will enable project managers to successfully lead their multigenerational project teams.[94]

Psychologist and workplace relationships specialist Dr. Paul White likewise maintains that generations are like cultures. Generational difference is not about age. White equates intergenerational differences to cross-cultural interaction. He claims that employees of different generations frequently experience frustration and confusion because their values are in conflict, much like when people encounter a different culture.[95] This is because people of different cultures often think their culture is the best. This is called ethnocentrism. Anthropologists define this term as "an attitude of cultural superiority which implies one's own culture is better than some other culture."[96] In order to help members of different generational cultures get along, White encourages them to think in cross-cultural terms. White introduces the concept of ethnocentrism to support his argument. He contends that generational differences should be looked at "through a cross-cultural lens." International travelers are often dismayed, annoyed, and shocked when people do things differently from the way they do them. In the same way, generations can become impatient with people of other generations because they think and do things differently.[97]

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[94] Gelbtuch and Morlan, "Successful Project Management Leadership in a Multigenerational Workplace," *PM World Journal* V, no. XI (November 2016), www.pmworldjournal.net.

[95] White, "Viewing Generational Differences Through A Cross-Cultural Lens," and White, email message to author, October 16, 2020.

[96] Akinyemi Oluwafemi Alawode and Joy Eno Umukoro, "Missiological Challenges Encountered by the Cross-Cultural Missionary: Man-Made or Natural? The Way Forward," *Journal of Biblical Theology* 1, no. 1 (March 2018): 192.

Generational Cultures

According to the generational cohort theory, people born in the same time frame develop similar values, beliefs, and attitudes which form their worldview.[98] Dr. Jeff Myers defines worldview as "a pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world."[99] Authors Dr. Paul White and Gary Chapman argue that "People who have similar life experiences tend to think and respond to situations more similarly than others who didn't share those experiences."[100] According to the Pew Research Center, a generation is comprised of a group of individuals born during a 15-20 year period.[101] There are, however, differences of opinion when applying this definition to the five generations under consideration in this study. While Pew uses 1928 to 1946 for the Silent Generation, Peter Menconi uses

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[97] White, "Viewing Generational Differences Through A Cross-Cultural Lens," and White, email message to author, October 16, 2020.

[98] Janet S. Jones, Samantha R. Murray, and Shelley R. Tapp, "Generational Differences in the Workplace," *Journal of Business Diversity* 18, no. 2 (2018): 90, Jean M. Twenge et al., "Generational Differences in Work Values: Leisure and Extrinsic Values Increasing, Social and Intrinsic Values Decreasing," *Journal of Management* 36, no. 5 (September 2010): 1120 and Lorinda Lewis and Harold Wescott, "Multi-Generational Workforce: Four Generations United In Lean," *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (2017), 3.

[99] Jeff Myers and David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: A Survey of Competing Worldviews* (Manitou Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2015), 6.

[100] Paul White and Gary Chapman, *The Vibrant Workplace: Overcoming the Obstacles to Building a Culture of Appreciation* (Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing, 2017), 138.

[101] "The Whys and Hows of Generations Research," *Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy*, September 3, 2015, accessed November 23, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2015/09/03/the-whys-and-hows-of-generations-research/.

1925-1943.[102] Haydn Shaw calls this group the Traditionalists rather than the Silents and uses 1945 as the cut-off date.[103]

There is no consensus among scholars on the specific traits that differentiate each of the generations or the events that have shaped them. Psychologist Jean Twenge and her colleague Stacy Campbell have done studies of generational differences in psychological traits and attitudes, then applied this knowledge to the business world. They discovered that each generation is influenced by events that take place during their lifetime. People who are born in the same era often have similar attitudes, values, and expectations that are different from those who are from another generation.[104] Anthropologists investigate changes that take place over time by comparing different generational cohorts. They seek to identify traits that become modified by subsequent generations, which leads to generational differentiation.[105]

The Pew Research Center considers generational descriptions a valuable analysis aid, but they warn that they are only a synopsis, not a comprehensive analysis.[106] The following brief descriptions of each generation are designed to serve only as a summary, to provide background for the discussion of intergenerational worldview differences.

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[102] "The Whys and Hows of Generations Research," *Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy* and Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church,* 43.

[103] Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 25.

[104] Jean M. Twenge and Stacy M. Campbell, "Generational Differences in Psychological Traits and Their Impact on the Workplace," *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 23, no. 8 (2008): 863.

[105] Sarah Lamb, "Generation in Anthropology," in James D. Wright, ed., *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., vol. 9 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015), 853.

[106] "The Whys and Hows of Generations Research," *Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy*, September 3, 2015.

Traditionalist/Silent Generation

There is widespread agreement on the two key events that shaped the Traditionalist/Silent Generation born between 1928-1945. Authors Haydn Shaw and Peter Menconi, along with many others, agree that the two main events are the Great Depression and World War II.[107] Peter Brinckerhoff suggests that the sacrifices the Silents made created a generation of men and women who value attributes such as loyalty, sacrifice, structure, authority, and patriotism. They have had to adapt to rapid change over the course of their life brought on by industrialization and technology.[108] Hard work and determination are the hallmarks of the Silent Generation.[109] According to Shaw, "they built the world we live in today."[110]

Boomers

The assassinations of JFK and Martin Luther King, Jr., the Civil Rights Movement, Neil Armstrong walking on the moon, Elvis and the Beatles, are the decisive events that shaped the Boomers according to Shaw and Menconi.[111] Born between 1946 and 1964, attributes that describe Boomers include a sense of entitlement and optimism. In spite of the Vietnam War controversy, Brinckerhoff maintains that the Boomers

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[107] Haydn Shaw, *Sticking Points: How to Get 4 Generations Working Together in the 12 Places They Come Apart* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 2013), 27-42 and Peter Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church: Understanding Congregations from WWII to www.com* (Littleton, CO: Mt. Sage Publishing, 2010), 43-50.

[108] Brinckerhoff, *Generations,* 13.

[109] Paul White, "Is the Notion of a 'Good Work Ethic' Generationally Biased?," *Entrepreneur*, last modified January 22, 2015, accessed October 18, 2020, https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/242031.

[110] Shaw, *Sticking Points*, 59.

[111] Shaw, *Sticking Points,* 43-61, and Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church*, 58-59, 62, 69-71.

remain an idealistic generation.[112] They are a generation of extremes. They are known for psychedelic drugs and the Sexual Revolution on one hand and Walt Disney and Mickey Mouse on the other.[113] Pew Research Center's Daniel LeDuc thinks Boomers were shaped in a way no other generation was by the introduction of television.[114] In contrast, business writer Vivian Giang highlights the Boomers strong work ethic and their tendency to be workaholics as the distinguishing characteristic of this generation.[115]

Generation X

According to The Center for Generational Kinetics, the fall of the Berlin Wall and Operation Desert Storm were the backdrop for Generation X's formative years.[116] Born between 1965 and 1980, they grew up as "latchkey kids" because of rising divorce rates and the increased numbers of women joining the workforce. Shaw argues that the defining traits of Gen X'ers are independence and self-reliance, which they developed because they were latchkey kids.[117] LeDuc, however, claims that their coming of age during the computer revolution is exemplified by Gen X'ers dependence on technology in

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[112] Brinckerhoff, *Generations,* 14.

[113] Shaw, *Sticking Points,* 66.

[114] Daniel LeDuc, "Who Is Generation Z," *Pewtrusts.Org*, last modified May 20, 2019, accessed October 28, 2020, https://pew.org/2OUVseQ.

[115] Vivian Giang, "Here Are The Strengths And Weaknesses Of Millennials, Gen X, And Boomers," *Business Insider*, last modified September 9, 2013, accessed October 24, 2020, https://www.businessinsider.com/how-millennials-gen-x-and-boomers-shape-the-workplace-2013-9

[116] "Moments That Shape a Generation," *The Center for Generational Kinetics*, last modified April 18, 2017, accessed October 26, 2020, https://genhq.com/moments-shape-generation/.

[117] Shaw and Kolbaba, *Generational IQ,* 64.

nearly every facet of their daily life.[118] Brinckerhoff contrasts Generation X with the

Silents and Boomers by highlighting their view of work. They work to live, not live to

work, which differentiates them from their elders.[119] Pew's Paul Taylor and George Gao

say Gen Xer's are characterized by skepticism of the government, corporations, and

religious institutions because of the impact of divorce on the family.[120]

Millennials

The Clinton/Lewinsky scandal, Columbine High School massacre, and September

11 became defining moments for the Millennials, born from 1981-1996.[121] A desire for

happiness and wanting to make a difference characterize this cohort. They view work

from a "What's in it for me?" perspective.[122] Millennials grew up in an age when internet

access expanded at lightning speed.[123] In *Sticking Points,* Shaw quipped that "a smart

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[118] Daniel LeDuc, "Who Is Generation Z," *Pewtrusts.Org*, last modified May 20, 2019, accessed October 28, 2020, https://pew.org/2OUVseQ.

[119] Brinckerhoff, *Generations,* 14.

[120] Paul Taylor and George Gao, "Generation X: America's Neglected 'Middle Child,'" *Pew Research Center*, June 5, 2014, accessed November 23, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/05/generation-x-americas-neglected-middle-child/ and Ethan Sacks, "X Doesn't Mark the Spot: As Millennials and Baby Boomers Feud, a Generation Is Left Out," *NBC News*, last modified November 24, 2019, accessed November 23, 2020, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/x-doesn-t-mark-spot-millennials-baby-boomers-feud-generation-n1082381.

[121] Shaw, *Sticking Points,* 92 and "Moments That Shape a Generation," *The Center for Generational Kinetics*, last modified April 18, 2017, accessed October 26, 2020, https://genhq.com/moments-shape-generation/.

[122] Amy Adkins, "What Millennials Want From Work and Life," *Gallup.Com*, last modified May 10, 2016, accessed October 27, 2020, https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236477/millennials-work-life.aspx.

[123] Emily A. Vogels, "Millennials Stand Out for Their Technology Use, but Older Generations Also Embrace Digital Life," *Pew Research Center*, September 9, 2019, accessed November 23, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/09/09/us-generations-technology-use/ and Daniel LeDuc, "Who Is Generation Z," *Pewtrusts.Org*, last modified May 20, 2019, accessed October 28, 2020, https://pew.org/2OUVseQ.

phone is a bodily appendage" for Millennials.[124] Writing for Pew, Janna Anderson and

Lee Raine link the rapid cultural and technological changes that Millennials have

experienced to their expectation for immediate gratification, which distinguishes them

from previous generations who were taught to be patient.[125]

Generation Z

Pew Research Center, for the purposes of their research, includes anyone born

from 1997 on as part of Generation Z.[126] This most recent cohort is known for being

digital natives.[127] They have been affected by the global Covid 19 pandemic as much as

previous generations were by World War II or September 11th. While being quarantined

by the pandemic increased their daily screen time, it also increased their feelings of

isolation and anxiety. It is too soon to know what the ramifications of the pandemic will

be on this generation. Scholars have not yet had time to study the effects. Journalists like

Kathy Gurchiek and Michelle Fox, however, are predicting it will have a lasting impact

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[124] Shaw, *Sticking Points*, 85.

[125] Janna Anderson and Lee Raine, "Millennials Will Benefit and Suffer Due to Their Hyperconnected Lives," *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, February 29, 2012, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2012/02/29/millennials-will-benefit-and-suffer-due-to-their-hyperconnected-lives/.

[126] Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins," last modified January 17, 2019, accessed October 16, 2020, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/.

[127] "Who Is Gen Z?," *Barna Group*, last modified October 19, 2017, accessed October 26, 2020, https://www.barna.com/who-is-gen-z/.

on Gen Z.[128] The uncertain future that lies before them has led many to look to

government to solve their problems.[129]

Generational Worldviews Compared

Much literature describes research showing how different key events, attributes,

and technology shape the generations. In addition, worldview differences also distinguish

the generations from each other. For example, according to the Center for Generational

Kinetics, the Silent Generation views God as the Creator of the universe. Traditional

family values are the hallmark of their worldview.[130] Many grew up attending church

multiple times each week and continue to do so. According to the Pew Research Center,

50% of the Silents attend weekly religious services.[131] As a group, though loyal to the

church, they are very private about their faith and spiritual matters.[132] In research

conducted by Pew entitled, "U.S. Religious Landscape Study: Belief in God," 20% of the

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[128] Kathy Gurchiek, "COVID-19 Pandemic Is Hitting Gen Z Hard. Find Ways to Connect," *SHRM*, last modified August 18, 2020, accessed October 22, 2020, https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/global-and-cultural-effectiveness/pages/covid19-pandemic-is-hitting-gen-z-hard-find-ways-to-connect-with-them.aspx and Michelle Fox, "The Coronavirus Pandemic Is a 'Defining Moment' for Gen Z — Here's How It's Impacting Their Future," *CNBC*, last modified June 1, 2020, accessed November 23, 2020, https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/01/how-the-coronavirus-pandemic-is-shaping-the-future-for-gen-z.html.

[129] Kim Parker and Ruth Igielnik, "On the Cusp of Adulthood and Facing an Uncertain Future: What We Know About Gen Z So Far," *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project*, May 14, 2020, accessed October 27, 2020, https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/essay/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far/.

[130] "Moments That Shape a Generation," *The Center for Generational Kinetics*, last modified April 18, 2017, accessed October 26, 2020, https://genhq.com/moments-shape-generation/.

[131] "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, October 17, 2019, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/.

[132] Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Ross Lawton, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 151 and Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church*, 53.

respondents said they have an absolute certain belief in God.[133] They are more focused on the spiritual development of their children and grandchildren than they are in changing the world.[134]

The Boomers have a different view of God. They think of Him more as a friend than a sovereign, transcendent God who controls the world.[135] They approach church as consumers, with only 35% attending weekly.[136] They also draw on diverse religious traditions in formulating their worldview. For them, all aspects of life, the spiritual, physical, and emotional combine in their worldview.[137] Among Boomers, Pew found that 29% hold an absolute certain belief in God.[138]

Having grown up in a postmodern world, many Generation Xer's believe that truth is relative. Only 34% profess to be absolutely certain of their belief in God.[139] According to Pew, about one third of Generation X'ers claim to attend church services weekly.[140] They expect a worship service that allows them to participate and not be a

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[133] "U.S. Religious Landscape Study: Belief in God," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, 2014, accessed November 24, 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/.

[134] Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church*, 52.

[135] Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church*, 219.

[136] "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, October 17, 2019, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/.

[137] Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church*, 77, 84, 219.

[138] "U.S. Religious Landscape Study: Belief in God," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, 2014, accessed November 24, 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/.

[139] Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church*, 204, 219.

[140] "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, October 17, 2019, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/.

spectator.[141] In their view, the world is a place that is filled with chaos and brokenness.

As such, Menconi points out that they often get involved in ministries to the homeless,

the underprivileged, and groups that have been traditionally excluded by the church.[142]

Unlike Gen X'ers, Millennials believe that the world can be "fixed."[143] Having

grown up in a post-modern culture, three-fourths of Millennials agree with members of

Generation X that absolute truth does not exist.[144] As a result, many Millennials hold a

pluralistic worldview that says there are many paths to God.[145] In a 2014 survey, Pew

found that 18% of Millennials claimed to have an absolute certain belief in God.[146]

Another survey by Pew found that only one in four Millennials regularly attend church.[147]

Members of Generation Z consider themselves to be spiritual, but not religious.

They are the first generation with a post-Christian worldview.[148] In a 2019 Pew study,

40% of Gen Zer's surveyed said that "they believe in God with absolute

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[141] Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church*, 219.

[142] Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church*, 219-20.

[143] Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church*, 219.

[144] "The End of Absolutes: America's New Moral Code," *Barna Group*, last modified May 25, 2016, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.barna.com/research/the-end-of-absolutes-americas-new-moral-code/.

[145] "Why Generation Z's Distorted View of God Matters," *ChurchPlants*, last modified May 25, 2017, accessed October 28, 2020, https://churchplants.com/articles/13840-generation-zs-distorted-view-god-matters-dale-hudson.html.

[146] "U.S. Religious Landscape Study: Belief in God," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, 2014, accessed November 24, 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/.

[147] "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, October 17, 2019, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/.

[148] "Meet Generation Z," *The MidSouth District*, last modified October 11, 2018, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.midsouthdistrict.org/nextgencollective/2018/10/11/meet-generation-z.

certainty.[149] They want a faith that is socially relevant and integrates cultural issues.[150] When asked about morality, 61% of Gen Zer's did not think it is necessary to believe in God to be moral. The researchers did not ask them to explain what the source of morality is if it is not based on a belief in God.[151] When Covid 19 forced churches to go online, members of Gen Z embraced the opportunity to livestream church because it is a format that is familiar to them.[152]

Since generations are like different cultures, the events that each lives through influences how they think and behave. This is true in the marketplace, the military, and the medical field. In today's world, people are living longer.[153] As a result, there are more generations in the workplace. Understanding generational differences and resolving them is essential to helping them get along. In his book *Sticking Points*, author Haydn Shaw identifies areas of potential controversy. He then offers ideas for addressing each of the twelve issues he found to be most problematic while conducting thousands of interviews.[154]

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[149] "Religious Habits of U.S. Teens," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, September 10, 2020, accessed November 27, 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/2020/09/10/u-s-teens-take-after-their-parents-religiously-attend-services-together-and-enjoy-family-rituals/.

[150] "Meet Generation Z," *The MidSouth District*, last modified October 11, 2018, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.midsouthdistrict.org/nextgencollective/2018/10/11/meet-generation-z.

[151] "Religious Habits of U.S. Teens," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, September 10, 2020, accessed November 27, 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/2020/09/10/u-s-teens-take-after-their-parents-religiously-attend-services-together-and-enjoy-family-rituals/.

[152] "Why 2020 Might Be Good News for the Church," *Barna Group*, last modified October 9, 2020, accessed October 26, 2020, https://www.barna.com/research/2020-good-news-church/.

[153] Health, United States, 2018 – Data Finder, "Table 4. Life Expectancy at Birth, at Age 65, and at Age 75, by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: United States, Selected Years 1900–2017" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018), accessed October 21, 2020, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hus/contents2018.htm#Table_004.

[154] Shaw, *Sticking Points,* xviii.

Although Shaw wrote *Sticking Points* primarily for the marketplace, the principles can be applied to other settings such as the church.[155] For example, in Chapter 13, Shaw discusses the transfer of knowledge from members of the Silent and Boomer generations to the younger generations. In his example, a project manager was struggling to get older employees to write down their "institutional knowledge." They would not comply. When Silents and Boomers were learning a new job, they asked someone familiar with the task. Members of Gen. X, Millennials, and Gen. Z want to look at a database for the answer. Shaw suggested the manager make short, ten-minute videos of the Silent or Boomer explaining the issue or task. Both the older and younger generations found this to be a good solution.[156]

Another generational issue Shaw examines is loyalty. Webster's Dictionary defines loyalty as "a feeling of strong support for someone or something."[157] Through their actions, the generations are defining loyalty in different ways. This creates misunderstandings and friction. Finding ways to bridge the difference of opinion on a matter as important as loyalty is necessary for the generations to work together toward a common goal.[158]

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[155] Shaw, *Sticking Points,* xvii.

[156] Shaw, *Sticking Points*, 159-67.

[157] "Loyalty - Definition for English-Language Learners from Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary," accessed October 31, 2020, https://learnersdictionary.com/definition/loyalty.

[158] Shaw, *Sticking Points*, 169-79.

Summary of Intergenerational Worldview Differences

The literature for intergenerational worldview differences revealed that the

generations are distinct from each other. They resemble cultures because they have

diverse values, attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics. Unprecedented cultural change is

presenting both opportunities and challenges for the marketplace, the military, and the

medical field. Leaders in these fields found that each generation has strengths and

limitations. Acknowledging these and capitalizing on them is important for success. The

principles that the leaders have discovered also apply to ministry. Addressing the

opportunities and challenges that arise from generational differences can be a powerful

tool for leaders in any field, including ministry. The next section of the literature review

will investigate leadership agility in this context.

Leadership Agility

The third area of literature explored leadership agility. Understanding agility can

help DWM develop women's programs that can meet the challenges of changing times.

In 2020, agility suddenly became a way of life when a worldwide pandemic broke out.

Businesses had to find new ways of getting goods and services to their customers.

Hospitals and medical personnel were suddenly overwhelmed with new protocols and

patients that had to be isolated, yet who needed intensive care from a team of medical

experts.[159] All branches of the military had to reconsider how to serve in close quarters

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[159] Jacob Shreffler, Jessica Petrey, and Martin Huecker, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Healthcare Worker Wellness: A Scoping Review," *Western Journal of Emergency Medicine* 21, no. 5 (September 2020): 1059–1066.

without spreading the virus.[160] Ministries were not exempt. Churches had to livestream their services because they could not meet in person. Zoom Bible studies replaced gatherings in homes and churches.[161]

Albert Einstein is reported to have said, "Insanity is doing the same thing, over and over again, but expecting different results." Business, medical, military, and ministry leaders could no longer continue doing things the way they had been before the pandemic. Leaders had to demonstrate agility to meet the challenges of the unexpected changes that resulted. In the next section, the characteristics that agile leaders exhibit will be explored.

Leadership Agility

A significant consequence of today's dynamic, complex, and uncertain business environments is that leadership skills are subject to continual obsolescence.[162] Leaders in all fields including business, the military, medicine, and ministry need to develop leadership agility to meet the challenges of constant change. Leadership agility is "the ability to take wise and effective action amid complex, rapidly changing conditions."[163]

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[160] "COVID-19: Coronavirus Info for the Military," Military OneSource, accessed November 27, 2020, https://www.militaryonesource.mil/coronavirus/.

[161] "Most Americans Say Coronavirus Outbreak Has Impacted Their Lives," Pew Research Center," last modified March 30, 2020, accessed November 26, 2020, https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2020/03/30/most-americans-say-coronavirus-outbreak-has-impacted-their-lives/.

[162] Kenneth P. De Meuse, Guangrong Dai, and George S. Hallenbeck, "Learning Agility: A Construct Whose Time Has Come.," *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 62, no. 2 (2010): 119-20.

[163] Bill Joiner and Stephen Josephs, *Leadership Agility: Five Levels of Mastery for Anticipating and Initiating Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 6.

Change is inevitable. Therefore, leadership agility is crucial. Agile leaders are more likely to be successful in today's world and distinguish themselves from their contemporaries.[164]

While scholars do not agree on a definitive list of characteristics agile leaders must exhibit, three skills recur throughout the literature. First, there is widespread agreement that a willingness to take risks is key to leadership agility. Leaders must be allowed to take risks and to fail to be truly agile.[165] Second, leaders need relational or interpersonal skills. For example, the ability to listen and discern is integral to being a good leader.[166] Third, leaders must understand the cultural context in which they are operating. To be effective, leaders must demonstrate the ability to adapt as situations change.[167] While there are other characteristics that are important, these three skills are the foundation of leadership agility.

The Importance of Leadership Agility

Leadership agility is necessary for organizations of all sizes and types. Those who are led by agile leaders are more likely to thrive. For example, organizational psychologists Nick Horney and Tom O'Shea, along with leadership expert Bill Pasmore, have written about leadership agility in today's world. They define leadership agility as

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[164] Joiner and Josephs, *Leadership Agility*, 5-12.

[165] Kenneth P. De Meuse, Guangrong Dai, and George S. Hallenbeck, "Learning Agility: A Construct Whose Time Has Come.," *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 62, no. 2 (2010): 126-28.

[166] De Meuse, Dai, and Hallenbeck, "Learning Agility," 122.

[167] De Meuse, Dai, and Hallenbeck, "Learning Agility," 119-20.

"the capability to respond to changes in the business environment with actions that are focused, fast and flexible."[168] According to Horney, O'Shea, and Pasmore, risk-taking is an important skill in today's VUCA world. VUCA is an acronym for the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity that describes today's world.[169] Leaders need to be prepared for what may come and have confidence they can meet the challenge. Rather than being risk adverse, they have an attitude of "I see change coming and am prepared and already doing something about it."[170]

Professors of Business Marianne W. Lewis, Constantine Andriopoulos, and Wendy K. Smith agree, but structure their argument in terms of paradoxes. They claim that confidence is built up by taking risks. Risking failure can lead to greater confidence, even if there is the possibility of not being successful. Leaders who show confidence in risk-taking encourage others to do so as well. Lewis, Andriopoulos, and Smith demonstrate that what seems like a paradox is, in fact, not. The willingness to take risks can actually build confidence and create an atmosphere where risk taking becomes the norm. Although they structure this argument in different terms, they are suggesting a similar outcome to Horney, O'Shea, and Pasmore.[171]

Business is not the only field that requires leadership agility. Gretchen Berlin, a registered nurse and healthcare management expert, and organizational psychologist

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[168] Nick Horney, Bill Pasmore, and Tom O'Shea, "Leadership Agility: A Business Imperative for a VUCA World," *People & Strategy* 33, no. 4 (2010): 33.

[169] Horney, Pasmore, and O'Shea, "Leadership Agility," 38.

[170] Horney, Pasmore, and O'Shea, "Leadership Agility," 38.

[171] Marianne W. Lewis, Constantine Andriopoulos, and Wendy K. Smith, "Paradoxical Leadership to Enable Strategic Agility," *California Management Review* 56, no. 3 (Spring 2014): 69-70.

Aaron De Smet, write that is it imperative for professionals in the medical field to be agile. Because of a rapidly aging population and the enormous changes in regulations during the past decade, healthcare leaders are increasingly compelled to adapt quickly. In the past, the healthcare industry was not known for agility. Now, however, Berlin and De Smet insist that they must become "nimble." Although Berlin and DeSmet use the term "nimble," they are talking about risk-taking. They clearly see that the healthcare field cannot continue doing things the way they did in the past. They, too, have to take risks and be agile.[172]

Agility consultants Kalyan Jonnalagadda, Dave Fleisch, Pete Hultman, and Steve Berez agree. Hospitals and healthcare companies are being forced to become more competitive and must take risks. However, they argue that healthcare leaders must utilize agility in two areas in order to compete in today's market. Taking risks is important. However, they contend that developing relational or interpersonal skills is equally as important. Jonnalagadda and her colleagues argue that healthcare professionals must learn to listen to patient needs, be attentive to their satisfaction, and be more accommodating to patients' and their families' expectations. For this to take place, healthcare leaders must focus on more personalized patient care as well as risk taking.[173]

Agility is particularly valued by the military because of the life and death situations they face. Maneuvers that require officers to make split-second decisions help

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[172] Gretchen Berlin, Aaron De Smet, and Maria Sodini, "Why Agility Is Imperative for Healthcare Organizations," McKinsey," last modified May 1, 2017, accessed October 31, 2020, https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/why-agility-is-imperative-for-healthcare-organizations.

[173] Kalyan Jonnalagadda et al., "How Agile Is Powering Healthcare Innovation," *Bain*, last modified June 20, 2019, accessed October 31, 2020, https://www.bain.com/insights/how-agile-is-powering-healthcare-innovation/.

develop their leadership skills.[174] Former Air Force Weapons Officer Zayn Knaub describes the importance of agility to success on the battlefield. Knaub explains that these same principles can apply in business or in any organization. He bases this conclusion on Gen. Stanley McChrystal's success leading the Joint Special Operations Task Force in Iraq. McChrystal allowed low-level leaders to take risks and make strategic decisions based on the context where the battle was taking place. This empowered field-level leaders to make decisions and implement them without seeking permission from superiors as had been done in previous military engagements. This new method kept decision-making power on the ground and avoided delays by eliminating the chain of command. McChrystal credited this combination of risk-taking and understanding the context to a successful mission.[175]

Organizational effectiveness expert David Gillespie makes a strong argument for how the military has been in the forefront in developing leadership agility. While small and medium sized companies might look to a tech start-up for ideas, Gillespie recommends that large organizations should look to the military. The ingrained structure of the military mirrors the "we've always done it this way" mentality of large or well-established companies, the mentality that makes agile leadership so very challenging. They can learn how to encourage members of the organization to take risks and try new solutions.

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[174] De Meuse, Dai, and Hallenbeck, "Learning Agility," 121-22.

[175] Zayn Knaub, "Organizational Agility: Winning in Today's Complex Environment," *The Strategy Bridge*, last modified April 21, 2017, accessed October 31, 2020, https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2017/4/21/organizational-agility-winning-in-todays-complex-environment.

Gillespie lays out three principles for using the military model to develop leadership agility. These principles answer the "How?" "Whom?" and "When?" questions. The first principle is that leaders should limit themselves to making decisions that only they should make. This gives agency to the people that are on "the front lines." The second principle is that leaders should emphasize what needs done and why, enabling their subordinates to make choices about how to accomplish the task. Gillespie used a quote attributed to Gen. George Patton to illustrate this principle: "Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do, and they will surprise you with their ingenuity." The third principle he mentions is the importance of feedback to leaders developing and utilizing agility. Gillespie points out that terrorism forced military leaders to become agile because warfare suddenly became unconventional. The top-down leadership structure no longer works. He suggests the same is true for leaders of organizations, large and small.[176]

As academic institutions such as Harvard and Cornell became aware of the need for agile leadership, they began creating certificate programs. For example, Harvard University addressed this need by developing online courses that teach strategic agility for organizational leaders. Students are taught to formulate broad-based strategies to enable them to remain agile during challenging situations that arise from constant change.[177] Similarly, Cornell University began a certificate program in leadership and

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[176] David Gillespie, "What the Military Can Teach Organizations About Agility," *MIT Sloan Management Review*, last modified November 14, 2017, accessed October 31, 2020, https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/what-the-military-can-teach-organizations-about-agility/.

[177] "Strategic Agility for Turbulent Times—Virtual," *Harvard Online Courses*, last modified July 6, 2020, accessed October 31, 2020, https://online-learning.harvard.edu/course/strategic-agility-turbulent-times%E2%80%94virtual.

strategic management. While earning their certificate, students gain the strategic skills needed to build consensus and influence others to collaborate. Just as organizational psychologists Horney and O'Shea, and leadership expert Pasmore suggested that risk-taking and flexibility is essential, the Cornell program focuses on helping students understand the cultural context they are leading in and how to address the VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) factors with agility.[178]

Change is inevitable. In fact, it is happening faster and faster. Successful leaders must learn to be agile to meet the challenges of constant change. A brief overview of the literature examining business, medical, and military leadership agility reveals three key skills: a willingness to take risks, relational or interpersonal skills, and an awareness of the cultural context. In the next section, the literature on ministry agility will be examined for the relevance of these three skills in the ministry context.

Ministry Agility

In contrast to the numerous studies done on leadership agility as applied to business, the military, and the medical profession, a search of the Alta Religion Database reveals a paucity of academic research books and articles on ministry and leadership agility. There are, however, many volumes written by pastors or ministry consultants that address this topic. These books often draw on the author's personal ministry experiences. While they take a more practical approach than would a typical academic study, many are

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[178] "Leadership Agility: Cornell Certificate Program," ECornell, accessed October 31, 2020, https://www.ecornell.com/certificates/leadership-and-strategic-management/leadership-agility/ and https://www.johnson.cornell.edu/faculty-research/faculty/gwc65/.

premised on Harvard professor Ronald Heifetz and his colleague's work on adaptive leadership.

Heifetz argues there are two types of situations that require leadership agility: adaptive and technical. Knowledge and skills that are already present are used in situations that necessitate technical agility. In contrast, adaptive situations call for new ideas or strategies to experiment with for challenges that have no ready solutions. Heifetz advises leaders to concentrate on adaptive agility rather than on technical agility because situations are constantly changing. The main priority of agile leaders is to keep members of the congregation or ministry focused on the things that matter most. Heifetz warns that adaptive leadership means taking risks, experiencing anxiety, and making hard decisions.[179]

Others employ the field of organizational psychology to examine the subject of ministry agility. For example, organizational psychologist Robert B. McKenna and his colleagues suggest that traditional methods of attending seminars and reading books are not effective in developing pastoral leadership skills in today's world. Rather, hands on experience, reinforced with personal supervision and the necessary resources to be successful, is a far superior approach. McKenna and his colleagues include the spiritual component in their study on clergy agility. They establish the importance of the connection between maintaining a healthy spiritual life to remaining an agile leader.[180]

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[179] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 1-9, 22-26, 126-29, 243-44 and Terri L. Elton, "Leading in the Midst of Change: A Theologically Grounded, Theoretically Informed Hermeneutic of Change," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 7, no. 2 (September 2008): 31.

[180] Robert B. McKenna, Tanya N. Boyd, and Paul R. Yost, "Learning Agility in Clergy: Understanding the Personal Strategies and Situational Factors That Enable Pastors to Learn from Experience," *Journal of*

Col. (ret.) Tom Hall, senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has applied leadership agility that he learned in the military to the ministry. While serving in the Air Force, Col. Hall taught leadership to senior officers and chaired a fifteen-nation committee at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. When it came time to transition to pastoring a church, he thought it would be similar to leading in the military. He was wrong. According to Col. Hall, he found leading a church was much harder than he thought it would be. With no military hierarchy, he discovered getting the church's session members to follow his lead was difficult. He found applying leadership agility in the military was easier than applying it in a ministry context because the hierarchical structure in the military allowed greater flexibility than did the structure of the session.[181]

Although many of the books and articles that are available on ministry leadership agility are written by pastors and ministry consultants, not academics, they often highlight the three key skills of leadership agility explored in the previous section: risk-taking, interpersonal skills, and the ability to contextualize with the rapid cultural changes taking place. Pastor and prolific author Eugene Peterson does not use the word agility in his writing, but the principle is evident nevertheless. He applies the concept of agile leadership through the lens of spiritual leadership. He criticizes the "Pastor as CEO model" of leadership that is popular among mega church leaders. Peterson prefers a

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Psychology and Theology 35, no. No. 3 (2007): 190-92 and De Meuse, Dai, and Hallenbeck, "Learning Agility," 125.

[181] Col. (Ret.) Tom Hall, email message to author, November 4, 2020 and Col. (Ret.) Tom Hall, email message to author, November 6, 2020.

"shepherd model" of leadership.[182] In *The Pastor: A Memoir,* he laments that "the vocation as pastor has been replaced by the strategies of religious entrepreneurs with business plans."[183] They operate the church like it is a business rather than a ministry.

In *Working the Angles,* Peterson elaborates on this premise. He claims "CEO pastors" are more focused on numbers than people. In Peterson's view, the "shepherd model" is comprised of three key leadership responsibilities. They include reading Scripture, prayer, and leading others. In contrast to the business or political fields where leaders seek to "get things done," Peterson suggests ministry leaders need to have relational skills. From his perspective, it is important to be a good listener in order to be a good leader. Peterson calls for ministry leaders to prioritize these personal spiritual aspects rather than outward perceptions; spiritual growth, not numbers.[184]

Pastor and leadership expert Carey Nieuwhof disagrees with Peterson. He rejects the "shepherd model" of leadership. He counters with the proposition that church members should take on the role of overseer so the pastor can concentrate on strategic planning. Like Peterson, Nieuwhof does not mention agility, but he implies that this concept is the central component of his thesis. He dismisses the leadership stereotypes of a brash CEO or gentle shepherd. Rather, he calls for leaders who exhibit entrepreneurial skills who can guide the church through the rapid cultural changes taking place. Nieuwhof identifies five skills that agile leaders need: the willingness to take risks, to

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[182] Eugene H. Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 1-6.

[183] Peterson, *The Pastor*, 4.

[184] Peterson, *The Pastor*, 5 and Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 3-4.

experiment and try new things, a dissatisfaction with the status quo, boldness, and a desire to take action. Although Nieuwhof uses different terms, he is talking about the same skills as Heifetz does in his adaptive leadership theory.[185]

In recent years, numerous programs designed to teach pastors leadership skills have adopted ideas of success from the business world. Long-time pastor Karl Vaters vehemently disagrees with this model. He is alarmed that doing so may damage people's "souls, spirit and mission."[186] While he agrees that leadership can be learned from different venues, he opposes using a secular business model for training church leaders because they have very different goals. Vaters points out that businesses are designed to make money and the goal of churches is to make disciples. Vaters, unlike Nieuwhof, thinks pastors who lead like a CEO are likely to sacrifice spiritual depth for the shallowness of entertainment. He is not opposed to gaining new insights from the business world. However, Vaters is adamant that Biblical principles must be the foundation of all ministry innovations: Scripture, prayer, worship, fellowship, ministry, and discipleship.[187]

In 2007, organizational consultant Kevin G. Ford wrote *Transforming Church* based on his experiences as a consultant to numerous ministries. The theoretical base for

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[185] Carey Nieuwhof, "Why We Need More Entrepreneurial Leaders, Not More Shepherds," CareyNieuwhof.com (blog), accessed December 17, 2020, https://careynieuwhof.com/why-we-need-more-entrepreneurial-church-leaders-not-more-shepherds/ and Carey Nieuwhof, "Why You Should Be Thankful If Your Pastor Behaves Like a CEO," CareyNieuwhof.com (blog), November 20, 2015, accessed November 17, 2020, https://careynieuwhof.com/thankful-pastor-behaves-like-ceo/.

[186] Karl Vaters, "Why We Need To Be Careful About Adopting Business Models In Our Churches," *Pivot* (blog), *Christianity Today,* May 8, 2019, accessed November 18, 2020, https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2019/may/business-models-in-churches.html.

[187] Karl Vaters, "Why We Need To Be Careful About Adopting Business Models In Our Churches."

his book was also Heifetz's adaptive leadership theory. In order to analyze a church's

leadership agility needs, Ford surveys the congregation. In viewing the results of the

survey, he consistently noticed that congregations were resistant to change. Ford

discovered that few pastors thought they had leadership gifts that would help them

navigate change. The skills he highlights are strategic thinking, conflict-management

skills, and leadership savvy.[188] Although these are not the exact terms used in the

leadership agility literature on business, the military, and the medical profession, they are

the same principles. Since change is inevitable, Ford wrote the book for churches that

"have the courage to embrace change and to confront adaptive issues head on."[189]

Six years later Ford and his colleague from TAG Consulting, Ken Tucker,

published *The Leadership Triangle.* Once again relying on Heifetz's theory, they

explored a common mistake that leaders make. They found that leaders often continue

using the same approaches to leadership challenges, obstacles, and opportunities when it

is obvious they no longer work.[190] When these leaders face new situations that require

making decisions, they do not know what to do. Ford and Tucker stress that agile leaders

need to be able to assess the congregation or the Christian organization's openness to

change and implement it at a pace that people will follow. Although this sounds like a

safe strategy, it still involves risk-taking. They cannot move too fast, or they will leave

the congregation behind. Ford and Tucker also stress that leaders need to be ready to

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[188] Kevin G. Ford, *Transforming Church: Bringing Out the Good to Get to Great* (Carol Stream, IL: SaltRiver, 2007), 6.

[189] Ford, *Transforming Church*, xv.

[190] Kevin Ford and Ken Tucker, *The Leadership Triangle: The Three Options That Will Make You a Stronger Leader* (New York, NY: Morgan James Publishing, 2013), 148.

make good choices in unfamiliar contexts. The authors utilize well-known people from the business and sports world to illustrate the importance of leaders developing the ability to adapt. Adaptability is the key for leaders in any sector and is foundational to their ability to lead.[191]

In his book *The Agile Church,* Dwight Zscheile explains that today's cultural climate creates obstacles that require new ways of going about the church's ministry. Zscheile, an Episcopal priest and seminary professor, also bases his research on Heifetz's theory.[192] However, he pursues a different angle of leadership than did Ford and Tucker. Like many of the other authors, he lays out a compelling case that church leaders must be willing to take risks. While looking for ways to blend in innovative ideas like Silicon Valley companies, agile ministry leaders must also be sure to remember that solid Biblical teaching is the goal. The goal is not to be a risk-taker. Zscheile, nevertheless, encourages innovation, asserting that "innovation is a profoundly biblical and theological theme."[193]

Zscheile admits this will likely lead to mistakes. However, he believes that not taking risks will leave churches and Christian organizations mired in the past. They will miss the chance to minister in the crucible of the cultural fluidity of this era. Rather than continuing to "do things the way they have always been done," leaders need to be agile enough to try new strategies. Zscheile calls this approach Spirit-led innovation. Similar to

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[191] Ford and Tucker, *The Leadership Triangle*, 145-64.

[192] Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Agile Church: Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2014), 60.

[193] Zscheile, *The Agile Church*, 3.

Eugene Peterson, he argues that it is important for church leaders and members to develop relational skills so they can walk around in their neighborhoods, listening to people's hopes and fears. "[P]reachers can preach all they want about how glorious God's kingdom is, but until church members experience and learn to interpret its coming firsthand in the ordinariness of their daily life, little change will take place."[194] For Zscheile, leadership agility is comprised of two facets. It is the willingness to make mistakes and a practical faith that is evident in people's lives.

Like Nieuwhof, Trevin Wax, a vice president at LifeWay Christian Resources, emphasizes that leaders must have a thorough understanding of the current cultural context as well as a solid Biblical foundation. The context where leadership takes place is not a static situation. It is constantly changing. Therefore, Wax argues that leaders need to be flexible and "know what time it is." This involves four areas that combine to provide an understanding of the ministry context in which they are serving. The first involves having a firm grasp of the cultural setting in which the leader is operating so he can contextualize the Gospel. The second area that leaders must discern is the particular role God has appointed them to fulfill. A third area that is crucial for leaders to comprehend is the present condition of their organization so they can have a vision for the future direction. The fourth area is having an awareness of living in the "already, but not yet" in Biblical history. Wax articulates the importance of these four areas dealing

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[194] Zscheile, *The Agile Church*, 77-78.

with the cultural context that leaders need to be effective in helping their parishioners navigate the changing culture in which they live.[195]

In his book, *Canoeing the Mountains,* Tod E. Bolsinger draws on the experiences of explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to examine leadership agility. Similar to Trevin Wax, Bolsinger, former pastor, current professor and senior fellow at the De Pree Center for Leadership at Fuller Seminary, writes about the adaptive leadership it takes to lead in an unfamiliar cultural context. Like Ford, Tucker and Zscheile, Bolsinger also draws on Heifetz's adaptive leadership theory to shape his argument.[196] He claims that many pastors find themselves surrounded by a post-Christian culture. As such, much of what they learned in seminary no longer applies. If pastors are to thrive in this setting, they must learn to take risks like Lewis and Clark did. Since they could not canoe across the Rocky Mountains, they had to adapt on the spot. Likewise, pastors will not thrive unless they "keep going no matter what."[197] Bolsinger sums up this problem by saying, "We are in uncharted terrain trying to lead dying churches into a post-Christian culture that now considers the church an optional, out-of-touch and irrelevant relic of the past."[198] He fears that he, and other leaders, will find their past experience to be

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[195] Trevin Wax, "4 Ways a Christian Leader Should Know 'What Time It Is,'" *The Gospel Coalition*, last modified November 24, 2014, accessed October 31, 2020, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/4-ways-a-christian-leader-should-know-what-time-it-is/.

[196] Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*, Exp. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 148.

[197] Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 12-14.

[198] Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 31.

detrimental to their being able to adapt because it is no longer relevant in today's world.[199]

In his more recent book, *Tempered Resilience,* Bolsinger digs deeper into the topic of leadership agility. Once again drawing on Heifetz and his colleague Marty Linsky's research on adaptive and organizational leadership, he explores the importance of leadership resilience.[200] Using the metaphor of a blacksmith, Bolsinger stresses that leadership agility requires developing the ability to adapt to unexpected change without forsaking Biblical principles such as character and hope. Like the process of tempering steel, leading through difficulties develops strong leaders.[201] He adamantly argues that reading books on leadership does not make a leader. It takes "on the job experience."[202] In chapters 4-6 of his book, Bolsinger explores a different angle in his research than the other studies. He adds an examination of the importance of leaders developing spiritual character. He mentions "vulnerable self-reflection, the safety of relationships, and specific spiritual practices."[203] Leadership agility is not merely what is seen on the outside. It is how leaders deal with stress. It requires being vulnerable and having an accountability partner who understands the challenges of leading a church. He points out

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[199] Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountain*, 109.

[200] Tod E. Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are Formed in the Crucible of Change* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 18.

[201] Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, 5-7, 132.

[202] Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, 53.

[203] Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, 5.

that only leaders who develop both the external skills and the spiritual character can lead and thrive.[204]

In his book *The Innovative Church,* Scott Cormode makes the bold statement that, "The church as we know it is calibrated for a world that no longer exists."[205] His main thesis is that churches of the future will have to be innovative and agile, or they will not survive.[206] Cormode's goal for writing this book is to change how churches do ministry to prevent them from becoming obsolete.[207] He, like Wax, Zscheile, and Bolsinger, offers ministry leaders creative ideas for doing ministry in the twenty-first century's unpredictable culture. This type of agile ministry, he points out, must be focused on people and listening to what is on their heart, rather than on programs. To accomplish this, leaders need strong interpersonal relationship skills.[208]

Using Heifetz's adaptive leadership theory, Cormode probes into the dilemma leaders face: how to help people who need to change, but don't want to. He admits people find adaptive change painful because it requires lifestyle change.[209] To enact adaptive change requires leadership agility, taking one step at a time so as not to outrun the people

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[204] Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, 2.

[205] Scott Cormode, *The Innovative Church: How Leaders and Their Congregations Can Adapt in an Ever-Changing World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 115.

[206] Cormode, *The Innovative Church,* xiii.

[207] Cormode, *The Innovative Church*, 31.

[208] Cormode, *The Innovative Church*, xiii, 6-9.

[209] Cormode, *The Innovative Church*, 173-201.

they are leading. Cormode cautions leaders to remember that the goal is not change for the sake of change, but to help people grow spiritually.[210]

Summary of Leadership Agility

The literature for leadership agility demonstrated that agile leaders are a necessity in an ever-changing world. Although little scholarly research has been done on ministry agility, Harvard professor Ronald Heifetz's adaptive leadership theory has been the foundation of many books written by pastors and ministry consultants. A review of the literature showed that while scholars do not always use the same terminology, many agree that agile leaders exhibit three skills. These skills include a willingness to take risks, relational or interpersonal skills, and an understanding of the cultural context in which they are ministering. While some of the authors discussed other agility skills, these three skills recurred repeatedly throughout the examination of the literature. This was true in fields as diverse as the military, business, and the medical profession, as well ministry.

Summary of Literature Review

This review of the literature examined three areas related to the Biblical framework of relationships, intergenerational worldview differences, and leadership agility. In the first section, an analysis of the underlying premise of Biblical relationships revealed the central role of *imago Dei* in both vertical and horizontal relationships. It also considered the implications this has for people's relationships to God and others. The second section explored literature about intergenerational worldview differences in the

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[210] Cormode, *The Innovative Church*, 211-12.

business world, the medical profession, and the military. Sources from anthropology, psychology, and generational cohort theory provided understanding into why generations act and think the way they do. Section three concluded the study by examining leadership agility. Drawing on Heifetz's theory of adaptive leadership, several pastors and ministry consultants have sought to apply this theory to the practice of ministry. A willingness to take risks, relational and interpersonal skills, and a knowledge of today's cultural setting, emerge as key skills that agile leaders need to employ in their ministry. Together, these three areas of the literature provide insights that can be applied to help DWM create intergenerational programs for women's ministry while navigating the complex nature of life in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore how church directors of women's ministry create intergenerational programs for women. The assumption is that church directors of women's ministry (DWM) learn best practices through creating and leading intergenerational programs in the church. To gain an understanding of how they accomplish this process and adapt to challenges that arise because of generational differences, a qualitative study was proposed. The following questions guided the interviews that formed the foundation of the qualitative study:

1. What planning process do DWM use to create intergenerational programs for women?

2. What are the outcomes for which DWM create intergenerational programs for women?

3. What challenges do DWM face in creating intergenerational programs for women?

4. What leadership strategies do DWM employ to navigate the challenges of creating intergenerational programs for women?

Design of the Study

The study employed a basic qualitative research design using *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* by Sharan B. Merriam, Professor Emerita of Adult Education at the University of Georgia, and Elizabeth J. Tisdell,

professor of Adult Education at Penn State University Harrisburg.[211] According to

Merriam and Tisdell, "Research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from

the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making a difference

in people's lives."[212] "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people

interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they

attribute to their experiences."[213] This method of research has four characteristics that

differentiate it from quantitative research. These characteristics are as follows: "the focus

is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of

data collection and analysis; the process is inductive, and the product is richly

descriptive."[214] As such, qualitative research allows for understanding DWM experiences

and adaptations to the changes present in women's programs. Therefore, utilizing

qualitative research rather than quantitative research is the best way to understand how

DWM create their intergenerational women's programs.

Participant Sample Selection

This research required participants who are able to communicate in depth about

creating an intergenerational women's program based on their firsthand experiences.

"Collecting data through interviews involves, first of all, determining whom to

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[211] Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed., (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2016).

[212] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 1.

[213] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 6.

[214] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 15.

interview."[215] After consultation with her faculty advisor and two DWM who have created intergenerational programs, the researcher utilized a network sampling, "the most common form of purposeful sampling."[216] This networking allowed the researcher to find participants who would be information rich. "Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry…"[217]

Six DWM were selected because they each represented "information-rich" cases due to their firsthand experience of creating intergenerational programs for the women in their churches for over 3 years. To gain data from a depth of experience with the challenges of intergenerational ministry with women and to gain data towards best practices, the participants self-reported to the researcher that they had this level of experience and felt the programs went well and had hoped-for outcomes. The size of the program they created was not a factor in the selection process as long as at least three generations were represented, a criterion required for the research focus on intergenerational work. The DWM represent a cross-section of regions throughout the United States in order to provide for maximum variation of ideas for the broad focus on national cultural differences in generations. To minimize variation in variables not related to the research focus, the participants were all from Presbyterian churches. Their ability to reflect honestly on the planning process and outcomes was a key factor in selecting the

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[215] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 127.

[216] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 98.

[217] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 96.

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participants in order to gain the depth of data needed for rigorous research. Therefore, the DWM who participated in this purposeful study sample provided valuable insight.

Each DWM was invited to participate in this study via an introductory email, followed by a personal phone call. All expressed interest and completed a written informed consent document to participate. Each participant was also notified that their privacy in this research is guaranteed and their names will not be used. The researcher took steps to minimize any harm that may have resulted from participating in an interview. Prior to the interview, the researcher sent each participant a series of questions to become familiar with before the interview meeting.

Data Collection

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, each sixty to ninety minutes in length, with six DWM who have created intergenerational women's programs at churches in the United States. This method was chosen because it "allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic."[218] Semi-structured interviews allow greater latitude in asking follow-up questions and addressing issues that arise during the interview than do structured interview questions. "In this type of interview either all of the questions are more flexibly worded or the interview is a mix of more or less structured questions."[219]

The interview protocol included specific questions relating to the research questions, some open-ended questions, and a "blue sky" question such as, "What if funds

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[218] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 111.

[219] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 110.

were not an issue?"[220] The data was then analyzed using a constant comparative method, which "involves comparing one segment of data to another to determine similarities and differences."[221] This method allowed for gathering the most comprehensive and descriptive data from the interviewee's perspectives.

In order to evaluate the questions before interviewing the DWM, the researcher performed a pilot test of the interview protocol to test the validity of the questions.[222] This provided a foundation for the actual interviews and allowed for fine-tuning of the questions. As the researcher conducted more interviews, new information came to light and was utilized to improve the interview process. Not only did the researcher ask the prepared questions, but also follow-up questions to seek clarification or additional information. Face-to-face, FaceTime, or Zoom interviews were used. All interviews were completed in a two-week period to facilitate a more accurate and meticulous comparison of each interviewee's ideas.

The four research questions were used to guide the interviews. The interview protocol contained the following questions, which were sent to each interviewee prior to the interview:

1. Tell me about a recent intergenerational event that you felt was successful.

2. Tell me about a generational difference that affects your planning process for the weekly Large Group Bible Study?

3. What are some decisions on programming that you would do differently if you

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[220] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 124-125.

[221] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 32.

[222] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 298.

had it to do over again?

4. What are some ways you address the different generational expectations in your planning process?

5. What are some important decisions you have made that have helped your Intergenerational ministry thrive?

6. Tell me about a time when all the generations engaged in your program in spite of their differences?

7. What are some ways you investigate what women in each generation are thinking about the program?

8. What are some ways you plan your intergenerational events differently now than a couple years ago?

9. Tell me about something you tried while your women's ministry was not able to meet in person during the pandemic.

10. What might be some intergenerational events you would create if funds were not an issue?

Data Analysis

The Voice Memos App and a Sony handheld MP3 player were used to record the interviews and then Descript software was used to transcribe the recordings into printed form. Using the constant comparative method, each interview was immediately coded and analyzed before the next interview. "Data analysis is the process of making sense out

of the data."[223] "The overall object of this analysis is to identify patterns in the data."[224] By coding each interview as soon as possible afterward, the researcher was able to categorize new information into common patterns and themes and look for areas where the interviewees differed in their answers. Each new interview's themes and patterns were also compared with previous findings.[225]

Researcher Position

The researcher in this qualitative research study served as the primary source through which data was collected, analyzed, and reported.[226] There are inherent biases that must be acknowledged that are a result of the researcher's theological, social and ministerial position, and experience. Interviewing "requires interviewers to have enough distance to enable them to ask real questions and to explore, not to share assumptions."[227] As a DWM, the researcher sought to avoid inserting her life experiences into the gathering of data.[228] As an evangelical Christian, the researcher believes that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, given as an authoritative guide that when followed brings glory to God and joy to those who obey. After growing up in the church, the researcher has served on the church staff for over 38 years in three different roles. During that time, she

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[223] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 202.

[224] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 32.

[225] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 179, 235.

[226] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 15.

[227] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 130.

[228] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research,* 208.

married, started a family, and was widowed. Both the researcher's mother and Generation Y daughter are very active in the church. The researcher currently serves as a Director of Women's Ministry in a Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) church in the state of Tennessee. There are approximately 320 active members in the women's program. These life experiences and deep ties to the women's program represent biases that could potentially have influenced the interpretation of the data gathered during the interviews. They also provide for the likelihood that the researcher will understand the data with depth due to her own experiences.

Study Limitations

Because of the nature of qualitative research, participants interviewed for this study were all currently DWM who lead an intergenerational women's program in a church. These DWM have experience with intergenerational dynamics and in women's ministry. Although interviewees were from four geographical regions of the United States, not all regions of the country were represented in the study. Therefore, DWM interested in creating an intergenerational women's program will have to selectively adapt the findings to fit their particular context and culture. Another limitation is that five of the six interviews had to be conducted via Facetime and Zoom rather than face-to-face, which would have been preferable due to lack of body language and an in-person dynamic during the interviews. As with all basic qualitative studies, readers bear the responsibility of determining what can be appropriately applied to their context.

Chapter 4

Findings

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Introductions to Participants and Context

Six current Directors of Women's Ministry were selected to participate in this study. The findings of this qualitative study are the result of an analysis of the data collected during the six interviews. All participants serve in Reformed evangelical

churches. They represent three geographical regions of the United States. One is a recent church plant. Three are large, historic, traditional churches. The last two were founded in the past thirty years, but are traditional in style. Four of the participants hold seminary degrees.

Shannon serves as the DWM in a large PCA Church on the east coast. She inherited a women's ministry that is intentional about intergenerational women's ministry. The ministry has four generations of women who attend. Prior to serving at this church, she was the DWM at another PCA church in the Midwest. Shannon is a wife, mother and grandmother and has worked at her current church for 12 years.

Lynn is the DWM at a large, historic PCA church in the south. There are four generations of women in this ministry. Lynn is in her sixties and has worked at the church for over thirty years. She earned a Master's Degree from Reformed Theological Seminary. Lynn oversees a staff of seven women who conduct women's and children's ministries.

Barbara leads the women's ministry at a large PCA church in the West. She holds a Master's Degree in Biblical Counseling. She has served in this role for 20 years. There are four generations of women who attend this ministry.

Dawn serves as the DWM at a large multigenerational PCA church in the Mid-South. Since receiving a Master's Degree from Covenant Theological Seminary, Dawn has led the ministry for a decade. She is currently a D. Min. student. There are four generations in the women's ministry.

Kay is the DWM at a PCA church plant in the West. There are three generations in her group. She was previously the DWM at a mid-sized PCA church in the south. She is a published writer and serves on several national committees.

Claire leads the women's ministry at a large EPC church in the Mid-South. Four generations of women attend her program. After receiving her Master's Degree, Claire was the DWM at a large church in the deep south. Since earning her Ph.D., she moved to her current position, where she has served for three years.

The Planning of Intergenerational Programs

The first research question examined how DWM create intergenerational programs. A number of themes emerged as the interviewees shared their thoughts and experiences on the planning process for women's programs. Three themes that arose from an analysis are: intergenerational leadership team, balancing the women's ministry calendar with the life of the church, and ministry philosophy.

Intergenerational Leadership Team

The participants were asked if they used a leadership team, and if so, how it works. All six DWM stated that they have an intergenerational leadership team. A common theme in their responses was the benefits of having an intergenerational leadership team. When asked about her leadership team, Shannon did not even hesitate. She quoted King Solomon, "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed." (Proverbs 15:22) She explained that her leadership council is comprised of ten to twelve women. The selection criteria requires that they are actively involved in the

women's ministry. Each council member promises to love and pray for the women in the church.

Shannon intentionally recruits women from all walks of life and from the different generations. Each team member makes a two-year commitment and agrees to attend a monthly leadership council meeting, one of the weekly Bible studies, and all special events. Each woman on the leadership council is responsible for planning one of the events or programs each year. Leadership team members are expected to recruit other women to help with their event. This is designed to get more women involved.

Lynn uses a similar leadership structure. She calls her team the Women in Church (WIC) council. The leadership team is made up of volunteers who serve a two-year term. In addition, she also has a team comprised of seven paid staff members who oversee the children's ministry and the nursery from whom she seeks advice. She says having different ages represented on the staff is invaluable. As a director in her sixties, she feels somewhat removed from what is going on in the lives of the women in their thirties. Her intergenerational staff provides her additional input from that of the leadership team.

Three DWM mentioned that a major benefit of a intergenerational leadership team is that there are built-in allies from every age group in the church. They have a vested interest in ministry and promote the program to their friends. Shannon put it this way, "everybody's got buy-in and they take our plan back to their people and you've already got some excitement." Kay and Dawn agreed. Having advocates from all those age groups provides invaluable rapport with members of all the generations.

DWM have varying degrees of success getting women from the different age groups to serve on their leadership team. Barbara has been able to achieve this goal. "We

have women on the leadership team from each age and stage group in the church - sixties, fifties, forties, thirties, and twenties." Three other DWM have found it difficult to get women from the twenties age group to join the leadership team.

Unlike Barbara, Kay has found it particularly difficult to find women in their twenties willing to serve on her leadership team. In fact, she has a separate group just for the twenties. Many young adult women move to her city looking for jobs. They are lonely. However, they are not as comfortable being in a group with older women. They prefer to make friends their own age.

Lynn explained that the younger adult women in her church are not as actively involved in the women's ministry. Their connection to the church is through the young adult co-ed ministry. They attend a Bible study, but it is not through WIC. She would love to have them as part of her group, but they've "already got their ministry." She noted that they usually switch over to the women's ministry when they have a baby and join the MOMS ministry. She explained that marriage doesn't draw them into the women's ministry, as much as motherhood does. The young moms also want their children to benefit from good care and teaching in the nursery.

Dawn was adamant that for her it is crucial that she gets a "plurality of voices" on her leadership team. She has always had women from each generation represented. But, she admitted if there is an age group that is missing or difficult to fill, it would be the twenties. She attributes this to the church's emphasis on families. As a result, there are not many single young women who attend the church, yet alone the women's ministry.

In summary, the participants shared broad agreement on two issues: the importance of an intergenerational leadership team and the difficulty of getting women in

their twenties to participate in the women's ministry. All of the DWM find the advice and ideas of their team to be useful. While it is not possible to implement everything everyone suggests, like Shannon, they agree with Solomon that, "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed." (Proverbs 15:22) Just as important as their advice is their commitment and enthusiasm for the program. Because members of the different age groups have "buy-in," they are outspoken advocates for the ministry and help make it successful.

Curriculum Team

In addition to the leadership team or council, the DWM utilize a variety of other leadership positions to assist in the women's program. Three of the DWM agree that these committees are central to the ministry. They enhance the area of their focus, allowing the leadership team to concentrate on the ministry as a whole. Without strong committees, the leadership team would be overwhelmed.

Shannon pointed out that not every person can be on the leadership team. But, they can contribute in a variety of other ways. She has both a retreat team and a curriculum team. These teams report to the leadership team, but make their own decisions. "The goal is to go down one layer and get those people to lead it." For example, her retreat team is responsible for doing all the planning and preparation. Shannon said, "I just show up and do the emceeing."

With her curriculum team, it is different. Shannon takes a more active role and the committee is smaller. Currently, it is comprised of Shannon plus two other women. One is younger and the other is older. "I have one woman who reads a book a day. She's just a brilliant woman. She loves the Lord and is strong in theology and she understands what I

am looking for. She and the other member look at curriculum ahead of me and then with me."

When Dawn does curriculum, she puts a team of three or four women of different ages together. She has them look at curriculum and give her feedback. Then, using a rubric, they come to a decision. She does this to avoid pitfalls. For example, if someone comes to her with a suggestion for curriculum, the rubric acts as tool to determine whether or not it will be adopted. The rubric eliminates hurt feelings and disappointment by providing the selection criteria. She also does this to get automatic buy-in from members of the different generations who can advocate for it among their peers.

Class Administrators

Class administrators are the unsung heroes of the women's ministry. Both Barbara and Lynn use "class administrators" in every Bible study group. These women assist the teachers by handling all the logistics of the Bible study groups. They are responsible for keeping attendance, email correspondence, social media posts, and announcements to notify members of upcoming events. The class administrators organize meal delivery to sick members. They also send get well, birthday, and bereavement cards.

At Claire's church, the women's ministry has circles in addition to the large group Bible study. These circles operate semi-independently of each other. Each group has a chairperson who is the circle teaching leader. Claire realized that because her chairpersons were getting up in years, the younger women were reluctant to join a circle. She feared "the circle ministry was dying because the older women didn't want to make any changes and the younger women didn't want to be a part of it."

Mentors

Since the young mothers want to have their own group, Lynn structures the MOMS group so there is a teacher and co-teacher. She also assigns a mentor to each group. By design, the mentors are in their fifties or sixties. This provides an intergenerational component to an otherwise single generation group. The mentor's job is to build relationships. Lynn said, "They're told to not give advice, unless asked, because we women like to take over and tell people what to do. They do a lot of listening. They will do some gentle guiding." If someone appears distraught or seems to need help, "the mentor will invite them to coffee and make themselves available."

Vision Team

Barbara recently decided to add a vision team to her women's ministry. She said, "I need to think forward - where we're going to go in the future." The job of this team is to help her think ahead about the direction the ministry should take in the coming years. She purposely put together an intergenerational group. The oldest member is sixty-five. One is in her fifties. Two are in their forties and one in her thirties. They all are very ministry minded. Covid interrupted her plans for the vision team to meet during 2020, but she expected to resume meeting in 2021.

To recap, the curriculum team, class administrators, mentors, and vision team are a vital part of creating and administering an intergenerational women's ministry. These other opportunities to serve allow many women to use their gifts.

Balancing the Women's Ministry Calendar with the Life of the Church

A second theme that emerged during the interviews concerning the planning process regarded balancing the women's ministry calendar with the life of the church. At Lynn's church, they attempt to be very family friendly. The church leadership tries to limit meetings to two nights a week to be thoughtful of the demands on their members' schedules. Activities and meetings are limited to Sunday and Wednesday nights. On Wednesday night they have a church-wide prayer meeting and electives – including a women's evening large group Bible study. The church provides a meal, offers a nursery, has security, as well as programs for children and youth. There is something for everyone.

Barbara's situation is similar to Lynn's. The church's senior leadership enforces not overbooking the calendar. The leaders guard against overscheduling the members. They do not want too much going on at church so that people feel like somebody in the family has to be at the church every night of the week. To ensure that her women's ministry leadership team is aware of the scope of activities going on, she enlists team members to help her "know what's going on all across the church." In a large church, it is easy to end up with overlapping activities. Although Barbara sees that there is wisdom in limiting the number of programs, she is also concerned that this might have unintended consequences. She experienced this firsthand. She had to cut back on the women's program to accommodate the churchwide calendar. She felt this was a mistake. In her opinion, she thinks overlapping commitments are inevitable as a church grows. She fears "women's ministry might be their only connection to the church." While protecting

church members is a good idea, she believes it would be a shame to eliminate the only

program that might connect a woman to the church.

In addition to being considerate of the churchwide calendar, DWM must be

sensitive to two specific times of the year that are particularly busy for women: the

Thanksgiving and Christmas season and the summer. Many women need a break during

the busy holiday season and a more flexible format for the summer when their children

are out of school. Due to these factors, five of the DWM adapt their ministry schedule.

The Thanksgiving and Christmas Season

The DWM interviewed held two schools of thought. Barbara, Shannon, and Lynn

believe it is important to take a break during the holiday season. Claire is the only one

who is adamant about continuing on the regular schedule. She also uses Christmas as a

time for evangelistic outreach by a luncheon and several evening social gatherings.

Barbara said, "We usually end before Thanksgiving and begin again the second week of

January." The only program she has in December is an Advent Prayer event. Typically,

eighty to one hundred women attend. It is held the first Tuesday night after Thanksgiving.

There is a speaker and a prayer and worship time to help the women prepare their hearts

for Christmas.

Lynn and Shannon also finish the semester the week before Thanksgiving and

return the second week of January. Shannon explained that her women are overloaded

during the holidays. It is too busy during that season for the women's ministry to put

anything else on their plate. The one event they do is a big Christmas evangelistic

luncheon and dessert. Shannon chose this type of event for two reasons. There is no

homework. It is the perfect event to which one can bring an unchurched neighbor or friend.

Kay said she "wraps up her fall Bible study the week after Thanksgiving. We begin our January study after local college kids are back." The reason she waits until they return from Christmas Break is because "they either attend or supply our nursery force." This means Kay cannot resume until the week of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. Another reason she does this is because she "also wants to give the moms of school age kids a week to get over the holidays after their children are back in school."

During December Kay's church has a huge churchwide Christmas party for adults only. Therefore, Kay does not plan any women's ministry events in December. She does not want to over-schedule the women during the busy holiday season. At her previous church that had no all-church event, Kay wanted to have a women's ministry Christmas party. To accommodate the older women, the young moms, and those who worked, she offered the party at three different times. She also scheduled it early in December to avoid conflict with the children's program.

In contrast, Claire said she "went all the way into mid-December and got going again the first week of January." She does not like to take extended breaks from Bible study. Claire also schedules "luncheons and more explicitly evangelistically-oriented evening gatherings." Like Shannon, Claire deliberately has these events because "I'm wanting us to 'take more territory' evangelistically in December." Since she became the DWM, Claire has gradually added evening social gatherings. She has sought to equip more of the women to host evangelistic Christmas gatherings in their own homes and invite their neighbors. Rather than dialing back, Claire adds more activities to an already

busy holiday calendar. She does this because these events are opportunities for evangelism.

Summer

Summer is a very busy time for many women because their children are out of school and their family is traveling. Five of the DWM talked about how they adapt their summer calendar to accommodate these two factors. Shannon, for instance, does a six-week book club instead of a Bible study. It meets one night a week and is the only women's ministry activity offered during summer. Shannon said she intentionally "scheduled this at the same time our middle schoolers met - Tuesday 7:00-8:15 p.m. thinking moms could drop them off and join us." One member of the leadership council is responsible for selecting the three books that will be read. One is about theology. Another is a classic. And, the third is on a contemporary topic. Recent titles are: "Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus," "Jane Eyre" and "Much Ado About Nothing" by Shakespeare. It was a joint decision between Shannon and the leadership council to implement this change. They wanted the summer calendar to be more relaxed and yet still get together.

Shannon wanted to try something different during the summer. Claire did not. She wanted to continue a formal weekly Bible study. Two years ago, however, she reluctantly switched to summer supper groups. Claire opposed having just a meal with no Bible study. "There was no content, which is not my style. And in fact, my colleagues had to force me to do it." Although this was not Claire's preferred approach, she admitted "they were right." She made it clear to the women that the supper groups were not meant to be just a social gathering. "We were explicit that our purpose in this [was] to put [them] together with people from different age groups and different cultural backgrounds." She

mixed them all up so they wouldn't be with people they already knew. The same group had dinner together once a month. The program was a success. Claire put it simply, "They loved it!"

Dawn takes a very low-key approach to summers because the majority of her people travel. Many members in her group have a beach or a lake house, so they are out of town quite a bit. And the ones that are in town have their kids at home because school is out. As a result, Dawn said she sometimes does a stand-alone program or a short, three- or four-week Bible study. Beyond that, she said "we usually do a couple of fellowships or go out to dinner together." Occasionally, Dawn schedules a panel discussion during the summer months. These can be on topics such as grief, loneliness, or anxiety.

In Kay's case, when she started her new position as the DWM the church's session recommended that she teach during the summer so the women could get to know her. She thought, "That was a great idea." Normally, a member of the teaching team would have taught the Bible study, but she could see the benefit of doing so to establish her leadership.

Lynn admitted that summers are really busy for both the women and her. That is the time of the year when she recruits volunteers and writes Bible study questions. She explained that another important reason is, "my teachers like a break!" Therefore, Lynn does not schedule formal Bible studies during the summer. Instead, they have two special activities: a "Mother, Daughter, Sister, Friend" luncheon in June and a Book Club in July. Lynn said "the book is a light, easy read that everyone can weigh in on during the discussion time." Surprisingly, because there was enough interest they still had the Book Club in 2020, in spite of Covid. They socially distanced, wore masks, and each person sat

at her own six-foot round table. The book was Rachael Jones' "'5 Things To Pray For The People You Love." Lynn acknowledged that instead of each woman bringing a salad ingredient to set up a salad bar, they had to use individual box suppers because of Covid.

Ministry Philosophy

The third theme that emerged in the interviews is how ministry philosophy shapes the planning process. For some DWM, the planning process is program driven. For others, the emphasis in on shepherding. Regardless of their starting point, they all want their ministry to be a place where women of all generations can come together and grow spiritually. The one event they all agreed accomplishes this goal is the women's retreat.

Kay begins her planning process knowing that not every event will appeal equally to each woman. She described her philosophy this way: "I'll look at the ministry planning as a whole for the year. I want to have something for everyone." One event that includes something for everyone is the women's retreat. Two issues need special attention in the planning process according to three of the DWM: the selection of the date and the overnight accommodations. Kay purposely schedules the retreat on a weekend so that schoolteachers can attend along with everyone else. In addition, Kay said, "I really want my younger women to meet one older person." The retreat is a great place for that to happen. But, getting the older women to come and spend the night has been a challenge. Kay chuckled as she recounted that her own mother refused to attend the overnight retreat even when Kay was the speaker! Her mom's best friend came, but there was no budging her mother.

Dawn's philosophy is similar. Not only does she plan activities that appeal to all ages, she wants those activities to promote intergenerational relationships. Dawn summed

up her ministry outlook by saying, "I do my strategic planning without even realizing I'm being intentional because intergenerational is just so much a part of me." For example, Dawn takes this philosophy to heart in the planning for the annual women's retreat. She said, "it's my favorite thing we do every year." However, she was quick to admit, "it's a lot of work and it's a lot of chasing people down." Dawn justifies all of the hard work it takes to put on the retreat because she thinks "it's one of the best ways to get the women of all ages in the same room."

At the same time, Dawn agreed the difficult part is getting them all in the same room. She also has struggled with planning around the issues about the calendar date and accommodations. First, everyone is busy. Finding a weekend when everyone can come is difficult. To overcome this obstacle, Dawn hosts a twenty-four hour retreat. She admits that "sometimes getting them for twenty-four hours is hard." The second issue she faces is the venue. Like Kay, she has found that retreat centers or camps are not inviting to the older women in her group. They refuse to sleep in bunk beds in a camp cabin. Neither do they find retreat center accommodations to their liking. The rooms may look like a hotel, but they are not. Dawn has discovered that booking a local hotel is more appealing to them. She admitted, "personally, I didn't want the hotel." But, she is willing to have the retreat there because the trade-off is worth it.

Taking into account the older generations' preference for comfort has made a big difference. Dawn has noticed that "the younger mothers really liked that some of the older women came." It accomplishes Dawn's goal to get women of different ages in the same space. She concluded, "I think putting different generations together is what I'm just trying to create - common areas, commonalities, shared space, shared experiences."

Lynn came to the same conclusion as Dawn. Typically, nobody over fifty would come to the overnight women's retreat. Lynn said, "when it comes to signing up, I have to just beg them to go on a retreat." In order to overcome their reluctance, she offered the limited number of hotel-like rooms at the retreat center to the first thirty-two women over fifty who registered. It worked. The bonus of "a connecting living room and good beds" accomplished her goal. By making that change, Lynn was able to achieve her goal of getting women of all ages together at the retreat.

Although Barbara has been at her church for twenty years, she just started including a women's retreat in 2020. Even though that was her first one, she described it as "a blowout success." The retreat center where the event was held was not very large. That limited the number of women who could attend. Her biggest problem was getting the older women to come. She said, "We did have a few that were close to 70. However, like Kay and Dawn, the older women in Barbara's group did not want to spend the night away from home.

Claire has a different philosophy. Programs are not foundational to her ministry. She explained, "program is not the heart of our ministry. Inevitably when you do that, you're going to be shifting toward one set of preferences over another." Claire considers the heart of her women's ministry to be "the study of scriptures and shepherding women of all ages."

This does not mean Claire is opposed to special events or retreats. She rotates the retreat between two models. One year Claire hosts a "staytreat," which is a conference at the church. The next year, she plans a traditional, off-campus retreat. One advantage of having a "staytreat" is that the older women will participate. She points out, "even if

we're not getting away for two days, there's nothing like it in terms of really building

meaningful relationships." A second advantage of having it at the church means there is

no limit the to the number who can attend. In the years when they go to a retreat center,

the number that can go is limited by the size of the facility. It also is a bigger time

commitment because of the travel.

In summary, three themes emerged among the research interviewees regarding the

planning process for creating an intergenerational women's ministry. There was broad

agreement about the importance of an intergenerational leadership team, balancing the

women's ministry calendar, and the different philosophies of ministry. In order to have

an intergenerational ministry, the interview participants agreed on the importance of

having a leadership team with representatives from the various generations. They also

recognized that it is critical to be sensitive to women's calendars, particularly during the

Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays and in the summer. Although they may differ on

their ministry philosophy, they all sought the same end result – an intergenerational

program where women of all ages can come together and grow spiritually.

The Outcomes of Intergenerational Programs

The second research question sought to determine what the outcomes are for

intergenerational programs. Two themes emerged: building relationships in

intergenerational programs and how program outcomes are measured.

Building Relationships in Intergenerational Programs

An important outcome DWM seek is to create a space where women of all ages

can build relationships while they grow spiritually. Two DWM's mentioned this as a

goal. Achieving this outcome is more difficult than it sounds. According to Claire, "getting intergenerational programs to thrive is a universal problem." But, she was quick to add, "the solution is love." She admitted, "that sounds so cliche, but in this case it's cliche for a good reason. It is the answer." In the context of women's ministry, Claire thinks relationships must be built on a foundation of love like that found in a family. She used the metaphor of a family reunion for the relationships she hopes to develop through her program. She described it by saying, "think in terms of a family reunion. When you've got lots of different generations coming together, you're going to do some things that you wouldn't choose - what you're willing to do for the sake of the family because you love your family members." In fact, Claire said, "cultivating family relationships among generations is high on my list."

However, Claire has found that a stumbling block that often prevents this from happening is generational preferences. The question is how to get the members of the different generations to willingly surrender their preferences for the sake of others like they would do for family members. There would be activities for both children and adults. Not everyone will agree on the location. Others may disagree on whether to have a covered dish or get takeout fried chicken. Claire pointed out that you don't have to like everyone who is there, but you do have to love them because they are family.

Similarly, Claire said, "I want our older sisters to understand the preferences of younger women and I want younger women to understand the preferences older women." When she noticed the older women were struggling with this issue, she began having a monthly meeting with them. During those meetings, preferences were often a topic of discussion. If they started complaining about the way younger women want to do

something, Claire put it in the context of someone they love – their granddaughters. According to Claire, "their hearts melt and that's because it all goes back to what we started with. It's all about love. It's all about relationships. We are a family of Christ. We've got to make the main thing growing in Christ."

Like Claire, Dawn's women's group includes both young and old members. Four generations are represented. She observes that in the case of her ministry, "the generations are more alike than we are different. We all have fears. We all have shame. We all have sin. We all have assumptions." Some of the generations seem to easily build relationships with each other. Dawn is happy to see the women forty-five to sixty who are really good at reaching out to the women in their twenties and thirties. In fact, she said, "I've had a group of women in their fifties who in the last several years have been really passionate about investing in young moms."

Dawn has also noticed, like Claire, a troubling trend in the relationships between the older generation and the other age groups. The older women prefer to spend time with each other rather than befriending the younger ones. Dawn knows that the women who are sixty-five and up still have plenty to offer. But, their attitude seems to be, "I've been there. I've done that." Dawn laments this situation and said, "I wish I would have done things differently." She regrets that she did not address this issue sooner and encourage them to get to know the younger women. In hindsight, Dawn wishes she had asked "the pastors to help me be intentional about this. About helping those women see that they've still got a lot to give in terms of the kingdom." She understands that they may not prefer "to talk about babies and changing diapers, but that's called dying to yourself." Understandably, they need a chance to be with people their own age. However, Dawn

adamantly believes they need to look for ways to serve women of other ages. They can

set an example for the younger women by obeying the instruction in Titus 2:4.

How Program Outcomes are Measured

When DWM are creating intergenerational programs for women, they often begin

with the outcome in mind. When the program is over, they usually evaluate how things

went and whether it was a success or not knowing that determining success is subjective.

Some prefer to get feedback from a survey. Others prefer face-to-face conversations. For

instance, Kay likes using surveys. In fact, she said, "I love a survey!" She does a survey

at the end of retreats or when they finish a semester to get feedback. Although it seems

low, she is happy if she gets 50% feedback from a survey.

In contrast, Barbara emphatically said, "We don't do surveys, mainly because the

church is not so keen on them." Like Barbara, Dawn does not use a formal survey. She

prefers gathering informal feedback by talking to people one-on-one. During the summer

she selects some of the women and schedules individual walks with them. She uses these

opportunities to "ask them to tell me what they're thinking. Are there things that we

should be thinking about for this next year or things that you're hearing?" Although she

is soliciting this input, Dawn admits that "I get more than I want sometimes." She listens,

but is not always able to do what they suggest. She acknowledges that they may have a

good point, but it may not be possible to implement their idea. Dawn knows it is

important for them to be heard. However, she has to be diplomatic and say, "I don't know

that we can do that, but let's think about that."

Some DWM measure the success of an event or program based on how many

women come. Others rely on feedback from surveys. Shannon uses a radically different

way to measure success. She explains, "my philosophy is you determine the success of an event, not by how good the speaker is or even by how many people come. Success is how many people we get to make the event happen." She points out, "The Lord controls who and how many come." This is why Shannon does not base success on numbers. She underscores that her goal is not just to get women to come, but to get them involved in the ministry. She believes, "If we can bring women in to become leaders and to love the ministry, then we've succeeded."

Sometimes an event does not accomplish the hoped for outcome. One time Lynn wanted to match older and younger women together in a "Heart to Heart" ministry. However, when she looked at the registration forms, there was a big problem! All of the women who registered, regardless of their age, registered as a "younger woman." When Lynn announced the pairings, she had to break the news to everyone over fifty that they were the "older women."

In Barbara's case, she planned a special program called "Come to the Table." The women met at the church and participated in a service project. Then, they took part in a short worship service. When that ended, they filed past a table with twelve different colors of paper tags. Each tag had an address where they were to meet. At each home, two hostesses served a dinner. The goal of this activity was to mix up the age groups and make new friends. Eleven of the twelve groups achieved the intended outcome.

The event was a huge success – except for what happened to two seventy-year old women. They couldn't find the address on the tag they had picked up. When they finally found the house, they knocked on the door. However, no one heard their knocking because they were in the kitchen laughing and talking. The women gave up and went to a

restaurant to get dinner. Barbara and her leadership team "felt terrible when we found out!" She called them and apologized profusely. To make amends, Barbara said "we got all of the women together for a repeat dinner at that home and made sure those two women were there! It was a beautiful evening! We redeemed the disaster!"

In summary, as the participants talked about the outcomes for intergenerational programs, two themes emerged: building relationships in intergenerational programs and how program outcomes are measured. According to several of the DWM, some of the generations seem to easily build relationships with each other. The older generation, however, prefers to spend time with members of their own age group. On the topic of how to measure outcomes, the DWM suggested a mixture of preferred methods: feedback from surveys, counting how many women come to a program, or how many women become involved in the ministry through helping make an event happen.

The Challenges of Intergenerational Programs

The third research question addressed the challenges DWM face in creating intergenerational programs. Challenges can come in many forms: resistance to change, technology, and competition with other women's ministries. Resistance to change and technology were the two most popular themes among the interviewees. A third theme mentioned by two of the DWM was competition with other ministries.

Resistance to Change

The theme of resistance to change is an issue for many women's programs. Four of the DWM have experienced resistance to change. When Shannon arrived at the historic church where she serves, the women did not meet together in a large group Bible

study. Shannon recommended they continue to divide the women into intergenerational table groups during the fellowship time. However, she proposed adding a large group teaching time. Shannon wanted women of all ages from her church to come together and be taught the reformed doctrines. The model she was proposing was the same one used by Bible Study Fellowship. She explained to the leadership council why she wanted to make this change and they agreed to try her idea. Although there was some reluctance to add this large group teaching component, now the women "love it!"

A very important component that had to be added was childcare. In order for the young mothers to take part and learn the reformed teachings, there had to be a nursery. This new format enabled greater participation by all the generations. Each Wednesday morning they begin with refreshments and fellowship. The women sit at assigned intergenerational, small group tables. These groups are chosen by Shannon and the leadership council based on a mix of ages and how often they attend. After the fellowship time, one of the pastors or a member of the teaching team teaches for thirty minutes. Then, the small groups go to individual rooms where the leader facilitates a discussion about the ideas and issues presented in the lesson.

One of the benefits of this format is that the intergenerational small groups get together outside of the formal Bible study time on Wednesday mornings. Relationships are strengthened between the generations. Occasionally, they invite their families so they can also get to know each other. Special events and activities have included birthday parties, backyard BBQ's, and picking apples at a local orchard.

Claire also found resistance to change an issue in her first DWM position. The program was comprised of several circles, semi-independent Bible study groups each

having a teaching leader. Burdensome rules and excessive homework were overwhelming to the younger women. Claire decided to take a bold step. She put it this way: "I wrangled the arms of some of the older women and laid it out clearly. Here's what will happen in ten years if you do not make these decisions." To their credit, the older ladies allowed Claire to make some changes. First, she added three circles for younger women. Second, she appointed a young woman who had a heart for older women to all of the existing circles. Third, she selected a young woman to serve as co-chair for every circle. With a co-chair to help, the chairperson could be in her nineties and still have the honor of being the leader. The co-chair would take responsibility for all of the work. When asked if this new structure worked, Claire did not hesitate. She was happy to report, "it was a massive success!"

When Barbara was appointed DWM at the church where she serves, she inherited a well-established program that was deeply divided. There were six Bible study options. Each functioned totally independently of each other. There were three teachers who each taught a morning and evening study. It was a challenge for Barbara to even get them to agree to one system of registration or to start the semester on the same day. What is more, it was a battle to get them to let her order their materials. One of the teachers insisted on distributing the Bible study materials from a little basket on her front porch. These three teachers were very resistant to submitting to her leadership and oversight of the program.

Barbara also experienced resistance from the matriarch of a wealthy family. This family was a major benefactor of the church. Three generations were actively involved in the women's ministry. One serves on the leadership team. To their credit, "they're ministry-minded and they get things done." However, the matriarch is very intimidating.

Although quite wealthy, she is very frugal. One day, Barbara and her friend were working the information desk during check-in for a women's event. The matriarch disapproved of the amount of money they had spent on name tags. She verbally reprimanded Barbara's friend. Barbara realized the matriarch was watching how she spent even small amounts of money.

Kay's situation is an extreme example of meeting with resistance when introducing change. Prior to being hired, Kay spoke at the women's retreat. A few months later, Kay was hired when the church made the DWM position fulltime. Previously, volunteers led the program. Kay quickly discovered that a group of five of the older women were cliquish. They called themselves "the Fab Five." Mildred, the most outspoken member of the clique, was on the women's program leadership team. Kay immediately began getting "flack" from Mildred because she had wanted the job as DWM when Kay was hired. The session wanted Kay to teach the summer Bible study so the women could get to know her. Normally one of the teachers would do this. Mildred used this opportunity to criticize Kay by telling her: "I don't think a couple of people like how you taught at the retreat." Looking back to that incident, Kay said, "that's how bad it was. It was a hot mess for a while there."

Kay realized that she needed to do something to regroup. She needed to rethink the ministry's leadership because two members of the clique were in charge of the Bible study committee. The situation got so bad that Mildred was called in to meet with the pastor. Kay characterized the outcome of meeting by saying, "he handled it." Kay was relieved. She appreciated the support of her pastor and the session. Without it she admits, "I would have left."

Afterward, Mildred and Kay met for lunch. Mildred apologized to Kay. They moved forward, but Kay said, "I knew then that I needed to reset the culture. The culture was not healthy." Instead of conducting teacher training the way they had been doing it, Kay announced that the leadership training was open to any woman who was "even remotely interested." It was no longer just for the Bible study teachers. There was a culture that the Bible study teachers were "super Christians." Kay said, "the teachers held the power and they didn't share it very well." Opening the teacher training to everyone was a major step forward in repairing the unhealthy culture.

The situation with the Fab Five continued to fester. Even though Mildred cycled off the Bible study committee, Kay invited her to teach that fall. Kay said, "I was very deferential to her because she's older than I am." Sadly, the Fab Five continued to be a "thorn in the flesh" to Kay until Mildred moved away. Although things improved after Mildred left, Kay realized it was going to take time. As a newcomer to the church, she was painfully aware that, "I'm just not one of theirs yet."

The Challenges of Technology

The second and most prevalent theme mentioned by the interviewees regarded technology. A major challenge they face is determining the most effective option to promote an event and register the participants. Three of the DWM reported facing a dilemma when choosing which method of communication to use because of the different generational preferences.

Promoting and Registering for Events

Shannon primarily advertises the women's ministry activities via e-blast. At the beginning of the semester, she creates separate email groups for each aspect of the women's ministry. When she wants to announce an upcoming event, she sends an e-blast to the groups that need to know that information.

Kay faced a challenge when Covid hit in 2020. Since her group could not meet in person, she sent out a survey to determine the best way to communicate. She said, "we were trying to figure out how to get the word out. Is it Facebook? Is it Instagram? Is it email? Is it a postcard?" When she tallied the results of the survey, "we found out almost everybody at least checked their personal email or they checked their church email. So, we started doing a weekly women's ministry email."

Kay also utilizes these methods of communication for Bible study registration at the beginning of the semester. In order to ensure she reaches all three generations represented in the women's ministry, she includes an announcement in the church-wide email, posts it on Facebook and Instagram, and mails out a postcard. Although Kay uses several different methods, she acknowledges, "we have our best turnout at events that get promoted by email because everybody in that church tends to be able to use that format."

Early in her ministry before email and social media existed, Barbara mailed out postcards to announce upcoming events. But, times have changed. She has found that it takes a variety of ways to communicate today. One problem is that the older women in her group typically are not very computer savvy. Some of them don't even use email. Like Kay, Barbara uses email, Instagram, Facebook, and paper announcements because the various generations require different formats. Barbara also has faced a challenge getting the older generation in her group to use the church's online software to register

for events. The women do not want to enter their credit card information online. However, it is hard to register any other way because of how the church's software is designed.

Shannon, Kay, and Barbara realized they must use multiple forms of technology to reach all the generations in their group. The pandemic of 2020 forced all six DWM to look for technological solutions for meeting together while in-person gatherings were no longer an option.

Meeting Together When You Can't Be Together

When the pandemic began in the winter of 2020, women's ministries looked for new ways to use technology in order to continue meeting. This challenge was mentioned by all the DWM interviewed for this study. They knew the solution was technology. They also knew the problem would be technology. All six DWM began using Zoom or posting Bible study videos on the church's web site to address this problem.

Two DWM mentioned that their women felt disconnected because they could not meet in-person. Claire said, "I just quickly threw together a Bible study and made a summer zoom group." It only lasted five weeks, but it helped the women reconnect until they could resume meeting at the church again. Coming to the same conclusion as Claire, Barbara said, "women miss seeing each other like crazy! They probably have their core group of close friends, but they miss seeing people - passing them by in the hallway, checking in and in-person. Standing side by side and singing, praying, worshipping." When it became apparent that it would be several months before they could meet in-person, Barbara started using Zoom. She admitted, "it's not the same, but Zoom does work and allows women to participate. We had women from California and even the

Middle East jumping into small groups via Zoom!" There was another unexpected benefit from switching the Bible studies to Zoom. Barbara's church was in the middle of a building program. Because of the construction, there were no classrooms available on campus. Zoom solved that problem. One of the Zoom Bible studies continued after the pandemic restrictions were lifted because of the convenience and flexibility it provides.

Kay was in a similar situation to Barbara. Her church did not have a building. They rented another church's facility. The only day she could have her women's large group Bible study was Friday morning, which was not ideal. During the pandemic, Kay began videotaping the Bible study lectures and making them available along with study questions. Once she offered a hybrid program where they could chose between in-person or Zoom, registration jumped from twenty-five or thirty to eighty!

One DWM mentioned that Zoom served as an unexpected solution for an immune compromised older teacher during the pandemic. Once Dawn taught her how to use Zoom, they were able to meet on their regular schedule. This group of fifteen to twenty women chose to continue meeting on Zoom after the other groups resumed gathering in-person.

Like Dawn, one of Shannon's groups found studying together on Zoom more convenient that meeting in-person. However, it was for different reasons. Working women and mothers with young children found an 8:00 p.m. "virtual circle" fit better into their schedule. Others wanted to be part of this group because they don't have to fight the heavy traffic common in their suburban area to get to the church. They would never have considered using Zoom were it not for the pandemic. Now that they see the benefits, they prefer this option.

When it became necessary to move the women's Bible study online, Lynn decided not only to do a live Zoom teaching on Tuesday and Thursday nights, she also recorded the lecture. She then loaded the recording into Google Docs and sent out an email announcement. Working women found this modification helpful. "They can watch the lecture at their leisure." Lynn was also surprised to learn that the MOMS ministry actually grew when it moved to Zoom because of Covid. When they met in-person, there were approximately one hundred women in the group. When they switched to Zoom, attendance doubled! In addition, Lynn discovered that former members of the MOMS ministry who had moved out-of-state were joining the class via Zoom!

Competition with Other Ministries

A third theme that two of the DWM mentioned is the competition with other ministries for teachers and leaders. Barbara has benefitted from experienced teachers in their forties and fifties who were trained by Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) and now teach in her women's ministry. Because these teachers are spiritually mature and from the middle generations, they are able to have good rapport with both the older ladies and the younger women. She notes, "our best leadership and teachers came from Bible Study Fellowship. Their teaching leader taught them that serving in their church was more of a priority than BSF." Barbara admitted, "they've been our best trained leadership." There is one in particular who has helped Barbara immensely. First, she worked with Barbara to put together an in-house teacher training. Second, she teaches the large group on a regular basis. Barbara praised her contributions to the program saying, "people all over [our city] come to hear her teach. She is a jewel to have." Barbara does not see the BSF teachers as competition. She sees them as co-laborers in kingdom work.

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This is not always the case. Shannon has experienced competition between her women's ministry and a national organization for teachers, leaders, and members. She admires their organization and the ministry they have. However, Shannon thinks that the women who are members of the church ought to support her women's ministry because it is their home church. Shannon didn't hold back when asked about the situation. She said, "one of my hardest challenges and probably one of the hardest things I have to deal with is that Community Bible Study (CBS)" meets in our church building. In fact, they predate the church's women's ministry. Because CBS was already there, the church's best teachers from the older generation remained loyal to CBS and teach for them. The experienced teachers who could have provided leadership and spiritual maturity for Shannon's group, are doing that down the hall for CBS. Interestingly, because Shannon and her predecessor created an intergenerational women's ministry that is thriving, the church's ministry is now getting the younger women instead of CBS. This is building a foundation of younger women who will be the members and leaders of the future.

In summary, challenges can come in many forms: resistance to change, technology, and competition with other women's ministries. Reluctance to change is a big challenge for DWM. In recent years, however, technology has become an issue as DWM must determine which form of social media is the best way to communicate with members of the group. Competition with other ministries was not an issue for many of the participants, but it can be if a DWM loses teachers and members to another ministry. The DWM acknowledged that they have faced a variety of challenges in these three areas, but have found creative ways to overcome them.

The Need for Leadership Agility

The fourth and final research question assessed the necessity of leadership agility in women's ministry. Leadership agility involves making wise decisions and being ready to take action when the need arises. During the interviews, two themes surfaced: the need to adapt to available personnel and to expect the unexpected.

Adapting to Available Personnel

The participants all agreed that the teachers and leadership team are the core of the ministry. DWM must work with the personnel that is available to them. This requires agility and a willingness to be flexible when selecting women for leadership positions. Knowing how important teachers are to the ministry, Barbara begins with an ideal teacher profile in mind. However, she has discovered that the best teachers may not fit that criteria. Ideally, she likes the Bible study teachers to be in their forties or fifties. Barbara thinks at a minimum, "they need to be in their late thirties to be a teacher because they need life experience." Of course, they must be spiritually mature. But, the ideal doesn't always happen! Her best teacher is in her seventies. Barbara says that people love it when this lady teaches. "She's phenomenal!"

At the other end of the spectrum, she has a teacher who is still in her twenties. Barbara made an exception and added Sally to her teaching team in spite of her age. Sally is on staff at the church, a seminary student, and an outstanding teacher. Although there is good reason to have an age requirement, Barbara knows there are times when exceptions can be made if a gifted teacher comes along. Sally is such a teacher.

Dawn loves to teach and it is her gift. But, she knows, "my women need to hear different voices and different teaching styles." Instead of doing all the teaching herself,

which she is capable of doing, she says, "I'm really trying to figure out how to develop leaders all the time." Dawn remembers specifically telling her leadership team soon after she took the DWM position, "I can't and I shouldn't minister to all these women, so I want to equip you." Dawn continued this thought saying, "I'm trying to always develop my teachers and let them utilize their gifts." She explained, "I've also had trainings for small group leaders. A lot of it depended on the particular gifts of the person and how eager they were. I try to model different methodologies." Dawn went on to say that she has utilized a variety of methods. "For instance, I've had several 'Day of Prayer' events with a pretty structured format to encourage women to think intentionally and with purpose for what and who they are teaching."

Lynn, like Dawn, doesn't think she should do all of the teaching. In her case, there are two reasons she relies heavily on others to share the responsibility of teaching. First, Lynn has found that if she does the majority of the teaching, her other duties fall through the cracks and everything seems to "cave in around me." Second, Lynn says "I know of at least a dozen women that are better teachers than I am. I may know more because I've gone to seminary, but actually upfront teaching gifts, there are at least a dozen that are better than I am." According to Lynn, her "challenge is always to start to bring up younger ones. I'm always projecting ten years in the future - who are going to be the Bible teachers for that generation and trying to support them and nurture them and get their feet wet." For example, one year Lynn had four of the women that she had identified each take a week of advent and do a devotional podcast for the entire congregation. She did this to give them experience in a safe context. She also often arranges for one of them

to substitute for the regular teacher, "even if it's not needed." She tries to ensure they each get to teach a week or two during the semester for experience.

Claire says, "it's a high priority to me that we have a teaching team that is generationally diverse so that we get to experience the joy of really being a family." To achieve greater generational diversity, Claire is always on the lookout for new members to add to the teaching team. She says, "I've asked the various groups to be deliberate in training up younger women." Currently, the teaching team is "predominantly fifty years old plus, but we're getting younger." Claire invests personally in meeting with these women and training them to teach. She strongly believes that "we need to be sacrificially serving the younger generation and training them up." She was happy to report that "we've seen good growth in our generational partnerships on our teaching teams." Claire was quick to add that, "I, by no means, value a younger teacher more than I value an older one. It's actually the reverse. It's about partnership in the gospel and training as a family."

Like Claire, Shannon is always on the lookout for new leaders. Sometimes, however, a woman will approach Shannon and ask to be part of the leadership team. Shannon is cautious when this happens. In her thinking, that is not the pathway to leadership. She believes leaders don't start at the top. They should come up through the ranks: join a group, do the homework, share appropriately, and attend regularly.

Not long ago, a woman who was new to the church asked Shannon "if she could jump into leadership." As she usually does in a situation like this, Shannon observed Elaine during both the large group teaching and the small group. She also asked the other members of her leadership team to keep their eye on Elaine and give her their feedback.

Elaine's actions did not appear to match her aspiration to be a leader. Shannon believes that it is not the desire to be a leader that counts. A person can have the credentials, but not be recognized by the other women in the group as a leader. It was obvious to Shannon that Elaine was not ready to be a leader. She gently let Elaine know that it was not the right time for her to step into leadership.

An interesting thing happened during the interviews. When asked what they would do if money were no object, two of the DWM said the same thing! They would use the money to take their leaders to the PCA women's leadership conference in Atlanta. At her previous church, Kay took her leaders to the conference several different times. At the conference, they were able to attend seminars and meet leaders from other churches. It was close enough for them to drive. Kay recalled that, "it was really great because we drove there and the four women got really tight." Then on the drive back, the women discussed how to implement what they had just learned. She commented, "it was a great use of our money. It was expensive, but it was an investment." In her current position, the travel time and expense prevent her from taking her leaders to the conference. Instead, she does leadership training in-house. Kay hopes someday to be able to take women from her current group to Atlanta because she firmly believes in the importance of leadership training.

Lynn is passionate about leadership training. She is well aware that even good teachers need further training. Like Kay, when asked if money was no object, Lynn immediately replied that she would invest in leadership training. She has also taken groups of her leaders to the PCA women's conference. She said, it's a "reward they get for being in leadership." The church pays for everything: registration, hotel, and

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transportation. In addition, Lynn thinks very highly of the Simeon Trust. This organization offers online training workshops for women who are currently teaching in a women's ministry. With the Simeon Trust online format, it would be easy for her to pay for several women to attend the two-day workshop. She replied, "I would do more of that."

Expect the Unexpected

Another often mentioned theme during the interviews was the need to be nimble. The DWM did not use this term, but the topics they mentioned deal with this concept. When she was hired in her current position, Barbara did not expect to find the women's ministry program splintered. But, it was. She inherited three Bible study leaders who were operating independently of the ministry and in competition with each other. They refused to even be listed on the same brochure promoting the Bible study options. Barbara observed, "they were so used to doing their own thing," She recognized that change needed to be made.

She wasn't sure what to do, so Barbara brought in another, more experienced DWM to help her evaluate and re-configure the women's ministry. The advice she received was "not to tear anything down, but build something new." Barbara was cautioned that eliminating a part of the program could wound those members involved in it. Instead, she was counseled to create a new Bible study option without dissolving the three existing ones. Barbara found that to be great advice. She decided to build "a new Bible study from scratch for mom's with preschoolers called, 'A Mother's Heart.'" She proudly notes that twenty years later "it is still going strong." Eventually, the three Bible study leaders agreed to consolidate. Barbara admitted that "it's sure taken years for the

sense of competition between studies, as well as not wanting to be under our authority, to calm down." Barbara inherited a mess, but by starting the new class and patiently waiting for the three teachers to come around, she was able to resolve the situation.

Agility served Shannon very well in 2020 when she could not hold an in-person Christmas program because of the pandemic. Not wanting to cancel the program, she shifted it to Zoom. It was called "Older than Eternity" based on Luci Shaw's poem "Dawn's Song." A woman and her two daughters did the introduction. Then, the senior pastor prayed. Following that, another mother-daughter team read scripture. Next, Shannon spoke on the incarnation and a member played "Rich Beyond All Splendor" on the violin. An older woman closed the event in prayer. The program lasted about thirty minutes and "got rave reviews."

The time between Thanksgiving and Christmas is not typically a good time to start a new program. However, Barbara recently had an unexpected opportunity to do just that. She realized that there were "lots of lonely women" who had extra time during the holidays. Barbara decided to offer a Bible study for them "during that 'empty' time until we started studies up again the first week of February." Barbara seized an unexpected opportunity to minister and it filled a need.

Agility can take many forms. Shannon demonstrated agility by using technology so she would not have to cancel a program. Barbara showed agility by adding a new program to the calendar during a time of the year when most DWM are cutting back. Three of the DWM recounted times when they needed to accommodate women who required extra help getting to Bible study.

The elderly wife of a long-time senior pastor attends Lynn's women's ministry. Because the building is too large for her to get around in, Lynn assigns Mrs. Jones' circle to a room on the first floor near a street entrance. Lynn also has pastors and deacons stationed in the parking lot at evening WIC events to escort ladies into the building. She does not want to risk having them fall crossing the street or walking up the steps.

In Shannon case, one of her Bible study leaders is legally blind and lives thirty minutes from church. Rachel could take the bus, but someone always picks her up. One particular door is the best access point for Rachel to enter the building. But, it is usually locked. Shannon keeps her phone with her so Rachel can text her when she arrives. Shannon or one of the other leaders then goes and lets her in. When the Bible study is over, one of the women drops Rachel off at home even though she insists she could take the bus.

One day, Barbara was at the right place at the right time. Because her church was in the middle of a building project, there were major issues with parking. She happened to be standing near the large entrance door that the women had to use. It was very heavy and hard to open. She noticed one of the older women approaching and said, "let me get the door for you." The lady was so relieved. She replied, "you don't know how much that helps. I pray every week that I can open this door." That incident reminded Barbara that she needed to anticipate similar issues that the construction might be causing and be ready with a solution.

In summary, two themes surfaced in connection with the necessity of leadership agility in women's ministry during the interviews: the need to adapt to available personnel and to expect the unexpected. The DWM responses revealed complete

agreement on the importance of the teachers and leadership team to the women's ministry. DWM must work with the personnel that is available to them. This requires agility and a willingness to be flexible when selecting women for leadership positions from the available personnel. A key component of putting together the leadership team is providing ongoing training to help them become better equipped. Good leaders are ready for the unexpected: three rebellious Bible study leaders, an older lady who can't open the door, a blind Bible study teacher, or even a global pandemic.

Summary of Findings

This chapter explored how directors of women's ministry create intergenerational programs for women. It began by examining the planning process DWM use. Three themes that arose from the analysis are: intergenerational leadership team, balancing the women's ministry calendar with the life of the church, and ministry philosophy. The interview participants all agreed on the importance of having a leadership team with representatives from the various generations. Several, however, found getting women in their twenties to join the leadership team to be difficult. The DWM appreciate the advice and ideas received from these women. They also recognize that it is essential to balance the demands of the women's ministry calendar with the church as a whole. They particularly emphasized being sensitive during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays and in the summer.

Regardless of their approach, all six DWM want women of all ages to come together and grow spiritually through the intergenerational ministry. Though determining success is subjective, measuring outcomes is important so DWM can plan more

effectively in the future. Evaluation methods range from getting feedback to a survey to how many women were involved in making the event happen.

The challenges that DWM face can come in many forms: resistance to change, technology, and competition with other women's ministries. A major stumbling block that can prevent DWM from achieving their desired outcomes is generational preferences. Although DWM often face a reluctance to change, technology can be an even greater challenge. Determining the best way to communicate with members of the women's ministry is complicated by generational preferences for different types of social media. The DWM also agreed that technology can be both a solution and a problem. While not a widespread issue among the participants, competition with other ministries for teachers and leaders can be problematic for DWM.

Lastly, the participants all agreed that the teachers and leadership team are the foundation of the women's ministry. Recruiting and training these women requires agility and a willingness to be flexible when selecting women for leadership positions. Another area where DWM need to be ready and willing to adapt is when something unexpected happens.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how church directors of women's ministry (DWM) create intergenerational programs for women. The working assumption was that church DWM learn best practices through creating and leading intergenerational programs in the church. There are many challenges that can prevent DWM from achieving their desired outcomes as they seek to create an intergenerational women's ministry. Therefore, they must employ leadership agility as they seek to plan a program that meets the hoped-for outcomes and enables them to navigate the challenges they face.

The following research questions guided the research:

1. What planning process do DWM use to create intergenerational programs for women?

2. What are the outcomes for which DWM create intergenerational programs for women?

3. What challenges do DWM face in creating intergenerational programs for women?

4. What leadership strategies do DWM employ to navigate the challenges of creating intergenerational programs for women?

This final chapter will begin with a summary of the literature review (Chapter Two) and the study findings (Chapter Four). It will then discuss the study findings in light of the literature review and the researcher's experiences and perspectives. It will conclude with recommendations for practice and further research.

Discussion of Topic

Every Sunday after church, I go to lunch with my eighty-seven year-old mother and my thirty year old daughter. While waiting on our food, we inevitably talk about what happened at church that morning. My mother and daughter dearly love each other and they both love the church. However, they see things very differently. In listening to their conversation, I noticed that their view of God and other preferences about worship show vast generational differences. As a member of the Silent Generation, my mother believes in the transcendence of God. To her, God is Holy and to be honored and revered. My daughter is a Millennial. She believes that God is approachable and present with her. Mother prefers high worship: traditional hymns sung to organ music and accompanied by a choir dressed in robes. My daughter prefers pop-style songs with acoustic instruments. The songs and hymns have the same words, but different tunes. This difference is a major point of disagreement between my mother and daughter week after week.

According to my mother, a cup of coffee has no place in the sanctuary and people should wear their best clothes. My daughter disagrees. She believes that God doesn't care what people are wearing or if they are drinking a latte. She thinks God looks at the heart. The differences in how they look at these things do not make one right and the other wrong. They do show that different generations look at the same things from very different perspectives. Some weeks, they have to agree to disagree.

As a result of these lunch conversations, I became interested in this topic of intergenerational differences. As a DWM, I deal with this issue every week with the ladies who attend the women's ministry. The older women know that the church cannot exist without their financial giving. The younger women are the future of the church and

without them the women's ministry will die. Their differing views present challenges for me as I plan the women's program. I have come to realize that I must learn to accommodate the preferences of all four generations of women who attend without compromising Biblical principles. Creating an intergenerational program became my goal so that the women of all ages could come together and grow spiritually.

In addition to lunch each week with my mother and my daughter, an article by Dr. Paul White revealed an idea that I had never considered. He argues that the different generations are like different cultures. This was eye opening. He compared the exasperation generations have with each other to what travelers experience when they are visiting another culture. This made me think of the frustration I see during our weekly Sunday lunches. The generational differences between my mother and my daughter are not about age. They are about core values. Dr. White's article described the very issue I was witnessing at the lunch table. At the end of his article, he suggested six ways to bridge generational differences. Two of these resonated with me. The first was to "seek to understand, rather than criticize." The second was to "be gracious and accept that you may not understand another's viewpoint." He summarized by saying, "we all, regardless of our age, generation, or cultural background, have a lot to learn from one another and much to offer." This is exactly what I want for the women in my group.

Summary of the Study and Findings

Summary of Literature Review

This study reviewed relevant literature in three areas and analyzed interview data from six directors of women's ministry. During the literature review, three topics

surfaced that are relevant to the experience of DWM: the Biblical framework of

relationships, intergenerational worldview differences, and leadership agility.

Biblical Framework of Relationships

The first area of literature examined was the Biblical framework of relationships.

When Claire used the family reunion metaphor during her interview, it connected this

area of the literature to the women's ministry. Her explanation about the different

generations coming together at a reunion summarized what Biblical relationships are all

about. When families get together with aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters,

grandparents and cousins, they have to be willing to eat foods they don't care for and talk

to family members they would rather avoid. They do it for the sake of the family. The

relationships in a women's ministry are built on the knowledge that each person is made

in the image of God and that they are sisters in Christ. If I can create a space where

women of all ages can build relationships with each other and become more like family

that "bears with one another," then I will be accomplishing my goal for the women's

ministry.

Intergenerational Worldview Differences

The second area of literature was intergenerational worldview differences. Before

undertaking this research, based on my weekly Sunday lunches with my mother and

daughter, I thought that older people were sometimes cranky about even small changes in

the worship service and younger people took a casual approach to Sunday morning

worship. These differing views seemed like superficial preferences, not a difference in

deep-seated core values and beliefs. While waiting on their food, they were arguing over

organ vs. acoustic music and "Sunday best" clothes vs. office casual. However, the literature for intergenerational worldview differences revealed that the generations are distinct from each other and this changed my way of thinking.

According to the literature, the generations are like different cultures. The studies published by the Pew Research Center showed the generations have diverse values, attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics, much like different cultures do. In her adaptation of Edward T. Hall's iceberg model, Jamie Gelbtuch divides culture into the visible behaviors and invisible values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions that describe generations.[229] Dr. Paul White's article brought my personal experiences together with the literature in this area. When he equated intergenerational differences to cross-cultural interaction, it was a moment of clarity. Not only did I better understand what was happening at lunch on Sunday, but I realized that this was the same dynamic taking place in my women's ministry. Like cultures, the generations of women need to remember that differences are not bad. The key is to learn to appreciate each other and remember that they have much to offer one another.[230] Although I don't mention the generational cohort theory to the leadership team when planning a women's event, we do take into account the generational differences.

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[229] Gelbtuch and Morlan, "Successful Project Management Leadership in a Multigenerational Workplace," *PM World Journal* V, no. XI (November 2016), www.pmworldjournal.net and Gelbtuch, *The Role of Resiliency in a Global Lifestyle*, 2 and Gelbtuch, email message to author, October 16, 2020.

[230] White, "Viewing Generational Differences Through A Cross-Cultural Lens," and White, email message to author, October 16, 2020.

Leadership Agility

The third area of literature focused on leadership agility. Numerous studies

exploring leadership agility can be found relating to fields such as business, the military,

and the medical profession. Businesses must be agile to survive. Military agility may be

the difference between life and death. Agility in the medical profession is the difference

between a large incision and a laparoscopic procedure covered by a band-aid. When I

noticed that Tod Bolsinger and the other pastors and ministry leaders were all basing their

books on Ronald Heifetz's theory on adaptive agility, it was a watershed moment.

Adaptive leadership, according to Heifetz, means taking risks, experiencing anxiety, and

making hard decisions.[231]

It became clear that we DWM need to develop leadership agility to meet the

challenges of constant change. If we don't take risks and make the tough choices, we will

continue do things the same old way. This was made obvious while I was conducting this

research in 2020. The global pandemic necessitated risk-taking and re-imaging how the

women's ministry would look. For example, we had to cancel all in-person activities for

six months. Two weeks into the lockdown, I decided to send out a devotion on our

ministry's Instagram. The positive feedback started coming in immediately. The next

week I asked my predecessor to do one. Every Tuesday thereafter, a different woman

from our group posted a ten-minute devotion on our Instagram page. The risk was this

involved technology that was unfamiliar to me. By re-imaging the large group Bible

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[231] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 1-9, 22-26, 126-29, 243-44 and Terri L. Elton, "Leading in the Midst of Change: A Theologically Grounded, Theoretically Informed Hermeneutic of Change," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 7, no. 2 (September 2008): 31.

study and converting it to a devotional, the women were able to stay connected and be encouraged spiritually.

Discussion of Findings

The literature review addressed the Biblical framework of relationships, intergenerational worldview differences, and leadership agility. The qualitative research aimed to understand how DWM utilize the planning process, outcomes, challenges, and leadership agility in creating intergenerational women's ministry programs.

Three themes emerged from the interview data regarding the planning process. The participants all agreed on the importance of having a leadership team with representatives from the various generations. This conclusion came as no surprise. In order to have an intergenerational ministry, it seems logical that it would be built on an intergenerational foundation. If all generations are not represented on the leadership team, then there will be a noticeable void. The generations that are missing will not have a chance to give input and share their ideas and suggestions.

Upon reflection, the two different philosophies of ministry mentioned in the interviews may actually be opposite sides of the same coin. The DWM all sought the same end result. They wanted to create an intergenerational program where women of all ages could grow spiritually. Since the end result they were seeking is the same, it seems the difference is not so much philosophical as much as it is execution.

During the planning process, my leadership team spends a great deal of time on the calendar. They must take into consideration: the women's personal calendars, the women's ministry calendar, and the church's calendar. Therefore, when all six DWM

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mentioned issues with the calendar I could relate to how difficult it is for them to balance their women's ministry calendar with the life of the church. It is a give and take process.

When the participants were discussing the outcomes of their intergenerational programs, it was interesting to hear the criteria they used to measure whether or not they achieved their intended purpose. When Shannon said that she measures success based on how many were involved in making the event happen, I realized I had never thought of it that way before. I am more accustomed to measuring success based on how many women came to the event. Now that Shannon has caused me to think about this option, I can see the merit in looking at success both ways.

I was not surprised, that only one of the DWM likes using surveys to get feedback. On the surface, surveys seem like a quick and easy way to find out what the women thought about the program or what they would like to do in the future. However, if you ask them what they want, they will expect you to do it. That sets you up for failure because no matter how hard you try, it is impossible to please everyone.

Although only two of the DWM spoke directly to the difficulty of women of all ages building relationships, their observations provided deep insight. Both of those DWM admitted that accomplishing this goal is more difficult than it sounds. They noticed that the older women prefer to spend more time with their own age group. Two things came to mind. Based on the literature review, this was not unexpected. If the generations are like different cultures, then they would naturally want to be with those who are most like them. I also thought it was brave of Claire to confront the older generation and tell them they need to think of the younger women as their granddaughters. By putting it in that

context, Claire was encouraging them to reach out and invest themselves in the younger generations.

This idea resonated with me. I have two Bible study groups of older women who want to stay together. This is a dilemma for me. I understand that they are comfortable in their current group. I also recognize that they may feel less secure in a new group with younger women. For them, change means loss. I have been inclined to let them stay together. But now, I am thinking about how I could get them to join an intergenerational group so the younger women can benefit from the older women's wisdom. Furthermore, the older women can benefit from the younger women's enthusiasm and energy.

While I decide on the best way to make the groups more intergenerational, I am going to use the refreshment time as an intermediate step. Using color tags or numbers, we will intermix the ages together at the tables. We will also rotate a member of each generation to share with the whole group what God has been doing in her life. Admittedly, this is not going to accomplish our goal of an intergenerational Bible study groups. However, it is a first step in that direction and it is something that we can build on.

The data showed three major challenges that the DWM consider the greatest obstacles to creating an intergenerational ministry: resistance to change, technology, and competition with other women's ministries. Two kinds of resistance to change emerged from the interviews: those relating to format, "but that's the way we've always done it," and those caused by power struggles. Conflicts over format are usually based on generational preferences. Since becoming the DWM, I have observed that although the Silent Generation and the Millennials say they want intergenerational relationships, they

still prefer to have their own age-group Bible studies. They are happy to have social activities together, but they feel more comfortable studying the Bible with women who are going through the same stage of life. I admit that I have two groups of older women who have threatened to quit coming if they are put in an intergenerational group. They want to keep their age-based group intact. My own mother has said her group will meet at her house if I disband their group. I can get them to sit with younger women at a luncheon or during a fellowship time. That is no problem. But, my dilemma is, do I try to force them to assimilate into the big group or allow them to continue their own small group that they have had for years?

Prior to the pandemic of 2020, the big issue with technology related to how best to communicate to the different age groups. Since the generations tend to use different types of social media, the discussion was about which ones to use so everyone could stay informed. When the pandemic prevented meeting in-person, technology became the only way the women could safely meet together. Zoom became a household word. All six of the study participants utilized it in their ministry. It was not unexpected to find the Silent Generation and even the Boomers struggling with the technology. Being a novice at technology, I too had to learn how to use Zoom for meetings and Bible studies. Currently, we are using a Paul David Tripp series for our weekly Bible studies. If some of the older women miss Tuesday morning, I have to arrange a time for them to come in when I'm there so I can turn on the DVD player. They do not know how and they are afraid to learn.

Although I expected challenges like resistance to change and technology, I did not expect competition from another ministry. Community Bible Study (CBS) used to meet

at a nearby church. When that church began a building renovation, CBS started using our facilities and continued to do so for several years. I never felt like we were in competition because their group was small in number and getting up in age. Two years ago, the group disbanded. Recently, however, I had lunch with one of their former teaching leaders. She wants to re-start the group in our building. That brought this challenge home to me. I admit my first reaction was to wince. Her ideas made me nervous. I am aware that they could take one or two of our key leaders and perhaps twenty members that now attend our program. But, after a minute or two, I also realized if they can get more women to come to Bible study, then we will gladly share our building with them. Their ministry is not the enemy. We both share the same goal.

These and the other challenges that DWM face do not have to be insurmountable obstacles. Leaders from sectors as diverse as the business world, the medical field, and the military have realized that leadership agility is a necessity in an ever-changing world. This is also true of DWM. Two themes surfaced in connection with the necessity of leadership agility in women's ministry during the interviews: the need to adapt to available personnel and to expect the unexpected. DWM must be flexible when recruiting and training women for leadership positions. All of the participants agreed on the importance of the teachers and leadership team to the women's ministry. However, unlike business leaders, medical administrators, and military superiors, DWM must work with the personnel that they have available to them. Perhaps the biggest surprise in these interviews was when Kay told about how she handled the Fab Five and their rebellion against her leadership. Her idea to invite the ring-leader to be part of the teaching team

was astounding. In a very diplomatic way, she showed that she was in control and not intimidated.

Sometimes agility requires a small, but obvious change to solve a challenging problem. Some of the most interesting conversations I had with the participants revolved around the retreat. All six DWM talked about the importance of the retreat to their program. One even exclaimed, "it's one of the best ways to get the women of all ages in the same room." I was not surprised that a major challenge that they all face is finding a facility where the older women are willing to come. Dawn's suggestion to host the retreat at a hotel seemed so simple and yet so obvious. It solved the problem that older women have with bunk beds at camps or rustic retreat centers!

I actually made a similar simple adjustment a few years ago that solved the same problem, but in a different way. Like Dawn, I could not get the older women to attend our retreat. So, we held the first night's session at the church. Everyone was able to go home and sleep in her own bed. Then, I arranged for one of the deacons to drive the older ladies out to the retreat facility on the church bus the next day. This way, they could attend the retreat without spending the night. Close to fifty of the older women came. This small change enabled us to accomplish our goal of getting the generations to spend time together and build relationships.

On so many levels, the literature, the research questions, and the data are inseparable throughout the study. The retreat is a microcosm of how they are woven together and intertwined in the creation of intergenerational programs where women of all ages can build meaningful relationships and grow spiritually.

Recommendations for Practice

In light of the findings described above, it is recommended that denominational leaders and DWM implement the following suggestions. The recommendations for DWM are specific ideas for practical ways to create an intergenerational women's ministry. This is God's design for the church. Titus' instructions to the early church still stands. The generations have duty to teach and encourage each other. The recommendations for denominational leaders are "big picture" in nature and deal with the training of DWM. These recommendations are gleaned from the literature, the data, and personal experience.

Build an Intergenerational Team

If the goal is to create an intergenerational ministry, having a leadership team comprised of women representing each of the age groups is essential. The first recommendation, therefore, is that all DWM assemble an intergenerational leadership team. The women's ministry is a logical place for women of all ages to build relationships in keeping with the principles found throughout Scripture and in particular Titus 2:3-5. All six of the study participants reported having an intergenerational leadership team. A common theme in their responses was the invaluable benefits gained from such a team. Among the benefits they mentioned were wise counsel, a built-in prayer team, and a "plurality of voices." In addition, they also recognized that it creates a group who have a vested interest in the ministry and who can promote the program to their friends.

As shown in the qualitative data, the DWM unanimously agreed that the leadership team should be comprised of at least one person from each generation

represented in the women's program: twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, and sixties plus. Although they acknowledged the benefits of having a representative from each age group, three of DWM pointed out that it is very difficult to recruit women from the twenties age group to serve. They are either at work, caring for small children at home, or they prefer attending a separate Bible study with those their own age.

In the process of undertaking this research, it has become apparent that it may be difficult for some DWM to assemble an intergenerational leadership team. But, it is not impossible. It requires being intentional. According to the data, it is worth the effort to implement because it is the foundation of an intergenerational ministry.

Build Biblical Relationships

Besides assembling an intergenerational leadership team, DWM need to focus on specific ways they can encourage women of all ages to purposely interact with each other. The following are four recommendations for implementing a plan to create opportunities where the women can build relationships.

The first recommendation is associated with the goal of creating a space where women of all ages can build relationships while they grow spiritually. Clearly, this is a vast undertaking. Engrained behaviors must be overcome to encourage the generations to mix. When most women arrive at an event, they look for someone they already know to sit with. They seldom choose to sit with someone they don't know or who is not their age. Of course, the women's Bible study may be their only chance each week to see their friends. There is nothing wrong with this. But, DWM can build in small, incremental opportunities for the women to make new friends and get to know members of other age groups.

While considering this topic for my dissertation, I decided to try a little experiment. Each week during the refreshment time of our large-group gathering, a member of one of the four generations shared a short, personal story about how God has worked her life. This enabled the members to get to know each other on a more personal level. Some women volunteered freely to tell their story. Others had to be coaxed into sharing. This proposal was cost-free and easy to implement. And, it paid big dividends toward our goal of building an intergenerational women's ministry.

A second recommendation involves a quarterly luncheon or dinner. During the interviews, Barbara told about the special program that she does called "Come to the Table." Each woman randomly selects a paper tag that is one of twelve colors. The tag has an address where to meet for dinner. The goal of this activity was to mix up the age groups and to help the women make new friends. Barbara declared the event a huge success – even though she nearly lost two of her older members.

Any DWM can adapt this activity for their group. It does not matter if it is large or small. The event can be held right at the church. No need to have everyone driving around looking for an unfamiliar address. Purchase four or five different colors of paper dinner plates – one for each generation in your group. Put two plates of each color at a table. When the women arrive, give them a name tag that is the same color as their generation's plate color. Then instruct them to sit at any table that has a plate that color available. Each quarter this will enable them to get to know six ladies from different generations.

It is important to remember that the goal is to mix up the different generations, but not to make anyone feel uncomfortable. If someone brings a friend, just pull up an extra

chair, don't send them off to sit at a table of total strangers! Members of the leadership team should be posted around the room to help watch for people who need help finding a plate of their color. "Table hosts" can sit at different tables to invite "lost" women to join them. In addition to providing an opportunity to mix up the generations, this is an excellent time to audition younger women who are being considered for the leadership team. They can be made the "table hosts" so you can see if they are comfortable talking with people they don't know and if they are able to show leadership in this small way.

A third recommendation involves using technology to bring the women together when, for one reason or another, they can't gather in person. As seen in the qualitative data, all six of the DWM utilized Zoom during the pandemic in 2020. For example, Lynn hosted a "Mother, Daughter, Sister, Friend" luncheon on Zoom in June and Shannon held a Christmas Zoom Mother / Daughter / Granddaughter Luncheon that December. These events, made possible by technology and quick thinking, accomplished the goal of bringing the generations together.

However, the use of Zoom is not limited to pandemics. It can be used for occasions such as the Spring Women's Tea or a quarterly prayer gathering. Not only can events like these bring together the various generations in the group, they might also be able to connect family members from generations that are living elsewhere. One of our church's charter members has a daughter in Birmingham and granddaughters in Austin, Texas, and Jackson, Mississippi. She and her daughters and their families are very close. However, they do not get to see each other very often. A Zoom event could be a fun way to overcome the geographical distance that separates them through allowing them to

participate together in one of the special women's programs. Activities like this that bring generations together require agile leadership and creative planning.

The fourth recommendation involves creating opportunities for the women to serve alongside of each other through special projects. During the interviews, Barbara recounted a service project that her group did. Women of all ages set up an assembly line and packed parcels of non-perishable food for families in Zambia, Africa. Service projects like this are a good way to accomplish two things at the same time. These projects often benefit other ministries such as Samaritan's Purse or the Salvation Army. In addition, it is a chance for women of different ages to get to know each other better while working side-by-side.

This fourth recommendation is also based on a service project my group does. We host a "rEcess" night each month. "rEcess" is a national organization founded in Little Rock, Arkansas. The group is a ministry to parents of children with a disability so they can have a "date night" out. When the project was announced to members of the women's ministry, members of four generations immediately volunteered! The volunteers are paired up two per child, one older and one younger. The Gen Z high schoolers volunteered to help so they could get credit for service hours. But, when they completed their hours, they continued helping. Although this project is designed to be a blessing to the parents of the disabled children, an unintended blessing has been how it has connected women from the four generations.

Leadership Agility

Without leadership agility, the women's ministry will become stagnant. It is imperative that DWM remain agile at all times. Through interacting with the literature

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and the data, it became apparent that there are three areas where leadership agility is crucial to creating an intergenerational women's ministry.

One area where agility is critical is in balancing the differing expectations of the generations. This is particularly true when it comes to curriculum. Members of Generation X, the Millennials, and Gen Z tend to prefer shorter units accompanied by DVD presentations to the more traditional year-long studies. Switching to this format would not compromise the Bible teaching. However, there might be some initial resistance from the older women to using a new format. According to Peter Brinckerhoff, bridging the "generational divides" requires working together to find common ground.[232] I tested a nine-week study using the Paul David Tripp video series on Hebrews 11 in the Spring of 2021. Because the teaching is only twenty minutes long, everyone stayed engaged. Although one member of the Silent Generation complained because she prefers a verse-by-verse study of Scripture, she loved being all together for these lessons rather than being divided into age-groups. In addition, the shorter studies enabled us to rotate teachers more often, allowing younger ones to gain experience and prepare them for future leadership roles. Even small adaptations like this can help bridge the generational differences.

A second area where leadership agility is vital involves the ministry calendar. During the interviews, Lynn pointed out the benefits of moving her evening women's Bible study from Tuesday to Wednesday. These benefits included one less night out, free childcare, and the church offers a meal. There are also several programs for older

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[232] Peter Brinckerhoff, "Understanding the Different Cultures of Different Generations," last modified 2013, accessed October 13, 2020, https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/organizational-effectiveness/understanding-the-different-cultures-of-different.

children. These factors are appealing to women with children because they do not have to arrange for childcare and they don't have to cook. Lynn's church also provides security so the women of all ages can feel safe walking to their cars in the dark. Merging the women's ministry calendar with that of the church can be difficult. However, being willing to adapt might lead to more women being able to participate.

A third area where agility is essential is in accommodating women who might need extra help. Barbara's story about the woman who could not open the door and Shannon's anecdote about the blind teacher illustrate how DWM must always be on the lookout for similar instances. This issue came home for me when I saw a ninety-year old women trying to walk from the parking lot to her Bible study room. She kept having to stop and sit down to catch her breath. It occurred to me that we needed to place chairs at intervals in the hall so she could rest along the way. This made me realize that my leadership team and I needed to anticipate these types of situations and have a plan in place to accommodate their needs.

Training for DWM

Before pastors begin their ministry, they must complete seminary, then pass oral and written ordination examinations. When hired by a church or a ministry, they are often examined again by a presbytery or another governing body. In contrast, there is no standard requirement of seminary training such as a Master's Degree or M.Div. for DWM. Since the women's ministry can play a vital role in the church's overall ministry, it is recommended that denominational leaders encourage churches to require formal training for candidates applying for a DWM position. The better equipped DWM are through theological studies, they better prepared they will be to contribute to the church's

mission. One limiting factor is the expense of obtaining a degree. It could be prohibitive for many DWM unless churches agree to subsidize the tuition.

Another option that could address the lack of formal training would be conferences and panel discussions. Admittedly, there are already excellent general conferences for women. The PCA Leadership Conference in Atlanta is one example. However, the focus of the PLC is Bible study leaders rather than DWM. Likewise, the Simeon Trust offers online workshops for women Bible teachers, but not specifically for DWM. Perhaps the Simeon Trust could add a workshop geared for DWM to their online training. Courtney Doctor, Coordinator of Women's Initiatives for The Gospel Coalition, hosted three Zoom groups for DWM during the pandemic in 2020. The goal of these meetings was to bring DWM together for encouragement, brainstorming ideas, and networking. Making this option a permanent offering would provide a third avenue for DWM to exchange ideas and suggestions for best practices.

An additional option could be to have panel discussions hosted by churches and seminaries, or during the annual General Assembly meetings. Events could be held regionally to keep the registration cost to a minimum. Panel members could respond to questions from an emcee and then take questions from the audience. These panels could provide DWM the opportunity to network and ask questions of experienced DWM. These sessions could be video-taped and posted on the PCA web page, the panelists' home church web sites, and the Covenant Theological Seminary and Reformed Theological Seminary web pages as a resource material for active DWM and anyone undertaking research on the topic of DWM.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study is the first to be devoted exclusively to an examination of how DWM create an intergenerational women's ministry. As with any study, there are limitations as to how extensive the research can be. There are many topics that merit further research which could contribute to scholarship.

The first topic is leadership agility. During the literature review, the sources for leadership agility demonstrated that agile leaders are a necessity in an ever-changing world. In the process of conducting the review, it became obvious that little scholarly research has been done on ministry agility. There have, however, been several books written by pastors and ministry consultants. These authors used Ronald Heifetz's adaptive leadership theory as the foundation for their examination of leadership agility in a church or ministry setting. The literature also showed that that agile leaders exhibit three skills. These skills include a willingness to take risks, relational or interpersonal skills, and an understanding of the cultural context in which they are ministering.

One of these books is *Canoeing the Mountains* by Tod E. Bolsinger. He draws on the experiences of explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to examine leadership agility, basing his analysis on Heifetz's adaptive leadership theory to shape his argument.[233] He claims that many pastors find themselves surrounded by a post-Christian culture. If pastors are to thrive in this setting, they must learn to take risks like Lewis and Clark.

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[233] Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*, Exp. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015).

While many books have been written on leadership agility by pastors and ministry leaders, there are no such works about DWM. Bolsinger's premise that pastors must learn to navigate the challenges of a post-Christian culture would be a good starting point for a companion volume for DWM. In their case, rather than the context being a post-Christian setting, it is an intergenerational environment. Dr. Paul White's hypothesis that generations are not age-based groups, but rather resemble separate cultures would provide a framework for a more thorough examination of generational worldview differences in a women's ministry context. As life-expectancy continues to rise, the number of generations represented in women's ministry will increase. This would be fertile ground for testing Heifetz's adaptive leadership theory in a crucible of the competing generational preferences found in the women's ministry.

A second topic that would be highly beneficial is a longitudinal study of DWM creating intergenerational women's ministry programs. This current research represents a cross-sectional study. It is a snapshot at a specific moment in time of six DWM. In contrast, a longitudinal study is conducted by observing the same participants over an extended period of time. If such a study were undertaken by conducting observations of DWM at different points throughout their ministry, it would show how things change over time.

If the participants in that study began with a women's ministry that is not intergenerational, but over the course of time built it into an intergenerational program, that type of study could provide data on how to accomplish this goal. It could include a more in-depth look at how to plan for integrating the younger generations with their differing core values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions into the women's ministry.

Another possibility would be a study with a broader scope. Expanding the geographical perimeters to include all regions of the United States, as well as representatives from smaller congregations would add a different perspective.

A third topic would be practical ideas and suggestions from DWM. This could take the form of an edited, book-length work by DWM. The chapters could address best practices, success stories, and times when an event or activity failed. Although this volume would not be a traditional academic study, it could be an invaluable resource for less experienced DWM.

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