Women in Leadership
NATIONAL STUDY

Best Practices for Attracting, Promoting, and Retaining Female Leadership in Christian Organizations

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BEST PRACTICES FOR ATTRACTING, PROMOTING, AND RETAINING FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN CHRISTIAN NONPROFITS AND COLLEGES

In the previous report, "Gender Dynamics in Evangelical Institutions," we examined the individuals who are leading in Christian organizations and the gendered beliefs and perceptions of those in leadership. Three central findings emerged. First, women are not well represented in the leadership of evangelical nonprofits and higher education institutions. In fact, the numbers are about half of what they are in the larger nonprofit and education sectors. It is especially rare for large evangelical nonprofits and educational institutions to place women in the organization's top leadership position. Second, much variance exists among organizations in terms of the number of women in leadership, clarity of the organization's stance on women in leadership roles, and gender climates. Finally, we found that many women and men do not know where their peers stand when it comes to the concept of women in leadership, and men and women in the same organizations often assess the level of opportunities and general climates of their organizations differently.

Based on our analysis of tax records and survey of organizational leaders, we interviewed male and female leaders at nine nonprofits and five colleges to better understand the best practices for attracting and encouraging women in leadership positions. At one level, we are interested in the different individual journeys of female leaders into leadership, with attention to the internal and external variables that have been important. On another level, we explore the different values, practices, and climates of organizations that help them to attract, promote, and retain women within leadership positions.

The appendix includes a detailed methodology of how these fourteen cases were selected, key organizational variables of these cases, and a demographic overview of the women and men who were interviewed.

We highlight five practices for attracting, promoting, and retaining women in leadership. Organizations should 1) be attentive to policies and procedures; 2) intentionally invest in diversity initiatives; 3) have senior leaders publicly support women in leadership; 4) provide education and foster discussion about gender and race; and 5) connect gender diversity to organizational mission.

I.   Be Attentive to Policies and Procedures

Organizations often have policies in place to prohibit discrimination. We first recommend that nonprofits enforce such policies and take issues of discrimination seriously. Second, organizations should consider flexible work policies as appropriate, and we highlight some suggestions below. Third, companies should acknowledge and investigate issues of gendered pay inequality and consider the impact of salary/benefits on the retention of employees. Within each of these areas, it is important not only that policies and programs are in place but also that senior leaders are fully supportive of such policies.

A. Enforce Non-Discrimination Policies

Nonprofits and colleges need to take issues of gender discrimination seriously; a similar case should also be made for issues of racial/ethnic discrimination. Several female leaders discussed

how their complaints about gender were not taken seriously—sometimes in their current

organization, or in the past; on occasion, they were accused of being overly sensitive. The

Human Resources (HR) department plays a critical role in this area. One female leader who had

worked with HR noted that

> There have been occasions…where we have had to speak to some guys, perhaps out of
> innocence, in how they related to younger women in particular… But I have observed
> that more when it's been different generations, and usually the woman is much younger
> and the guy does not even have a clue that [a pat on the back, personal questions] might
> potentially feel awkward to her or feel inappropriate.

One male leader discussed being approached by HR in his organization for his own behavior,

and admitted that he did not initially recognize it as inappropriate, but that he now understood

why his behavior was seen as offensive. In small nonprofits, members may feel reticent to

discuss complaints against supervisors, and HR needs to enable people to voice concerns.

In addition to enforcing policies related to harassment or discrimination, the organization should

have clear expectations regarding the respect that should be given to women in authority. This is

especially the case in organizations where there may be mixed attitudes among leaders regarding

women's role in the church. Although nonprofits and colleges are not churches, they are

involved in ministry. One male executive noted, "We have a statement in our new code of

conduct about insubordination towards women's leadership…If you're insubordinate and don't

like a woman supervisor, that's grounds for discipline." The HR director of one institution

articulated this standard in a context where there would be theological differences. He stated,

"We have been very aggressive in trying to communicate that if you are being treated differently

because of your gender, we want to know. We try to confront that. There is a difference

between somebody sharing a different perspective versus treating you differently." We found

that many organizations in the broader sample of evangelical nonprofits do not clearly state their stance toward women in leadership and expectations toward staff.

B. Create Flexible Policies that Work for the Organization

Paid maternity and paternity leave and policies that welcomed children into the workplace were often mentioned as contributing to a positive workplace environment for women and men alike. While many nonprofits do not offer paid leave, a majority of the organizations in our study did, sometimes beyond the customary six weeks. Further, in multiple organizations, leaders discussed the importance of children-friendly policies. Within one organization, a female member of the executive team noted, "we've had office babies—the office of the president has had four babies, and we claim them as our own." A female leader in another nonprofit mentioned that she appreciated that her boss "allowed me to bring my children to work so I could nurse them." In general, men and women expressed an appreciation for workplaces that they saw as family friendly. Men in several of these organizations also had taken advantage of policies allowing them to spend more time with their young children. One lingering concern in several organizations pertained to travel and conferences: in some organizations, leadership was trying to think creatively about ways to provide childcare or arrange for events that incorporate families to make them more accessible to mothers and fathers of young children.

A number of female leaders also discussed the importance of flexibility in work arrangements. This included the ability to work remotely or within part-time positions; in some cases, it meant combining different jobs to create a full-time job, while in others it meant allowing people to start in part-time positions and move to more time-consuming roles as this became possible for

them. The goal was to create a position that worked for the employee being recruited in light of her life stage and outside commitments. Multiple interviewees talked about turning down a job before the organization refashioned it to better fit their situation.

Interviewees believed that the commitment of senior leaders to promoting women in the workplace was as important as having the appropriate policies in place. One woman noted that she had altered her schedule to come in later in the morning, but was also coming into the office at night. Her boss, although he had given her flexible time, equated not seeing her at typical times with slacking off, and did not understand the effort she was giving during non-traditional hours. Even though she was "doing all this extra work... It was just like that didn't even exist and that was horrible." Several of the female leaders discussed the difference it made when they felt valued by the organization. One woman noted how much she appreciated her female boss telling her, "We want to do whatever we can to make this work" because it signified that the organization valued her contribution and was committed to helping her figure out the details of how to balance her personal and professional lives.

C. Discuss and Evaluate Salary and Benefits

Issues of pay and salary need to be discussed within the organization. Some leaders noted Christians are often discouraged from discussing salary or equity concerns, and employees who do so are sometimes viewed as less committed to the mission or vision of the organization. Given that women typically receive lower salaries than men, not discussing the issue can translate into continued gendered pay inequality.

This pay imbalance is especially evident when it comes to positions where salaries come from individual fundraising efforts. In the Christian nonprofits we interviewed, women were less likely to be financially supported by churches and church members, in part because of congregants' conflicting views regarding women as ministry leaders. Furthermore, because of gendered family expectations about the husband being the main breadwinner, several leaders mentioned that women's financial support tended to drop after marriage. Women generally had a harder time raising sufficient support. In addition to these gender concerns, leaders noted that those from minority communities and those from lower class backgrounds also have a more difficult time raising support. As a result, gender and class can shape who is able to work for the organization.

Organizations have dealt with fundraising challenges in two different ways. The first approach is to set aside funding for women and those from minority and lower income communities who may face more challenges in raising funds. In this way, people are not paid solely as a result of the funding they raise. This strategy is important both for leadership positions and intern positions, since in many nonprofits, intern positions are often the entrance point into the organization, and future leadership often comes from this pool. A second approach is to rethink the way that leadership positions are funded, primarily by incorporating more paid and salaried positions. One organization moved from a senior leadership team that mostly raised their own funds to one where some positions were salaried; in doing so, they also made these positions more attractive to outsiders. As one male leader noted,

> We just had never done it before, and we realized as we moved into this new century and everything, that not all of our people had the skills that we needed …particularly when you get into some of the more highly skilled areas of, whether it's finance or fund development… and so back about a dozen years ago we hired our first vice-president. And that cracked the

ceiling, and as the years have gone by we've realized that you know we need the best people in there, not just who's available from within our membership.

In addition to salary concerns stemming from issues of fundraising and support, leaders also mentioned the importance of benefits. Female leaders cited this issue more often than male leaders. Within nonprofits, pay levels are rarely comparable with similar work in other industries, and leaders within multiple nonprofits mentioned the importance of an attractive benefits package – such as health care, vacation time, maternity/paternity leave, and flexible work policies.

II.   Intentionally Invest in Diversity Initiatives

In some cases, a lack of gender diversity in leadership is intentional, as some Christian nonprofits and colleges think that men alone should serve in the highest positions. However, for a majority of nonprofits and colleges, this does not seem to be the case. For those who are open to gender diversity in leadership, we recommend attention to developing leaders and providing opportunities for them. Additionally, resources should be invested in diversity efforts, and the organization's leaders need to hold themselves accountable to their own goals. In efforts to increase diversity, organizations should also recognize intersections between gender and race.

A. Develop Leaders

In many of the organizations in our study, programs exist to develop leaders from employees already within the organization. Organizations should consider how to use such programs to promote women, minorities, and other underrepresented groups. We found that having managers

and mid-managers responsible for identifying leaders was important. A plan to move these promising employees into leadership positions is also needed.

To recruit women to leadership positions, we also encourage consideration of diverse measures of leadership. Through our interviews, it became evident that women were less likely to apply or take a position simply for the sake of being a leader. They often voiced a desire to develop new skills, increase their responsibilities, or tackle new challenges. One woman discussed the fact that because she did not score as a leader on a particular assessment, she was not being groomed for leadership in the way that her male counterparts were. However, many female leaders came into leadership roles because those above them provided opportunities for them to grow. Additionally, female leaders mentioned the importance of being recognized and affirmed in their leadership gifts by mentors and other leaders.

B. Invest Human and Financial Resources in Diversity Efforts

If increased gender and racial diversity are organizational values, resources should be directed towards these efforts.   Diversity efforts need to be supported and monitored. Leaders in different organizations discussed ways that they invested in such efforts. One organization had a division that dealt with diversity issues. Others had a gender-related task force that met with different leaders and departments. Still others had a VP of diversity or an HR compliance officer who named gender as a key issue. In some cases, these actors were involved in hiring decisions and in the interview process. In other cases they led accountability reviews for the organization, presented before the board or meetings of all employees, and led educational efforts on diversity issues within the organization. Finally, several organizations also had a committee of the board

that provided oversight and accountability regarding gender and racial/ethnic diversity and diversity efforts.

C. Collect Data and Hold Oneself Accountable to Diversity Markers

Some of the organizations we studied used annual reviews as accountability mechanisms for reaching diversity markers. Often such reviews were coordinated with the board, or the board was in charge of analyzing corresponding data. In terms of hiring, one leader noted a desire to ensure the process itself was robust: during the organization's most recent presidential search, the board was "trying to be very diligent and inclusive in the process, so that whoever becomes the new president will be empowered by the fact that people know we conducted a robust process to come to this conclusion." Within another organization, executives reviewed the work of its gender task force every year, and all employees were updated on its progress. Yet another organization issued an annual report to the board on its progress toward strategic goals, including diversifying leadership. Groups tasked with evaluating markers are then able to lead the broader organization in thinking about ways to promote change and move forward.

D. Actively Recruit a Diversity of Women

While most of the organizations sought to increase gender and racial diversity, these were rarely pursued together. Racial diversity was often named as a more important strategic priority or emphasis as compared with gender diversity. When organizations address these issues separately, it may mean that white women and men of color are the targets of diversification efforts. That said, a few organizations stood out for the way that they dealt with such diversities in relationship to one another. For example, in one organization, one female minority leader

championed a peer, noting that she was "very intentional about cultivating relationships [with women of all ethnicities and races]….rather than assuming that all of the women's issues are the same." In yet another organization, a leader discussed engaging a number of female theologians from various countries to better understand different feminine perspectives on God and the church.

To find effective female leaders, organizations must recruit outside their normal networks. Organizations with successful outreach had done so beyond a desire to increase their applicant pool; instead, it was part of a sustained and holistic effort to be involved in diverse communities. In these cases, gender diversity must be highlighted alongside race/ethnic diversity. In some organizations, we noted that almost all of the outreach to diverse racial communities was targeted towards male leaders. Successful strategies used by our interviewees to increase gender and racial diversity included reaching out to faith communities that have a long history of promoting women leaders, investing and participating more actively in ethnic-specific faith communities, and trying to engage younger Christians. Such findings suggest that the organization's leaders must consult other leaders outside of their networks for advice, listening to and learning from those outside of the organization's normal base of support.

In order to attract or promote female leaders, organizations must recognize the different pathways men and women traditionally take into leadership. The women and men we interviewed rarely sought out a leadership position. Despite this commonality, with women the resistance to leadership was often stronger. Women often took advantage of a leadership opportunity because of a chance to grow or because of a commitment to the organization.

Several of the women needed to be asked to lead multiple times or to be strongly affirmed in their own abilities and how those abilities matched the needs of the organization before taking the job. The leaders within the organization pursued them. As one woman who moved up was told, "You need to take this now." Another female leader who initially turned down a position of leadership noted that the organization kept approaching her: "I was not sure I was going to come back…So they returned, persuading me to consider an offer of something that was appealing to me, and I came back."

III.   **Have Senior Leadership that Publicly Supports Women in Leadership**

People who hold senior leadership roles—especially the top leadership role—matter for the trajectory and climate of the organization. The top leader—whether male or female—can contribute to a positive organizational climate by encouraging collaboration among the leadership team and by fostering healthy male-female professional relationships. We also found that senior leaders who supported women publicly were appreciated and contributed to a better working environment for women. Finally, we argue that having senior leaders who are female is important for both the men and women serving in the organization, in legitimating and modeling female leadership.

A. Make the Senior Leadership Team More Collaborative

One way that senior leaders contributed to a more female-friendly environment was through cultivating collaboration. Female leaders often expressed an appreciation for being able to work in more collaborative environments. This collaboration was evidenced in the way people thought that leaders listened and the ways that input from others was used. A number of leaders talked

about seeking out the opinions of others for advice. In several organizations, program ideas came from audiences being served. Senior leaders asked their employees for advice with different projects, modules, and organizational decisions. One person noted, in describing the chief officer of her organization, that he "likes to surround himself with a variety of ideas, and a variety of staff." Another leader recalled an instance when the head of her organization sought out her opinion, saying to her "'I just trust you, you know, your judgement'…and I was honored because this is amazing when you have a mentor…coming and asking you questions." One female chief officer noted that "my philosophy is hire people smarter than you."

In addition to the attitude that a senior leader takes, there were also examples of structural changes in the organizations that increased collaboration. In several of the nonprofits, the senior leader had reorganized his leadership team to include more leaders in the decision making and to reduce hierarchy between himself and direct reports. In one nonprofit, they had transformed the office spaces of senior leadership to be more connected and open; another organization used lots of windows to encourage collaboration with senior leaders. In these cases, changing the structure of leadership teams and transforming space encouraged collaboration.

B. Support Women Publicly in Word and Deed

Based on the survey results in our earlier study, we found that although most leaders (ninety-five percent) support women in leadership within society and the organization, twenty percent of the female leaders interviewed did not believe that their peers supported women in leadership in such circumstances. Within interviews, we found that leaders sometimes assessed the support of

other senior leaders towards women differently. Organizational members do not always know where senior leaders stand when it comes to women in leadership in the organization.

Accordingly, women mentioned the importance of having men publicly and vocally support women's leadership. Men may be hesitant due to the potential cost within some Christian environments that may result from supporting women in leadership roles. One leader talked about pushback he received in the past when he appointed women: "I did care what they thought, but I wasn't going to let what they thought and what they were expressing to me inhibit what I knew was the right thing to do in relation to including very talented people—oh by the way they're female…They had the gifts and skills that I needed to accomplish what I believe God had called us to accomplish." Female leaders did not want their gender to define their value, but rather wanted to see a recognition that both men and women were gifted.

For female leaders, simply being female does not equate with being an advocate for other women. There were a number of female leaders who were lauded by peers for the ways they had actively pursued policies and strategies to make leadership opportunities more accessible for women. For example, one female leader noted the difference another female leader in her organization had made: "She has spent probably her whole career as being the first or the forerunner for a lot of other women leaders so I think she has done an amazing job in giving voice and being an advocate for women in so many ways."

Beyond public advocacy, additional strategies are available to male leaders who wish to foster women in leadership. Female leaders discussed the importance of mentoring by male leaders and

being included in male networks. They expressed appreciation for male leaders who had expanded their leadership teams—both in terms of race and gender—because they valued other perspectives. At the same time, they also noted that without intentionality, they are often excluded from male networks. Interviewees recognized that top leaders who supported female leadership in word did not translate that support into informal practices. For example, one female executive noted, "It's not necessarily that [our leader] doesn't trust women… but [within his leadership team] the people that he did trust [were mostly white and male]."

Women also appreciated top leaders (male and female) providing opportunities in the organization for them to lead. Senior leaders who provided opportunities for women to lead and be visible in the organization affirmed the value of female leadership to those inside and outside the organization. This communicated to other organizational members that women have leadership potential. For instance, one leader was proactive in placing women in front of the board to make sure they have adequate opportunities to represent the organization.

Male leaders might also consider ways that they can support female leaders in less-than-supportive settings. In each of the fourteen organizations included in this phase of the study, all leaders supported women's leadership at the top levels of the nonprofit or college, and the organizations were part of networks with more mixed attitudes toward women in leadership (or mixed realities concerning the presence of women in leadership). A few female leaders mentioned their appreciation not only for being asked into these broader umbrella groups, but also for the ways male colleagues were intentional in their support in such settings.

C. Model Positive and Professional Culture and Relationships

Female leaders spoke positively of male peers who were able to engage in professional relationships with women, and attested to the importance of modeling professional male-female relationships. A number of men in our study did not have a great deal of experience in this regard, although it seemed to make a significant difference if the men had wives, mothers, sisters, or daughters in whom they recognized particularly strong leadership skills. One female executive mentioned that the organization has "such great strong male leaders who don't feel threatened or intimidated by women." When talking about the male chair of the board, a fellow female board member highlighted "the regard he has for everyone in the room but particularly for the women and the way he honors and makes space for us and communicates the value of our contribution." Yet another leader appreciated her CEO's "capacity to function collegially with women and his innate, profound respect for women and their gifts."

A number of leaders, male and female, discussed the ways that men's approaches to authority sometimes differed from women; in particular, there is sometimes a greater need for men to show power. One male executive noted that men "tend to exert their authority" while women are less likely to do so. Another male leader stated that the "male ego is really problematic in some leaders." Women who had worked with men talked about the ways in which they were not heard. Both men and women noted that women's challenging of ideas was sometimes less acceptable than it was for men who were expected to exhibit dominance. Awareness of these dynamics is important for male leaders as they seek to interact with female leaders and colleagues as equal partners.

D. Recognize the Symbolic Importance of Women as Senior Leaders

Among those who affirmed women's leadership, there were a number—male and female—who admitted that they felt more comfortable under male leadership because that is what they had experienced in the past. Several leaders within established organizations discussed the ways that these organizations had been historically male-dominated. Evangelical nonprofits have a history of being dominated by male voices, and the symbolism of having female leaders has positive impacts for women and men, albeit in different ways.

For men, the presence of female leaders provides a chance to experience being under the authority of female leadership. Many of the men interviewed had not had to report to a woman within the context of their nonprofit or college. This was especially true of men where most of their work experience was in evangelical settings. For men who affirmed women's leadership in faith-based and ecclesiastical settings, one of the two main reasons for this affirmation was their experience with and exposure to strong female leaders (the other central factor, and a more important one, was biblical study of the issue). This was true for men who theologically affirmed women in leadership (in the church and society), and for those who were dealing with the theological complexities associated with women in leadership. As one man noted, "I know there are women who feel called by God, and boy I can't argue against a call." Several men talked about how being involved with strong female leaders in the mission field had changed their attitude regarding the leadership of women in Christian mission activity.

When organizations have a mix of female and male leaders, such leaders have the opportunity to model positive male-female professional relationships. Some women expressed that the more

they saw these professional relationships modeled, the more options they envisioned for their own leadership style and peer interactions. As one female executive noted, in an organization with more gender parity, "You're watching men dealing with all the different women in the room in ways that are different than each other," and this reality provides more opportunities for how women and men can interact. Those leaders who worked in more mixed-gendered leadership settings were less likely to draw on stereotypes. As one woman noted who served on a gender diverse leadership team, "it's hard to answer how men and women are different without massively overgeneralizing."

Models of women who exercise leadership in evangelical institutions also provided legitimation of the leadership abilities and potential of other women. Female executives discussed the important role that Sunday school teachers, pastors, and mentors had played in showing what female leadership looked like. One female leader noted that "Having a female leader, even if it's in a Bible study…does bring out that sense that 'I could do that, I could be that strong woman too.'" A second female executive who had grown up with constraints on women in leadership noted that it was another female leader who allowed her to envision herself as a leader. She said of one female peer, "I look at her and go, 'You're one of the people I'm going to blame as well, capable women who are in leadership roles and doing all this stuff who are just messing with all the paradigms I've had throughout my life." Finally, another female discussed how seeing different models in the past allowed her to imagine herself in a leadership role.

It is important that women serving in leadership are racially diverse. One female leader of color talked about what the lack of female (and non-white female, specifically) representation meant

for her: "[The organization] has largely been dominated by white male middle class and clerical men. I believed deeply in what [the organization] was doing, and yet did not see my community or populations like myself reflected in that."   However, this same organization later actively recruited multiple women of color to serve in leadership in response to a growing awareness of the issue, and the interviewee above served on the board. Women of color are the least represented demographic in evangelical nonprofits (as noted in our earlier study); this communicates that many evangelical nonprofits and colleges are not for them. As evangelical nonprofits hope to reach out to more diverse communities, this must be modeled within the leadership.

IV.   Provide education and foster discussion about Gender and Race

Leaders' assessments of their organizational climates varied; women were more likely than men to identify areas needing improvement related to gender dynamics. We offer two key recommendations. Organizations should make sure that women—and especially women of color—have opportunities to collaborate with others like them, and that the issues they identify in the organization are taken seriously. Second, interviewees spoke to the power of education on gender and racial issues, and we suggest some ideas to increase awareness of gendered issues for all organizational members. Finally, we list some of the central gendered concerns and barriers that leaders named in our interviews; while these vary based on organization, they provide a starting point for issues an organization might consider.

A. Provide Opportunities for Female Staff to Collaborate with One Another

One of the ideas that emerged within our interviews is the power that comes from having multiple women serving in leadership together. Some female leaders talked about feeling alone at different points in the organization, especially when serving predominantly with male leaders. Women of color and white women experience this isolation in different ways; the same is also true when looking at married and single women. Most of the women serving in evangelical nonprofits are white and married. Some organizations recognized this, and tried to provide forums where different mid-level leaders and senior leaders could come together. Being intentional about fostering support communities for women, racial minorities, and especially women of color can be very helpful.

B. Increase Training and Education for Employees Regarding Racial/Gender Concerns

As mentioned, a disproportionate number of male interviewees believed that gender dynamics were not a problem in their organization. Women were more likely to discuss ways that gender was at play in the organization. In the survey, most men rated the gender climate in their organization as more positive than did the women (by about ten percentage points).

To try to increase understanding about gender dynamics and foster discussion, some organizations engaged people in shared educational experiences. This often included reading books together or watching films. One organization developed educational modules for employees on issues related to gender and race in the workplace. Another posted educational resources online to help male leaders encourage and support female staff (and encourage their leadership development.) In trying to increase organizational members' awareness of gender dynamics, several organizations also recognized the importance of making sure they were

learning from women's experience and voices. For example, in two different nonprofits, there was an emphasis on having the leadership team read and discuss theological works and biographical accounts written by women of various races, ethnicities, and nationalities. This choice was made given the dominance of theology and literature by men that has shaped leaders' education to date. One group of leaders mentioned that these materials helped them have better discussions about the variety of challenges faced by women. In another organization, leaders discussed the important role that reading female theologians of color played in raising their awareness towards racial issues and refining their theology.

Leaders in one organization noted that discussing issues of diversity could be difficult if people were honest and spoke of challenges they faced in the organization. This is especially the case when their colleagues might be implicated. Several women described past experiences where they had a number of negative interactions with male leaders, and sometimes with female leaders, that were based on gender stereotyping or discrimination. In many of these cases, nothing was said to their peers. But as one female executive noted, her leadership team had "agreed with each other to hold short accounts…If someone says something that crosses a line and could be taken as inappropriate, hurtful, whatever… because there's a number of us in there we'll step up for the other person and go, 'Hey, that was inappropriate.'" In this organization, grace is coupled with a willingness to also call out hurtful behavior.

C. Recognize Key Barriers that Impact Female Leaders

The majority of female leaders that we interviewed discussed challenges associated with being a woman in leadership. Given that this document is focused on practices to attract, retain, and

promote women, we will not go into detail on the host of issues discussed. The concerns expressed by female executives and board members varied, primarily based on race, age, and marital status. The three dominant issues that interviewees mentioned were expectations towards female leaders, concerns about sexuality, and evangelical restrictions towards women's leadership in the church. Some women identified their concerns as minor, or as annoying micro-aggressions with which they have been able to cope. Others continued to struggle within the organization while being unable to voice concerns publicly. Still other women have left organizations because of these issues.

One of the central issues women raised were the expectations about how they could or could not lead. They felt pressured not to be "too bold" or "too pushy" or "too forceful," but instead to be nurturing, deferential, and kind. A second challenge women faced was having their competence and authority questioned regularly, most often those who were under their authority. One woman noted that "I definitely feel a little bit of pressure that I have to prove that I know what I'm talking about…. When [male leader] speaks… he [is perceived to know] what he is talking about." Women's authority was often seen as sphere-specific, and this limited their ability to speak for the organization in broader contexts. Top women leaders of organizations have been invited to speak at churches and had invitations rescinded; some have been told that polity prohibits giving them a platform; some acknowledged they cannot and will not be invited to some places. Female leaders spoke to a host of ways that their role as nonprofit leaders was challenged, both within and outside of the organization.

There are internal implications as well; several of the women we interviewed talked about doubting their own leadership abilities. One female leader, committed to women's leadership inside the organization and church, noted the impact of upbringing: "There is always this thing in the back of my head…what if my dad was right? What if women aren't supposed to be pastors? I just don't think God gifted women with these amazing abilities and these gifts and talents and created women to be leaders and then said, 'But you can only do it in this box.'" One female leader noted, "I had a huge battle with myself after taking the job because I was thinking, 'Spiritually, can I lead men? Is that allowed?'... So that was a wrestling match I was going through." As one educational leader shared, "…at the back of your mind you will find yourself thinking, 'Might I damage my kids? Am I making choices that will lead them to be unhappy or drug addicts?' There is all the baggage that women carry."

Beyond challenges associated with expectations and opportunities for leadership, several women also spoke about the suspicion of women's sexuality and its implications for leadership. One woman, expressing a view held by several interviewees, noted that "We're forced to be aware of our sexuality and be responsible for that…" Men, on the other hand, were more likely to talk about how they put up boundaries: one clear advocate for women stated that "I have to have clear boundaries because sexuality is always there." Women experienced disadvantages due to this fear of their sexuality. One person declared, "If you can't meet with a door closed you're never going to be privy to really important information. If you can't have lunch with a man alone in a public arena you're going to miss out on some very important establishment of relationship and shared lives and ministry together. If you can't travel in a car with someone between points A and B alone you're going to miss some of the most important talking that is

ever done between two colleagues." While many colleges and nonprofits maintain high moral standards towards sexual behavior, these should not be equated with the exclusion of women, or the suspicion of them, within intimate professional spaces and networks.

Finally, women spoke about the impact of church life on their professional life. The female leaders interviewed were more likely than male leaders to affirm women's leadership in the church. Women with these egalitarian church attitudes were also more likely than men with egalitarian attitudes to discuss frustrations associated with a lack of consistency between spheres (the workplace and the church). As one female leader stated,

> When you are trying to live an integrated life – how do you do that when you have this whole different paradigm going on in the church? You have this workplace that says you need equality, but at its root, it doesn't really believe that to be true. That's where I run into problems in faith-based organizations. We have people who theologically come from a perspective that just runs antithetical to what the workplace is trying to accomplish.

While several women struggled with restrictive theology toward women in leadership in past (or present) churches, even in egalitarian churches, a number of women struggled to make connections. As working mothers or professional women, they often struggled to find a place in the church and mentioned feeling alone.

V.   **Connect Gender Diversity to Organizational Mission**

Efforts to connect gender and racial diversity to the pursuit of mission and vision varied greatly across Christian nonprofits and colleges. For those who could articulate why they desired diversity, several key theological and organizational approaches are noteworthy: an articulation of God's desires for community, a recognition of God's gifting of women, and a recognition of

the organizational value of diversity. We would also encourage organizations that are seeking

gender diversity to make clear these commitments.

A. Develop a Robust Theological Understanding of Gender and Diversity for Mission

Three values seemed to guide organizations' commitments to gender diversity. The first was an

emphasis on community and the need to include everyone in that community. In one

organization, leaders expressed a strong belief that all voices are needed; individual differences

brought the community closer to Christ and led to greater effectiveness in achieving their

mission. Given that Christianity is a corporate rather than individualistic faith, leaders noted that

we learn about Scripture and faith from others. Groups with high levels of diversity generally

recognized a need for the help of others if we are to understand God and God's Word more

deeply. An emphasis on the need for all people was often connected to a belief that men and

women have different experiences, perspectives, skill sets, and approaches to leadership, and that

it was important to bring these voices together for a fuller picture of God and the world.

"Inclusion" was a word that leaders often associated with such a perspective.

A second value associated with desiring diversity was a commitment to more accurately model

the Kingdom of God. Here, organizations wanted to better reflect God's people and to improve

their witness to the world. Leaders recognized that some demographics have less of a voice than

others and sought to ensure their inclusion. One female executive commented, "the overall goal

is to reflect the body of Christ" and noted that diversity of gender and race/ethnicity were both

core to reflecting the Church; as a result, she stressed the need to be intentional in pursuing that

diversity. According to another leader, diversity in leadership "gives our [audience] a full

perspective of the thinking that's going on in the kingdom." Another leader stated that "If we're made in the image of God, male and female and all ethnicities and tribes...I am actually not doing you a service as a non-Christian or Christian by giving you this really narrow space… I am actually giving you the opportunity to have a more thorough understanding not only of who God is but what our relationships are like."

A third theological value was justice and a desire to think about sin beyond individual actions. A substantial subset of the nonprofits in our sample focused on under-resourced or marginalized populations. As such, these organizations were especially cognizant of how society and the Church have prioritized the perspectives of the dominant groups, namely those of whites and men. These organizations were motivated to increase diversity in leadership out of a sense of responsibility to address this injustice and were aware of the systems and structures that supported and encouraged it. Notably, this idea was referenced more often by men, although women did discuss it. One leader noted, "When you have only white men at your board table, you are perpetuating a systemic imbalance of power that organizations will have to correct in a very intentional way in order for there to be any progress towards something like equality."

B. Allow Women to Fully Follow God, Grow the Organization, and Live in the Kingdom
Many leaders (male and female) who supported women in leadership focused on encouraging women to follow God's leadership in their life. Leaders who pursued gender parity exhibited an active desire not to limit the work of God in others. Even those who were open to women in leadership, but were not actively pursuing more diversity, expressed the same sentiment. At a basic level, many of the Christian organizations had a commitment to allow God to work in

people's lives. Empowering women meant giving God the freedom to work within women, and giving women the power to answer the call of God on their life. One female executive noted, "I just want to be Christ-centered and Biblically-based and as far as I understand how Christ related to women, it was very liberating." Yet another woman said, "I'm going to be very passionate about wherever God calls you to serve. That's where you need to be, male or female. Wherever the Lord calls you, that's where I want you to be." Yet another top female leader noted that the failure to support women had severe theological implications: "We quench the Holy Spirit in our organization if we say, 'I'm sorry, we have a rule, and our rule is more *important* that your sense of gifting." One male leader noted that God does not give gifts to people only to ask them not to use those gifts; he argued that an organization would not be allowing *God's* gifts to be used if women were restricted. Several leaders stressed that Christians need to free people (and organizations) to be faithful stewards of the gifts that God has provided them, and link this attitude toward partnering with God's mission in the world.

C. Acknowledge the Organizational Impact of Increased Gender Diversity

A number of leaders have served in organizations that were dominated by male leadership and those that were led by men and women together. Research reveals that mixed-gender teams often enhance organizational performance; in our interviews, leaders mentioned three main impacts of greater gender diversity in leadership. First, leaders noted that they have seen more collaboration on mixed-gender teams. One female executive said that she is now part of a "much more collaborative team, there's a lot more communication, a lot more collaboration, a lot more willingness to be in each other's business." Second, leaders acknowledged the broader perspectives and better conclusions that emerged as a result of diversity. As one leader put it,

"diversity brings more robust discussion which leads to better decision making." Another female leader commented that, "the more diverse your leadership, the greater the understanding of reality we will have." Finally, leaders stressed that they saw increased professionalization on mixed-gender leadership teams. This was true for leaders coming from female-led and male-led contexts. One person noted that "conversations are healthier and we get more work done." Another leader noted that she was more "careful about those kind of side comments or things… that's also where you can have some accidental discrimination… So the more professional we are in our interactions and in our meetings the better."

Conclusion

Given the variance among female leaders and among organizations, we did not identify a single formula for how to best encourage, retain, and promote women within leadership. However, the interviews with leaders yielded some best practices that we found repeated both in the individual lives of female leaders and in organizational contexts that nurtured women in leadership. In this report, we highlighted these best practices. Organizations need to 1) be attentive to policies and procedures, 2) invest in diversity initiatives, 3) have senior leaders be vocal and active in their support of women in leadership, 4) encourage discussion of challenges related to gender and race, and 5) connect gender diversity to organizational mission.

Within these five practices, three central findings emerge. First, organizations have to recognize the importance that senior leaders play in shaping other organizational members' and leaders' professional lives. Senior leaders are instrumental is shaping the organizational culture; leaders who took collaborative approaches were often attributed with creating a more positive

organizational climate, especially for women. Senior leaders also provide powerful models to men and women in the organization, and other leaders spoke about ways leaders modeled healthy male-female professional relationships and actively supported women. Policies to create more positive environments for female staff and leaders were more effective when championed and supported by the senior leader. Finally, simply having female senior leaders communicates important messages to all in the organization.

The second central finding is that practices must acknowledge and address the ways that structural realities impact the gender climate. In other words, policies and procedures shape the experiences of women in leadership.   Within many organizations, current realities disadvantage female leaders. Practices that we found that were effective in encouraging women in their leadership growth were addressing discrimination, promoting work/life balance, funding diversity efforts, and changing leadership structures and job roles.

Finally, in addition to the role of individuals and structures, we have also tried to highlight the importance of theological commitments. While secular nonprofit organizations have similarities with evangelical nonprofits, evangelical organizations stand out in the centrality of theological perspectives in their understanding of their missions. Skirting issues of gender, which seems to be a popular choice, is not effective when this choice is an obstacle to an organization's desire to use all the skills, talents, and gifts of its staff in order to achieve its mission and advance the Kingdom. We were most impressed by the strength and effectiveness of organizations that clearly saw and articulated the relationships among diversity, obedience to God, and achieving the organizational mission that God had entrusted to them.

Methodology

For this final phase of the study, we selected a subset of cases that varied on a number of different organizational variables: size, location, type of ministry, and church affiliation and religious tradition[1]. These cases were all selected for performing better than average on a number of gender indicators, including having at least 20% of the board of directors and 20% of paid leaders be women (if there were at least 3 paid leaders). In addition, interview respondents in Phase Two had to, on average, place opportunities for women at 80% or above for their workplace. All respondents to the survey for that organization also had to agree that "Men and women should share leadership roles within society."

Nine nonprofit organizations and five colleges were selected. (We initially selected ten nonprofits and six colleges, but one nonprofit and one college did not respond before the interviews were completed) We contacted a senior leader within each organization—either the CEO/President or a senior leader with whom we had previously been in contact. Within each of these organizations we interviewed the top leader, all women at the second tier of leadership, and a number of other men holding key leadership positions (e.g., provost or executive vice president). We also interviewed board members within the organizations. For the nonprofits, two board members were interviewed per organization; for the colleges, board members were interviewed in three of the five cases. A total of 63 nonprofit and 25 college respondents were interviewed.

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[1] More information about the first two phases of the WILNS study is available on the WILNS website, www.gordon.edu/womeninleadership.

Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. One co-PI (Janel Curry) conducted all the interviews with college leaders, given her role in leadership within the CCCU and at Gordon College. For consistency, the other co-PI (Amy Reynolds) interviewed all the nonprofit leaders. We used an open-ended questionnaire that asked about the following topics: a) individual pathways to leadership and experience in leadership; b) assessment of organizational culture and organizational factors encouraging and hindering women from leadership; c) experience with mentors, advisors, and current leaders within their organizations; d) understanding of the theology and values that guided their organization in efforts of diversity; e) family experience, both growing up and current, and how it supported their experiences in leadership; f) church experience, both growing up and current, and how it supported their experiences in leadership and addressed gender dynamics; g) their impression of their own leadership style; h) their own theological views, generally and on gender; and i) their attitude towards feminism.

In all cases of paid leaders, we first tried to arrange in-person interviews. For each of the case studies involved, we also visited the headquarters of their organization. Due to heavy domestic and international travel schedules, there were four women and two men (nonprofit leaders) who were interviewed via phone. Conversely, we decided to interview all board members via phone. Here, there was also one exception of a female nonprofit board member who was interviewed in person. All interviews were recorded, with two exceptions where women preferred not to be recorded and extensive notes were taken instead.

Interviews were first transcribed and then coded with the assistance of qualitative data analysis software atlas.ti. A set of 63 codes was developed to code each interview, grouped by six central

themes: individual leadership factors, organizational leadership factors, perspective of the individual, church experience, family experience, and the impact of gendered diversity.

Table 1: Organizational Characteristics of Case Study Organizations

Organization	Sector	Size (Millions)	% Board Female	% Leaders Female
Christianity Today Intl.	Nonprofit-ECFA Literature Publishing (Media/Arts)	$12.8	27%	50%
Development Associates International	Nonprofit –ECFA Graduate/Seminary (Other)	$5.1	50%	100%
Fellowship Housing Corporation	Nonprofit – ECFA Rescue Mission (Social Service)	$0.6	45.5%	100%
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship	Nonprofit –ECFA Student Ministry (Missions/Ministry)	$75.9	36%	20%
Medical Teams Intl.	Accord (Social Service)	$142.6	26.7%	50%
Mission Year	CCDA (Social Service)	$1.2	37.5%	0%
Open Door Rescue Mission	Nonprofit – ECFA Rescue Mission (Social Service)	$15.8	15.3%	--
Sojourners	CCDA Social Service	$4.4	40%	20%
Wycliffe	Nonprofit-ECFA Foreign Missions (Missions/Ministry)	$162.6	11%	24%
Bethel College	College/Univ-Holiness	$39.8	10%	14.3%
Eastern Mennonite University	College/Univ-Anabaptist	$41.9	40%	27%
Messiah College	College/Univ-Anabaptist	$112.8	27%	44%
Spring Arbor University	College/Univ Wesleyan	$66.7	31%	29%
University of Northwestern	College/Univ Ecumenical	$78.3	35%	33%

Table 2: Individual Characteristics of Interviewed Respondents

Type	Male – White	Male – Nonwhite	Female – White	Female- Nonwhite
College/University	10	0	13	2
Nonprofit	13	3	38	9