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A STUDY OF IDENTITY ISSUES THAT AFFECT CLERGY LEADERSHIP

ON LGBTQ INCLUSION

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September 26, 2018
Educational Leadership

A STUDY OF IDENTITY ISSUES THAT AFFECT CLERGY LEADERSHIP ON LGBTQ INCLUSION

Abstract

This dissertation analyzes how the leadership decisions of thirty local church Protestant clergy in Virginia were influenced by personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Self-understanding of identity issues affected clergy practice of biblical and theological interpretations on topics that include: purity, inclusion, same-sex marriage, ordination of LGBTQ persons, denominational loyalty, local church loyalty, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and transformative leadership. The researcher used semi-structured phenomenological interviews with seven focus groups and seven individual follow-up interviews. The researcher explored the process by which clergy construct their identities, while noting the resulting leadership strategies implemented by local church Protestant clergy in their local congregations. This qualitative research study fills an existing gap caused by a majority of research being conducted on denominational level rather than local church level leadership decisions in relationship to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. This study advances substantive knowledge about how personal, organizational, and cultural identities play integral roles in leadership methods employed by clergy at the local church level on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. The study revealed that traditional clergy did not believe same-sex attraction to be a sin, but that sin occurred through the participation in homosexual acts. In response to same-sex attraction traditional clergy advocated for celibacy, while progressive clergy advocated for same-sex marriage. When doing biblical

interpretation on homosexuality, traditional clergy focused on specific passages where God commands “You shall not (commit this homosexual act)” in order to maintain purity. When doing biblical interpretation on homosexuality, progressive clergy allow for contextualization of the narrative stories in the Bible, and focus on passages that contain the word “all” as a witness for inclusion. Both traditional and progressive clergy gravitate toward transformational leadership to promote dialogue on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, however, only progressive clergy follow transformative leadership in creating new leaders of LGBTQ persons. Also, both traditional and progressive clergy have a stronger gestalt identity through their local church, than an aggregate identity with their denomination.

Keywords: *mainline Protestant clergy, homosexuality, LGBTQ inclusion, personal religious identity, organizational religious identity, cultural religious identity, purity, inclusion, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, transformative leadership*

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Doctor of Education

Educational Leadership

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of two college roommates and friends, Chuck Koch and Duncan McRae. Christian men, whose gay identities in church were semi-closeted, and who struggled for full inclusion in society.

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I would like to thank the following individuals for their guidance and support throughout this incredible journey: Dr. Carol Burbank, Dr. Angela Young, and Dr. Rob Vaughn. This work would not have been possible without your patience, comments, wisdom, and encouragement.

I would like to thank the Rev. J. Brooke Willson for inviting me to attend a Richmond Flying Squirrels minor league baseball game during the summer of 2017. By the third inning the Flying Squirrels were hopelessly behind, so we began to talk about my research on personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues that affect clergy leadership for matters of purity and inclusion. Brooke suggested I examine the historic effect of Puritan theology and practice to promote personal, organizational, and cultural purity. The examination proved fruitful, so I want to acknowledge the helpful role the Richmond Flying Squirrels played in this dissertation.

An additional thank you goes to Dr. Shelley McClure who suggested I use crystallization as my method for analysis. Crystallization broadened and deepened my analysis.

Most of all I want to express my deepest gratitude to my wife, Jan, for her support, comments, and encouragement during this journey to fulfill a dream of mine that would not go away. Thanks for your love and sacrifice.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On a Wednesday morning in May of 1984, Adam (a pseudonym), entered the office of the Rev. Jimmy Creech and declared, "I quit! I won't take it anymore. I'm leaving the church" (Creech, 2011, p. 1)! What had upset Adam, as he informed Rev. Creech that he was gay, was an article in the local newspaper reporting that the 1984 General Conference of The United Methodist Church had adopted "a new policy prohibiting the ordination and appointment of 'self-avowed practicing homosexuals'" (p. 1). In addition, the General Conference had placed in Paragraph 304.3 in *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* a doctrinal statement on moral purity and homosexuals that read "The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching" (p. 226). Rev. Creech writes, "Because I didn't know anyone who was a self-avowed practicing homosexual, the news meant nothing to me" (Creech, 2011, pp. 1-2). However, Adam's comments prompted Creech to reflect on what he had been taught as a boy about persons who identified as gay or lesbian, "that they are dangerous people, psychologically sick, depraved, and immoral. Adam fit none of these stereotypes; in fact, he'd destroyed them for me. He was a healthy, responsible person of good character. He was a gentle person of faith, a thoughtful and practicing Christian. Who Adam was and my beliefs about homosexuality were incompatible. I was distraught" (p. 3).

The confusion experienced by Rev. Creech on that day is not unusual as Cadge, Girouard, Olson, and Lylerohr (2012), found that 70% of clergy "expressed uncertainty in their personal *opinions* about homosexuality, uncertainty about how they should *act* pursuant to the issue, or *both"* (p. 371). The effect of Adam's visit on Rev. Creech was twofold. First, Creech realized that due to pastoral responsibilities he could not remain immobilized. To move forward

he recognized that "it was necessary for me to look back on my personal history to understand how my attitudes toward sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular had been formed" (Creech, 2011, p. 4). Second, with regards to action he realized that his mission as a pastor was "to help people overcome whatever damaged them spiritually; whatever diminished their capacity to trust God's love, to love others, and to love themselves" (p. 4). This realization brought new insight as Creech writes, "I never imagined sexuality to be an issue of justice, much less a spiritual one" (p. 4). The issue of justice would serve as seed for Creech's eventual full-grown commitment to transformative leadership on matters related to homosexuality. However, at this point Rev. Creech began a journey "with no clear destination and with no guide or maps to follow, other than the intuitive sense of what was right, just, and compassionate" (p. 4).

An initial step in that journey for Rev. Creech was "to know and understand what the Bible said about homosexuality, what the Christian church had taught about it over the past two thousand years, and what the most current scientific studies on sexuality revealed" (p. 27). For foundational biblical information Creech went to *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (IDB) and found unambiguous statements denouncing homosexuality with the practice being an abomination worthy of death (Buttrick, 1951, pp. 27-28). A scriptural passage cited in support for this judgment was Genesis 18-19 where the male citizens of Sodom demanded that Lot send out the two male guests (angels) in his house for sexual purposes. Genesis 19:5 (New Revised Standard Version) reads, "Bring them out to us, that we may know them." The word *know* in this passage is a euphemism for *sexual relations*. The IDB then referenced six more passages that it claimed specifically condemned homosexuality: Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Romans 1:27, I Corinthians 6:9, I Timothy 1:8-11, and Jude 7. After reading these scripture passages and the accompanying commentary from the IDB Creech almost ended his research, but "these words

did not describe Adam.…I was not willing to consign Adam to this condemned company, to pronounce him a sinner because he was gay, to say that God did not love people like him. I felt compelled to investigate further" (Creech, 2011, p. 28).

Rev. Creech is not alone in investigating the matter of homosexuality from the perspectives of the Bible, and the traditional understandings of the Christian church. However, that process is complicated by the fact that "there is a fight on between contemporary biblical scholarship and theological proposals on how Christians should read their scripture" (East, 2017, p. 31). The fight reveals two biblical mandates and theological issues that appear to be in conflict and form the brackets in the debate over homosexuality and the church (Campbell 2006; Kapinus, Kraus, & Flowers 2010). The first is the call for individuals and the faith community to pursue and maintain purity (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; I Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:3-8). The second is to extend hospitality as an act of inclusion (Leviticus 19:34; Matthew 25:35; Romans 12:13; Titus 1:8; Hebrews 13:1-2).

The contrasted understandings for the biblical, theological, and cultural concepts of purity or inclusion in relation to homosexuality have created a division in the organization that is the church. This division is categorized by those *for* purity who refuse to condone homosexual behavior that would contaminate individuals as well as the church, and those who are *against* excluding homosexuals as they do not believe homosexuality to be a sin that contaminates individuals and the church (Campbell 2006; Countryman 2007). However, it must be noted that there are many responses within the two brackets that are based on differing theological beliefs or ethical values (Campbell 2006). Those in the middle are urged to join one side of the bracket. This political activity produces *in-groups* and *out-groups* (He & Brown 2013) that limits dialogue, thus hindering organizational unity. The conflict within denominations over the proper

organizational response to homosexuality or Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-Queer (LGBTQ) inclusion (Blank, Asencio, Descartes, & Griggs 2009) has already caused fracturing within the Episcopal and Presbyterian traditions (McAuliffe 2015). In 2019 The United Methodist Church (UMC) is preparing for a specially called General Conference to address matters related to sexuality. At a minimum the denomination will change, and possibly divide into two or more denominations (Wesleyan Covenant Association 2017).

The conflict over issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion pose leadership challenges to local church Protestant clergy. Jones and Cox (2009) found that there is widespread agreement among Mainline Protestant clergy that avoiding the topic of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion is not a realistic option. Only 9% of clergy in their study agreed that the best approach to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in the church is "don't ask, don't tell" (p. 15). Church members are looking to their local clergy for leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Methods of leadership for clergy will be affected by the conclusions reached following a period of re-examination of the relationship between homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and their personal, denominational, and cultural identities. These conclusions will shape what and how they preach and teach about Christian faith and homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Researcher Role

The researcher's interest in local church clergy leadership for issues that result in conflict comes from having observed and even been part of conflicts during his 40 years of service as an ordained clergyman in the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. In 2019 at a specially called General Conference, the only body that can make official decisions for The United Methodist Church, recommendations will be received that, at a minimum, will change the

denomination and possibly result in two or more new denominations. The presenting issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in this conflict for The United Methodist Church has also been experienced by other Protestant denominations. It is a crisis that cries out for leadership from local church clergy who are closer to and will have more effect on local church members than will denominational leaders. Given the circumstances the researcher decided to examine the influences that eventually help to formulate a clergyperson's decisions regarding how to lead in a local congregation on conflicted matters such as homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. It is the hope of the researcher that the findings of this research study will add to academic knowledge and to practical application.

One other matter that compelled the researcher to undertake this study was to honor two college roommates who were gay and who served as groomsmen in the wedding of the researcher and his wife. The first roommate, whose father was a United Church of Christ (UCC) clergyman, was murdered on the streets of Washington, D.C. by a homophobe a few weeks after the wedding of the researcher and his wife. The second roommate died of AIDS. His death occurred decades prior to the Supreme Court decision in 2015 to allow same-sex marriage, so he and his partner were denied the right that heterosexuals enjoy to exchange vows in a church wedding and be legally married. While the nation permits same-sex marriage, a number of denominations, including the researcher's denomination, prohibit clergy from officiating at same-sex marriages and has an official policy that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.

Effective clergy leadership, especially during times of conflict, has long been a matter of interest for the researcher. Through the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church he received training by Dr. Peter Steinke, author of *Healthy Congregations: A Systems*

Approach (1996), as a Healthy Congregations Facilitator and as a Bridgebuilder Consultant for congregations experiencing serious conflict. The successful management of a moderate level conflict and the transformation of a serious level conflict were dependent upon a number of factors including skillful leadership practices by the clergy. In the current conflict over homosexuality the researcher has colleagues and long-time friends on both sides of the issues. The researcher recognizes that stereotypes are being assigned to clergy on opposing ends of the continuum and even clergy in the middle are having accusations leveled at them. Resolution will not be achieved without a greater demonstration of respect for all persons. Moreover, pressure is being exerted on all clergy, no matter their position, by denominational leaders from above and church members from below. This study arises from the researcher's interest in the forces that support or impede justice on the issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, as well as learning more about ways to bridge the perspectives in this crisis that is challenging the church.

Statement of Problem

A common perception portrays local church Protestant clergy as being opposed to or supportive of LGBTQ persons, when in reality many clergy are ambivalent about their own personal, organizational, and cultural identity in the context of the explosive topic of homosexuality and the church (Cadge et al., 2012; Jones & Cox 2009). This ambivalence leads clergy to be reflective and pragmatic about providing leadership in their congregation on matters that relate to homosexuality (Cadge, et al., 2012). Dr. Lovett H. Weems, Jr., Distinguished Professor of Church Leadership and retired Director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary, writes that the ineffectiveness of local church clergy leadership stems from the church sharing with the larger culture a "general lack of visionary leadership" (Weems, 2010, p. xiii). Weems' observation echoes the conclusion of Pulitzer Prize winner

James MacGregor Burns that "One of the most universal cravings of our time is a hunger for compelling and creative leadership" (Burns, 1978, p. 1). Weems and Burns are in concurrence that the remedy for the visionary void in the church and American culture is the implementation of leadership that challenges the status quo and enables followers to envision and participate in creating a new future.

The findings of Cadge et al. (2012) regarding the ambivalence of some local church clergy to offer leadership illuminate the reasoning behind Weems' and Burns' passionate endorsement for visionary leadership. The combination of the discoveries by Cadge et al. (2012) with the recommendations of Weems (2010) and Burns (1978) focuses a spotlight on a problem facing local church Protestant clergy, and that is what method of leadership to select and implement. A key matter in that decision involves the goals of the leader and of the organization that are best served by a particular style of leadership. Three possible methods of leadership for a leader and an organization are contrasted by Shields (2010) as: transactional, transformational, and transformative. The leader in transactional leadership ensures "smooth and efficient organizational operation through transactions" (Shields, 2010, p. 563). This type of leadership is directive and offers rewards for followers who help to accomplish the leader's goals. Transactional leadership is associated with the desire to maintain the status quo and the traditions of the organization as well as society. For Shields (2010), a transformational leader strives to motivate followers by developing common purpose and focusing on overall "organizational goals" (p. 563). This type of leadership uses inspiration to pursue the accomplishment of organizational effectiveness and change. According to Burns (1978) a necessary characteristic of transformational leadership is that it is morally uplifting. However, in the debate over homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and Christian faith members of, both, *for* and *against* groups

perceive themselves as being morally motivated to offer transformational leadership. A transformative leader is described by Shields (2010) as one who lives with the tension and challenge of contentious issues and then acts with courage. Transformative leaders do this because they believe that questions of justice and democracy provide the beginning point for critiquing practices of inequality within the organization and society at large. The goal of a transformative leader is to transform individual followers and the organization as well as society by challenging inappropriate uses of privilege and power that create or perpetuate inequality and injustice.

The recommendations of Weems and Burns regarding transformative leadership lead to moral questions that clergy can ask to provide a visionary highway for how the church can organize itself for ministry and mission. The use of questions about justice and morality helps to mold individual church members as just and moral agents whose words and actions benefit the church as an organization as well as the culture and society in which the local church resides. However, while transformative leadership would in theory appear to be a natural fit for clergy and the local church, the implementation of transformative leadership can be problematic. Vaughn (1998) found that the barriers to effective ministry to persons with HIV and AIDS include: “moral questions concerning homosexuality” (Vaughn, 1998, p. vi). Moreover, Cadge et al. (2012) discovered that many clergy feel constrained in offering leadership on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion due to “pressures from ‘above’ (denominational leaders and denominational doctrine) and pressures from ‘below’ (members of the congregation)” (p. 372). Further study is needed on the external and internal obstacles local church clergy encounter on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion that impede the practice of transformative leadership.

In particular research is needed on the leadership of local church clergy. A greater amount of research has been conducted on the leadership practices of denominational leaders and denominational statements on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion than on local church clergy. Mary McClintock Fulkerson (1995) provided a succinct account of denominational statements and polity regarding homosexuality in relation to biblical and theological interpretation, but she did not extend her study to the biblical and theological understandings of local church clergy. Cadge, Olson, and Wildeman (2008) studied how denominational resources influence debate about homosexuality in mainline Protestant congregations, but the emphasis of the study was on the affect of the denominational resources rather than local church clergy leadership. Cummins and O'Boyle (2014) studied leadership in an organizational setting using Social Identity Theory, but their study did not include local church clergy. A study by McKenna, Yost, and Boyd (2007) provided insights into leadership development and clergy. However, their study examined broad events and lessons such as the handling of relationships with laity and staff, personal awareness, and managerial and organizational thinking that shaped pastoral leaders rather than the specific topics of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Another dilemma experienced by local church clergy in providing leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion is the biblical and theological concerns for purity and inclusion. The synonymous values of purity and holiness can be found in Deuteronomy 7:6 "For you are a people holy to your God," and I Peter 2:9 "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light". A profound example of inclusion is found in Acts 10:34 where the Apostle Peter says regarding the inclusion of Gentiles into the

family of God, “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him”. In the context of homosexuality the matters of purity and inclusion produce leadership tensions for a local church clergyperson.

The division about the emphasis on purity or inclusion has produced in-groups and out-groups in the church. Campbell (2006) identified clergy who take a traditional approach to interpreting Scripture as the *prohibition group* because they perceive that homosexuality is impure and sinful behavior. Therefore, homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching and must be prohibited. Campbell (2006) identified clergy who take a progressive approach to interpreting Scripture that acknowledges cultural contexts as the *celebration group*. This group believes that God created everything and that everything “God created is by definition good” (p. 111). Therefore, God created gay and lesbian persons, so their God given sexuality is to be celebrated by including them as full members of the church. People with concurring understandings of homosexuality form an in-group, while people with non-concurring understandings of homosexuality form an out-group. Jones and Cox (2009) have identified a third group, the *uncertain middle*. Members of this group support some gay and lesbian rights, but are ambivalent on others. A local church clergyperson in the uncertain middle experiences multiple leadership challenges. These challenges begin with managing church members who identify with either the prohibition group or the celebration group, and who have strong objections to the positions taken by the members of the other group. Moreover, the conflict in a local church is intensified by members of the prohibition group and the celebration group striving to pull church members in the uncertain middle to their side.

In particular, United Methodist clergy find themselves in this situation as a specially called General Conference has been scheduled for February 23-28, 2019, to determine the

organizational fate of the present denomination. One potential scenario is to maintain one world-wide denomination while the five U.S. jurisdictions will be replaced by three connectional conferences, each covering the entire country, based on theological understandings and perspectives on LGBTQ ministry. The three connectional conferences would represent the progressive, contextual (i.e. uncertain), and traditional understandings. While annual conferences would decide which connectional conference to affiliate with, if members of a local church wanted to affiliate with a different conference then the local church clergy would have to guide the decision making process while trying to hold that local church together (United Methodist Council of Bishops, 2018, February 28). More research is needed on these unique leadership concerns for local church clergy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to conduct research on how personal, organizational, and cultural identities influence Protestant clergypersons serving local churches to implement leadership in their local congregation on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. These three identities are powerful forces that may encourage or discourage local church Protestant clergy from initiating transformative leadership as a means for addressing the controversial issue of homosexuality and the church. Moreover, clergy in the three groups (i.e., the traditional/prohibition group, the progressive/celebration group, and the uncertain middle) may have differing understandings of transformative leadership and what it means to implement that method of leadership. To gain insight into the perception of a local church clergy on transformative leadership and other methods of leadership, focus group and individual interviews were conducted to allow clergy to state their own narratives about transformative leadership for matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in the local church.

The personal identity of a local church Protestant clergyperson is formed by a variety of factors including their understanding on how to lead on the biblical and theological concerns for purity or inclusion regarding LGBTQ persons and the church. This research study explores how the personal beliefs and understandings of clergy on individual and corporate purity affect the selection and implementation of a leadership methodology that engenders purity. This research study further explores how clergy who identify that it is their personal role as a pastor to promote justice for LGBTQ persons will select and implement a leadership methodology that supports inclusion. In addition, this research study explores how clergy in the uncertain middle are conflicted with their biblical and theological understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, and how that conflict affects their selection and implementation of a leadership methodology that either straddles or remains silent on purity and inclusion.

The organizational identity of a local church Protestant clergyperson can produce divided obligations. Clergy are accountable to denominational leaders and to church members so this research study explores how local church Protestant clergy in Virginia handle that specific dual pressure of organizational accountability. This research study also evaluates and furthers the work of Cadge et al. (2012) which found that clergy tend to be reflective for a period of time before deciding whether or not to provide leadership in their local congregation on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

The cultural identity of local church Protestant clergy shapes their attitudes about homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion (Adamczyk & Pitt 2009). This research study explores how cultural identity for a local church Protestant clergyperson influences their decision-making and implementation of leadership in a local church. Through qualitative research the researcher

sought narratives that reveal why a clergyperson selected a particular method of leadership in response to matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

One other purpose of this study is to research local church Protestant clergy understandings of transformative leadership in the context of the issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church (Cadge & Wildeman 2008). There are a variety of leadership options available to local church Protestant clergy including transactional, transformational, and transformative. Individual clergy may have different understanding of the meanings and implications of each of these methods of leadership that influence implementation. More research is needed on local church Protestant clergy definitions of transformative leadership and the implementation of transformative leadership in response to matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Significance of the Study

There is a need for research on local church clergy's leadership for the matter of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Research has been conducted at the denominational leadership level (Cadge et al., 2008; Fulkerson 1995; McAuliffe 2015; Ray 2015; Simpson 2011), but very little regarding transformative leadership has been conducted at the local church level (Weems 2010). Local church clergy are experiencing conflict with their own personal, organizational, and cultural identities that guide their leadership (Adamczyk and Pitt 2009; Creech 2010; Cadge, et al., 2012; Djube and Neiheisel 2008). The biblical and theological interpretations of purity and inclusion are promoting internal and organizational conflict that creates in-groups and out-groups (He & Brown 2013) that is divisive to the church (Bailey 2016; Campbell 2006; McAuliffe 2015). Clergy are uncertain where to find resources for preaching and teaching that will prepare them for effectiveness in leadership on matters related to

homosexuality (Wicks 1999). There is a need for scholarly knowledge and guidance for the practice of transactional, transformational, or transformative leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion that will benefit the local church clergy in their role as leaders.

The timing of this research study on leadership at the local church level coincides with The United Methodist Church preparing for a specially called General Conference in February of 2019 that will deal only with matters related to sexuality. So divisive is the issue that it is anticipated that the denomination will undergo a major change in organizational structure or possibly divide into two or more new denominations (Wesley Covenant Association 2017). Local church clergy experience a closer relationship with church members than do denominational leaders, so local church pastors will be the first persons laity seek for leadership during times of anxiety. Not only United Methodist clergy, but clergy from other Protestant denominations will benefit from greater insights on how the conflict over homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion can provide an opportunity to implement transformative leadership in their congregation. The implementation of transformative leadership could help to initiate ministries of justice and reconciliation that would make a local church more effective in promoting values important in Christianity such as justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

In addition, this research study benefits local church clergy in gaining insight into how their personal biblical and theological perspective on purity and inclusion in relation to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion influences their leadership decisions. This research study furthers the work of Cadge et al. (2012), and Jones and Cox (2009), on how to effectively manage the organizational pressures clergy feel from above (denominational leaders and denominational doctrine) and from below (church members) in order to implement

transformative leadership in their congregation. Finally, this research study aids local church clergypersons to better understand the cultural issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion that affect their implementation of transformative leadership.

Research Questions

The focus of this research is Protestant clergypersons' understanding and practice of transformative leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. A participant population of 30 Protestant clergy in Virginia was identified. The following questions were answered through the research:

- How do a Protestant clergyperson's personal and theological perspectives on purity and inclusion influence their decision regarding the implementation of leadership in their local congregation?
- How do Protestant clergypersons experience organizational pressures from "above" (denominational leaders and denominational doctrine) and from "below' (local church members) on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and how do these organizational pressures affect the clergyperson's decision to implement leadership in their local congregation?
- How do Protestant clergypersons prepare through continuing education opportunities and resources to better understand the cultural issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in order to implement leadership in their local congregation to promote justice for LGBTQ persons?

The answers to the questions illuminate the personal, organizational, and cultural identifications perceived by local church clergy that affect their biblical and theological understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. These understandings affect the

clergyperson as they respond to pressures from "above" (denominational doctrine and denominational leaders) and pressures from "below" (church members) in their leadership role in a local church. The role experience affects their decisions for leadership. A clergyperson might select one of four leadership styles – transactional: authoritarian leadership; uncertain: ambivalent leadership; transformational: moral leadership; or transformative: justice leadership. Figure 1.1 provides a schematic of the process for identity factors shaping clergy understandings of biblical and theological perspectives on homosexuality as clergy experience pressures from above and below that affect leadership decisions on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

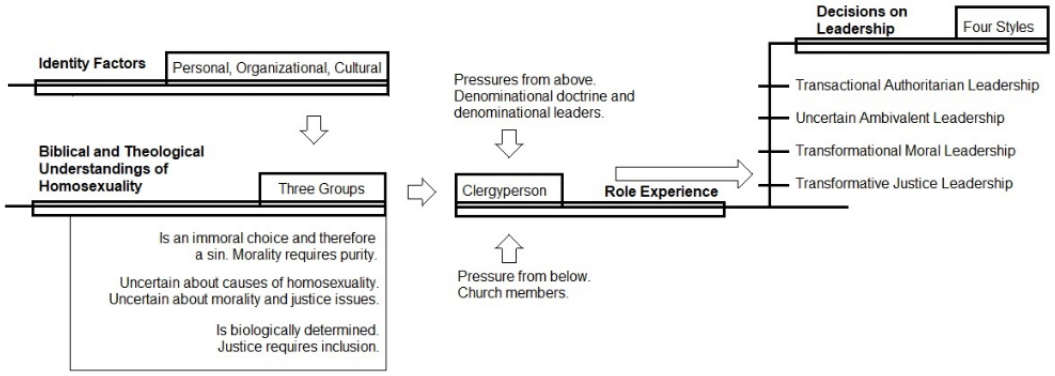

Figure 1.1. Systems diagram of identity factors, biblical and theological understandings, pressures from above and below that affect leadership decisions on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion

Conceptual Framework

Organizational Identity (OI), Organizational Identification (OID) and Learning Organization (LO) theory provides the conceptual framework for this research study. OI and OID are helpful for interpreting a complex issue (Mills & Bettis 2015) such as the relationship of local church Protestant clergy's personal, organizational, and cultural identity with

homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in the context of leadership. He and Brown (2013) note that OI is "mainly conceptualized from a social identity perspective" (p.3) that can be employed in explaining the behavior of individuals, groups, and organizations which is a major aspect of this research study. Albert, Ashforth, and Dutton (2000) advocated for the employment of OI in research as identity is a problematic issue and "the dynamics of identity need to be better understood" (p.14). A learning organization has been described by Senge (1990) as "an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future" (p. 14). The goals of a learning organization are not merely to survive or to adapt, but instead to generate new learning and new ways of functioning at a higher level of effectiveness that benefits individuals, the organization, and society (p. 14). He and Brown (2013) have also identified that OI is "key in efforts to understand strategic change (Ravasi & Phillips 2011), decision-making (Riantoputra 2010), internal conflicts (Humphreys & Brown 2002); communication (Fombrun 1996), issue interpretation and response (Dutton & Dukerich 1991; Gioia & Thomas 1996), and pivotal to the theorization of legitimacy (He & Baruch 2010; Sillince & Brown 2009)" (p. 4). This research study used OI, OID, and LO theory to examine the personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues regarding homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion that are specifically experienced by local church Protestant clergy who are tasked with providing leadership for individual church members and for their congregations.

With regards to strategic change Weems (2010) identified that little research has been conducted on local church clergy and the practice of transformative leadership. In what research has been done, McKenna et al. (2007) examined events and lessons that shape pastoral leaders, but there is a need to focus specifically on the issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the leadership response of local church clergy. Since transformative leadership begins with

questions of justice and democracy (Shields 2013), OI, OID, and LO theory were used to examine how personal, organizational, and cultural concerns for purity and inclusion in relation to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion affects leadership decisions made by local church Protestant clergy. This research furthers the studies on inclusion and purity by Elcott and Sinclair (2004); Holloway (2007); Kapinus et al., (2010); and Manning (2015).

The conflict over homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion has produced in-groups and out-groups within the church (Campbell 2006; Fulkerson 1995). Effectiveness in facilitating communication between in-groups and out-groups is a major leadership concern for local church clergy (Scott 2007). Wicks (1999) conducted a research study with 378 clergy in Canada using the premise that when the clergyperson's world of theology connected with the role of preacher that the function of communication would occur. His study found that "the more extreme a minister's theological position, the more likely he or she is to stay within his or her own theological world when selecting resources for the preaching task" (p. 211). A shortcoming of Wicks' study was that he did not identify the topics on which the clergy preached, so his study did not provide specific information on clergy leadership through preaching on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. This study addresses that particular gap in research.

An outstanding qualitative study on issue interpretation and response by local church clergy regarding homosexuality was conducted by Cadge et al. (2012) who found that seven out of ten clergy "expressed uncertainty about homosexuality, either in terms of their personal beliefs, actions, or both" (p. 375). Their findings reveal the presence of a continuum for clergy's understandings and actions on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion from prohibitive to uncertainty to justice seeking. The authors further found that there were contextual constraints from "above" (denominational leaders and denominational doctrine) and "below" (congregation

members) that caused local church clergy to ponder their dual roles as pastor and prophet that led them to act pragmatically in offering leadership (p. 382). This study extends academic knowledge and improved practice by applying OI, OID, and LO theory to understanding the uncertainty experienced by local church Protestant clergy in how to implement transformative leadership in relation to the specific socio-moral/justice issues of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

The conceptual frameworks of OI, OID, and LO assisted in the theorization of issues centered on the legitimacy of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion with full participation in the life of the church. Aspects of personal, organizational, and cultural identity play roles in a local church Protestant clergyperson's biblical and theological understanding for leadership through preaching and teaching on matters related to homosexuality (Perry 2015; Placher 2006; Siker 2006; Simpson 2011; Yoder 2006). While some clergy, due to their biblical and theological understandings, believe that there is no need for discussion about the appropriateness of homosexual behavior because the Bible has condemned it, other clergy due to their biblical and theological understandings, believe that there are justice and pastoral needs for that discussion (Adamczyk & Pitt 2009; Anderson 2011; Campbell, 2006). Figure 1.2 illustrates the use of conceptual frameworks in this dissertation to promote analysis and create new knowledge.

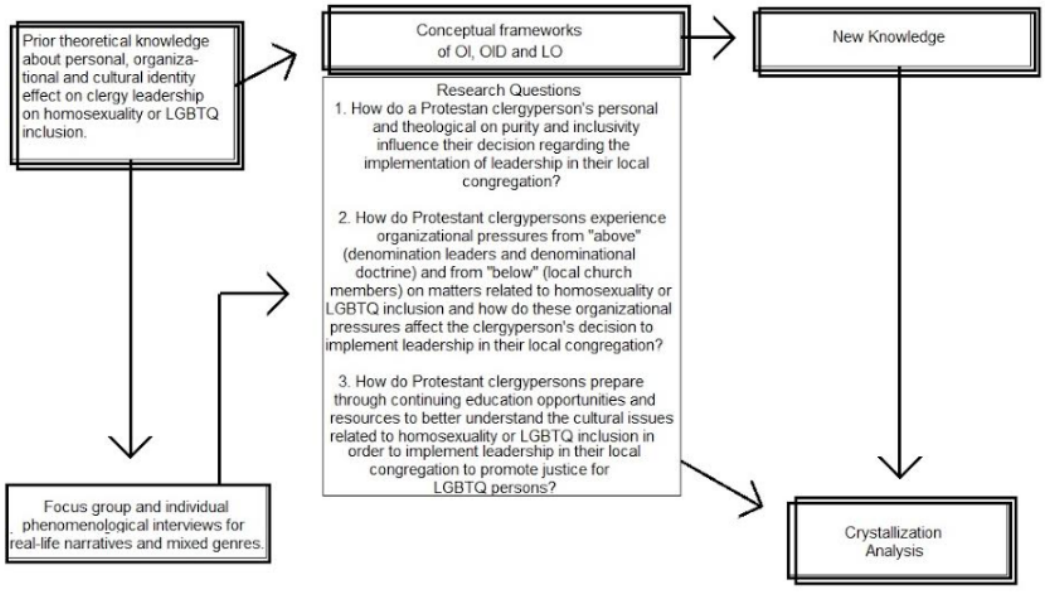

Figure 1.2. Application of conceptual frameworks of organizational identity (OI), organizational identification (OID), and learning organization (LO)
Modified application of pathways of abductive research approaches. (Spens and Kovacs, 2006, p. 376).

Assumptions and Limitations

The assumptions in this research study were: the participants would be truthful when sharing comments, the participants would openly express their attitudes and beliefs regarding matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, the participants would be candid about their decisions or non-decisions to engage in ministry with LGBTQ persons and to offer leadership in their congregation on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, the participants would share a reliable self-assessment of their leadership skills on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, and the participants would state as accurately as possible a projection on how they would provide leadership in the future on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Because this was a phenomenological study, these assessments were analyzed for self-expression, beliefs, values, and perceptions of clergy on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion for effective leadership at the local church level.

A limitation of the study was the small sample of 30 local church Protestant clergy who serve Virginia congregations. Information was gathered through focus groups and personal interviews with the validity of that information dependent upon the participants' openness to self-disclosure of beliefs and behaviors. The scope of the study was further narrowed by examination of how a clergyperson's emphasis on two matters, purity or inclusion, affects the clergyperson's approach to transactional, transformational, and transformative leadership. An additional limitation is that the study cannot be generalized to all clergy in the United States.

Definitions

Key terms used in this study include:

Purity: An individual's body or a corporate body that remains free from the dirt or the sin that would contaminate (Countryman 1988). A God-given pattern of life that permits no deviation from the path laid down for Christians in the Holy Scriptures, and taught to them by their parents and their properly appointed ministers (van Beck 1988).

Morality: Principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior; descriptive term that refers to a set of codes of conduct conceived by a society, a religion, or an individual as self-behavior (Garlitz 2014).

Sanctification: "Occurs in the work of God's grace through the Word and the Spirit, by which those who have been born again are cleansed from sin in their thoughts, words and acts, and are enabled to live in accordance with God's will. Entire sanctification is a state of perfect love, righteousness and true holiness which every regenerated believer may obtain by being delivered from the power of sin, by loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and by loving one's neighbor as one's self" (*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, 2016, p. 75).

Inclusion: "Openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world; therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination" (*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, 2016, p. 101).

Traditional/Prohibition Group: Clergy for whom authority for preaching and teaching about the sinfulness and impurity of homosexuality is found in *The Holy Bible* as it is the word of God and must be respected. Scripture is to be interpreted either literally or within tight constraints so as not to deviate from the ways of God (Campbell 2006). Homosexual behavior is always wrong as this behavior is "contrary to nature or to the order of creation" (Campbell, 2006, p. 110).

Progressive/Celebration Group: Clergy for whom *The Holy Bible* is authoritative and inspired as it is the word of God, but that word was mediated through human beings in specific times, places, and cultural practices. The cultural context between when passages were written and today's society requires evolving understandings of Scripture in order to be faithful in the present age (Placher 2006; Siker 2006). Like the Traditional/Prohibition Group, the Progressive/Celebration Group believes that God created everything and that everything "God created is by definition good" (Campbell, 2006, p. 111). "Therefore, God loves everyone just as they are: male, female, gay, straight, of every ethnic or racial background, able-bodied or not" (Campbell, 2006, p. 111).

Supportive Base: These are clergy who strongly support gay and lesbian rights, and generally do not see homosexuality as a choice or a sin (Jones & Cox 2009).

Opposing Base: These are clergy who strongly oppose gay and lesbian rights, and generally do see homosexuality as a choice with that produces sin (Jones & Cox 2008).

The Uncertain Middle: These are clergy who support some gay and lesbian rights, but are ambivalent on others (Jones & Cox 2009).

In-group: An official or unofficial hierarchy that sustains cultural guidelines to perpetuate what is "central, distinctive, and enduring about an organization" (He & Brown, 2013, p.8).

Out-group: An official or unofficial hierarchy that challenges the cultural guidelines being championed by the opposing in-group (He & Brown 2013).

LGBTQ Inclusion: The full inclusion in an organization or in society of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people (Blank et al., 2009).

Personal Identity: "The definition of oneself in terms of personal idiosyncratic attributes" (Gomez & Vazquez, 2015, p. 468).

Organizational Identity: The values, beliefs, and behavioral norms that a member shares with the organization that inspires loyalty on the part of the member (Pratt 1998).

Cultural Identity: "Beliefs about identity (that) arise from one's cultural group membership(s)" (Usborne & de la Sablonniere, 2014, p. 436).

Transactional Leadership: Starts with a desired agreement undergirded by honesty, responsibility, fairness, and the honoring of commitments through an exchange of rewards or punishments in order to advance a mutual goal. The leader ensures the smooth and efficient organizational operation through bureaucratic leadership and scientific management (Shields, 2010, p. 563).

Transformational Leadership: Starts with a need of the organization to run smoothly and efficiently while practicing liberty, justice, and equality to promote organizational change. The leader seeks to motivate followers to pursue a common purpose that achieves organizational goals and reforms the organization (Shields, 2010, p. 563).

Transformative Leadership: Starts with questions of justice and democracy that critiques inequitable practices to promote inclusivity to produce a better life for each individual, the

organization, and the wider community (Shields, 2010, p. 559). Leaders are willing to live with tension and challenge while deconstructing and reconstructing social/cultural knowledge frameworks that generate equality and privilege. As an activist for change the leader must possess courage to enable social justice that transforms individuals, organizations, and culture (Shields, 2010, p. 563).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 of this dissertation provided the introduction to this research study on local church Protestant clergy's implementation of transactional, transformational, or transformative leadership on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion as influenced by personal, organizational, and cultural identity in relation to the biblical concerns for purity and inclusion. The significance of this study is that it focuses on the leadership of local church clergy. The majority of research has been conducted on leaders at the denominational level, but little research has been conducted on the transformative leadership (Weems 2010). A literature review has aided in the formation of three research questions. The conceptual framework of OI, OID, and LO was employed in this study. Eighteen definitions have been provided that are specific to the field of regulatory practice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The dynamics of what local church Protestant clergy are experiencing in providing leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion are complex and evolving. This literature review will examine the conceptual framework of Learning Organization (LO), Organizational Identity (OI) and Organizational Identification (OID) theories to support the search for insights into the factors that influence local church Protestant clergy's decisions and actions for leadership. The conceptual framework helped to identify through the literature review four themes regarding homosexuality and local church clergy leadership:

- Personal identity on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion
- Organizational identity on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion
- Cultural identity on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion
- Methods of leadership by local church Protestant clergy on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Emerging from each of the themes of personal, organizational and cultural identity are three sub-topics that influence clergy leadership: purity (Haider-Markel & Joslyn 2008; Ritter, Preston, Salomon, & Relihan-Johnson 2015), inclusion (Elcott & Sinclair 2017) and clergy uncertainty about homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion (Cadge et al., 2012). The literature review of previous research on the three themes and the subtopics suggested that scriptural and theological interpretation strongly influenced a local church Protestant clergyperson's leadership on matters of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. However, many denominational clergy are hesitant about the leadership they provide to a congregation due to feeling pressure from "above" (denominational leaders and denominational doctrine) and "below" (local church members)

(Cadge et al., 2012). More research is needed on the forces being experienced by denominational Protestant clergy that promote or hinder their decisions to implement leadership in the local church. The literature review also revealed that very little research has been conducted on transformative leadership by local church clergy (Weems 2010). This research study adds to the knowledge about why and how local church Protestant clergy are implementing transactional, transformational or transformative leadership in the congregation on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Personal Identity

Purity

Local church Protestant clergy occupy a unique place in American society. They understand themselves to be called by God to the role of ordained minister that adds a layer to their personal identity (Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell 2004). One function of an ordained minister is to serve as a protecting and guiding shepherd for both individual members and the congregation. A clergyperson's personal biblical and theological understandings of purity in relation to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion will impact how the clergyperson will prepare and eventually preach on the issues. In a two part research study that involved both survey and interview of clergy Wicks (1999) found that "the more extreme a minister's (personal) theological position, the more likely he or she is to stay within his or her own theological world when selecting resources for the preaching task" (p. 211). The findings also showed that "the more centrist a pastor's theological position, the more open she or he is to using sources from another camp (either liberal or conservative)" (p. 211). Although Wicks did not identify or examine the topics on which the clergy preached, his mixed methods study laid the

ground work for more applied and detailed evaluation of clergy preaching on purity and inclusion with regards to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

The personal perception of the cause for homosexuality is an indicator in a clergyperson's position on purity (Haider-Markel & Joslyn 2008). Their research showed that personal etiological beliefs about homosexuality fell into three main categories – biological, choice, and environment. A study by Chonody, Kavanagh, and Woodford (2016) found that heterosexual participants were more likely to believe that homosexuality is a choice and environmentally caused (p. 1736). The belief that homosexuality is a choice can engender "hostility toward gay men and lesbians" (Vezzali, Brambilla, Giovannini, & Colucci, 2017, p. 716) due the assumption of moral contamination and moral impurity on the part of the LGBTQ person (Cottrell, Richards, & Nichols 2010). It is this perceived threat "to moral purity that evokes disgust and behavioral reactions aimed at reducing the spread of the ostensible contaminant" (Vezzali et al., 2017, pp. 716-717). Golec de Zavala, Waldzus, and Cypryanska (2014) found that even imagining an interaction with a gay man can increase the need for physical washing in order to cleanse the impurity.

Disgust can produce not only a physical response for cleansing due to an interaction with an LGBTQ person, but also an emotional and spiritual warning to avoid LGBTQ persons. Ritter et al. (2015) extended the work of Inbar, Pizarro, and Bloom (2012) through an online quantitative study to measure "subjective feeling to contamination" (Ritter et al., 2015, p. 781). Ritter et al. (2015) found that participants who experienced the emotion of disgust rather than anger from reading religiously false (*heretical*) statements provided harsher moral judgments due to the subjective feeling of contamination (p. 786). The emotion of disgust served as a warning that the participant was entering an area of personal impurity that needed to be avoided (p. 786).

A limitation of Ritter et al. (2015) was that participants were from the general population, so specific insight was not gained into how local church Protestant clergy process the emotion of disgust as a boundary to protect personal purity.

The literature review showed that the lack of a personal relationship with a member of the Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-Queer (LGBTQ) community can greatly impact a clergyperson's personal identity and response on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. An enlightening study on this matter was conducted by Jones and Cox (2009). Their study consisted of four waves of questionnaires over a six month period that generated 2,658 responses (p. 28) by senior clergy from the seven largest mainline denominations: United Methodist Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, American Baptist Churches USA, Presbyterian Church USA, Episcopal Church, United Church of Christ, and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (p. 1). Among clergy who did not know a gay or lesbian person only 10% supported same-sex marriage, while 65% were strongly opposed to same-sex marriage (p. 17). Regarding the ordination of a gay or lesbian person only 16% of clergy with no relationship with a gay or lesbian person were supportive. More study is needed on the connection of concerns for purity with a lack of relationship with a member of the LGBTQ community in the development of the personal position of a clergyperson being opposed to same-sex marriage and the ordination of LGBTQ persons.

Jones and Cox (2009) described clergy who personally perceive homosexuality to be a choice and therefore a sin as the Opposing Base due to their opposition to gay and lesbian rights (p. 1). Campbell (2006) termed this group as the Traditional/Prohibition Group. Traditionalists interpret Scripture literally or within tight constraints so as not to deviate from the ways of God (Campbell 2006). Members of this group believe that homosexuality is always wrong because

biblically and theologically it is contrary to the order of creation (Campbell 2006; Powell 2003). Among the scripture passages the Opposing Base/Traditional/Prohibition Group (OTP) cite in support of their personal biblical and theological understanding of matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion are: Genesis 19 (the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah due to homosexuality), Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 (it is an abomination for a male to lie with another male as with a woman), Romans 1:26-27 (homosexual men exchanged natural relations for unnatural), and I Corinthians 6:9-10 (neither the immoral, …, nor homosexuals,…, will inherit the kingdom of God), (Gaventa 2006; Hayes 1986; Peterson 2016; Powell 2003; Yoder 2006). Clergy members of the OTP would agree with Richard Holloway (2007), "Purity and its opposite, uncleanness, are big issues in the Bible" (p. 104).

Clergy, who agree that homosexuality is a choice and a sin, unite to form an in-group, while those with a differing opinion are identified as the out-group. Members of the OTP are an in-group based on a common personal identity conviction about the proper way to interpret Scripture concerning purity. The conviction is that a correct reading of the Bible begins with three assumptions or presuppositions: "a unique epistemology (assumptions about knowledge and truth), ontology (presuppositions about human nature and the nature of the world), and soteriology (assumptions about the prerequisites for salvation)" (Hempel & Bartkowski, 2008, p. 1650). On the issue of purity, members of the OTP cite the Apostle Paul's list of eighteen unholy (i.e. impure) characteristics that hinder some who claim to be Christian from being saved as they "hold the form of religion, but deny the power of it" (II Timothy 3:1-5). Paul then instructs the readers of his letter, "Avoid such people" (Holloway, 2007, p. 104). The OTP in-group believes that homosexuals belong on Paul's list of the impure as their salvation is at risk, and those who associate with impure homosexuals place their own salvation at risk. The need to

protect and maintain personal purity as well as organizational purity affects the leadership methodology decisions by members of the OTP.

Agreement on scriptural interpretation and the proper hermeneutic for preaching on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion promotes networks within in-groups and out-groups. The conceptual frameworks of Organizational Identity (OI) and Organizational Identification (OID) are helpful in analyzing the processes that produce mutual agreement within an in-group as well as legitimacy for the values of the in-group (He & Baruch 2010; Sillince & Brown 2009). Placher (2006) perceived the self-identified legitimate practice of scriptural interpretation and exegesis for preaching to be a vital component of a local church clergyperson's personal identity. In addition to OI and OID, Learning Organization (LO) theory enables an exploration of the motivation of a local church clergyperson to become a learner of skills on scriptural interpretation for the purpose of leading the congregation to function as a learning organization on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. OI, OID, and LO theories as a conceptual framework helped to form the first research question in this study and to form interview questions for focus groups and individuals. Answers to the interview questions provided data on a clergyperson's personal, organizational and cultural understandings on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Inclusion

The role of pastor necessitates caring for the members of the congregation while also reaching out in hospitality to connect with the stranger, the marginalized and the outcast in acts of inclusion. Regarding the former task, Turner and Stayton (2014) found that clergy are often the first point of contact for crisis situations, relational problems, or sexual orientation issues. Bowland, Foster, and Vosler (2013) attested that gay/lesbian church members in their study

vouched for the value of clergy care in their lives. Regarding the latter task, the Rev. Jimmy Creech decided to participate in the 1988 Gay Pride March in Raleigh, North Carolina, to further connect and advocate for LGBTQ persons (Creech 2011). In response to Rev. Creech's public witness for fuller inclusion of LGBTQ persons in church and in society, 79 members of his congregation signed a petition requesting his removal as pastor. At the end of "a long and contentious" (p. 53) congregational meeting Creech was allowed to remain as pastor (Creech 2011). The backlash experienced by Rev. Creech in witnessing for inclusion of LGBTQ persons is not unique. Cadge and Wildeman (2008) conducted a qualitative study interviewing 30 United Methodist, Presbyterian, and Lutheran clergy on how these clergy responded to the matters of homosexuality or LGBTQ persons. The study showed that these clergy started with their own personal identity issues, particularly their fears and concerns, before deciding the public level of their support and the parameters of their leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion (Cadge & Wildeman 2008).

Another example of clergy processing their own personal identity issues on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion was provided by McAuliffe (2015). He explained his journey with an event from his childhood playing a game called *smear the queer* (p. 3). Five years later McAuliffe noticed that his younger brother called the same game *tackle the carrier* (p. 3). McAuliffe's personal identity journey on inclusion was further affected by a conversation with his father when McAuliffe asked why he was taught at school that gay people were bad. His father responded that gays were not bad and that God teaches people to love everyone. Then his father added, "Who cares? They are not hurting anyone. What they do and who they love is their own thing. Two guys holding hands on a sidewalk in no way affects how my day goes" (p. 4).

The effect of family dynamics on revising personal identity issues to move towards inclusion while maintaining a traditional understanding of sexual purity was researched by Manning (2014). Manning interviewed 13 Christian families where the parents did not believe that homosexuality was compatible with Christian teaching, however, their teenager had announced that they were gay/lesbian and intended to date. The parents, after wrestling with how to respond to concerns for purity, discussed with and gained the signature of the teenager on a purity pledge to refrain from intercourse while dating. In this manner personal purity was maintained, but a new personal identity had formed as inclusion was practiced with regards to the allowance for a homosexual dating relationship.

Personal experiences with members of the LGBTQ community can positively impact a clergyperson's commitment to inclusion (Jones & Cox 2009). Jones and Cox (2009) found that clergy who have a gay or lesbian co-worker (54%) or close friend (53%) support same-sex marriage. Among clergy who do not have a relationship with a gay or lesbian person only 10% support same-sex marriage. The findings of Jones and Cox (2009) support the contact theory conclusions of Chonody et al. (2016) who found that negative attitudes can be diminished through social contact that occurs under favorable conditions with members of a marginalized group such as the LGBTQ community. Also, etiological beliefs and attitudes about homosexuality can be changed "through increased positive experiences with LGBTQ individuals" (p. 19). Chonody et al. (2016) recommended further research on etiology and sexual prejudice that includes indicators of social contact and relationship closeness. One aspect of this research study is to explore how personal etiology and sexual understandings of local church Protestant clergy are affected by social contact and relationship closeness with LGBTQ persons.

Clergy who practice inclusion tend to view homosexuality as biologically determined (Haider-Markel et al., 2008). Campbell (2006) referred to these clergy as members of the Progressive/Celebration Group, making this designation because "homosexuality is part of God's good creation to be celebrated without further question" (p. 111). Therefore, it is illegitimate to exclude homosexual persons from the community of faith and from society. Jones and Cox (2009) refer to clergy who support inclusion as the Supportive Base Group. On the specific issue of homosexuals being welcomed at church there was little difference between the Supportive Base (99%) and the Opposing Base (91%). However, on the specific issue of the Gospel requiring full inclusion of homosexuals in a congregation there is a huge difference between the Supportive Base (99%) and the Opposing Base (19%) (p. 26). Jones and Cox (2009) also found that on LGBTQ issues in the church among the Supportive Base that 84% believed that the church should bless same-sex marriages, 97% supported ordination of homosexuals with no special requirements, and 98% supported gays and lesbians serving as lay leaders (p. 20).

Clergy whose personal identity guided them to practice inclusion for homosexuals have a broader understanding of purity than clergy who practice prohibition. In his seminal book, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today* (2007), L. William Countryman began his study of sexual ethics in the Bible with two presuppositions: 1) the writers of the New Testament regard sexual ethics as a peripheral matter, and 2) the biblical writers are negative toward sex and regard it as only to be engaged in specifically defined circumstances. Countryman concluded that the first presupposition was incorrect because a literal reading of a passage reveals a different focus than had been presupposed. The second presupposition was incorrect because "language, presuppositions, and concerns" (p. 5)

have changed from when a passage was written that places the topic of purity and homosexuality "in a different historical, religious, and cultural context" (p. 5). Holloway (2007) extended Countryman's work by identifying the primary focus of purity in the Bible is not about avoidance. Instead, what makes for impurity in a sexual relationship is not the gender of the persons involved, but the use of power that overrides the recognition of the humanity of the person who is desired. Traditionally power is identified with masculinity as the male is to dominate during intercourse. Thus, a male during intercourse is not entered into, but enters. Holloway (2007) concluded that biblical purity is really about the practice of inclusion by "a constant process of turning the heart towards others. Or, as Jesus put it; it is to love our neighbor as ourselves" (p. 104).

Biblical and theological interpretation was a major focus of the study by Jones and Cox (2009). They found that 47% of clergy embraced a modernist approach to theology that employed a contextual reading of the Bible, and 67% did not believe "that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, both in matters of faith and in historic, geographical, and other secular matters" (p. 5). Interestingly, 55% of clergy reported becoming more liberal and inclusive on gay and lesbian issues due to additional Bible study. Djupe and Neiheisel (2008) in a survey of 148 clergy found that in the debate over same-sex marriage that social conservatives would frame the issue as "morals and family values" (p. 147). Social liberals would frame the issue around inclusion using the terms "social equality and equal rights" (p. 417). Cadge and Wildeman (2008) found that personal biblical and theological understandings led clergy to adopt one of two identities: facilitator or advocate. Facilitators worked to educate and create consensus on the issues of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, while advocates desired change so they took positions and advanced actions for inclusion (Cadge & Wildeman 2008).

The debate about homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church is also a debate about legitimate methods for biblical and theological interpretation. “There is a fight on between contemporary biblical scholarship and theological proposals on how Christians should read their scripture” (East, 2017, p. 31). Clergy who support inclusion point to the cultural context in which sections of the Bible were written that permits new and evolving understandings of passages in order to be faithful in the present age (Placher 2006; Siker 2006). Members of the Supportive/Progressive/Celebration (SPC) group have different understandings from members of the Opposing/Traditional/Prohibition (OTP) group regarding key scripture passages in relation to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion: Genesis 19 (the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is due to a lack of hospitality), Leviticus 18:22, 20:13 (part of outdated purity codes), Romans 1:26-27 (Paul is using a stereotype of Gentiles to enable Jewish Christians to understand that they too are under judgment), and I Corinthians 6:9-10 (*malakoi arsenokoitai* should not be translated as homosexuals but as soft males who served as temple prostitutes) (Brawley 2006; Coote 2006; Gaventa 2006; Powell 2003; Yoder 2006).

Concurrence with the legitimacy of interpreting scripture and theology in the manner of the SPC with regards to homosexuality, purity, and inclusion produced an in-group. Members of this group agreed that *homosexual orientation* is a recent development and that the technical term *homosexual* is not present in Scripture (Siker 2006). They hold the opinion that “some translations anachronistically and misleadingly render the original Hebrew and Greek words from Scripture as ‘homosexual’” (p. 41). Also, some translations read “modern understandings back into Scripture and fail to understand Scripture on its own terms” (p. 41). Powell (2003) identified several uniting beliefs for this in-group: 1) a homosexual person “required to remain celibate is forced to miss the very aspects of life that many consider to be most precious

(romance, marriage, sex, & family)," and 2) "a committed and loving relationship between two same-sex partners allows homosexual persons to come much closer to experiencing such aspects of life than they would otherwise" (p. 38). For Powell (2003) and other members of this in-group "homosexual Christians should not approach questions regarding their sexual conduct with an attitude that asks 'What am I allowed to do?'" (p. 39). The question to be asked seeks purity in relationship with God along with inclusion with other Christians who are also asking, "How can I please God, whom I love and want to serve?" (p. 39).

Uncertainty

Jones and Cox (2009) found that 41% of clergy formed an Uncertain Middle who were undecided on the causes for homosexuality and supported some gay and lesbian rights, but were ambivalent on others (p. 19). Cadge et al. (2012) found that 70% of the clergy expressed uncertainty regarding homosexuality for two reasons: 1) uncertainty about their *personal* feelings about homosexuality, and 2) uncertainty about how to *act* with regard to the issue (p. 387). Specifically on the uncertainty about their personal opinions, Cadge et al. (2012) discerned five themes:

- Questions about homosexuality being innate or chosen
- Disconnect between moral opposition to homosexuality and positive experiences with gay people
- Difficulty understanding same-sex attraction
- Indecisiveness about the appropriateness of same-sex marriage
- "General wrestling with the issue either presently or in the past" (p. 376).

The most significant discovery through the literature review was the presence of this large group of uncertain clergy and the need to study how uncertainty affects their leadership.

Characteristics of the Uncertain Middle include how "they stake out middle or moderate positions on many gay and lesbian issues and the degree to which they report their views changing over time" (Jones & Cox, 2009, p. 23). Among the Uncertain Middle 44% agreed that homosexual behavior was inconsistent with Christian behavior. Also, 26% of the Uncertain Middle supported same-sex marriage. (p. 20). Regarding the degree to which their views on homosexuality had changed over time, members of the Uncertain Middle reported that they had become more supportive of gay and lesbian issues (p. 24). "Six times as many clergy in the Uncertain Middle report that their views have become more liberal than conservative on LGBT issues over the last ten years (56% vs. 9% respectively), while 36% say they have not changed their minds on LGBT issues" (p. 24).

As clergy who are members of the Uncertain Middle attempted to find a way forward on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, one avenue that was traveled was to refocus the biblical and theological debate on the meaning of baptism (Stortz 2003). This strategy allowed them to avoid disputes over the legitimate way to interpret passages such as Genesis 19; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9-10. Instead, some members of the Uncertain Middle encouraged the discussion to focus on Acts 22:16 "And why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name," and I Corinthians 12:13 "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bound or free; and have been made to drink of one Spirit." The former passage stresses purity while the latter stresses inclusion in the body of Christ that is the church, and both matters are vital aspects of baptism. This proposal attempts to find common ground (Stortz 2003), between the Opposing/Traditional/Prohibition (OTP) group and the Supportive/Progressive/Celebration (SPC) group by incorporating both scripture and Christian

theology/doctrine about Holy Baptism. By beginning the discussion with baptism the focus is not on homosexual or heterosexual "lifestyle" (Stortz 2003), but is about the lifestyle of discipleship that "is shaped by the 'one flesh' union Christians have with Christ" (p. 73).

Stortz' recommendation that clergy should move to a middle position in the debate over homosexuality and the church was noted by Campbell (2006). She defined the polar positions as "prohibition" and "celebration," but "between these two positions, there are a number of other positions that can be identified" (p. 111). In the middle of the continuum are three approaches. The first approach in the middle of the continuum is "differentiated judgment" (p. 111). The critical issue for this perspective is homosexual activity. The homosexual person "is not the problem; it is the behavior that is wrong" (p. 111). Therefore, "homosexual persons can be welcomed into the life of the church and even elected and ordained to office as long as they are not sexually active" (p. 111). The second approach is "pastoral acceptance" (p. 112). It was the pastoral acceptance step that Rev. Creech took following his meeting with Adam that caused him to rethink the stereotypes he had learned about homosexual persons – that they were "dangerous people, psychologically sick, depraved and immoral" (Creech 2011, p. 3). Adam was a person of good character, sincere faith, "a thoughtful and practicing Christian" (p. 3). So, Rev. Creech provided pastoral care to Adam as he would to any other church member. The third approach is "sanctification" (p. 112). This approach accepts homosexuality, but views homosexual Christians in the same category of all Christians – sinner, and all sinners are in need of redemption and sanctification (p. 112).

The presence of the Uncertain Middle necessitates moving beyond a dichotomized study of local church Protestant clergy leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church. One reason is that while the OTP and the SPC each form their own in-

group and cast the other as the out-group both make great effort to pull the members of Uncertain Middle into their group in order to tip the balance of power (Cadge et al. 2012). Therefore, research is needed that assumes "neither one-dimensional nor dichotomous beliefs and attitudes" about clergy and homosexuality (Cadge et al., 2012, p. 387).

Organizational Identity

Sluss & Ashforth's research (2008) focused on how OI and OID provided insights into group cohesiveness and leadership that are important matters in this study. They acknowledged Pratt's insight (1998) of OI occurring "when an individual's beliefs about his or her organization become self-referential or self-defining … [so as to] integrate beliefs about one's organization into one's identity" (p. 172). However, while agreeing with Pratt (1998), Sluss & Ashforth (2008) expressed concern that organizational scholars have explored individual identities with: the organization, the occupation, the group, and significant work relationships, but have focused on only one referent and have overlooked the interpersonal or dyadic level of identification (p. 807). Unfortunately, Pratt (1998) and Sluss and Ashforth (2008) reflect the tendency of OI and OID researchers to study identity relationships in business settings and not extend their study to identity relationships in religious organizations.

The gap in research regarding the complexity of religious organizational relationships and religious organizational identity for local church clergy begins to be filled through the work of Reimer (2011). What makes Reimer (2011) intriguing is his employment of "organizational ecology" to explain the diversity in the understanding and practice of orthodoxy in American Protestant churches (p. 763). The concept of organizational ecology "derives from animal and plant ecology, where a species inhabits an environmental niche (with adequate food and water, proper climate, etc.) that has a certain 'carrying capacity' for that species and its competitors"

(p. 763). Following the lead of Scheitle (2007) as well as Scheitle and Finke (2009), Reimer (2011) applied organizational ecology to religious organizations. His research of the Episcopal (EC), United Methodist (UMC), and Assemblies of God (AG) denominations in three U.S. locales, found that there was significant diversity in the understanding of orthodoxy along a continuum from conservativeness to liberalness among Protestant congregations in the same denomination that are located in close geographical vicinity. Reimer (2011) concluded that organizational ecology helped to explain this diversity, which created organizational fitness by reducing niche overlap and competition (p. 763). Reimer (2011) found that the growing denomination, AG, had the most decentralized governance structure that enabled local congregations to more effectively respond to their locale. The declining denominations, UMC and EC, had moderately centralized to centralized governance structures that required local church clergy and congregations to engage with additional levels of organizational structure (p. 765). The AG took a strong traditionalist stand on the divisive issue of same-sex marriage that increased organizational identity among local church members, while the UMC avoided taking a strong stand one-way or the other that had the effect of leaving local church clergy and congregations to determine their own position on same-sex marriage (Cadge et al. 2008).

Purity

Shared understandings about what is central, distinctive, and enduring about an organization promote not only unity for orthodoxy, but enable complex interactions to occur among a variety of members who represent differing levels of hierarchy (Kjaergaard, Morsing, & Ravasi 2011). The differing levels of hierarchy produces two distinct variations of collective identities in an organization. He & Brown (2013) described the first as the "*aggregate* perspective where collective identities reside in the minds of individual members" and "is

therefore a summation of individual views" (p. 8). The second was a "*gestalt* version, which suggests that collective identities are located in the relationships and relational ties that bind cognitively people together" (p. 8). The first variation exists among those who view homosexuality as a sin that threatens organizational purity regarding legitimacy (He & Baruch 2010), and values (He & Brown 2013). Historically the concern for religious organizational purity and orthodoxy can be traced to a branch of the Reformation Movement known as the Puritans whose original goal was to purify the institutional church (Staples 1988). The aggregate perspective of members of the Puritan renewal movement that created organizational identity and unity was the need "to return to the pristine purity of the original Christians, as described in the Acts of the Apostles" (p. 65). The gestalt perspective of the members in the Puritan movement led to the creation of strict covenant societies in Europe and in the New England section of America (p. 65).

Both the aggregate perspective on personal and organizational purity and the gestalt perspective on covenantal organizational structure from the New England Puritan movement helped to form a purpose identity for members of the Opposing/Traditional/Prohibition (OTP) group in America that is committed to maintaining a strict biblical and theological interpretation on moral issues. This group continues the tradition of the Puritans who "tried to follow a God-given pattern of life which permitted no deviations from the path laid down for them in the Holy Scriptures, and taught to them by their parents and their properly appointed ministers" (Staples, 1988, p. 66). The Puritans adhered to a process of simplification that required "the removal of all unbiblical features from both public institutions and one's personal life" (p. 66). Moreover, a polity was created with three primary features:

- **church-orders**, which showed how the saints could be organized into *pure* churches (i.e. local congregations)
- the **covenants**, individual and collective contracts to walk in the ways of the Lord
- the **patterns** of biblical interpretation, preaching and pastoral ministry (Staples, 1988, p. 66).

This polity established the relationship between ideology and ethos in intimate patterns of thought (or belief) along with behavior that requires a joint examination by a Puritan Christian or by present day Christians who stand in that heritage (Staples 1988).

A vital aspect of orthodoxy for persons maintaining the Puritan heritage is the shared belief that salvation begins with the decrees of the Sovereign God. These moral and ethical decrees about purity are "unchangeable because God's will is indeed sovereign" (Staples, 1988, p. 73) and must be obeyed. Therefore, Holy Scripture is infallible and traditional church doctrine is to be maintained and protected (East 2017). This strict understanding of orthodoxy regarding biblical and theological interpretation on matters related to purity is a core value for members of the OTP that does not align with denominational names, but instead cuts across and through denominations. Scheitle (2007) found that local Protestant congregations with strict understandings of orthodoxy not only attract distinct demographic populations, but that their distinct *religious niche* attracts persons seeking a congregation with traditional understandings of biblical interpretation and concepts of sexual purity (p. 22). The literature review revealed that organizational identity based on denominational heritage is in flux as there is a lack of shared understanding within various denominations about legitimate biblical and theological interpretation. Everton (2004) concluded that the lack of shared understandings has produced

renewal movements such as The Institute on Religion and Democracy, The Association for Church Renewal, and The Confessing Movement for the purpose of returning their denomination to "the faith of their founders" (p. 189). In all, Everton (2004) identified 30 evangelical renewing movements within mainline Protestant denominations (p. 190). Fulkerson (1995) conducted a study of religious papers on human sexuality by the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A., the United Methodist Church (UMC), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ECLA), and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (PSUSA). Documents from all four denominations affirmed the Protestant conviction to the primacy of scripture. However, for members of the OTP all four documents "have abandoned biblical authority, either for contemporary sciences or for the corrupting influences of secular culture" (p. 46). The abandonment of biblical authority is connected with the erosion of traditional authority in society, another matter of great concern for members of the Opposing/Traditional/Prohibition (OTP) group.

This perceived abandonment of covenantal polity along with theological corruption is too much to bear for advocates of a modern day form of Puritanism and, one of the driving forces in a contentious realignment regarding religious organizational identity. In 1973 the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) separated from the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA) in "opposition to the long-developing theological liberalism which denied the deity of Jesus Christ and the inerrancy and authority of scripture" (Carter, 2011, p. 1). In 2016 the Anglican Communion suspended the Episcopal Church for three years from key voting positions in response to Episcopal clergy being allowed to officiate at same-sex marriages (Goodstein & DeFreytas-Tamura 2016). The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church has formed the Commission on a Way Forward to bring recommendations on matters related to homosexuality and the church to a specially called General Conference in 2019. The

scope of the Commission included organizational identity as: “In reflection on the two matters of unity and human sexuality, **we will fulfill our directive by considering ‘new forms and structures’ of relationship and through the ‘complete examination and possible revision’ of relevant paragraphs in the Book of Discipline**. We will give consideration to a greater freedom and flexibility to a future United Methodist Church **that will redefine our present connectionality**, which is showing signs of brokenness” (Berlin 2017).

Signs of brokenness are observable through the existence of in-groups and out-groups that coalesce not around denominational identity, but around the groupings of the Opposing/Traditional/Prohibition (OTP) group and the Supportive/Progressive/Celebration (SPC) group identified by Campbell (2006), Jones & Cox (2009), and Cadge et al. (2012). Elcott and Sinclair (2017) recognized the presence of the two groups when they surveyed 600 church members about core religious beliefs in relation to opinions on secular government policy such as same-sex marriage (p. 9). They found that “liberals prioritize (two core values) care and fairness while conservatives prioritize (three core values) loyalty, authority, and sanctity” (p. 7). Elcott and Sinclair (2017) did not interview clergy, but their study did shed light on the power of core values such as purity and sanctity to transcend denominational identities in creating a new grouping, OTP, to which members ascribe authority and loyalty. This coalition manifests itself in the political realm by voting for candidates who are opposed to granting legal legitimacy to same-sex marriages (Dillion 2014). Elcott and Sinclair (2017) concurred and properly recommended that future research examine how social policy preferences and voting patterns “are linked to more fundamental beliefs about the nature of the world and loyalty to authority” (p. 2). Their recommendation is in recognition that researchers have frequently used religious affiliation as a control variable that misses “divisions within denominations on specific policy

proposals" (p. 3). If opposition to or support for social change by American Christians is to be better understood, then the relationship (or lack of) between denominational leaders, local church clergy, and local denominational church members must be extended to also examine the relationship (or lack of) within the OTP. Such research would add knowledge to the relationship between loyalty and authority as well as about core beliefs concerning the fundamental nature of good and evil in the world.

Inclusion

What is central, distinctive, and enduring about Protestantism that promotes unity along with organizational identification is a Reformation theology represented by four *particulate exclusia: solus Christus* (Christ alone), *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone), *sola gratia* (grace alone), and *sola fida* (faith alone) (Hofheinz, 2017, p. 279). The four *particulate exclusia* promote the two variations of collective identities, aggregate and gestalt, described by He and Brown (2013). The aggregate identity is manifested in the beliefs of: the primacy of Christ, the authority of Scripture, and salvation that is obtained by the grace of Christ through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-10). The gestalt identity historically occurred through the ecumenical relationships among "mainline" Protestant churches (Dorrien 2013). However, due to the historic manifestations of the Reformation the aggregate and gestalt collective identities of Protestants are complex and convoluted given "the breakdown of Christian unity in the face of a proliferation of hundreds, if not thousands of Protestant denominations" (Hofheinz, 2017, p. 275). Moreover, new groupings based on biblical and theological interpretation as well as positions on moral values have led some wonder if "we are living during a time when we are watching Protestantism or denominationalism coming to an end" (p. 277).

What the legacy of the Protestant Reformation is to be is questioned by Ryrie (2017). He ascertains that one of the possible narratives is that those who live their Christian faith with the attitude and actions of "defiance and revolution" (p. 5) properly identify with what it means to be heirs of the Reformation. This narrative begins with Martin Luther "standing on his conscience and the Word of God at the Diet of Worms, defying all the powers of the Church and Empire rather than abandoning what he knew to be right" (Ryrie, 2017, p. 5). The defiance eventually spread to France, Holland, and England. Hundreds of years later the defiance took the form of the Anti-slavery Movement in Great Britain and America (pp. 5-6). Manifestations of this legacy in the twentieth century include:

- The 1934 Barmen Declaration of the Confessing Church that stood in opposition to the fascist government of Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party
- The civil rights movement in the United States led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)
- The anti-apartheid movement in South Africa led by South African Protestant clergy such as Beyers Naude, Desmond Tutu, and Allan Boesak (p. 6).

These movements sought to redefine religious organizational identity by moving beyond worship, Bible study, and prayer to include social justice activism. To accomplish the larger goals of reforming and transforming society in order to be more in keeping with the ways of the kingdom of God, religious leaders first had to disturb the church as an organization for it to move out of its comfort zone that emphasized piety (Delehanty 2016). The forerunners of the Supportive/Progressive/Celebration (SPC) group worked to connect the systemic and structural dimensions of biblical interpretation and theology with discipleship and faith commitment as a vital part of Protestant organizational identity.

Core values that produce unity, purpose, and organizational identity for the members of the SPC are justice and compassion. This is in keeping with Kohlberg's (1969) groundbreaking research on moral psychology that "initially conceptualized morality in terms of harm and justice, which involve values of individual rights, fairness, and personal freedom" (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, p. 963). It is important to note that for members of the SPC purity is a matter of moral significance not to be neglected, however, purity has less significance than the categories of justice and harm/care (Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park 1997). When making moral judgments specific actions are considered wrong if "they are unfair or partial, create inequality, or otherwise restrict others' rights" (Horberg et al., 2009, p. 964). On-the-other-hand, "actions are particularly moral if they enhance rights, autonomy, freedom, or self-expression" (p. 964). By applying these criteria members of the SPC believe that they have a moral obligation to support the ordination of homosexual persons and same-sex marriage. For members of the SPC faithfulness means that ultimate loyalty is due to a higher authority than secular government or organized church doctrine and policy. Advocacy groups working to reform denominational policy for LGBTQ inclusion and to practice social activism include Affirmation and The Reformation Project (Everton 2004).

A major reason for denominational organizational identity fracturing is that members of the SPC will debate with members of the OTP the proper manner for interpreting scripture. A contentious aspect of this debate is the legitimacy of postmodern thought that there may be more than one way to interpret a scripture passage and then develop a theological narrative on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church. For members of the OTP the allowance of postmodern thought as legitimate destabilizes the traditional biblical and theological understandings that serve as foundations for the church's organizational identity. Those who

perceive postmodern thought as legitimate cite the insights by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her 2009 TED Talk "The Danger of a Single Story." One reason Adichie warns against a single story in understanding reality is that a single story can create stereotypes. "And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story" (Adichie 2009). Her comment counters the questioning by some members of the OTP about why there is a debate over homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church because they perceive that God has spoken clearly through Scripture and the issue is settled (Siker 2006; Stevenson-Moessner 2006). For Adichie and those who reference her in the debate over homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church, this is an illegitimate power move because "how [stories] are told, who tells them, when they are told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power" (Adichie 2009). For members of the SPC the debate over homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church extends beyond legitimacy questions about biblical and theological interpretation to include questions about the legitimacy of organizational power.

To understand how Protestant denominations publicly present their version of the story regarding homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church, Kapinus, Kraus, and Flowers (2010) examined the websites of twelve denominations across four categories of Protestant faith based on theology: liberal-mainline, moderate-mainline, evangelical, and black Protestant (p. 7). These categories reflected: belief in biblical inerrancy, openness to scientific discovery, and acceptance of secular authorities (p. 7). Kapinus et al., (2010) found that liberal and moderate mainline Protestant denominational websites do not post detailed explanations of positions on specific scripture passages about homosexuality, but instead post broad statements regarding justice and compassion. A frequently used phrase was the need to "respect and defend the

individual integrity of all persons" (Kapinus et. al., 2010, p. 10). Hannan, Carroll, and Polos (2003) found this organizational strategy ineffective because "generic products normally do not fully satisfy anybody, even if they partially satisfy many; whereas specifically targeted products satisfy a specific niche, but have limited appeal beyond a narrowly defined group" (Reimer, 2011, p. 766).

While members of the SPC do not specifically cite her philosophy, the literature review revealed their moral positions had much in common with Virginia Held. One tenet of her philosophy is a "compelling moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility" (Held, 2006, p. 10). All persons are dependent on others in some way. Moralities that are built upon the concept that individuals are independent and autonomous are naïve (p. 10). What is true is that no one is able to get through life alone. A second tenet is that traditional moralities are misguided that refrain from allowing emotion to be part of the moral decision making process. Emotion is to be embraced as it evokes the qualities of "sympathy, empathy, sensitivity, and responsiveness" (p. 10) that allows connection at the deepest human level. While members of the SPC may not be aware of the moral philosophy of Virginia Held, these tenants follow the instructions of Jesus to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31) regardless of sexual orientation. Doing so affirms the identity of both persons as children of God who are brothers/sisters with one another. However, the ethics of care goes beyond individual relationships to the corporate concern for "justice (or lack of it) of the ways the tasks of caring are distributed in society" (Held, 2006, p. 16). Thus, the ethics of care calls for an embodied moral response that connects with individuals and affects society.

In keeping with the first possible narrative of defiance and revolution for the legacy of the Protestant Reformation identified by Ryrie (2017), the moral philosophy for members of the Supportive/Progressive/Celebration (SPC) group leads them to function as an in-group committed to compassion and social justice on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. While they would agree with the members of the Opposing/Traditional/Prohibition (OTP) group that the organized Protestant church needs to be reformed, they would disagree with the focus of that reform. For the members of the SPC the OTP becomes an out-group because it focuses on individual sexual purity that proclaims homosexuality a sin, and organizational purity through traditional biblical and theological interpretation undergirded by strongly enforced covenants. A divisive conflict results when clergy, such as the Rev. Jimmy Creech, guided by their understanding of justice and compassion officiate at same-sex weddings. For the OTP this breaks covenant and threatens organizational identity that necessitates punishment and even expulsion (defrocking) which is what occurred to Rev. Creech in 1999 (Creech 2011).

Uncertainty

A key question in organizational identity (OI) is "Who am I in relation to the organization?" (Pratt, 1998, p. 171). Cadge et al. (2012) identified two levels of identity as many local church clergy felt "constrained by pressures from 'above' (those created by the religious traditions within which they serve) and pressures from 'below' (those unique to their own congregations)" (p. 372). Clergy admitted that they were uncertain how to lead on the issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion as they did not know how to simultaneously respond to pressures from above and below. Ellingson (2004) contends that various institutions will address the issue of homosexuality only "when it threatens to disrupt the institutional order or when

clients bring sexual concerns to institutional actors" (p. 286). Jones and Cox (2009) found that "overwhelming majorities of clergy across every denomination agree that avoiding the issue is not a viable solution" (p. 15). Yet, they also found that "losing members is a very real concern among Mainline clergy" (p. 16). This creates a dilemma for how to address the issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion without losing members.

The work of Cadge et al. (2012) supported studies by Djupe and Neiheisel (2008), Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert (2006), Olson, Cadge, and Harrison (2006), that "clergy who address homosexuality tend to do so pragmatically and as a result of a great deal of deliberation, focusing primarily on grappling with the issue in light of the professional constraints they face" (Cadge et al., 2012, p. 372). In a narrative that illustrates the pragmatic actions of some clergy, an Episcopal priest shared with Cadge et al. (2012), "Now I have to say that in my own church…because of its very conservative history and process of gradual change, I wouldn't dare perform a same-sex marriage in church" (p. 380). One way to promote gradual change within the local church organization is to abide by the guidance given by denominational leaders to provide educational opportunities employing small groups to create "more dialogue and a deeper understanding of sexuality" (Kapinus et al., 2010, p. 9). To demonstrate loyalty to upper level organizational leadership in fostering more dialogue local church clergy can, verbally and in writing, communicate official statements from their denominational headquarters on sexuality:

- We want this dialogue to continue. Homosexuality presents a particular problem for the church. It seems to be contrary to the teaching of scripture. The church though should be aware of the partial nature of our knowledge of homosexuality (Presbyterian Church USA 2007).

- We also recognize our limited understanding of this complex gift and encourage the medical, theological, and social science disciplines to combine in a determined effort to understand human sexuality more completely (United Methodist Church 2007).
- People across the broad spectrum of ages "need information and experience to understand and responsibly live out their sexual identity" (Evangelical Lutheran Church 2007).

Reporting the dissemination of official statements by local church clergy to church members may please denominational leaders, but the statements cited above lack power to do more than engender minimal change at the local church level. This leaves local church clergy in an organizational vise.

Few studies have been conducted on middle managers' uncertainty in business organizations during times of change (Herzing & Jimmieson, 2006, p. 628), and the literature review revealed that this also applies to local church clergy who serve as middle managers in religious organizational structures. Milliken (1987) defined uncertainty as "an individual's inability to predict something accurately" (p. 136). This inability might be due to ambiguous or even contradictory statements and information. The most characteristic feature of uncertainty is the sense of doubt that develops concerning future events in addition to the cause and effect relationships in an environment of change (DiFonzo & Bordia 1998). Concern over future events for local church United Methodist clergy was illustrated by reviewing communications from the Commission on a Way Forward and the United Methodist Council of Bishops in preparation for a specially called General Conference in February of 2019. These communications readily acknowledged the "possible changes in the global denomination that could occur as a result of the Special Session of the General Conference" (United Methodist News Services, 2018, March

20). In preparation for the 2019 General Conference the Commission on a Way Forward in February of 2018 offered a summary of two possible future organizational models for the UMC:

One Church Model

The One Church Model gives churches the room they need to maximize the presence of United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible. The One Church Model provides a generous unity that gives conferences, churches, and pastors the flexibility to uniquely reach their missional context in relation to human sexuality without changing the connectional nature of The United Methodist Church.

Multi-Branch: One Church Model

This model is grounded in a unified core that includes shared doctrine and services and one Council of Bishops, while also creating different branches that have clearly defined values such as accountability, contextualization and justice. The five U.S. jurisdictions would be replaced by three connectional conferences, each covering the whole country, based on theology and perspective on LGBTQ ministry (i.e. progressive, contextual, traditional branches). Annual conferences would decide which connectional conference to affiliate with; only local churches who chose a branch other than the one chosen by their annual conference would vote to join another conference. (United Methodist News Services, 2018, February 28)

It is important to note that the recommendations in the form of two models from the Commission on a Way Forward are primarily addressed to the members of the General Conference. The General Conference will be composed of 864 persons (432 laity and 432 clergy) from around the world. Only General Conference has the authority to vote on the recommendations from the Commission on a Way Forward that will decide the future of the United Methodist Church. Local church clergy as middle managers have received

communications from hierarchical leadership to offer education events and further conversations about homosexuality, as well as to disseminate explanations about possible reorganization. A dilemma for local church clergy is that hierarchical leaders have not prioritized these tasks. In reference to this dilemma Bishop Gregory Palmer, resident bishop of the West Ohio Annual Conference and a member of the Commission on a Way Forward stated, "We are in a crucible together, trying to create something that does not yet exist. God's grace and mercy in Jesus Christ sustains us through the ups and downs of the process that we trust leads to newness" (United Methodist News Services, 2018, March 23). Local church clergy have a unique place in the crucible that situates them between hierarchical leadership and local church leadership with members of both groups expecting effective leadership during a time of organizational uncertainty.

Cultural Identity

Most of the studies conducted in the United States and Europe for understanding attitudes on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion have tended to focus on the effect of personal religious beliefs and religious affiliation, but "the religious culture of a nation may also shape attitudes" (Adamczyk & Pitt 2009, p. 339). To expand academic knowledge this study examined the effect of religious culture on attitudes on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion for a specific population, local church Protestant clergy. Yip (2005) suggested that most of the world's religions describe homosexual behavior as unnatural, ungodly, and impure. This narrative frame of unnatural, ungodly, and impure, when coupled with active involvement in religious activity, regular reading of religious literature, and close connection with Christian friends, is likely to precipitate anti-homosexual attitudes (Olson et al. 2006; Scheitle & Adamczyk 2009). Moreover, Adamczyk and

Felson (2006) suggested that people who do not profess religious beliefs may be influenced in their personal beliefs by the religious culture in which they live.

Purity

Countryman (2007) wrote, "A system that divides clean from dirty is a way of understanding and defining what it is to be human – or, more specifically, what it is to belong to a particular human group that so defines purity" (pp. 12-13). Cultural purity systems place the human being near or at the center of the system, with dirt (or impurity) being outside the system as it should not associate with the people of that society. This may be because the dirt/impurity is "unfamiliar, irregular, unhealthy, or objectionable" (Countryman, 2007, p. 13). Cultural anthropologist, Mary Douglas, wrote "As we know it, dirt is essentially disorder" (Douglas, 2013, p. 2). The presence of dirt means that something is out of place. However, it is important to note that there can be significant differences from one culture to another as to what is clean and what is impure. For instance, in the Hebrew tradition in accordance with Leviticus 11:7, pork is considered to be unclean. Many cultures consume pork. Never-the-less, a number of cultures that consume pork abide by Leviticus 11:22 that reject the eating of grasshoppers (Countryman, 2007, p. 13). Thus, every culture's purity concepts can be understood to reveal the culture's uniqueness as well as the common human effort for purity. Therefore, a key question for every society and culture regarding purity is: "What is legitimate and what is illegitimate?" (Countryman, 2007, p. 13).

Douglas (2013) perceived that purity systems promote cultural identity by using body boundaries as a symbol for social boundaries (pp. 114-115). Such purity systems foster sexual ethics in that certain sexual acts are understood to be either pure or impure, and those who participate in such sexual acts are either pure or impure in the eyes of the society. Countryman

(2007) correctly stated that “Purity and impurity are thus culturally and emotionally powerful for us” (p. 19). Tranby and Zulkowski (2012) extended this understanding by noting that religion is a particularly strong cultural force for shaping beliefs about sexuality. Ideas, symbols, and metaphors that evolve from a culture influence attitudes and actions as people seek tools from a “cultural toolkit” (Swidler, 1986, p. 273) to express their position on matters such as homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Schnabel (2016) concurred with Cadge et al. (2012); Jones and Cox (2009); Kapinus et al. (2010), and Wellman (1999) by describing the debate over homosexuality as a “bipolar culture war” (Wellman, 1999, p. 184). The term, bipolar culture war, helps to set the opposing brackets, but it does not illuminate the diversity of positions. To examine the diversity of positions and to increase academic knowledge both Kapinus et al. (2010) and Wellman (1999) employed a specific form of the conceptual framework OI, subculture identity theory, to examine the symbolic positions taken by religious leaders “to mobilize political movements, resources and members” (Wellman, 1999, p. 184). Smith (1998) highlighted an important nuance between fundamentalists and evangelicals in that “evangelicals thrive because they are in tension with the wider culture, not to the point of fundamentalists who abjure the culture altogether, but in dialogue with the culture” (p. 21). This allows evangelicals to be in contention with the broader culture while simultaneously maintaining their religious and cultural identity without separating from the culture or being a mirror image of the culture (Wellman, 1999, p. 187). Concurring with Wellman, Kapinus et al. (2010) cited statements by the Assemblies of God and the Southern Baptist Convention about what they perceive as cultural shifts on sexual activity outside of marriage and the sanctity of the family.

- We believe, in the light of biblical revelation, that the growing cultural acceptance of homosexual identity and behavior, male and female, is symptomatic of a broader spiritual disorder that threatens the family, the government, and the church (Assemblies of God 2007).
- Scripture condemns any abuse of sexuality, including premarital sex, adultery, rape, incest, pornography, promiscuity, prostitution, and homosexuality. These authoritative biblical guidelines are now under persistent and concerted attack by a culture of moral relativism, even within the religious community (Southern Baptist Convention 2007).

These statements revealed the effect of cultural identity on some religious organizations regarding homosexuality, but more study is needed regarding the effect on individual clergy. The effect of the overlapping cultural structures of family/sexuality, religion, and politics in the evolving debate over same-sex marriage was the focus of a study by Sherkat (2017). Sherkat (2017) perceived that cultural capital has been employed to maintain and protect hierarchies of domination, in particular, the patriarchal nuclear family (p. 381). Feminism produced the initial challenge to patriarchy in part by disconnecting sexuality from reproduction (Powell, York-Quadlin, & Pizmony-Levy 2015). An additional challenge to patriarchy came when LGBTQ people asserted their claim to be treated as legitimate heads of family units. This engendered a strong cultural backlash against both feminism and LGBTQ rights as "the patriarchal family enjoys considerable support in some quarters of the religious marketplace, and many religious groups in the United States use their resources to promote patriarchal family structure (Sherkat, 2017, p. 382). Wadsworth (2011) concluded that religious and cultural support for the patriarchal family structure was conditioned by ethnic privilege and religious interpretations formed in ethnic experiences, which in turn shaped objections to homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman (2011) presented a slightly different perspective as they argued for the existence of a neo-traditional frame they call "egalitarian essentialism" (p. 259). This frame allowed for some aspects of feminist equality by asserting that women and men have *equal, but essentially different* natures that make each better equipped for different roles. Women are perceived to be better caretakers and men are better suited for the workforce and wage earning. Thus, *egalitarian essentialism* combines feminism and familism to reinforce traditional gender roles while denying that women are of lesser value. This cultural perspective is foundational for *complementary theology* that argues that men and women were meant to complement one another in different roles for the sake of stable families. Therefore, two persons of the same gender cannot complement one another to develop a stable family, so for the sake of children and society same-sex marriage must be opposed (Schnabel, 2016, pp. 32-33).

Phillips and Yi (2017) envision the overturning of the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court Decision – *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) – that declared same-sex marriage to be a fundamental right under the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process and Equal Protection clauses. They believe that this can be accomplished if those opposed to same-sex marriage follow the strategy used by anti-abortion/pro-life groups who are seeking to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (1973), which declared a constitutional right to abort. Rather than allowing the decision in *Roe v. Wade* (1973) to delegitimize their cause in the eyes of society, anti-abortion/pro-life groups recast the issue from an individual woman's right to choose, to a battle for the rights of the unborn child. To strengthen their argument and political power, the anti-abortion/pro-life groups have employed traditional biblical and theological understandings with religious social networking to be a formable force. The analysis of Phillips and Yi (2017) is "Abortion opponents are now largely

accepted as legitimate contributors in the public forum, and the debate has become part of normal, contentious politics, marked by wins and losses for each side" (p. 27).

Scheitle and Adamczyk (2009) extended previous research on religious social networking by including the role that exclusive theological beliefs play in creating embeddedness within one's congregation. They sensed that exclusive theological beliefs produced a higher commitment to the congregation, which leads to more friendships within the congregation. However, the effect of exclusive theology did more than create a protective barrier to other theologies. It strongly affected a person's worldview of culture and secular society. Scheitle and Adamczyk (2009) wrote, "Exclusive theological beliefs become a guide not only for salvation in the afterlife, but also a guide to salvation in the present life" (p. 19). These beliefs then serve to define the appropriateness of activities and relationships which tend to cause the individual to limit relationships to other like-minded persons (p. 19). This finding supports the conclusion of Olson et al. (2006) that an individual with a high proportion of close friends in an exclusive theology congregation will have more negative attitudes toward same-sex unions.

The cultural effect on in-group and out-group dynamics on the matters of purity and homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion is profound. Application of sub-cultural identity theory revealed that evangelicalism provided a sense of identity and meaning by establishing and clearly communicating norms about "sexual sin, moral relativity, and homosexuality" that separate evangelicals from other religious groups (Kapinus et al., 2010, p. 16). This is in keeping with Wellman (1999) who described how gay and lesbian persons serve as a particularly useful out-group for evangelicals because there are few negative outcomes from the strategy (p. 202). One reason is that the in-group dynamic engendered a sense of protective security from gays and lesbians as well as other members of the out-group (Vezzali et al. 2017). According to Elcott and

Sinclair (2017) a key reason for the fundamentalist/evangelical in-group to remain separate from the impure was a cultural understanding of the demonic (p. 7). Douglas described how some fundamentalists/evangelicals perceived that human beings who embody the demonic have the capacity to defy the divine plan of God causing God to withdraw from His church, society, and the entire world. This is the cost for abandoning the sacred by supporting corruption and contamination (Douglas, 2013, p. 133). According to Elcott and Sinclair (2017) so great is the power of evil that government power may need to be added to overcome the demonic. Therefore, sin is not a private matter, and for righteous believers, the sin is not limited to only the sinners as explained by Milgrom (2004), When the evildoers are punished, they bring down the righteous with them. Those who perish with the wicked are not entirely blameless, however. They are inadvertent sinners who, by having allowed the wicked to flourish, have also contributed to the pollution of the sanctuary. (Elcott & Sinclair, 2017, p. 15)

Due to this perspective evangelicals feel obligated to speak out against cultural impurity or as Bean (2014) wrote, refuse "to privatize their moral beliefs" (p. 13). This action, in response to cultural moral depravity, must be taken because as Mark Douglas (2006) acknowledged, "If the church accepts homosexuality, what is to keep us from accepting sins like adultery, incest, bestiality, and sex with children? Don't we have to draw the line somewhere?" (p. 76).

Inclusion

For members of the Supportive/Progressive/Celebration (SPC) group the line to be drawn regarding homosexuality and Christian faith is not a straight line separating impure persons from pure persons, unholy persons from holy persons, for the sake of the kingdom of God. Instead, it is a circle that encompasses straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people who by grace through faith in Jesus Christ are made fit to be part of the kingdom of God. The present

conflict in the Christian church about purity and inclusion mirrors a debate during the earliest days of the church with culture serving as the context. The first Christians were Jews who had become Christians and these Jewish Christians brought with them traditional Jewish understandings of purity with practices such as Sabbath observance, synagogue attendance, adherence to strict dietary laws, and morality laws on the sanctity of marriage that set them apart from people of other nations and cultures. A major decision for the early church concerned whether to limit the message of salvation only to Jews or to share the gospel with Gentiles that they also might be included. A complicating factor was that Gentile culture was so different from Jewish culture. "The legitimation of the Gentile mission is a dominant motif in Acts," (Hedrick, 2012, p.302), with resolution of the conflict occurring in Acts 15 (Olson, 2012, p. 362). It was at a gathering of apostolic leaders in Jerusalem that "the assembly concluded that Gentile Jesus-believers were not obligated to become Jews or to observe the whole Torah" (Olson, 2012, p. 362). Thus to be effective in mission the early church acknowledged cultural context and this acknowledgement led to new understandings and practices on a variety of issues.

Perry, Jr. and Rodriquez (2004) discussed how culture has always influenced what Christians think about God and moral behavior in order to be effective in mission. Perry, Jr. and Rodriquez (2004) defined religious culture as "a meaning-giving system created by a particular people that expresses, forms, and transmits, in culturally specific forms, how people and all things are connected to God" (p. 83). This definition affirms the understanding of the noted theologian Paul Tillich who wrote that "religion is the substance of culture; culture is the form of religion" (Tillich, 1959, p. 42). A similar perspective is offered by evangelical Rob Bell (2006) in *Velvet Elvis* that, "To think that I can just read the Bible without reading any of my own culture or background or issues into it and come out with a 'pure' or 'exact' meaning is not only

untrue, but it leads to a destructive reading of the Bible that robs it of its life and energy" (p. 54). Olson (2012) accepted cultural context for interpreting biblical and theological ideas that promotes viewing the incorporation of Gentiles into the church as an analogy for welcoming gay and lesbian Christians into the church (p. 375). In addition, Olson (2012) argued that just as Gentile believers in Jesus were viewed as equal in Christ with Jewish believers that the analogy extends to the equality of Christians who feel same-sex attractions with Christians who feel opposite sex attractions (p. 376). To further emphasize the equality of believers no matter their sexual orientation, Olson (2012) understands the Apostle Paul's teaching about the giftedness of Christians (I Corinthians 12) to imply that homosexual Christians also have gifts to share (p. 376).

An overlap between cultural opposition and religious opposition to same-sex marriage concerns members of the Supportive/Progressive/Celebration (SPC) group. They note how closely the biblical and theological arguments used to oppose interracial marriage are now being used to oppose same-sex marriage. The test case that went to the U.S. Supreme Court on interracial marriage was *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). Prior to that time the case was first heard by Judge Leon M. Bazile of the Fifteenth Circuit Court of Virginia. Bazile sought to maintain 19th century states' rights doctrines and "with each succeeding decade, he became more resentful of the legal and social changes taking place in the 20th century" (Hershman, 2018, p. 2). In 1959 Richard and Mildred Loving were charged with violating Virginia's prohibition on interracial marriage detailed in the commonwealth's Act to Preserve Racial Integrity. Legal procedures went back and forth between state and federal courts. Historian James H. Hershman, Jr. has written:

> Acting to preempt federal court action, Bazile responded on January 22, 1965, with his final ruling on the matter. Finding them guilty of a felony he sentenced them to a year in jail, and then he added the racist dictum that "Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents…The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix" (p. 4). On June 12, 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court quoted in full Bazile's racist dictum, and overturned his ruling for being in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Boston (2010) built upon the experiences of Richard and Mildred Loving when he provided more details about the ways that religious arguments used to oppose interracial marriage are being used to oppose same-sex marriage. Boston described how the couple who were the first interracial marriage in Mississippi received condemnation for "race mixing" because it was unchristian (p. 1). A local racist group became aware of the couple's plan to marry, so they petitioned a state judge to order the county clerk not to grant them a marriage license. The couple received hate mail:

> I'm sure you did it to prove a point to the Christian white people of Mississippi, but in the end you will be the one to sorrow…This is against the law of God and you will have to answer to Him for disobeying this very stern commandment in His word (Boston, 2010, p. 2).

Boston interviewed the husband, Roger Mills, who is now a Sunday school teacher in Georgia, about the couple's experiences:

> We got lectures on Leviticus and the Old Testament about how it was impermissible to have your seeds be mixed. We got the curse of Cain and how blacks were marked in the Old Testament and what I was doing was a shame to my race. (Boston, 2010, p. 2)

The couple eventually married and had a daughter, Demetria, who is lesbian and who had to hire a lawyer to receive a marriage license for a same-sex marriage. One of the briefs filed by their lawyer stated, "Today's opponents of marriage between two people of the same-sex are using precisely the same flawed arguments that once were used to justify racial slavery and apartheid" (Boston, 2010, p. 3). When she was interviewed, Demetria added, "I'm not sure how my being married to my partner could possibly affect the couple who are heterosexual who live next door. It's irrational" (Boston, 2010, p. 3).

A distinctive cultural difference at present between persons who support the inclusion of LGBTQ persons in church and society versus persons who support the exclusion of LGBTQ persons is the legitimacy of science. The openness to the application of science in understanding the origins of homosexuality harmonizes with the belief that culture is always in flux. Yip (2005) interviewed 25 women and 36 men who self-identified as Christian and lesbian/gay/bisexual in England. The participants highlighted the cultural and historical specificity in the traditional interpretation of homosexuality that they recognized as negative, and perceived the traditional interpretation to be "inapplicable to contemporary society with its modern understanding of the diversity of human sexuality" (Yip, 2005, p. 53). Yip quoted Ian, a gay priest in his 50's,

So what if the Bible says some negative things about homosexuality? It was written ages ago, when people didn't have the scientific knowledge we now have about human sexuality. The culture was so rigid then when it comes to sex. How could you apply the standards and norms then to our lives now? We have moved on. We should move on from that…I think that's the problem. The Church thinks that our understanding of sexuality doesn't change, or shouldn't change. But we do change, as individuals and as a society. (Yip, 2005, p. 53)

A chief component in the debate over homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion has been "the values of family and societal stability" (Thomas & Olson, 2011, p. 351). Persons who advocate for inclusion argue that "the cultural and legal legitimation of gay relationships and gay families is good and necessary because it leads to personal and public stability through encouraging gay persons toward committed, monogamous, and long-term relationships" (Thomas & Olson, 2011, p. 352). The Human Rights Campaign on their website states: "the qualities that help children grow into good and responsible adults…do not depend on the sexual orientation of their parents but on their parents' ability to provide a loving, stable and happy home, something no other class has an exclusive hold on" (Human Rights Campaign 2011). Olson (2004) amplified the need for not only legal, but cultural legitimacy for gay families. Inhibiting cultural legitimacy for gay families are *relationship killers* identified by scientists "that are most likely to either crush the spirit of a human being or to produce anger that burns with intense and destructive heat and lasts for a long time – sometimes for generations or even centuries" (Olson, 2010, p. 108). Three relationship killers cited by scientists are betrayal, contempt, and exclusion. According to Olson (2010) neuroscientists have been able to establish a direct link between the three relationship killers and "the areas of the brain that regulate aggression and depression" (p. 108). He broadened these findings to include schoolyard shootings, workplace shootings, and road-rage killings as being committed by persons "who perceived themselves as objects of betrayal, contempt, and exclusion" (p 109). These conclusions regarding the need for supporting on-going cultural change for matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion mesh well with Virginia Held's ethic of care.

Knowledge of how the three relationship killers affect members of the LGBTQ community engendered passion in persons who advocate for inclusion to overcome these

identified human and civil rights injustices. Jones and Cox (2009) found that 56% of the Supportive Base perceived that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's provided the strongest historical analogy to present LGBT issues (p. 25). In contrast they found that only 19% of the Opposing Base perceived the Civil Rights Movement to be the strongest historical analogy, while 51% of the Opposing Base perceived alcoholism to be the strongest historical analogy to present LGBT issues (p. 25). An historic event that illuminated how a minority group experienced harm in their relationship with the organized church was described by Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, the Associate Director of the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change at the University of Memphis. Nelson, who is also a Presbyterian minister, cited the leadership decision of the PCUSA to move the 1965 General Assembly meeting from Memphis, Tennessee, to Montreat, North Carolina, because the original host, Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis, "prohibited African Americans from being admitted to worship" (Nelson, 2006, p. 82). Nelson (2006) saw the attempt to exclude a minority group as an expression of a Western cultural and theological dynamic of empire building in that "someone has to be left out so that the powerful may prosper" (p. 84). Nelson (2006) then asked, "Is this issue really about sin – or is it centered on maintaining the 'good ole boys' club through conservative control…?" (p. 84). The position of Nelson was that liberal ideals of inclusion on race and homosexuality cannot be accomplished through passive-aggressive strategizing. Similar to Bean (2014) writing that evangelicals refuse "to privatize their beliefs," (p. 13), Nelson (2006) urged supporters of LGBTQ rights not to privatize their beliefs.

Uncertainty

Wellman (1999) wrote, "Americans are ambivalent at best on a number of issues, not the least of which is homosexuality" (p. 185). He correctly diagnosed the tendency of popular media

and some members of academia to present homosexuality as a bipolar cultural war that failed to identify or research the uncertain middle (p. 185). Earlier research clearly showed that the bipolar thesis was inadequate for describing the opinions held by the general American public (DiMaggio, Evans, & Bryson 1997). Kniss (1988) performed a groundbreaking study in which he plotted the moral and ideological map of American religious groups within the American cultural landscape and surfaced nuanced positions between the extremes. He noticed that the edges of the map contained fewer points, but that these points represented the most passionate positions. The center of the map contained a greater number of points as positions began to overlap which represented participants' ambiguity. Kniss (1988) called the group in the center the *ambiguous middle*. Sheetz-Willard (2007) called for further study on the cultural forces that are helping to maintain the existence of an ambiguous middle after over three decades of church debate on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

An example of complex cultural forces acting to position one particular segment of society in the ambiguous middle was the African-American community. Historically, the black community had employed a "don't ask, don't tell policy" (Boykin, NY Times, 2004, May 18). Keith Boykin, founder and former President of the National Black Justice Coalition, described this policy as serving a dual purpose by allowing "the church to remain simultaneously the most homophobic in the black community and the most homo-tolerant" (Boykin, NY Times, 2004, May 18). In this manner a traditional cultural value was maintained without alienating gay and lesbian church members (Kapinus et al. 2010). This dual purpose practice occurs because racial solidarity is a vital matter in the black community due to racial and ethnic discrimination. Therefore, concerns about homosexuality pale in comparison. William Shaw, former President of the National Baptist Convention, did not support same-sex marriage, but illustrated positioning

in the ambiguous middle in the context of the black community when he said, “marriage is threatened more by adultery, and we don’t have a constitutional ban on that. Alcohol is a threat to the stability of the family, and we don’t have a constitutional ban on that” (Banerjee, NY Times, 2005, September 4). Research by Kapinus et al. (2010) listed the cultural experience of economic and social injustice as having a higher priority to address by many members of the black community than the matter of homosexuality (p. 17). Kapinus (2010) determined that members of the black community act pragmatically on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in order to survive in society.

American cultural understandings of homosexuality entered a new phase in 2015 when the Supreme Court ruled that state-level bans on same-sex marriage were unconstitutional. The decision effectively legalized same-sex marriage across the United States (Adamczyk, Boyd, & Hayes 2016). While researchers have explored national trends that have become more accepting of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and have identified religion as an important factor in shaping public opinion, the research of Adamczyk et al. (2016) focused on county characteristics. Examining smaller segments of the national population provided greater depth to their research. They correctly noted that the United States occupies the third largest landmass in the world, but people’s experiences differ from one area of the country to another. They are also correct that researchers have overemphasized individual characteristics that influence attitudes on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, and have neglected to study and factor in local area religious cultural effects on attitudes on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. When studying the results of the American National Election Survey (2004-2008) including individuals from187 counties (pp. 5-6), Adamczyk et al. (2016) found that through the surrounding culture, structure, and social interactions the greatest influence on participants’ attitudes came from macro

characteristics such as “the dominant religion within the county, or the proportion of friends who say religion is important” (p. 5). Interestingly, even if the participants did not accept the “religious” rationale for the views on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion they were likely to “adopt the views of those around them to maintain a self-image based on reference group expectations” (Adamczyk et al., 2016, p. 5). This is significant because the results showed that “feelings about homosexual individuals are not randomly distributed across the United States” (Adamcyzk et al., 2016, p. 12).

The findings of Adamczyk et al. (2016) demonstrated that local religious cultural understandings on homosexuality has the power to pull persons from uncertainty over to one side of the debate or to the other. According to Wellman (1999) the uncertain middle has the political power to decide denomination doctrine and policy (p. 190). Jones & Cox (2009) found that the uncertain middle has a greater concern for the organization than they do for the specific social issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion (p. 24). Organizational stabilization is a greater concern for members of the uncertain middle than is concern for organizational purity. The members of the uncertain middle are comfortable embodying the inner contradictions that characterize American society in general. As Wellman (1999) concluded, “the ambiguity in the middle is not only due to ideological confusion and compromise but to the symbolic tensions between American tradition of individual liberty and their resistance to compelling moral norms on the American public” (p. 190). The contest for the support of the members of the uncertain middle presents difficult challenges for local church clergy leadership that are explored in the next sections of this literature review.

Local Church Protestant Clergy Leadership

Overwhelming majorities of clergy across a spectrum of denominations believe that avoiding the issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in the local church and failing to provide leadership "is not a viable solution" (Jones & Cox, 2009, p. 15). In the research of Cadge et al. (2012) 52.5% of clergy admitted that they were uncertain about leadership actions to take on the issue of homosexuality. While much research has been conducted on the developmental journey of leaders in secular organizations, to fill in the gap in academic knowledge, McKenna et al. (2007) undertook a study of 100 local church clergy concerning key events that influence their development as leaders (p. 179). Similar to the results of previous research on business leaders, McKenna et al. (2007) found "the preponderance of developmental experiences occurred in-the-trenches (32%), during times of significant transition (27%), or in personal relationships (23%), indicating that pastors develop as they are doing their work and leading on the edge of their comfort zones" (p. 179). Two enlightening comments about leadership made by clergy during interviews were: "I learned that you can make some really bad mistakes when you refuse to lead," and "This is what it [being a leader] means sometimes, to make difficult and hard decisions" (p. 185).

After clergy overcome their hesitancy to lead on contentious issues, then a vital, yet hard and difficult decision is on how to lead. To examine this matter it was helpful to employ the conceptual framework of learning organization (LO). Senge (1990) defined learning organization as "an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future" (p. 14). To expand its capacity to survive a learning organization must implement adaptive learning. Adaptive learning is data driven and identifies gaps in knowledge in order to respond to a changing environment (Senge, 1990, p. 14). Adaptive learning is an effective coping strategy.

However, a true learning organization unites *adaptive learning* with *generative learning*. Doing so enhances the ability of group members to be creative. Generative learning is a strategy that incorporates existing knowledge with new ideas in order to expand capability (Wittrock 2010). Senge (1990) identified five disciplines in a learning organization:

- Personal Mastery – A special level of proficiency
- Mental Models – An inward examination of how one views the world
- Building Shared Vision – Pictures of the future that foster group commitment
- Team Learning – Dialogue that suspends assumptions to engender "thinking together"
- Systems Thinking – This discipline integrates the other four disciplines fusing them into a coherent body of theory and practice

A study on educational pedagogy for social justice by Shields (2010) furthered the work of Senge (1990) through the examination of the utility of three leadership theories: transactional, transformational, and transformative (Shields, 2010, p. 558). The next sections of the literature review compare and contrast the present use and potential future effect of these three leadership theories by local church Protestant clergy.

Transactional

Previous research sheds little light on transactional leadership development (Groves & LaRocca 2011; McCleskey 2014). Transactional leadership is understood to be a traditional form of leadership (Burns 1978). McCleskey (2014) understood that "this may stem from the fact that most leaders do not need development to behave transactionally with their followers" (p. 125). McCleskey (2014) indicated that the key personal mastery attributes for transactional leadership is self-confidence and the ability to clearly communicate organizational culture and goals. In his groundbreaking work on social and economic organizations, Max Weber (1924/1947) described

a system of operation and coordination as *traditional* if it was part of an established method of control, and if the leader exercised authority based on status ascribed due to a process of education. These descriptions of traditional leadership fit with local church Protestant clergy as they serve as the spiritual and organizational leader for the congregation and status is ascribed through hearing a call to ministry, the completion of educational requirements, and receiving ordination. A compelling reason to employ transactional leadership by local church Protestant clergy for contentious issues is that it can minimize organizational anxiety (McCleskey 2014). However, a criticism of transactional leadership is that "it utilizes a one-size-fits-all universal approach to leadership theory construction that disregards situational and contextual factors related organizational challenges" (McCleskey, 2014, p. 122). With regards to a local church Protestant clergy leadership who encounters a wide variety of contentious matters, this is a valid concern.

A number of ethics and leadership scholars understand transactional leadership and transformational leadership to be "predicated on a divergent set of ethical values" (Groves & LaRocca, 2011, p. 511). Kanungo (2001) identified teleological (utilitarianism) ethics as a foundation for transactional leadership. He further argued that Senge's mental model for the moral behavior of a transactional leader engenders a striving to promote the greatest satisfaction for the greatest number of people in pursuit of the greatest social good (p. 260). Groves and LaRocca (2011) noted that an aspect of utilitarianism is that "individuals' actions are judged ethical depending on whether they follow certain rules under which the action falls" (p. 513). Local church Protestant clergy, whose biblical and theological mental model emphasized individual and organizational purity, can employ transactional leadership to manage outcomes and compel doctrinal compliance (p. 513). Moreover, Groves and LaRocca (2011) perceived that

transactional leadership supported the status quo of an organization (p. 513). This style of leadership requires close monitoring of followers for any deviances, mistakes or errors in order to provide immediate corrective actions (p. 513) for the purpose of returning individuals and the organization to a state of purity. Groves and LaRocca (2011) in their study of 122 leaders and 458 followers from 97 organizations confirmed that leader teleological ethics predict active transactional leadership (pp. 523-524).

The relationship between transactional leadership and team innovativeness was the subject of a study by Liu, Liu, and Zeng (2011). The results showed that transactional leadership increased team innovativeness in jobs with low-emotional labor, while transactional leadership decreased team innovativeness in jobs with high-emotional labor (p. 292). This means that emotional labor serves as a boundary condition on the relationship between transactional leadership and team innovativeness for building shared vision with the context determining the resultant increase or decrease (McCleskey 2014). One hypothesis to examine, with regards to building shared vision, is that transactional leadership is more effective in motivating church members to engage in the activity of evangelism (i.e. grow the church numerically that some might view as a non-threatening organizational membership drive), than in guiding church members to undertake actions for social justice (i.e. confront the powers that be in an emotional encounter to bring about societal change).

Tyssen, Wald, and Heidenreich (2014) conducted an intriguing study on transactional leadership in the context of temporary organizations that has affinity with organizations in flux. They characterized temporary organizations as requiring new organizational routines along with new ways of thinking and connecting (p. 376). Successful accomplishment of these projects necessitated cutting across organizational boundaries and the blurring of hierarchical lines of

authority (Hanisch & Wald 2011). Transactional leadership is well-suited for clergy who wish to maintain traditional biblical and theological understandings of morality to enforce alignment with these values. To lead in this fashion would interject stability in a time of uncertainty, however, Tyssen et al. (2011) noted that transactional leaders who provided goal and organizational stability "resemble administrative managers rather than visionary leaders" (p. 378). Transactional leadership operates through a straight line of unquestioned authority, so it does not meet the fifth criteria of systems thinking in LO as defined by Senge (1990).

Transformational

In his pioneering work on leadership, Burns (1978) identified two leadership styles that function as a dichotomy: transactional leadership and transformational leadership. In contrast with a transactional leader who functions as an authoritarian, Burns (1978) wrote that a transformational leader functions as a motivator by raising "the followers' level of consciousness about the importance and value of desired outcomes and the methods of reaching those outcomes" (p. 141). Bass (2008) identified a transformational leader as one who convinces followers to transcend their self-interest for the sake of the organization. In the case of leaders who value strict interpretation of scripture on issues of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, transformation requires standing against a libertine culture in order to maintain the status quo of traditional church doctrine. In the case of leaders who value a contextual interpretation on issues of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, transformation requires standing against an oppressive culture in order to promote change and justice in the church and in society.

Both sets of transformational leaders employ the four components of transformational leadership: influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration in order to build shared vision (McCleskey 2014). However, they do so with

different objectives and goals requiring specific personal mastery skills and proficiency (Senge 1990). While their goals and objectives differ, both sets of transformational leaders strive to project qualities and behaviors that followers are impressed by and wish to emulate. Some researchers described a transformational leader as having *charisma* that provided inspirational motivation through the leader's enthusiasm and optimism. Another attribute was that intellectual stimulation occurred as the leader questioned assumptions and reframed known problems to entice followers to be innovative in creating new frameworks and perspectives to old and on-going situations and challenges. A transformational leader cannot be critical of followers' attempts at innovation, but instead must demonstrate confidence in followers by increasing the self-efficacy of followers. Finally, an important characteristic of a transformational leader is to act as a coach or mentor in assisting individual followers to reach their full potential (McCleskey, 2014, p. 120).

True transformational leadership must be morally uplifting, while also enabling followers to be transformed into leaders (Burns 1978). Zhu, Riggio, Avolio, and Sosik (2011) stated that "transformational leaders possess positive moral perspectives, which not only enable them to confront ethical challenges but allow them to serve as role models for others" (p. 150). However, Bass & Steidlmeier (1999) detected that some leaders practiced a counterfeit form of transformational leadership (p. 181). The terms they used to differentiate between the valid and counterfeit forms were *authentic* and *pseudo* transformational leadership (p. 187). Authentic transformational leadership is ethical in nature and is unifying by embracing universal justice and moral values (Zhu et al., 2011, p. 150). Pseudo transformational leaders highlight "we-they" differences in values that creates division by identifying in-groups and out-groups (p. 151) as can be the case with transactional leaders.

Bass & Steidlmeier (1999) are correct in emphasizing that all four components of transformational leadership: influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration have moral aspects that distinguish authentic transformational leadership from pseudo transformational leadership. The researchers were also correct that moral issues (such as homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion) lead to debates with the parameters being *right/wrong, good/bad, should/ought, good/evil* (p. l82). In the debate over homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church both the Opposing/Traditional/Prohibition (OTP) group and the Supportive/Progressive/Celebration (SPC) group perceived that they are on the morally correct side of the issue due to their mental models and worldview which made their form of transformational leadership authentic and true.

The situation of the OTP and the SPC perceiving that their group alone is practicing authentic and true transformational leadership requires an inward examination of their mental model for moral identity. Blasi (1984) did pioneering work in this area and identified three basic characteristics of moral identity. The first was that moral identity is deeply rooted in the core of one's being and selfhood. The second was that moral identity requires being true to oneself in moral decision making and in action. The third was that moral identity is associated with truthfulness (i.e. with regards to one's personal understanding of reality) (Blasi, 1984, p. 130). A commitment to truthfulness can lead a transformational leader to take risks in order to remain faithful to their moral values. For that reason Blasi (1984) concluded that "morality is more a characteristic of the agent than of either action or thinking; the ultimate source of goodness lies in good will, and good will is at the core of what a person is" (p. 130). For Virginia Held (2006) the core value of *good will* is more accurately described as *care*. "Care seems to me to be the most basic of moral values. Without care as an empirically describable practice, we cannot have

life at all since human beings cannot survive without it. Without some level of caring concern for other human beings, we cannot have morality" (Held, 2006, p. 73). Held's ethic of care provides a tool for distinguishing between authentic and pseudo transformational leadership.

There are a number of ways that transformational clergy leaders are attempting to develop learning organizations in response to the issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion for the purpose of engendering morality among church members and the institution that is the church. One of these ways is meant to maintain the traditional biblical and theological understanding of homosexuality and other cultural issues, while propelling the church from being an institution content with status quo into an institution for change and transformation. Iorg (2011) argued that a transformational church maintains doctrinal integrity (p. 95). Stetzer and Rainer (2010) emphasized doctrinal integrity in their leadership study of local church Protestant pastors by including as final participants only clergy who strongly agreed that "Our church considers Scripture to be the authority for our church and our lives" (p. 234).

In their analysis Stetzer and Rainer (2010) found that transformational churches embraced traditional values and incorporated three elements in their behavior (p. 35). The first element was Vibrant Leadership. Vibrant clergy leaders sought to guide church members into places where these members could be effective in mission while developing leadership skills, a primary trait of transformational leaders. In addition, vibrant leaders rejected transactional leadership where the leader expected to be listened to and followed simply due to their title (p. 35). In interviews church members reported that they followed vibrant leaders more because of their examples rather than their dictates (p. 36). The second element was Relational Intentionality. This element requires vibrant leaders to enable church members to connect with one another in accountability for purity of faith and action through mission. Moreover, the

foundation for long-term relationships within a small group is laid that promotes purity by inhibiting exposure to false doctrine or immoral persons (p. 36). The third element was Embrace that requires connecting with God through prayer for: 1) personal transformation and 2) to receive power with which to join God in transforming the world. The emphasis on prayer by transformational leaders points followers to God as the One who transforms the world, rather than leaders and followers initiating and being the power for that transformation (p. 36). Aspects of the transformation leadership strategy offered by Stetzer and Rainer (2010) are also practiced by mainline denominational clergy on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Primarily that takes the form of a systemic effort to create a learning organization through short term study groups. In keeping with LO members of small groups are urged to read specific books on biblical and theological understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion for the purpose of challenging long-term assumptions. An example was the recommendation of The Commission on a Way Forward of The United Methodist Church that local church clergy organize special study groups to foster discussion about homosexuality and the church. Among the recommended books were: *The Anatomy of Peace: Resolving the Heart of Conflict* (The Arbinger Institute 2015) and *Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting out of the Box* (The Arbinger Institute 2010). These two books advocate for transformational change that begins with a self-examination of mental models that engenders personal change that then has a systemic change effect on others. The apparent hope of The Commission on a Way Forward was that while study groups would not necessarily change anyone's position on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church, the study group discussion would result in greater collaboration that enables the denomination to remain intact and not fracture.

To further this conversation Adolf Hansen, Senior Scholar and Vice President Emeritus, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, has published *Is It Time?: Helping Laity and Clergy Discuss Homosexuality One Question at a Time* (2017). In his Introduction Hansen (2017) explained his concern about previously published books on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church. "Most of those books either defend or attack a certain point of view. A limited number of them attempt to bring differing perspectives together. But none that I have located use a Socratic approach – asking questions rather than formulating answers – in dealing with the central issues involved in a discussion of homosexuality" (Hansen, 2017, p. 13). Hansen clearly employed the five disciplines of LO identified by Senge (1990). This method of transformational leadership aligns with the findings of Cadge et al. (2012) that clergy who address homosexuality tend to do so pragmatically by acting as facilitators for conversation (p. 372). Moltmann and Losel (2017) are critical of this type of transformational leadership because it relies so heavily on dialogue that, in their opinion, doesn't lead anywhere. They made their point through a story about a traveler in a foreign town. He asks another man, "Which way is the railway station?" The other answers, "I don't know either, but how nice it is that we got into a conversation" (Moltmann & Losel, 2017, p. 11). Moltmann and Losel identified an important challenge in the application of LO and transformational leadership which is to do more than talk and to actually move forward.

A unique study on transformational leadership in creating a congregational learning organization where a congregation moved forward is by Thomas and Olson (2011). The setting for their study was Grace Church, a congregation of gay evangelicals. The most significant sources of data came from investigating the ten-week course regularly offered by Grace Church to its parishioners called Spiritual Principles for Successful Dating (SPSD) and, second, from a follow-

up interview with the Senior Pastor (p. 355). The SPSD course emphasizes traditional moral values of commitment and stability in sexual relationships (p. 357). The course highlights four aspects of these values: Seriousness – the body is sacred so do not devalue yourself, Prudence – make good decisions and delay gratification, Monogamy – be faithful to one person, and Longevity – a life-long commitment (pp. 358 – 359).

Unlike the approach to transformational leadership recommended by Stetzer and Rainer (2010) and Iorg (2011), who argued for fidelity to traditional doctrinal and cultural understandings of homosexuality, the pastor of Grace Church employed a *blended approach* that combined traditional evangelical sexual norms with the private and public context of the understandings of the gay community about sexual and relational life (p. 349). Thomas and Olson (2011) found that the Senior Pastor was effective as a transformational leader because of his caring for parishioners that he combined with rational and evidence based arguments for his moral claims (p. 360). They said of the Senior Pastor's leadership, "instead of demanding moral allegiance based on appeals to external authority (e.g. 'God told me so') or to unquestionable scriptural interpretations (e.g. 'This is what the Bible says – end of story'), rather, the Senior Pastor has had to systemically convince parishioners of the wisdom of his perspective" (p. 360). What was appealing to church members about this blended transformational strategy was that it promoted traditional understandings of sexual relationships, "while simultaneously rejecting that such norms and values can only apply to legitimate heterosexual relationships" (p. 367).

Transformative

While a transformational leader is reformed-minded, they are not a revolutionary (Hewitt, Davis, & Lashley 2014, p. 229). However, a transformative leader is a revolutionary as they seek to disrupt the status quo and long-held assumptions (p. 229). Shields (2010) stated,

"Transformational leadership focuses on improving organizational qualities, dimensions, and effectiveness; and transformative educational leadership begins by challenging inappropriate uses of power and privilege that create or perpetuate inequality and injustice" (p. 564). Unlike transformational leadership that wants to strengthen the organization, transformative leadership wants to reach beyond the organization for the purpose of correcting systemic and structural inequalities in society (Hewitt et al., 2014, p. 229). To be an effective transformative leader requires personal mastery of special leadership skills (Senge 1990). These skills include being able to articulate an activist agenda that combines the rights-based theory that every human being is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect while advancing this theory in order for these rights to become a reality at the societal level (Shields 2010).

Shields (2013) understands transformative leadership to be based on Paulo Freire's (2000) fourfold call for critical awareness (*conscientization*), which leads to critical reflection, critical analysis, and finally to critical action (*activism*) that works to right the injustices that have surfaced (Shields, 2013, p. 11). Aspects of Freire's fourfold call relate well to Senge's five disciplines of LO. A critically aware transformative leader will reflect on their personal mastery skills and will seek persons who have additional skills that are needed for potential tasks. Moreover, a critically aware transformative leader will conduct an inward examination of their worldviews that affect leadership decisions. In addition to conducting an inward examination, a critically reflective transformative leader, after contemplating a new future, will give voice to that future for the purpose of fostering group commitment. Besides seeking group commitment, a transformative leader will engage in critical analysis that includes participation of the group through team learning that promotes multiple viewpoints and ideas in order to develop a plan for

implementation. A transformative leader will then incorporate Friere's fourfold call with Senge's five disciplines of LO to initiate a systemic action plan for transformation.

There has been little empirical research on transformative leadership (Shields 2010; Weems 2010). As Shields (2010) noted: "few studies have operationalized transformative leadership and examined its effect on real-life settings" (p. 572). A real-life setting study on leadership for social justice was conducted by Theoharis (2007) using school principals. Theoharis (2007) exposed his mental model/worldview by defining social justice leadership in his study "to mean that these principals make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalized conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (p. 223). Theoharis' definition of leadership for social justice regarding school principals as organizational leaders was transferable in this study to the understanding and practices of local church Protestant clergy for transformative leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. The potential consequences of practicing Theoharis' definition of leadership presents reasons to ask local church Protestant clergy if they would chose the transformative leadership path as did Rev. Jimmy Creech in light of the result of that decision. Creech made justice for homosexuals in church and in society central to his ministry. Eventually Rev. Creech was defrocked for his transformative leadership (Creech, 2010, p. 328).

How a transformative leader is to be effective was addressed by Weiner (2003) who recognized that power issues must be managed when instigating structural change. As a challenger of the powerful who maintain the status quo for their own benefit and others of their kind, a transformative leader must have access to the powerful in order to confront them. Weiner (2003) stated that the transformative leader must have one foot in the environment of the

oppressed and also "one foot in the dominant structures of power and authority" (p. 91). Dual footing is required in order for the transformative leader to be viewed by the oppressed as an understanding advocate of their cause, while simultaneously having access to and legitimacy in the eyes of the dominant powers. Such leadership that seeks to build shared vision (Senge 1990) with the oppressed and the oppressors requires great skill. Weiner (2003) explained that a transformative leader must be willing to "take risks, form strategic alliances, to learn and unlearn their power, and reach beyond a 'fear of authority' toward a concrete vision of the work in which oppression, violence, and brutality are transformed by a commitment to equality, liberty, and democratic struggle" (p. 102). Lacking dual footing could limit the accomplishments of a transformative leader to what Evans, Hanlin, and Prilleltensky (2007) described as "incremental, developmental, evolutionary or 'first-order change'" (p. 332). The ultimate goal of a transformative leader is for dynamic change that Evans et al. (2007) described as "transformative, discontinuous, revolutionary, or 'second-order' change in human systems" (p. 332). Rev. Jimmy Creech (2010) is an example of a transformative leader as his meeting with Adam caused him to seek second-order change (p. 41).

Creating a learning organization on the matter of sexuality and theology is especially challenging given that "few topics are as personal, embodied, culturally dependent, politicized, and moralized" (Ott & Stephens, 2017, p. 106). Park, Perez, and Ramirez-Johnson (2016) concluded that "clergy today need the education and training that can help them articulate the views and perspectives of the different sexual orientations and perspectives that are in a cogent fashion with the current views and understanding of science" (p. 184). However, Ott and Stephens (2017) emphasized that once scholars possess a level of expertise on sexuality and theology that a shift must be made "from a content-based 'subject matter' to an embodied

learning experience that promotes awareness of different worldviews and thereby transforms student perspectives" (p. 107). Therefore, local church clergy practicing transformative leadership will not simply provide information to church members, but will expand worldviews of these members through team learning.

Leading experts, Sitron and Dyson (2012), perceive that worldviews on sexuality cross a continuum with one end being "dualistic (right or wrong)" and at the other end "relativist (possible perspectives are endless and not one perspective is right or wrong)" (pp. 11-12). Just as a transformative leader initiates their own personal reflection journey that leads to new understandings, so a transformative leader aids followers in embarking on their own journeys of personal reflection. On the matter of homosexuality "shifts in self-awareness and levels of empathy and understanding depend on broadening one's perspective of how social, psychological, and cultural factors shape sexuality and our perception of it" (Ott & Stephens, 2017, p. 108). Sitron and Dyson (2009) term this educational pedagogy as *perspective transformation* that is in keeping with professional development training and transformative learning theory (pp. 172-173). The literature review shows that transformative leadership and transformative learning theory work in tandem.

A vital cultural characteristic of a continuous learning organization that is nurtured by transformative leadership is a strong commitment to the pursuit of truth. Caldwell et al. (2012) perceived that a transformative leader recognizes that it is their role to "pursue truth, constantly learning and providing a learning culture" (p. 181). This aids individuals and the organization to move forward into the future so that individuals and the organization are alive and vital in the work of transforming society. Lovett Weems (2010) advocated for transformative leadership in the church that exists to "make possible a preferred future for the people involved, which reflects

the heart of mission and values to which they are committed" (p. 17). Weems illustrated his advocacy for the immediate implementation of transformative leadership by referencing a line in William Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932), "That which is destroying the church is not the outward groping of those within it or the inward groping of those without, but the professionals who control it and who have removed the bells from its steeples" (Faulkner, 1932, p. 487). Faulkner's (and also Weems') point is that too many clergy have settled for status quo leadership that fails to toll the bell for change in the church and in society.

In a similar vein Dr. Peter Steinke, an advocate for systems thinking, connected the need for clergy to be a prophetic voice with the first step in John Kotter's eight steps to significant change with that initial step being a sense of urgency (Steinke, 2010, p. 55). Steinke (2010) reported that Kotter, the Konosuke Matsushita Professor of Leadership, Emeritus, at Harvard Business School, admitted that only one out of four organizations he had worked with had made significant change (p. 58). Steinke (2010) understood that churches are slow to accept transformative leadership because "transformation redefines who we are and what we do. It is always an emotional experience. For one thing, transformation begins with *endings*. Death comes to the system in some form" (p. 59). While it may seem odd, given that the most foundational belief and value of the church is resurrection, the literature review indicated that the foremost task of a transformative clergy leader in creating a learning organization is to ask church members, "Do you really believe in resurrection?" After asking that question a transformative leader on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion has to help church members, the church as an organization, and the surrounding culture to enter a process that causes understandings, policies, and actions to be re-examined and even to change in order to faithfully enter into a new future.

Chapter Summary

The compilation of the literature review has been guided by the conceptual frameworks of organizational identity (OI), organizational identification (OID) (He & Brown 2013), and learning organization (LO) (Senge 1990). Four themes emerged from the literature review regarding homosexuality and clergy leadership: personal identity, organizational identity, cultural identity, and methods of leadership. From the four themes there emerged three subtopics: purity (Haider-Markel & Joslyn 2008; Ritter et al. 2015), inclusion (Elcott & Sinclair 2017), and uncertainty (Cadge et al. 2012). Previous research by Cadge et al. (2012) revealed that local church clergy experience pressures from above (denominational doctrine and denominational leaders) and below (church members) that lead to clergy acting pragmatically on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Taylor and Stayton (2014) found that clergy are the first point of contact for church members who are experiencing crisis situations, relational problems, or sexual orientation issues. A method of leadership must be selected as avoiding the topic of homosexuality is not a viable option for local church clergy (Jones & Cox 2009).

The literature review revealed that local church Protestant clergy have three primary methods of leadership to follow on matters related to homosexuality: transactional, transformational, and transformative (Shields 2010). Transactional leadership is an option for clergy who wish to maintain the status quo, and who perceive that it is their responsibility to monitor and correct any deviation from traditional understandings of morality (Groves & LaRocca 2011). The literature review revealed that both the Opposing/Traditional/Prohibition (OTP) group and the Supportive/Progressive/Celebration (SPC) group believe that they are practicing transformational leadership as they are challenging what they perceive to be the

prevailing culture (Iorg 2011; Stetzer & Rainer 2010; Vines 2014). However, each group holds a different opinion as to the characteristics of the prevailing culture, and thus each group's response on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the society are vastly different. Transformative leadership is committed to disrupting the status quo and long held assumptions (Shields 2010). Transformative leaders will not be satisfied with just improving the church as an organization, rather, transformative leaders reach beyond the organization in order to correct systemic and structural inequalities in society (Hewitt et al. 2014).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative study the conceptual frameworks of Organizational Identity (OI), Organizational Identification (OID), and Learning Organization (LO) theories framed the data gathered from interviews conducted with focus groups and individuals. OI and OID have proven effective in analyzing situations where there is ambiguity and multiplicity of identity (Mills & Bettis 2015). Cadge et al. (2012) found that many clergy are uncertain about their feelings and leadership actions to take on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. OI and OID was beneficial in understanding how the participants in this study, local church Protestant clergy in Virginia, interpreted the issues surrounding homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and then formed their leadership response to these issues (Dutton & Dukerich 1991; Gioia & Thomas 1996).

The conceptual framework of LO was employed to examine how local church Protestant clergy in Virginia promote learning by members of their congregation about homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and about the effect of the issues of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion on the denominational and local church levels of the organization. Senge (1990) explained that what fundamentally distinguishes "learning organizations from traditional authoritarian 'controlling organizations' is the mastery of certain basic disciplines" (p. 5). The five disciplines are: personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking (Senge, 1990, pp. 6-10). The five disciplines of LO served as lens for examining the effectiveness of transactional, transformational, and transformative leadership by local church Protestant clergy in Virginia on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

For this qualitative research study the methodology of phenomenological interviewing was applied to focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Data was gathered using Rev.com to transcribe interviews. Data was coded by locating narrative text segments and assigning code labels to these segments in order to identify themes. Crystallization (Ellingson 2009) was employed to analyze data and transcripts.

The research questions for this study are:

- How do a Protestant clergyperson's personal and theological perspectives on purity and inclusion influence their decision regarding the implementation of leadership in their local congregation?
- How do Protestant clergypersons experience organizational pressures from "above" (denominational leaders and denominational doctrine) and from "below" (local church members) on matters related to homosexuality on LGBTQ inclusion and how do these organizational pressures affect the clergyperson's decision to implement leadership in their local congregation?
- How do Protestant clergypersons prepare through continuing education opportunities and resources to better understand the cultural issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in order to implement leadership in their local congregation to promote justice for LGBTQ persons?

To illuminate the methodology for this research study the next sections of this paper describe: the research approach, site selection, participant selection, study conduct, data collection, data analysis, limitations, biases, and ethical considerations. Fidelity to each of these matters was necessary for the completion of this quality research study.

Research Approach

The research questions for this study emerged in response to the research gap in clergy and non-profit organization leadership (Weems 2010), and from studies that focus on denominational leadership rather than local church clergy leadership on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion (Cadge et al. 2012; Fulkerson 1995; Simpson 2011). Research questions shaped by the conceptual frameworks of OI and OID prompted the examination of local church Protestant clergy leadership on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion through the themes of personal identity, organizational identity, cultural identity, and methods of leadership (He & Brown 2013). The conceptual frameworks of OI and OID also shaped research on the effect of organizational doctrine, polity, and power dynamics on local church Protestant clergy as they are accountable to both denominational leaders and church members. The conceptual framework of LO shaped research on how local church Protestant clergy organize their church as a learning organization on the topics of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion through transactional, transformational, or transformative leadership.

The literature review revealed the historic impact of Puritan thought and theology on American religious culture with regards to the religious concerns for individual and congregational purity verses the biblical admonition to extend hospitality for inclusion (Staples 1988). Diametrically opposing groups have evolved around biblical and theological interpretations of the Christian values of purity and inclusion (Elcott & Sinclair 2017). Cadge et al. (2012) as well as Jones and Cox (2009) found that understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion by local church Protestant clergy actually fall on a continuum. The continuum of clergy understandings led the researcher to a continuum approach of qualitative methods. This allowed the researcher to avoid dichotomous thinking and instead to explore the range of

possible understandings and leadership practices of local church clergy in response to issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

There were scholarly and practical reasons to examine the leadership of local church clergy on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion as local church clergy have a far greater amount of personal interaction and influence with congregation members than do denominational leaders (Djupe & Gilbert 2009). Such examination is especially needed at this time to assist United Methodist clergy in caring for and educating members of their congregation as the denomination moves towards a specially called General Conference in February of 2019 to consider only matters related to human sexuality that may result in a restructuring of the denomination (Wesleyan Covenant Association 2017).

Phenomenological Interviewing

For this qualitative research study the methodology of phenomenological interviewing was applied in focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Phenomenology is a way of *seeing* how things appear to participants in a study (Finlay 2012). Phenomenology is more than a method as it demands a way of *being* for the researcher that allows an examination of every day human experience that can go unquestioned (Finlay 2012). An advantage of phenomenological interviewing is it reveals contextual themes (Bevan 2014). Contextual issues that local church Protestant clergy encounter as they contemplate implementation of transactional, transformational, or transformative leadership include: purity, inclusion, as well as personal, organizational, and cultural identity. Further themes were identified in the interviews. Bevan (2014) stated that "phenomenological interviewing consists of three main domains: contextualization (natural attitudes and life-world), apprehending the phenomenon (modes of appearing, natural attitude), clarifying the phenomenon (imaginative variation and meaning)"

(p. 138). The three domains of phenomenological interviewing combined with the conceptual frameworks of OI, OID, and LO strengthened the analysis of this research study.

Quinney, Dwyer, and Chapman (2016) believe that ignoring the foundational elements of "who, where, and how" in descriptive phenomenological research may result in lean or even skewed data (pp. 2-6). To produce thick and accurate data Quinney et al. (2016) recommended that the phenomenological researcher pay specific attention "to the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology, and organizing interviews so that the participant is able to develop a trust relationship with the interviewer and is able to access the role, language, and space that is reflected in the research question" (p. 6). Quinney et al. (2012) identified four overlapping considerations in the data collection framework for phenomenology. The four interdependent considerations are: space, language, role, and trust (p. 6). Abiding by the four interdependent considerations enabled the participants "to provide vivid, rich, and authentic accounts of their experiences" (p. 6). It was through a reduction in tension and barriers to sharing that allowed the researcher to gain an avenue for access to the everyday experiences of a participant (p. 6). The advice of Quinney et al. (2012) was followed in the preparation and conduct of the phenomenological interviews for this research study.

Crystallization

In addition to using phenomenological interviewing, this research study incorporated the qualitative methodology of crystallization to enhance the examination of themes and sub-topics using multiple lenses along with a variety of genres (Ellingson 2009). Ellingson (2009) explained that in this manner crystallization differs from triangulation and mixed methods design (p. 22). Triangulation is used in positivist and post-positivist research in an attempt to draw closer to the truth by bringing together multiple forms of data and analysis to clarify the observed

phenomenon (p. 22). This means that the goal of triangulation is to discover a definitive truth, while crystallization is open to learning about multifaceted truths (p. 22). Practitioners of crystallization, in keeping with postmodern thought, acknowledge that a researcher will encounter multiple and partial truths that can be co-constructed (p. 22). Researchers using crystallization believe that partiality is not a limitation, but rather is an asset for illuminating "multiple points of view of a phenomenon across the methodological continuum" (p. 22).

The methodology of Ellingson (2009) for uniting multiple perspectives and experiences to reveal a larger and systemic view of themes and sub-themes extends the work of Flannery (2001) and Warren (1994) who offer quilting as a feminist metaphor for science and research. Warren (1994) explained, "The quilts (or patches) tell unique, individualized stories about the quilters and the circumstances of their lives; they are candidate patches for a larger global mosaic…[that] collectively represents and records the stories of people of different ages, ethnicities, affectional orientations, race and gender identities, and class backgrounds committed to [feminist principles]" (p. 186). Flannery (2001) furthered the metaphor by describing how a finished quilt conceals as much as it reveals when she wrote, "Just as the backing hides a great deal about the construction of the quilt, such as the rough edges where pieces were sewn together, a research article hides as much as it reveals about the process of science" (p. 636). By applying this metaphor to crystallization Ellingson (2009) celebrated the methodology for reflecting the voices of both researchers and participants through a collaborative process that brings multiple patches together in one systemic masterpiece (p. 99). Figure 3.1 provides a summary of the qualitative research continuum identified by Ellingson (2009).

	Art/Impressionist	Middle-Ground Approaches	Science/Realist
GOALS	To Unravel Accepted Truths To Generate Art	To trouble the take-for-granted To generate pragmatic implications for practitioners	To discover objective truth To predict and control behavior
QUESTIONS	What are other ways to imagine? What is unique about my or other's experience?	How do the participants and author co-construct a world? Semi-structed interviewing	What does it mean from the researcher's point of view? What behaviors can be predicted?
METHODS	Interactive Interviewing Participant Observation Use of first-person voice	Focus groups Thematic metaphoric, and narrative analysis Use of first-person voice	Measurement Structured interviews Use of passive voice
WRITING	Personal reflections Open to multiple interpretations	Use "snippets" of participants' words Some consideration of researcher's standpoints	Meaning summarized in tables and charts Objectivity and minimization of bias highlighted
RESEARCHER	Researcher as the main focus, or as much of the focus of research as other participants	Participants are the main focus, but researcher's positionality is key to forming findings	Researcher is presented as irrelevant to results
VOCABULARIES	Artistic/Interpretive: inductive, personal, ambiguity, change, process, creativity, evocative experience	Social Constructionist/Post-positivist: inductive, emergent, process, themes, categories, co-creation of meaning, social construction of meaning, ideology(e.g. Feminism, post-moderism)	Positivist: Deductive tested, measurement, variables manipulation of condistions, control prediction, validity, reliability, theory driven
CRITERIA	Do stories ring true, resonate, engage, move? Are they coherent plausible, interesting, aesthetically pleasing?	Flexible criteria Clarity and openness of processes Clear reasoning and use of support Evidence of researcher's reflexivity	Authoritative rules Specific criteria for data, similar to quantitative Proscribed methodological processes

Figure 3.1. Summary of qualitative continuum from Laura Ellingson, 2009, pp 8-9.

Project Participants

Participants were local church Protestant clergy currently serving as the pastor of a church or clergy staff at a denominationally affiliated school located in the state of Virginia. A pool of 30 potential participants was created by the researcher contacting five clergy previously known to him who function as the coordinator for an ecumenical lectionary/support group in their area. The researcher asked the coordinator to identify other clergy who are members of their ecumenical lectionary/support group and then to inquire as to their willingness to participate in a research study on leadership at the local church level on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. The participants serve in a variety of Protestant denominations: Lutheran, Mennonite, Presbyterian, Southern Baptist, and United Methodist. These clergy were diverse in terms of: gender; age; single/married/widowed; years of service in present church; total years of service; setting – rural, small town, suburban, or urban; academic training; self-identified theological orientation; average worship attendance of congregation – small (less than 125/Sunday), medium (125-250/Sunday), large (greater than 250/Sunday).The diversity of participants enabled a more profound analysis to be conducted by extending beyond one denomination.

Project participants were needed to gain insight into how local church Protestant clergy are implementing and practicing the five disciplines identified by Senge (1990): personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking, in order to create a learning organization of their congregation on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. The implementation and practice of these five disciplines by clergy can aid to church members who are wrestling with “difficult and complex situations involving sexuality,” so “they are turning to their clergy and religious leaders for guidance and help in the belief that

these same leaders are trained in, and capable of, dealing with this vast range of concerns" (Turner & Stayton, 2012, p. 485). In addition, participants were needed to gain understanding of the personal, organizational, and cultural factors that lead local church Protestant clergy to practice transactional, transformational, and transformative leadership for their congregation on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Exploration was also needed on the belief of Caldwell (2012) that an organizational system can evolve to a higher order of purpose through the initiation of a specific type of leadership.

Site Selection

A unique aspect of this research study is that there was not a specific physical site where a specific organization was located such as a high school to examine the effect of the leadership practices of the principal on their teaching staff. Rather, in this study the site was the opportunity 30 Protestant clergy in Virginia have in a local church or a denominationally related school to inform, educate, transform, and affect societal understandings about sexuality and religion. These tasks are accomplished through pastoral leadership by preaching, teaching, counseling, and community involvement. A site where collegial conversations occur is lectionary/support groups which help to form clergy's leadership decisions regarding homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church. Five lectionary/support groups were identified and the members approached to serve as sources for this research study.

Participant Selection

The participant selection process began with the researcher contacting five clergy colleagues in the state of Virginia, previously known to him, who serve as coordinators for ecumenical lectionary/support groups. The five colleagues were asked to contact Protestant members of the ecumenical lectionary/support group about their willingness to consider

participating in a research study on local church Protestant clergy leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. If a member of the ecumenical lectionary/support group expressed willingness, then the coordinator explained that they would pass that person's name, email, and telephone number on to the researcher. The researcher then made a personal telephone call to the perspective participant to introduce himself and to verbally explain what would be involved in participating in a focus group session. The researcher provided assurance on the issue of confidentiality and made the perspective participant aware that they might withdraw from the research project at any time. If the perspective participant expressed interest in participating in the 90 minute focus group session, then the researcher explained that the researcher was also looking for a pool of volunteers from the focus group members who would be willing to participate at a later point in time in a 60 minute individual follow-up session. On the consent form was a place for a participant to check their willingness to participate in the individual follow-up session. The researcher further explained that, from the pool of volunteers for the individual session, a name would be randomly drawn and that person would be notified by the researcher to make arrangements for the personal interview. Following the telephone conversation a formal letter of invitation along with an informed consent form, willingness to volunteer for a possible individual follow-up interview, and a general information sheet (i.e. age, gender, single/married/widowed, education, denominational affiliation, years of service, self-identified theological perspective, and affinity membership with an organization actively opposing or supporting gay rights) was mailed to the perspective participant. The perspective participant was asked to bring the consent form and the demographic information sheet to the focus group session. The participation of five ecumenical lectionary/support groups in different localities around the state of Virginia helped to create diversity in gender, age, race, theological

perspective, and denominational affiliation. In order to accommodate participants' schedules the researcher arranged for seven focus group sessions as well as seven individual follow-up sessions.

Research Methods and Tools

The research method for this study required the creation of five focus groups to produce a pool of 30 participants. The participants were members of regional ecumenical lectionary/ support groups in the state of Virginia. Demographic information was collected from each participant and a confidentiality form was signed by the researcher and the participant. Each focus group session was scheduled for a 90 minute semi-structured phenomenological interview conducted by the researcher. The researcher arranged a 60 minute individual interview with seven randomly selected clergy from a pool of volunteers.

Study Conduct

To develop data sources a pool of 30 participants was created, first by the researcher contacting by telephone five coordinators of ecumenical lectionary/support groups about their willingness to participate in the study and to assist in making members of the lectionary/support group aware of the possibility of participating in the study and, second by the researcher contacting by telephone and by email members of the ecumenical lectionary/support group to arrange their participation and to begin to develop a trust relationship with the researcher. During the telephone conversation the researcher described the research project, explained what was involved in participation in the focus group or individual follow-up session, insured privacy and confidentiality, emphasized the right of the participant to withdraw at any time, and expressed gratitude to those who were willing to participate in the study. The researcher followed up the telephone conversation with a letter thanking the potential participant for their expressed

willingness to participate along with a written description of the study as well as an explanation of the 90 minute focus session to be held at a neutral site. The letter reiterated that the researcher was seeking a pool of volunteers from each focus group with one volunteer being randomly selected to participate in a 60 minute individual follow-up session. The mailing contained a consent form along with privacy and confidentiality forms to be signed by the participant, as well as a volunteer form for persons willing to be randomly selected to participate in the individual follow-up session. The final form in the mailing was a demographic form for information on the participant: age, gender, marital status, education, denominational affiliation, total years in ordained ministry, years served at present church, average worship attendance to determine size of church being served, theological self-identification and affinity membership with an organization actively opposing or supporting gay rights. The demographic forms were collected at the focus group sessions. Participants who did not bring the information sheet with them to the focus group session were given a new demographic form and allowed time to complete it. At the beginning of the focus group session the purpose and process of the research study was reviewed with a time for questions and all forms collected. Every participant received a $5 gift card to a coffee shop in their area for participating in the research study.

Time points to be met began with the researcher contacting five coordinators of ecumenical lectionary/support groups in the state of Virginia between May 16 and June 23, 2018. The list of the 30 potential participants was generated by June 24, 2018. The researcher finished contacting the potential participants by telephone by June 25, 2018. The researcher mailed written information on the study along with the privacy/confidentiality form, volunteer for individual interview form, and demographic form between May 17 and June 26, 2018. Arrangements for the neutral site for the focus group sessions were made by the researcher

between May 17 and June 25, 2018. The five focus group sessions occurred between May 22 and June 29, 2018. The five individual follow-up sessions occurred between May 22 and July 6, 2018. The semi-structured phenomenological interviews for focus groups lasted 70 – 110 minutes. Neutral sites consisted of private rooms at community centers, restaurants, libraries, and conference rooms with light refreshments provided by the researcher. Focus group sessions occurred at the convenience of the members of the focus group. The 60 minute individual follow-up session with one volunteer, randomly selected member from each focus group, occurred at a time and place convenient for the participant being interviewed.

Creswell (2012) described informed consent as a statement that a participant must sign before the participant can participate in the research study (p. 622). The informed consent form for this study included: title of the study, participation was voluntary, right to withdraw at any time, purpose of the study, procedures, right to ask questions, right to obtain results, right to anonymity, no known risks, and benefits. The informed consent form required the participant's signature with date and contact information on the researcher (See Appendix A). Rooney (2013) stated, "Informed consent is a key issue in qualitative research" (p. 71). Shaw (2008) argued that "the ethics of qualitative research *design* pose distinct demands on principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy, social justice, and practitioner research" (p. 403).

As Shaw (2008) stated, it is important to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the participants in a qualitative research study. In the written letter of invitation to participate in the study and again during the review section at the beginning of the focus group session, the researcher promised participants to maintain their confidentiality. Confidentiality and privacy has been maintained as the researcher has used a pseudonym for each participant and each church or denominationally affiliated school in the study. Focus group sessions were held at

neutral sites that provided a private and secure room. The location of the focus group sessions were places where clergy were either unlikely to be seen by church members or where it would not be unusual for the clergyperson to meet with other clergy. To insure confidentiality and privacy for the members of the focus group the researcher asked the focus group participants to sign a formal confidentiality covenant. The purpose of the confidentiality agreement was to be collegial and to insure that what was said and occurred in the secure room remained confidential. In addition, throughout the research project only the researcher had access to the participants' true names and their demographic information. This information was password protected on a computer accessible only to the researcher. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and to their organizations.

The life cycle of this research study spans from the initial contact with five coordinators of ecumenical lectionary/support groups in Virginia to the final approval of the dissertation by the University of New England. Ethical considerations involving confidentiality and privacy, phenomenological interviewing, and protection of data have been practiced during the life cycle of the research study. Narratives gathered during focus group sessions and individual follow-up sessions may reveal sensitive information about a participant, so the life cycle for the researcher to retain the narratives on a computer file is limited to the length of the study. Following the completion of the requirements by the University of New England to be awarded a doctorate in educational leadership, all data will be destroyed.

Armour, Rivaux, and Bell (2009) claim "No single or commonly accepted guideline exists to assist researchers in the creation of quality research within qualitative methods" (p. 105).

However, a process for quality assurance and rigor can be established by first focusing on "the context of the research or interrelated conditions inclusive of the paradigmatic and practical issues" (p. 105). In this study the context of the personal, organizational, and cultural factors that influence local church Protestant clergy leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion led to hermeneutic phenomenological research in order to be rigorous (Armour et al., 2009, p. 101). While Creswell (2012) argued for trustworthiness as a standard for rigor in qualitative research, Armour et al. (2009) has stated that authenticity is a more appropriate standard for rigor in a qualitative study. Authenticity allows for relativism and emphasizes that a priority being given to a fair presentation of the values and viewpoints of the various stakeholders (p.103). Moreover, the rigor for authenticity allows the stakeholders to be more aware of each others' values and differing perspectives, while also engendering action and transformation (p. 103).

By employing crystallization a researcher demonstrates rigor by having multiple points of connection as well as multiple angles of vision on the topic being researched (Ellingson, 2009, p. 15). The use of crystallization in this research study has provided quality assurance for two reasons: 1) the framework of crystallization retains conventional reporting while enhancing it with narrative experiences or artistic representations that provide complimentary insights, and 2) crystallization focuses on the everyday activities that cannot be fully understood without storytelling or works of art (Ellingson, 2014, p. 443). A benefit of crystallization in qualitative research is that the results can be communicated in a manner that is understood by academics and non-academics such as "practitioners, community members, research participants and other stakeholders" and that common understanding can help "to promote social change" (Ellingson, 2014, p. 447).

Data Collection

To gather data a demographic form was handed, mailed, or emailed by the researcher to persons who agreed to participate in the research study. The demographic form sought information about: age, gender, marital status, education, denominational affiliation, total years in ordained ministry, years served at present church, average worship attendance to determine size of congregation being served, and theological self-identification. The demographic forms were collected at the focus group sessions. Participants who did not bring a completed demographic form to the focus group session were allowed time to complete the demographic form prior to the beginning of the session.

Data was also collected at the focus group sessions. The researcher asked the approval of each participant for the researcher to take a few written notes during the session. The researcher observed for non-verbal cues, tone of voice, and the interaction among various participants. To help protect for the Hawthorne Effect where a participant modifies their behavior or verbal answers due to their awareness of being observed by a researcher (Stokes, 2011, p. 1) or Social Desirability due to being heard and observed by peers whom they wanted to please (Lavrakas, 2008, p. 1), the researcher provided five minutes at the end of the focus group session for participants to write on a blank piece of paper anything a participant wanted to communicate to the researcher about the focus group session or about any matter the participant did not feel comfortable sharing in the focus group session. The researcher observed for non-verbal cues and tone of voice during individual follow-up interviews. Rev.com was used to record the seven focus group sessions as well as the seven randomly selected individual follow-up sessions. Rev.com provided the transcripts of the conversations.

Audio files of focus group and individual follow-up sessions were sent to Rev.com for transcription and aggregate data with the participant's identifiable information being omitted. This minimized risk to participants. The observations of the researcher and the transcripts from Rev.com were inspected, organized, and coded for themes and sub-themes. Data was then ready for the assigning of pseudonyms and for analysis.

Data Analysis

The process of qualitative data analysis required collected data to be inspected, organized, and coded in order to create a construct that explains and interprets the phenomenon that is being researched. Creswell (2012) recommended six steps in this process. To fulfill these steps the researcher: collected the data through interviews, prepared the data for analysis by using Rev.com to transcribe the interviews, read the data to gain a general sense of the material, coded the data by locating narrative text segments and assigned a code label to these segments, and coded the texts for themes used in the research report (pp. 244-245). The use of Rev.com in this research study eased the process for retrieval and transcribing. Rev.com also aided in organizing and categorizing the data for the purpose of coding.

Coding was guided by the conceptual frameworks of organizational identity (OI), organizational identification (OID), and learning organization (LO). Cadge et al. (2012) established that local church clergy are experiencing pressure from above (denominational doctrine and denominational leaders) and from below (church members). Research was needed about how local church clergy manage this identity crisis in which they have one foot in the denomination and one foot in the congregation while trying to respond to issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Exploration was needed concerning the factors that cause a local church Protestant clergyperson to feel a greater allegiance to the denomination or to the local

congregation and why? OI was well-suited to examine these matters. OID was well-suited to exploring why some clergy feel a greater concern for maintaining the institution in its present form rather than providing leadership towards a new denomination that concurs with the clergyperson's personal, theological, and cultural understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion or even towards becoming an independent church. OI and OID are well-suited to examining why and how some clergy may want to reform the present institutional church and in what ways. LO was well-suited to examine how a local church Protestant clergy prepares to lead on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion by incorporating the five disciplines of LO: personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking. Moreover, LO was helpful in studying how a local church Protestant clergyperson organized their faith community to study, reflect, and respond to the issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in the church.

Crystallization was the method used for analyzing the data and transcripts. Ellingson (2009) was convincing about the role of transcripts in analysis that employs crystallization as "transcripts have an aura of credibility" (p. 48). The information revealed by studying the transcripts "lends them face validity as scientific data" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 48). Through a phenomenological narrative study data was gathered and available for analysis that would not have been available in a quantitative study. Among the information that can only be provided through a qualitative study is: accurately representing spoken language, the rhetorical emphasis on the verbal content that is not always clear in written documents, the appearance of the participants along with non-verbal cues, and the tone of the discussion (Ellingson, 2009, p. 48). Crystallization was selected as the methodology for analysis by the researcher as it offered a means for moving beyond binary research that would have cast the conclusions of the study as

black/white or this/that (Ellingson 2009). Binary research would constrain a researcher to think in limited terms and to act in accordance with preconceptions rather than pursuing emerging clues and trends in the research (p. 7). Ellingson (2009) identified crystallization as a middle ground approach to research. (See Figure 3, Summary of Qualitative Continuum).

In this particular study participants were asked to provide narrative stories of experiences from their ministry to illuminate their personal, organizational, and cultural understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church. Participants were also asked to share their understanding of specific scripture passages that are frequently mentioned in the debate over sexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church. Participants were asked to name other scripture passages that influenced their understanding of the homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion debate and why these passages were significant for them. In addition, participants were asked to name a hymn, a song, artwork, or a movie that had impacted their understanding of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and Christian faith. The sharing of ministry narratives along with the identifying of scripture passages and the naming of a hymn, a song, art work, or a movie provided multiple views on the issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church that allowed the researcher to juxtapose these multiple views through the methodology of crystallization. The juxtaposition revealed subtleties in data that could have remained masked if only one genre had been used to report the findings (Ellingson 2009).

Limitations, Biases, and Ethical Considerations

The power of narrative to communicate personal experience and understanding on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church led to the selection of the methodology of phenomenological interviewing, but there are limitations to the methodology. Also, the researcher was not without bias. Moreover, a participant during a phenomenological

interview may well open up a window to their soul that a researcher needs to ethically honor and respect.

Limitations

Unluer (2012) identified three potential problems for an insider researcher. The first potential problem is that greater familiarity may lead to a loss of objectivity (p. 1). Incorrect assumptions may be made by the insider researcher due to prior knowledge of the matter being researched, so the insider researcher must always beware of bias. To overcome incorrect assumptions the insider researcher must be aware of their own perspective. The second potential problem is role duality. It is not easy balancing the insider role with the researcher role (p. 2). The third potential problem is that the insider researcher may come into sensitive information, so at every stage of the research the researcher must adhere to ethical research standards and behavior (p. 2).

Another set of potential problems would be due to the Hawthorne Effect where participants provide inaccurate answers due to being observed by a researcher (Stokes, 2011, p. 1), or due to Social Desirability where participants "report an answer in a way they deem to be more socially acceptable than would be the 'true' answer" (Lavrakas, 2008, p. 1). To minimize the Hawthorne Effect and Social Desirability the researcher provided a sheet of paper and a pen for each participate to take five minutes at the end of the focus group session to write down whatever they wanted to communicate to the researcher about the focus group session and/or the issues of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

This qualitative phenomenological study was limited to 30 Protestant clergy serving in Virginia. The findings cannot be generalized to other states or regions of the United States. Moreover, the participants were all Protestant clergy, so the results cannot be generalized to

include Roman Catholic priests, Jewish rabbis, Islamic imams or leaders from other religious traditions. Also excluded were hospital chaplains in order to set parameters for the examination of the leadership practices of local church clergy or clergy who teach and conduct worship services at denominationally affiliated schools (Djube & Gilbert 2009). Moreover, the small sample size, while offering rich phenomenological information, is not representative of all pastors from every state.

To overcome the possibility of participants becoming reserved, Ellingson (2009, 2012) and Lambotte & Meunier (2013) suggested that a researcher acknowledge themselves to be an insider researcher and to point out that that identity would add to the richness of the interpretation of the data from the interviews. The sharing of profound narratives by participants was enhanced through the understanding that the researcher was sensitive and aware of the leadership decisions being processed by local church Protestant clergy.

Biases

The researcher self-identified as being slightly to the right of center theologically, but slightly to the left of center on biblical interpretation. The researcher is very progressive on justice and social issues. This meant that the researcher reads scripture contextually and perceives that times have changed that require new understandings of what God is communicating in the present day and age. Reading the Bible in this manner allows Holy Scripture to be a living word and not a history book. In Isaiah 43:19 God says, “See, I am doing a new thing! Do you not perceive it?” In the present context of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church and society, the researcher perceives that Jesus’ call, “Come and follow me” (Matthew 4:19), means to embark on a faith journey that imparts new understandings that may lead to persecution (Matthew 5:11-12). Being slightly to the right of center theologically

aligns the researcher with the prophets who challenged the status quo of the religious organization and the lack of compassion and justice in society. Moreover, the researcher identified with the Supportive/Progressive/Celebration (SPC) group as his friendship with a number of LGBTQ persons has confirmed for him that LGBTQ persons are children of God who have gifts to offer the church and the cause of the kingdom of God. This researcher views the matter of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church and society as a justice issue and believes that transformative leadership is needed to transform the church and society.

Prior to entering research to gather data in order to analyze how other clergy perceive the issues regarding homosexuality and how other clergy interact with clergy with differing opinions, the researcher spent time analyzing his own understandings and opinions on the issues of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion as well as how he interacts with clergy with differing opinions. The most effective way for the researcher to manage bias while conducting the study was to be aware of his own bias. This required an inward journey that was deep and soul-searching. Moreover, the inward journey and self-examination did not end with the initiation of the interviews, but continued throughout the entire research process and analysis. This research study is not about making known the understandings and leadership actions of the researcher, but is instead to learn what other clergy understand and the leadership actions they are taking on the conflicted issues of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. What really helped the researcher to manage bias was the excitement he felt and the insights he gained by fully listening to what the participant was saying about their leadership on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Ethical Considerations

The Belmont Report (1979) and the *Code of Federal Regulations: Title 45 Public Welfare: Part 46 Protection of Human Subjects*, illustrate and help to enforce a strict adherence to the highest level of ethics when conducting research with human subjects as great damage can be done in the name of research. The Belmont Report (1979) reminded the researcher that respect for persons must be demonstrated throughout the research project. The three principles of The Belmont Report (1979) are: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. This leads to a core value of the report that is the "ethics of involvement." This core value refers to the researcher making a commitment to create an equitable and inclusive partnership that understands that participant and researcher are engaged as partners in gaining knowledge about the research topic. This partnership is based on the concepts of negotiation, inclusion, adequate time, commitment, mutual regard, equality in sharing, and accountability. The integrity of the participant must always be respected. Participation in the research study should produce an empowering experience for the participant.

Respect for Persons

Shore (2006) states that "respect entails acknowledging and valuing the different skills and experiences within the partnership" (p. 12) that exists between participant and researcher. A participant is to feel that they have a part in the decision-making and that the research has been for the benefit of the wider community. Such a partnership takes time to create and sustain. This is a vital aspect of the "ethics of involvement" (p. 12). In this study the researcher had a collegial relationship with every participant as all were clergy. The researcher had a strong preference for collegiality and saw each participant as a disciple of Christ called to ordained ministry with gifts and ideas to offer the research project and the wider community.

Concern for Welfare

In accordance with The Belmont Report (1979) the researcher demonstrated concern for the individual participant, and also for the wider community. As Shore (2006) noted, "(researchers) have to be able to provide some product that will help (participants) think more critically about what they do every day, or leverage resources or solve a problem" (p. 14). To accomplish this, a researcher must be self-reflective. In this study the researcher sought answers to not only the impact of personal, organizational, and cultural identity on local church Protestant clergy for matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, but the researcher also sought answers on how he and other clergy can lead more effectively on these issues. Therefore, the researcher felt an obligation for the welfare of the participants in the study as well as the wider community.

Chapter Summary

This research study has the potential to engender reflection on the part of local church Protestant clergy in how they: engage in ministry with LGBTQ persons, the effect on their leadership of pressure from "above" (denominational doctrine and denominations leaders) and from "below" (church members), and preparation for future ministry through continuing education opportunities and selection of resources for leading through preaching and teaching on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Local church clergy may find it illuminating to contemplate their personal position on the biblical and theological matters of purity verses inclusion. Clergy serving local churches may better understand the affect their personal, organizational, and cultural identities have on their leadership, particularly on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Finally, the study begins to fill a gap in research on transformative leadership by local church clergy.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to conduct research on how personal, organizational, and cultural identities influence local church Protestant clergypersons in Virginia to implement leadership in their local congregation on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Research was also conducted on how local church Protestant clergypersons in Virginia handle the dual organizational pressures from above by denominational leaders and from below by local church members related to matters of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Finally, research was conducted on how local church Protestant clergy in Virginia are preparing to lead their congregations in the future on the matters of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

In this chapter the researcher examines the recruitment and data collection process for phenomenological interviews, and provides an explanation of the process for creating codes and identifying themes that resulted from the gathered data. Pseudonyms have been assigned to all participants and to their organizations. In addition, the crystallization analysis process is described.

Data Collection Overview

Potential participants were gleaned from lists provided the researcher by coordinators of ecumenical lectionary groups and/or clergy support groups. Participants were contacted in person, telephone, or email by the researcher to provide an overview of the research study and to explain what would be involved for persons who chose to participate. Persons who indicated an interest were provided a formal letter of invitation to participate in a 90 minute phenomenological interview focus group, informed consent form, a confidentiality covenant agreement, an invitation to volunteer to be randomly selected to participate in a 60 minute

individual follow-up interview, and a demographic form. These forms were collected at the focus group session. Copies of the informed consent form signed by both the participant and the researcher were mailed back to the participant.

The formal letter of invitation contained the three research questions:

- How do a Protestant clergyperson's personal and theological perspectives on purity and inclusion influence their decision regarding the implementation of leadership in their local congregation?
- How do Protestant clergypersons experience organizational pressures from "above" (denominational leaders and denominational doctrine) and from "below" (local church members) on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and how do these organizational pressures affect the clergyperson's decision to implement leadership in their local congregation?
- How do Protestant clergypersons prepare, through continuing education opportunities and resources, to better understand the cultural issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in order to implement leadership in their local congregation to promote justice for LGBTQ persons?

The seven focus group sessions lasted 60 to 110 minutes and were conducted at neutral sites arranged by the researcher. Participants were provided coffee, cold water, snacks and a $5.00 gift card to a local coffee shop. It was not unusual during a focus group session for participants to ask questions of one another that deepened understanding about what an individual was sharing. The seven individual follow-up interviews lasted 45 to 70 minutes and were conducted at a neutral site or in the office of the participant. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed using Rev.com. Three participants were later contacted by the researcher to

clarify statements made or stories shared by the participant. During the focus group sessions the researcher took notes regarding verbal and non-verbal interactions among participants. A review of these notes revealed themes that engendered future follow-up questions for the researcher to ask when the themes re-emerged in later focus group sessions or in individual follow-up interviews. During the last portion of the focus group sessions participants were given a blank piece of paper to write down any comments they wanted to convey to the researcher about process or that they had felt uncomfortable sharing with other participants.

Description of the Population and Sample

This study included seven focus group phenomenological interviews with 30 Virginia Protestant clergy. In addition, from a list of volunteers one name was randomly drawn from each focus group that resulted in seven individual follow-up interviews. Table 4.1 provides the aggregate demographics of the participants and Table 4.2 provides the individual demographics for each participant.

Table 4.1.

Aggregate demographics of participants in study

Gender	
Male	25
Female	5

Ethnicity	
Caucasian	29
African-Amer.	1

Age	
20-29	2
30-39	4
40-49	7
50-59	7
60 and Above	10

Marital Status	
Single	1
Married	27
Widowed	2

Years at Present Church	
1-5	14
6-10	9
11-15	3
16-20	2
21-25	2

Ministry Setting	
Rural	10
Small Town	5
Urban	7
Suburban	6
Campus Ministry	2

Attended Seminary	28
Licensing School	2

Self ID'd Theological Position	
Fundamentalist	1
Evangelical	3
Moderate	7
Progressive	9
Liberal	3
Other	7

Highest Degree	
B.A. or B.S.	2
Masters	26
D. Min.	1
D. Min + J.D.	1

Other	
Narrative	2
Trad. Compatibilist	2
Neo-Orthodox/Barthian	1
Reformed	1
Wesleyan	1

Total Years in Ministry	
1-5	4
6-10	7
11-15	7
16-20	1
21-25	3
26-30	1
31-35	2
36-40	4
40 or more	1

AVG Weekly Attendance	
<125	16
125-250	11
Over 250	3

Table 4.2

Individual demographics of participants in study

Name	Gender/ marital status/ age	Ethnicity	Level of education/ denomination	Time served present church/ total years in ministry	Setting	Average weekly worship attendance	Self-identification of theological perspective
Anthony, Sue	Female Married 30-39	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	3/8	Rural	<125	Moderate
Bishop, Denny	Male Married 60+	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	4/38	Urban	250+	Liberal
Calvin, John	Male Married 50-59	Caucasian	M.Div./ Presbyterian	17/23	Small Town	125-250	Moderate Evangelical
Care, Anna	Female Married 40-49	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	8/12	Urban	125-250	Progressive
Day, Debbie	Female Married 20-29	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	2/4	Suburban	125-250	Narrative
Finch, Amos	Male Married 40-49	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	6/7	Rural	<125	Traditionalist Compatibilist
Garden, Noah	Male Married 40-49	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	5/10	Urban	125-250	Moderate
Gooden, Joy	Female Widowed 60+	Caucasian	M.Div./ Presbyterian	21/40+	Urban	125-250	Liberal
Greene, Iron	Male Married 50-59	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	19/25	Suburban	125-250	Evangelical Conservative Moderate

Table 4.2 Continued

Individual demographics of participants in study

Name	Gender/ marital status/ age	Ethnicity	Level of education/ denomination	Time served present church/ total years in ministry	Setting	Average weekly worship attendance	Self-identification of theological perspective
Health, Jon	Male Married 30-39	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	7/13	Small Town	125-250	Traditionalist Compatibilist
Heat, Andrew	Male Married 50-59	Caucasian	D.Min. & J.D./ United Methodist	9/9	Rural	<125	Moderate
Justice, Abel	Male Married 40-49	Caucasian	D.Min./ United Methodist	7/14	Campus Ministry	<125	Progressive Evangelical
King, Stan	Male Married 50-59	Caucasian	M.Div./ Southern Baptist	3/12	Rural	<125	Evangelical
Light, Larry	Male Married 30-39	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	2/6	Suburban	<125	Narrative
Lively, Paul	Male Married 60+	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	4/6	Suburban	125-250	Evangelical
Mission, Thomas	Male Married 60+	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	6/36	Urban	125-250	Progressive
Mountain, Forest	Male Widowed 60+	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	2/30	Rural	<125	Progressive/ Radical Urban Socialist
Newcome, Sara	Female Married 30-39	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	¼	Rural	<125	Liberal
Nutt, Harry	Male Married 60+	Caucasian	Licensed/ Presbyterian	10/38	Rural	<125	Reformed

Table 4.2 Continued

Individual demographics of participants in study

Name	Gender/ marital status/ age	Ethnicity	Level of education/ denomination	Time served present church/ total years in ministry	Setting	Average weekly worship attendance	Self-identification of theological perspective
Peace, Benjamin	Male Married 40-49	Caucasian	M.Div./ Mennonite	5/5	Urban	125-250	Progressive
Perkins, Albert	Male Married 60+	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	11/34	Suburban	250+	Wesleyan
Promise, Joshua	Male Married 50-59	Caucasian	M.Div./ Mennonite	22/35	Urban	125-250	Moderate
Richard, Allen	Male Married 60+	African-American	M.Div./ United Methodist	11/11	Small Town	<125	Fundamentalist
Riggins, Jay	Male Married 60+	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	2/35	Suburban	<125	Moderate
Shepherd, Germain	Male Single 50-59	Caucasian	M.Div./ Presbyterian	6/7	Rural	<125	Neo-orthodox/ Barthian
Speaker, Grant	Male Married 60+	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	5/18	Small Town	<125	Moderate progressive
Strauss, Wes	Male Married 60+	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	4/15	Urban	<125	Progressive
Teacher, Randy	Male Married 20-29	Caucasian	M.Div./ United Methodist	4/5	Campus Ministry	250+	Moderate
Truth, Stephen	Male Married 40-49	Caucasian	M.Div./ Southern Baptist	6/15	Rural	<125	Progressive
Wright, Al	Male Married 40-49	Caucasian	M.Div./ Lutheran	11/23	Rural	<125	Progressive

Only three participants listed affiliate memberships. They were:

Paul Lively – American Family Association, Good News, and Wesleyan Covenant Association

Forest Mountain – American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

Benjamin Peace – Brethren/Mennonite Council (BMC) on LGBTQ Affairs for Affirmation

Process for Codes and Themes

The researcher applied the six step process for phenomenological research recommended by Creswell (2012):

- The researcher collected data through seven focus group and seven individual follow-up interviews.
- The researcher prepared the data for analysis using Rev.com. This secure transcription service provided 187 single spaced pages of data.
- The researcher read the transcripts several times to gain a general sense of the material.
- The researcher coded the data by locating key words and narrative segments as well as scripture passages, movies, television shows, and books mentioned by participants.
- The researcher assigned codes labels to the segments.
- The researcher coded the texts for themes to be used in the research report.

To enhance the process of coding and identifying themes the researcher modified Speas and Kovacs (2006) "Pathways of deductive, inductive and abductive research approaches" (p. 376). The modifications allowed the researcher to connect prior theoretical knowledge about personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues that impact clergy leadership on

homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion with data gathered from focus group and individual follow-up interviews. The combination of prior theoretical knowledge with interview data was then analyzed in light of the conceptual frameworks of organizational identity theory (OI), organizational identification theory (OID), and learning organization (LO) as well as the three research questions. These steps were taken to enhance analysis and to create new knowledge.

The phenomenological research recommendations of Creswell (2012) combined with the pathways of inductive, deductive and abductive research advocated by Speas and Kovacs (2006) and modified by the researcher, led the researcher to create two lens for viewing codes and themes for the purpose of recognizing what participants were saying about clergy leadership on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. The first lens provided a vision of codes for identity issues revealed through statements made by participants in focus group and individual follow-up sessions. The codes for identity by statements are:

- Identity Issue: Personal Journey
- Identity Issue: Organizational Commitments
- Identity Issue: Cultural Influences
- Identity Issue: Scriptural Interpretation
- Identity Issue: Conversation Effectiveness
- Identity Issue: Future Outcomes

The second lens provided a vision of codes for understandings on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion revealed through stories, Scripture, books, movies, and television shows identified by participants in focus groups and individual follow-up sessions. Use of this second lens allowed the researcher to become aware of additional factors that impact a clergyperson's position on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion that aided the researcher in examining the data

provided by the participants from multiple perspectives. The ability of the researcher to view a topic from a multitude of angles that produces a tapestry of analysis that promotes rigor is known as *crystallization* (Ellingson 2009).

The codes for participants' understandings illustrated by stories, Scripture, books, movies, and television are:

- Understandings Through Personal Relationships
- Understandings Through Organizational and Societal Exclusion and Inclusion
- Understandings Through Cultural Expressions
- Understandings Through Scriptural Interpretation
- Understandings Through Conversations
- Understandings Through a Mirror Darkly

The overlap of the two lenses produced a focus that enabled coding for identity issues and understandings on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion for the why and how of clergy leadership in the local church. Five codes were revealed in the overlap and they are:

- The Why and How of Family and Personal Relationships
- The Why and How of Scripture
- The Why and How of Discipleship Gifts and Clergy Leadership Strategies
- The Why and How of the Emphasis on the Local Church
- The Why and How of Future Leadership

Themes emerged through the codes labeled in the lens on identity issues revealed by statements. Also, themes emerged through the codes labeled in lens on understandings by stories, Scripture, books, movies, and television. Finally, themes emerged through codes labeled in the resulting overlap of the two lenses regarding the why and how of clergy leadership in the local

church. Figure 4.1 provides a schematic of the coding process for identity statements and understandings developed by the researcher.

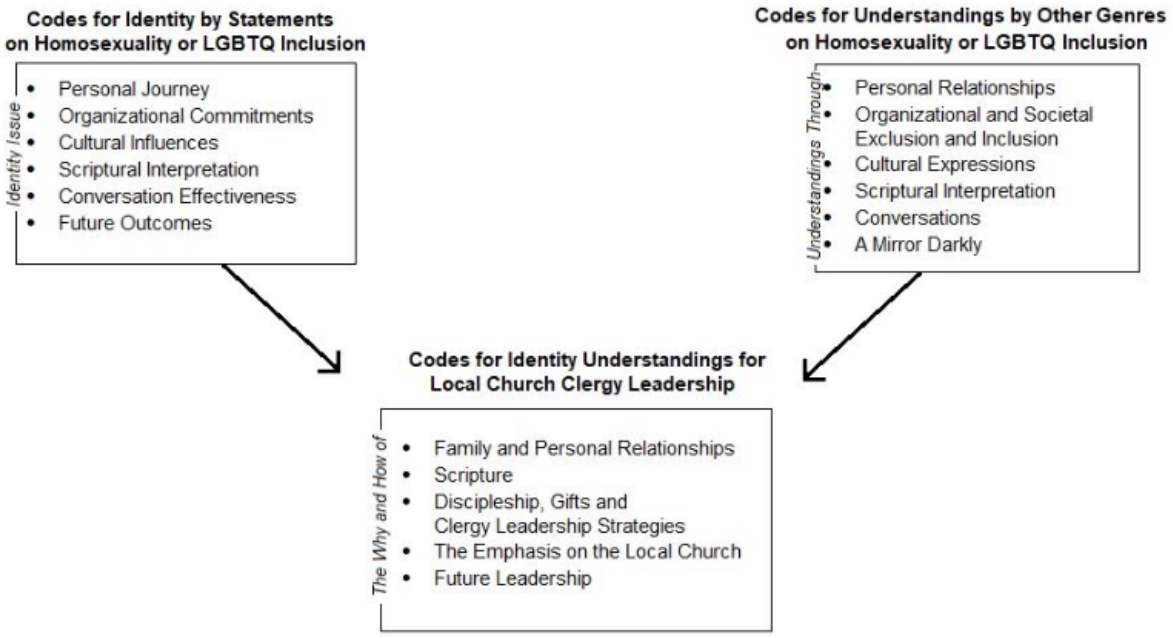

Figure 4.1. Coding process for identity statements and understandings

The next section of this dissertation details the themes revealed through the five codes on the why and how of clergy leadership in the local church on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Also, the next section of this dissertation will provide the results of the analysis through the process known as crystallization.

Description of Emergent Themes

Code 1: The Why and How of Family and Personal Relationships

Identity formation experiences on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion due to relatives, friends, colleagues, church members, or relatives of church members surfaced from clergy the greatest number of statements and stories in any coded category. The statements and stories numbered 28. Often the statements or stories were lengthy, and were offered with deep emotion.

One clergyperson, Jay Riggins, has a son who is gay, and another, Grant Speaker, has a brother who is gay.

Theme 1: Clergy with LGBTQ Relatives, Friends, and Staff

Subtheme 1: Clergy with LGBTQ Relatives

Jay Riggins initiated his comments about his personal journey by explaining that in college he was theologically more conservative than he is at present. In seminary he took a class where he sat next to a woman who wore a rainbow vest with buttons proclaiming that she was a lesbian, "That was a shock, you know, like getting thrown into the deep end" (J. Riggins, personal communication, May 22, 2018). As he left seminary he was grateful for how he had been exposed to a more progressive theology, but he dealt carefully with the issues of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. His understandings and positions really changed when his son, Nathaniel, came out as gay. As Riggins shared:

> After his first year in college, (Nathaniel) disappeared for a few days, and we realized afterwards that he was trying to get up the resolve, the strength, to come out. He wrote a note to my wife, and then she didn't read it to me for two days. It was at that point that I was confronted with what do I really believe? Ultimately, what is most important? (J. Riggins, personal communication, May 22, 2018)

The experience drove Riggins back to the scriptures. He read and he prayed. His efforts at spiritual discernment led him to conclude that "Ultimately, God loves us no matter what. We need to love them. And that has become what I have always preached, that ultimately the question is: 'Are we loving them as God loves us in Jesus Christ? That's the bottom line'" (J. Riggins, personal communication, May 22, 2018). Immediately after Jay Riggins shared his

personal story in the focus group, Thomas Mission affirmed Riggins' understanding and action by saying:

> You can talk about morality all you want, but…the ultimate morality is that we have to love. The song is they will know we are Christians by the way we love. It's not they will know we are Christians by the way we judge. (T. Mission, personal communication, May 22, 2018)

During a different focus group session Grant Speaker revealed a significant matter that impacted his personal journey:

> I do want to tell you that, something that deeply informs me is, I have a brother who's a gay man. He's been a practicing gay man for a long- and I love him dearly. He's a college professor…that's part of my context…he's my youngest brother, and my love. (G. Speaker, personal communication, June 7, 2018)

The personal experiences of two clergy with LGBTQ relatives led them to the same conclusion – God's love is an inclusive love. This understanding of loving inclusion extends beyond their gay relatives and is being manifested in the ministry of these two clergy.

Subtheme 2: Clergy with LGBTQ Friends

Stories shared by clergy regarding relationships with friends who were gay produced accounts of dichotomous experiences. Forest Mountain grew up in the Episcopal Church. The priest for this church was gay. The experience taught Mountain that he could be friends with a gay person, and that a gay person could a deep faith as well as gifts for service to the church. For Mountain his friendship with a gay Episcopal priest positively shaped his theology for inclusive ministry and the necessity of loving others as he had been loved by Christ.

Two other clergy, Iron Greene and Albert Perkins, also had experiences with gay friends, but those experiences did not change their traditional understandings on homosexuality. Perkins' personal experience occurred while he was in seminary with a classmate who was his prayer partner. One Friday Perkins asked his prayer partner to pray for him as Perkins would be traveling to his home state to try to reconnect with an old girlfriend to see if there was still anything left in the relationship. Perkins' prayer partner responded, "Yeah, I'd appreciate you praying for me because I'm going back to Missouri to actually kind of settle some things with an old lover." Perkins then asked, "What's her name?" His friend replied, "Well, it's not a she." (A. Perkins, personal communication, June 27, 2018). Perkins' prayer partner then shared what it was like being a gay man training for ordained ministry, and confided in Perkins that he had decided not to act upon his sexual orientation, but instead to pursue a life of celibacy. For Perkins the testimony of his friend affirmed his belief that a gay man could commit to celibacy in the pursuit of faithfulness to Christ.

The personal experiences of Iron Greene have similarities with that of Albert Perkins. The first was with a gay friend who intentionally wanted Greene to better understand the homosexual lifestyle. "So, we went to a gay bar together and he shared openly about his progression, you know, from a teenager, the progression of his self-identification and how he would respond to the attractions he would feel" (I. Greene, July 6, 2018). While this experience did not change Greene's traditional opinions on homosexuality, it did provide a foundation for him to feel comfortable being in relationship with a gay person and to being open to learning about a gay person's perspectives and understandings. An even more profound experience for Greene occurred while he was in seminary. A different friend had actively been part of the gay community for five to ten years. This friend was diagnosed as HIV positive at a time when "the

AIDS medicines weren't as effective as they are today." The friend told Greene his faith response would be, "I want to share with people my experiences and specifically share with the Church how the Church can be more sensitive and effective in reaching people who are in the gay community." Greene was deeply moved by his friend's decision and commented, "That was a noteworthy and really admirable understanding of call to ministry." Moreover, Greene said that he learned a lesson about being inclusive in ministry by looking for "the image of God in each person. Don't be stopped or put off by someone's behavior" (I. Greene, personal communication, July 6, 2018).

Subtheme 3: Clergy with LGBTQ Colleagues

Three stories emerged concerning clergy relations with LGBTQ persons on staff. The three stories illustrate exclusion and inclusion.

The source of the first story was Noah Garden and concerns Boehm UMC. The church fractured in the 1990's during the pastorate of Rev. Timid who was uncertain how to handle the complaints of a few congregates who wanted the organist terminated because he was gay. One week after the Personnel Committee had announced to the congregation that the organist had received an exemplary evaluation the congregation was informed that the organist had been terminated. No reason was given as matters of confidentiality were cited. A leadership void was created when Timid left on a two week vacation and during that time could not be contacted. Garden reports that "for the next 25 years, we just don't talk about it. It is the elephant in the room and we don't deal with it" (N. Garden, personal communication, June 28, 2018). At present Boehm UMC is less than half the size it was 25 years ago. There are many reasons for this decline, but one of the reasons appears to be that their Senior Pastor who served during the 1990's was uncertain about how he personally felt about homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion,

and he was uncertain how to act as a leader during a time of crisis. Timid fits with the 70% of clergy interviewed by Cadge et al., (2012) who admitted to being uncertain about how they personally felt about homosexuality and/or how to lead on issues related to homosexuality.

The personal understandings of homosexuality by Albert Perkins, Senior Pastor at Living Stone UMC are traditional, but Perkins was able to maintain a good relationship with a previous choir director who was gay. In addition Perkins is maintaining relationship with another staff member, Debbie Day, who serves as a diaconal minister for children's and educational ministries. Day has LGBTQ friends, so she advocates for them. Day and Perkins were research participants in different focus groups, but during her focus group interview Day commented on her staff relationship with Perkins by saying:

> We have a lot of conversations about human sexuality because it needs to be discussed in our church (and) because my senior pastor has taken the initiative to talk about it…He and I are on different sides of the spectrum, which he sees is a good thing. I agree that it is good thing to have two different views. (D. Day, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

The public unity displayed by Day and Perkins, in spite of their differing views on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, models for the congregation what it means to respect, love, and serve with other Christian disciples no matter the other's opinion on issues related to human sexuality. The researcher believes that the connectional witness of Perkins and Day is a factor in Living Stone UMC continuing to function as a large church (unlike what happened to Boehm UMC), and that their connectional witness will be beneficial as events unfold in their local church in response to the specially called General Conference in February of 2019.

A third story concerning clergy and LGBTQ colleagues came from Abel Justice who serves as the Dean for Spiritual Life and Discipleship at a small denominational college. In his role he ministers to 4,000 students and 1,000 faculty/staff in ways that are intentionally inclusive of LGBTQ persons. Of the five staff persons directly connected with his office, two are lesbians in same-sex marriages and both couples are raising children. A number of years ago Justice established an on campus, Sunday afternoon worship service with a multi-sexuality leadership team for the purpose of reaching LGBTQ persons. As Justice explained:

> If you want to start a multi-racial church, you don't have only white people up in the front, you have a multi-racial leadership team. We have a multi-sexuality leadership team. So, we have a very high population of people who attend our worship services that would define in the homosexual, bisexual, transgender categories…We don't have a lot of people who identify as conservative on this issue. We will never be able to reach them because our leadership is so diverse when it comes to sexuality as much as I try….but we are going to live into who we are, who we believe God told us to be. If you have a problem with that, there are plenty of churches out there that will welcome you. There are not plenty of churches out there that would welcome our homosexual population. (A. Justice, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Theme 2: Church Members with LGBTQ Relatives, Friends, and Staff

Subtheme 1: Church Members with LGBTQ Relatives

When church members are aware that their pastor is open to pastoral conversations about homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion some of them will come to their pastor with stories about LGBTQ relatives. Jon Health shared:

> But people would tell me…about their children who were homosexual and their relationship, and how their faith impacted that. They may be unrelated, but I have a sense that my willingness to broach the subject matter (in a sermon) eased their willingness to be able to interact. (J. Health, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

A conversation with people having experienced exclusion due to their LGBTQ children was provided by Sue Anthony. A couple who worshipped in her church for six months, asked about becoming members of that church. They wondered if their unmarried gay son who was in a relationship with another man, would be welcomed to worship in that church, and what affect that would have on the parents becoming members. Anthony informed them, "Of course, he's welcome to worship with us and his partner would be welcome to worship with us." The couple replied, "That's really good to know because our last church (Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, LCMS) revoked our membership and wouldn't let us" (S. Anthony, personal communication, June 7, 2018). Shortly thereafter the parents became members of Anthony's church.

A couple who had played a significant role in the Church Council deciding that "no self-avowed homosexual could be a leader in the church's Boy Scout Troop," came to Jay Riggins for counseling. Their daughter had just informed them that she was lesbian. Moreover, she had told them that she had left the United Methodist Church to join the Episcopal Church in order to pursue her call to ordained ministry. They were wondering how to respond. Riggins told them, "You don't have to agree, you don't have to understand, but you need to make sure that you love her." During the focus group session Riggins added:

> She was ordained in New Jersey as an Episcopal priest, and a year later they…said, "Our daughter has invited us to her wedding." I said, "What are you going to do?" They said, "Love her, we got to go." (J. Riggins, personal communication, May 22, 2018)

The parents of a son who had died of AIDS approached Denny Bishop about conducting their son's funeral. The deceased had been a beloved member of Bishop's church, and also beloved in the community. The man had been a lifelong Peace Corp worker, so Denny invited the man's colleagues from the Peace Corp Headquarters in Washington, D.C., to come and speak. The church was packed for the funeral, standing room only. Friends and colleagues came forward and testified to the acts of grace this man had done in their lives. "It was a testament. I didn't have much of a sermon, I didn't need that. I said, 'How can any of us here even think that the gates of heaven were denied to this man?'" (D. Bishop, personal communication, May 22, 2018).

Harry Nutt took a similar position on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion when a female member told him during a counseling session, "My son is gay, and a person in the congregation, my friends so and so, and so and so, are telling me how sinful it is. And, that he's going to burn like toast in hell for the rest of eternity." Nutt offered her grace and comfort, and tried to reassure her that "acceptance is necessary, regardless of whether you have friends in the church who don't like it, or do like it" (H. Nutt, personal communication, June 29, 2018).

Subtheme 2: Church Members with LGBTQ Friends

Focus group and individual follow-up interview sessions contributed insights into how local church members relate to LGBTQ persons in their congregation and to larger issues regarding homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. When clergy were asked, "If you could describe the effect of the issue or LGBTQ inclusion in your church in two – three words, what would those two - three words be?" The answers included: Denial and avoidance, a shimmering issue, below the surface, distraction, tension, divisive, hurtful, split down the middle, clarifying,

conversation building, empowering, and minimal impact. Germain Shepherd described a reason for avoidance being that Tiny Presbyterian Church basically consisted of three families:

> One of my core families is a husband and wife and their adult son, who is in his early thirties, and unmarried. At Tiny Presbyterian, the issue of homosexuality is assiduously avoided because I think there is this underlying nervousness or discomfort that this gentleman might be gay. (G. Shepherd, personal communication, June 7, 2018)

What Shepherd has sensed is that no one in the congregation wants to say or doing anything that might cause this family to leave the church after many years of friendship and living in the same community. Similarly, Anthony observed that her church members would only deal with the issue "if it was in their face" (S. Anthony, personal communication, June 7, 2018). Two places where the matters of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion are surfacing in the local church involve weddings and funerals. The first involved Joy Gooden, Senior Pastor of Vision Presbyterian Church, when she was approached by a lesbian church member for Gooden to officiate at the wedding of her and her partner. The couple wanted to be married in the church's sanctuary, so that required the approval of the session, the governing body for the local church. The session took six months to reach a decision. Gooden reported that approval for use of the sanctuary was granted as the session concluded that it would "violate the couple's commitment to Christ if they weren't allowed to get married in the church" (J. Gooden, personal communication, June 27, 2018). The session emphasized their rationale and strongly stated that other church members did not have to agree with the decision in hopes that unity could be maintained within the church. Never-the-less, Gooden stated that she and others were grieved that a fairly significant number of families left the church.

It was a wedding request that forced the members of Martin Luther Lutheran Church to deal with the issue of same-sex marriage. Al Wright was approached by two same-sex individuals to be married in the church's sanctuary. Following policy Wright sought input from the congregation to gauge the level of support for this request:

> Raising the issue, it really exploded in the life of the congregation. I had several families who left, just because I raised the conversation, and so we are still feeling the effects of that because a number of those were young families with small children…There were, also, other people who threatened to go away if this was talked about anymore they would withdraw their funding… I backed off and I thought, "How can we begin to talk about any issues that are hot topics?" (A. Wright, personal communication, June 7, 2018).

Three years later a grief situation involving a lesbian couple produced a different response from the members of Martin Luther Lutheran Church:

> One of our members was in a committed relationship (and) her (lesbian) partner died… The ministry of the congregation to them, and to her, particularly, through the course of that was exceptional…in this congregation…the issue seems to be more around marriage…giving God's blessing to a same-sex marriage, that wasn't acceptable. But, accepting gay persons…as a member of the congregation isn't an issue as everyone seems to be on equal footing. Something about the equal footing is what seems to be the bugaboo on same-sex marriage. (A. Wright, personal communication, June 7, 2018)

When the researcher asked Wright about his understanding about what the two situations revealed regarding the responses of the laity of his congregation to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion he answered:

> It was the same group of people in both situations responding so differently. In the marriage situation the people based their words and actions on their theology. They could not believe that God would bless the marriage of a couple of the same sex. This was because they identified the women as lesbians rather than as children of God, part of the body. In the grief situation, they based their words and their actions on their practice of discipleship. The woman, who had lost her partner, had shown her true colors as a disciple of Christ using her gifts in service to the church and Christ's kingdom. She had been a vital member of the body of Christ. In the grief situation they saw her as a child of God, a sister in the faith, who was in need of care and comfort. To me it was incongruous that they could say one thing in one situation and practice another in a different situation. (A. Wright, personal communication, August 22, 2018)

Code 2: The Why and How of Scripture

Statements and stories concerning scripture constituted the second greatest number of data entries in coding with that number being 12. Persons representing both the traditional and progressive perspectives on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion profess the deepest regard for the authority of scripture and the vital role scripture is to play for guiding a believer in the Christian way of life. Separation results between the two groups due to differing methods each group uses when conducting scriptural interpretation.

Theme 1: Scripture and Traditional Interpretation

In focus group and individual follow-up interviews traditional participants referred to the interpretation debates over Genesis 19; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; and I Corinthians 6:9-10. Allen Richard cited Leviticus 18 as guiding his understanding of God's perspective on homosexuality:

> It says, for a man to lie with a man as with a woman…it's an abomination…God is giving you His viewpoint. I'm looking at this thing, and it's a hateful, ugly situation. That's what He's saying. It's an abomination…Nobodies ever convinced me that this is not God's point of view. (A. Richard, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Albert Perkins dismissed the progressive explanation that because Leviticus 18:22 was written prior to modern insights and understandings that it is not binding today:

> If you go back to the first part of the verse…it says "You shall not." Regardless of whether it's an abomination, or whether it's this or that or the other thing; it includes this "You shall not do this." And that's the only thing. And you debate this all you want…and it's very clear. "You shall not. You shall not do these things." Come out and be separate, and be different from your culture….and I think that still applies today. (A. Perkins, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Iron Greene introduced an additional scripture verse in support of this perspective:

> Be appalled, O heavens, at this be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the Lord, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water. (Jeremiah 2:12-13, NRSV)

For Greene this passage conveys the grief of God's heart. "It's about rejection. It's about rejection and replacement. People saying, what you have for me isn't good enough. I'm going to make it my own" (I. Greene, personal communication, June 27, 2018).

This understanding of Jeremiah 2:12-13 prompted the researcher to probe the matter of why some men feel attracted to other men, and to ask if participants understood scripture to prohibit acting upon that attraction. The researcher was surprised to learn that the participants

with traditional understandings of homosexuality readily acknowledged that some men and women experience same-sex attraction due to a genetic pre-disposition. Albert Perkins saw an analogy between a pre-disposition to alcohol with the pre-disposition for same-sex attraction: You recognize that there's a genetic pre-disposition toward alcoholism. But we don't say, well just because you are wired this way, it is okay to go ahead and indulge because there are harmful effects. Now some would argue. But the point is, just because I'm wired that way doesn't make it right. (A. Perkins, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

The understanding of Albert Perkins places him in the 17% of American Protestant clergy who believe "that the issue of alcoholism provides the best model for dealing with gay and lesbian issues" (Jones and Cox, 2009, p. 15). Perkins perceived that some people experience same-sex attraction, "You can even love someone romantically, but that doesn't mean you have to have sex with that person" (A. Perkins, personal communication, June 27, 2018). Allen Richard added, "I mean, once you commit the act, then you've crossed the line" (A. Richard, personal communication, June 27, 2018).

Theme 2: Scripture and Progressive Interpretation

When discussing scriptural guidance for responding to issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, progressives would reference a greater number of scripture passages than traditionalists. Frequently progressives would cite the importance of using the entire Bible as the lens for understanding homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion rather than narrowing the discussion to a few specific verses. Debbie Day explained:

> You are looking at the scope of scripture…I'm looking at this because my theology is that I see scripture as a narrative. So, I take the themes out of scripture and that's what informs how I preach and teach… themes of love and acceptance…themes like the

> acceptance of the widow and the orphan. (D. Day, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Day has found the themes of acceptance, inclusion, and exclusion in a television show that illustrates the significance of narrative scriptural interpretation for her preaching and ministry:

> If you are looking for a cultural reference, my husband and I are watching…Queer Eye on Netflix…about five men who are homosexuals. They…do a makeover transformation of a person. In season two, the first episode…(The team) is helping this woman who's very involved in the life of her church and they're helping with the Recreation Center of the church…one of the guys…doesn't want to go into the sanctuary. The other guys are like, why don't you go in? He's like, I can't even set foot in a church because I've been so hurt and so offended by the church. As my husband and I watched I just started sobbing. I have so many friends and that is their life. I would love to say that it doesn't affect how I preach or teach. I certainly wouldn't go up in front of my congregation with a human rights campaign shirt on or a love me…blog shirt. I don't think that would be well received. But I can't deny that my friends and what I see in my culture affect the way that I preach the gospel. (D. Day, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Denny Bishop professed a great love for scripture. Therefore, the authority of scripture is an important issue for him. However, his real life experiences with LGBTQ persons have led him to conclude:

> There is going to be in society so many people that are going to be homosexual or transgender, that's the way they are. To overlay an admonition using the scripture I don't think is realistic, but it brings up the question then how do we deal with the authority of scripture? (D. Bishop, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

To illustrate what he means about dealing with the authority of scripture Bishop referenced the television show *The West Wing:*

> In one episode President Bartlet confronts a very outspoken fundamentalist Christian. He's a biblical scholar, the President. He recites all these laws in Leviticus. "Should I stone my brother to death because he is growing two different grains in the same field? How do I deal with my daughter if I want to sell her into slavery? Do I put to death my son who has been disrespectful?" He cites chapter and verse of all these things in Leviticus that no one in their right mind in this day and time would consider doing to make his point. (D. Bishop, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Bishop continued:

> I'm not always a big fan of Paul Tillich, but somewhere he used the terms "temporal truths and eternal truths." What I remember is that Tillich used as an example Paul's admonition that women should be silent and should not speak in church. He said that was a temporal truth, meaning it was a truth relevant only to that particular time and place. There are other things, like Jesus saying, "Love God, love your neighbor," that are eternal. (D. Bishop, personal communication, May 22, 2018)

A significant scripture passage for Abel Justice regarding the appropriateness of contextual interpretation of scripture is Acts 15. In that chapter the Jerusalem Council discusses, debates, and discerns what should be the official position on the religious and cultural practice of circumcision with regards to Gentiles wishing to become members of the church. The Jerusalem Council decided that circumcision was not a requirement for Gentiles to become Christian and to become part of the church. In light of that historic event Justice has concluded that the church can discuss and even change traditional understandings and practices:

> So, we can talk about how somebody would want to change an age old understanding. Why can't we change what we believe in? Why can't we change what we've always done before? We can have that conversation without throwing stones or hurting one another back and forth. (A. Justice, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

The benefit of multiple perspectives on biblical and theological interpretation for conversation around homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion was supported by John Calvin. For the United Methodist pastors in the focus group he offered a history lesson and analysis on what occurred in the Presbyterian Church USA:

> The Methodist Church, as I understand it from the outside looking in, is where the PC USA was five years ago. For better or for worse, we made our decision and now sort of the dust is settled and the dynamics are very, very different in terms of there's no sense of advocacy. We are who we are. Now, let's try to figure out how to lead into and be that. Most of the conservatives, who ended up on the underside of the decision-making process have separated. That is sad because our conversations have become much more one-sided and the no counterbalance. (J. Calvin, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

In one focus group two clergy, who are at the opposite ends of the spectrum for homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, agreed that the Bible addresses more than sexual sin. Stan King said, "I do believe that scripture says that homosexuality is a sin. I believe that adultery is a sin and that lying is a sin and that stealing is a sin" (S. King, personal communication, June 29, 2018). While not agreeing that homosexuality is a sin, Grant Speaker concurred with King's understanding that scripture identifies a number of sinful behaviors:

> My study of theology tells me that homosexuality is not anathema to God. My theology tells me, Jesus Christ never said anything about homosexuality. He did say a whole lot

about money…but never said anything about homosexuality, Paul did. (G. Speaker, personal communication, June 29, 2018).

And King agreed with his friend.

Forest Mountain echoed Grant's theological position by offering this observation about his local church:

When my church members get in a conversation about homosexuals going to heaven or to hell when they die, it gets back to that question of grace and sin. If you say a sinner goes to hell and you say a gay person goes to hell because they are gay, does that mean you go to hell because you are a racist, or do you go to hell because you're an elitist, or you go hell because you're wealthy? Well, there's a heck of a lot more in the New Testament that talks about the wealthy going to hell than anybody else. (F. Mountain, personal communication, July 6, 2018)

Data from focus group and individual follow-up interviews showed that when progressives engage in biblical and theological conversation about homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion that a frequently used word is *all*. Wes Strauss firmly stated his belief that "we're just all sinners in need of redemption and God loves us all," then quoted scripture, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ Jesus have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27-28, NRSV). For Strauss the passage doesn't mean that there are just three categories of people who are in Christ. "It's really God saying all people" (W. Strauss, personal communication, May 22, 2018). Strauss also referenced where Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd, "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (John 10:16, NRSV). Once when preaching this passage Strauss said, "So all those other sheep might

not be people with whom we are particularly comfortable. Maybe they are Muslims. Maybe they are gay" (W. Strauss, personal communication, May 22, 2018).

Revelation 7 inspires Larry Light to practice inclusion of LGBTQ persons because of John's vision of *all* worshipping God around the throne. It was with enthusiasm that Light spoke of the passage:

> It is where great multitudes gather around the throne and therefore from every tribe and nation. To me there's a great diversity gathered around the throne and that diversity conveys a time of hope and a time of expectation and a time of celebration. The gathering of the saints reflects to me a great diversity and for there to be any lacking in diversity is a loss of that expectation. (L. Light, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

A similar understanding of God's perspective on homosexuals and LGBTQ inclusion was voiced by the Rev. Anna Care, "God's dream is one where all are gathered. And God's dream is radical, radically inclusive" (A. Care, personal communication, June 28, 2018). When the researcher inquired as to which scripture passage she would turn to in support of her understanding she replied:

> The entire gospel narrative; Look at Jesus' life. Look at who he spent his time with. He was constantly communicating a message of, you are welcome here. And, he had a way of turning upside down cultural assumptions and assumptions of what is sin, and what is not. And who is welcome and who is not on its head. That's why they killed him. He was too threatening. They had to stop him, because all of a sudden he was offering a new compelling vision to countless individuals, and they were starting to believe it. So, to me it's not only about gay love and transgender, you know, anyone who does not fit in the cisgender, hetero-normative box. It's not only about that community. It's about any

> community of people. Refugees, people of color, women, you know, inmates, and on and on… (A. Care, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

Theme 3: Scripture and Shared Understandings by Traditionalists and Progressives

Persons with traditional understandings of biblical interpretation and persons with progressive understandings of scriptural interpretation cited the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11) in support of their position on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. However, while they both cite the passage, each came away with a slightly different insight. Paul Lively spoke from a traditional perspective:

> This story informs my view on homosexuality and LGBTQ issues. These are sinful behaviors, things that people do with their bodies. And so they are caught in the act of that sin. And so Jesus did not say to the woman caught in the act of adultery, you should be killed right here and now. Instead, he did tell her as she went forward after the forgiveness she received from him, to go and sin no more. And so for me it's the same idea. Yes, you could be trapped in this lifestyle…but God's call is not to live that way. 'Cause it's not God's design for sexuality and so we should be doing everything we can to live as God's called us to live. (P. Lively, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Jon Health also spoke about how Jesus did not condemn the woman, but told her to go forth and sin no more. However, Health also perceives that the men wanted to exclude the woman from the community, and so great was their desire to exclude her that they wanted to kill her. Jesus not only refrained from condemning the woman, but through the power of his forgiveness and grace sent her forth as one to be included in his kingdom. In the words of Health, "So, for each and every person, Christ is seeking to love us, not to condemn us because of our

sin, but to inspire and to encourage us, so we will go forth as changed…as changed servants in his kingdom." (J. Health, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

While Jon Health and Paul Lively have much in common in their understandings of John 7:53-8:11, there is a nuance in interpretation that leads to a different emphasis with regards to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. For Lively the story provides support for his concerns about sexual sin of any kind that creates an impurity that might cause a person to miss out on entering into the kingdom of God. For Health the story provides support for his position on inclusion in God's kingdom of all persons who have experienced the forgiveness and grace of Jesus Christ.

Code 3: The Why and How of Discipleship Gifts and Clergy Leadership Strategies

Theme 1: Discipleship Gifts

One of the primary tasks for clergy serving a local church is to help laity to identify their gifts to serve in the world as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, in a manner similar to transformational leadership or even transformative leadership, clergy are to help laity to enhance their gifts. By enhancing an individual's gifts for ministry the lay person can become a more effective disciple for serving in the world and can develop leadership skills to assist other disciples to grow in faith and in service. The next sections of this dissertation will examine how discipleship gifts possessed by homosexual or LGBTQ persons are regulated or acknowledged, employed, enhanced by local church clergy in accordance with traditionalist and progressive viewpoints.

Subtheme 1: Traditionalist View of Discipleship Gifts

When asked how he would handle a lesbian or gay person in his congregation who volunteered to serve in a position of leadership Iron Greene answered:

With discretion and discernment…if someone wanted to be the leader of the mowing team, I probably would feel comfortable with that…if they wanted to serve as the leader of Disciple Bible Study or a co-leader of a Disciple Bible Study, I might be okay with that, because the curriculum is fixed…the person would have to demonstrate a spiritual maturity for them to be considered for a position like that. But if someone were to want to come onto staff of the church or serve in children's ministry or to serve in some other sensitive areas, even leadership team,…I would not feel good about that in a similar way that I wouldn't feel good about having someone who was an actively drinking alcoholic or an actively using drug abuser to serve in one of those positions. (I. Greene, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

A difficult pastoral situation presented itself to Stan King. A member of King's congregation, a married man with children, brought his wife with him for a counseling session: The gentleman in the marriage wanted to be transgender. After a year of hiding he finally sat down with me and his wife. I wanted to hear what he had to say. This gentleman didn't serve in a leadership role, except to help me do a few small things. I said, "While you are struggling with this identity, it may be best if you don't serve in a leadership role. I think that's my shepherding job." …He wanted his wife and children to move with him to a large city where there is a large transgender community and where there is a transgender church. He said, "Maybe God's going to use me, to tell people about Jesus in a transgender church." The wife decided to take the children and moved away. The house is sitting here empty. One of the last things he said to me was, "In the history of the world there's never been a place for me." (S. King, personal communication, June 29, 2018)

Another situation that presented itself in King's ministry concerned a married man with three children who came out as gay:

> He was a Sunday school teacher at our church and he wanted to move in with another man who was his partner. However, because everybody in this story is a little bit poor, they all moved into the other man's house...The local church…said, "What you are doing is confusing. Under our umbrella, what we believe in scriptures, and where you've aligned yourself as a member, we believe it's sinful. We would ask you that you be reconciled with the Lord, with the church; let's have a conversation about that." Church discipline was done, and that gentleman decided that it would be better for him to choose that lifestyle…than get back in the church's favor. Was it super hard on the church? It was hard. (S. King, personal communication, June 29, 2018)

John Calvin described a different set of circumstances in the congregation he serves regarding LGBTQ persons serving as church leaders:

> We have several folks in the LGBTQ community, but they are quiet about who they are and they are not out to rub it in anyone's face. They're not looking to be in leadership in terms of elected offices in the church. So, Sovereign Presbyterian marches along happily and they love those folks. I wonder if that might change should one of them raise their hand in a congregational meeting to indicate that they want to be an elder or a deacon. We would be forced to confront that decision. Now, I will admit that I have had conversations with a few members who were trying to fish for details about some people they wondered about. My approach…is to steer them beyond that issue and to talk about what the guy does in the community that is good, where the man and his partner are making a difference…the homosexuality issue, it's not the dominating definer of their personality or their relationship with God. (J. Calvin, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Regarding the matter of homosexuals or LGBTQ persons being ordained and their gifts being used in that capacity in the church, Iron Greene offered specific thoughts:

> I am not comfortable with that happening…because I don't think it's an example of God's best…I would lift up a term in the *United Methodist Book of Discipline*…"self-avowed practicing homosexual" because the self-avowed is an important part. I'm not comfortable with the United Methodist Church ordaining self-avowed practicing homosexuals. I would have different feelings about someone who identified as homosexual because of their same-sex attractions, but was committed to celibacy. The key is not their attractions, but their being committed to not act up those. (I. Greene, personal communication, July 6, 2018)

Subtheme 2: Progressive View on Discipleship Gifts

The foundation for Forest Mountain's beliefs about the use of discipleship gifts by laity is his understanding of baptism. Through baptism a person fully enters into the fellowship of the church. Mountain was baptized in an Episcopal church, but the matter of full inclusion based on baptism became an important part of his theological understanding when the pastor of the Baptist Church, where his wife was a member, invited Mountain to join the Baptist Church. To join required him to be re-baptized and he would not. As Mountain explained:

> In Baptist churches you had to become something before you could be included, whatever that something was. You had to become a believer in a certain way…I've always understood my baptism as inclusion, and it is so significant that it has never bounced me out of the church. But what happens if a child turns out to be gay who's been baptized? What are we saying if we exclude them from the full life of the church even though they're baptized? (F. Mountain, personal communication, July 6, 2018)

In an individual follow-up interview Mountain provided more information on why the sacrament of baptism required him as a pastor to practice full inclusion of lesbians and gays:

> While I didn't actively push congregations for inclusion, I always acted inclusively with the gays that were in my congregation, to the point that they were leaders in the congregation. If somebody said something to me, I didn't feel that I had to justify their leadership…they were leaders in the community already... I just thought it was natural for them to do what they were doing. (F. Mountain, personal communication, July 6, 2018)

Mountain's reflection led the researcher to ask, "When people came and questioned why this person is being allowed to be a leader in the church, what do you think motivated them to come to you for that?" Mountain answered:

> I think they have some idea that a gay person is somehow inadequate for leadership, that their choice of lifestyle excludes them from leadership. My usual response to that was, "When did you choose to be heterosexual?...and did you seriously consider being gay, because I can tell you that those who are gay seriously tried to be anything but gay." What they are doing is choosing to honor who God made them to be, and we ought to honor that too. (F. Mountain, personal communication, July 6, 2018)

Failure by the church to use the discipleship gifts possessed by lesbians and gays was a concern for Debbie Day. The historic example she used to support her concern did not occur in a religious setting, but did underscore her belief that LGBTQ persons could have invaluable gifts to offer in time of need. The example she cited was the story of Alan Turing, a gay man, as portrayed by Benedict Cumberbatch in the movie *The Imitation Game*. During World War II Turning worked in Bletchley Park as a member of the team assigned to decrypt the Enigma machine that the Nazis use to send coded messages. It is estimated that Turing helped to save 14

million lives thus making what Winston Churchill considered to be "the single biggest contribution to the Allied victory" (Hollywood Report, p. 1, retrieved on July 16, 2018). A significant line in the movie is when Turing says, "Sometimes the people we expect nothing from are the people who do the things we never expect" (Hollywood Report, p. 2, retrieved on July 16, 2018).

Joy Gooden revealed her position on the suitability of lesbians and gays for ordination by narrating the journey of a woman in her church who was attending seminary with the hope of being ordained in the Presbyterian Church USA:

> She calls me and says, "I'm in love with a woman. I guess I can't be ordained." At that time that was certainly the case. I went with her…to the Presbyterian committee dealing with this, and she announced to them that, "I'm lesbian, so I guess I will withdraw my candidacy." She became United Church of Christ (UCC). She graduated number one in her class from Yale Divinity School. The bottom line was here was somebody, a child of our church, and also a child of the Presbyterian Church, had been a missionary prior to seminary, and now she was going to be prohibited from being a minister in our denomination. When she withdrew her candidacy the committee…asked me what I thought. I said, "I think it is a sad day that this person that we all know has gifts for ministry cannot be ordained." (J. Gooden, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Later in the focus group Gooden added another story about a powerful clergyman in the Presbyterian Church USA who had been slow to accept women ministers, but he was on board with that finally. Gooden asked him:

> "When do you think the Presbyterian Church will allow gays to be ordained?" He said, "Well, the reason they allowed women to be ordained was because all of a sudden

> people's daughters and sisters and aunts wanted to be ordained. The time will come when their sons and their daughters will want to be ordained who are gay and lesbian, and that will turn the tide." (J. Gooden, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Theme 2: Clergy Leadership Strategies

Subtheme 1: Traditionalist Views on Clergy Leadership Strategies

Due to his understanding of the importance of enforcing church standards the clergyperson in this research study who was the closest to practicing transactional leadership was Stan King. As King explained:

> I think that the idea of a church accepting the community's values is anti-church. So, I think a leader of a church, which a church according to scripture is the bride of Christ composed of people who by his grace and love are converted to Christ. When they become part of the church, the church is the place where the standard is different. (S. King, personal communication, June 29, 2018)

The importance of letting people know where their pastor as their spiritual leader stands, especially with regards to correct biblical interpretation, was stressed by Allen Richard:

If you're the leader, you gotta let people know what you feel…especially what it is rooted in. If it's in scripture let them know and show them the scripture…and how you believe it…so from that point on they'll know who's speaking from the pulpit and who is leading them, and guiding them. (A. Richard, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

A different reason for making one's position known was offered by Paul Lively, who described how church members wanted to know where he stood on the issues of homosexuality and LGBTQ inclusion. "But I find myself being essentially pushed more and more to take a side. And raise the standard, if you will." When asked which side of the spectrum was pushing him, he

answered, “Both sides. But on either end, they’re looking at the pastor and saying, ‘How can you talk out of both sides of your mouth? How can you not understand this as either an abomination before God, or it is about justice and human rights?’” Lively lamented that “Some people want a very autocratic style where you tell them what they’re supposed think and feel and do. They’ll show up in church. They’ll worship and you’ve taken care of everything, and they go home and they’re happy” (P. Lively, personal communication, June 27, 2018). Richard identified as a reason some church members desire autocratic leadership from their pastor is “Everybody wants a church that you can come in, praise the Lord, worship, and be told what to believe” (A. Richard, personal communication, June 27, 2018).

The majority of the clergy interviewed who self-identified as being on the traditionalist/conservative end of the spectrum on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion were uncomfortable with the practice of transactional leadership. Iron Greene was representative of the traditionalist population in the study:

> I feel more responsibility to set an example than to impose a set of morality on the people in the church. I feel responsible for shining a light on the holiness of God and calling for people to live into and allow that holiness to spring forth from them, but I don’t feel the responsibility like a wood sculptor would to carve people into a certain shape or form. (I. Greene, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

The method of leadership employed by most of the traditional clergy who participated in this research study was transformational. Like Iron Greene, who was uncomfortable imposing a set morality on people, traditional clergy indicated that they were engaging in conversations with individuals or establishing conversation groups in order to transform the members of their local church and the church itself. The strategy of promoting individual and group conversation fits

well with the four components of transformational leadership: influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (McCleskey 2014). Allen Richard stated, "If somebody wants to talk about it, I can talk about it." Greene also advocated for conversation:

> I think it's going to be important to… offer support groups or conversation for folks for whom it is a bigger struggle than others…the more hurt they are going to be if the decision at the 2019 General Conference goes against their opinions or their preference. (I. Greene, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

As the 2019 General Conference draws nearer, Greene is implementing one of his leadership strategies for assisting church members to stay connected with one another and with the church. "I'm not denying people the ability or the right to have an opinion on it. Letting people know it's okay for them to have an opinion and belief, but I'm strongly encouraging them to not have that as their primary identifier" (I. Greene, personal conversation, July 6, 2018).

When asked about his leadership strategies Paul Lively replied:

> In the leadership question, what I've tried to show is a willingness to have the difficult conversations…you say one thing, I say something else. Well, let's try to figure out where the differences lie in a loving way as well as accepting way in hearing people's stories, without a demand that we all agree and have one mind about this. (P. Lively, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Albert Perkins questioned Paul Lively's answer regarding leadership on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion:

> Well, the difficulty there, Paul, is we have a member of our church who was a former Presbyterian. And he said, "We spent all this time talking about it, and trying to have

> open conversations…at the end of the day, no one's mind was changed. And we took a vote, and we drew a dividing line." Lively responded to Perkins, "It's not necessarily going to change anything, but it's going to set a tone of loving and listening to the other, and trying to understand them." (P. Lively and A. Perkins, personal conversation, June 27, 2018)

A profound moment for the researcher, while conducting a session with a focus group composed entirely of traditionalists, was the group members' sensitivity to the use of the letters LGBTQ. In a previous focus group session composed of progressives and middle of the spectrum clergy, the members of the group requested that he just use the term homosexuality when asking questions instead of using the phrase "homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion." "We know what you mean by LGBTQ so just use homosexuality. That will give us more time to answer your questions and to have a conversation." In light of his previous experience the researcher began the traditionalists' focus group session by asking, "Would you prefer for me to just use the term homosexuality or do you want me to lengthen the question by adding the term LGBTQ inclusion?" The members of the group were adamant that LGBTQ inclusion not be eliminated from any question. In a follow-up conversation Iron Greene enlightened the researcher about the group's reasons:

> I think the reason…is because those letters do represent significantly different self-understandings and ideas of relationships that are being pursued…on the other hand, if that's a preferred term for people who are in those categories, that instead of gay or lesbian or homosexual, then LGBTQ inclusion is the word you use. It's always respectful to people in a group other than yours to use language that is least possible stumbling block for them…regarding the specific letters there's LG and then B and then T and

> Q…LG I think could be talked about together, but B and T and Q probably deserve their own conversations. (I. Greene, personal conversation, July 6, 2018)

The explanation concerning the use of the terms homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion led the researcher to ask traditionalists if biblical interpretation is the primary issue in the debate with homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion being the secondary issue. Paul Lively answered:

> My experience with conservative people is this is a secondary issue in terms of how we understand the scripture in God's revelation to us…on the liberal side of the spectrum it's not a secondary issue because it is about human rights and… being accepting of all people. So, for either of these camps to call this a secondary issue is to dismiss their concerns…For us to say, oh let's not talk about that, let's just focus on making disciples; the immediate question that comes to my mind is what kind of disciples? Disciples who say that nothing is important… (P. Lively, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

The main leadership question facing traditionalists according to Iron Greene was, "What does it mean to really love someone without accepting or embracing or endorsing all of their choices?" A strategy Greene recently employed was to refer a gay man to a nearby church:

> I encouraged a gay man…to connect with a specific United Methodist Church which I knew would be more not only welcoming, but celebrating of him and his same sex choice than I think is right…I knew that they would be…I felt myself for the first time being glad that I could recommend that this guy go to this church, which happened to be in his neighborhood, and I did that because he is estranged from God right now…He has a felt need for significant friendship and community and I believe he could find those things. (I. Greene, personal communication, July 6, 2018)

This testimony prompted the researcher to ask, "So…your evangelical side and desire for people to connect with Christ led to that recommendation?" Greene answered, "Absolutely, right." The researcher responded, "Yeah. Wow. Wow, which really gets at your core." Greene agreed, "Yeah. That matters much more. For me someone's connection with Christ matters much more than the timing of the reforming of their character or the process of their sanctification." The researcher continued, "Which also speaks to your belief in the power of Christ." Greene replied, "Yeah. And even through the Church, because I think that God, through the Holy Spirit, could reach this person even if they remain out of fellowship for the next 20 years, but I believe that God may work more effectively and the person has a better chance of being reconciled to God if they are within a body of Christ" (I. Greene, personal communication, July 6, 2018).

Subtheme 2: Moderate Views on Clergy Leadership Strategies

College Mennonite Church is led by Joshua Promise. It is a diverse congregation, but as Promise explained, "We value our ways of being together to worship, and doing mission together, and we've been open about our diversity of opinion on social issues and theological issues." Leadership strategies to create an environment for people to speak their opinion and to hear the opinions of others on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion have included two week structured congregational conversations followed by small group conversations. The congregational conversation led six people to spontaneously form a small group they call *the gang of six*. "They meet once every couple of weeks, and they intentionally chose the composition of the group to have three persons who are on the left of this issue and three persons who are on the right, and committed to talking with one another." The group has met for several years, and has reported that, "they've actually discovered that there's an awful lot that they agree on in the process of these conversations" (J. Promise, personal communication, June 28, 2018).

Another transformational strategy employed by Promise and the lay leadership of College Mennonite Church to foster organizational health and organizational unity, is keeping the vision statement of the church in the forefront of all activities. Promise explained:

> In the midst of any differences…it's a stated goal objective we are going to hold together…We value our commitment to one another and that is more important than the issues upon which we disagree. We…avoid the language of agreeing to disagree, because that's…a cheap way out. We're saying no, it's not agreeing to disagree; it's recognizing that our disagreements are important, but they're not fellowship breaking. We will continue to talk with each other and we will continue to engage, but we won't break fellowship with each other over it. (J. Promise, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

Subtheme 3: Progressive Views on Clergy Leadership Strategies

Data from interviews revealed that the leadership strategy with which many progressives begin on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion is transformational leadership. Individual and group conversations are implemented to fulfill the criteria for transformational leadership of influence, inspiration motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (McCleskey 2014).

Guiding progressives in their transformational leadership efforts are books such as Jack Rogers' *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church* (2006). Joy Gooden described Rogers as an evangelical who was elected Moderator for the Presbyterian Church. In this role Rogers engaged in conversations with congregations and groups that caused him to shift his position on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. He wrote a book about his journey and his newfound support for gay ordination. Gooden reports, "His evangelical

conservative brothers, mostly brothers, disowned him." Study groups at Gooden's church used Rogers' book to facilitate discussion (J. Gooden, personal communication, June 28, 2018).

Another book that has guided the transformational leadership of progressives is Frances Taylor Gench's *Faithful Disagreement: Wrestling with Scripture in the Midst of Church Conflict* (1999). The researcher found Chapter 3, *Living with Disagreements: Romans 14:1-15:13*, to be very helpful in providing a biblical foundation and historic example for responding to disagreements within the church. Gench perceived that the conflict in Rome was over the proper response by Christians to food and drink as well as the observance of special days. In an appeal for present day church unity Gench cited biblical scholar N. T. Wright's commentary on Romans 14:1-15:13, "there are some things that appear to divide Christians very deeply in terms of their practice but are, in fact (in the language of later theology), 'things indifferent' that should not be allowed to divide them" (Wright, 2002, p. 749).

Al Wright has practiced transformational leadership as a writer for his congregation. Experiences have taught him that coming head on at homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion isn't very successful so, "now I come at a slant. I come around the back door and instigate conversation and thought processes in the congregation. That way people can be ponderous." A specific slant method Wright has used is writing newsletter articles and a blog:

> Writing gives me an opportunity to think it though…for myself…where I am theological and where pastorally I want to go, and then share that with the congregation. People might disagree with me, but at least I'm hitting on the best of my thinking. (A. Wright, personal communication, June 7, 2018)

Andrew Heat acknowledged that transformational leadership emphasizing Christ's love for all persons might take some church members only part way in relating to LGBTQ persons.

"For some the issue is certainly a matter of loving everybody, being open to everybody, but for some it will still take on a judgment aspect of 'love the sinner, hate the sin.' That in its self would be something that someone who was gay, I assume, would find reprehensible." (A. Heat, personal communication, June 7, 2018).

Indeed, the members of Prince of Peace Mennonite Church, where Benjamin Peace serves as pastor, would find the phrase "love the sinner, hate the sin," to be reprehensible. Prince of Peace Mennonite Church is "a church with a safe space, kind of a sanctuary space for, in particular, I think activists and allies for LGBT people," stated Peace. "We've had some clarifying statements over the years and know where we put our stake in the ground. That has been…empowering in a number of ways." While the leadership decision to create a congregational identity of welcoming and including LGBT persons and allies has been clarifying and empowering, the decision has also produced the experience of exclusion. Peace shared that a pastor previous to him was lesbian and her license to preach created a great deal of tension with the Virginia Mennonite Conference.

In the process of coming alongside and supporting that person who was going through a difficult time in relation to the conference, the church eventually decided that it would be a safer environment to function as a congregation in another conference. What that has meant is that now we are part of a conference that is not geographically where we are located. Other churches have done that. We're now a part of a conference that is becoming less and less geographically focused and more ideologically focused. So, this has been isolating in some ways. (B. Peace, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

Dissatisfaction with United Methodist hierarchical leaders in guiding local church clergy to practice transformational leadership was expressed by Denny Bishop:

> When I began ministry, the advice…from…my superiors, were all about maintaining comfort. Don't upset your people…but inevitably, if you're a good pastor, you're going to end up upsetting someone. It's not just that we are avoiding social issues, but we're avoiding the gospel as an institution...The United Methodist perspective has become muddy and inconclusive, not just on homosexuality, but on most social concerns … The church is afraid to stand for anything, because we operate as if we're being Christian by constantly sitting on the fence. (D. Bishop, personal communication, May 22, 2018)

As Bishop looks back over his years of ministry he laments, "I don't regret being careful and pastoral with people, but I'm haunted by the fact that I maybe didn't do my part to help bring people into a new understanding" (D. Bishop, personal communication, May 22, 2018).

Another clergyperson who voiced concern with transformational leadership was Forest Mountain:

> I think the church has bigger problems than the issue of homosexuality. If I were to challenge the church and spend my justice time it would be on the issue of race, on the issue of economics, and the idolization of America. Those three issues for me are more important…I think that the people in those three categories are the ones most at risk to go to hell. (F. Mountain, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

The experiences of Thomas Mission raised a concern for him about promoting dialogue as a means for transforming the local church. "The last church I served you could feel the tension that came from the division over national politics. What I noticed was rather than discuss what the Bible said on the matter that the response was to whatever was the current political climate dialogue" (T. Mission, personal communication, May 22, 2018).

Where progressive clergy really expressed frustration in leading a local church was when they tried to move from transformational leadership to transformative leadership. Transformative leadership seeks to disrupt the status quo and long-held assumptions (Hewitt, Davis, & Lashley, 2014, p. 229). Moreover, transformative leadership seeks to reach beyond the organization for the purpose of correcting systemic and structural inequalities in society (Hewitt et al., 2014, p. 229).

Following the contentious 2016 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Amos Finch preached a sermon series on how Christians have different understandings of specific scripture passages and the "why" for those different understandings. The next morning a woman came to his office, "Pastor Amos, why do you teach us what other people think?" Finch answered, "Because they are Christians, brothers and sisters." On a different Sunday Finch told a story that in his memory is about Christian leader and theologian, Tony Campolo. When Campolo was in high school other boys urinated on a gay classmate after gym class. Campolo didn't speak up. As Campolo looks back on the event he is repentant, and his repentance has caused him to stand with the marginalized. After Finch told that story the same woman returned to his office to ask, "Pastor Amos, can you talk about where maybe people abuse conservative Christians or something like that?" Finch replied, "I'm considering my audience, which is more likely the sermon we need to hear" (A. Finch, personal communication, June 28, 2018).

The other profound story that Finch shared came from an earlier appointment that was a four point charge. The four churches organized a Homecoming Service and the pastor previous to Finch was invited back to preach. The following is Finch's narrative of the sermon:

The pastor…was doing a Genesis to Revelation service. He was bringing up every single character through the whole thing. I thought, "Oh my goodness, we're going to be here a while!"

Then, somewhere in the New Testament, he stopped and he lambasted homosexuality for about 10 minutes. And there was a big "Amen!" from the congregation. And I was like, "Really? Is this what they have been waiting for me to say? …What's the sin they've been waiting to hear? It wasn't theirs. (A. Finch, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

In contrast to Denny Bishop, Jon Health did not follow the guidance of conference leaders in avoiding controversial topics when he first arrived at his new appointment. Instead, he laid his cards on the table preaching on topics like abortion, divorce, and homosexuality; issues he called *hot potatoes*:

> At the end of each sermon I said, "Look, I want you all just to know where I am. Faithful Christians disagree with this, but let me tell you where I am." I wanted to model for them transparency, and…in humility to say, "I don't have this all figured out." So, that was an important step for me to make. And I think it directly related to the next phase of my ministry there. I have a sense that my willingness to broach that subject matter eased their willingness to be able to interact. (J. Health, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

It has been in educational settings rather than the local church that clergy have found it easier to practice transformative leadership. Randy Teacher not only teaches at a denominationally affiliated school for higher education, but serves as the chaplain by providing pastoral care and organizing worship services. Inclusion is part of the DNA of this school as students come from all around the world. "On some…days, I'm the only white person in the room and it's a room of about 30 students and myself." Continuing on the theme of diversity, "We've had students that have come and participated in chapel or have come to Bible studies that are either transgender or homosexual." As a result of this inclusive environment Teacher

reported, “I’ve just had a student who is transgender who went through confirmation and he was baptized” (R. Teacher, personal communication, June 27, 2018).

A different denominationally affiliated school for higher education is served by Abel Justice. Four years ago this institution established a diversity office with Justice as the Dean. In that role Justice and his staff offer trainings to school staff and to students on inclusion and diversity. Prior to these trainings there was a frequent need for intervention on the athletic fields due to homophobic slurs. Justice reported that the trainings provided to athletic teams have been very effective:

> The athletes are open to this conversation if it’s had in such a way that is structured and fair and decent… So, my place is a chance to exemplify what needs to be inclusive and loving…I get a chance to be an ally in my actions...I do have to admit that inclusion in the female athletic realm is usually much more open and accepting than it is in the male athletic realm. (A. Justice, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

A strategy that has been effective for Anna Care in providing transformative leadership for individuals, and for Resurrection United Methodist Church, has been the establishment of faith and discipleship groups. Care explained:

> The faith and discipleship groups…has been lifesaving because there are countless persons who identify as LGBTQ who were raised in some sort of religious tradition or who longed for a meaningful connection with their creator and with community. In countless ways they have been told that their mere existence is shameful…whatever words you may want to choose such as an abomination…sinner is one of the less offensive, but essentially there is no place for you here. Occasionally there is some fine print. There is no place for you unless you cease and desist being who you are. That

> produces a cumulative effect of a lifetime of shame, and alienation, and disconnect that has led some LGBTQ people to hurt themselves or commit suicide. I have had numerous people though the years say to me, "This community has been an incredibly important part of me starting to believe that I am not a mistake." And, it has in certain situations saved lives. (A. Care, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

Organizational transformation has occurred at Resurrection UMC through the establishment of faith and discipleship groups. Care explained:

> These are intentionally formed groups that have a very high bar set for them, as far as attendance and staying at the table…groups of about eight to ten, and they typically explore the intersection of some particular…topic such as church culture with secular culture…those were very transformational for all persons in the groups…for many people, they had never really heard the stories of what persons who are LGBTQ have experienced…had never sat and cried with someone who'd tried to take their own life… This kind of relationship building, it transforms everyone. (A. Care, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

An important goal for Resurrection UMC is to provide leadership opportunities that create a new generation of leaders for the Christian faith. Care stated:

> This is important to us too. We not only welcome people, we enable people to lead. This isn't some sort of welcome with limits. Someone said to me…, "I've encountered welcoming communities before, but this is the only community I've encountered where I truly am you, just like everyone else. I'm not so and so who's a great guy, and he's gay. I'm so and so who is a beloved child of God with gifts and abilities." (A. Care, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

The commitment to transformative leadership has been costly for Anna Care in terms of her standing within her denomination and with certain segments of the wider community. A specific decision that was not well received was Care's and Resurrection UMC's arrangements for Justin Lee, founder of the Gay Christian Network, a nonprofit Christian Ministry, to speak at a public event held in the local college's auditorium. In preparation for Lee's address, the faith and discipleship groups of Resurrection UMC read his book, *Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-vs.-Christians Debate*. The book describes Lee's struggle with his homosexuality and his experiences as a gay person in Christian organizations. Lee decided to write his book as a way of reaching out to people he encountered who felt torn in one way or another by the conflict between the church and the gay community. Care reported that over 400 people attended Lee's address to hear his message that "God's arms are open unconditionally to every one of God's children." Lee's address affected Care as she said "That is a thread that is very much woven through virtually every sermon I preach. That kind of always has been the journey of Resurrection UMC, but as I reflect, we probably have gotten clearer, and clearer, and clearer, and clearer about it." (A. Care, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

Care does not view herself as an activist, but events such as the Justin Lee's public address has led others to negatively view her as an activist:

> There's been some serious blow back from my decisions, not only from denominational authority, but even in this community. The response has provided an opportunity for me to self-define, for me to really dig down deep and figure out who I am at my core, and the battles I'm willing to fight. The journey has been painful, and transformational, but indescribably important for me. (A. Care, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

A fascinating account about the leadership of a clergy mentor for Stephen Truth caused the researcher to wonder if it is possible to simultaneously practice transactional and transformative leadership. The issue confronting Truth's mentor and the members of his church in North Carolina was that the schools in that community were beginning to desegregate. Truth reported that his mentor told his congregation, "There's going to be a lot of chaos going on when the doors open on whatever day this week. There will be very adamantly vocal people adding fuel to the fire. You won't be those people" (S. Truth, personal communication, June 7, 2018). To the researcher the words of Truth's mentor contained punitive admonition, an aspect of transactional leadership, yet vision for a more just society, an aspect of transformative leadership. When asked Truth concluded that his mentor demonstrated transactional leadership in the manner of a parent conveying to their child that if the child were to act in a certain way then the parent would be profoundly disappointed in the child. At the same time Truth's mentor demonstrated transformative leadership by providing a vision for how God's people conduct themselves to make a better society in keeping with the ways of kingdom of God (S. Truth, personal communication, August 10, 2018).

Code 4: The Why and How of the Emphasis on the Local Church

Interview data revealed that many clergy feel a stronger sense of loyalty to their local church than to their denomination. The local church is where clergy have the greatest number of relationships and the most significant leadership obligations such as preaching on a weekly basis, organizing worship services, overseeing mission, visiting from house to house and in the hospital, counseling, praying for and with people, and so much more. For a variety of reasons some clergy and their congregations feel disconnected from their denomination and not just on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Theme 1: Pastoral Identity and the Local Church

Paul Lively expressed frustration over denominational leaders' inability to strengthen the local church. In his view, for the past 25-30 years matters of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion have occupied a central place in the life of the denomination, resulting in inadequate attention being given to the local church. As Lively noted, the issues that need resolved "didn't come up last year." The failure by denominational leaders to produce a resolution has impacted the local church through the departure of a significant number of families. "It's not specifically homosexuality per se, but that's been one of the issues that make people say, 'What the heck is going on in this church? What do they believe? Where do they hold scripture?" (P. Lively, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Jay Riggins also expressed frustration, "The conference offers resources that are very good resources and the staff are wonderful people, but most of the people we call upon are more concerned about maintaining the institution then about saying what we need to do in order to make this church active, vital, and effective in ministry" (J. Riggins, personal communication, May 22, 2018).

Denny Bishop offered an even harsher critique of denominational leaders. "I think our leaders are afraid. I think our leaders are more concerned about holding the denomination together than they are about doing the loving thing, the justice thing" (D. Bishop, personal communication, May 22, 2018).

Appreciation for the modeling of leadership by his district superintendent on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion that he found helpful as he served as the pastor for a local church was expressed by Forest Mountain:

> My district superintendent has led us on this district to be a non-anxious presence and a people of prayer. I could not agree more with that expectation, and I heartily embrace it and believe it. If there is an expectation from my bishop, I don't know what it is. (F. Mountain, personal communication, July 6, 2018)

Theme 2: Pastoral Identity and Same-Sex Marriages

A number of clergy voiced disappointment about how the present stance of their denomination inhibits pastoral care for lesbian and gay persons. One of these clergy was Grant Speaker who related a conversation with a woman in his church:

> She said, "Well, I have a daughter who is lesbian, and I want to know if you could marry her to her partner." I said, "I can legally, in the state of Virginia. I can't within the United Methodist umbrella, at this time. Would I if I could? Yes. But, I cannot now. But, I know somebody who can." (G. Speaker, personal communication, June 29, 2018)

Speaker continued that the couple did get married and occasionally they come to his church. The couple's presence is a non-issue with the members of Speaker's congregation.

The issue of officiating at a same-sex marriage did become a serious issue for Anna Care and Resurrection UMC. Two members of Resurrection UMC, Annette and Linda, asked Care to officiate at their wedding. Care made the decision to officiate. "I did what I did because I had a deep, like in my red blood cells kind of sense, that it was faith. And I did what I did because I'm a pastor." Then, "literally within 36 hours of the wedding everything started." Care received a telephone call from the conference office that led to a process known as "just resolution" that required her to meet with the resident bishop and a few other conference leaders. Care described the process from her perspective:

> I've said many, many times on record, "Look, I knew what I was doing." And, I never once asked to be made a martyr or anything like that. I knew there would be consequences for the decision I made. What was so difficult was the manipulation and what went on behind the scenes. The process and how unhealthy it was and what I felt was dishonesty at times. That was what was so painful. So, the outcome…Well, it was not pleasant. That wasn't what was so painful. It was the journey towards the outcome. And, the sense of hopelessness I started to feel with the church in general. (A. Care, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

In the initial phase of the just resolution process Anna Care was to be suspended without pay for six months. Negotiations followed and she was suspended for one month without pay. Care's testimony regarding how she felt during and after the wedding provides a window into her heart and her spirit:

> I will always, until my last breath, remember the day of Annette's and Linda's wedding…I will always remember the peace. It is some of the deepest peace I ever felt in my life…It was such a gift because God knows. It was…like, "Alright, I'm gonna give you this sense of peace because you're gonna need to remember this." Because, of the storm that's coming. But, there's a wonderful picture from their wedding of them facing each other, and I'm standing there. And, I have this smile on my face that is just beautiful, because it conveys joy, and peace and centeredness. There is no doubt in my mind that what I did was faithful and that God was very okay with it…it was transformative. I've had people tell me "Your decision empowered me or your decision made a difference." And that feels good. (A. Care, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

The researcher found it very interesting that Joy Gooden offered similar comments to that of Anna Care regarding a same-sex wedding she conducted. The wedding occurred not in Virginia, but on Long Island, New York, so Gooden didn't need permission from her Presbytery to officiate. The wedding had many aspects of inclusion:

> One of the grooms was a Catholic who had a Jewish father and a Catholic mother. The other groom was a member of the Church of Christ. The officiant was a Presbyterian minister. It was probably the holiest thing I've done in my whole ministry, because here were all these things, and later we had a celebration. All these people who had been rejected by their churches, mostly Catholics, came to me, crying, "I feel validated that God loves me." It was one of the holiest things of my ministry. (J. Gooden, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

The second half of Anna Care's story focused on the local church and its relationship with the annual conference:

> Our leadership in particular just kinda braced itself for my suspension. We got zero help or support through that by the way. Zero. But, we got through…our leaders kind of said, "Wait a minute…We're not okay with this. We're not going to pretend that this never happened." It seemed like they wanted us to "just stick our heads in the sand and move on." But, that's not who Resurrection UMC is. So, the leaders of Resurrection UMC sent a letter to the bishop, and copied two other appropriate people in the connection to say, "Hey. We're not okay with this. And, we're not going to pretend it was something different. We are not going to pretend like this didn't happen." (A. Care, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

It was in that manner that the leaders of Resurrection UMC communicated their position to conference leadership. Care tried to dissuade them from sending the letter, but they were determined to make their position known. After sending the letter, the leadership of Resurrection UMC decided, "We need to talk, we need to discern whether there's a place for us in this denomination." (A. Care, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

Code 5: The Why and How of Future Leadership

The last two stories in the proceeding section of this dissertation lead to a final code section for Chapter 4, and that has to do with the why and how for clergy preparing to lead their local congregations in the future as that future is impacted by matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Theme 1: Discouragement

Among United Methodist clergy there is a recognition that the connectional system that characterizes the United Methodist Church is going to change. Andrew Heat summarized the uncertainty about the future being experienced by many United Methodist clergy:

Within the Methodist context …there's the potential for some change to occur as the result of General Conference in 2019. But, you also have the potential for nothing to change in 2019, which will in fact lead to change with possibly those on the progressive end of the spectrum giving up on being Methodist. I guess if it gets real bad I could elect to retire. (A. Heat, personal communication, June 7, 2018)

Iron Greene has seen signs that the United Methodist connection is dissolving as some clergy are transgressing the polity of the denomination by conducting same-sex marriages and some conference boards of ordained ministry are approving the candidacy of LGBTQ persons. This observation has produced sadness and frustration within him:

> There are conferences and boards of ordained ministry that are saying, "Hey, we're just going to go ahead and ordain LGBTQ people." There is the situation with the bishop who is serving the Rocky Mountain Conference and a married lesbian…My sadness and frustration has two sources. One is the disregard of the connectional agreement and the other is what I believe to be practice that's not faithful to God or that's not seeking to be grounded in scripture. (I. Greene, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Greene's comments provide some insight into conservative clergy distress over the erosion of traditional authority for organizations in society and institutions such as marriage. An additional aspect of the erosion of traditional authority is the use of context by progressive clergy for conducting biblical interpretation.

Some persons on the progressive end of the homosexuality or LGBTQ spectrum also lament that the traditional authority of the church is eroding. Stated Forest Mountain:

I think the United Methodist Church is destined to die no matter what we decide in 2019, mostly because we are suspect on the race issue. We're basically a white church and white church is a suspect institution anyway because…, at least…in the public eye what we are is all about exclusion. (F. Mountain, personal communication, July 6, 2018)

The comments of Mountain engendered a discussion in the focus group about the dissolution of brand loyalty and the impact of that dissolution on the institutional church. Abel Justice agreed and then offered this observation:

> So, if you look at young adults coming through college, if they got any conservative bent in them at all, they aren't concerned about maintaining the United Methodist brand. They are in the Assemblies of God, they're in the Baptist Church, or they're in the non-denominational churches. They have no connection to denominationalism anymore. So, if

> the conservative church wins again on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, we're still going to lose young adults that are going to the non-denominations. If we decide to go the same route, nothing changes, they're gone. They are not staying with our denomination. They are going to be in some other denomination. (A. Justice, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Regarding the younger generation of Christians Iron Greene was also of the opinion that brand loyalty was not important to those in that age group. He expressed what did concern him about that age group and the issues of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion:

> The generation of people born 1980 or so or later who grew up with Ellen DeGeneres or who grew up with Glee. People who grew up with some prominent cultural expressions of acceptance of homosexuality who then the concern is that a significant part of this generation, if not this whole generation, will see the church as bigoted and this would be a huge stumbling block as the church continues to maintain a traditional position. So, I think that is a very legitimate concern. (I. Greene, personal communication, July 6, 2018)

One pastor foresaw a split coming in the United Methodist Church as this pastor had heard that one segment of the church had funded 27 full time field organizers to impact the decisions to be made at the 2019 General Conference. This pastor concluded, "Some sort of split, whatever it looks like, is inevitable. Somebody is leaving" (A. Care, personal communication, June 28, 2018). In a related comment Thomas Mission said, "What I fear most for my denomination is that we are sacrificing the mystery of God for the guarantee of certainty." (T. Mission, personal communication, May 22, 2018).

A dire prediction about the future of the institutional church in America came from Forest Mountain:

> I see the utter collapse of institutional and denominational structures. They'll implode over finances and over divisive issues like race and homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. A book that has influenced my projections for the future is *The Death of White Christian America*. I believe that most of our congregations are more about Americanism than they are about Christianity. Most of our churches, church members, they can't separate the two. The way I see it, in the future, there is going to be a reconfiguring to produce an inclusive church that might have more ties across what use to be denominational lines. It won't matter if you are Calvinist or Wesleyan or Lutheran. What will matter is that you are inclusive. I think that there will be an exclusive church that will be all about prosperity and the American way, and I think that will become very much like Roman religion and the empire .(F. Mountain, personal communication, July 6, 2018)

Theme 2: Hope

Subtheme 1: Hope in Christ

Focus group and individual follow-up interviews produced a variety of expressions of hope for the future. The first of these expressions of hope had two aspects that involved death and the potential positive outcome from division. The initial aspect was voiced by Germain Shepherd who perceived that homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion is a generational issue. The analysis he offered was, "I think to a certain extent, the Presbyterians are banking on the older people who are really heated up on this issue, frankly dying" (G. Shepherd, personal communication, June 7, 2018). The latter aspect was voiced by Albert Perkins:

> We can bemoan…what is happening, or we can say this is God's doing and God's in charge of the church. As long as…our eyes and our hearts and our minds are fixed on serving Christ, then whatever transformation of the church transpires, I believe will be

> commended. Historically, you can look at churches that have split and you see growth that will come out of that. Whereas, when churches tend to merge and unite what happens is there is a lot of energy poured into the internal processes and congregations …wind up losing that kind of evangelistic zeal. (A. Perkins, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

The second expression of hope focused on the power of change. Sara Newcome is in her first appointment and serves a multi-point charge. She expressed hope that the 2019 General Conference will allow United Methodist clergy to preside at same-sex marriages and will allow LGBTQ persons to be ordained. Newcome was uncertain how her various congregations will feel about this and that "organizationally this could present a problem for the charge, for myself, and any future pastors. Also, if one or two of the churches decide to leave the charge, then how might that impact the future of the churches that remain?" Newcome was hopeful because, "on matters that I made assumptions about in the past, my congregations have proven me wrong, so I do my best not to assume they would go one direction or another" (S. Newcome, personal communication, June 7, 2018).

Jay Riggins saw signs that his local congregation was changing:

> I think that they are moving towards being open about that change. I think they see it, it's on the horizon and they're willing to move towards that. It's not going to be easy when we realize we're going to lose some people. (J. Riggins, personal communication, May 22, 2018)

Germain Shepherd became hopeful when he overheard a conversation between two men taking place in an adult Sunday school class. What initiated this conversation was a news report one man had seen on television about two men marrying one another. "I saw these two guys

kissing on the news and it just turned my stomach. I can't believe that we've come to this. This is just so wrong." At this point in the story Shepherd interjected that the county where his church is located was one of the counties in the late 1950's in Virginia when a number of public school systems closed for the school year rather than desegregate. To replace the public school system, all white private schools were established in these areas. Eventually, the public schools reopened and were desegregated. With that historic precedent in mind another member of the adult Sunday school class said, "Well, now remember, we used to think one way about a certain group of people and it took us a long time and a lot of pain to come to realize we were wrong. Maybe we need to think about this" (G. Shepherd, personal communication, June 7, 2018).

Like Sara Newcome, Forest Mountain is hopefully that the 2019 General Conference will approve for clergy, if they so desire, to officiate at same-sex marriages, and that gays and lesbians be eligible for ordination. When Iron Greene was asked by the researcher how he would feel if the 2019 General Conference approved clergy being allowed to officiate at same-sex marriages, but did not require all United Methodist clergy to perform same-sex marriages if their services were requested, Greene responded:

> I think I could live within that because I don't feel responsibility for all the choices…of my fellow members of the body of Christ. It is not my preference to officiate at a same-sex marriage. I can have convictions as to what I believe is right for clergy, but I don't feel that God holds me responsible and I don't care if the world tries to hold me responsible for whatever fellow United Methodist clergy do. (I. Greene, personal communication, July 6, 2018)

One clergy on the blank sheet of paper handed out at the end of the focus group session wrote, "I am positively hopeful for the future of our denomination – not necessarily that we

remain the institution we are today, but that our Wesleyan witness to the world will continue in whatever form God allows."

Hope for the immediate fruitfulness of the United Methodist Church was voiced by Abel Justice. Interestingly, his hope was engendered by a sense of sadness that the work of the United Methodist Church seemed to be on hold as everyone awaits the decisions of the 2019 General Conference. In his opinion, the United Methodist Church already knows that to be fruitful and vibrant in the future that it needs more young people and more diverse people. He stated, "If you want to reach people and to see people transformed, well then focus on issues of justice and things will fall into place." (A. Justice, personal communication, June 27, 2018). In essence, Abel Justice's hope is that the United Methodist Church will release the *pause button* and instead of focusing on organizational polity, will be a church in action. This would mean issuing the call to more young and more diverse people to serve as Christ's disciples in the kingdom work of justice that is inspiring and life-giving.

The final hope expressed by traditionalists, moderates, and progressives on the spectrum with regards to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion was that the church's hope is in Jesus Christ. Jon Health and Iron Greene both emphasized that they did not believe homosexuality to be a salvation issue. Health stated:

> This is not a salvation issue. I clearly told the people of my church that I would invite and welcome a LGBTQ person into membership, to the table, to be a full participant in our life together. Even though I might not be one to perform a marriage ceremony, for me it is not a hindrance to them developing a growing relationship with Jesus, and I want to be part of that. I want my congregation to know that the most important thing is saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. I think we've isolated homosexuality, but there's a whole lot

> of room for redemption around sexuality that is larger than just homosexuality. (J. Health, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

Greene's statement focused on the power of Christ's grace to redeem all people including LGBTQ persons, and that differing understandings about homosexuality should not divide the church:

> I believe that sexually active homosexual relationships are not God's best for us. However, they don't disqualify us from God's redemption…Therefore, as the Church, we should welcome all people regardless of sexual identification or identity or orientation to be reconciled to God (and)…if people disagree with one another's understanding of homosexuality, I believe that this should not divide the church. So, even though sexuality is an important part of our identity as human beings…it's not the core of who we are. (I. Greene, personal communication, July 6, 2018)

Amos Finch expressed his understanding of the human role in the redeeming work of Christ as well as his confidence in Christ performing that redeeming work by relating the story of a church member who provided the children's sermon one Sunday morning:

> He brought a fishing pole with different kinds of bait. So, he was talking about reaching people for Jesus. He was saying, "Well, if we need to change our approach to catch people for Jesus then that's what we should do." Later, somebody asked him about the stuff inside the fish or the people that need cleaned. The man answered, "Well, God has called me to fish for him. Jesus is the one who has to clean them out." So, the man had a vision: Let's bring people to Jesus and let's see what the Spirit does with them. Let's see what Christ does with them…So, that's one of my hopes. (A. Finch, personal correspondence, June 28, 2017)

Forest Mountain described how he was filled with hope because of the power of Christ's resurrection:

> There's such a thing that's called resurrection. I'm just stupid enough to believe that God is tearing it apart in order to start over. I just believe that what opposes God fails, so it is time to start new things….There is a God. He has not abandoned us. It's we who have abandoned him. So, we need to get ourselves together and follow Jesus. (F. Mountain, personal correspondence, July 6, 2018)

Subtheme 2: Hope for Clergy Leaders

Stephen Truth articulated his hope for how young adults in his local church would remember his leadership as a servant of Christ on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion:

> This isn't to say that I have to be the next Martin Luther King, Jr. I don't have to be that person. However, I do want younger folks in my church, when they become adults, to look back and say, "When things were really crazy in our culture, my church was not silent." (S. Truth, personal correspondence, June 7, 2018)

Chapter Summary

Many of the codes and themes that emerged from this study were present in the literature review. Focus group and individual follow-up interviews with local church Protestant clergy serving in Virginia, illuminated clergy's leadership responses to personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Prior theoretical knowledge was combined with interview data using the conceptual frameworks of organizational identity (OI), organizational identification theory (OID), and learning organization (LO). Depth of analysis was increased through the use of crystallization that allowed for multiple perspectives using narratives, books, movies, and television shows.

The next chapter will examine how the literature review and the phenomenological interviews answered the research questions for this study. Alignment and non-alignment of analysis findings with the literature review will be discussed. The limitations of this study will be acknowledged that will be tied to recommendations for the purpose of broadening and deepening findings through future study. Implications and recommendations for action will be offered to promote transformative leadership by local church Protestant clergy on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this qualitative study was to conduct research on how personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues influence local church Protestant clergy to implement leadership in their local congregation on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. The researcher identified a need for such a study as a significant amount of research has been conducted at the denominational level (Cadge et al., 2008; Fulkerson 1995; McAuliffe 2015; Ray 2015), but less research has been conducted at the local church level (Weems 2010). The researcher hopes that increased awareness of the influence of personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion by local church Protestant clergypersons will enable critical reflection to guide their decisions for leadership.

The codes and themes that emerged from the phenomenological focus groups and individual follow-up interviews were reported in the previous chapter. In this chapter the interpretations of the interview data using the analysis tool of crystallization are shared. Conclusions are offered in relation to the three research questions and the literature review. Implications from these conclusions are presented, in addition to the usefulness for these results for local church Protestant clergy, other stakeholders, and future researchers.

Review of Research Questions and Summary of Responses

This study was guided by three research questions:

Question 1: How do a Protestant clergyperson's personal and theological perspectives on purity and inclusion influence their decision regarding the implementation of leadership in the local congregation?

The maintaining of purity in response to homosexual or LGBTQ inclusion was a vital matter for traditional clergy. However, none of the clergy with traditional understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion believed that same-sex attraction was a sin. What was considered to be a sin was to act upon the same-sex attraction. This understanding prompted traditional clergy to guide homosexual persons to practice celibacy.

Family relationships or friendships with gay men deeply affected both traditional and progressive clergy, but in different ways. For Perkins Albert and Iron Greene, their experiences strengthened their leadership decision to guide gay or lesbian persons towards celibacy and thus purity from a specific sexual sin. For Jay Riggins and Grant Speaker, their experiences led them to review scripture and reexamine their theology. Their study resulted in a ministry of full inclusion of LGBTQ persons due to a belief in God's love in Christ for all people.

Clergy with progressive understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion practiced contextual interpretation of scripture. This practice allowed them to dismiss exclusionary scripture passages regarding homosexuals for reflecting ancient cultural understandings that were no longer applicable. Clergy with progressive understandings also practiced a narrative interpretation of scripture. This practice surfaced multiple passages with the word *all* that promoted leadership for full inclusion of LGBTQ persons in the church and in society.

Question 2: How do Protestant clergypersons experience organizational pressures from "above" (denominational leaders and denominational doctrine) and from "below" (local church members) on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and how do these organizational pressures affect the clergyperson's decision to implement leadership in their local church?

Phenomenological interviews revealed that it was primarily due to pressure from above that local church clergy were organizing reading groups and dialogue sessions on homosexuality

or LGBTQ inclusion, and in the case of United Methodist clergy, potential denominational reorganization. Some clergy questioned the effectiveness of transformational leadership through conversations. Frequently, the conversations would result in minimal sharing on biblical or theological understandings, while maximizing sharing of current political understandings that produced further division in the local church. Traditional and progressive church members would press clergy to publically take their side on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Both traditional and progressive clergy refrained from transactional leadership to impose their understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. While traditional and progressive clergy had concerns about the practice of transformational leadership, it was the primary style of leadership employed as it redirected the process from clergy understandings on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion to church members' reflections on new information that could affect their understandings. Some clergy described this leadership style as coming at contentious issues at a slant.

Pressure to conform to denominational doctrine on the ordination of a lesbian church member has caused one local church represented in the study to transfer their conference relationship. The transfer has allowed that local church to be in unity with other churches that support and advocate for full inclusion of LGBTQ persons. However, the pastor perceived that the transfer resulted in a loss of geographical affiliation with churches in the former conference. The effect is that combined community ministry and leadership has become more difficult. Pressure to conform to denominational doctrine through the suspension of a local church clergy for officiating at a same-sex marriage, may eventually result in that church making the decision to leave the denomination.

Question 3: How do Protestant clergypersons prepare, through continuing education opportunities and resources, to better understand the cultural issues related to homosexuality or

LGBTQ inclusion in order to implement leadership in their local congregation to promote justice for LGBTQ persons?

During the seven focus groups sessions and the seven individual follow-up sessions there was no mention by any participant of having attended a continuing education event on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, or having attended a continuing education event on how to provide leadership on these issues. Clergy had transported laity to teleconference events, sometimes 40 minutes away, on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church. However, clergy found these events to be more directed at laity, and the teleconferences had little effect on furthering clergy's leadership on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. For continuing education, clergy are immersing themselves in Bible study and theological reflection. Also, they are reading books recommended by denominational leaders. Many of these recommended books do not specifically address homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, but are about self-management and leadership skills to promote reconciliation and transformation during times of personal and institutional conflict. Clergy have found these books on self-management and leadership skills to be helpful, but the books are not a panacea for resolving conflicts at the local church level on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. The leadership by progressive clergy is being affected by reading books that narrate a person's journey from opposing to supporting full inclusion of LGBTQ persons. The leadership of progressive clergy is also being affected by television shows and movies that illuminate the societal challenges as well as the societal contributions that are part of the LGBTQ narrative.

Interpretation and Alignment of Findings with Literature

Personal and Theological

The literature review revealed that personal etiological beliefs about the causes for homosexuality fall into three categories – biological, choice, and environment (Haider-Markel et al., 2008). As the researcher anticipated, progressive clergy subscribed to the understanding that homosexuality is biologically determined. The researcher also anticipated that traditional clergy would subscribe to the understanding that homosexuality is a choice. This second anticipation proved to be incorrect. Traditional clergy in this research study believed that just as a person can have a predisposition to alcoholism but practice abstinence, that a person could have a predisposition to homosexuality but practice celibacy. The viewpoint of traditional clergy who participated in this study was that purity was not compromised by same-sex attraction, but by homosexual acts that the Bible declares to be an abomination. The literature review showed that the biblical abomination argument was used decades ago to oppose interracial marriage (Boston 2010, O'Neil 2014, Phillips & Yi 2017). More research is needed on this historic analogy.

The literature review also revealed that negative attitudes toward LGBTQ persons can be diminished through social contact that occurs under favorable conditions (Chonody et al., 2016). The perception that traditional clergy would be uncomfortable around or even hostile towards LGBTQ persons (Vezzali et al., 2017) was not supported by the data. The findings of Chonody et al., (2016) that negative attitudes towards LGBTQ persons can be diminished through social contact were supported by data. It did not surprise the researcher that social contact with gay relatives led Jay Riggins and Grant Speaker to become advocates for LGBTQ persons. What did surprise the researcher was how at ease Iron Greene and Albert Perkins, traditional clergy, were with a gay prayer partner and with a gay seminary classmate. There appears to be two reasons for this comfort level. First, Greene and Perkins illustrate an on-going shift over time that each succeeding generation is less fearful of LGBTQ persons. Albert described his encounter with his

gay prayer partner, “No homophobe here” (A. Perkins, personal communication, June 27, 2018). Moreover, Perkins testimony revealed that he does not concur with the findings of Vezzali et al., (2017), that other people can be contaminated by merely associating with homosexual persons. Second, Greene and Perkins illustrate evangelistic zeal that accepts persons where they are and then helps to connect them with Jesus Christ. The experiences of Greene and Perkins did not change their opinions on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. However, the comfort level they felt with a gay prayer partner and a gay seminary classmate opens a new avenue in the exploration of the social contact theory of Chonody et al., (2016).

While a goal of traditional clergy was to bring LGBTQ persons into the life of the church, this goal did not extend to full inclusion of LGBTQ persons for leadership in the church. Traditional clergy in this study subscribed to the leadership strategy of “differentiated judgment” (Campbell, 2006, p. 111). Clergy who practice differentiated judgment perceive that the homosexual person “is not the problem; it is the behavior that is wrong…homosexual persons can be welcomed into the life of the church and even elected and ordained to office as long as they are not sexually active” (Campbell, 2006, p. 111). Iron Greene illustrated differentiated judgment by saying, “I’m not comfortable with the United Methodist Church ordaining self-avowed practicing homosexuals, I would have a different feeling about someone who identified as homosexual because of their same sex attractions, but was committed to celibacy” (I. Greene, personal communication, July 6, 2018).

Progressive clergy in this research study aligned with two other understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion that are described by Campbell (2006). The first understanding is LGBTQ persons should have full membership in the church and be considered for ordination because “homosexuality is part of God’s good creation to be celebrated without

question" (Campbell, 2006, p. 111). The second understanding receives support through the theological doctrine of sanctification in that homosexual Christians, like all Christians, are sinners in need of redemption and sanctification (Campbell, 2006, p. 112).

Unlike traditional clergy, progressive clergy believe that the answer to same-sex attraction is not celibacy, but marriage. Progressive clergy in this study agreed with Powell (2003): 1) a gay or lesbian person "required to remain celibate is forced to miss the very aspects of life that many consider to be the most precious (romance, marriage, sex, & family)," and 2) "a committed and loving relationship between two same-sex partners allows homosexual persons to come much closer to experiencing such aspects of life than they would otherwise" (p. 38). Progressive clergy further agreed with Powell (2003) that ultimate purity is not a matter of sexual relations, but that ultimate purity comes from being in relationship with God and being included with other Christians who are asking, "How can I please God, whom I love and want to serve?" (p. 39).

Organizational

One finding that the researcher found fascinating was that many members of the traditional clergy group and the progressive clergy group both practiced transformational leadership on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. These clergy were comfortable initiating and facilitating small group and private conversations. Cadge and Wildeman (2008) described these transformational leaders as *facilitators*. An example of this style of leadership was Joshua Promise and College Mennonite Church. Small discussion groups composed of people with differing opinions had been formed and a vision statement reminded people of the common value of their commitment to one another above the issues upon which people disagreed. Joshua Promise self-identified as a moderate, but Paul Lively on the

traditionalist end of the spectrum and Al Wright on the progressive end of the spectrum on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion issues, fit the transformational leader category of facilitator. Data shows that this style of leadership was effective in holding the local church together, but little change occurred in society through the witness of the three congregations.

Cadge and Wildeman (2008) identified a second type of leader as *advocate*. An advocate is a transformative leader as they desire change in an organization and in society. Progressive clergy such as Anna Care, Joy Gooden, and Abel Justice were practitioners of transformative leadership due to justice concerns in the church and in society for LGBTQ persons. They were transparent through their preaching and teaching about their understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. They initiated small groups where LGBTQ persons could find support and share their life's experiences. They invited speakers to address the religious, cultural, and emotional health matters facing LGBTQ persons. Data shows that this style of leadership enabled the three clergy to take a public stand on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion that initiated change in the church and in society, but not without consequences. For Anna Care her advocacy resulted in a one-month suspension by denominational leaders.

Data from focus group and individual follow-up interviews sheds new light on the work of He and Brown (2013) regarding aggregate and gestalt organizational identities. For local church clergy the gestalt identity with the local congregation was stronger than the aggregate identity with the denomination. This was due to clergy's primary identification being the pastor for the people of their local congregation, with their secondary identity being an interpreter for the denomination. It was with church members that clergy experienced their strongest relationships and their most significant responsibilities. Multiple United Methodist clergy such as: Sue Anthony, Andrew Heat, and Sara Newcome shared their wonderment about the future of

their congregations following the decisions to be made at the 2019 General Conference concerning United Methodist doctrine and polity. While local church clergy function as middle managers, the data show that their allegiance to the two levels of the organization in which they serve (denominational and local church) is not equal. Denominational leaders will be more effective in their future leadership if they will adapt to this awareness by tailoring statements to be more readily understood and providing resources that can be practically implemented at the local church level.

Cultural

The literature review did not reveal any research studies on clergy attending continuing education events on the topics of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, or on leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Moreover, clergy who participated in this research study did not mention attending any continuing education events to better understand cultural issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. The researcher believes that there is a need for seminaries and non-profit organizations to offer continuing education events on these matters and for research studies to be conducted on their effectiveness.

Limitations

The study's sample size of 30 Protestant clergy was consistent with phenomenological research, however, the pool of participants were all from Virginia so the results cannot be generalized nationally or to non-Protestant clergy. The participant pool cut across the categories of denomination, gender, race, size of congregation, and theological self-identification. However, the participant pool was weighted towards white male United Methodist clergy serving small to medium sized congregations who theologically self-identified as moderate to progressive. One method to overcome these limitations would be to conduct a national survey to

obtain a broader picture. The study was limited to Protestant clergy serving a local church or a denominational related school for higher education. Insights from the findings could be deepened by conducting a companion study with denominational leaders, particularly on understandings of organizational identity and leadership. While this study may be helpful to United Methodist leaders as it was conducted prior to the 2019 General Conference to consider matters of human sexuality, that fact is also a limitation. The timing limitation could be overcome by conducting a follow-up study after the 2019 General Conference.

Implications and Recommendations for Action

This research study has the potential to improve local church Protestant clergy leadership by enhancing the understanding of personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues that affect clergy leadership decisions on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. Greater self-awareness of biblical and theological understandings of purity and inclusion has the potential to engender more meaningful deliberations regarding leadership during the decision-making process. This study also has the potential to improve the development of local congregations as learning organizations.

Recommendations for action include:

- Provision by seminaries and other organizations of continuing education events on multi-disciplinary understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion for transformative leadership
- Formation of biblical and theological interpretation groups on issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion to be composed of clergy with diverse understandings

- Denominational leaders encourage local church clergy to preach on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion using the model of Jon Health's *hot potatoes* sermon series (J. Health, personal communication, June 28, 2018) on their biblical and theological understandings, while acknowledging the understandings of others
- Creation of learning organization of the local church using College Mennonite Church and lead pastor, Joshua Promise, as a model for presentations by speakers with expertise on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion as well as establishing small conversation groups composed of persons with diverse opinions on the topic
- Institutionalization of local church as a welcoming and inclusive community as well as a leadership development organization for LGBTQ persons using the model of Resurrection United Methodist Church and lead pastor, Anna Care

Recommendations for Further Study

Recommendations for further study include:

- Conduct a nation-wide questionnaire survey of local church clergy for the purpose of replicating the findings of this research study. It would be helpful to provide a wider base to validate that clergy with traditional understandings and progressive understandings of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion are both practicing transformational leadership.

Questions to be examined would include:

1. Why was transformational leadership selected by traditional clergy and progressive clergy for providing leadership in their local congregations on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion?

2. What goals do traditional clergy and progressive clergy hope to accomplish through transformational leadership in their local congregations on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion?
3. Once these goals are reached, what do traditional clergy and progressive clergy anticipate will be their next steps in leadership in their local congregations?
4. Which clergy are functioning as transformative leaders and how are they functioning?

Findings from the present study revealed that both traditional and progressive clergy implement transformational leadership by engaging in one-on-one conversations and forming discussion groups. It would be helpful to have greater insight regarding the similarities and differences in goals of traditional clergy and progressive clergy for practicing transformational leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. It would also be helpful to have greater insight into the next steps transformational clergy plan to take on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, as well as which clergy are progressing to transformative leadership and how they are functioning.

- In 2023 and 2028 (5 years and 10 years from now) phenomenological interviews could be conducted using focus groups and randomly selected follow-up interviews from a group of volunteers. Findings from the new studies would be compared and contrasted from the findings of this research study. The new studies would correct limitations on the denominational, gender, and race imbalance in the present study.

Questions to be examined include:

1. How have personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues for local church Protestant clergy that influence leadership decisions on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion been maintained or changed and why?

2. What updates can be made to the literature review?
3. Is homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion still a major issue facing the church?
4. Are clergy acting as transactional, transformational, or transformative leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and why?

A new study would not only correct limitations in the present study, but provide a continuum of data and analysis on how personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues for local church Protestant clergy influence leadership decisions on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. The literature review would be extended and up-dated. A new study could determine if homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion had continued to be major issues facing the church. The progression over the years of clergy leadership on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church could be examined and analyzed.

- A nation-wide questionnaire survey seeking responses from local church clergy and their church members on how their congregations are functioning as learning organizations for matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Questions to be examined include:

1. How are local church clergy structuring their congregation as a learning organization to be an ongoing characteristic and value of the institution?
2. What topics are being requested by church members to be studied? What topics are being offered: Prayer? Bible study? Christian parenting? Social issues: homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, racism, sexism, poverty, environment, nationalism?
3. What obstacles did local church clergy have to overcome for their congregation to become a learning organization on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion?

4. What resources are being recommended and used by small groups in the learning organization process on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion?
5. What is the perception of the local church clergy leader on the effectiveness of the church in functioning as a learning organization on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion? What is the perception of church members on the effectiveness of the church in functioning as a learning organization on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion?

A nation-wide questionnaire survey completed by clergy and laity would promote a broader and deeper understanding of the perceptions of the effectiveness of a congregation to function as a learning organization. Data would be obtained about topics requested, topics offered, and resources provided that would illuminate whether the church was functioning as a transformational institution or as a transformative institution. For both academic knowledge and practical application it would be helpful to know what obstacles arose and how these obstacles were overcome for the congregation to value being a learning organization.

- A nation-wide questionnaire survey on local church clergy understandings of the requirements for salvation and how these understandings affect LGBTQ persons being allowed to participate in leadership in their local church.

Questions to be examined include:

1. What is the ontological (presuppositions about human nature and the nature of the world) understanding of local church clergy in relation to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion?
2. What is the soteriological (prerequisites for salvation) understanding of local church clergy for LGBTQ persons?

3. If homosexuality is not a salvation issue (as some clergy have stated is their understanding during interviews for this research study), then why is homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion an issue for leadership in the local church or for ordination?

An important finding in this research study was that clergy, no matter where they were on the spectrum of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion, understood salvation to be obtained through saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. These clergy did not view sexuality as a salvation issue. A wider study would seek to replicate this finding and to gain greater insight into why some clergy, who do not consider homosexuality to be a salvation issue, then deny LGBTQ persons the opportunity to serve in local church leadership or to be ordained.

- Regional (Northeast, Southeast, North Central, South Central, West) questionnaire surveys of local church clergy understanding of the present state of traditional authority and the opposition of some clergy to doing contextual biblical interpretation. The research study should allow for additional written responses that would be coded and analyzed.

Questions to be examined include:

1. How do you as a local church clergyperson define traditional religious authority?
2. How do you as a local church clergyperson define traditional secular authority?
3. Do you perceive that traditional religious authority is eroding?
4. Do you perceive that traditional secular authority is eroding?
5. How do you as a local church clergyperson understand the relationship between religious authority and secular authority?

6. What do you understand to be the strengths and weaknesses of traditional strict interpretation of scripture and progressive contextual interpretation of scripture on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion?

Scholarly knowledge would be enhanced through a research study that collects data, codes, and analyzes regional understandings of traditional religious authority and traditional secular authority. An important aspect of such a study is the understanding of the overlap between traditional religious authority and traditional secular authority from region to region. Local church clergy could be surveyed about their perceptions of any erosion of traditional religious authority and traditional secular authority. The researcher then would seek to discover if there is a relationship between the perceptions of erosion of traditional authority with a clergyperson's practice of traditional interpretation of scripture while objecting to contextual interpretation of scripture on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

- A nation-wide questionnaire survey followed by a phenomenological study of randomly selected local church clergy on the use of scripture to oppose interracial marriage and to oppose same-sex marriage

Questions to be examined include:

1. Do you agree that in light of scripture that homosexuality is an abomination before God? Why or why not?
2. Do you agree that in light of scripture that interracial marriage is an abomination before God? Why or why not?
3. Is there a difference, in light of scripture, between understanding interracial marriage to be an abomination before God and understanding homosexuality to be an abomination before God? Why?

4. How does your understanding of the historical use of scripture to oppose interracial marriage and same-sex marriage affect your leadership on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion?

Decades ago Bible passages were cited by opponents of interracial marriage. Their argument was that interracial marriage was not in accordance with God's order and intention. At present Bible passages are being cited by opponents of same-sex marriage. Their argument is that same-sex marriage is not in accordance with God's order and intention. The nature of this historical relationship needs further examination with attention being given to how awareness of this historical relationship affects a local church clergyperson's leadership on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Conclusion

This qualitative research study examined the influence that personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues had on the leadership of 30 local church Protestant clergy in Virginia regarding issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. This research study fills an existing gap caused by a majority of previous research being conducted on leadership at the denominational level rather than the local church level. Local church clergy felt a stronger obligation to their local church than to their denomination. Both traditional and progressive local church clergy implemented transformational leadership to promote dialogue on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion to maintain unity in their local church. Only a few progressive clergy, due to a strong desire for justice for LGBTQ persons in the local church and in society, implemented transformative leadership. Clergy who implemented transformative leadership encountered significant opposition from denominational leaders above and/or from church members below. This study shows that transformative clergy leaders on matters related to homosexuality or

LGBTQ inclusion are effective in reaching LGBTQ persons with the gospel of Jesus Christ and guiding them into a life of discipleship. However, like Jimmy Creech and Anna Care, the commitment to justice may result in negative consequences for one's career.

The researcher believes that transformation is the work of Jesus Christ, but the church is to play a role in bringing about that transformation in the lives of individuals and the world. For true transformation to occur there must be justice. Austin O'Malley, an English Literature professor at the Notre Dame University said of justice, "The perfection of justice implies charity, because we have a right to be loved" (Castle, T., 1984, p. 137). For the researcher that statement is applicable to the situation facing LGBTQ persons in the church and in society. These children of God have a right to be loved, and in charity to be fully included in the life of the church and in society or else justice is not perfected. As Christians wrestle with what is a faithful response to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and the church, the researcher perceives that it is helpful to recall the words of the late Methodist Bishop, G. Bromley Oxnam, "Because I believe the will of God is revealed in the Gospel of Christ, I hold that all historically conditioned political, economic, social, and ecclesiastical systems must be judged by the Gospel, not identified with it" (Testimony of Bishop Oxnam, House Un-American Activities Committee, July 21, 1953). The Gospel judges us and our institutions, and our primary identity that yields salvation is with Jesus and his gracious Gospel rather than with our institutions. Local church clergy leaders will do well to remember that. Just as Bishop Oxnam witnessed for justice over half a century ago, there is still a need for clergy to witness for justice in response to the issues of the present day and age. Martin Luther once said, "If you preach the gospel in all aspects with the exception of the issues which deal specifically with your time, you are not preaching the gospel at all" (Martin Luther Quotes about Preaching/A-Z Quotes, retrieved September 10, 2018). The times are begging for

transformative leaders who do not avoid the tough issues of the present. Local church clergy leaders who choose this path with all its perils, will be strengthened by the vision offered by Stephen Truth, “I do want younger folks in my church, when they become adults, to look back and say, ‘When things were really crazy in my culture, my church was not silent’” (S. Truth, personal correspondence, June 7, 2018).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Study Invitation

Study Invitation

May, 2018

Dear,

As a doctoral student completing his dissertation study through the University of New England, I am inviting you to complete a demographic form, participate in a 90 minute focus group session with clergy colleagues, and possibly a 60 minute one-on-one interview to share your input on your experiences in providing leadership in a local church on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. As an ordained clergyperson currently serving a Protestant church or as a chaplain at a denominationally affiliated institution for higher education, you have significant experience and knowledge about issues that impact your leadership decisions with regards to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in the church as well as in society. This study focuses primarily on the personal, organizational, and cultural issues that affect your leadership on the matters of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. By participating in this study you are providing a valuable contribution to scholarly and practical knowledge on leadership by clergy at the local church level in relation to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Research Questions: The three research questions for this study are:

1. How do a Protestant clergyperson's personal and theological perspectives on purity and inclusivity influence their decision regarding the implementation of leadership in their local congregation?
2. How do Protestant clergypersons experience organizational pressures from "above" (denominational leaders and denominational doctrine) and from "below" (local church members) on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion and how do these organizational pressures affect the clergyperson's decision to implement leadership in their local congregation?
3. How do Protestant clergypersons prepare through continuing education opportunities and resources to better understand the cultural issues related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in order to implement leadership in their local congregation to promote justice for LGBTQ persons?

Study's Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative study is to conduct research on how personal, organizational, and cultural identities influence local church Protestant clergypersons to implement leadership on matters related to homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. These three identities are powerful forces that may encourage or discourage local church Protestant clergy in initiating transformative leadership as a means of addressing the issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion in the church and in society. The findings of this research study will provide insight into local church clergy's perceptions of the viability and effectiveness of transactional,

transformational, and transformative leadership for matters regarding homosexuality or GLBTQ inclusion.

Procedures: Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. The study includes a demographic form, a covenant statement to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of other participants, as well as a 90 minute focus group session with other Protestant clergy colleagues. If you choose to be included in a pool of volunteers from which the researcher will randomly draw one name, there is the possibility that you will be selected to participate in a second interview. The second interview will be a one-on-one interview with the researcher and will last 60 minutes. The study will run from May 2018 through June 2018, with results published in July 2018. Upon your request I can send you a copy of your demographic form, a summary of the focus group session, and if you volunteer and are randomly selected, notes on the one-on-one interview. Upon request I will also provide you a copy of the completed dissertation. I do not foresee this study presenting a hardship on you, other than the time invested in it. However, your time invested will contribute to the immense anticipated benefits of collecting this data for scholarly knowledge and practical implications for the leadership of other Protestant clergy colleagues. Together, we can create a better tomorrow for gay and straight people to whom the church ministers as well as local church Protestant clergy as he/she provides effective leadership on the issue of homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion.

Confidentiality: The researcher will protect your identity throughout the study and thereafter. Only I, the researcher, will have access to your information. Follow-up verbal/signed and written reports and discussions will identify you only with a pseudonym. Your name, the church you are serving, and your responses will not be shared by the researcher with anyone else. A potential risk to a participant is that another participant in the focus group will fail to abide by the signed confidentiality covenant. Revealing what was said during the focus group session with denominational leaders or church members could harm a participant's reputation or employment. At the beginning of the focus group session the researcher will re-emphasize to each participant the need to abide by the signed confidentiality covenant.

Compensation: As a token of appreciation for your participation in this research study you will be given a $5 gift card to a coffee shop in your area.

Questions: If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and your participation, you may contact me, the researcher, via e-mail at jbutcher@une.edu or butcher.jeff@yahoo.com, or via my cell phone at 540-560-3006. You may also contact Dr. Carol Burbank at the University of New England at cburbank@une.edu or 301-292-4947.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at 207-221-4171 or irb@une.edu.

Once you have agreed to the consent form and the confidentiality covenant, you will be provided information in order to attend the focus group meeting that is convenient to the participants in the focus group. You will be given a copy of this consent form. Your contribution not only supports

my dissertation study, but also future leadership practices by local church clergy on the issues of homosexuality.

University of New England's Transformative Leadership Program

Sincerely,

J. Jeffrey Butcher, Doctoral Student

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: A Study of Identity Issues That Affect Clergy Leadership on LGBTQ Inclusion

Principal Investigators: J. Jeffrey Butcher, Doctoral Candidate, University of New England, jbutcher@une.edu or butcher.jeff@yahoo.com, 540-560-3006
Carol Burbank, Lead Advisor, University of New England, cburbank@une.edu, 301-292-4947

Please read this form as it will provide you with information about this research study. You may request that the form be read to you. Also, the form is to document your decision if you choose to participate in this research study. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as seven days to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

The purpose of this research study is to relate local church Protestant clergy's experiences with research on personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues that affect leadership on matters regarding homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion. The researcher does not have a consultative or financial interest in this study.

The research study focuses on local church Protestant clergy presently serving a congregation in the state of Virginia. Hospital chaplains and pastoral counselors will not be participants in this study unless they are also serving as the pastor of a Protestant church or as a chaplain at a denominationally affiliated school for higher education in the state of Virginia. Also, you have been identified as a member of an ecumenical lectionary/support group. The researcher will contact members of existing lectionary/support groups in Virginia in order to develop a pool of 25-40 participants who are diverse in terms of: gender, age, denomination, years of experience, size of congregation presently served, setting – rural, small town, suburban, or urban, and self-identified theological orientation.

Enclosed is a demographic information form. If you choose to participate in the research study please fill it out and bring it with you to the focus group session to be collected by the researcher. Also on the demographic form is a place to check and sign if you are willing to volunteer to participate in a 60 minute individual follow-up interview at a later date. After a list of volunteers has been generated, one name will be randomly selected as the participant for the individual follow-up interview**.** At the end of the demographic form is a confidentiality covenant agreement. By signing this agreement you are agreeing not to share any information about what is said by other participants in the focus group session. Data gathered from the demographic information form will be coded for themes by the researcher and later analyzed by the researcher. Only the researcher will have access to the data and will serve as the solo analyzer of the data**.** A

focus group session, with approximately 8 members of an ecumenical lectionary/support group, will involve an unstructured phenomenological interview lasting 90 minutes. Since the researcher cannot guarantee that other participants will abide by the signed confidentiality covenant agreement, the researcher will hand you a blank piece of paper and a pen to allow you, during the last five minutes of the focus group session, to write down anything you want the researcher to know about how you experienced the focus group process or anything you did not feel comfortable sharing during the focus group session. The duration of an individual's participation begins with the filling out of the informed consent form, the demographic information, the confidentiality covenant agreement and ends with the conclusion of the focus group session or the individual session. As a small token of appreciation a $5 gift card to a local coffee shop will be given to each participant.

There are no known discomforts associated with this study. The researcher will maintain confidentiality and privacy for participants, and participants will be reminded to maintain the confidentiality covenant agreement by not revealing to anyone what was said or shared in a focus group session. However, the researcher cannot guarantee that other participants will honor the covenant to maintain confidentiality and privacy**.** At the beginning of the focus group session the researcher will remind each participant of the signed confidentiality agreements and that failure to abide by the agreement could be potentially damage to another participant's reputation and employment if what that participant said was shared with a denominational leader or a member of the participant's church. An expected direct benefit of this study is that you may learn more about how personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues impact your leadership on matters related to homosexuality. An expected indirect benefit is that other local church clergy, laity, and denominational leaders may learn more about how personal, organizational, and cultural identity issues on homosexuality or LGBTQ inclusion are affecting clergy leadership at the local church level.

There are no costs associated with participation in this study other than the cost of transportation to and from the focus group session or the individual session. Again, a small token of appreciation in the form of a $5 gift card to a local coffee shop will be given to each participant.

The focus group session and the individual session will occur at a neutral site arranged by the researcher. The site will provide a private and secure room in a restaurant or a community center to insure the privacy and confidentiality of each participant. The researcher will maintain the confidentiality and privacy of each participant. The researcher will emphasize to participants the significance and importance of maintaining the confidentiality covenant agreement to protect the privacy of other participants**.** Results of the research will appear in the dissertation to partially meet the requirement for the researcher to receive a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of New England. No identifying information or original data will be shared with denominational leaders or local church leaders. At this point in time the researcher does not expect to publish an article in a research journal. If the opportunity arises for the researcher to publish a research article you will be notified, but no identifying information will be made public.

Pseudonyms will be used for all participants in the study to maintain confidentiality and privacy. Data from the 90 minute focus group session and the individual follow-up session will be recorded and later transcribed using Rev.com, a service that specializes in recording and transcribing phenomenological interviews while maintaining confidentiality, privacy and data security. Only the researcher will have access to the data and transcripts in order to code for themes and to do analysis. Research records will be kept in a locked file in the locked office of the researcher. Individual identifiable data from the demographic forms, written information provided at the end of the focus group session, and recordings will be destroyed after the study is complete.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review the research records. There are no funding agencies or regulatory agencies involved in this research study.

A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained by the researcher for at least three years after the research study is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored at a secure location that only the researcher has access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project. A certificate of confidentiality is being sought from the IRB and once secured will be kept with the consent forms in a secure location.

Regarding focus group confidentiality, members of the focus group will sign a confidentiality covenant agreement, but the researcher cannot ensure that group members will respect other participants' privacy. To help ensure privacy and confidentiality the researcher will remind each member of the focus group of the confidentiality covenant agreement that indicates that what is communicated verbally and non-verbally during the session will not be shared with anyone outside of the focus group. Only the researcher will have access to the audio recording made using Rev.com. The recordings will be transcribed and securely mailed to the researcher to apply pseudonyms and demographic data. The researcher will then code for themes in order to do analysis. The researcher will also code for themes the information provided on the blank sheet of paper at the end of the focus group session to include in the data for analysis**.** At this point in time the researcher does not anticipate seeking consideration by a research journal publication, but if the opportunity arises the researcher will contact you and will maintain your privacy and confidentiality. You may contact the researcher for results of this competed study. Also, the researcher will make you aware of a link to the completed study upon approval from UNE.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participant will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University of New England or with the researcher. Denominational leaders will not be made aware of your participation in this research study and no information from your participation will be provided to denominational leadership. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. There is no penalty to you for withdrawing. During the phenomenological interview process in the focus group session or the individual session, you may refuse to answer any question for any reason. You will be informed of any significant findings developed during the course of the research that may affect your willingness to participate in the research. Should you become hostile towards others in the focus group and out-of-control, then the researcher may terminate your participation without your consent.

The researcher conducting this study is J. Jeffrey Butcher. For questions or more information concerning this research study you may contact him at 540-560-3006, jbutcher@une.edu or butcher.jeff@yahoo.com. You may also contact the lead advisor from UNE, Carol Burbank at 301-292-4947 or cburbank@une.edu. If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact J. Jeffrey Butcher at 540-560-3006, jbutcher@une.edu or butcher.jeff@yahoo.com or the lead advisor from UNE, Carol Burbank at 301-292-4947 or cburbank@une.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or irb@une.edu.

You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Statement

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

_____ _____

Participant's signature or legally authorized representative Date

_____

Printed name

Researcher's Statement

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in the study.

_____ _____

Researcher's signature Date

_____

Printed name

Appendix C: Demographic Form, Confidentiality Agreement, and Volunteer for Individual Follow-up Interview Form

Demographic Form

A Study of Identity Issues That Affect Clergy Leadership on LGBTQ Inclusion

Your Name: _____ (a pseudonym will be assigned)

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Gender (check one): _____ Male _____ Female

Age (check one): ___ 20-29 years old, ___ 30-39 years old, ___ 40-49years old, ___ 50-59 years old, ___ 60+ years old

Race (check one): ___ Caucasian/White, ___ African/Black, ___ Hispanic, ___ Biracial,

___ Other

Marital Status: ___ single ___ married ___ divorced

Did you graduate from a seminary? ___ Yes ___ No

Level of Education (check highest level) ___ High School ___ B.A. or B.S. ___ Masters

___ D. Min. ___ Ph.D. or Ed.D.

Years of Service at Present Church _____ Total Years of Ordained Ministry _____

Ministry Setting: ___ Rural ___ Small Town ___ Suburban ___ Urban

Average Worship Attendance: ___ Less than 125 ___ 125 – 250 ___ 250+

Self-identified Theological Orientation: ___ Fundamentalist ___ Evangelical ___ Conservative

___ Moderate ___ Progressive ___ Liberal ___ Other (For other please name the term you would apply to your self-identified theological orientation)

Are you a member of any affinity group that is actively working in opposition or support for gay and lesbian rights? _____ Yes _____ No

Name or Names of organizations _____

Confidentiality Covenant Agreement

I , _____, enter into covenant with other participants in the focus group session to maintain confidentiality and privacy regarding the identity of participants and what is said or shared during the focus group session.

Signature _____

Willing to Volunteer for One Hour Individual Follow-up Individual

Yes ____ No _____