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JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

COMPARISON OF PERCEPTIONS OF SINGLE MOTHERS
AND CHRISTIAN LEADERS THROUGH
TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Brienne D. Robertson

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the transformational change process of single mothers from their perspective, and to then assess the influence of Christian leaders in this transformational change process from the leaders' perspective, with respect to the single mother's family stability: spiritually, emotionally, financially and generationally. The two theories working simultaneously in this study was the transformational leadership theory and transformational learning theory. The implementation of these two theories could spark an authentic life-long change in the single mother. Understanding the role of transformational leadership in Christian leaders then becomes necessary to guide single mothers towards spiritual formation and family stability, breaking the generational pattern and ultimately becoming who God intends her to be "in His image". Through interviews and surveys of Christian leaders, who then identified potential participants for the sample group of single mothers, the perceptions of both groups were compared to determine the effectiveness of transformational change. By reviewing the responses, perceived barriers surfaced as possible hindrances to a transformational change, as well as perceived indicators which could be used as a future predictor of transformational change that is generational.

Keywords: transformational leadership, transformational change, single mothers

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Dedication

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

To the single mother who longs to believe that there is a purpose in life and is desperate to have God lead you into a transformed life. I pray this research will be an encouragement gently bring you to see that you are wonderfully created “in His image”. God *will* bring you and your children through the darkness and into the light of His goodness.

I thank the Lord for the strength, experience, and growth He gave me while navigating through the years of being a single mother. Only because of His grace and faithful love, am I here today as a transformed mother, daughter, wife, and leader.

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With more thanks than I could ever express:

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To my extraordinary parents, Sandy and Beth Robertson, who with unwavering and unconditional love, have been my greatest examples of Christlikeness and absolute dependence on God. As grandparents, thank you for being the anchor that Alexa, Jacob, and Josiah needed when I did not think I could get through the darkness of being a single mom. Thank you for never compromising, and for placing God first in your lives and in the lives of our family. Thank you for our weekly WFT's (warm family times) - a tradition I pray will continue for many generations.

To my incredible children, Alexa, Jacob, and Josiah, who have been graciously patient with me as I often had to rearrange schedules and postpone family activities to meet deadlines. Thank you for being my biggest cheerleaders! I pray that you will see the fruit from this journey in the transformation of my own life. I want you to have a mom who seeks God with all her heart, soul, and mind in everything she does. And to Kayleigh – I pray that you will see me as a 'bonus mom' who loves you and believes in you. To that end, it is my desire that each of you will love God and others well, and in turn model this to my future grandchildren. I love you all dearly!

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List of Abbreviations

Hard-disk Drive (HDD)

Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Internal Review Board (IRB)

Liberty University (LU)

No Date (n.d.)

Problem Based Learning (PBL)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Over most recent years, several studies have emerged that suggest the educational level (or lack thereof) of a single mother may have a direct effect on the stability in the lives of the single mother and her children. Areas directly affected by the level of her educational achievement have financial restrictions (Jackson, 2000), emotional significance (Thompson-Smith, 2016; Peden et al., 2004), and academic implications that may hinder her ability to assist in her children's educational growth (Williams, 2016; Nomaguchi, 2011; Hicks, 2018). To compensate for the 'gaps' that educational deficiencies create in the family lives of single mothers, numerous programs have been developed nationwide. Agencies such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (Women, Infants, and Children), HUD Public Housing Assistance Program, and Head Start, all provide assistance in purchasing basic provisions such as food, healthcare referrals, low-cost rental housing, and school readiness preparedness. Non-profit organizations often provide financial assistance, continuing education opportunities, affordable childcare, job placement and even attainable housing. But is this merely a temporary fix to a greater problem? Research demonstrated that government programs have created dependency upon assistance rather than developing a foundation that encourages independency (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986). Do these well-intended and much-needed programs cultivate transformation, or are they simply a mode of behavior modification? Could there be more than just the belief that only a higher education degree would lift single mothers out of the dependency of welfare assistance and out of the cultural despondency that often accompanies the single parenthood? It is suggested that Christian leaders begin to consider the possibility of exercising transformational leadership when leading single mothers through a

transformational change, providing an opportunity to experience a positive impact on family circumstances and stability. While pursuing a higher education is profitable and encouraged, it is believed by this researcher that apart from the aid of a spiritual transformation, the likelihood of a generational breakout from poverty and negative thinking for single mothers and their families still remains unchallenged.

Instead of being held captive to the thinking that there is no way to break free of the cycle that spins day by day just to survive, could single mothers experience a genuine transformation? Could there not be a transformation of the heart, soul, and mind and a “putting off the old self” (Eph. 4:22, ESV) by the woman who desires a better future for her children, and for herself? What if she could learn to experience hope, even in her darkest circumstances, and be shown that there is a way for her to become all that God has divinely planned for her to be? What if Christian leaders were to create a learning environment where they could guide her through the necessary steps and experience a radical change of thinking? In a transformational learning environment, single mothers could reflect on her circumstances through a biblical worldview lens and see that she is wonderfully created “in His image”. Although seeking a higher education is good, apart from the positive influence of a Christian leader who is exercising transformational leadership that leads to spiritual transformation, the likelihood of a generational breakout from the poverty and negative thinking as a single mother is more difficult. It is suggested that without being guided by a Christian transformational leader, single mothers may never experience the spiritual transformation that could change their lives. In the end, it is likely that the same pattern of negative thinking and sole dependency on program assistance will continue from generation to generation.

This study sought to examine the spiritual transformational change process from the perspective of single mothers and assess the effectiveness of Christian leaders in the process. It explored whether or not Christian leaders knew how to guide single mothers into a genuine transformational change through spiritual formation when asked by single mothers for help in this change. If so, are Christian leaders effectively addressing the potential emotional, financial, and practical concerns from a theological foundation while creating a transformational learning environment that effectively marries the theoretical methods with a biblical worldview? The desired outcome would be that single mothers would experience a genuine spiritual transformational change in their lives by the renewal of their minds and putting off ‘the old self’ as led by Christian leaders. These single mothers would then see every circumstance and aspect of daily life through the lens of a biblical worldview, knowing that contrary to the beliefs of today’s culture, they are created in His image. With this new learned thinking, these single mothers will model a transformed lifestyle that is guided by the ‘new self’ and in turn, become a reflection of hope to their children. What joy this transformed lifestyle would bring to a family that is threatened by the corrupt thinking that there is little hope to thrive as a single mother! A hope that this genuine transformational change will plant seeds for a similar change in their children, weakening the generational cycle of single parenting. “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut. 6:6,7).

Chapter One begins by providing a background to the problem, investigates this problem from a theological and theoretical position, and then identifies the research statement and

questions. The assumptions and delimitations of this study are clearly outlined. It then concludes with the significance that the results of this study may have upon other groups.

Background to the Problem

The cycle is vicious and seemingly never-ending. A promising job opportunity is within grasp, only to discover at the interview that a college degree or certification is required. The destitute single mother is left with limited choices of jobs that pay minimum wage and offer no benefits. She can hardly pay the rent and put food on the table, let alone entertain the thought of going back to school in order to get the college degree she needs for the higher paying jobs.

According to 2018 U.S. Census Bureau, out of approximately 11 million single parent families with children under the age of 18, more than 80% were headed by single mothers (Bureau, 2018). Sadly, these single mothers are much more likely to be poor than married couples. The poverty rate for single-mother families in 2017 was 34%, nearly five times more than the rate for married-couple families (6%). According to the National Women's Law Center 2019 report, nearly one in eight women (over 15.5 million) and nearly one in six children (approximately 11.9 million) lived in poverty in 2018. Three out of five of all poor children lived in families headed by women (National Women's Law Center, 2019). These trends in family structure may bode ill for tomorrow's labor force, at least if the predictions of economic theory are correct. In Becker's (1981) model, children raised in families with fewer resources tend to have lower human capital. Thus, economic theory would predict that, all else equal, the next generation of workers will enter the labor market with less human capital than the last (Grogger & Ronan, 2003).

Could there be something more to this life for single mothers, with the sole mindset of surviving rather than thriving? Caught up in the belief that a better job would solve all their

problems, which typically requires the pursuit of a better education, single mothers are ushered into the ill-producing cycle of circular reasoning. Defeated, they believe that there are no other options, except to push through day by day. An attitude of doubt, discouragement and depression seeps into their thinking (Peden, Rayens, Hall, & Grant, 2004) and eventually becomes ‘truth’, creating a negative mindset that unconsciously becomes ‘the norm’ by the single mothers’ children. At a practical level, professionals recognize that education is critical to the deepening of knowledge and development of skills that may open doors of opportunities to meet the needs of the family (Hicks, 2018; Smith-Thompson, 2016). But what if a spiritual transformational approach is taken through the guidance of Christian leaders, and a new outlook on life from a biblical perspective could renew the thinking and subsequent behaviors of single mothers? It then becomes necessary for the Christian leader to understand the role of transformational leadership in order to effectively guide single mothers in a transformational learning process towards spiritual formation, and implement applications of this transformational change to the elements that affect family stability – ultimately breaking the generational pattern by modeling who God intends single mothers and their children to be – “in His image.”

Theological Position for Transformation

In the lives of the single mothers, not only is formal education or vocational training strongly encouraged to compensate for inadequacies, but more critically, a spiritual transformation of the old self. The inception of the new self that launches the journey of humanity's renewal towards the image of God must begin with a spiritual rebirth – a conforming and transformation to the life of Jesus Christ. Paul tells his readers, "For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29, HCSB). The Oxford English Dictionary defines *conform* as, “to be similar or identical; to bring into harmony.” Thus,

to conform to the image of His Son means that “conforming to God's image, Jesus Christ, involves the whole person. . .” so that in every human way, man seeks to “reflect various godly attributes to God's glory” (Kilner, 2015, p. 240). Unable to do so in man’s fallen state, such a radical change process requires a transformation of “putting off your old self” (Eph. 4:22) followed by putting “on the new self, the one created according to God’s likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth” (4:24).

What a glorious hope there is for single mothers to realize that their lives were created in the image of God, regardless of what they had done in the past or what had been done to them. To the illegitimate woman or child, there is comfort in believing that their existence was an intentional forming and fathering of life, without mistake or mishap. To be known by the true God who knew His creation “before I formed you in the womb” (Jer. 1:5), brings a hope of destiny and purpose of her life here on earth. To hear from friends and family that single mothers have value, is vital for growth. Great yet is to embrace the truth that in God's eyes, they are much more – they are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14) in His image.

So, for the single mothers who are crying out to God for His redeeming grace, how do they begin this life-altering journey of transformation into His image? Practically speaking, what does the ‘new self’ look like in their world of inadequacies, exhaustion, and loneliness? How can they determine what God’s perfect will for their life is by the “renewing of [their] mind” (Rom. 12:2)? Only through the modeling and discipling of spiritually mature Christian transformational leaders who provide sound biblical teaching, can the difficult and challenging course of action begin. In their spiritual hunger for this change that produces healthy growth and stability, it is anticipated that single mothers will be seen by their children as Godly women, firmly rooted in Christ. Rather than leaning on their own understanding to survive this life, they will demonstrate

that through all trials, they can rejoice in all things (Phil. 4:4) and know that God has plans to give them “a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11). Transformation that begins as a spiritual renewal will impact how single mothers perceives their circumstances, now through the lens of a biblical worldview rather than on their own understanding. This has significant implications for how single mothers perceives their future, as the role model for their children, weakening the generational cycle of single parenting.

Theoretical Position for Transformation

The two theories working simultaneously in this study were the transformational leadership theory and the transformational learning theory. The implementation of these two theories provide the spark needed for an authentic life-long change in single mothers.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory will serve as the theoretical foundation for this study. “The term transformational leadership was first coined by sociologist James V. Downton in 1973” (*What is Transformational Leadership?* 2014), but the term was more widely developed by leadership expert James Burns in 1978. According to Burns, “Transforming leadership is a process in which leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation” (*Transformational Leadership*, n.d.).

In 1985, researcher Bernard Bass further added to Burns’ studies, inspired by a statement made by Count Cavour. Bass quoted Cavour as saying, “If you can’t measure it, you don’t know what you’re talking about” (1995, p. 463). Bass believed that, “Transformational leaders as those who seek to change existing thoughts, techniques and goals for better results and the greater good” (*Transformational Leadership*, n.d.). In reviewing Bass’ work, author Morgan McCall stated that, “Bass set out to understand transformational leadership...he attempts to build a model

of the transformational leader—the kind who engenders from others ‘performance beyond expectations’” (1986, p. 1). Bass later developed the Theory of Transformational Leadership, seeking to distinguish the defining characteristics between a transactional leader and a transformational leader. Bass and Stogdill stated, “According to the Bass Theory of Transformational Leadership, transformational leaders possess good visioning, rhetorical and impressive management skills, and use them to develop strong emotional bonds with followers” (1997).

There are several factors which are perceived to be critical in the transformational leadership model in determining how much influence a leader has on followers. McCall again pointed out that, “According to Bass, there are four major factors comprising transformational leadership: charisma, inspirational leadership, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation” (1986, p. 1). Bass and Riggio illustrated that by combining these factors, “transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers’ needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization” (2006, p. 3). Thus, transformational leadership can serve as a theoretical foundation for change in an individual, a family, or organizations.

Transformational Learning Theory

Building on transformational leadership is the theory of ‘transformational learning’. Merzirow (1978) first applied the label transformation in his study of U.S. women returning to post-secondary study or the workplace after an extended time out. In an effort to address the needs of U.S. women who were resuming their education or were considering employment after an extended period of time out of university or the workforce respectively, Mezirow conducted a

qualitative study to identify factors that characteristically impede or facilitate women's progress re-entry programs. (Kitchenham, 2008, p. 105). With the implementation of Mezirow' ideology from a spiritual vantage point, single mothers may experience the greatest success in a lifelong change that first heals their spiritual condition while developing a culture of emotional and generational growth. "Transformation occurs when we establish new frames of reference, elaborate on existing frames, transform habits of the mind, or transform our points of view. Thus, transformation results in our perspectives or worldview changing" (Payette, n.d., p. 7).

Though first recognized in secular fields, James Loder Jr., late Professor of Practical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary took the transformational learning theory onto a 30-year spiritual journey, driven by the desire to understand how adults experience authentic change from the sinful and fallen nature of mankind. On this journey, Loder gained "deep insight that changed the way they [individuals] perceived and lived their lives" (Young, 2013, p. 325). Recognizing Mezirow's (1978) emphasis of self-reflection in the transformative learning theory, it is important for the Christian leader to create an environment that allows the single mother to use critical self-reflection that challenges the underlying belief and assumptions of the world in which she lives.

Christian Leadership as Transformational Leaders

According to Wilhoit, the transformational approach for Christian leadership is best as it, "seeks to foster a radical change in learner-disciples by remaking them from the inside out" (1986, p. 91). Called to guide and teach, Christian leaders must use every opportunity to usher the whole body (physical, emotional and spiritual) towards the putting off the old humanity and transforming into the new self. Wilhoit continues,

Christian education is rightly conceived as the intentional process of helping a person to be formed in Christ, nurtured in Him through Scripture by the Holy Spirit and the human teacher, and encouraged to continual development into a maturing disciple of Christ. (1995, p. 25)

For Christian leaders, there is a call to exercise transformational leadership, striving to lead others into transformed people created in the image of God.

Statement of the Problem

Many studies have been conducted over the years that examined the relationship between single parents and their children's academic performance (Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto, 2003). There are some who have considered whether being raised by a single mother and the inability to provide for her children financially, physically and emotionally could be directly due to inadequate education or skill training of the single mother (Smith, 2017; Smith-Thompson, 2016). Additionally, other studies have demonstrated that some children raised in single-parent homes are potentially at greater risk for lower academic achievement (Amato, 2001; Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Mulkey, Crain, & Harrington, 1992; Pong & Ju, 2000). As these studies examine the relationship between the educational level of single mothers and the impact that their level of education may or may not have upon family stability, one would ask if this is enough to make a lasting impact that is strong enough to steer the next generation in a spiritually stable direction or is it a temporary solution? The gap in literature would suggest there is a need to consider the generational impact that a transformational change would have on the family stability of single mothers when guided by Christian leaders in transformational leadership.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the transformational change process of single mothers from their perspective, and to assess the

influence of Christian leaders in this transformational change process from the leaders' perspectives, comparing their responses with regard to single mothers' family stability: spiritually, emotionally, financially and generationally. It was believed that when single mothers are led through a spiritual transformational change by Christian leaders, it would alter the way in which they think and subsequently behave, in response to their circumstances as single mothers.

The two theories working simultaneously in this study will be the transformational leadership theory (Bass & Stogdill, 1997) and transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1997, 2000; Taylor, 2008). Implementation of these theories by the Christian leaders and by the single mothers anticipates an authentic and desired life-long change in single mothers. It also seeks to reveal any barriers that may hinder the process, and more importantly, identify indicators that may predict the positive influence this change may have upon their children, forming a healthier well-being in the next generation.

Research Questions

RQ1. As perceived by both groups of study participants, what is the role of the Christian leader in guiding single mothers in a transformational process towards spiritual formation and family stability?

RQ2. As perceived by both groups of study participants, what are the barriers that hinder single mothers in the transformational process?

RQ3. As perceived by both groups of study participants, does the practice of transformational leadership by Christian leaders influence a transformational change in single mothers? If so, how do participants describe this change?

RQ4. As perceived by both groups of study participants, how is the spiritual, emotional, and financial condition of single mothers improved or worsened after the transformational process?

RQ5. As perceived by both groups of study participants, what indicators could be used as a future predictor of transformational change that is generational?

Research Assumptions

It was assumed that these mothers would be honest with their interview and survey answers, and willing to disclose their financial status at the time of the study. It was further assumed that the Christian leaders and pastors selected for this study would have credible expertise in spiritual training and assessment. For this study, there was an assumption that the single mothers would be capable of learning, whether through formal or vocational methods, and are not impaired by cognitive disabilities or addictions. As this researcher has personally experienced the challenges of single-parenting, additional cautions were taken during the analysis of the data to avoid researcher bias.

Delimitations of the Research Design

The single mothers included in this research were identified as those seeking a genuine desire to change their lifestyle and were to apply themselves in the transformational process. As one element of this study was to examine the financial implications of a transformational change, it was suggested that the potential single mothers in this study be employed part-time, at least 30 hours a week and earning less than \$21,000.00 annually.

Several delimitations were noted for this research and assisted in describing the boundaries of this study. One of the delimitations was the interviews strictly of biological mothers and would not include lesbian, gay or bisexual women (LGB). No common-law relationships were included. This research was further delimited from grandmothers, as the findings may not accurately be generalized to an older population. Stepchildren were considered as the single mother's children if they were in the legal custody of the stepmother at least 50% of the time. Single fathers were not be included in this research. Finally, the literature review had emphasis on publications found within the last 30 years, referring occasionally to older studies

only as a means to establish generational issues that were significant beyond this current generation of single mothers.

Definition of Terms

1. *Single Mother*: A woman who at the time of study is not married, has been separated, widowed or divorced, and not co-habiting with a male companion.
2. *Transformational Leadership Theory*: A method of leadership for those who “help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers’ needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 3).
3. *Transformational Learning Theory*: A method of teaching where “learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (Taylor, 2008, p. 5).
4. *Transformational Change*: The process by which a person is being formed daily into Christ's likeness through the transformation of behaviors, thoughts, and actions, resulting in a life that models Christ's character that glorifies God (2 Cor. 3:18).
5. *Christian Leaders*: A man or woman who is called by God to serve others, guiding them in spiritual formation, reflecting the character of Christ, leading them in worship to God, teaching them the Word of God, and discipling them to do likewise. For this study, these Christian leaders would be pastors, women’s ministry leaders, and professional counselors.
6. *Formal Education*: “Process of training and developing people in knowledge, skills, mind, and character in a structured and certified program” (IGI, 2018).
7. *Vocational Training*: “Vocational training is training for a specific career or trade, excluding the professions. Vocational training focuses on practical applications of skills learned and is generally unconcerned with theory or traditional academic skills” (StateUniversity.com, 2018).
8. *Financial stability*: The ability to “have enough income to pay rent and utilities, buy food and clothing, pay bills and save for the future” (CCC, 2018).
9. *Emotional Stability*: The “predictability and consistency in emotional reactions, with an absence of rapid mood changes” (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2018).
10. *Spiritual Stability*: The demonstration of a life that is in continual pursuit of knowing Christ and firm in godly character (Phil. 4:1).

Significance of the Study

This writer suggests that the spiritual transformational change process will be effective when Christian leaders seek to develop a more intentionally focused discipling and mentoring plan that leads single mothers towards the ‘new self’ when addressing the areas of spiritual, emotional, and practical needs. The attentive and transformational leader becomes responsive to the needs of the single mother, developing a custom-made plan for her situation. Sensing genuine concern by the leader for her care, the single mother is more likely to develop a sense of self-worth and value that is greater than her current circumstances. It is not a ‘quick fix’ but rather a relational plan that guides single mothers and her family into a belief system that is led by a biblical worldview.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7)

This study was significant for several reasons: to examine the transformational process and authentic change of the single mother from her perspective, to examine the impact this process has on the single mother’s family stability, and to determine if there are any generational predictors this change may have upon her children. In addition, a closer investigation showed that the lack of understanding of transformational leadership by Christian leaders demonstrated that there needs to be a change the approach to leading single mothers, in comparison to other demographic groups found within the church and the community. The results from this study have the potential to impact single fathers, counselors, teachers, community leaders, and agencies.

Summary of the Design

This qualitative research took a phenomenological approach, utilizing on-line surveys and live interviews that sought to understand the transformational change process of 14 single mothers from their perspective. The same instruments were used to assess the effectiveness of transformational leadership by 10 Christian leaders in the transformational change process of single mothers, from the Christian leaders' perspectives. After consenting to the study, each participant completed an online survey, followed by an interview of approximately 30 – 45 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and handwritten field notes were made. Valuable information was gathered from these interviews, drawing heavily on the personal interaction between the researcher and the participant. Each audio recording was transcribed into a Word document, and the data was stored on the researcher's laptop. Two back-up copies were made onto flash-drives. Similarly, the data from the surveys was compiled into a database, saved onto the laptop and copied onto the flash-drives.

After the coding process, this researcher sought to identify which areas from the participants' perspectives, have the greatest impact from the transformational change process. The results brought acute awareness to areas of transformational leadership that need closer attention when working with single mothers and identified significant indicators that would suggest future predictors of a generational change. This study demonstrated its validity through triangulation, member checking, and peer review.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the transformational change process of single mothers from their perspective, and to assess the influence of Christian leaders in this transformational change process from the leaders' perspective, with respect to the single mother's family stability: spiritually, emotionally, practically, and generationally. The desired outcome was that the single mothers would in turn model a lifestyle that would generate a transformational change in their children. In the life of the single mother, a higher education or vocational training does have the means to compensate for financial inadequacies. Unless there is a spiritual transformation of the 'old self,' effectively led by a spiritually mature Christian leader, the likelihood of breaking the generational cycle of negative thinking and single parenting may prove to be much more difficult.

The inception of the new self that launches the journey of the single mother's renewal towards the image of God, must begin with "the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:1), a spiritual rebirth that seeks to be a transformation to the life of Jesus Christ. Paul tells his readers, "For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Such a radical change process requires one to "take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires" (Eph. 4:22), followed by putting "on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth" (4:24). This difficult and challenging course of action requires the leadership and guidance of spiritually mature Christian leaders. This is key in providing sound teaching that promotes healthy and fruitful growth for both the single mother and for her children. The spiritual stability of the single mother grows more secure as her new life in Christ becomes firmly rooted in Him (Col. 2:7), perseveres

under all trials (James 1:12), rejoices in all things (Phil. 4:4), and lives with the hope of knowing that God has a plan of “a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11).

Theological Framework for the Study

Several questions must be asked and then answered before examining the literature that will guide this study. The first and most important line of inquiry should seek to identify through Scripture who these single mothers are and why do they require such an acute attention from Christian leaders? What is the Scriptural basis for an intentional advocacy towards single mothers, the widows, the fatherless, and orphans? Should the care of single mothers fall under the protection of Christian leaders, such as pastors and ministry leaders, or should any non-spiritual needs be directed to the educators and/or Christians in professional social service positions?

If Scripture confirms that the ethics of care and the well-being of single mothers falls under the responsibility of Christian leaders, then a second group of pivotal questions is raised. To begin, does Scripture support the calling of transformational leaders who are to guide these single mothers through spiritual formation that radically changes the single mothers’ family stability? If so, do Christian leaders recognize their responsibility to single mothers, leading them in a spiritual transformation that disciplines them in the renewing of their minds, and fosters a new life that reflects the image of God? Lastly, are Christian leaders committed to bringing these women and their families into a thriving and stable lifestyle that has a generational effect?

Single Mothers in Scripture

Some issues of Christian ethics are more difficult to see in Scripture, and therefore, leave much room for speculation and freedom of interpretation. This is not the case when addressing the identification of single mothers, widows, and the fatherless. Throughout Scripture, there are

accounts of women in desperate circumstances with little hope of survival – unless the individual called by God obediently intervenes on their behalf. Not only are there accounts of godly leaders ministering to single mothers, but through the faithfulness of both the leader and the single mothers, these ostracized women are transformed into flourishing lives that demonstrates God’s plan for hope and a future.

Hagar. As one of Scripture’s notable ‘surrogate’ mothers, Hagar was obedient in Abram and Sarai’s plan to assist God in conceiving a son who would be an heir, with “descendants greater than the number of stars to be counted” (Gen. 15:4, 5). What Sarai grossly miscalculated was the animosity that would grow between herself and Hagar, causing Hagar to flee from Sarai’s wrath while carrying the son of the future Arab nation. Not turning a blind eye to the misconduct of this woman, God sought out Hagar by sending the Angel of the Lord to her (Gen. 16:7) and instructing her to return to Sarai (16:9). Thirteen years later, after the birth of Isaac (21:2), by God’s direction, Abraham drives Hagar and Ismael away (21:12-14). A second time, but now as a single mother, Hagar is faced with a waterless desert in her life, the promises from years ago only a faint memory (16:11, 12). God provided for this single mother and her child and instructed Hagar to “get up, help the boy up, and support him, for I will make him a great nation” (21:18). Not only was God providing the immediate need for water, but He also required Hagar to participate in providing for her son. Though allowing the abandonment of this single mother and her child to occur, God demonstrated His unwavering love and concern, never wavering from fulfilling His promises to those who are faithful.

Naomi and Ruth. There can be no greater redemption story than that of Ruth, a Gentile from Moab. Her story of desperation begins with the death of her husband but ends with the birth of a son who becomes an integral part of the lineage in God’s ultimate redemption plan. Driven

by a practical need to find food, Ruth follows her Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi, back to Bethlehem where God's faithful people are experiencing His blessings (Ruth 1:6), granted only by God's mercy that followed their repentance from disobedience. By divine orchestration, God used a wealthy landowner to not only fulfill the law of Moses by allowing Ruth to glean in his fields (2:15, 16) but demonstrated exceptional courage to risk his social status and political power by becoming a family redeemer for Ruth (4:1-11). From this selfless act of providing for the practical needs of a single mother, a community wedding is celebrated. Ruth's life is not only restored, but she becomes the mother of a child who continues the family line that would bring a blessing to Israel (4:17).

The Widow at Zarephath. In an ironic twist of social turmoil, Elijah is led by God to find shelter and food from a widow (1 Kgs. 17:9), a class of society considered to be the lowest classes of people. "Although the denotation of widow referred to a woman whose husband had died, because of the social context the word quickly acquired the connotation of a person living a marginal existence in extreme poverty" (Dempster, n.d.). To add to the complication, this widow was from the Gentile city of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:9), another example of cross-cultural opportunities for Christian leaders. Believing that she was about to prepare her last meal for herself and her son, the widow obediently followed Elijah's instructions to prepare a meal for him first. Inadvertently, the widow demonstrated more compassion and care by putting Elijah first, than did the Israelites who rejected their own people – Elijah (Lk. 4:25, 26). God cares for the needs of both the workers and those who are hurting and rewards those who are faithful to His word. "The flour jar did not become empty, and the oil jug did not run dry, according to the word of the Lord He had spoken through Elijah" (1 Kgs. 17:16). Relationships are reciprocal,

even more so are the ones which are divinely orchestrated and built outside the walls of the church.

Ethics of Care for Single Mothers by Christian Leaders

The very essence of all Christian leadership is based on the ability to influence others by reflecting the image of Christ through selfless behaviors and actions that appeal to a higher sense of values, ethics, and morals. The ethics of care places emphasis of putting others first and placing value on their needs, requiring the Christian leader to listen and understand the culture around them. Is it easier to feed the hungry, bring blankets to a camp of the homeless, or serve at a soup kitchen once a week, than to walk alongside a single mother and her children? Are Christian leaders aware that “the alarming statistics of single mothers [show that] this group of society is “one of the fastest-growing sects of our population” (Maggio, n.d.)? Quite often, Matthew 25:40 is used to champion the outreach of the church to the poor, hungry and the needy: “And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’” But a closer study of the passage reveals a different context. “When we show care for members of Christ’s body, we are showing care for Christ himself” (DeYoung, 2009).

“Matthew 25 is about social justice in the sense that it is about caring for the needy. But the needy in view are fellow Christians, especially those who depend on our hospitality and generosity for their ministry” (DeYoung, 2017). Gill’s commentary suggests that acts of charity are to be shown to all, but those mentioned in this passage are more directly focused on the brethren within the Church who are with need.

Nor in so large a sense, as to include all in human nature; but the saints only, the children of God, and household of faith: for though acts of charity and humanity are to be done to

all men, yet especially to these. . . but is a weak believer in spiritual things, as well as poor in temporal things. (Gills, n.d.)

The single mothers in the church are certainly those would fall into this category.

The ethic of care requires the interweaving of responsibilities into all areas of daily life – social, political, economic, religious and cultural. In order to do so, it requires the developing of a model that demonstrates an ethic of care in a Christian perspective which seeks to answer the question, ‘What does care look like in the eyes of Christ?’ “While different care theorists have defined the aims of caring in a variety of different ways, most agree that caring at a minimum involves meeting the basic needs of individuals, developing their capabilities, and helping them to survive and function” (Engester, 2007). Christian physician and ethicist Pellegrino described caring as “compassion or being concerned for the other person, doing for others what they can’t accomplish on their own” (Ustul, 2003, p. 15). A prime example of this discipline is found in the field of nursing, where the ethics of care is priority. Christian leaders could be identified as the ‘spiritual nurses’ for the hurting and sick. When reaching out to the single mother, the similar premise applies to that of a nurse. Ustul (2003) said:

Know that you may be the only encounter with Christ-like caring and the ethic of care that someone receives today. You embody the ethic of care. As a Christian nurse, you recognize that nursing is a calling from God. Ephesians 2:10 states, “For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. (p. 14)

So what does this ethics of care look like for the Christian leader from a biblical worldview and does Scripture suggest there is a responsibility to single mothers? Several mandates can be found in Scripture that directs Christian leaders to defend, to guard against the abuse of power and social injustice, and to provide. In order to be an effective defender, a change is required. Isaiah 1:17 mandates the leader to, “learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression;

bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.” Simply put, this requires a transformation of a mindset – changing from evil and replacing with acts of goodness and standing firm for justice. With this change, an advocate rises up for the fatherless (children of single mothers) and widows. Isaiah continues to urge the leaders to protect the needs of the lowest class of society from those who sought to take advantage of their weakness. “Your leaders are rebels, the companion of thieves. All of them love bribes and demand payoffs, but they refuse to defend the cause of orphans or fight for the right of widows” (Isa. 1:23). Jeremiah echoed the same lament. “But I will be merciful only if you stop your evil thoughts and deeds and start treating each other with justice; only if you stop exploiting foreigners, orphans, and widows” (Jer. 7:5, 6).

To guard against abuse of power and social injustice is not only required by leaders at the community level, but the Old Testament clearly shows the role of kings as being a representative of God’s justice: “God, give Your justice to the king and Your righteousness to the king’s son” (Ps. 72:1) and “May he vindicate the afflicted among the people, help the poor, and crush the oppressor” (Ps. 72:4). It is expected from all mankind, whether at the community or governmental level, that the interests of even the most vulnerable in society is protected. Scripture is clear that the Lord has special concern for the widows and orphans, reminding the Israelites, “You must not exploit a widow or an orphan. If you exploit them in any way and they cry out to me, then I will certainly hear their cry” (Ex. 22:22, 23). “Do not oppose the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. . .” (Zech. 7:10). “. . .orphans and widows are wronged and oppressed among you” (Ezek. 22:7). The abuse of power continued into the New Testament when Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their behavior and hypocrisy: “They devour widows’ houses and say long prayers just for show. These will receive harsher punishments” (Mk.12:40).

To provide for those less fortunate does not mean it is always a ‘hand out’ but rather a ‘hand-up’. The Israelite priests received only what was tithed to them, compensating them for the duties they performed in the tabernacle. In addition, the Israelites were instructed to care for the less fortunate, not just for their survival but with the promise of God’s blessing.

Give it [tithes] to the Levites, who will receive no allotment of land among you, as well as to the foreigners living among you, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, so they can eat and be satisfied. And the Lord will bless you in all the work of your hands that you do. (Deut. 14:29)

Though not bound by the Mosaic law, the Christian leader today likewise must abide by the principle of giving regularly in abundance (2 Cor. 8:14, 15), setting aside the collection that can be distributed as necessary (2 Cor. 16:1, 2). The Festival of Booths was not only to reflect on Israel’s journey through the wilderness, but was an opportunity to practically meet the needs of the lowliest members of society. “Rejoice during your festival – you, your son and daughter, your male and female slave, as well as the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow within your gates” (Deut. 16:14). The wealthy took additional responsibility for those unable to provide for themselves, recognizing that they were accountable to God for giving back from the blessings that ultimately came from Him.

When you reap the harvest in your field, and you forget a sheaf in the field, do not go back to get it. It is to be left for the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. (Deut. 24:19)

Renewing of the Mind

There is not a single mother’s life that is so damaged by the past, nor so marred with the shame of single motherhood, that God’s power and forgiveness cannot restore her for His glory. Each life is cleansed by the luster of His grace, immensely strengthened in value by His power, and treasured by His love. It is God’s heart to restore the years that have been lost by sin, seeking

repentant hearts, and calling authentic leaders to bring single mothers into the healing transformational process, becoming a trophy of His grace.

The need for renewal. Beginning in Genesis, it was quickly established that man is God's creation, placed within the perfect environment to grow in communion with Him. Following a dialogue amongst the Trinity, God demonstrated that there is both community and ownership in His creation when He said, “Let Us make mankind in Our image, according to Our likeness...So God created man in His own image” (Gen. 1:26 -27). As no other creatures are made in the image of God, mankind has been given a uniqueness unlike anything else in creation.

With the freedom to choose comes the eternal consequences of choice, whether right or wrong. After the fall of man (Gen. 3:1-7), sin separated mankind from the perfect holiness of God. And yet, in His compassion and grace for His creation, God provided a way for restoration and salvation. Beyond mankind's comprehension of time, it was God's desire that none of His creation is lost “but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). The shedding of innocent blood had to be spilt to cover the transgression of sin (Heb. 9:22). Through the ultimate sacrifice of His Son, the innocent blood of Jesus Christ was shed, the price for redemption was paid so that the restoration process could begin.

Examples of restoration and renewal in Scripture.

David. Under the rebuke of God through the prophet Nathan, David confesses his sin “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Sam. 12:13). Whyte (1967) noted, “What shall we ourselves owe to Nathan at that day for that sermon? We should never have had David's psalms but for Nathan's sermon.” (p.245). Writing from a repentant and grateful heart, David pens Psalm 31 with, “How joyful is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!” (31:1).

Samson. In complete surrender in a hopeless situation, God provides the hope of restoration. “But the hair began to grow back after it had been shaved” (Judges 17:22).

Peter. As an encouragement after his remorseful denials of Jesus, the Gospel of Mark records the angel telling the women at the tomb, “But go, tell His disciples and Peter” (Mark 16:7).

The Prodigal Son. God's compassion for His people is so great that He sees His repentant children returning “while still a long way off” (Luke 15:20). “What encouragement, what hope, what comfort, what life from the dead is in that! Blessed be the lips that told this whole incomparable story and added to it these words of gold – ‘a great way off’” (Whyte, 1967, p.365).

God's People. In Deuteronomy, Moses prophesied that due to disobedience and disregard for God's covenant, God's people would turn from Him: “While you are in all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you” (30:1). Yet God still offered His mercy and instructed Moses to proclaim a promise of restoration to the Israelites by saying, “Then He will restore your fortunes, have compassion on you and gather you again from all the people where the Lord your God has scattered you” (30:3). Throughout the Old Testament, God's prophets relentlessly brought His announcement of judgement upon the Israelites and despite their hardness of heart, and yet God always offered the promise of restoration with repentance so that He may be glorified.

Ezekiel describes a shepherd tenderly caring for his flock and bringing back the sheep that have strayed, an image which, as it later emerges, is intended as an analogy of God's care for his people: “And you, my flock, the flock of my pasturage, you are human? I am your God.” (Ganzel, 2010)

Steps to renewal.

Repentance. The challenging part of renewal is the humbling of the heart in repentance. When Jesus forgives sins and adds ‘Go and not sin anymore!’ (John 8:11b), He challenges the sinner to change the present life. He requires the sinner to sincerely abandon the old, and often desirable, ways of life.

Even the most perfect repentance can never undo (repair) the damage once done, but it does not mean that the repentance is useless. On the contrary, repentance is a manifestation of remorse over the damage caused in the past and an expression of the will not to harm anymore. (Michančová, 2010)

In his book, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1994), Nouwen looks through the eyes of the prodigal son upon his return home to his father asking himself, “Do I want to break away from my deep-rooted rebellion against God and surrender myself so absolutely to God's love that a new person can emerge?” Receiving forgiveness requires a total willingness to let God be God and do all the healing, restoring and renewing. The follower must surrender the desires for sin and abandon the life that brings along with it a burden of guilt and shame. “Since life cannot be ‘yokeless’ – conversion [and in this case restoration] must involve an alteration of sovereignty, an exchange of masters, the assumption of a new yoke, that of service to Christ” (Harris, 1999, p. 94).

Change of thinking. To have the mind of Christ, single mothers must turn from human thoughts which are sinful, to those of God, which are heavenly (Is. 55:7-8). Throughout his writings, Paul “thinks that a mature believer is one whose thoughts and corresponding pattern of behavior conform to their status as having the mind of Christ” (Samra, 2005, p. 115). In one of Paul's letters to the Corinthians, he regards spiritual wisdom as his benchmark of maturity and that they are to have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). At the time his writing that letter, many of

the Corinthians were so immature in their walk with the Lord that Paul had to address them as “babies in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:1) and as such, could only feed them “milk to drink” (fundamental Christian instruction) rather than “solid food” (advanced teaching). To mature into solid food, single mothers must be taught how to transform their thinking, attitudes and beliefs to that of Christ.

Change of behaviors and attitudes. If following Christ's attitude and actions as the “standard or norm for believers,” then “the ultimate standard is Christ's love” (Samra, 2005, p. 115). This attitude of love can only be reached if one surrenders the habits and selfish actions of the old self. The love of Christ is not a suggestion, but rather a command to the believer as Jesus said in John 15:9, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.” In Ephesians 3:17-19, Paul prays for the believers, desiring them to be “being rooted and firmly established in love” so that they “may be able to comprehend the depth of Christ's love” in order to be filled with all the fullness of God. In the transformation process, the single mother seeking to change her old behaviors must purposely and prayerfully reflect on the Christ's ministry to capture the depth and richness of His love.

One online journal author noted, “Capturing what Jesus did [on the cross] brings about a surrender and a love in the believer’s heart found in Mark 12:30” (AllAboutFollowingJesus.org,, 2017), which commands believers to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Trying to love people is difficult, and even more difficult to love like Christ when deep wounds have been afflicted by the hands of those who were trusted. In a testimony of personal experience, Miller confessed, “I am convinced that Christian spiritual formation should always, at its core, be about learning to love, especially when loving others is uncomfortable or challenging” (Pettit, 2008). Evidence that

spiritual growth is occurring in Christ-like love is seen in the freedom given through the knowledge of God's truth (Jn. 8:32) and the discernment to expose the lies of the enemy who would seek to deceive and manipulate the Word of God.

Give God the glory. After the recognizing God's abundant mercy, it is imperative that through the leader's guidance and example, the single mother gives God all the glory. King Nebuchadnezzar would have certainly recalled Daniel's example, who through a life of courage and obedience to God, demonstrated the importance of humbling himself before God. After his seven years of discipline, Nebuchadnezzar was swift to exalt the Lord God above all creation by declaring, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and glorify the King of heaven" (Dan. 4:37). Through his repentance, Nebuchadnezzar was restored to his kingdom. In contrast, some 600 years later, another king followed a similar path, except the costly outcome was the result of a prideful heart. King Herod's demonstration of self-proclaimed glory and expectant praise from his subjects was immediately stopped by an angel of the Lord with death by intestinal worms (Acts 12:21-23).

Role of Christian leaders. Under the careful and intentional guidance of a transformational leader, the steps of renewal begin. While renewal can occur under the direction of the Holy Spirit, it is greatly supported by the intervention of a transformational leader firmly rooted in God's truth, the Christian leader is directed to, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom" (Col. 3:16a). When the Christian leader demonstrates authentic transformational leadership as Christ did, the single mother begins to recognize that the life of the leader is modeling a reflection of Christ. As sheep who know the shepherd's voice, they will follow (Jn.10:27) and submit themselves to being discipled into the 'new self' (Eph. 4:22). The leader must guide the single mother into a renewal of their mind, a

process that is a journey not an event. They must encourage and comfort the single mothers through their sufferings, work alongside them in the rigors of daily life, refuse to walk away when times are tough, and give God the glory in all things.

To model. As a young child imitates the actions and behaviors of their parents, it is essential that the daily process of ‘putting of the old self’ (Eph. 4:22) is being modeled by spiritually mature Christian leaders to the single mother. If it would be unreasonable to expect a child to grow socially, emotionally, spiritually or physically without the interaction and presence of others, then one cannot expect spiritual growth from a single mother in the transformation process without the modeling of the ‘new self’ (Eph. 4:24). It is therefore necessary to for Christian leaders to model Christ-like behaviors that would lead single mothers into the image of God. In his desperate plea of correction to the Galatians, Paul begs them to, “Become like me” (Gal. 4:12). He then encourages the Philippians to follow his example of godly living when he asks them to, “Join in imitating me” (Phil. 3:17). Paul believes that through his example, insisting that others do likewise, creates “a means of imitating Christ” which is a “standard of maturity” (Samra, 2006, p. 5).

To disciple. From a leadership perspective, the concept of discipline is one that seeks to persuade a change of behaviors or attitudes within an individual. The intent is to create an atmosphere of rehabilitation from former thinking and drive a positive change deep down into the heart. For the Christian leader guiding the single mother in a transformational change, the challenge then becomes a necessity to “prepare and encourage people to deal with change” (Northouse, 2016, p. 257). Each single mother and her family are going to experience varying degrees of change in different seasons of their lives, but the spiritually mature Christian leader can “help followers deal with conflicting values that emerge in changing work environments and

social contexts” (Northouse, 2016, p. 275). One of the goals for the Christian leader who is discipling the single mother is to ultimately foster an improved life in the present and for her children in the future.

To guide. As a leader grows in the knowledge of God, and earnestly seeks His will, the leader will comprehend more clearly God's plan for their life and the lives of others. “Those who walk in wisdom receive God's clear direction for their lives” (Stanley, 2002, p. 42). With the privilege and responsibility of guiding others, it is critical to hear God's voice, discern His direction and to wisely move in the path of His instruction. This responsibility comes with severe consequences if a leader neglected to guide one of His disciples, including single mothers, away from sin. “But whoever causes the downfall of one of these little ones who believe in Me. It would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea!” (Matt. 18:6).

In *Being Conformed to Christ in Community*, Samra noted that

Paul's desire to see his readers excel in faith (2 Cor. 8:7), grow in faith (2 Cor. 10:15) and be strengthened in faith (1 Thess. 3:2) is in part a desire to see them more fully identify themselves with Christ. (Samra, 2006, p.115)

Pettit (2008) stated that “in the process of spiritual growth, God is doing an ‘inside’ job. He invades us with his Spirit, interpreting spiritual things with a Spirit who knows his mind and heart” (p. 106). Pettit went on to quote Lightner, “Spiritual formation describes the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer which conforms the child of God more and more to the image of Christ” (p. 247). As the repentant single mother surrenders to Christ and grows in her faith, the work of the Holy Spirit transforms her into His image bearer, His likeness, and His fullness.

To bring glory to God. Leaders must make intentional steps to seek God's will to avoid becoming content with the accomplishment of everyday tasks that allow self-glorification to seep into their success. “True spiritual leaders value glorifying God more than they do personal or organizational success” (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, p. 142). Blackaby continues to reinforce this principle by stating “the goal of bringing glory to God must always be the impetus behind the efforts of every Christian” (2001, p. 142). In the restoration process, the leader must lead by example to the single mother, by bringing glory to God for His abundant mercy and forgiveness, and His abundant blessings. “Bringing people to spiritual maturity, developing leaders and, most importantly, bringing glory to God ought to be basic objectives of every leader” (p. 145).

Effectiveness of a transformational Christian leader. According to internationally recognized leadership expert Maxwell (2008), there are four questions to ask to measure the success and effectiveness of a leader. These will be applied to the renewal process of single mothers: “Are they following the influence of their leader? Are they growing in Christ? Is there visible change? Are they succeeding?” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 77-80). If these four questions are used as the benchmarks to guide the single mother through an effectiveness transformation, evidence of change should begin to emerge, and spiritual growth is visible. In answering the question, ‘Are they growing in Christ?’ biblically speaking, it would be difficult *not* to grow if one is truly seeking a transformed life that is desiring to know God and being conformed to Him. This growing transformation process requires more than just following God – one must know God. In order to know God and thus reflect the image of God, it is vital for the Christian leader to teach the single mother to stay focused on the person and work of Jesus Christ through whom God has revealed Himself.

With growth, other evidence of a transformed life would be seen in their character. “Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (Col. 3:12). The renewing of their mind by nurturing an intimate relationship with God through prayer, worship and reading His Word, which produces Christ-like attitudes and behaviors. “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me; practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:9). The spiritual formation of a renewed life produces the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self- control. Authentic spiritual growth can only flow from a relationship with Jesus Christ which becomes a reflection of His attributes and births a fruitful life that walks in His character.

In His Image. The creation of mankind in “the image of God” places humanity as the pinnacle of all of God's creation. Being nurtured through a special connection with God, only mankind enjoys this intimate attention. How sweet was the communion of man with God, walking together in the garden, growing towards eternal glory in perfect holiness? Yet, confronted by the smooth lies of the serpent, humanity jeopardized the face-to-face relationship with God and as a result, opened the door to the devastating consequences of sin. With humanity's dignity and purpose now damaged by sin, “humanity is not able to live out God's intentions for people created in God's likeness-image” (Kilner, 2015, p. 69). Thus, God intervened on behalf of His creation and provided a standard, His Son Jesus Christ, as the exact imprint of His image (Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:3). Through Jesus Christ as the standard for humanity’s renewal, God’s intention for humanity is secure – to become conformed into the undamaged image of Christ.

The dialogue of humanity created in the image of God has been (and continues to be) immense, causing debates and divisions between theologians and philosophers for centuries. It is necessary to firmly establish from the beginning that God's image has not been damaged, marred, or in any way diminished from the ramifications of humanity's sin. As such, this position will be supported through biblical evidence, developing a theologically sound doctrine, and address some of the contrary views that have been presented historically. Knowledge of this critical study is only profitable when applied to daily living, particularly in education and leadership. It would be a contradiction to Christian living, and an insult to God, if leaders were not reflecting the image of Christ in their lifestyle and failing to grow through the special connection with God that brings Him glory.

How is it that only the creation of man receives the blessing of being created in the image of God? After five days of creation, God announces six times that “it is good” (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), and yet there was nothing made considered to be in His image. It is at this point that God declares, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). Yancey (2004) pointed out a unique thought as to the distinction between animals and man. Yancey stated, “Adam was already biologically alive – the other animals needed no special puff of oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon dioxide to start them breathing, so why should man?” (p. 241). The Genesis 2 account declares that God “breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7b). In one life-giving moment, man becomes both physical and spiritual. “This single act of special creation, God breathing into man the breath of life, distinguished humanity from all other creatures” (Yancey, 2004, p. 241). Only humanity is created in the image of God, perfectly formed and with a special, spirit-breathed connection. “The entire Old Testament insists upon the central truth that God is spirit and that no physical

image can capture God's essence" (2004, p. 255). "God the spirit agreed to become a human being. Christ came to earth to offer us an image in the purest sense of the word: a precise reflection of what the Father is like, in bodily form" (2004, p. 257).

Badly damaged by sin, including the special relationship with God, humanity is no longer able to fulfill God's eternal intentions. Condemned, but not without hope, the renewal of the image of God in humanity is possible, only by the conforming and transforming to the image of His Son. Romans 8:29 speaks of this spiritual renewal when Paul states, "For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son." Both Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:9-10 describe how humanity must "put off the old self" and "put on the new self" as a daily behavior that is continuously being renewed to reflect the image of God. No longer is humanity bound by sin, but through the glorified Christ. "We will also bear the image of the heavenly man" (I Cor. 15:49b).

Historically, each theologian, or Christian for that matter, would claim their view of the image of God is biblical. The Enlightenment age assured mankind that the image of God was the ability to reason; Pietists identified it as the spiritual faculty; Victorians claimed it as the capacity to make moral judgments; and Renaissance thinkers located the image of God in artistic creativity (Yancey, 2004). It is therefore of utmost importance that one avoids "reading into the idea whatever is central to their theology" or that "they have made the word [image of God] mean just what they choose it to mean" (Kilner, 2015, p. 43). Humanity is not God, nor are they like God. Kilner (2015) also pointed out that, "when people assume that being in God's image is about ways that people are presently like God, they are disposed to read into God's image whatever traits or capacities their contemporary culture admires" (2015, p. 49).

Fundamentally and Scripturally based, only Christ is God's image, the standard to which humanity is to reflect God's divine attributes. "When people look at Christ, they see an expression of all the divine attributes in a way that reveals who God is and models how God intends for people to be in the world" (2015, p. 61). Kilner (2015) addressed several misunderstandings of how human attributes have deemed the standard for which the image of God is measured, each with serious deficiencies. The four noted attributes are reason, righteousness, rulership, and relationships (Kilner, 2015). Each of these attributes is divinely appointed by God and must "flow from the image of God" (p. 230), not yet perfected until glorification. Therefore, until Christ's return, it is God's intention for mankind to reject the old humanity and undergo a renewal according to Christ's character, the perfect image of God. "God is asking us to be the chief bearers of his likeness in the world" (Yancey, 2004, p. 242). Though not complete until glorification, humanity must choose to "reflect various godly attributes to God's glory" (2004, p. 240), experiencing a glimpse of eternal life through Christ, anticipating for what God has waiting in heaven.

Without hesitation, it must be the Christian leader's goal to guide all people, including single mothers, through the lies and deception of today's culture by affirming their worth as God's image bearers. Even with the constant threats of legal and political barriers which would seek to keep the presence of God out of society, the task is critical. The lives of the Christian leaders must be vigilant in modeling one that conforms to Christ's image so, "that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). Their lives must strive to reflect the character of Christ, who is the image of God, which brings hope and healing to single mothers.

Transformational Leadership in Scripture

With mature discipling, teaching, mentoring and training, this transformational process brings hope to all, particularly the single mother who struggles with personal identity, economic deficit, social stigma, and parental inadequacies. A new outlook on life from a Christian perspective will strengthen the single mother. The role of transformational leadership in Christian leaders then becomes necessary to guide the single mother towards spiritual formation and family stability, breaking the generational pattern and ultimately becoming whom God intends her to be “in His image.”

This genuine change process requires one to “take off your former way of life” (Eph. 4:22), followed by putting “on the new self, the one created according to God’s likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth” (4:24). The inception of the new self that launches the journey of humanity’s renewal towards the image of God must begin with a spiritual rebirth – conforming and transformation to the life of Jesus Christ. This challenging course of action requires the leadership and guidance of spiritually mature Christian mentors, providing sound counsel that promotes healthy and fruitful growth for both the single mother and for her children. Ultimately, the children will see their mother model this new life in Christ, teaching them to be firmly rooted in Him through all trials, rejoicing in all things, with the hope of knowing God has plans to give “a future and a hope” (Jer.29:11).

Jesus. With the understanding that transformational leadership seeks to “seek to change existing thoughts, techniques and goals for better results and the greater good” (Transformational Leadership, n.d.), there is no greater leader for such a transformation than the image of God Himself, Jesus Christ. Longing to have His people conform into His image and fulfill their destiny, Christ in His sinless life, modeled the ultimate standard to which humanity is to reflect

God's divine attributes, guided through the power of the Holy Spirit. "When people look at Christ, they see an expression of all the divine attributes in a way that reveals who God is and models how God intends for people to be in the world" (Kilner, 2015, p. 61).

In what ways could Jesus' simple life on earth reflect a transformational leader? He Himself did not need any correction of behavior, a renewing of thoughts, redirected moral vision, or an adjustment to future goals. But He knew humanity's eternal destiny was condemned if their old self was not transformed. In public and in private, Jesus lived, taught, and loved through the lens of an intimate relationship with His Father, guiding His followers to lead others towards the greatest mandate: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19-20).

As a powerful leader capable of raising the dead, Jesus did not entice, bribe or commission His followers but rather drew them to Himself through a life servanthood. "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Coleman (2008) suggests that the foundational of all Christian leadership is understanding the principle of servanthood – taking up the cross and following Christ (p. 2). Burns and Shoupt (2014) further discusses Jesus' teaching,

The Sermon on the Mount clearly casts a compelling vision of a possible future and a compelling moral vision as well. Furthermore, Jesus clearly modeled this vision in his own life. He was willing to suffer and turn the other cheek; he practiced solitary prayer and often explicitly attempted to avoid drawing attention to himself; he fulfilled the law, being perfect even as his heavenly Father was perfect. In all these ways and hundreds more, Jesus embodied the moral vision that he taught. He explicitly serves as a model for his disciples, whom he tells to serve as he himself served, to love as he loved, to do the works that he did and to teach others to do the same (John 14:12; Matthew 28:19-20). (p. 79)

Through His love, Jesus surrounded Himself with the lost and hurting. There were none too far from His mercy. "All the tax collectors and sinners were approaching to listen to him"

(Lk. 15:1). He showed compassion to the adulterous woman (Jn. 8:3-11). Jesus' simple actions of dining with Zacchaeus demonstrated a dramatic impact on a life transformed. With the exclamation through the eyes of a new life reborn, Zacchaeus proclaims, "Look, I will give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord! And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I'll pay back four times as much!" (Lk. 19: 8). Being drawn to Him by the destitute, demonstrating intentional leadership to His disciples, giving individualized attention to those who are hurting, and speaking wisdom to confront His challengers, Jesus Christ as the image of God is the divine example of a transformational leader.

Paul. The demonstration of an old life completely surrendered to the Christ of the Gospel could not be more evident than in the life of Paul. A transformed life turned into a transformational leader. Only a few years after the approved stoning of Stephen, the apostle Paul is now claiming, "For me, living is Christ and dying is gain" (Phil. 1:21). His new and transformed goal is to preach the Person and the resurrected power of Jesus Christ. "My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Phil. 3:11). "The power of the resurrection combines with a clear focus on the mission of proclaiming the gospel to form the foundation of Paul's theology of leadership" (Burns & Shoup, 2014, p. 80). Burns and Shoup (2014) stated:

Paul is determined to influence people at every opportunity to follow his pattern of living: He calls the Romans to be transformed by the renewal of their minds (Romans 12:1-2). He wants the Colossians to set their minds on things above, not on earthly things (Colossians 3:1-4). The Ephesians are encouraged to be renewed in the spirit of their minds (Ephesians 4:23-24). What is striking in these passages is not just that Paul is calling his followers to a radically different lifestyle—to live as new men and to put off the old man—but that he emphasizes the absolutely central role that the mind plays in this process. Sound, biblical teaching should produce a transformed mind. This mind, as he tells the Corinthians, no longer views things "from a worldly point of view," but rather from the perspective of a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:16-17). (p. 81)

In his letter to the Corinthians, “Paul challenges the Corinthians to attend to the eschatological project of the Lord God who raised up the crucified Christ and who thereby inaugurated the eschatological covenant that is now being inscribed on their hearts by the Spirit” (Scholla, 1997, p. 17). It is evident that as a transformational leader, Paul’s mission is to shape believers towards the image of God, with an eschatological anticipation to see God’s glory both now in the present and in the future. In addition, Paul knows that while humanity gradually transforms towards this future hope, humanity will experience new spiritual life while in an earthly body. In his own life, Paul demonstrates that through his suffering and negative circumstances, he strives to reflect Christ’s example and serves as an instrument that guides a spiritual formation towards the promised eternal glory. “Therefore, we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16).

Not only does Paul address churches and large groups, but he takes the time to mentor and guide individuals. Burns and Shoup (2014) said:

Paul’s letters are also full of instances of assigning people tasks for transformative purposes. For example, he sent Onesimus, the runaway slave, as a messenger to his previous master (Philemon 10-16); and he sent Epaphroditus back to the Philippians both as an encouragement to them and as an opportunity for them to honor him for his sacrificial service (Philippians 2:25-30). (p. 82)

Paul makes intentional connections and consistent involvement with the transformational process of those around him, not simply a dictator of the Word of God from a distance. When personal instruction was not possible, Paul often sent representatives in his place. For example, Timothy was dispatched to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:17), not only as a courier but as a student and a pastor-in-training. Modeling what he would ultimately die for, Paul encouraged others to

follow his example. Even being known as “fools for Christ” (1 Cor. 4:10), Paul urges the Corinthians “to imitate me” (4:16, 11:1). Considered to be one of the most zealous apostles, Paul could be considered as an excellent transformational leader who exemplified Bass’ definition of one who “seek[s] to change existing thoughts, techniques and goals for better results and the greater good” (Transformational Leadership, n.d.).

As demonstrated throughout Scripture, transformation leadership squarely rooted on a theological framework provides an approach conducive to guiding single mothers into a genuine transformational change. When fully committed to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the transformational approach for Christian leadership is dynamic, seeking to reflect Christ as the image of God, the ultimate example.

Jesus defines in His life and works the meaning of transformational leadership – leadership that shows not only the nature of the Kingdom of God but also how it comes into the world as His followers go forth in the power of His Spirit to emulate His lifestyle. (Coleman, 2008, p. 1)

Thus, it should be the desire and mission of every Christian leader, educator, and Christian professional working in social services, to see a renewal of the image of God in single mothers by providing every opportunity to guide these mothers into a transformed life that will in turn model a lifestyle that produces a transformational change in their children for generations yet to come.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Within the last several decades, considerable attention has been given to the methods of leadership and education. “Research on transformational, or charismatic, leadership became a dominant research strand, producing a number of studies confirming that transformational leaders had a more powerful impact than those who relied only on transactional approaches”

(Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 333). Understanding that many methods could well serve the Christian leader, the transformational leadership theory and transformational learning theory will be evaluated for the purposes of this paper. To begin, one must first research the history, the definitions, and the applications of these theories in order to effectively integrate them into the method of guiding single mothers into a genuine transformational change through spiritual formation. It is the desire that through these two theories, Christian leaders can lead single mothers through a transformational way of thinking which approaches the aspects of life with a biblical worldview, and in turn model a stable lifestyle as an example to their children for generations to come.

Transformational Leadership Theory

The term transformational leadership was first coined by sociologist Downton in 1973 (STU Online, 2018) but was more widely developed by leadership expert Burns in 1978. Transformational leadership motivates followers by appealing to higher ideals and moral values (Lussier & Achua, 2013), and so the transformational leader is considered a visionary who wants to change the status quo by articulating to followers the problems in the current situation and present a compelling vision of what the future can be (Lussier & Achua, 2013). The essence of transformational leadership appears to be inspiring, developing, and empowering followers (Yukl & Uppal, 2017). Looking at the work by Burns and Bass will set the foundation as to which the transformation theory may be perceived by Christian leaders and educational professionals.

James Burns. Burns proposed two leadership approaches to getting work done: transactional and transformational. “The transformational label comes from the assessments of a leader’s past performance rather than follower attributions” (Lussier & Achua, 2013, p. 331).

According to Burns, “Transforming leadership is a process in which leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation” (Transformational Leadership, n.d.).

Bernard M. Bass. In 1985, researcher Bass further added to Burns’ studies, inspired by a statement made by Count Cavour: “If you can’t measure it, you don’t know what you’re talking about” (Bass, 1995, p. 463). Bass believed that “transformational leaders as those who seek to change existing thoughts, techniques and goals for better results and the greater good” (Transformational Leadership, n.d.). “Bass set out to understand transformational leadership... he attempts to build a model of the transformational leader, the kind who engenders from others ‘performance beyond expectations’”(McCall, 1986, p. 1). Bass then developed the theory of transformational leadership, seeking to distinguish the defining characteristics between a transactional leader and a transformational leader. “According to the Bass Theory of Transformational Leadership, transformational leaders possess good visioning, rhetorical and impressive management skills, and use them to develop strong emotional bonds with followers” (Bass & Stogdill, 1991). Bass also believed that transformational leaders “can be found in any organization at any level, and this type of leadership is universally relevant for all types of situations” (Yukl & Uppal, 2017, p. 348).

In addition, Bass proposed that “there are four major factors comprising transformational leadership: charisma, inspirational leadership, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation” (McCall, 1986, p. 1). By combining these factors, a “transformational leader helps followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers’ needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 3).

Transformational Leadership from Christian Leadership Perspective

According to educator Wilhoit, the transformational approach for Christian leadership is best as it “seeks to foster a radical change in learner-disciples by remaking them from the inside out” (1986, p. 91). Being particularly interested in the transforming process that a leader guides a new Christian, the other approaches do not address “the radical nature of New Testament sanctification or the active and passive aspects of Christian growth” (Wilhoit, 1986, p. 91). Called to guide and teach, Christian leaders must use every opportunity to usher the whole body (physical, emotional and spiritual) towards the putting off the old humanity and transforming into the new self. As Christians lead, their leadership should be interwoven with the higher calling of carrying out the ministry of reconciliation in a fallen world. Reconciliation with God essentially calls for the transforming work of redemption and sanctification. Christian leaders, then, must serve others by using their gifts and talents to facilitate transforming redemption and sanctification in the lives of those they lead (Burns & Shoup, 2014).

Transformation leadership provides a framework that offers an approach conducive to a Christian perspective, only when the leader serves with a mindset of Christlikeness. If the perception of the leader gradually shifts towards a self-serving agenda, then Bass' definition becomes strictly secular in that he or she is “aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 3), absent of a redemptive goal. When fully committed to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the transformational approach for Christian leadership is dynamic, seeking to reflect Christ as the image of God, the ultimate example.

Jesus defines in His life and work the meaning of transformational leadership - leadership that shows not only the nature of the Kingdom of God, but also how it comes into the

world as His followers go forth in the power of His Spirit to emulate His lifestyle. (Coleman, 2008)

Thus, it should be the desire of every Christian leader and educator to see a renewal of the image of God in humanity by providing every opportunity to guide others into a transformed life.

Transformational Learning Theory

Falling in line with the basis of transformational leadership, “Transformational learning is not teacher-centered, but learner-centered” (Young, 2013, p. 322). The result is “convictional knowing” (Young, 2013, p. 325) in which one’s origin and destiny are grounded in God, and He becomes the goal of all learning. Thus, transformational learning best compliments the leadership of a transformational learner when the environment allows the learner to reflect on experiences and consequences from the past. Transformational learning occurs when there is a shift in thinking. Young describes this occurrence as:

The process that leads to this perspective transformation begins with a disorienting event or dilemma in which an individual's core beliefs and understanding of reality are challenged by an experience that contradicts them. This experience can be as overt as a natural disaster or family tragedy or as unapparent as an inner cognitive or emotional crisis of faith. (Young, 2013)

In leading single mothers through a transformational change, the transformational leader must seek ways to change the perceptions of single mothers from their previous ways of thinking to one that anchored with a Biblical worldview. “One of the most powerful tools for fostering transformative learning is providing students with learning experiences that are direct, personally engaging and stimulate reflection upon experience” (Taylor, 2007, p. 182). This becomes more than merely a classroom of instructional teaching and head knowledge. “Transformative learning transcends skills acquisition “to affect changes in frames of reference, because individuals and groups step out of their ‘habits of mind’” (Choy, 2009, p. 66). Therefore, the learning

environment is best supported by a framework of trust, encouragement, affirmation, and loving correction as the single mothers begin to see themselves created in God's image.

In this learning environment, the single mothers must be led through steps that will help them reshape their previously conceived ideas of who they are and even reinterpret past events. Restructuring the steps found in the secular framework proposed by Loder in 1973, Young constructs five phases of transitional learning, which provided some consideration to the line of inquiry in this study:

Phase 1: The Disorienting Dilemma (Compares with Loder's "Conflict" – Step 1)

Phase 2: The Journey of Desperate Hope (Compares with Loder's "Scanning" – Step 2)

Phase 3: The Transforming Moment (Compares with Loder's "Convictional Experience" – Step 3)

Phase 4: The Surge of Vitality (Compares with Loder's "Release of Energy" – Step 4)

Phase 5: Growth (Compares with Loder's "Interpretation" – Step 4). (Young, 2013, p. 325)

Related Literature

If transformational leadership by the Christian leader has the effect of, "influencing followers to shift from a focus on self-interest to a focus of collective interests" (Lussier & Achua, 2016, p. 332), then it is essential to create an effective learning culture. Studies reveal the transformational leadership theory produces leaders who have a more powerful impact (Bolman & Deal, 2017) upon followers who willingly embrace the compelling vision of a changed future. By guiding single mothers through a transformational learning process, the Christian leaders will help single mothers' approach integral aspects of their life with a God-centered and biblical worldview. The desire for a higher education, increased family stability, and a weakening of the

generational cycle of single parenting will be approached with a ‘new self’ – the renewal of their minds by putting off the ‘old self.’

Transformational Learning Theory

In its simplest form, the transformational learning theory suggests that people learn, make decisions and act through the lens of their worldview that is framed by their assumptions and reflections of their life experiences. “The particular worldview may or may not be well articulated, but it is usually based on a set of paradigmatic assumptions that derive from the individual’s upbringing, life experience, culture or education” (Christie, Carey, Robertson, & Grainger, 2015, p. 11). Mezirow (2017) described transformative learning as “learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change” (p. 10). Mezirow was interested in peoples’ worldviews and what leads people to change their individual view of the world. Of significant interest in this research is how transformative learning “changes not only what we know; it also changes how we know” (Seifert, 2013, p. 35). Mezirow (2000) stated that transformation typically follows some variation of the following phases:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles

9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (2000)

To guide a single mother through a transformational change requires the “putting off the old self” (Eph. 4:22), the process of shifting her current worldview towards her “new self” (Eph. 4:24) mandates a change in her way of thinking. “Transformative learning should attend to the deliberate efforts and designs that support changes in the learner’s form [or way] of knowing” (Seifert, 2013, p. 41). Unless there is a complete submission to this transformational change, the results are simply temporary. To ensure long-term change and true transformation, the “act of learning can be called transformative only if it involves a fundamental questioning and reordering of how one thinks or acts. If something is transformed, it is different from what it was before at a very basic level” (Brookfield, 2000, p. 139).

Jack Mezirow. Mezirow put forth the concept of transformative learning through his study with women who chose to continue their formal education by returning to community college after being away from school for many years (1991). As the women in Mezirow’s study grew in their understandings of their personal, cultural, and social histories, they were able to modify their assumptions and expectations of learning. “Mezirow (2000) asserts that personal transformation happens when a person has a transformation in perspective, in a frame of reference, and in a habit of mind; therefore, transformative learning involves a reordering of assumptions” (Seifert, 2013, p. 35).

Transformational Learning from Christian Leadership Perspective

Transformative learning attempts to explain how our expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning we derive from our experiences. It is the revision of meaning structures from experiences that is addressed by the theory of perspective transformation” (Transformative Learning Theory, n.d., p. 6)

From these experiences, there must be a critical reflection that follows. “Critical reflection on experience is key to transformational learning. Having an experience is not enough to effect a transformation” (Criticos, 1993). Merriam (2004) discussed Criticos’ (1993) observations that what is valuable is not the experience itself but, “the intellectual growth that follows the process of reflecting on experience. Effective learning does not follow from a positive experience but from effective reflection” (Merriam, 2004, p. 62).

Transformational Learning from Instructional Perspective

The transformative learning theory is focused on adult learning, particularly in the context of post-secondary education (Craig et al., 2001; King, 2002). Mezirow (1997) did not see transformative learning as an “add-on” educational practice or technique. Mezirow saw it as the very essence of adult education, such that the goal of adult education is “to help the individual become a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings, and purpose rather than uncritically acting on those of others” (1997, p. 10). Mezirow stated that “adult education must facilitate experiences for adults that allow them to formulate more dependable beliefs about their experiences by assessing the contexts in which they occur. Seifert noted that Mezirow believed that “this process leads to an understanding of meaning and facilitates decision-making” (2013, p. 36). As such, the educational environment must promote opportunities for the learners (single mothers) to be guided in the changing from their previously formed worldview towards learning and making decisions through the lens of a transforming biblical worldview.

In the educational setting, both the instruction and the instructor are instrumental for the overall transformational success. “Pedagogical approaches used within the classroom can have a

direct influence on the environmental capacity for transformative learning to occur” (Haber-Curran, & Tillapaugh, 2015, p. 67). With the complexities of single-motherhood, one method of interest is Problem Based Learning (PBL). “PBL is a student-driven, collaborative and reflective learning process” (Shepherd & Cogswright, 1998, p. 348) in which students are faced with real-world problems resembling those they are likely to face in the future. PBL challenges traditional approaches to instruction that emphasize what students should know, instead of emphasizing how knowledge can be acquired and applied in practice (Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2015; Shepherd & Cogswright, 1998).

To ensure the long-term effectiveness of any transformational learning, the responsibility to falls into the hands of the transformational leader. Transformative learning is a process, and instructors play a pivotal role in constructing learning environments in which students learn to be critically reflective and examine their own beliefs. Instructors who promote transformative learning “create a common ground of intellectual commitment...[and] stimulate active, not passive, learning and encourage students to be critical, creative thinkers, with the capacity to go on learning after their college days are over” (Boyer, 1997, p. 24). Student learning is at the core of transformative education; thus, instruction moves past the control-based models of teaching to be student centered (Dyson, 2010; Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2015).

Weakening the Generational Cycle

The importance of the parental role model at home is believed to shape how a child’s future is prone to become. Over the years, this belief (McCord & McCord, 1958) has become reality, as research in various disciplines (Harper & McLanahan, 2004; Scafidi, 2008) has determined that the family environment has an effect on the success of a child’s future. The educational effects will be addressed in greater detail following, but it is important to briefly look

at other potential generational implications that single motherhood has upon single mothers' children.

Criminally. Studies reveal that in addition to parent child relationships or mothers' education levels, a child raised outside of an intact marriage is more likely to commit crimes as a teen and young adult (Scafidi, 2008). In one study, Harper and McLanahan (2004) found that boys reared in single-mother households were more than twice as likely to commit a crime that lead to incarceration when compared to children who grew up with both their parents (Scafidi, 2008). Typically, children reared in single-mother households are more than twice as likely to engage in criminal activities as children reared in a married household (Harper & McLanahan, 2004). Not surprising, criminal rates were found higher in children raised by parents who have a criminal background. The rate increases when there is both a criminal father and a passive or rejecting mother (McCord & McCord, 1958).

Relationally. One can only imagine the relational implications that living with insufficient financial means and inadequate educational abilities could have on both single mothers and their children. Looking forward, the literature demonstrates that growing up in poverty increases the risk of becoming a single parent as well as the risk of academic failure for one's children. In addition, some parents have personal traits that predict poor academic outcomes for children, such as low cognitive ability, personality disorders, alcohol or substance use problems, and poor social and parenting skills. These traits also increase the risk of relationship disruptions and the formation of single-parent households (Amato et al., 2015).

Education - Single Mothers and Their Children

It is recognized that education is critical to the deepening of knowledge and development of skills that may open doors to opportunities that would generate income to meet the practical

needs of the family (Hicks, 2018; Smith-Thompson, 2016). In response, single mothers may investigate the local community college which offers evening and online courses, but the cost of tuition is beyond reach while working a service industry job. Even with financial assistance to attend such classes, hourly wages could dramatically be reduced due to the demands of school, causing bills to become delinquent. Additionally, the dilemma of childcare becomes more complicated – additional costs are incurred, more time is spent away from the family, and parental involvement in the educational development of the children is minimal at best. If the degree or certification from a vocational institution cannot be accomplished, single mothers risk losing the opportunity for a better paying job. And without the better paying job, the cost for further education is out of reach. Can single mothers break free from this circular pattern, delivering the lie that there is no way out? Desperate prayers of these women plead for a better future for their children, believing that somehow they will break free from this hopelessness. Is this a false perception or a reality for the single mother?

Single mothers' education. Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that the educational level of a single mother has a direct effect on the well-being of the single mother and her children (Hicks, 2018; Nomaguchi, 2011; Williams, 2016). In addition, it is proven that a teenage birth compounds this dilemma and reduces educational attainment (McLanahan & Percheski, 2008). Students who drop out of high school typically are not preparing for future possibilities of furthering their education at a four-year university (Smith-Thompson, 2016). Research conducted by Smith-Thompson (2016) revealed that single mothers furthering their education described personal challenges in terms of three categories: academic issues, financial issues and psychological issues. The benefits for those single mothers who overcome these challenges are generational, increasing the probable outcome for their children. Studies

conducted by Carneiro, Meghir, and Parey (2013) provided intriguing statistics, including the findings that a one-year increase in mother's education reduces the probability of grade repetition, and each year of maternal education produces a slightly smaller increase in the math score of the child.

Effect on financial strain. Without the college degree, or even a high school diploma, the financial strain is greater for the single mother than for those women who are married. “The results revealed that higher educational attainment was associated with increased earnings, which in turn were associated with less financial strain. Financial strain, together with lower educational attainment, predicted elevated levels of depressive symptoms” (Jackson, 2000). Thus, with the lack of sufficient income, both the single mother and her children are affected, and their reactions to the strain will vary.

Poverty, regardless of source of income, is associated with diminished school achievement and high behavior problems, even when factors such as parental education, mother's age at birth, family structure, and residential relocations (all associated with low income) are controlled for. (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997b; Lipman & Offord, 1997; McLanahan, 1997; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). (Jackson, 2000) Other studies echo similar findings: “The biggest reason that children born to unmarried mothers tend to have problems – they're more likely to drop out of school and commit crimes, is that they tend to grow up poor” (Bazelon, 2009).

Effect on educational achievement of single mother's children. Two known factors have contributed to the lower academic achievement of children in single mother homes. The first factor is the one-parent family structure itself. According to the 2018 US Census Bureau, there are 11 million children under the age of 18 living with single parents. In 1960, children living with single parents was recorded at 9%, and steadily increased to 28% in 2012 (Child Trends, 2013). Additional research confirms that children in single-parent households score

below children in two-parent households, on average, on measures of educational achievement (Amato, 2005; Brown, 2010; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994). The second factor of lower educational achievement for children in single mother homes, is the educational level of the single mother herself (Amato et al., 2015). This is particularly due to financial instability, emotional stress, and inability to assist in their children's educational achievements (Hicks, 2018; Nomaguchi, 2006, Williams, 2016).

Children with delinquent fathers receive, on average, 11.5 years of education. Readers may rightly infer that the majority of these children will not graduate from high school, while their peers growing up in a two-parent home are more likely to. (Wright, 2012)

In a study conducted by Pong, Dronkers, and Hampden-Thompson (2003), it was found that single-parent family status was negatively associated with math and science achievement scores. Further, this phenomena is not unique to the United States. Their research shows that an educational gap exists between children from single-parent families and those from two-parent families in other Western industrialized countries, including Britain (Cherlin et al., 1991; Kiernan, 1992), the Netherlands (Borgers, Dronkers, & Van Praag, 1996; Bosman & Louwes, 1982; Dronkers, 1994), Sweden (McNab & Murray, 1985; Murray & Sandqvist, 1990), and Switzerland (Oggenfuss, 1984).

Family Stability

There are unique burdens that fall upon the shoulders of single mothers, whether attributed to divorce, death, or a choice of separation by the other parent. “Over the last 50 years, more than a thousand studies have examined the factors that predict healthy adjustment in children and adolescents” (Lamb, 2012, p. 99). The way in which the single mother adapts (or succumbs) to their circumstances, has a direct effect the well-being of their children (Klebanow,

1976). This literature review will look briefly at the threat upon the single mother's family stability from a social, emotional, and practical aspect.

Social. In the life of a single mother, it is important for the Christian leader or educator to recognize the factors that impact the psychological well-being of the single mother's child. Extensive studies have shown that children of single parents are always 'adjusting' to the factors in their life such as divorce, death, and frequent moving. When the single mother is the sole voice that speaks into the life of her child, there is an absence of collaborative construction, training, and influence. To overcome this exclusive shaping of her child towards a healthy psychological well-being, it seems necessary to wisely choose those who promote such a goal. "The relationships between the adults intimately involved in children's lives can be as influential as the quality of the dyadic relationships between children and their parent figures" (Lamb, 2012, p. 101). The transformational Christian leader who is actively involved in the life of the single mother and her children, has the opportunity to become a positive influence in light of the absent parent. Studies show "that mothers who receive higher levels of social support are more nurturant toward their children than are those who receive lower levels of support" (Jackson et al., 2000, p. 4). Such a great responsibility and blessing are those who are called to mentor and disciple the single mother and her children!

Emotional. Statistics reveal that "47% of Millennials births in 2012 were to unwed mothers" (Martin, 2015). Falling under the self-perceived stigma from being a single mother, these women may come across as well put-together, but inwardly are carrying the weight of guilt and shame that keeps them from asking for assistance. They are already facing an unspoken discrimination in the professional world and often considered less capable of their male

counterparts. Kunzel (1993) stated that “most histories of women and the professions, portray women as excluded from or at the margins of the professions” (p. 3).

In a society that has pushed for cultural freedom, does the single mother still experience the stigma of being unwed or having children out of wedlock in the 21st century? “Prior studies suggest that single mothers rarely attend religious services, perhaps because of the stigma placed on single motherhood within many religious institutions” (Petts, 2012). Whether real or perceived, this quiet judgment toward single mothers could add to an already existing negative mindset. This perception, combined with an attitude of doubt, discouragement and depression, begins to seep into the thinking of single mothers (Peden et al., 2004).

Petts’ (2012) study of 1,14 single mothers found that “those [single mothers] who attend religious services are more likely to experience positive developmental outcomes for their children” (p. 264). Petts continued to suggest that “even though many religious institutions promote the traditional family model and may have difficulty accepting and addressing the needs of diverse families, a sizable percentage of single mothers attend religious services despite these barriers” (p. 264).

So often, single mothers and subsequently their children, are so desperate for acceptance, advice, and guidance, they will throw themselves at anyone who will listen. In, *In a Different Voice* (1982), Gilligan (1982) discovered that “women and girls frequently turned to another voice that of concern, and connection, in finding answers to their moral dilemmas” (p. 16). These other ‘voices’ need to be mature Christian leaders, strategically placed in the life of the single mother and her children, to protect them from those who would seek to prey on vulnerability and weakness. It is critical that Christian leaders and the church intentionally use every opportunity to guide the single mother and her family. Even at a basic emotional level, “involvement in a

religious institution may also help a mother deal with the stresses involved with raising a child” (Petts, 2012, p. 265)

Practical. The research examining the financial challenges of single mothers is extensive, reaching beyond the scope of this study. Of particular interest is one study that confirmed, financial strain was associated indirectly with children’s development, suggesting that money does seem to matter both for mothers’ psychological functioning and child developmental outcomes. “While most studies have focused on young children, poverty and its co-factors have been associated with lower cognitive test scores and school achievement among such children as well” (Brooks-Gunn, Klebanov, & Duncan, 1996). This finding corroborates those of others who have argued that income plays a role in the development (and life chances) of children (Jackson et al. 2000).

According to another recent study, nearly 76% of single mothers are employed, 50% worked full-time year-round, 29% had family income below poverty, and nearly 43% received some type of public assistance (Solomon-Fears, 2016). In their book, Edin and Lein (1997) claimed that after nearly three decades of stagnant wages, ineffective child support enforcement, and dwindling welfare benefits have made single mothers and their children America’s poorest demographic group.

Can these single mothers make a change in their employment status or occupation and correct these statistics? If not for themselves then for their children and future generations? A study by Moore, Rangarajan, and Schochet (2007) examined the factors that significantly affected whether single mothers who progressed and left the poverty line in 2001 stayed out of poverty over a long period. Moore et al. reported that successfully leaving was more probable in administrative or professional occupations as opposed to service occupations. Retail or sales

positions were also associated with instability in terms of poverty (Smith-Thompson, 2016). As Christian leaders are guiding single mothers through the transformational change process, it is critical that the financial aspect and its daily ramifications are addressed with practical and attainable applications.

Transformational. The study conducted by Thompson-Smith (2016) revealed that in addition to being able to financially support their children [with a better job due to higher education] there is a sense of needing to move the family forward in some way. The vicious cycle that single mothers find themselves in stresses the importance of developing programs that help break the mindset that “people in poverty develop attitudes and patterns of conduct that seem to be an accommodation of their circumstances” (Bailey, 2017, p. 2). Additionally, research notes that there is an “indirect relationship between instrumental support and depressive symptoms, suggesting that available instrumental support does play a role in the association between economic pressure and maternal psychological functioning” (Jackson, 2000).

Profile of the Current Study

The transformational learning theory can provide a framework that assists Christian leaders who are guiding single mothers in a genuine transformation. By first discovering the perceptions and level of understanding of transformational learning by Christian leaders, the effectiveness of their ministry to single mothers through transformational leadership may be much greater. If there is a genuine transformation change in the single mother, then she is better equipped to build family stability in the areas of educational, emotional, and financial concerns from a biblical worldview. Future life experiences and challenges will be addressed through the lens of this newly transformed worldview, modeling a life that promotes a hope and a future to her children.

Such is the case with God when the single mother is pulled out of the darkness of deceit and despondency, and carefully guided back to towards a renewed life by leaders who seek to reflect God's love and mercy. Years may have been lost to poor choices, unforeseen consequences, or the harm of man, but it is God's heart to restore those lost years. The Lord proclaims, "I will repay you for the years that the swarming locusts ate" (Joel 2:25) as well as the promise to give His Spirit, declaring "After this, I will pour out My Spirit on all humanity" (2:28). What an encouragement to the single mother to hear that "the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people to Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6). Through the restoration process and the renewing of her mind, the single mother can experience a transformed life that brings a hope of a future with stability and healing.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study with a phenomenological approach, was to examine the transformational change process of single mothers from their perspective and to assess the effectiveness of Christian leaders in the process, with regards to the single mother's stability: spiritually, emotionally, financially and generationally. The research was grounded on a theological foundation, while the theoretical methods were examined with a biblical worldview. The desired outcome was that new knowledge and insights from the perspectives of single mothers would be revealed, shedding new light in an unexplored phenomenon. From the interpreted data, it was believed that a targeted transformational strategy implemented by Christian leaders would be able to guide single mothers into a changed lifestyle that would model authentic change to their children, weakening the generational cycle of single parenting.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

Many studies have been conducted over the years that look at the relationship between single parents and their children's academic performance (Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto, 2003). Other studies have considered whether being raised by a single mother and the inability to provide for her children financially, physically and emotionally could be directly due to inadequate education or skill training of the single mother (Smith, 2017; Smith-Thompson, 2016). Such studies examine the relationship between the educational level of single mothers and the impact that their level of education may or may not have upon family stability. But one may ask if education alone is enough to make an impact that is strong enough to steer the next generation in a spiritually stable direction, or is it a temporary practical solution? The gap in literature would suggest that though the pursuit of higher education is recommended,

there is a need to consider that a spiritual transformation in single mothers is needed to change their way of perceiving their circumstances, reversing negative thinking and mindsets.

Additionally, one must assess the effectiveness of Christian leaders as they guide the single mother through this transformational change process and examine the generational impact that an authentic change would have on the single mothers' family stability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the spiritual transformational change process of single mothers from their perspective, and to assess the influence of Christian leaders in this transformational change process from the leaders' perspective, with regard to the single mother's family stability: spiritually, emotionally, practically, and generationally. The two theories working simultaneously in this study was the transformational leadership theory (Bass & Stogdill, 1997) and transformational learning theory (Taylor, 2008). Implementation of these theories by the Christian leaders and by the single mothers anticipated an authentic and desired life-long change in the single mother. It also sought to reveal any barriers that would hinder the process, and more importantly, to identify indicators that could predict the positive influence this change may have upon her children, forming a healthier well-being in the next generation.

Research Questions

RQ1. As perceived by both groups of study participants, what is the role of the Christian leader in guiding single mothers in a transformational process towards spiritual formation and family stability?

RQ2. As perceived by both groups of study participants, what are the barriers that hinder single mothers in the transformational process?

RQ3. As perceived by both groups of study participants, does the practice of transformational leadership by Christian leaders influence a transformational change in single mothers? If so, how do participants describe this change?

RQ4. As perceived by both groups of study participants, how is the spiritual, emotional, and financial condition of single mothers improved or worsened after the transformational process?

RQ5. As perceived by both groups of study participants, what indicators could be used as a future predictor of transformational change that is generational?

Research Design and Methodology

This qualitative research took a phenomenological approach, utilizing interviews and surveys that sought to understand how the transformational change process would impact single mothers' family stability and the role Christian leaders played in that process.

Setting

This study was primarily conducted in Brevard County, Florida, selecting leaders from well-documented and proven Christian ministries who have experience in transformational leadership and ministry to single mothers. Since the single mothers were identified by the Christian leaders, these single mothers live in the cities and communities of Brevard County, Florida.

Participants

A maximum variation sampling, a purposive sampling strategy, was used to capture a wide range of perspectives of single mothers and Christian leaders who were chosen based on pre-selected criteria derived from the research questions. This technique assisted in examining how different single mother participants with extreme variables, such as age differences and income, perceived the transformational process.

The first sample frame was 15 Christian leaders, such as pastors, counselors, and clinical professionals, narrowed down to 12 participants who were included in the research sample group. These Christian leaders were selected from churches and organizations in Brevard County, Florida who have a significant single mother population in their ministries. It was also intended that there could be participants from nationally recognized Christian organizations who have direct involvement in family-services, education, and counseling. The 12 participating Christian leaders were asked to identify and name three single mothers in their ministry who they considered to be good candidates for this study.

The second sample frame was comprised of 30 single mothers who had been identified by the Christian leaders in the first study group. Due to reasons beyond the control of this researcher, this group of single mothers ended up totaling 11, rather than 30. Key criteria for these single mothers were between the ages of 18 - 45, and were currently seeking a genuine change in the way they view their circumstances or had already begun the process, they had one or more biological children who lived with them at least 50% of the time, had a high school diploma *or less*, and made approximately \$21,000.00 a year *or less*. They lived in their own residence or lived with family members. The single mother spoke English.

Role of the Researcher

Prior to being remarried in 2013, this researcher was a single mother for 13 years. There would be no direct relationships between the participants, such as a supervisor-employee relationship, that would reflect a conflict of interest. This researcher holds a Bachelor of Religious Education and a Master of Education, providing the training of skills necessary to carry out the designed study. In addition, she has notable experience in public communication, and relationships, and coordination of large event productions through her involvement with

community partners and leaders. Since 2016, she has been the visionary and developer of a new community initiative directed at single mothers and anticipates its ground-breaking ceremonies in the winter of 2020.

Ethical Considerations

It was the full intent to offer each participant the most confidentiality as possible, understanding that by conducting interviews, this researcher would be privy to the identity of the participants. Van den Hoonaard (2003) suggested that guaranteeing full anonymity during qualitative research is an ‘unachievable goal.’ Saunders et al. (2015) also presented the view that since the researcher would know the participants identity, true anonymity can never be achieved. The areas of concern in identity were:

- Participant’s names
- Occupation
- Church background
- Number of children
- Family relationships
- Other potentially identifying information

With the protection of the identity of the participants being paramount, pseudonyms were used to edit identifying information. For each participant, a pseudonym was assigned after the formal consent and used in the data collection process. During the data collection process, that pseudonym was consistently used when entering collected information into the data management system. For example, SM1 represented the first single mother interviewed. Since these women were invited by the Christian leaders from the first group of study participants, the names of

these women would be known to those leaders. By using pseudonyms, there was no direct connection between their names and their responses. In addition, only the researcher knew the identity of these women during the surveys and interviews.

The voluntary participants were advised that they may stop the interview or study process at any time, and even withdraw from the research without any pressure to continue. They were advised that all personal information would remain confidential, and all names would be used as pseudonyms. In order to establish a high level of trust and demonstrate the importance of this research, this researcher shared her own experiences as a single mother when appropriate.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Collection Methods

This qualitative research took a phenomenological approach, utilizing live interviews and online surveys that sought to understand how the spiritual transformational change process impacted single mothers' family stability and the role Christian leaders played in that process. The phenomenological approach assisted in reducing the researcher's preconceived assumptions regarding the above-noted phenomenon and brought clearer meaning from the participant's perspective. These perspectives created a database that was collected through the interviews and surveys. After agreeing to the consent process, each participant completed an online survey, requiring approximately 15 minutes. The next step was to schedule a face-to-face interview. The interviews were conducted in a relaxed environment that was chosen by the participant, ensuring a non-threatening and comfortable setting for the participant. Each interview took approximately 45-60 minutes, depending on the availability of the participant. Each participant agreed to that the interview would be audio recorded.

Instruments

Surveys. SurveyMonkey, an online survey program, was used to create 13 questions (Appendix D.A). This was the first step in creating the database needed to answer the research questions proposed in this study. The identical survey was sent to both the Christian leaders and the single mothers, in order to compare their perceptions of the transformational change process. Open-ended and ranking questions were incorporated into the surveys and the questions had a specific interest in revealing the beliefs of the single mother when determining the effectiveness of Christian leaders in the transformational approach. “A survey is a system for collecting information from or about people to describe, compare, or explain their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior” (Fink, 2003, p. 1). The online survey instrument was an asset to this researcher when collecting information from both single mothers and Christian leaders, even if they were not accessible for personal interviews. The survey link was provided in an email or through a text message, accessible via any device where an internet connection was available.

Interviews. The interviews (Appendix D.B and D.C) were conducted in a comfortable but private atmosphere, chosen by the participant. It began with two structured questions used as ‘ice breakers,’ giving time to build an element of trust as the participant gradually opened up and shared her perception of the transformational change experience. “When doing interviews, it is often helpful to elicit a specific experience. This can be done by asking when and how this experience occurred—what was it like the first time? The most recent time? The most memorable moment?” (Manen, 2016, p. 299).

The interview then transitioned to 13 unstructured and/or open-ended questions designed to draw out opinions and views of the participants. When followed by opening key questions, the

open-ended questions paved a way towards a deeper probing into the understanding of the participant's experiences (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Information was recorded by making handwritten field notes and with an audio recording device. Within 48 hours of the interview, the information from the audio recording was transcribed into a Word document. This created the word-for-word manuscript of the interview, reducing the margin of error by depending solely on the recollection of memory of the researcher.

Protocol

Consent. The process to obtain information proceeded as follows:

- Participants were informed regarding the purpose of the research.
- The process of analysis was discussed with them, including the storing of their contributions.
- The steps to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality were explained.
- Their right to withdraw from the study at any time was assured.
- Participants gave their consent by initialing the "Consent Letter" (Appendix C)

Recording and Safeguarding Data. Several factors played a role in the devices used to collect, record and store the data. Accessibility, transportability, and storage size will be taken into consideration for each of the collection methods used. For short-term collection, portable devices such as laptops and tablets will be used. The advantage of this method is the security of strong passwords and encryption.

For this study, two types of storage mediums were used. Initially, data was saved onto the researcher's laptop hard disk drive (HDD). Secondly, two flash-drives were used to copy the data

as back-ups in the unlikely but possible event of loss or damage. Uploading sensitive data to cloud storage (Google Drive, OneDrive, Dropbox, etc.) was not ideal, as this posed a greater risk for security breaches.

Handwritten field notes and transcribed Word documents from the recorded interview were locked in one file cabinet. The coding of the collected data and the coding key was locked in a separate cabinet, away from the original handwritten data. The electronic data was stored on a password locked computer. Only the principal researcher had access to all information collected.

Confidentiality. Participants were assigned a pseudonym from the onset. The 12 Christian leaders were coded as CL1 through CL12, and the 11 single mothers were SM1 through SM11. Personal information was cloaked by the coding and protected the identity of the participants. Any publication and reports resulting from this research will be constructed in such a way that the identity of the participants will be safeguarded. After three years, all handwritten, transcribed, and electronic records will be destroyed as per federal regulations by shredding and pulverization. The confidentiality limitation would be that that the single mothers identified by the Christian leaders and the Christian leaders themselves may or may not discuss between themselves the events of this research, or with others outside of this study.

Document Analysis

As the data collection progressed, the analysis of the information occurred simultaneously as the researcher began to recognize similarities, differences, and patterns evolving from the participants. Qualitative research data analysis is “unlike quantitative research in which the investigator collects the data, then analyzes the information, and finally writes the report” (Creswell, 2000, p. 194). To assist in the overwhelming task to analyze the data and

create an influential and professional narrative, the MAXQDA software was utilized for this process. This software boasts an excellent design, particularly for coding, and has a reader-friendly presentation format. Bevan (2014) researched the studies conducted by Husserl (1967) and von Eckartsberg (1986), noting that:

The method of analyzing phenomena in the phenomenological tradition is reflective. In philosophical phenomenology, it is the philosopher who reflects on the givenness of a thing, whereas in phenomenological research initial reflection is by the person who has undergone a particular experience, and this reflection is a primary interpretation. (p. 137)

Analysis Methods

In qualitative research, “the impact of this process is to aggregate data into a smaller number of themes” (Creswell, 2000, p. 195). This researcher followed the process of analysis steps outlined by Creswell (2000), utilizing a simplified version of other researchers such as Moustakas (2011), Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973, 1978), and Keen (1975).

Step 1 – Organize and prepare the data for analysis (transcribing interviews, typing up handwritten notes, sorting and arranging the data into different types).

Step 2 – Look at all the data. Obtain a general sense of the information and reflect on its overall meaning.

Step 3 – Start coding the data, organizing the information and labeling into categories and themes.

Step 4 – Use the coding process to generate descriptions of the categories and themes.

Step 5 – Develop a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis.

Step 6 – Make an interpretation of the findings. (Creswell, 2018)

The end result was a concise yet all-encompassing description of the phenomenon under study, validated by the participants who created it. “The method depends upon rich first-person accounts of experience; these may come from face-to-face interviews but can also be obtained in

multiple other ways; written narratives, blogs, research diaries, online interviews and so on” (Morrow et al., 2015).

Data-Driven Coding.

- The label or name of the code
- Who coded it (name of the researcher/coder)
- The date when the coding was done/changed
- Definition of the code; a description of the concept it refers to
- Information about the relationship of the code to other codes you are working with during the analysis.

Validity

As an identified strength for qualitative research, validity “is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account” (Creswell, 2018, p. 201). Creswell (2018) also stated that “qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (p. 201). Despite Manen’s (2016) opinions to the contrary, this study demonstrated its validity through triangulation, member checking, and peer review.

The validity of a phenomenological study,

has to be sought in the appraisal of the originality of insights and the soundness of interpretive processes demonstrated in the study. No predetermined procedure such as ‘members check’ or ‘triangulation of multiple methods’ can fulfill such demand for validating a phenomenological study. (Manen, 2016, p. 348).

For this study, the research questions and subsequent findings were presented to four local pastors and ministry leaders. After their review, there was an agreement that themes created from the study were considered likely perceptions of both research groups. Ironically, the

unexpected theme of ‘lack of understanding transformational leadership’ was also consistent with these four independent readers. They too, would agree that pastors had limited understanding of transformational leadership and suggested further teaching would be profitable.

Triangulation. “Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell, 2000, p. 126). Two origins of the term are presented. One suggests that it was taken from land surveying, the term triangulation is based on the concept that by “knowing a single landmark only locates you somewhere along a line and in a direction from the landmark, whereas with two landmarks, you can take bearings in two directions and locate yourself at the intersection” (Patton, 1999, p. 1192). The second suggests that “the term comes from military navigation at sea, where sailors triangulated among different distant points to determine their ship’s bearing” (Creswell, 2000, p. 126). Both origins suggest the premise that a single method cannot solve the problem alone. Through triangulation, multiple methods may reveal different aspects of the participants’ perceptions, providing more substantial and real data to support the validity. “Limiting data collection to one of the two methods may result in the exclusion of eligible patients and may lessen the breadth of results by only gaining partial insight into the phenomenon of interest” (Carter et al., 2014, p. 546).

In this study, the Christian leaders were selected from a variety of ministry settings, which provided the opportunity to obtain different perspectives regarding their interaction with single mothers. The professions held by these leaders included counselors, teachers, recovery pastors, senior pastors, women’s ministry leaders, and community social services leaders. By broadening the scope of the ministry settings, the perceptions of these leaders confirmed that the need for transformational change in single mothers remained consistent regardless of the setting.

Member Checking. Critical to the validity and credibility of triangulation, the member checking process engages research participants. Lincoln and Guba (1986) describe member checks as:

The process of continuous, informal testing of information by solidifying reactions of respondents to the investigator's reconstruction of what he or she has been told or otherwise found out and to the constructions offered by other respondents or sources, and a terminal, formal testing of the final care report with a representative sample of stakeholders. (p. 77)

Creswell and Miller (2000) suggested that member checking “consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account” (p. 127). In addition, “the participants add credibility to the qualitative study by having a chance to react to both the data and the final narrative” (2000, p. 127).

Upon completion of the interviews and surveys, drafts of each participants’ responses were compiled and brought back the participant for the review of accuracy. Each confirmed that the responses were correct. One pastor was particularly fascinated with his responses when he read them aloud. So moved by his passion to minister to single mothers, he asked if he could keep the copy. He believed that there were “several good sermons in there” and felt that his congregation needed to hear how an intentional strategy to better reach single mothers must be incorporated into their church mission.

Chapter Summary

As described throughout this chapter, the phenomenological approach of the qualitative method was implemented through interviews and surveys. These methods supported the validity of triangulation for data collection. The advantages of such an approach permitted the researcher to directly observe the single mothers as they describe their perception of the transformational

change process, revealing the struggles they face daily. Personal experiences and historical background information drawn from a questioning process (both open-ended and structured) brought a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. All the data entrusted under the care of this researcher was safeguarded to the best of her ability, and the identity of the participants was protected at all available costs. By carefully and thoroughly implementing these methods, it is believed this study offers a tremendous insight into the effectiveness of Christian leaders as they guide single mothers through the transformational change process.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the spiritual transformational change process of single mothers from their perspective, and to assess the influence of Christian leaders in this transformational change process from the leaders' perspective, with respect to the single mother's family stability: spiritually, emotionally, practically, and generationally. The two theories working simultaneously in this study was the transformational leadership theory (Bass & Stogdill, 1997) and transformational learning theory (Taylor, 2008).

Through the inquiry of the research questions, answers from the participants were grouped into four broad categories: *roles of Christian leaders*, *barriers to change*, *indicators of change*, and *strengthened stability*. Surprisingly, a fifth category presented a strong indication that an understanding of transformational change by Christian leaders was greatly lacking. When trying to answer research question three, "As perceived by both groups of study participants, does the practice of transformational leadership by Christian leaders influence a transformational change in a single mother?," it was discovered that neither the Christian leaders nor the single mothers knew what transformational leadership was. The theory of transformational leadership had to be explained, and how the application of this theory could impact the lives of single mothers. Only then were both groups able to offer an answer as to whether the practice of transformational leadership could be influential in the lives of single mothers. Each research question was fully answered by the surveys and interviews, suggesting that these instruments were effective at comparing the perceptions of the participants of this phenomenological study.

Table 1

Categories formed from Research Questions

CATEGORIES FORMED	RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED				
	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3	RQ4	RQ5
ROLE OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS	X		X		
BARRIERS TO CHANGE	X	X			
INDICATORS OF CHANGE			X	X	X
STRENGTHENED STABILITY				X	
UNDERSTANDING	X	X	X	X	X
TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE					

If the implementation of these theories by the Christian leaders and by the single mothers were to be successful, it was anticipated that there would be an authentic and desired life-long change in the single mother. This study also sought to reveal any barriers or hesitations, experienced by both the single mothers and the Christian leaders, that may hinder the change process. More importantly, this researcher was looking for any indicators that would predict a positive strengthening in the single mothers' stability, suggesting that a healthier well-being would be established in her children and in turn, weaken the generational cycle of single motherhood. Chapter Four will provide a summary of how the research was designed to examine this transformational change process, answer the proposed research questions, describe the demographics of the sample groups who were studied, outline the data collection techniques,

present how the data was processed and coded, and finally, evaluate how the findings are significant to the study.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

This qualitative research took a phenomenological approach, utilizing interviews and surveys that sought to understand how the transformational change process impacts the single mother's family stability and the role Christian leaders play in that process. The phenomenological approach was used to assist in the reduction of the researcher's preconceived assumptions regarding the above-noted phenomenon and bring meaning from the participant's perspective. Once Liberty University's IRB approval was granted, research began by inviting participants via email or text, directing them to follow a link to the online survey generated by SurveyMonkey. The introductory page of the survey outlined the consent letter and the option to continue by selecting 'I Agree' box. Upon doing so, the survey began with the average completion time of 21 minutes for the Christian leaders, and 14 minutes for the single mothers. The last question on the survey requested each participant to provide their contact information necessary to set up the face-to-face interview. Each interview was conducted in a location chosen by the participant, requiring approximately 45 – 60 minutes, depending on the time constraints of the participant. Handwritten field notes were taken during each interview, and each interview was audio recorded, with the exception of one interview when the recording device was not present.

Demographic and Sample Data

The first intended research group was 15 Christian leaders, consisting of pastors, counselors, and clinical professionals. These Christian leaders were selected from churches and organizations in Brevard County, Florida who have a significant single mother population in

their ministries or have direct involvement in family services, education, and counseling. Once the Christian leaders were identified, the initial request for participation was made in-person, or by email, by presenting them with the research recruitment letter. At the close of the research deadline, 12 participants committed to being included in this first research group of Christian leaders. After the lapse of one week, each Christian leader was contacted by the researcher to schedule the face-to-face interview, and to follow up on the referral of three single mothers that each had identified as being good candidates for this study. Ten out of the 12 Christian leaders were interviewed, 11 out of the 12 Christian leaders completed the online survey and only five out of the 12 were able to refer single mothers to be included in the second research group. The second research group was intended to include 30 single mothers who were identified by the Christian leaders in the first study group. These single mothers were to be invited to participate by the Christian leader, who was to forward the research recruitment letter, either in person or email, on behalf of this researcher. This researcher had requested that the Christian leader follow-up if no responses were received after one week. If there were no response after two weeks, the researcher asked the Christian leaders to identify other potential participants and proceed with the above steps. At the close of the research deadline, the second research group consisted of a total of 11 single mothers. Nine of the 11 completed the survey and were interviewed, but two of the 11 did not meet for the interview. Although this was not the intended size, it was enough to generate several significant themes within the data. These single mothers were between the ages of 18 – 45, and were currently seeking a genuine change in the way they viewed their circumstances or had already begun the process, they had one or more biological children who lived with them at least 50% of the time, had a high school diploma *or less*, and

made approximately \$21,000.00 a year *or less*. They lived in their own residence or lives with family members. The single mothers all spoke English.

Data Analysis and Findings

Organizing

Though the surveys were identical, the single mothers and the Christian leaders were given separate links to complete the survey. This created a database for each of the two appropriate sample groups: Single Mothers and Christian Leaders. To compare the collected responses from each participant, SurveyMonkey created graphs within each sample group, demonstrating the varying levels of perceptions to the questions asked.

At the end the survey, participants were asked to provide their contact information so that a face-to-face interview could be conducted. These interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participant, as well as the location chosen by the participant. Handwritten field notes were taken during the interviews and then individually labeled with pseudonyms so that the participants' confidentiality would be protected. The single mothers were labeled SM1-SM11, and the Christian leaders were labeled CL1-CL12.

With the consent of the participants, the interviews were audio recorded on a handheld device. These audio recordings were then downloaded onto the researcher's laptop and saved onto her hard disk drive (HDD). Two external flash-drives were used to save the data as backups in the unlikely event of loss or damage to the researcher's laptop and stored securely in a cabinet. The audio recordings were then transcribed by typing each recording into a Word document while the transcription feature of the MAXQDA program played the recording. Each document was saved as the participant's pseudonym which was assigned earlier at the interview stage, and thus, would correspond with these newly generated audio transcripts. Two folders were created

in the MAXQDA software (Single Mothers and Christian Leaders), and each transcribed document was grouped accordingly. These documents were also saved on the researcher's HDD and on the external flash-drives noted above.

Coding and Labeling

The initial level of the coding phase took place by taking the raw data, the transcribed audio- recording documents and the handwritten field notes, looking for categories and themes. This was done by labeling key words and phrases during the transcription with the color-coded highlighting feature in the MAXQDA program. This valuable feature provided a coding system that allowed the researcher to identify categories that could be grouped together, and then later broken down into themes. From the data, four broad categories emerged based on the study's research questions: roles of Christian leaders, barriers to change, indicators of change, and strengthened stability. Surprisingly, a new category was discovered: understanding transformational change. The second level of coding required the researcher to recode the data from the initial coding phase into smaller themes, in which there were three predominant ones: spiritual, practical, and emotional. The coding system in the MAXQDA program was again utilized for this step in the coding process.

The third level of coding required all the documents to first be printed. By doing so, the researcher was able read each transcription and interview field note several times, becoming so thoroughly familiar with the content, it was as if she stepped directly into the lives of the participants. While reading, the researcher manually highlighted key points, used sticky notes, and made notations in the margins. With almost 100 documents filled with rich content but decorated with color-coded highlights, sticky notes, and margin notations, the data was still too large to clearly communicate the findings in a narrative form. Thus, several large sheets of

desk pad paper were then used to place the codes into hand-drawn concept maps and charts, creating a ‘birds eye view’ of the data and providing a solid framework for the narrative.

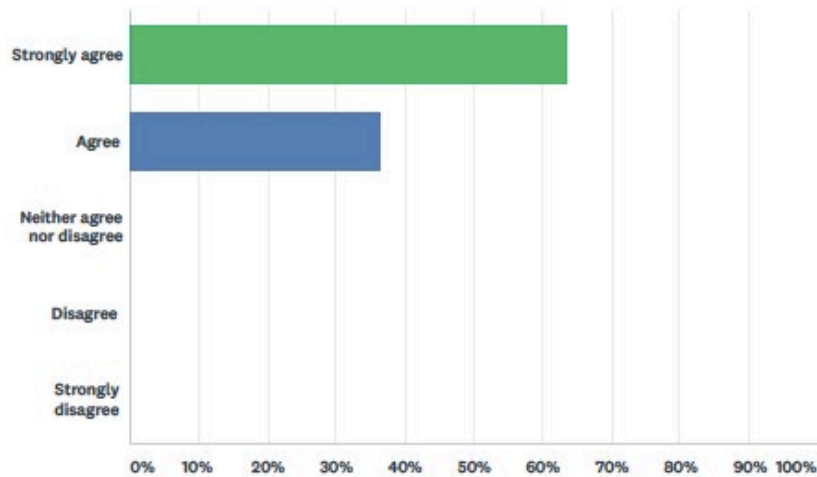
Findings

Being a phenomenological study, a holistic approach was taken. Participants were asked both broad and specific questions in the survey and interviews, seeking to develop a comprehensive understanding of their experiences and their perceptions of those experiences. In this study, the primary phenomenon was to examine the transformational change process as perceived by single mothers, and to assess the roles that the Christian leaders should play in this process. It is from their perceptions that the qualitative data was collected, consisting of their feelings, opinions, behaviors, and knowledge in relation to their real-world circumstances. By seeking to answer the study’s research questions, the four primary categories developed, entwined with three significant themes. The unexpected fifth theme will be addressed independently at the end.

Category 1: Role of the Christian leader.

Involvement. Question 5 on the survey asked, “Do you believe that guidance from a Christian ministry leader (pastor, counselor, teacher, etc.) is needed for a single mother, who has minimal income and a high-school diploma or less, in leading her through a transformational change that will bring her into a place of stability?” Without exception, it was discovered from the 11 single mothers who completed the survey, that the involvement of Christian leaders in the transformational change process was necessary to bring single mothers into a place of stability. Table 2 shows that 70% of single mothers *strongly agreed* and 30% *agreed* believed this to be true.

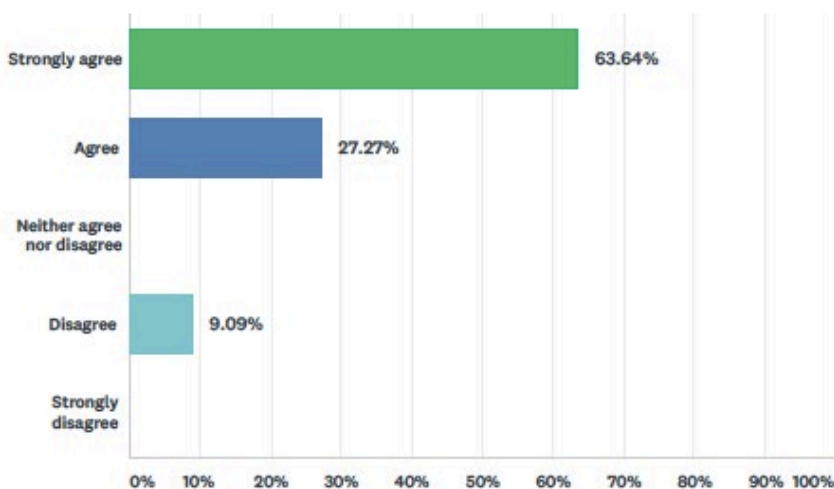
Table 2

Christian Leaders Involvement - Survey Question 5 - Single Mothers' Responses

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	63.64%	7
Agree	36.36%	4
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		11

The 11 Christian leaders who completed the survey also demonstrated a positive response to the need for Christian transformational leadership. Table 3 shows that seven out of the 11 (63.64%) *strongly agree*, three out of the 11 (27.26%) *agree*, and only one out of the 11 (9.09%) *disagree*.

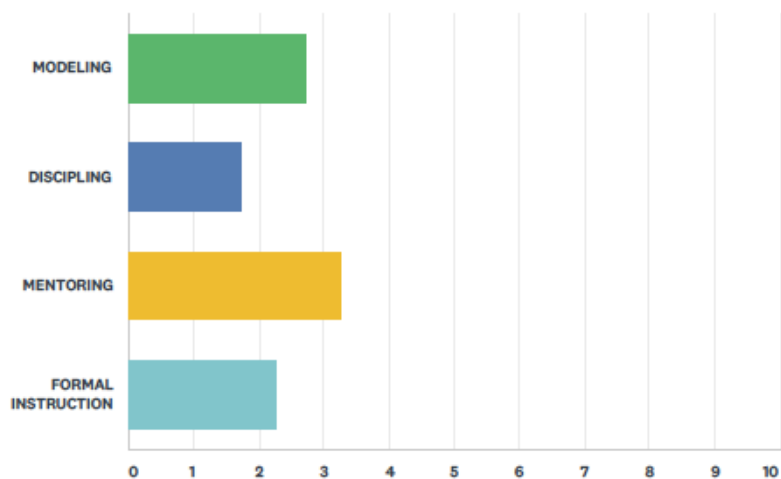
Table 3

Christian Leaders Involvement - Survey Question 5 – Christian Leaders' Responses

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	63.64%	7
Agree	27.27%	3
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	9.09%	1
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		11

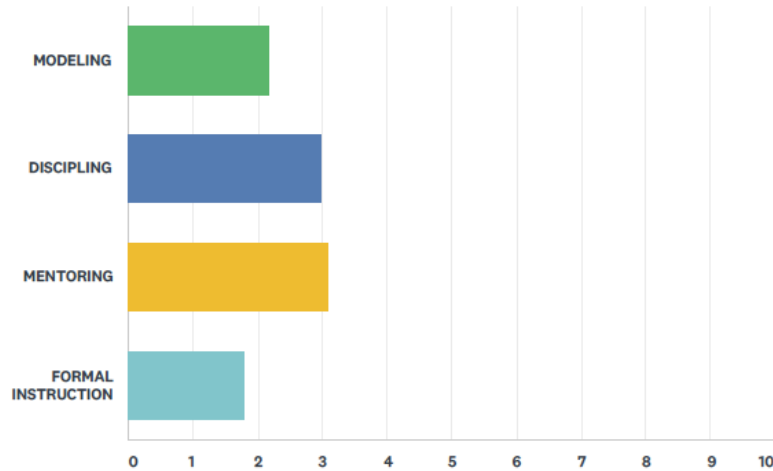
Roles. Question 9 on the survey asked both groups, “From your perspective, list in order the most effective way Christian leaders can guide single mothers through a transformational change.” For the single mothers, 63% of them placed *mentoring* first with almost 54% of them placing *modeling* second (Table 4). The Christian leaders tied *discipling* and *mentoring* as first importance (Table 5). The role considered to be of least importance in both groups was *formal instruction*.

Table 4

Effective Ways in Transformational Change - Survey Question 9 - Single Mothers' Responses

	1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL	SCORE
MODELING	9.09% 1	54.55% 6	36.36% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11	2.73
DISCIPLING	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	18.18% 2	63.64% 7	0.00% 0	11	1.73
MENTORING	63.64% 7	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	11	3.27
FORMAL INSTRUCTION	9.09% 1	27.27% 3	45.45% 5	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	11	2.27

Table 5 *Effective Ways in Transformational Change - Survey Question 9 – Christian Leaders’ Responses*



	1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL	SCORE
MODELING	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	36.36% 4	36.36% 4	0.00% 0	11	2.18
DISCIPLING	36.36% 4	36.36% 4	18.18% 2	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	11	3.00
MENTORING	36.36% 4	36.36% 4	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11	3.09
FORMAL INSTRUCTION	0.00% 0	27.27% 3	18.18% 2	45.45% 5	9.09% 1	11	1.80

From the personal interviews, the four roles listed in the survey, *modeling*, *discipling*, *mentoring*, and *formal instruction*, were also included in the participants’ perceived expectations for the Christian leader, along with several other roles.

Table 6

Effective Ways in Transformational Change - Interviews - All Participants' Responses

Role of Christian Leader		
Spiritual	Practical	Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praying • Grounded on the Word of God • Mentoring • Discipling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening • Empowering • Providing resources • Teaching / Formal Instruction • Building Community • Modeling • Providing learning environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging • Loving • Affirming • Caring • Non-judgement

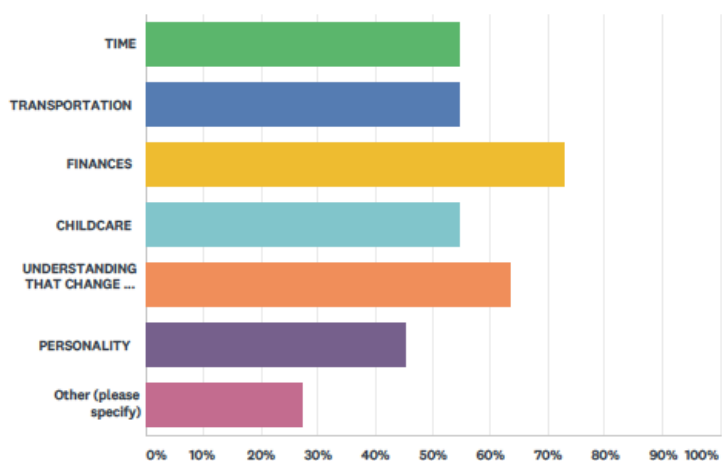
Category 2: Barriers to change. In order to determine the effectiveness of a Christian leader in the transformational change process of a single mother, it was necessary to determine if there were any barriers or hinderances, whether real or perceived, that may exist for both the single mothers and the Christian leaders.

Barriers of single mothers. Question 6 on the survey asked, “What do you think are barriers that hinder single mothers from achieving a genuine transformational change in their current situation, regarding their perception of finances, spiritual health, and emotional well-being?” The greatest challenge that single mothers claim to be hindering them from any type of

change is financial. Almost 73% indicate that *finances* not only keep them from reaching a change in their stability but is the greatest contributor to any type of change (Table 7). A high percentage (63.64%) of single mothers admitted that when they first became a single mother, they did not understand that a change was necessary or if a change was even possible. This correlates with the three added ‘open responses’ at the end of Question 6: *emotional well-being*, *maturity*, and *unaware of how to make change*.

Table 7

Barriers for Single Mothers – Survey Question 6 -Single Mothers’ Perspective

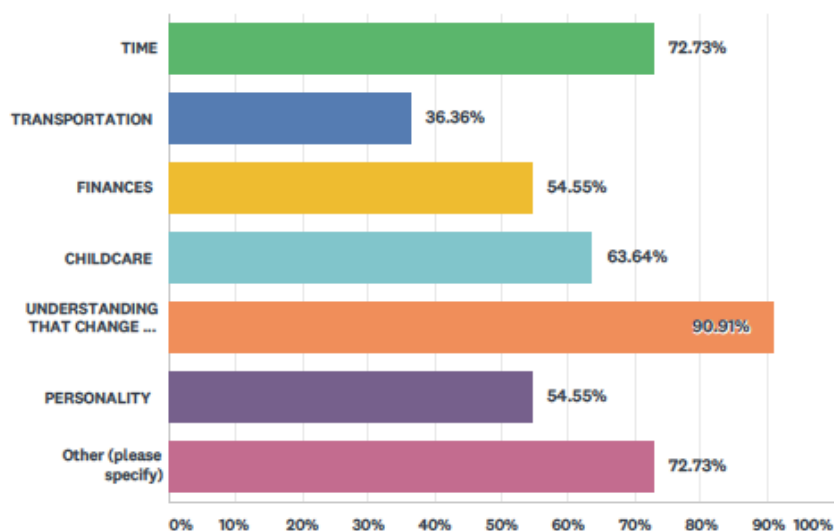


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
TIME	54.55%	6
TRANSPORTATION	54.55%	6
FINANCES	72.73%	8
CHILDCARE	54.55%	6
UNDERSTANDING THAT CHANGE IS NEEDED	63.64%	7
PERSONALITY	45.45%	5
Other (please specify)	27.27%	3
Total Respondents: 11		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Emotional well being	12/5/2019 6:56 PM
2	Maturity	11/21/2019 4:57 PM
3	I believe that sometimes a mother is unaware of how to make changes	11/17/2019 1:15 PM

From the perspective of the Christian leaders, over 90% believed that *understanding that change is needed* was the greatest barrier for single mothers in the transformational change process (Table 8). *Time* was the second most challenging barrier for single mothers as perceived by 73% of the Christian leaders. In comparison, only 54% of single mothers believed it was a barrier (Table 7). The third ranked barrier from the perspective of the Christian leaders was *childcare*, where almost 64% believed that the lack of childcare caused the single mother from moving forward in transformational change. Some additional barrier that were added as ‘open responses’ were: *too many responsibilities, emotional and psychological exhaustion, lack of support, fear, wounds from the past, and not having a relationship with Jesus* (Table 8).

Table 8

Barriers for Single Mothers – Survey Question 6 – Christian Leaders' Perspective

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
TIME	72.73%	8
TRANSPORTATION	36.36%	4
FINANCES	54.55%	6
CHILDCARE	63.64%	7
UNDERSTANDING THAT CHANGE IS NEEDED	90.91%	10
PERSONALITY	54.55%	6
Other (please specify)	72.73%	8
Total Respondents: 11		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	so many responsibilities, can't think about change	12/18/2019 7:05 PM
2	1.emotional and psychological exhaustion. 2.Lack of support from family and friends	12/13/2019 4:38 AM
3	Now or what I would call a poverty mindset	11/18/2019 2:55 AM
4	Bitter spouse; deadbeat dad leading to fear for emotional and physical safety of self and child	11/15/2019 4:08 PM
5	Lack of psycho-social emotional support to include substance abuse and/or domestic violence	11/4/2019 6:32 PM
6	wounds of the past	11/4/2019 3:16 PM
7	fear and lack of hope	11/4/2019 2:43 AM
8	Not having a personal relationship with Jesus	10/31/2019 7:21 PM

From the interviews of both groups, participants revealed additional barriers, several closely related to the ones identified in the survey. Table 9 demonstrates the combined perceived barriers.

Table 9

Barriers to Singles Mothers - Interviews - All Participants' Responses

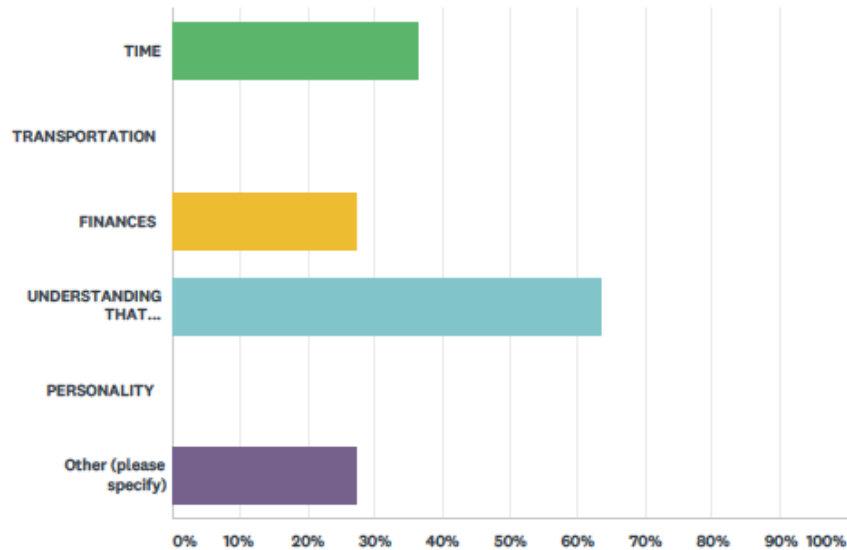
Barriers		
Spiritual	Practical	Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No exposure to the Gospel • Raised in a different religion (ex. Catholic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare • Housing • Employment • Transportation • Time • Financial • Lack of Skills • Lack of Support • Lack of Education • Poor Environment • Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low self-esteem • Discouragement • Fear • Hopelessness • Stigma • Pride • Judgement • Crisis mentality • Shame • Guilt • Embarrassment • Trauma from past • Generational • Feeling 'stuck' • Comfortable in a climate of chaos

Barriers for Christian leaders. Recognizing that there may be some barriers or hinderances that keep Christian leaders from fully connecting with single mothers and thus assess their effectiveness in the transformational process, it was necessary to ask the participants what they perceived these hinderances to be. Survey Question 7 asked, "What do you think are barriers that hinder Christian leaders from guiding single mothers through a genuine transformational change? Check all that apply or list other potential barriers" (Appendix D.A).

Over 63% of the single mothers perceived that *understanding that transformational change is needed* was a significant barrier, along with *time* and *finances* (Table 10).

Table 10

Barriers for Christian Leaders – Survey Question 7 - Single Mothers' Perspectives



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
TIME	36.36%	4
TRANSPORTATION	0.00%	0
FINANCES	27.27%	3
UNDERSTANDING THAT TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE IS NEEDED	63.64%	7
PERSONALITY	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	27.27%	3
Total Respondents: 11		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	mother not willing to accept the help that can be given	12/18/2019 2:01 AM
2	Different backgrounds and life experiences	11/21/2019 4:57 PM
3	Understanding/ personal experience of the situation	11/17/2019 1:15 PM

The perception that *understanding that transformational change is needed* was intended to imply that it was the single mother who did not understand that change was needed. It was not this researcher's intent to suggest that it was the *Christian leader* who lacked the understanding

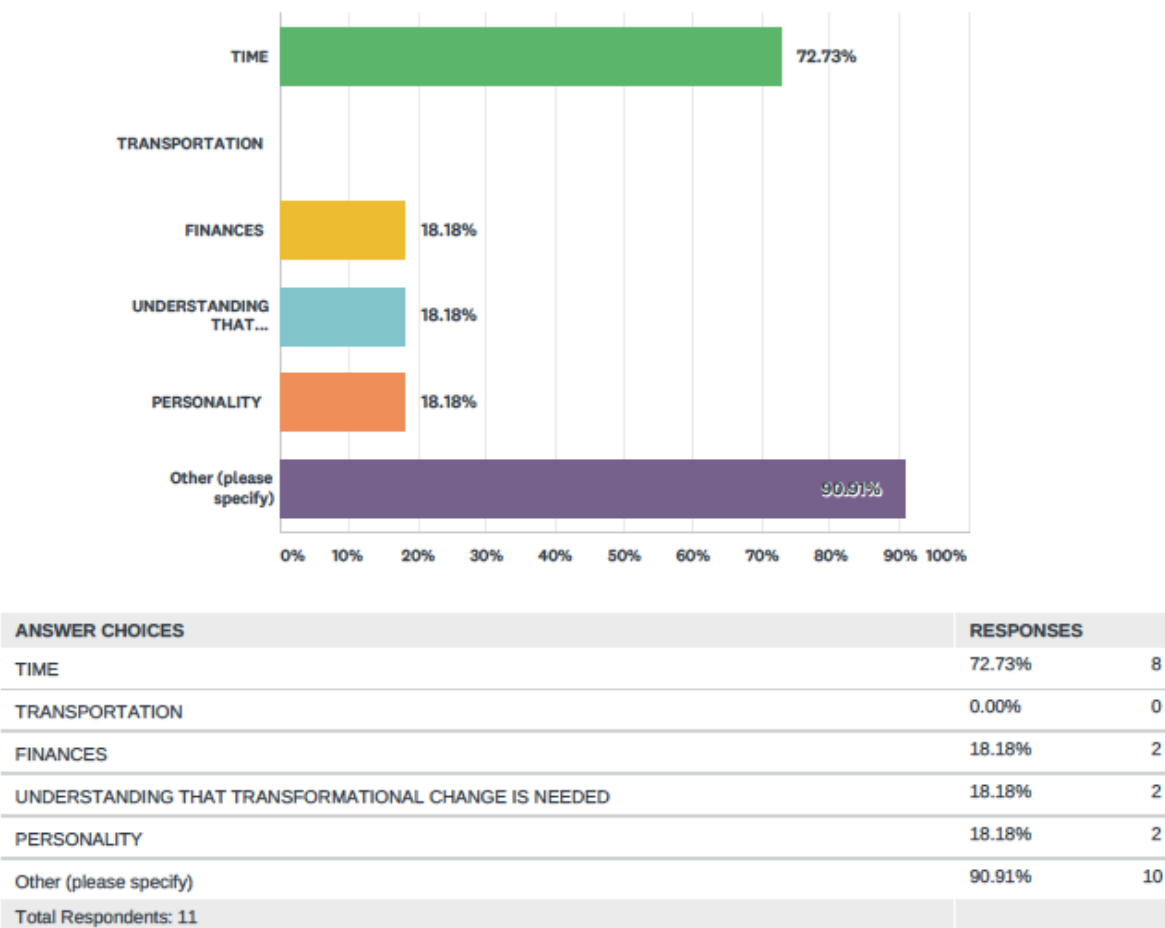
that change was needed. But, out of the three additional barriers suggested by the single mothers, two of them had revealing significance to the contrary. By suggesting *having different backgrounds and life experiences*, followed by *understanding/personal experience of the situation*, the single mothers were referring to the Christian leaders, not the single mothers. This conclusion was supported when Interview Question 10 was presented to the single mothers. Question 10 reads, “Why do you think Christian leaders are hesitant in helping single mothers through a transformational change?” (Appendix D.C). The single mothers perceive that the Christian leaders do not fully understand how to lead the single mothers through the transformational process, as indicated by almost 64% of the research group (Table 10).

Over 72% of the Christian leaders identified *time* as being one of the barriers that keep Christian leaders from guiding single mothers through a transformational change (Table 11). Relatively low on the ratings were *finances*, *understanding that change is needed*, and *personality*. It is to be noted that over 90% of the Christian leaders had additional barriers that were contributing factors, such as:

- Many churches are not equipped to help single mothers.
- Many are hesitant to commit long-term, believing that helping would require great investments (time, energy, finances) but without much immediate gratification.
- There is a lack of education on how to holistically transform lives.
- Passivity in members, and leadership.
- Leaders do not always know how to help nor do they know where to start.
- Many leaders are uneducated regarding single parenting and psychological issues.

Many lack the ability to coach and counsel someone effectively.

Table 11

Barriers for Christian Leaders – Survey Question 7 – Christian Leaders’ Perspectives

Category 3: Indicators of change. The intent of this study was to understand the effects that the transformational process would have on single mothers, and the possible generational impact this change could have on their children. In order to establish the effectiveness on single mothers’ stability, it was suggested that evidence of positive change must be visible. Therefore, five areas of growth were examined: *spiritual, emotional, social, financial, and parental*. Survey Question 11 asked, “List any visible indicators (evidence) of positive change resulting from a transformational change process in the following areas...”. For the single mothers’ group, all 11

participants believed that there was, or would be, growth in each area (Table 12.1). Tables 12.2 - 12.6 record the single mothers' specific indicators to that area of growth.

Table 12.1

Indicators of Change – Survey Question 11 – Single Mothers' Perspectives

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
SPIRITUAL GROWTH	100.00%	11
EMOTIONAL GROWTH	100.00%	11
SOCIAL GROWTH	100.00%	11
FINANCIAL GROWTH	90.91%	10
PARENTAL GROWTH	100.00%	11

Table 12.2

Indicators of Change – Survey Question 11 – Spiritual Growth from Single Mothers' Perspective

#	SPIRITUAL GROWTH
1	reading bible and attending church
2	Finding good church
3	Yes
4	It's different for every individual
5	Peace in their heart, joy, and trust in the Lord.
6	I became better aware of my purpose as a mother, as well as God's purpose for my life.
7	Trusting God in the mist of a storm
8	The best thing that has ever happened to me!! When I acknowledged God when he was calling me and let him in my heart, my life was changed for the better forever.
9	Spending more time with the lord
10	I haven't had much spiritual growth. I was raised in church.
11	Group has taught me how to pray & talk to God about everything; has helped me to build a stronger relationship with God

Table 12.3

*Indicators of Change – Survey Question 11 – Emotional Growth from Single Mothers’**Perspective*

#	EMOTIONAL GROWTH
1	happier than usual
2	Having stability
3	Yes
4	Handling life situations in a different positive way
5	Have peace in their heart, feel more strung in the different circumstances
6	I learned to react to situations differently, understanding that everything can be figured out.
7	Calling on God instead of self medicating
8	Happier, positive thinking.
9	Having more peace and reacting less
10	I am more self confident, I am trying to get away from having social anxiety
11	Group helps to meet other mothers in similar situations & helps me to feel understood, and for my feelings to be validated

Table 12.4

Indicators of Change – Survey Question 11 – Social Growth from Single Mothers’ Perspective

#	SOCIAL GROWTH
1	making friends
2	Positivity
3	Yes
4	Can add a few people that you can contact for support
5	More social and open to know more people.
6	I learned to carefully pick and choose the people I hung around, understanding that people did not posses the same intentions as I did.
7	Bringing friends to church vs. the club
8	Associating with other Christian people with the same situation
9	Having a larger and closer community
10	I am getting over social anxiety. I always felt like everyone was judging me, by my clothes, hair, shoes, what I said, how I said it, and what I didn't say. I am trying to get over this, to help me in interviews for better paying jobs and in life in general.
11	introduction to individuals battling similar situations

Table 12.5

Indicators of Change – Survey Question 11 – Financial Growth from Single Mothers’ Perspective

#	FINANCIAL GROWTH
1	able to provide what is needed for survival without worry
2	Good job
3	None
4	Lord will provide and open doors.
5	I learned to tithe, and create a realistic budget, which resulted in available means and stability.
6	Budgeting for your Tithes
7	Believe when God says do not worry about money , what you will eat or what you will wear. He will provide!
8	Spending less when possible and saving more. Giving to the church
9	I received an Associate's degree in December 2017. The day after, I was given a \$3 an hour raise. I am at the top of what I could earn there. I am getting my Bachelor's degree next year and will hopefully gain a good job. I don't need too much more money, but once my girls are out of the house and child support stops, I will need to make a better salary.
10	learning to trust in God to provide when our family is in need

Table 12.6

Indicators of Change – Survey Question 11 – Parental Growth from Single Mothers’ Perspective

#	PARENTAL GROWTH
1	no longer feels overwhelmed raising kids alone
2	Having help
3	Yes
4	Learning handle life struggles in a more effective way also expands to growing as a parent
5	More patient with our kids and will be able to guide them to the Lord... a happy family
6	I learned to become selfless, and more humbled. I learned to teach and lead by example. Most importantly, I learn how to love and be loved.
7	Praying for children vs. disciplining them for everything
8	More calm about certain situations and different approaches to parenting.
9	Having more patience with children. Being able to calmly set more healthy boundaries.
10	My ex always told me that I needed to spank our daughters more. I was only spanked once, as a child. I have been able to figure out ways for us to work through problems, without spanking (when they were younger). We are close.
11	learning to pray for/ about my children & the situations I face in raising them

Similarly, all 11 Christian leaders who participated in the survey believed that a transformational change in single mothers' lives would produce evidence of growth in all five areas of inquiry (spiritual, emotional, social, financial, and parental). Responses in the area of spiritual changes reflected a greater desire and hunger for the Lord, resulting in more active participation in church attendance and activities (Table 13.2). Reflecting similar responses as the single mothers, the Christian leaders suggested that greater peace and less anxiety were evidence of positive emotional changes (Table 13.3). A sense of confidence and the intentional choosing of positive relationships were evidence of the social changes (Table 13.4).

Table 13.1

Indicators of Change – Survey Question 11 – Christian Leaders' Perspective

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
SPIRITUAL GROWTH	100.00%	11
EMOTIONAL GROWTH	100.00%	11
SOCIAL GROWTH	100.00%	11
FINANCIAL GROWTH	100.00%	11
PARENTAL GROWTH	100.00%	11

Table 13.2

Indicators of Change – Survey Question 11 – Spiritual Growth from Christian Leaders’ Perspective

#	SPIRITUAL GROWTH
1	A peace that is a new part of this person
2	Has a visible desire to know God and develop a personal relationship with Him through reading the Bible and prayer. She would be actively involved in regular church activities that would promote her understanding of who Jesus Christ is ; what He has done for her and what His promises mean for her
3	Body language
4	Salvation
5	Spiritual growth is inevitable for single moms who really want to change their lives; church attendance is proof of evidence
6	Surrender of all things to God
7	humility & hunger for God’s direction
8	Increase in prayer, time with the Lord and in the word.
9	More giving, less selfish
10	Old habits die
11	Peace and trust the God loves them and will guide & provide

Table 13.3

Indicators of Change – Survey Question 11 – Emotional Growth from Christian Leaders’ Perspective

#	EMOTIONAL GROWTH
1	ability to make decisions, lees meltdowns, and outbursts
2	Hopefully she would get to know herself and recognize her weaknesses. She could then avoid habits and behaviors that would compromise her increasing confidence.
3	Hygiene
4	Diminished angry/outbursts
5	Changes is single mother’s demeanor as she grows in the knowledge of what God says about her
6	Lack of dependence on substances, medicine, and overall feelings of genuine peace
7	hope, positive mental outlook
8	Positive internal dialogue, healing and forgiveness
9	Easily engages with others, expresses emotions
10	Reactions are healthier
11	thoughtful responses instead of immediate reactions

Table 13.4

*Indicators of Change – Survey Question 11 – Social Growth from Christian Leaders’**Perspective*

#	SOCIAL GROWTH
1	leaving negative friends behind, including boyfriends
2	There would be definite changes where necessary in friendships, social activities, topics of conversation, vocabulary, personal habits etc.
3	Body language in groups
4	Joins a support group
5	More willing to reach out for female and family support through participation in family targeted church events
6	Absent trauma-related responses; Stops isolating and builds strong community of equally yoked members; participation with social mentors
7	more connection to others
8	getting involved with family group or ministry, time with family and friends.
9	Less involved in social media, more in people's lives
10	Friend groups are positive
11	Healthy relationships and reconciliation where appropriate

As evidence for financial change indicators, the practice of budgeting was suggested or implied by the Christian leaders (Table 13.5). Closely associated with budgeting, tithing was encouraged, and the reduction of debt was noted. As a result, the freeing of funds allowed single mothers to put invest in better vehicles, further their education, and focus on the planning of long-term family goals.

Table 13.5

*Indicators of Change – Survey Question 11 – Financial Growth from Christian Leaders’**Perspective*

#	FINANCIAL GROWTH
1	able to budget the available funds and get the important bills paid.
2	learning to allocate income wisely; appreciate pennies and always be thankful
3	Housing, vehicle
4	bills are all paid on time
5	Evidence would include visibly seeing the financial changes in a host of different ways (vehicle, clothes, tithing, etc.)
6	Impulsive buying ends; employment steady; ability to focus on family budget increases
7	consistency, more mature decisions
8	meeting a goal: paying off debt and creating a savings.
9	Works to become more educated and learns financial planning ie: budgeting
10	Debt is decreased
11	choosing for long term goals instead of immediate self gratification

The parental growth in single mothers as perceived by Christian leaders was predominately visible in the way single mothers interacted with their children (Table 13.6). More quality time was spent with the children, demonstrating behaviors that were calmer and more attentive towards the children than in the past. Intentional choices were being made to model a Christlike life, suggesting that the damaging behaviors learned in the past can be altered and reshaped.

Table 13.6

Indicators of Change – Survey Question 11 – Parental Growth from Christian Leaders’ Perspective

#	PARENTAL GROWTH
1	Less yelling (and hitting) able to reason with the child, affirmation of the child
2	She would try to create a healthy environment of love, patience, forgiveness and encouragement. She would also provide the necessities of daily living as best as she is able. She would live by example and raise her children in a Godly environment.
3	Physically more engaged with children
4	Speaks calmly to children
5	True parental growth will be evidenced by the single mom's willingness to change and show up for their appointments with their guidance counselor/mentor; willingness to show up and participate in parenting classes
6	Measured responses to children vs. reactionary; being "present"; putting needs of children first; co-parenting skills increase (where possible); consistent parenting skills
7	more selfless decisions & active care of children
8	Use of healthy parenting tools
9	Less involved in social media, more engaged and active with children
10	Less reaction, less yelling, firm boundaries.

Several additional indicators of visible change were recorded in the interviews of both the single mothers and the Christian leaders (Table 14).

Table 14

Indicators of Change – Interviews – All Participants’ Responses

Indicators of Change		
Spiritual	Practical	Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going to church • Spiritual hunger • Praying as a family • Filling ‘void’ with God, not man • Asking God for wisdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothers present in her children’s lives • Healthy relationships • Modeling positive change • Willingness to serve • Submission to instruction • Change in culture at home • Positive reports: family, friends, jobs & school • Healthier habits (eating & exercise) • Change in care of self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgiveness • Countenance • Positive attitude • Less angry • More calm • Less worry • Validation • Acceptance • Not trying to be perfect

Category 4: Strengthened stability. In addition to the visible indicators of positive changes in single mothers, it is necessary to determine if this transformational change could have a lasting impact on single mothers’ stability. From the interview with single mothers, Question 14 asked, “Do you believe that your family stability (spiritually, emotionally and financially) will be strengthened or weakened after a transformational change?” Without exception, every single mother responded with a resounding “absolutely strengthened” or “definitely strengthened.” The desire from the strengthened stability for single mothers could suggest a generational impact on their children. Therefore, Question 9 in the interviews with Christian leaders took a slightly different approach. It asked, “If you believe that the Christian leader is to guide the single mother through a transformational change, do you believe it can be genuine and

have a generational impact on her children?” Once again, there was a voice of unison in the affirmation that a transformational change led by Christian leaders would have such an effect. Both groups suggested several tangible examples of strengthening stability for the single mother in the areas of *spiritual*, *practical*, and *emotional* (Table 15).

Table 15

Strengthened Stability – Interviews – All Participants’ Responses

Strengthened Stability		
Spiritual	Practical	Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in a church • Praying for absent parent • Biblical perception of God • Holy Spirit in the home • Regular reading of the Word • Hunger for the Lord 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More sustainable • Pay raises • Healthy future marriages • Serving others • Eagerness to pursue change • Connected to the community • More giving than taking • Family getting along better • Pursuit of higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less therapy & counseling • ‘Victor’ not ‘victim’ mentality • Peace • Not trying to be perfect • Not obsessed with own problems • Communication with others

Interpretation

From the perspectives of both the single mothers and the Christian leaders, there was consistent evidence that the effectiveness of a transformational change in the stability of single mothers is greater when led by a Christian leader. Four categories emerged: *role of Christian leader*, *barriers to change*, *indicators of change*, and *strengthened stability*.

Role of Christian leader. Without exception, every participant believed that the involvement of the Christian leader played, or will play, a significant role in the transformation

of single mothers. SM8 noted that, “We feel very lonely and left alone. If we had that person who would guide us, that would really, really help a lot. That would change a family – a whole complete family” (SM8, 2019). Similarly, another single mother said, “It helped to know that there was someone out there that could see the ‘good, bad and ugly’ and still love me” (SM4, 2019). More importantly from the spiritual aspect, the same single mother said, “Someone who believe in me and wouldn’t beat me up for being human and for being a sinner but who would gently tell me truth and pray for me” (SM4, 2019).

The Christian leaders showed a strong agreement of needing the involvement of Christian leaders to lead single mothers through the transformational process, with the exception of one (CL4) who disagreed with this position. And yet in her interview, when asked Question 9 (Appendix D.B), “If you believe that the Christian leader is to guide the single mother through a transformational change, do you believe it can be genuine and have a generational impact on her children?,” she answered, “Yes.”

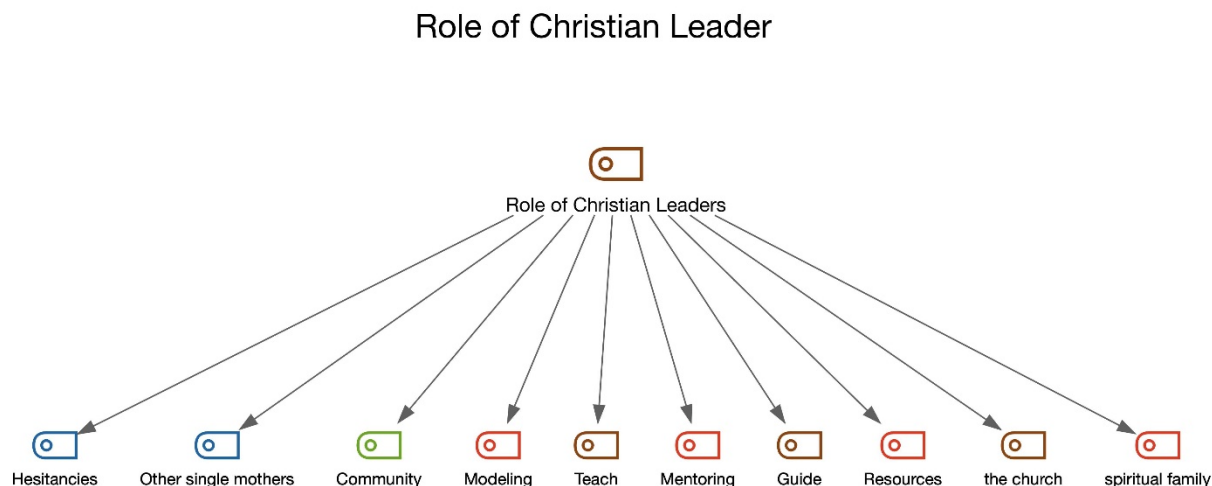
Repeatedly, it was mentioned during the interviews that “coming alongside of them [the single mothers] and helping them” (CL8, 2019) was paramount. One Christian leader, the pastor of a recovery ministry, recognized that “we have to gradually and lovingly help guide them through it [the transformational change process]” (CL9, 2019). This same pastor likened this involvement as needing a sherpa, “We need to get around other people who have navigated this before us. You need someone else who has done this before and gone before us” (CL9, 2019). Not only is the Christian leader to walk alongside of single mothers, but other women who have traversed this same journey. SM2 testifies that connecting with other single mothers “gets me with like-minded people that are going through the same thing” (SM2, 2019). Another single

mother suggested that “a previous single mom would know better” and “it would benefit from an ex-single mom” (SM5, 2019).

With the demonstrated support for the involvement of a Christian leader in the transformational process, there were several roles that both groups expected the Christian leader to perform. In both groups, *mentoring* was ranked first. CL2 believes that having “role models, mentors that have done it and can mirror to them [single mothers] and talk them through it” (CL2, 2019). When asked what is needed in creating a learning environment necessary to guide single mothers through the transformational change, she states, “I feel having a mentoring program, somebody who’s been in their shoes and can show them ‘here’s how it worked for me’” (CL4, 2019).

Running very close to *mentoring* was the role of *modeling*. SM7 shared her frustration of Christian leaders who “get up in the pulpit and they just tell you [what to do]” (SM7, 2019). She continues to say that “you can tell a person something but that doesn’t mean that they’re going to know how or where to start, or what to do. So, I think ‘modeling’ is the word I’m looking for.” (SM7, 2019). Table 16 illustrates the top nine perceived roles of Christian leaders, including one category labeled *hesitancies*, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Table 16

Hierarchy of Roles for the Christian Leader**Barriers to change.**

Single mothers. Both research groups recognized that there were significant barriers or challenges that were hindering the single mothers from moving towards a transformational change in the way they perceive their circumstances. In the list of perceived barriers to single mothers, finances [lack of] were the greatest barrier as perceived by the single mothers. Time, transportation and childcare ‘tied’ for the second greatest barriers. One single mother expressed her exasperation in describing her greatest challenges. She said, “It’s like Jenga [the game] for me. If one piece is gone, whether I take it or whether it’s taken, then I feel like I’m trying to hold all these pieces in place” (SM10). This describes the all-to-common cycle that each single mother had been experiencing. SM2 recalls how the lack of finances impacted her mindset and caused her to think, “Maybe I’ll just struggle for the rest of my life” (SM2). The lack of finances causes the ‘snowball effect.’ Well described by CL9, he noticed that “There’s a catch-22 that happens when you’re working a low-income job - that means you have a low-income car, and

you have low-income housing” (CL9). This catch-22 prevents the single mother from being able to afford childcare (SM2, SM3, SM8, CL2, CL9), which keeps the single mother from finding a suitable job (CL2, CL6, CL9), due to a lack of education or skills (SM3, SM4, CL9), which lowers the chances of finding affordable housing (CL3, SM6, SM10) and on it goes. SM5 (2019) described this personal scenario:

It just followed a vicious cycle. I’m working just to pay the phone bill, and car insurance. It’s a circus. I had daycare but I felt like I was working just to pay daycare. So, I was just dragging knuckles... (SM5)

Understanding that change is needed. Though the lack of finances was considered to be a significant barrier as perceived by single mothers, most Christian leaders believed that the greatest barrier to most single mothers was that they did not understand a change was needed. Several felt that single mothers were “stuck in their thought patterns, such as hopelessness or pride” (CL5) or that they have a “chaos mentality” (CL8), keeping them from seeing that they have options and a change is possible. CL9 suggests that “they’ve been beaten down over the years, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually that they don’t feel they deserve anything better.” CL2 provides this insight: “I think it’s generational. It’s a learned behavior that they grew up with.” CL1 suggests that “The biggest thing is whether or not she understands our Lord, because if she depends only on herself - she’ll fall short every time.” The radical transformation of SM7 describes her need to change her thinking:

I was arrested for drug trafficking. And now I honestly, to this day, can say it was the best thing that happened to me because I got to a place where I knew I had to change my way of thinking. Because if I didn’t, I was just going to be another statistic. (SM7)

Stigma and judgment. In a society that has advanced in its thinking of liberalism, it was surprising to hear the hurt several single mothers experience from the stigma and judgement that they feel from those around them. One single mother describes it this way, “Society is still that

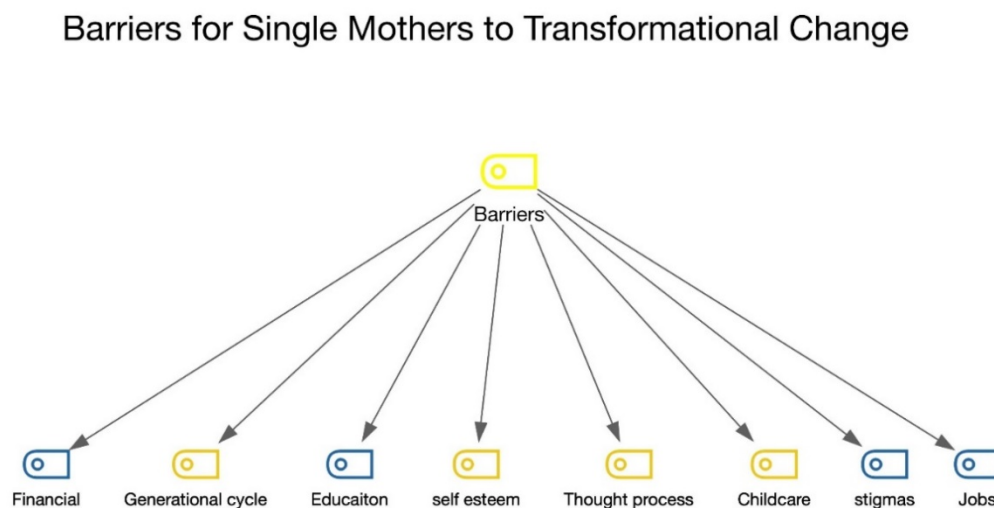
way, looking at you like you're not a complete family; you're incomplete because you're not married. You're a bad person" (SM8). She continues to say that, "People treat you different, especially in the church environment. I'm a Christian and I love God, but I still fear the judgement of the people" (SM8). Sadly, SM10 shares her perception:

I think one of the biggest challenges that I have found when talking to Christian leaders is they don't really want to talk to you like a human being. They want to talk to you like someone who needs to be saved or somebody who needs to be fixed and that doesn't feel like real, true human connection. When it's coming from someone who is more privileged than you for them to almost look down on you and say, 'Well, we know you ruined your life, we're going to help you.' It's not exactly the welcoming you want. (SM10)

Table 17 illustrates the eight most referenced barriers as perceived by both the single mothers and the Christian leaders (not in ranking order): *financial, generational cycle, education, self-esteem, thought process, childcare, stigmas, and jobs*. One Christian leader summed up this relentless cycle that single mothers face: "Everything is a challenge for the single mother"(CL3).

Table 17

Barriers for Single Mothers to Transformational Change



Indicators of change. One of the four questions posed by Maxwell (2008) when asking to measure the effectiveness of a leader is, “Is there visible change?” . The three themes that emerged throughout this study and are of interest from the vantage point of stability, are *spiritual*, *emotional*, and *practical*. Two additional themes, *social* and *parental* were significant in the inquiry of change that is visible while going through a transformational change. Every single mother participant agreed that there was, or should be, visible indicators of change in each of these areas. Similarly, all 11 Christian leaders echoed the same expectation.

Spiritual. For the spiritual change, CL4 believes that “Some of them [single mothers] don’t even know about God at all, so it’s allowing this brokenness to get healing, deeper than just finding a job.” CL6 suggests that “The spiritual hunger effects everything!” Stemming from a spiritual hunger (CL7), the spiritual formation process begins. Several Christian leaders (CL2, CL7) and single mothers (SM2, SM4) suggested regular attendance and participation in church is one of the building blocks in the foundation of moving forward in change. CL2 noticed that, “When they’re not in church, there are other things that are going to be effected, so their behaviors are going to sling.” Likewise, CL7 believes that, “That’s the direct link – us being able to plug in and serve and become a part of something much bigger than ourselves.”

Other indicators of a spiritual change will manifest themselves as forgiveness (CL2), serving others (CL2, CL9), and prayer (CL3, SM14, SM6). SM6 describes the relief she felt when a Christian leader told her that, “God died so we wouldn’t have to be perfect. There’s no such thing as a perfect person.” She responded with, “Oh, ok. That’s a new way to look at it.” The result for SM6? “A lot has changed. I don’t mop my floors every night, I don’t care if there’s dishes in the sink! My sons wrote on my couch and I didn’t kill him!”

Being grounded in the Word of God on a daily basis was the encouragement SM14 needed to start her day. By regular reading of the Scriptures, single mothers see who they are in Christ and view their circumstances through God's eyes, not how the world would see them. CL1 states that, "I believe when we keep our eyes focused on our Lord, the other things come." SM7 would proclaim, "Stay in the Word!" Another single mother described the power of the Word in her dark circumstances:

I kinda self-taught my things and I really had to stay diligent in the Word. So, I think seeing it in the Word and relating it to what you're going through because...you know what I mean? It's kinda 'keeping your eye on the prize' type thing. I did have a Bible [in jail]. It's the only thing I had. I would say the Word kept me. (SM7)

Emotional. One single mother stated that, "Your spiritual relationship and your spiritual path have a lot to do with your emotional mindset. Plus, your emotional well-being when your spiritual relationship is strong" (SM2). Each participating single mother recognized that a change in thinking was necessary and crucial to making a lasting change. "If you change our thinking, it will change our lives" (SM7). This is a powerful challenge for Christian leaders: to change the way that single mothers perceive themselves, to change how they react to crisis situations, and to create a calmness about the future. "People will see that you are calm. You have peace. You are more happier. You're not in darkness anymore" (SM8). By having a Christian leader giving the single mothers tools to "identify how we're feeling," SM10 felt that we "can be ourselves and with safe people."

Practical. To provide the day to day necessities, one single mother shared that "I realized God equipped me with everything I need to provide and to be able to take care of my children" (SM4). One of the several ways in which single mothers take care of their children is by being

present in their lives. “Spending more time with their kids. Being more active in their children’s lives” (SM3).

Strengthened stability. Without exception, it was confirmed by every single mother who participated in this study that her family’s stability had been, or would be, strengthened after a transformational change process when led by a Christian leader. Captured well by SM10, “Definitely strengthened. I can’t see how it can weaken it.” SM8 believes that this change process will not only strengthen her, but “the whole family.” SM4 feels like she is “an effective parent now.” SM5 asserts that her family stability is unquestionably strengthened, “One hundred percent! I don’t care about the money and I don’t care about the shopping.”

Evaluation of the Research Design

Chapter 4 presented the compilation protocol, sampling demographics, data analysis procedures, research findings, and evaluation of research design. Findings from this phenomenological qualitative approach were consistent with the findings of related studies on transformational leadership and the care for single mothers. Additionally, the effectiveness of Christian leaders using a transformational leadership approach were examined by comparing the perceptions of single mothers and Christian leaders. Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of these findings for Christian leaders and groups who have direct involvement with single mothers. The limitations to this study will also be presented.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter offers a summary of this study and the significant conclusions that were derived from the collected data presented in Chapter 4. A brief reinstatement of this study's research purpose and its research questions will assist the reader in understanding the implications and applications of the findings. From the conclusions, implications and applications will be suggested to the Christian leaders who are actively connected in the lives of single mothers. Finally, the limitations of this research and the opportunities for further investigation to broader areas of study will be presented.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the transformational change process of single mothers from their perspective, and to assess the influence of Christian leaders in this transformational change process from the leaders' perspectives, comparing their responses with regard to single mothers' family stability: spiritually, emotionally, financially and generationally. It was believed that when single mothers are led through a spiritual transformational change by Christian leaders, it would alter the way in which they think and subsequently behave, in response to their circumstances as single mothers.

This study also sought to reveal any barriers or hesitations that may hinder the change process, as perceived by both the single mothers and the Christian leaders in the research groups. More importantly, this researcher was looking for any indicators that would predict a positive strengthening in the single mothers' stability, suggesting that a healthier well-being would be established in her children and in turn, weaken the generational cycle of single motherhood.

Research Questions

RQ1. As perceived by both groups of study participants, what is the role of the Christian leader in guiding single mothers in a transformational process towards spiritual formation and family stability?

As perceived by each of the research participants, the primary role of the Christian leader should first be *mentoring*. Quite consistently, the single mother participants referred to the positive influence that one-on-one connections with a Christian leader had on their lives. It was also noted that a similar effect was found on their children who met with counselors on a regular basis at school or with youth leaders from church. Tied closely to mentoring, the roles of *modeling* and *discipling* were deemed important by both groups of research participants. The single mothers felt more comfortable watching and learning from other individuals who could relate to their circumstances, and more specifically with other single mothers who have walked in their shoes.

RQ2. As perceived by both groups of study participants, what are the barriers that hinder single mothers in the transformational process?

Barriers that hinder single mothers in the transformational change process were perceived differently by the two groups. Single mothers believed their two greatest barriers were *finances* and *understanding that change was needed*. The single mothers described how they found themselves caught in a cycle that began with the lack of finances, spinning faster and faster as the demands of housing, employment, and childcare grew beyond their means to satisfy. At first glance, one may wonder how finances would affect the transformational process, as there is not a financial obligation. When viewed through the lens of a single mother, it becomes clearer. With limited income, even the cost of gas to drive to a support group is out of the question, plus the added expense of childcare if the church or support group does not offer such a commodity is a

factor. Most of the single mother participants knew that a change was needed, but most of them admitted they did not understand how a change could even be possible. This was the area that the Christian leaders perceived as being the primary barrier. Many Christian leaders believe that some single mothers have been raised with a generational mindset of single parenting and therefore see this lifestyle as ‘the norm’ for that family. Tragically, several Christian leaders described how they often encounter single mothers who are comfortable in the ‘climate of chaos’. It is feared that single mothers do not understand how damaging this type of environment is, and that these single mothers are inadvertently teaching their children a damaging and un-biblical view of life.

The second barrier that Christian leaders felt significant to single mothers in pursuing a transformational change was *time*. They believed that since single mothers often need to work several jobs to financially provide for their families, there would be little time to commit to a group or program. Though not ranked as the most challenging barrier, single mothers did believe that time was an issue – but not because they did not *have* time. They often had the time but felt guilty in using this precious little time in a group or program, rather than being at home with their children after working several jobs.

RQ3. As perceived by both groups of study participants, does the practice of transformational leadership by Christian leaders influence a transformational change in single mothers? If so, how do participants describe this change?

Theoretically and theologically speaking, the research demonstrated that the practice of transformational leadership by Christian leaders *would* influence a transformational change in single mothers. Research showed that 22 out of 23 participants agreed, and all participants described the change as a positive improvement in three specific areas: spiritual, emotional and practical. Practically, the research showed that the Christian leaders do not have an

understanding of the transformational leadership theory, and thus, are not able to effectively use that method of guiding a single mother through the transformational change process.

Once the practice of transformational leadership was described to both research groups, it was discovered that the transformational change process was in fact occurring for several of the single mothers. The single mothers described how they felt more connected and affirmed when a Christian leader was intentionally walking beside them through the ‘messiness’ of their lives. Research showed that when Christian leaders met the single mothers where they were at, the single mothers began to grow stronger spiritually, emotionally, and practically. All participants recognized this transformational change is truly a process, not a project.

RQ4. As perceived by both groups of study participants, how is the spiritual, emotional, and practical conditions of single mothers improved or worsened after the transformational process?

Research participants from both groups perceived that the *spiritual*, *emotional*, and *practical* conditions of single mothers were strengthened, not worsened in any way. Without exception, each of single mother participants could describe great improvements during and after the transformational process, giving examples of visible change in her family’s stability. Several were shocked that see that the option of ‘worsened’ was even a choice. Spiritually, the single mother and her family experienced a hunger for the Word and a desire to get ‘plugged in’ to the local church. Emotionally, both the single mother and her children experienced a lessening of anger in exchange for a growing sense of calmness and peace. The greatest testimony of emotional change was redirecting their focus from themselves to a focus on serving others. Practical growth was evident in the way the single mothers made decisions about finances. Positive reports at the place of employment and positive behaviors at school (by the children)

were reported. Finally, the single mothers described the ability to develop healthier relationships with friends and family as a result.

RQ5. As perceived by both groups of study participants, what indicators could be used as a future predictor of transformational change that is generational?

Evidence from this study demonstrated that there are tangible indicators that could be used as future predictors that a generational impact was made. Both research groups affirmed that with the strengthening of single mothers' family stability, there were gradual changes occurring in their child(ren). Active participation in the local church, not just merely attending but committed to being involved, reinforced the transformed attitudes and behaviors. A submission to instruction and an eagerness to learn were significant indicators, suggesting a greater desire to understand and then teach from their own experiences. Less frequent visits to family counselors and financial counselors indicate that the changes are genuine and are being correctly applied in family decisions. Overall, healthy marriages for the children is firm evidence that the generational cycle of single mothers can be broken.

Research Implications

Role of Christian Leaders

While a transformational change can occur under the direction of the Holy Spirit, it is greatly supported by the intervention of a transformational leader. This spiritual transformation process requires more than just following God - one must know God. In order to know God and thus reflect the image of God, the roles of the Christian leaders must include the guiding of single mothers through a spiritual transformational change process. It is paramount that every opportunity is intentionally used to teach single mothers to focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ through whom God has revealed Himself.

Evident from the research, the key roles expected to be carried out by the Christian leaders who are guiding single mothers through a transformational change are mentoring, modeling, and discipling. This is consistent with the current research and related literature, recognizing that the change process is more successful when time and resources are invested by individuals committed to walking alongside of single mothers. When Christian leaders demonstrate a ‘Jesus’ model, a holistic approach that ministers to the emotional, spiritual, and physical attributes of mankind, single mothers see a life modeled in the reflection of Christ – in His image. By creating a Christ-centered learning environment that is safe, loving, and non-judgmental, single mothers will find opportunities to connect with those who can guide them as they navigates through the process of change.

Spiritually. Because of sin, the special relationship mankind had with God was damaged. But through God’s mercy and sacrifice of His Son for our salvation, mankind is offered hope. Putting “off the old self” and putting “on the new self” (Eph. 4:22,23) through the transformational process that changes the “old humanity” towards a renewed life that reflects the image of God. The role of transformational leadership by Christian leaders in the spiritual formation of single mothers then becomes necessary so that the single mothers can view their circumstances and challenges through the lens of a biblical worldview – contrary to what society would tell them. Spiritually mature Christian leaders would provide sound teaching, model Christlike lifestyles, and become stable mentors who would promote healthy and fruitful growth for single mothers and their children.

Emotionally. The research unveiled surprising reports from the single mothers of perceived stigma and silent judgment, not only from the community around them but also from the church. Evidence shows that single mothers are often made to feel as if their family is

‘incomplete.’ The emotional transformation gave these single mothers the ability to forgive others, and themselves. Being able to ‘label’ their emotions, and then evaluate them through a biblical worldview, changed how they reacted to circumstances, failures, and disappointments. To effectively strengthen single mothers emotionally, Christian leaders need to teach them how to “take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Previously negative thoughts such as low self-esteem, unworthiness, anger, bitterness, and hopelessness were replaced with peace, happiness, and hope for the future.

Practically. One of the most immediate practical needs indicated by the single mothers in this study was assistance with childcare. The lack of finances had a direct impact on single mothers’ ability to afford childcare. Not only for single mothers who are at work, but for those trying to go back to school, or even wanting to attend a church function that does not provide childcare. Another practical need was finding resources that would develop the skills and tools needed to better equip them in providing for their children. By offering hands-on training or connecting single mothers with resources from the community that could enhance skillsets, Christian leaders can assist in strengthening single mothers’ stability. Ultimately, this encourages and empowers single mothers to realize they have options.

Surprises. The greatest unexpected outcome of this study was discovering there were two areas that lacked understanding by the Christian leaders. The first area that lacked understanding was in the theories of transformational leadership and transformational learning. As a result, the Christian leaders were unable to use the application of these theories when it pertained to single mothers. It would not be unwarranted to suggest that this lack of understanding is not limited only to the application of single mothers, but to any group at all. The

second area that lacked understanding by Christian leaders is knowing how to effectively connect to single mothers at a relational or emotional level.

Recommendations

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	
MAJOR FINDINGS	SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
Transformational change process is most effective when led by a Christian leader.	Christian leaders must become intentional in walking alongside of single mothers. Find the resources and create a network that will support the single mother.
There is a lack of understanding by the Christian leader of transformational leadership.	Workshops, conferences or training in the area of transformational leadership to be available to all Christian leaders (in-house, formal training, etc.)
Transformational change is effective when guided by an individual who has experienced similar circumstances.	Invite mature Christian women who were previously a single mother, to serve as a mentor. Encourage the same training in transformational leadership.
Most single mothers are aware that a change is needed but do not know how to achieve that change on their own.	Walk the single mothers through a self-inventory, assessing the areas that need change.
Most Christian leaders personally do not have a direct connection to single mothers within their ministry.	Be intentional in knowing the 'status of your flock'. Find out who the single mothers are in the ministry, congregation and areas of influence which the Christian leader has been called to.
There is a lack of understanding by Christian leaders as to the 'big picture' of single mothers and therefore do not have the tools or skills to effectively minister to them.	Research current statistics on single mothers. 'Survey' known single mothers to determine what their needs are. Become familiar with available community and county resources that could assist the single mother and her family.

Applications of Findings

Christian Leaders	Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior pastors • Teachers • Counselors • Recovery Leaders • Coaches • Community Leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single fathers • Grandparents raising grandchildren • Social services agencies

Research Limitations

The major limitation of this study was the unexpectedly small sample size of single mothers, the second research group. Only five out of the 12 Christian leaders were able to identify and invite a total of 14 single mothers who participated in the surveys and/or interviews, instead of the intended 30 single mothers. This revelation supports the imperative need for Christian leaders to become more aware and intentional in ministering to single mothers.

One setback was due to unforeseen issues with the timeframe related to receiving the appropriate research permissions in conjunction with the educational deadlines. This challenge contributed to a shortened period for Christian leaders to identify at least three single mothers best suited to participate in this research. As such, this researcher was unable to provide Christian leaders further time to search beyond their immediate circle of influence for additional single mother participants if the original prospects were unavailable or unwilling. The culminating effect of this delay created the unexpected challenge of analyzing and presenting an accurate reflection of the research questions from this study. Much to this researcher's surprise, the small sample group of single mothers proved consistent responses and results.

Further Research

Evidence from this study reveals two startling outcomes that require further research. First, there is a lack of understanding of the transformational leadership theory by *both research groups*: single mothers and Christian leaders. As a result, Christian leaders are then unable to apply transformational principles into the work of Christian ministry, though they are agreed that transformational change is needed. Subsequent to this finding, it is suggested that further research be conducted in how the training of Christian leaders should incorporate transformational leadership, seek to examine the extent to which transformational learning should be taught, and finally, how the principles can be effectively applied to all areas of Christian ministry.

Secondly, and of greater importance, begs to ask the question, “Why do Christian leaders have such little interaction or involvement with single mothers?” Given the vast demographics and circles of influence in which Christian leaders have been called to minister, there appears to be a significant void in reaching single mothers. Research could be conducted by examining how Christian leaders could be made more aware of this often-overlooked group, and how the lack of connection could be overcome.

Conclusions

Further education will always be considered a powerful tool that can equip most individuals who are searching for a higher paid employment opportunity. For single mothers, this may be an option, though a challenging one, and not easily obtained. But will the pursuit of a higher education strengthen single mothers’ family stability, reaching beyond the financial implications? Will the pursuit for a higher education transform the way single mothers perceive

themselves and their circumstances, and bring them into a spiritual transformation – a renewing of their mind where they see themselves with a biblical worldview of who they are in Christ?

It was believed by this researcher, grounded on a theological and theoretical foundation, that a transformational change is possible for single mothers who are genuinely seeking such a change. It was also believed that this transformational change is more effective when led by Christian leaders, strengthening the single mothers' family stability in the areas of spiritual, emotional, practical conditions. What was left undiscovered was the perception and level of understanding of transformational leadership by Christian leaders, and how their effectiveness in ministry to single mothers would be much greater if they applied transformational leadership principles.

This research demonstrated that when there a genuine transformational change in the single mother, she gradually becomes better equipped by the mentoring, modeling and discipleship of Christian leaders, who will help her build family stability. When the Christian leader fully understands the impact of transformational leadership and then applies the potential life-changing principles into the lives of single mothers, the chains that hold so many single mothers captive to the vicious cycle of hopelessness can be broken. The single mother's spiritual, emotional, and practical concerns are will be addressed through a newly framed biblical worldview who sees herself made 'in His image.' Freed from the weight of negative thinking and spiritual despondency, a transformed life can begin. Now experiencing joy in their circumstances, peace in the home, and hope for a stronger future, single mothers can lead their family securely anchored in God's truth, and ultimately weakening the generational cycle.

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APPENDIX A

Letter to Potential Christian Leaders for a Study of
A Comparison of Perceptions of Single Mothers and
Christian Leaders Through Transformational Change

Letter to Potential Christian Leaders for a Study of
A Comparison of Perceptions of Single Mothers and
Christian Leaders Through Transformational Change
Liberty University
Rawlings School of Divinity

Dear Christian Leader,

My name is Brienne Robertson and I am a doctoral student in Christian Leadership at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. My dissertation research will be the comparison of two study groups in transformational change. The first group will be from the perspective of the Christian leader who has or will be guiding a single mother through a transformational change process, and to assess their own effectiveness in the process. The second group will be from the perspective of the single mother who has or is seeking to be, guided through a transformational change process, and to assess the effectiveness of Christian leaders in this process.

I would like to invite you to participate in this much needed research that seeks to help single mothers and weaken the generational cycle of single parenthood. There are two steps that I would ask for your involvement. The first step is a 10-question online survey and should take approximately 15-20 minutes, accessible wherever the internet is available. The second step is a face-to-face interview that I will conduct in a location convenient to you and should take approximately 45-60 minutes.

Though collected results will be reported in the dissertation, individual identity and personal data will remain confidential, and only the principal researcher will have access to all the information collected. Participants, including yourself, will be given a pseudonym. The

interviews will be audio recorded so a complete and accurate transcription can be made. All data will be securely stored and will be destroyed upon completion of this study. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time.

Your time and effort for participating in this study is highly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact me. Thank you in advance for your participation in this matter and making this study possible.

Sincerely,

Brienne Robertson

Email: bdrobertson@liberty.edu

Telephone: 321-544-8549

APPENDIX B

Letter to Potential Single Mothers for a Study of
A Comparison of Perceptions of Single Mothers and
Christian Leaders Through Transformational Change

Letter to Potential Single Mothers for a Study of
A Comparison of Perceptions of Single Mothers and
Christian Leaders Through Transformational Change
Liberty University
Rawlings School of Divinity

Dear Potential Study Participant,

My name is Brienne Robertson and I am a doctoral student in Christian Leadership at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. My dissertation research will be the comparison of two study groups in transformational change. The first group will be from the perspective of the Christian leader who has or will be guiding a single mother through a transformational change process, and to assess their own effectiveness in the process. The second group will be from the perspective of the single mother who has or is seeking to be, guided through a transformational change process, and to assess the effectiveness of Christian leaders in this process.

I would like to invite you to participate in this much needed research that seeks to help single mothers and weaken the generational cycle of single parenthood. There are two steps that I would ask for your involvement. The first is a 10-question online survey and should take approximately 15-20 minutes, accessible wherever you have internet access. The second portion is a face-to-face interview that I will conduct in a location convenient to you and should take approximately 45-60 minutes.

Though collected results will be reported in the dissertation, individual identity and personal data will remain confidential, and only myself as the principal researcher will have

access to all the information collected. Participants, including yourself, will be given a pseudonym to keep your personal information confidential. The interviews will be audio recorded so a complete and accurate transcription can be made. All data will be securely stored and will be destroyed upon completion of this study. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time.

Your time and effort for participating in this study is highly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact me. Thank you in advance for your participation in this matter and making this study possible.

Sincerely,

Brienne Robertson

Email: bdrobertson@liberty.edu

Telephone: 321-544-8549

APPENDIX C

Participant Consent for Research – Christian Leaders

10/29/2019 to --
Protocol # 3959.102919

CONSENT FORM – CHRISTIAN LEADERS

Comparison of Perceptions of Single Mothers and Christian Leaders Through Transformational Change

Brienne D. Robertson

Liberty University

You are invited to be in a research study of the transformational change process of single mothers and the comparison of perceptions of both Christian leaders and the single mothers they counsel. This phenomenological study is to compare the responses between the two groups with the intent of seeking to understand the effects of the transformational process and experience for the single mother and the generational impact it may have on her children.

You were selected as a possible participant because

- ☐ You have been identified as a Christian leader, such as a pastor, a counselor, or a clinical professional.
- ☐ You work in a recognized Christian ministry (church or organization), primarily in Central Florida.
- ☐ You are or have been actively involved with the transformational change process of individuals (preferably single mothers but not limited to).
- ☐ You speak English.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Brienne D. Robertson, a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to examine the transformational change process of single mothers from their perspective and to assess the influence of Christian leaders in this transformational change process from the leaders' perspective, comparing their responses with regard to the single mother's family stability, spiritually, emotionally, financially and generationally.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

- ☐ The first is a 12-question online survey, which should take approximately 15-20 minutes and is accessible wherever the internet is available.
- ☐ The second step is a face-to-face interview that I will conduct in a location convenient to you, which should take approximately 45-60 minutes. This interview will be audio recorded.
- ☐ I will review the collected data with you to confirm its accuracy.

Risks: The only potential risk is a breach in confidentiality if the data is lost or stolen.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. However, a benefit to society may be generated if this research demonstrates that a new mindset of thinking positively changes the behaviors of single parents and improves family stability.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private.

- ☐ In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.
- ☐ Research records will be stored securely, and only the primary researcher will have access to the records.
- ☐ Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- ☐ Electronic data will be stored on a password locked computer, and hard copy data will be stored in a locked cabinet. Data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and hard copy data will be shredded.

- ☐ Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Brienne Robertson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at 321-544-8549 or bdrobertson@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Gary Bredfeldt, at gjbredfeldt@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D

Participant Consent for Research – Single Mothers

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
10/29/2019 to --
Protocol # 3959.102919

Consent Form – Single Mothers
Comparison of Perceptions of Single Mothers and
Christian Leaders Through Transformational Change
Brienne D. Robertson
Liberty University

You are invited to be in a research study of the transformational change process of single mothers and the comparison of perceptions of both Christian leaders and the single mothers they counsel. This phenomenological study is to compare the responses between the two groups with the intent of seeking to understand the effects of the transformational process and experience for the single mother and the generational impact it may have on her children.

You were selected as a possible participant because

- You are a single mother between the ages of 18-45,
- You are seeking a genuine change in the way you view your circumstances,
- You have biological children who live with you at least 50% of the time,
- You have a high-school diploma or less,
- You make \$21,000/year or less, and
- You are willing to participate in a face-to-face interview.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Brienne D. Robertson, a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to examine the transformational change process of single mothers, from their perspective, and to assess the influence of Christian leaders

in this transformational change process from the leaders' perspective, comparing their responses with regard to the single mother's family stability: spiritually, emotionally, financially and generationally.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

- The first is a 12-question online survey, which should take approximately 15-20 minutes and is accessible wherever the internet is available.
- The second step is a face-to-face interview that I will conduct in a location convenient to you, which should take approximately 45-60 minutes. This interview will be audio recorded.
- I will review the collected data with you to confirm its accuracy.

Risks: The only potential risk is a breach in confidentiality if the data is lost or stolen.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. However, a benefit to society may be generated if this research demonstrates that a new mindset of thinking positively changes the behaviors of single parents and improves family stability.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private.

- In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.
- Research records will be stored securely, and only the primary researcher will have access to the records.
- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Electronic data will be stored on a password locked computer and hard copy data will be stored in a locked cabinet. Data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and hard copy data will be shredded.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Brienne Robertson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at 321-544-8549 or bdrobertson@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Gary Bredfeldt, at gjbredfeldt@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

_____ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX E

Instruments for Data Collection

Instruments for Data Collection

A. SURVEYMONKEY.COM QUESTIONS

1. Are you a parent over the age of 18? If so, how many children do you have under the age of 18?
2. From your perspective, rank what you believe are the greatest needs for a single mother?
(6 being the greatest need; 1 being the least need)
 - a. Employment
 - b. Education for the mother
 - c. Housing
 - d. Legal assistance
 - e. Transportation
 - f. Childcare
3. Do you believe a change in thinking will assist the single mother in her approach to make changes that will strengthen her family stability?
4. Do you believe that guidance for the single mother is needed in leading her through a transformational change?

5. What do you think are barriers that hinder single mothers from achieving a genuine transformational change? Check all that apply.

- a. Time
- b. Transportation
- c. Finances
- d. Childcare
- e. Understanding that change is needed
- f. Personality
- g. Other (specify)

6. What do you think are barriers that hinder Christian leaders from guiding single mothers through a transformational change?

- a. Time
- b. Transportation
- c. Finances
- d. Understanding that transformational change is needed
- e. Personality
- f. Other (specify)

7. Are you aware of community resources that are available for single mothers? If so, please list.

- a. Yes
 - b. No
8. From your perspective, what are the most effective ways that Christian leaders can guide single mothers through a transformational change?
- a. Modeling
 - b. Discipling
 - c. Mentoring
 - d. Formal Instruction
 - e. Other (specify)
9. From your perspective, do you believe Christian leaders are familiar with transformational leadership and transformational learning?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
10. List any visible indicators of positive change that results from a transformational change process.
- a. Spiritual growth
 - b. Emotional growth
 - c. Social growth
 - d. Financial growth
 - e. Parental growth

Instruments for Data Collection

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS

1. From your perspective, who do you believe is to care for the single mother and her children?
2. From your perspective, what are the greatest challenges of being a single mother?
3. Do you believe that guidance is needed in changing how a single mother makes choices?
4. Why do you think single mothers are hindered from changing their way of thinking and thus the subsequent behaviors?
5. Do you believe Christian leaders have a clear understanding of the transformational leadership theory? If so, do you believe it can be used in Christian leadership? Explain.
6. What do you think Christian leaders are hesitant in helping single mothers through a transformational change?

7. If you believe that the Christian leader is to lead the single mother through a transformational change, do you believe a genuine transformational change is possible for the single mother?
8. How can you as a Christian leader help the single mother become a more autonomous thinker, rather than acting on those of others?
9. If you believe that the Christian leader is to lead the single mother through a transformational change, what is needed in the learning environment that will promote opportunities for the single mother to be guided from their previously formed worldview to making decisions with a biblical worldview?
10. What facilitation roles are needed to foster a genuine transformational change?
11. What indicators could be used as a future predictor of a transformational change that is generational?
12. What do you think are visible indicators of effectiveness or success to change?
 - a. Spiritual hunger/growing in Christ
 - b. Positive behaviors

- c. Countenance
 - d. Service to others
 - e. Submission to instruction/ following the influence of their leader
 - f. Positive reports at job (if applicable)
 - g. Positive reports in school (if applicable)
 - h. Positive reports from close friends and family
13. Can you identify three (3) single mothers who you believe would be good candidates for this study? They must be biological mothers who are between the ages of 18-45, employed at least part-time, and have custody of their children at least 50% of the time.

Instruments for Data Collection

C. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SINGLE MOTHERS

1. What is your greatest joy about being a mother?
2. How many children do you have and how long have you been a single mother?
3. From your perspective, what are the greatest challenges of being a single mother?
4. From your perspective, who do you believe is to care for the single mother and her children? Why?
5. From your perspective, what is the role of Christian leaders in the lives of a single mother and her children?
6. Do you believe that guidance is needed to learn how to make different decisions as a single mother? Explain your answer.
7. In general, why do you think single mothers are hindered from changing their way of thinking and thus the subsequent behaviors?
8. Have you heard of ‘transformational leadership’ and ‘transformational learning’? If so, do you understand how that could be applied to your life as a single mother?

9. Do you believe that Christian leaders have a clear understanding on how transformational leadership could lead you as a single mother into a genuine change?
10. Why do you think Christian leaders are hesitant in helping single mothers through a transformational change?
11. Do you believe a genuine transformational change is possible for you as a single mother, if led by a Christian leader? Explain.
12. If you believe that the Christian leader is to lead you through a transformational change, what role would that leader play in helping you to form a biblical worldview that would change the way you see yourself as being made 'in His image'?
13. What do you think are visible indicators of effectiveness or success to your change?
14. Do you believe that your family stability (spiritually, emotionally, financially) will be strengthened or weakened after a transformational change process?
15. From your perspective, what indicators could be used as a future predictor that your transformational change will have an impact on your children?

APPENDIX F

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 29, 2019

Brienne D. Robertson

IRB Exemption 3959.102919: A Phenomenological Comparison of Perceptions of Christian Leaders and Single Mothers with Respect to the Transformational Change Process

Dear Brienne D. Robertson,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office



Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971