

CHRISTIAN WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Perspectives from seven black, Asian and white women

by

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ABSTRACT

In this research, personal experience of being a white Christian woman from the UK in leadership in a different cultural context in Africa was used to initiate conversations with six female Christian ministers from African, Caribbean and Indian Sikh heritages in Britain. The purpose of the research was to explore the realities of the individual lives of black or Asian women in church ministry, and to explore what qualities were exhibited and strategies used in their ministries. Using an autoethnographic methodology, conversations were designed and initiated by the researcher around issues of calling, vocation and mission, gender, race, ethnicity and culture, women as community builders, costs and sacrifices, rewards and fulfilments, honour and dishonour and the future of black or Asian women in church ministry in Britain. Comparisons were drawn with the writer's experience of being a white woman in Christian missionary service in Liberia, West Africa. It is hoped that this qualitative enquiry will contribute to the inclusion and empowerment of black, Asian and white women in Christian ministry and leadership and that the reality of these experiences will help other women beginning the same journey.

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I dedicate this research to the next generation.

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INTRODUCTION

Christian Women in Leadership has developed as a research topic from my many years of cross-cultural missionary service with an interdenominational organisation, working in Liberia, West Africa, after a background in social and church work. I began with a desire to find out more about black Christians in the UK, and the reality of their lives in a white majority nation. I have always believed in the equality of all races, and in a God who values justice and hates oppression of those who are unfavoured or marginalised through a dominant discourse. The term 'black' carries loaded meaning, because of the history of racism but, in my understanding, it is an intentional definition of belonging, honour and the ontological beauty of being made in the Image of God.

I began the research by defining the subject and the aim. Having considered broad subjects such as the black majority churches in the UK, and racial reconciliation, I narrowed the focus to the specific element of women in Christian ministry and leadership, which connected with some of my experience. This quickly led to the constituency of black women in the UK, as an opposite to my own history as a white woman in Africa. An important step along the way was watching a documentary about the Women's Peace Movement in Liberia, 'Pray the Devil back to Hell,' which is discussed in Chapter 2. This true story of Liberian women campaigning for the Liberian civil war to end, demonstrates the impact of ordinary women's lives. Having returned to the UK in 1999, after thirteen years overseas, I linked my interest in women in leadership and my love for African people with a desire to engage more with Caribbean Christians, and began this research in 2009.

The aim was originally to investigate the lives of some black Christian women leaders in the UK, and to compare similarities and differences with my own experience of being a woman co-leader of a Christian mission team in Liberia. The purpose was to reveal the realities for women of colour in the UK church today, in terms of a race and gender discourse. However, through the process, I recognised my own implicit aim, which was to affirm and advocate for black women in Christian ministry and leadership. Any research, therefore, would have to name researcher subjectivities and maintain clarity of focus. The element of cross-culture was included because, as researcher and interviewees, we all shared a common experience of working across cultural boundaries.

As the research has progressed, I discovered a deeper aim, which was to examine how black women leaders exercised their leadership, with what styles, and how they coped with discrimination and difficulties. The aim summarised then has been to investigate how six black or Asian female church leaders live out their ministry in the UK and compare their realities with my experience of being a white woman leading a black and international mission team in Africa. I added the possibility of interviewing someone from an Asian heritage, in order to better reflect the British context in terms of ethnicity.

The research question has developed through the process of thought, writing, interviews and analysis. I defined a simple research question, which was to ask, 'What are the realities of black and Asian Christian women leaders' lives in the UK?' and to compare similarities and differences amongst each other and with me as a white woman. From this, I designed a number of questions, drawn from my own missionary experience, which will be explicated in Chapter 2 and can be seen in Appendix B. I interviewed six Christian women leaders, from Caribbean, African and Asian heritages, and from different denominational backgrounds.

As the research progressed, I discovered that the questions developed into an investigation of women's style of leadership, their values and ways they expressed Christian ministry. The analysis of the interviews contains, not only a comparison of similarities and differences, but also an exploration into how the interviewees dealt with barriers and obstacles, and what strategies and styles of leadership they adopted in order to rise above those obstacles. It is hoped that this thesis will add to the knowledge base surrounding black and Asian women in Christian leadership.

I begin in Chapter One with my personal background to the research, as well as a section on methodology, in which I do not focus on feminist methodology as much as autoethnography, because the latter is how I began this academic journey. Feminist literature will be discussed later in Chapters Three and Four, in keeping with my own pathway of discovery and forms a significant part of the investigation and analysis of this subject.

Chapter 2 discusses the research issue in greater depth, while the fruit of the interviews are in the analysis in Chapter Three and their significance in the theological reflection in

Chapter Four. I conclude, in Chapter 5, with some thoughts on the contribution this thesis may make to the subject.

During the early days of thinking about the possibility of research, I attended some black majority church events, and met a black female church leader with a wide influence amongst African and Caribbean British Christians.¹ She helped me think through some of the issues related to this topic, and I am grateful for this connection. She also agreed to be interviewed for this research.

¹ Rev. Katei Kirby, currently Head of Operations at Ruach Ministries, London.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 A white woman in Christian leadership in Africa

After several years in social and church youth work in the UK, I spent over twenty-five years with Youth With A Mission,² an interdenominational and international Christian mission organisation. My main responsibilities were in missionary training and leadership development, working in six different locations: The Netherlands, Liberia West Africa, Switzerland, Spain, England and Scotland. Seven of those years overseas were lived in Liberia, where I co-pioneered a small team of volunteers working in Christian formation and community development alongside churches from many denominations. This context became the crucible in which cross-cultural understanding was worked out amongst team members, comprising both Liberians and westerners. That challenge, lived out against the backdrop of the Liberian civil war in the 1990s, was life changing, life threatening, yet life enhancing, a classroom where all participants grew in appreciation and acceptance of each other. As a white woman in Christian leadership in a black nation, I encountered difficulties, but also welcome and opportunities. I now live in the UK, working in leadership development, and life coaching.

After three visits to Liberia, with short term teams, I went in 1989 with a female colleague to establish a long term YWAM centre in Monrovia. In prayer, during an urban mission conference, I experienced a strong sense of a divine invitation to go to Liberia, based upon a verse from Isaiah, 'If you spend yourself on behalf of the poor and the needy, then I will strengthen your frame and provide your needs in a sun-scorched land.' (Isaiah 58: NRSV) Being called to Christian based work was a strong inner reality which had guided my decisions for many years, through social work, church youth work and now with an international mission. My first experience of a sense of divine calling to Christian service was in my early twenties, through a verse in Matthew, 'Freely you have received, freely give.' (Matt 10:8 NRSV) The outworking of this calling has been and is through people centred work, whether families in need, or teenagers in youth clubs, or through training young adults to become missionaries. My

² Youth With A Mission, hereafter known as YWAM, founded in 1960 by Loren and Darlene Cunningham

calling is to live intentionally as a Christian to make a positive difference in the world, and vocation refers to the specific arena in which the calling is lived out. Currently, that is expressed through mentoring, life coaching, missions teaching, personal development and conflict mediation. The geographical location has changed many times but Liberia was the most dramatic place in which to learn and grow through understanding a completely different way of life and experience a very different culture.

Moving from one's own nation and background to live in another country and continent is a displacement, as one leaves the familiar and comfortable to go to a place of unfamiliarity and vulnerability. Lack of knowledge of the expectations, cues, interactions, and meaning of actions and words used by local people is like being in a cultural fog, not being able to 'see' anything clearly. Nouwen quotes the Webster definition of displacement as, 'being removed from the ordinary and proper place,'³ and explicates the idea of 'voluntary displacement' as a consequence of the calling of the church to build Christian community.⁴ I had grown up in a Midlands village, worked in a small Devon town, and then at the age of thirty-four, left England to go to The Netherlands to work with YWAM in Amsterdam, notorious for sex and drugs, and somewhat rejected by the rest of Holland as not being really Dutch. There I experienced severe loneliness, even though I appreciated and liked the Dutch very much. I was unable to define the loneliness as culture shock, being ignorant of such a phrase. By contrast, when I made field trips to Liberia during that time, I discovered a stronger bond with African culture. Where Amsterdam had been cold and grey, Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, was sunny, warm, and full of colour. The smell of oranges and red earth, red and orange flowers, yellow taxis, and rich dark smiling faces captured my heart. Market women calling out to people to buy their produce, people mopping their brows in the heat, fruit stalls everywhere, were all part of the rich canvas of a bustling city life. There, my love for cross-cultural difference grew. The sense of being displaced disappeared. One reason for this is that Liberia is a people oriented culture. I did not have an opportunity to be lonely. In fact, it was hard to find time to be on your own. A sense of family grew, and now, even after so many years, those relationships are still strong.

³ Henri Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, Douglas A. Morrison, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life* (New York: Image, 1983), p. 63.

⁴ Nouwen, McNeill, Morrison, *Compassion*, p. 64.

During the decision making process that took place before I and my female co-worker were officially commissioned by YWAM Amsterdam to go to Liberia, doubts were expressed by the leaders about the wisdom of sending two women to lead in the African context. Questions were raised about our ability to cope, and concerns expressed for our welfare. However, one of the core values in YWAM is that everyone can hear from God and we honour the individual's sense of calling, whether male or female, young or old, new or experienced. Eventually, the leaders decided to allow us to go and to support us with personnel, some finances and a commitment to make pastoral visits. Liberian church leaders, when asked if they were happy for two women to lead a mission team, were positive. Part of the reason for this acceptance is found in Liberia's unique perspective on western missionaries who were, and are, held in high regard. In the late 1980s, there were few female leaders in YWAM, although the trend was growing and we were well ahead of many other mission agencies at that time. One of my colleagues from South America, Ricardo Rodriguez, suggested to me, in a conversation in Chile, that women are sometimes better pioneers in the developing world than men because they do not attract such a high level of deference from local people. Women are not considered to be as high on the ladder of hierarchy as men in many cultures, so local men may be more able to rise into leadership in the organisation where a woman is leading in the early pioneering stages.⁵ This is seen negatively from a feminist perspective, but the suggestion by my colleague was to let our lack of position work for us in the pursuit of our objectives. So rather than fight for our rights, we could allow others to treat us according to their perspectives not ours. This gave room for them to take more responsibility and initiative and certainly I experienced the protection of my Liberian male team members in the time of war. Whether this perspective is surrendering to patriarchy or laying down one's rights like Christ is open to discussion. I recognise that women can be subjugated and denied rights, rather than exercising a free choice to surrender them. However, in our context at the time, one of our primary goals was to train and release a Liberian leader for our mission team and that would probably be a man at that time. This happened eventually and currently the YWAM team in Liberia is led by a Liberian man. Rodriguez also noted that, at the time of our conversation in 1991,

⁵ Comment in conversation with YWAM Southern Cone South America Director Ricardo Rodriguez, Santiago Chile May 1991.

the three most difficult nations in Africa were being pioneered for our mission by female leaders (Liberia, Mozambique and a third un-named North African country).⁶

1.1.1 Honoured as a white woman

As a white woman in Liberia, I realise that I was given a level of acceptance and honour that was undeserved. I stood out in the crowd. When I went to church everyone knew where ‘Sister Sue’ tried to sit, which was usually under the fan that worked when the generator was on and at the back near the open door where there was more breeze. The point of this is that I was one of only two white people who regularly attended that church and I was always obvious. Whether it was walking down the street in town, going to the Post Office to check for mail, or walking in my neighbourhood to visit friends, I was always noticed. The use of the term ‘Sister’ and then my name was not a greeting purely for missionaries but was commonly used in the church setting when people greeted one another. It is a term of respect. Even today, living in the UK and having African friends, I often greet one Ghanaian male friend with a handshake and, ‘Hello brother’ and he exclaims, ‘Sister Sue! How are you?’ and we laugh together. This is for fun and to reclaim our sense of identity and belonging with Africa. It is true that as a white woman in Liberia, I received honour, that is affirmation, worth, welcome, and respect. Lingenfelter and Mayers describe the difference between ‘status ascribed’ and ‘status achieved’ cultures.⁷ Liberia is a more ‘status ascribed’ culture, which means that status or worth is given to people who have positions in society, which may be hereditary or assumed. The western world, by contrast, accords honour to those who achieve something, e.g. a degree, wealth, or success. Malina uses similar phrases ‘ascribed honour’ and ‘acquired honour’ to explain differences in status in the New Testament World, ‘Ascribed honour happens passively and derives from the fact of birth ... acquired honour on the other hand, is the socially recognised claim to worth that a person acquires by excelling over others in the social interaction.’⁸ Thus a person is given worth and value according to their status, position, and unchangeable characteristics like gender and

⁶ Conversation with Rodriguez, 1991 Chile.

⁷ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter & Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross Culturally* 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), pp. 91-99.

⁸ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 32.

ethnicity. I recognised that in Liberia, I was given honour because of my 'white' skin colour, and because of my British heritage from which it was assumed that I was educated and wealthy. My gender in Liberia held no barrier, but I saw that Liberian women were not always honoured. Since that time in the 1990s, women's rights have advanced in Liberia with the end of the civil war and a democratically elected government with a female President, who is the first female head of state in Africa.

The contrasting terms, 'non-western' and 'western' are sometimes referred to as 'hot climate, high context' and 'cold climate, low context.'⁹ High context refers to the importance placed on outward appearance and saving face; the outward context is important. Thus a person has to dress up to their status in society. This is true in Liberia where Christian ministers and missionaries have to dress formally. However, in many places in the western world, people often dress casually, and tend to dress down whenever possible, because the importance of outward context is less, and people do not want to judge or be judged on appearances. Thus the outward context is low. Perhaps this is a reaction against what is seen as the hypocrisies of formal Victorian society. I would be honoured in Liberia because of my status as a missionary leader, and being white added to that honour, rather than detracted from it.

However, beneath that status and honour, which sometimes kept people from being real with each other, there was a desire to move beyond the walls of status. For example, I remember talking with a Liberian leader who told me that many Liberian Christians would talk about the 'missionary smile.'¹⁰ This was the smile that missionaries showed to Liberians to convince them that everything was fine, when, in fact, the opposite was true. Liberians saw the smile and wondered when the missionary would be honest. Was the missionary unable to appear vulnerable or needy to an African? Were they unable to receive help and counsel from them? I experienced that this could also be true of Liberians, for in a culture that places value on saving face, and appearance, it can be difficult to say what you really think or feel. I would listen to people sharing their stories of terrible near death experiences in the war, and yet they would smile and laugh in the

⁹ Sarah Lanier, *Foreign to Familiar* (Hagerstown, MD: McDougall Publishing, 2000), pp. 15-21.

¹⁰ Sue Pratt, *To See a New Day: A Story of War, Peace and Hope in Liberia* (Self published: LULU 2010), p. 95.

telling. This could have been a device to hide the intensity of their emotions, or to save face, or to protect themselves from being too vulnerable in front of others. Or perhaps they were determined to trust in God's goodness, even through hard times.

1.1.2 Black and white

The terms 'black' and 'white' also require comment here. Although loaded terms in the UK, it was acceptable in Liberia to speak of white people and black people. In fact, when asking what someone looked like, a Liberian friend once said, 'Oh he's black- black'¹¹ meaning the person came from one of the Liberian tribes that were darker, like the Kru.¹¹ Someone who was lighter skinned was referred to as 'bright,' for example many of the Kpelle people.¹² 'Black' and 'white' as constructs in the British setting will be discussed later (1.1.5). In the Liberian context, skin colour is part of tribal identity but not connected to oppression. There are sixteen major tribes or ethnic groups in Liberia, including Americo-Liberians, descendants of African-American slaves who had gone to Liberia in 1822 to settle and establish the nation. Some tribes are dark in skin colour and some are lighter, but the locus of oppression and resentment is between the Americo-Liberians and the tribes who had never been sold into slavery, and therefore never left Africa. White people have generally been welcomed to Liberia although never allowed to become citizens.¹³

1.1.3 Going as learners to build a team

In our mission training in Amsterdam, my co-worker and I had listened to Brewster and Brewster's Language Acquisition Made Practical (LAMP) teaching through their books and videos. They taught that if we lived simply, close to the people in terms of material wealth, and not in a western compound with all the mod-cons of western life, we would build bridges and reciprocal relationships faster.¹⁴ We did not need to learn another

¹¹ The Kru ethnic group from the South East of Liberia, around the county town of Greenville.

¹² Kpelle ethnic group from north of Monrovia, around the St.Paul river, and west of Gbarnga.

¹³ The Liberian Constitution stipulates that Liberia was formed as a home for black people, and in order to 'preserve the positive Liberian culture, values and character, only persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent shall qualify by birth or by naturalization to be citizens of Liberia' Approved Revised Draft of the Constitution of the Republic of Liberia 1983, Chapter IV Citizenship, Article 27, <http://www.liberianlegal.com/constitution1986.htm#_CITIZENSHIP> (12 January 2014).

¹⁴ Tom and Elisabeth Brewster, *LAMP Language Acquisition Made Practical* (Lingua House, 1976).

major language in English speaking Monrovia, but we tried to live out the principles we had learned. One quote from the LAMP material has stayed with me and encapsulates what I think cross cultural Christian work is all about. Don Richardson recounts from his own missionary experience in Western New Guinea (Irian Jaya), Indonesia: ‘As I sat with my new friends day after day, I remembered a quote that Tom Brewster had shared about an African man who, when asked how he had learned a new language, answered, “I went to where the people were and I sat down.”’¹⁵ Language learning is placed right in the centre of relationships and community and communicates the very simplicity of sitting among people, learning from them, rather than going as an expert. Furthermore, language learning can be ministry in itself, because of the open doors it creates.¹⁶ All this carried great meaning for us as we tried to build a collaborative team, through reciprocal relationships of equality and honour. In building a cross-cultural team, I and my co-worker did live simply with few western luxuries and with the same housing standard as our Liberian co-workers, and the same Liberian food. The Boff brothers define ‘evangelical poverty’ as being a chosen way of life that is associated with a vocation to Christian service and is a poverty that has purpose.¹⁷ Living simply was important in the pursuit of reciprocal, non-paternalistic relationships and was one aspect of building a team. The other aspect was doing physical work, in serving tasks, like washing floors, and cleaning. This prevented a hierarchical paradigm of physical work being viewed as being beneath the dignity of a leader. Over the years, I noticed that those missionaries who lived separately from Liberians, and had richer environments, like big houses with washing machines, air-conditioning, and ate western food tended to become more critical and negative towards the locals than those who lived closer to the people. Ignorance seemed to breed judgment. The difficulties and opposition I experienced in Liberia had to do with the context at the time. There was a cost in giving up western luxuries, to live without electricity and running water, and with a greater risk to one’s health because of malaria or other diseases. However, the biggest challenge was the risk associated with living in Liberia

¹⁵ Tom Brewster, *Community is my language classroom!* (Pasadena, CA: Lingua .House Ministries, 1986), p 24.

¹⁶ Dan R. Brewster, *Only Paralyzed from the neck down: The life and ministry of E. Thomas Brewster* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), p. 97.

¹⁷ Leonardo Boff and Clovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), p. 31.

during the civil war, and knowing that I and my colleague were targets as white women because of our perceived wealth. In fact, the main wealth that we did have was the power to get on a plane and leave when we needed to, although when surrounded by rebel fighters in a city under siege in 1996, that power seemed imaginary. We also felt pressured to give everything we had in order to meet people's needs, and had to daily subvert own cultural preferences. However, as white women, we were never rejected on grounds of race or gender from any Christian ministry.

1.1.4 Christian leadership

In an interdenominational mission organisation like YWAM, our leaders are not necessarily ordained denominational clergy. We do, however, teach about Christian leadership, and the values that underpin its practice and some YWAM leaders have pursued theological and other training. I also recognise that in a denominational setting, Christian ministers may prefer to use the word, 'servant' rather than 'leader,' because of the need to identify a specifically Christian view of leadership. In the business and secular world, the literature surrounding leadership development and management is enormous and in YWAM, we have eclectically drawn on many sources for insight, for team building and for leadership development in a desire to grow healthy, effective teams. However, one core value that underpinned our ministry and informed us in Liberia was one of YWAM's core values:

11. EXHIBIT SERVANT LEADERSHIP

YWAM is called to servant leadership as a lifestyle, rather than a leadership hierarchy. A servant leader is one who honours the gifts and callings of those under his/her care and guards their rights and privileges. Just as Jesus served His disciples, we stress the importance of those with leadership responsibilities serving those whom they lead.¹⁸

When I refer to Christian leadership, I am referring to influence and responsibility, rather than hierarchical authority, but I recognise that in denominational settings, 'leadership' may refer to ordained clergy who carry a priestly function in terms of representing people to God and God to people and the administration of the Christian sacraments. However, Margaret Wheatley, a business consultant and educator refers to leaders as, 'anyone who

¹⁸ YWAM, "Foundational Values of Youth With A Mission," <<http://www.ywam.org/about-us/values/>> (12 January 2014).

wants to help, who is willing to step forward to create change in their world.’¹⁹ This flat, non-hierarchical way of viewing leadership is perhaps another way to describe being a servant and one with which I resonate. In this research, I use the terms, ‘ministry’ and ‘leadership’ interchangeably, because leading people can be the same as ministering to people. Equally, ministering to people could be the same as serving people. Both can flow from a leader’s desire to help people flourish in the context of church and society.

These aspects of how I experienced living and working cross-culturally in mission have formed the basis for my thinking about Christian women leaders in the UK who are from Caribbean, African and Asian heritages. In the following chapter, I expand on this issue and prepare for conversations with participants. But first, let us turn to methodology.

1.2 Methodology

Deciding on a methodological framework for research is very important. I wrote about my experiences of Christian leadership as a white woman in Africa and I used this narrative to give shape to how I might conduct in-depth interviews with a few black Christian women leaders in the UK. This approach is in the field of qualitative research and lends itself to an autoethnographical methodology, sitting well within reflexive, narrative ethnography and is relevant to Africa, which is a place for telling stories with meaning, value and history. I will reflect on the nature of autoethnography, its benefits, and drawbacks, and discuss the methods that I used to hear interviewees’ stories. A feminist methodology is also very relevant to this study and will be explicated in later chapters, as part of a self-assessment of the research outcomes.

1.2.1 Definitions of Autoethnography

As part of qualitative research, autoethnographic methodology has developed in importance, as researchers have moved away from scientific positivism, to an insider, participant observer, anti positivist, and ideographic stance. This development came about because it was recognised that the researcher’s subjectivity and personal experience played a part in their research. In 1979, David Hayano, coined the phrase

¹⁹ Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2006), p. 196.

‘auto-ethnography’ instead of the known term ‘insider ethnography’ to describe this new methodology.²⁰ However, Reed-Danahay suggests that pre 1960, self narrative life stories were a part of anthropology but became ‘unfashionable’ from the 1960s to the mid 1980s when a trend towards ‘scientism’ took place.²¹ So, in fact, autoethnographic research in the form of self narrative was in the arena of a developing qualitative research paradigm, but had not clearly been defined and there was not much literature yet. Since the mid 1980s, much more has been written and researched.

Carolyn Ellis defines autoethnography as referring to, ‘Writing about the personal and its relationship to culture. It is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness.’²² Art Boechner defines it as, ‘an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural.’²³ Valerie-Lee Chapman’s definition is, ‘A form of self-narrative that places the self in a social context.’²⁴ Reed-Danahay defined autoethnography as: ‘A form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context. It is both a method and a text.’²⁵ In this research, I place myself in the context of black Africa, and use those cultural connections to explicate meanings about life as a Christian missionary. This enables me to connect with women in different contexts, yet with some shared similarities.

Autoethnography has developed in the last twenty years even in terms of its name, spelling and punctuation. Hayano coined the phrase Auto-Ethnography where a hyphen

²⁰ David M. Hayano, “Auto-ethnography: Paradigms, Problems and Prospects,” *Human Organisation*, Vol. 38, Number 1, Spring 1979.

²¹ Deborah Reed-Danahay and Nicole Coulis (Ed.), *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 1997), p. 1.

²² Carolyn Ellis, *The Ethnographic I : A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), p. 37.

²³ Art Boechner in “Autoethnography” in Chapter 28 N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2000), p. 739.

²⁴ Valerie-Lee Chapman, *A Woman’s Life Remembered: Autoethnographic Reflections of an Adult/educator*, SCUTREA (Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults), 1999.

²⁵ Reed-Danahay and Toulis, *Auto/Ethnography*, p .9.

separates Auto and Ethnography.²⁶ Reed-Danahay titles her work Auto/Ethnography, again separating Auto and Ethnography by a forward slash. Carolyn Ellis refers to 'autoethnography,' as a term without hyphens, slashes or spaces,²⁷ as does Boechner, and a newer writer Tessa Muncey.²⁸ It may be that when 'auto-ethnography' first emerged, the definition needed to reflect that the important element was still ethnography, located within an anthropological and positivist framework. Even 'auto/ethnography' kept the separation between 'auto' and 'ethnography.' But more recently the term 'autoethnography' has reflected the integration of the methodology and is no longer so rooted in anthropology but is located more in social science and even creative writing. Indeed Ellis, in her lecture to students, puts autoethnography in the middle ground between science and art.²⁹ At the scientific end, researchers use presumed objectivity to study others, to prove or disprove theories. At the other end of the continuum is art, which is impressionistic and interpretive. Autoethnography is in the middle of that continuum, 'As a form of ethnography, autoethnography overlaps art and science; it is part auto and part ethno or culture. It is also something different from both of them and greater than its parts.'³⁰ The idea of autoethnography as storytelling, narrative, evocative, autobiographical, and interactional between writer and reader, researcher and researched, gives endorsement to using a qualitative research approach adopted here.

Carolyn Ellis outlines several different autoethnographic approaches. Reflexive, personal, autobiographical, evocative writing is included in autoethnography.

Reflexive or narrative ethnography focuses on a culture or sub-culture and authors use their life story in that culture to look more deeply at self-other interactions. This approach offers insight into how the researcher changed as a result of observing others.³¹

There are further approaches, but for the purposes of this research I will mention contingent autoethnography which is where the researcher sets out to tell a story about

²⁶ Hayano, *Auto-ethnography*.

²⁷ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, p. 1.

²⁸ Tessa Muncey, *Creating Autoethnographies* (London: SAGE, 2010), p.2.

²⁹ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, p. 27-30.

³⁰ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, p. 31-32.

³¹ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, p. 46.

others, but in the process discovers their connection to the subject matter of the research and as a result, re-writes their own life story.³² In pursuing this subject, I was aware that it had the potential to change my thinking, and possibly offer new ideas and ways to live out a calling to Christian ministry. This might not mean re-writing my own life story but it might mean meaningful and profound changes of world view or theology.

1.2.2 Autobiography and autoethnography

It is important to distinguish autoethnography from autobiography. Reed-Danahay makes the point that before Autoethnography came into its own, Ethnography was defined as a text about a people and autobiography as a text about a person.³³ This kept the two apart as ideas and practices, but Denzin defined autoethnography as bringing ethnography and autobiography together.³⁴ It seems that autoethnography and autobiography can be interchangeable terms, but there is a nuanced difference. While autobiography may be concerned with factual dates, history and events in the writer's life, autoethnography is about making sense of those memoirs, linking them to culture, to meaning, to interpretation of events, and their lived experience to that of others.³⁵

So in my understanding, autoethnographic writing uses autobiographical events to investigate phenomenon of relational, cultural, ethnographic or social realities, and in so doing use evocative or analytical styles and storytelling techniques. Thus I have used events from my life to shape initial questions as I initiated conversations with participants and listened to their stories.

1.2.3 Autoethnography as feminist and postcolonial criticism

Tami Spry defines autoethnography as a 'self-narrative that critiques the situations of self with others in social contexts'³⁶ and links autoethnography with feminism, 'Auto-

³² Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, p. 50.

³³ Reed-Danahay, *Auto/Ethnography*, p. 127.

³⁴ Reed-Danahay, *Auto/Ethnography*, p. 6.

³⁵ Ellis and Bochner, "Autoethnography," Chapter 28 in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, p. 742.

³⁶ Tami Spry, "Performing Autoethnography: an Embodied Methodological Praxis," *Qualitative Enquiry*, Dec 2001 p. 710.

ethnography has been inspired by feminist autobiography to risk writing about the everyday about lives that once were not accounted as important enough for the researchers to bother with.³⁷ Thus, autoethnographic research critiques dominant discourses and theologies, while ordinary women's lives speak from a feminist or womanist perspective to issues of power and hierarchy. Paul Armstrong linked autoethnography with critical reflection because, 'by their very nature, autoethnographies critically challenge the taken for granted ways of knowing, ways of thinking, and ways of making sense of the world, which bring the subjective and the objective together.'³⁸ That subjective experience is validated is an important development in thinking about autoethnography. Can anyone truly be 'objective' since we all bring our subjectivities into the interplay of relationships and life? Sometimes objectivity is seen as more rational and male, whereas subjectivity is seen as more emotional, irrational and female. Primavesi states that, 'It is characteristic of the patriarchal shaping of Christian consciousness that reason is generally considered to be a masculine principle, ordained to rule the material body.'³⁹ Objectivity may be seen as more male and positivist, and scientific research has been the domain of men. One might be tempted to conversely say that autoethnography as a qualitative research methodology is more feminine, because it recognises subjectivities. It is true that autoethnography as a discipline does have many female writers like Ellis and Reed-Danahay but there are several men as well (Hayano, Boechner, Pelias and others) However, autoethnography does lend itself to feminist questioning of 'objectivity' and thus can be identified as critical, and subversive. I can agree with this to some extent but would add that questioning objectivity may be more to do with postmodernity than gender, because in a postmodern world, metanarrative and notions of absolute truth are questioned.

Looking at ethnicity, and the fact that I, a white woman, interviewed black women, I note Denzin's caution:

Sadly, qualitative research, in many if not all of its forms, (observation, participation, interviewing, ethnography) serves as a metaphor for colonialism, for power and for truth. The metaphor works this way. Research, quantitative and qualitative, is scientific. Research provides the foundation for reports about

³⁷ Spry, "Performing Autoethnography," p. 710.

³⁸ Paul Armstrong, *Toward an Autoethnographic Pedagogy*, SCUTREA, 2008.

³⁹ Anne Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity* (Tunbridge Wells, UK: Burns & Oates, 1991), p. 103.

and representations of the 'Other'. In the colonial context, research becomes an objective way of representing the dark skinned 'Other' to the White world.⁴⁰

I recognise the danger for me as white woman who has worked in Africa, among 'dark skinned' people to assume an objectivity based on my own ethnicity and racial identity. Conversely, I also recognise the possibility for me to be over sympathetic with black participants, to privilege and not critique their realities.

Using an autoethnographical methodology therefore requires the researcher to start with self, to name one's subjectivities and to be a participant in the process not merely an observer. Treating participants with professional respect means listening carefully to participants and clarifying what they say so that information is not misunderstood.

1.2.4 Drawbacks and benefits of autoethnography

I will now examine the drawbacks and benefits of using an autoethnographic methodology. It has been critiqued by Hofland and Hofland as being narcissistic and self indulgent:

Even when exceptionally well executed, reports analysing autobiographical data are often viewed by readers as borderline self indulgence. When only competently executed they are liable to be labelled narcissistic or exhibitionist and simply dismissed as uninteresting,⁴¹

The idea that the presence of the researcher's self in the research process is self-indulgent and even uninteresting is a judgment made on how a reader might respond as well as an assumption that the researcher is no more than an observer. I think that people being real about themselves is very readable and interesting. Ellis's use of drama to create the scene of a classroom with her as teacher talking with her students about autoethnography was very compelling and rich in communication.⁴² However, I do see that where qualitative research is focussing on self as well as the other, the researcher may embed so much of themselves in the writing, that sight is lost of the other person or

⁴⁰ Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd Edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2005), p. 1.

⁴¹ J. Lofland and L.H. Lofland, "Analysing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis" (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth 1994), p. 14, in Amanda Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity* (London: SAGE 1999), p. 3.

⁴² Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*.

group in the study. I needed to use the skill and discipline of reflective and active listening so that participants could articulate their concerns, not what I might want them to say. The use of open-ended questions was crucial. However, a benefit of autoethnography is that it makes possible the inclusion of the researcher into the research which is a more honest approach.

Another criticism of autoethnography is the view that it is difficult to assess the reliability of the results, since everything is subjective and written from the researcher's interpretation and point of view. Sparkes suggested that, 'Autoethnography is at the boundaries of academic research because such accounts do not sit comfortably with traditional criteria used to judge qualitative inquiries.'⁴³ I think, however, that meaning and truth is not only conveyed through statistics, but through description and the value of one individual or one group. As stated above (1.2.3), naming researcher subjectivities is a key element to integrity and credibility. The benefit here of autoethnography is that it allows for description and validates unique experiences.

Chang outlines the dangers to avoid in autoethnography, which are: the excessive focus on self in isolation from others; an overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation; exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source; negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives; and inappropriate application of the label 'autoethnography.'⁴⁴ Such criticisms are valid but can be countered by a disciplined application of an authentic research agenda and the researcher's ability to look beyond self to the realities of others, or to operate with emotional intelligence. The researcher diligently seeks a thorough ethical review before interviewing others, and participants' personal memory is validated through external corroboration by family or friends, and if not, then admitted as personal hearsay or viewpoint. The key, in my opinion, is honesty and an adherence to professional standards. The benefit to qualitative research is the integration between researcher and

⁴³ A. C. Sparkes, "Autoethnography and Narratives of Self: Reflections on Criteria in Action" in Nicholas L. Holt, "Representation, Legitimation, and Autoethnography: An Autoethnographic Writing Story," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(1). 2003.

⁴⁴ Heewon Chang, *Autoethnography as Method: Developing Qualitative Enquiry* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008), p. 54.

researched and the potential for richer, deeper meaning to emerge. Geertz's 'thick description' posits the importance of qualitative research including details, stories, meaning, and interpretation, not only skeleton facts.⁴⁵

Regarding the over emphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation, this is a debatable point. Ellis and Boechner put forward an excellent defence of the validity of narrative story.⁴⁶ They refer to Atkinson, who argues that the goal of storytelling is therapeutic, rather than analytic. He concludes that if you treat stories as social fact then you are not doing social science.⁴⁷ Ellis and Boechner, however, state that the real issue is not to ask if a story really reflects life accurately, but rather: 'What are the consequences my story produces? What kind of person does it shape me into? What new possibilities does it introduce for living my life?'⁴⁸ Ellis and Boechner seem to be trying to integrate the two sides of telling and analysis, the therapeutic with the analytic, in that narrative, like therapy can bring change. It seems to me that in both, the overall aim is to understand, learn, discuss, and assimilate and as one trained and practiced in debriefing for mission personnel, I agree with the notion that being listened to is powerful. In the western world intellectual understanding is a linear process, from one point to another. In Africa, however, learning is often through stories, in a holistic, circular, and indirect way. Clearly there are many African academics and theologians who use the Western intellectual approach and yet also use stories to communicate important realities. Mercy Amba Oduyoye would be an example of integration between Western and African.⁴⁹ In using an autoethnographic methodology, I wanted to bring together storytelling with analysis.

⁴⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books Classics, 1977), p. 6.

⁴⁶ Ellis and Boechner, "Autoethnography" Chapter 28, Denzin and Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), p. 742.

⁴⁷ P. Atkinson, "Narrative turn in a blind alley?" in *Qualitative health research*, 7, 325-344. quoted in Ellis and Boechner, "Autoethnography" Chapter 28, Denzin and Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. p. 739.

⁴⁸ Ellis and Boechner, Chapter 28, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. p. 746.

⁴⁹ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).
Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*. (Cle and Regnum Africa, 2002).

In conclusion, I used an autoethnographic methodology for this research, and having been cognisant of the drawbacks, I was still convinced of its relevance and appropriateness for linking my experience with that of others. My hope was that participants would communicate their own autoethnographic narrative, and that this experience would be positive and life enhancing rather than exposing, or demeaning in any way.

1.2.5 The participants and the interviews

Looking briefly at interviewing, I mention three interview styles that can be used. First reflexive dyadic interviews are conversations between researcher and interviewee where most of the talking is done by the latter, but the comments and thought of the interviewer may also be recorded as an important part of the event. This reflection by the interviewer of their journey to this interview adds depth and richness to the research.⁵⁰ Another technique is interactive interviewing. This can be between two people but can also be between three or four. Everyone is a researcher and everyone an interviewee so that all discover together as they ask questions and form answers. This may be particularly helpful for those researching personal, emotional subjects where trust needs to be built.⁵¹ A third style mentioned by Ellis in the same chapter is co-constructed interviews, especially useful for couples or partners, constructing an interview together, with or without the help of an interviewer. I decided that semi-structured interviews and a reflexive dyadic interviewing technique would be the best framework for engaging with my research participants because it could facilitate a dialogue, and give space for in-depth information. I used purposive, rather than random sampling, individual rather than quantitative enquiry. A questionnaire was designed and sent to participants before the meeting to allow them time to think about what they want to say. The questionnaire however was not collected as data information, but the interview was recorded and transcribed afterwards.

My aim was to interview black women in leadership from a variety of backgrounds. Initially, I used my existing relational network in the UK, which opened up an informal

⁵⁰ Carolyn Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, p. 62.

⁵¹ Carolyn Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, p. 64.

cascade process in that suggestions were given to me of possible participants, from the first few women I met. There could be a danger in cascade interviewing in that people may recommend others whom they personally like or approve of. This may result in a sample where there are too many similarities, and not enough variety. However, the field of black female Christian leaders is not large, which may mean that some know each other. They all expressed support for the topic and for me personally and were very willing to participate, even though the time was limited by their full working schedules. I do not think that the research is invalidated because they may know each other, because I interviewed them separately over many months, and they work in very different settings.

I started with someone who I knew well, Mrs. Virginia Kpayser, who is a lay leader in a non-denominational church in London and of Caribbean heritage, was born in Antigua, but came to the UK as a young child. I met Virginia first in Liberia in 1995, during her mission field trip with YWAM. She is now married to a Liberian, who was part of our original mission team in Liberia, and they live in London. I wanted to begin with Virginia, because of her breadth of cultural and mission experience and because of her lay leadership position. Including a non-ordained woman from an evangelical charismatic church added breadth of experience. I had met Rev. Kate Coleman and Rev. Cham Kaur-Mann at a seminar with Next Leadership in London in 2010, and I thought that their broad experience and knowledge across the sphere of women in leadership would be very relevant. Kate is a former president of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (2006-2007) and is currently Chair of the Evangelical Alliance Council. She is a Baptist minister and founder and director of Next Leadership, a leadership development initiative. Kate is Ghanaian, born in Ghana and has lived in the UK since the age of four. Cham Kaur-Mann is a Baptist minister in Birmingham, co-directs Next Leadership and is chair of the Nehemiah Foundation in Birmingham. Cham is the first Asian Baptist minister in the UK, and is from a Sikh background, but born in the UK. I had hoped to include someone from an Asian background, because this would bring a different experience of someone from an important minority heritage. I had already met Rev. Katei Kirby, as stated before (Introduction), and I wanted to interview her because of her Caribbean British background and her wide links with Caribbean and African Christians. Katei at the

time of interview was the Partnership officer for Belonging Together, a Methodist diversity initiative, having previously been CEO for the African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance. Katei was born in Britain, with Antiguan parents. The fifth woman I interviewed was Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin who is, and was at the time of interview, Vicar of All Saints, Haggerston and Holy Trinity, Dalston, in Hackney, London. She is also Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, and the Palace of Westminster, and one of the Chaplains to Her Majesty the Queen. I wanted to interview Rose because of her unique life and position in British society today. Rose was born in Jamaica and came to the UK at the age of eighteen. The final participant was Rev. Canon Eve Pitts, who is Vicar of Holy Trinity, Birchfield in Birmingham. Eve was born in Jamaica and came to the UK as a young child. It was recommended to me by Kate Coleman that I interview Eve because of her experience of being the first black female vicar from a Caribbean background in the Church of England. I also wanted to hear her unique story and perspective.

In order to maintain variety and breadth I endeavoured to interview women from different denominations. This was broadly achieved, in that two participants were Anglican (Rose and Eve), two Baptist (Cham and Kate Coleman), one non-denominational, evangelical (Virginia) and one from the Wesleyan Holiness church, but worked with the Methodist Church at the time of interview (Katei Kirby). All of the women interviewed have been in Christian ministry for many years, and some as much as thirty years.

1.2.6 Interview method

The interview process is a meaningful human encounter within which both parties gain implicit and explicit knowledge about the other. It is a unique space for the creation and sharing of meaning.⁵²

The above definition of the interview process certainly described my intention as I interviewed the participants. Each interview was to be a meaningful human encounter and a unique space for the sharing and creation of meaning. Swinton and Mowat add to this definition the caveat that an interview is differentiated from a conversation by

⁵² John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006), p. 64.

the two elements of power and counselling.⁵³ An interviewer has more power than the interviewee because the former holds information about the latter, and when the consent form has been signed, the interviewee has to trust the interviewer in terms of accurate representation and honesty. In addition, an interview to garner information should not develop into counselling whereas a conversation between two people can do so. In my research interviews, I took care to ensure that in the interview encounter the focus was on the unique story that each participant had to tell. Although I wanted to establish rapport and empathy, I did not use the time to counsel, or give advice. I used a semi-structured approach to the six interviews, and sent a questionnaire to each participant about two weeks before the planned interview. (App. B) The questionnaire was explained as a tool to help them think about what they might want to share. It served as a guide to possible content of the interviews, which were audio recorded in full and later transcribed. Each participant was invited to answer the questions in any order they wished, to spend more time on one question than another, and to add questions and issues as they saw fit. In fact, everyone was happy to go through the questions one by one as they appeared on the paper which I took with me to the interviews. My hope was that the semi-structured conversation would be open enough for them to be able to really share what was meaningful to them. I occasionally added in a comment or reflection on what they talked about, to maintain a real dialogue, but they did the majority of the talking. The length of interview depended on the time each participant had available, the shortest being just over one hour and a half and the longest being two hours and a half. It became obvious that each woman was scheduling me into the middle of a busy day. However, they all willingly participated and gave as much time as possible.

I did have one major concern about my interview technique and that was with the interview with Kate Coleman and Cham Kaur-Mann, which evolved into a co-constructed approach. Originally, I decided to ask to interview them together because they work closely together, and it reminded me somewhat of my own experience in Liberia with my co-worker. Listening to two close friends and colleagues talking together and with me was certainly unique. However, on reflection, I am not so sure that it ended up capturing enough of either of them. Trying to condense into about

⁵³ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p. 65-6.

two hours what both of them had to say was difficult, especially because one is naturally quicker to articulate. I am not entirely satisfied that either participant was able to give their full opinion in that format. But this is a reflection of hindsight and I recognise that the opportunity to interview them together was an economic way to complete the questions for them as well as me. Further, this is not the same as an interview with a married couple. Co-constructed interviews with couples might be very rich because of the close relationship and the nuances that emerge in the conversation. However, one cannot assume such a dynamic with two friends and co-workers and from experience I know that it can be very annoying when others liken the relationship of two singles who happen to work together, to that of a couple.

1.3 Ethical section

The interview is a dangerous gift that people offer to the researcher, a gift that can be received, treasured and accepted, or abused, manipulated and implicitly or explicitly discarded.⁵⁴

Previously, I quoted Swinton and Mowat's positive definition of the interview process (1.2.7). Now, I note the above caveat in terms of ethical concerns for interviewer and participant. During this research, it has been my goal to ensure that the wishes of those interviewed were adhered to, and that communication was clear beforehand about expectations. All this was covered in the Ethical Review process. I further wished that the interview itself would be a meaningful and positive experience for the participants, and I included questions that might be useful to them in their reflections on the subject.

1.3.1 Questionnaires

All the participants in this research received the questionnaire (see Appendix B) a few weeks before the interview took place, so that they had time to think about the subject. They were also sent an information and consent form, which they signed. In this form, it was stated that they could withdraw from the research process at any time. (see Appendix C)

⁵⁴ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p. 65.

1.3.2 Anonymity

All of the participants were invited to remain anonymous in the research unless they wished to have their names published (Appendix A). However, as the interviews took place and the analysis began, it became clear that most of the participants are in fact quite well known publicly and that making their names known might be positive in terms of their interest in and support for the subject of black Christian women in leadership.

1.3.3 Agreement to publish names

I asked the participants what their wishes were in this regard and all gave permission for their names to be used, on the understanding that I would send them the text where their comments were recorded so that they could read and agree before anything would be submitted in the final draft to the University. This I fully agreed to and carried out, so that everything contained in the thesis under their names has been checked by them. Regarding the transcripts of the interviews, I edited them in order to shorten their length and remove repetitions, or possible prejudicial or sensitive information. This was in order also to give maximum protection to the participants. Including the edited transcripts of interviews has been agreed by the each interviewee, who also have their own copies.

CHAPTER 2

THE ISSUES AND POTENTIAL COMMONALITIES

2.1 Black women leaders in the UK

In the previous chapter, I outlined my background in Christian leadership, particularly in Liberia. Having identified the relevant methodology, I now discuss issues and questions that emerge, as a precursor to interview analysis.

The research focus of black women ministers locates the issue within gender and ethnicity. Although my experience was primarily in Africa, I wanted to converse with women from a Caribbean heritage because, along with Africans, they have a strong Christian history, and are connected to Africa by their original background. However, they live in the UK, and may define themselves partly as British, depending on birth and strength of connection. Their place of belonging was originally determined by the ‘open sore of the world,’ that is the African slave trade described by David Livingstone, which is very different from the African experience of someone who does not descend from an enslaved people.¹ However, they do share the hot climate background with Africans, as do Asians.

Many people who came from the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa to live in the UK in the middle of the 20th century are now older and have lived longer here than they lived back in their lands of birth. In addition, there are many second generation adults, born in the UK but with parents who are not British by birth. This second generation crosses both cultures and world views, and there are similarities with ‘third culture’ missionary children, who came from one culture (or even two, if their parents were from different nations) but were raised in another.² They may experience the challenge of belonging, of defining their roots, but conversely they may also carry an innate flexibility, in term of cross-cultural understanding, and an ability to connect with people from diverse backgrounds. In addition, leaving one’s own nation and culture for a significant period of time enables a greater perception of it from a distance. Experiencing separation from

¹ Rob McKenzie, *David Livingstone: The Truth Behind the Legend* (Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe: Fig Tree Publications, 1993), p. 357.

² e.g. Heidi Sand Hart, *Home Keeps Moving* (Hagerstown, MD: McDougal Publishing, 2010).

the familiar, and vulnerability through cultural ignorance thrusts some into a learner position and can develop greater cultural flexibility, though not without cost or pain. Living cross-culturally as a free choice is hard enough, but where it has been the consequence of forced migration, the lack of rootedness may be even greater. The question 'Where is home?' is real. There is also a sense in which all Christian ministry becomes a journey of separation from the familiar to serve somewhere else. Having been uprooted, the question where will new roots grow and for how long is pertinent. Black and Asian women serving as clergy in the UK today have within their DNA the experience or heritage of cross-cultural living, as well as a flexibility that comes with being rooted in more than one culture.

However, people coming to live in the UK from formerly colonised nations enter the world of the former colonial power where the norm is assumed to be western and the Other is assumed to be non-western:

Colonial reading can be summed up as informed by theories concerning the innate superiority of Western culture, the Western male as subject, and the natives, heathens, women, blacks, indigenous people, as the Other, needing to be controlled and subjugated. It is based on the desire for power/domination.³

In a postcolonial reading, this subjectivity is questioned as is the missionary drive of the colonial era. Sugirtharajah questions Western missionary endeavour as being linked to the expansion of power in the colonial period and suggests that the record of Paul's missionary journeys in Acts, is 'a way of perpetuating the myth that it was from the West that the superstitious and ignorant natives received the essential verities of God's message.'⁴ Thus to privilege the narratives of black or Asian women who have come to Britain or been raised here as a second generation child, is to recognise that Christian ministry and mission in the UK is not about white people being the ministers and black people being the recipients. In fact, some of the biggest churches in the UK are African or Caribbean congregations which are doing considerable amounts of community work in our cities and towns. Ruach and KICC (Kingsway International Christian Centre) are two examples of large black majority

³ R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Postcolonial Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 15.

⁴ Sugirtharajah, *The Postcolonial Bible*, p. 95.

churches in London. YWAM recruits people from all races and ethnicities and has a view of Christian mission as being from all nations to all nations. ‘Youth with a Mission is a global movement of Christians from many cultures, age groups, and Christian traditions, dedicated to serving Jesus throughout the world.’⁵ The mixing of cultures and the rise of churches from minority communities may have both contributed to a paradigm shift in missionary identities and values.

In the UK, it is important to recognise that the term ‘black’ has been shrouded in a cloak of rejection, powerlessness and prejudice. Kate Coleman, in her Ph.D. thesis, clarifies her use of the word ‘black’:

To be designated as black within the British context is not simply to make a pronouncement related to one’s skin pigmentation but rather is to make a political statement regarding the marginalised space of unlocation that the dominant discourse assigns to all those perceived as ‘other’ in relation to itself. However, the term black, as expressed in this text, is to be read and understood as applying specifically to those of African or Caribbean descent within Britain.⁶

I will use the term ‘black’ in this research, to mean those from or with a heritage from Africa and the Caribbean, noting well however, the caveat stated above. I will use the term ‘Asian’ and ‘Asian British’ to mean those from or with a heritage from the South Asian subcontinent.

2.1.1 Women overlooked and excluded

The multi-cultural nature of urban Britain is a context in which many Christians are active in community service and church ministry. The dynamic growth of the African and Caribbean churches has given them more influence than ever before. Many of these churches are led by dynamic men, supported by strong wives, some with ministries of their own. In addition, there are other female leaders, ministers in their own right, who are leading in their organisations. However, Aldred admitted that women were ignored at inter church meetings convened in Birmingham, between 1996-98, when he was at the forefront of endeavours to

⁵ YWAM, <www.ywam.org/about-us/> (12 January 2014).

⁶ Kate Coleman, *Exploring Métissage: A Theological Anthropology of Black Woman’s Subjectivities in Postcolonial Britain*, Ph.D, Birmingham University, 2005.

bring black and white church leaders together for dialogue and relationship building. 'We did not make any provision to ensure gender balance, which was a clear mistake, but we did ensure that Asian Christians were invited through the involvement of the alliance of Asian Christians.'⁷ The exclusion of women was not intentional but an oversight, even though effort was made to include men from the Asian community. Even James Cone, the black theologian, had to correct the original edition of one of his books, in which he had overlooked the special needs of African-American women.⁸

This overlooking of women, their needs and potential for leadership is, however, slowly changing, though not without struggle. A story from Liberia was recently highlighted in 2011 through the Nobel Peace Awards. Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia and the first female head of state in Africa, was awarded the prize along with two other women. Her recognition came because of her work to re-establish democratic institutions and the rule of law, after sixteen years of civil war. The other Liberian honoured for her work for peace was Leymah Gbowee, the founder of the Liberian Women In Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), and an example of a Christian woman who campaigned for a cause and became a leader in the process. She could not tolerate the Liberian war any longer because of the destruction of a whole generation of children and young people. She mobilised women to demonstrate on the streets of the capital city, Monrovia, in 2002-2003, to plead for peace. Her amazing story can be seen in the documentary 'Pray the Devil back to Hell.'⁹ The women peace activists travelled at their own expense to the Peace Accords in Accra, Ghana, in 2003 where the Liberian opposing warlords were meeting in closed sessions with West African leaders. Weeks passed as the men enjoyed the good food and beds in the nice hotel in Ghana, but no peace agreement was signed. Finally, the women arrived at the hotel to demonstrate outside the meeting room. Becoming impatient with the slow process, they decided to barricade the men inside. They locked arms outside the doors and would not allow anyone to come out until they had signed a peace agreement, even threatening to strip naked, which would be

⁷ J. D. Aldred, *Respect* (London: Epworth Press, 2005), p 117.

⁸ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* fortieth anniversary edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), p. xx.

⁹ Abigail E. Disney and Gini Reticker, *Pray the Devil back to Hell* DVD (Dogwoof, 2008).

seen as a cultural curse on their ‘brothers’! The women were so desperate for peace that they were willing to humiliate themselves in order to achieve their goal. Fortunately, the chief mediator, a former president of Nigeria, supported their cause and allowed their demonstration to continue. In this way, the Liberian male leaders were shamed into signing a peace agreement to end a violent war that was started by men. True, some women became fighters, but not many. Women and children were the ones most affected by the atrocities committed by men against them. There are conflicting results from research into gender based violence during the civil war in Liberia. The World Health Organisation report in 2005 reports a mean percentage of 73% of women in Liberia were probably raped during the Civil War.¹⁰ This figure has been challenged as being too high, but it is undoubtedly true that huge numbers of women and girls were raped or forced to become sexual slaves or ‘girlfriends’ of fighters.¹¹ That the men in the peace negotiations could sit in a closed room and make decisions about the war, without the voices and perspectives of women suggests a thoughtlessness, and an exclusion of women from a very important social and political space. Part of female inferiorization, according to Primavesi is, ‘the reduction of women to silence: cultural, religious, political, artistic and philosophical.’¹² In this Liberian context, women were silenced through exclusion. After the women had demonstrated and been heard, the men admitted that they should have included women in the peace process. I think that hierarchy, as a Greek construct, may be applied to this African example, even though I recognise that a discussion on African patriarchy, and the effects of European patriarchal colonization, would demand another thesis. In Africa, there are some matriarchal groups, such as the Akan in Ghana, and Oduyoye’s experience is that, under matriarchy, men and women were both included in family meetings and decisions.¹³ However, she also encountered the patriarchy of the Yoruba in Nigeria, which was a culture shock for her.¹⁴ In the

¹⁰ Prof. Marie-Claire Omanyondo, “Sexual Gender Based Violence and Health Facility Needs Assessment” (WHO 2005).

¹¹ June Munala, “Challenging Liberian Attitudes to Violence Against Women”. *Frontier Mission Review*, 27, p. 36.

¹² Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis*, p. 27.

¹³ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa* (Yaounde, Cameroun: Regnum Africa, 2002), pp. 70-71.

¹⁴ Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, p. 71.

Liberian example, women were excluded and silenced by a male dominant discourse that considered women to be irrelevant.¹⁵

Leymah Gbowee in her acceptance speech in Oslo at the Nobel Peace Prize awards talked of the struggle of women to demand peace and justice in their nation and society:

I must be quick to add that this prize is not just in recognition of the triumph of women. It is a triumph of humanity. To recognize and honour women, the other half of humanity, is to achieve universal wholeness and balance. Like the women I met in Congo DRC over a year ago who said "Rape and abuse is the result of larger problem, and that problem is the absence of women in the decision making space." If women were part of decision-making in most societies, there would be less exclusive policies and laws that are blind to abuses women endure.¹⁶

Here she emphasises the negative and destructive impact on society, when women are ignored, not listened to, and not included in decision making. Although this is at a national and political level, and is applied to a specific issue, it can also be applied to a church level in terms of issues of exclusion. Aldred notes that in England the church attendance ratio of men to women is 1:2, which is twice as many women as men attend church. However, in Birmingham, he noted that female leadership was about 10% to male leadership which is 90%.¹⁷ The question of what happens when women are not included in decision making in churches and Christian communities is important. It may well be that women exert influence, even when they do not hold official positions, but this influence may be more indirect. However, this aspect is not the focus of my research. Instead my intention has been to focus on women who are in some sort of direct leadership, whether in a denominational or lay position.

¹⁵ It should also be noted that the third woman to be given the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 was a Yemeni woman, Tawakkol Karman, a Muslim who works for women's rights and safety in Yemen. While the subject of this research is Christian women in leadership, it is also important to state that women from other religious backgrounds have also been prominent in leadership and peaceful protest, like Tawakkol Karman and of course the unique example of Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar (Burma).

¹⁶ Leymah Gbowee, "Nobel Lecture," <www.Nobelprize.org> (4 January 2012).

¹⁷ Aldred, *Respect*, p. 118.

2.1.2 Feminism, womanism and black feminism

Researching black women in Christian leadership has been informed by feminist and womanist theology. The former was driven by intellectual, middle class white women, and black women's voices were not heard, according to Coleman:

‘Having rejected the universalizing tendencies of ‘traditional’ male patriarchal ideologies, they [white feminists] had succumbed to the temptation of universalizing the Eurocentric middle class values and experiences of a defined and limited group of mainly white female academics.’¹⁸

Womanism emerged as an expression of black women's discourse concerning oppression and exclusion. It privileged the black woman's narrative in the African-American community in the USA in the 1980s and 1990s and has been expounded by Jacquelyn Grant, Delores Williams, Audrey Lorde, bell hooks and others.¹⁹ Alice Walker coined the term ‘womanism’ to highlight black women's experiences. It comes from ‘womanish’ which was used in the African-American community, to describe black women, ‘acting womanish who want to know more and in greater depth than is good for one.’²⁰ A womanist is a black feminist or feminist of colour, according to Williams.²¹

Black Feminism, like womanism, is a black theology. Mojica states that:

‘Black Feminism is still a derivative of Feminism, which is female-centred. Womanism, as defined earlier, is centred on the natural order of life, family and a complimentary relationship with men and women. It is all-inclusive and universal.’²²

Coleman clarifies that both streams are in response to the lack of white feminists addressing of issues of race.²³

¹⁸ Kate Coleman, “Black Women and Theology,” in Michael N Jagessar and Anthony G Reddie, *Black Theology in Britain: a Reader* (London: Equinox, 2007), p. 117.

¹⁹ bell hooks is known by the lower case spelling of her name, ‘she has chosen the lower case pen name bell hooks, based on the names of her mother and grandmother, to emphasize the importance of the substance of her writing as opposed to who she is.’ <<http://www.berea.edu/appalachian-center/home/faculty-and-staff/bell-hooks/>> (12 January 2014).

²⁰ Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (London: The Woman's Press, 1983), p. xi.

²¹ Delores S. Williams, “Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices” in Ursula King, *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader* (London: SPCK, 1994), p. 77.

²² Carmen Mojica, <<http://www.genderacrossborders.com/2011/03/29/feminism-and-womanism/>>

²³ Coleman, *Exploring Métissage*, p. 24.

In the UK, Kate Coleman, Lorraine Dixon, and Valentina Alexander were among the first to talk and write about black women's issues from a British perspective. Coleman expressed relief when the term 'womanism' emerged in the late 1980s:

My personal journey has been interspersed by significant milestones. Firstly, I was one of many black British women who felt a sense of 'relief' when Alice Walker posited her notion of 'womanism' as a vehicle for expressing the particularised experience and expressivity of black womanhood.²⁴

bell hooks wrote that feminism did not connect with black women's experiences properly because it was racist.²⁵ She claimed that black women's voices were tuned out, dismissed and silenced.²⁶ She also spoke about the lack of awareness of many white women towards the reality of black women's lives:

Many white women who daily exercise race privilege lack awareness that they are doing so.... they may not have conscious awareness of the significance of the ideology of white supremacy and the extent to which it shapes their behaviour and attitudes towards women unlike themselves.²⁷

It should be stated, however, that white feminists like Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'quickly recognised the implications of emerging African-American male black theology and feminist theological approaches for the theologising of African-American women.'²⁸ Ware states:

Ruether's assessment of black theology anticipates the development of womanist theology. As early as 1974, Ruether identified the limitations of both black theology (mostly done by black males) and feminist theology (mostly done by white females) as frameworks of interpretation for African-American women.²⁹

It became evident that black women suffered a double exclusion from being female and black. The term 'double jeopardy' was first used by Frances Beale, in her work on the hardships of black women in the USA, to describe the double discrimination and

²⁴ Coleman, *Exploring Métissage*, p. 1.

²⁵ Bell Hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (London, Winchester, MA: Pluto Press, 1981).

²⁶ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1984), p. 11.

²⁷ hooks, *Feminist Theory*, p. 54.

²⁸ Kate Owusua Coleman, *Exploring métissage: a theological anthropology of black women's subjectivities in postcolonial Britain*, (Ph.D. University of Birmingham, December 2005), p. 97.

²⁹ Frederick L. Ware, "Methodologies of Black Theology" (Cleveland: The Pilgrims Press, 2002), p. 24. in Coleman, *Exploring Métissage* p. 97-8.

marginalisation that can happen for black women.³⁰ Women in the black community can be excluded and silenced, where only men are leaders. Secondly, because they are black women in a white society, they are ignored because they are black, 'The struggle for black women has been the struggle to survive in two contradictory worlds simultaneously, one white and privileged and oppressive, the other black, exploited and oppressed.'³¹

A womanist's identification with the story of Hagar, Abraham's mistress, in the Bible in Genesis is discussed by Delores Williams:

The African-American community has taken Hagar's story unto itself. Hagar has 'spoken' to generation after generation of black women because her story has been validated as true by suffering black people.³²

Within the story of Abraham, Sarai and the birth of Isaac, Hagar's experience, as a suffering slave, is often forgotten or devalued, while the main attention is on the son of promise, Isaac. Williams' close examination of Hagar's story, conflict with Sarai, running away, meeting God in the wilderness, and naming God 'El Roi' or 'The God who sees me,'³³ gives us another important perspective wholly different from the story of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis.(Genesis Chapter 18, NRSV)

Kwok Pui-Lan talks of the difference between the Western missionary accounts of Christianity in China with the more recent recovery of the history of Chinese Christians. However, even that Chinese view is from a male viewpoint, 'as if women were not an integral part of the encounter between China and Christianity.'³⁴

Musimbi Kanyoro echoes the need to listen, 'Until women's views are listened to and their participation allowed and ensured, the truth will remain hidden, and the call

³⁰ Frances Beale, "Double Jeopardy: to be black and female" was originally written as an essay in 1969 and published in Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (London: Random House Publishing 1970). Also published in Toni Cade Bambara, ed. *The Black Woman* (N.Y: Washington Square Press Inc., 1970, 2005).

³¹ Coleman, *Exploring Métissage*, p. 118.

³² Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1993), p. 33.

³³ Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, p. 23.

³⁴ Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2005), p. 32.

to live the values of the Reign of God will be unheeded.’³⁵ I am not sure how much double jeopardy is still a part of church life in the UK today, but I do think that, because of significance of the issues of race and gender inequality, it would be naive to assume that some progress means completion. Womanist voices still speak to the journey of acceptance and welcome of black women leaders.

2.2 Potential commonalities to begin a conversation

I have identified a number of ‘commonalities’ to begin my conversations with black female leaders. The Chambers dictionary definition of ‘commonality’ is ‘the state of being common to all, standardization, frequency, prevalence.’³⁶ The Oxford dictionary defines ‘commonality’ as ‘sharing of an attribute, or a common occurrence.’³⁷ Discovery of similarities and differences may be very powerful in that the reasons for those differences may highlight issues that are relevant for black and Asian female leaders today. I used, therefore, the term ‘commonality’ to mean a ‘shared similarity in experience,’ and identified some potential areas of commonality which were used as an opening set of questions for interview.

The areas of potential commonality were 1-10:

1. Calling, Vocation and Mission
2. Gender
3. Race, Ethnicity and Culture
4. Women as Community Builders
5. Difficulties, Costs, and Sacrifices
6. Rewards, Joys and Fulfilments
7. Experiences of Honour
8. Experiences of Dishonour
9. Where the Church is today in terms of Black and Asian women in leadership
10. What each participant needs to move forward in their ministry.

The first eight areas come from my own experience, of which some has been expanded on in Chapter One (1.1). As I reflected on life and ministry in YWAM, especially in

³⁵ Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, “Introduction” in *The Will to Arise: Tradition and the Church in Africa* ed. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1992), p. 1.

³⁶ The Chambers Dictionary 10th Edition (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap, 2006), p. 308.

³⁷ The Pocket Oxford Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 166.

Liberia, the primary area for consideration for me was calling and vocation as a woman. However, I realised that all these potential commonalities were ways to investigate the same overall question relating to women's realities in Christian ministry. I lived out a calling to serve God, in a cross-cultural context where I, as a white woman, was leading black men and women. The areas of difficulties and rewards are issues that I dealt with, as are experiences of honour and dishonour. I have expanded on these in Chapter 1. (1.1)

I added the last two areas concerning the state of the church today in relation to black women in leadership, and a personal question to the participants about their own needs for moving forward in their ministries. My purpose was to enable the conversation to move to their views of the future and to include personal reflections on their needs. I hoped to highlight issues for black female leaders and their place in church and society. In the New Testament, St. Paul writes, 'Accept one another as Christ accepted you.' (Romans 15:7 NRSV). The Greek for 'accept' is '*Proslambano*' which carries a strength of meaning which can also be translated 'welcome.'³⁸ Thus the word 'accept' here is not a grudging, passive acceptance of difference, but a positive, affirming statement of welcome for people, and embracing change. In British society and the church, have black or Asian women leaders been grudgingly accepted or welcomed and celebrated? I now elaborate on the potential commonalities outlined above, in order to clarify the route of this research and to set them in a context.

2.2.1 Calling, vocation and mission

The Oxford Dictionary defines calling as 'strong urge toward a particular way of life or career,' whereas it defines vocation as 'a strong feeling of suitability for a particular career or occupation ... a person's employment or main occupation, especially regarded as worthy and requiring dedication.'³⁹ In the Christian context, 'calling' is understood as an inner urge that has resulted from hearing God's direction and voice. An example of such a commission in the Bible could be Isaiah, who had a vision of God, 'Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I: send me!"' (Isaiah 6:8 NRSV). Vocation, however, describes the outworking

³⁸ <<http://www.teknia.com/greek-dictionary/proslambano>> (18 January 2014).

³⁹ Oxford Dictionary, <www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition> (18 January 2014).

of that call in the choice of career or way of life, according to a feeling of suitability for a particular area of work, and a sense of dedication to it. In everyday parlance, however, ‘calling’ and ‘vocation’ are often used interchangeably and the difference may reflect denominational interpretations. For example, in the Catholic tradition, a priest, monk or nun lives out a vocation in the framework of the religious vows to poverty, chastity, and obedience. In other Christian traditions, vocation is expressed through becoming an ordained member of the clergy. What they all have in common is a strong sense of an encounter with God which directs their choices, and empowers a commitment to a life path. This may be costly, but cherished because of the inner sense of purpose and fulfilment which is greater than the sacrifices.

Recently, in a BBC documentary about the Queen, former Archbishop Rowan Williams talked about vocation, ‘A vocation is not just stepping into a role or exercising a function but becoming a certain kind of person.’⁴⁰ The Queen has a strong sense of vocation in terms of her commitment to her role (which she did not choose), and that is strengthened by her faith and character. A vocation is more than a job, it is a life choice that impacts every area of life, and may sometimes carry with it a leadership position. All six participants in this research are women of influence in their contexts. Sometimes people can be reluctant missionaries like Jonah in the Bible. When the Liberian civil war happened, many Liberians became refugees across West Africa and many planted churches, learned French, and became missionaries, even though they may never have intended to. I liken that to the scattering in Acts, where because of persecution, believers escaped to many places, and started churches. Some arriving in the UK from the Caribbean or Africa have come because they made a decision about moving, to find a better life in a richer country. The people coming from Jamaica in the 1960s had thought well of the ‘motherland’ Britain and came with high hopes of a good life.⁴¹ They were not received well. As the black Christian community has grown, the mission vision for the UK has grown too. In October 2009, I attended an Evangelical Alliance meeting in London where church leaders, black and white, discussed how far the black churches had

⁴⁰ Rowan Williams in ‘The Diamond Queen’ Episode 3, Andrew Marr, BBC 1 (20 February 2012).

⁴¹ Trevor Phillips and Michael Phillips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins, 2009), pp. 81-94.

come since the 1960s.⁴² Black leaders expressed a strong sense of calling to the UK, that the UK was the mission field and that black Christians had a voice and a message. Many strong, dynamic and influential black male leaders in the UK demonstrate that calling and vocation, in addition to linking ministry here in the UK with overseas, especially with places of family origin like Nigeria and Ghana. Also there are growing numbers of women who are giving leadership in some very diverse areas, including denominational leadership. The clarity of vocation and calling to Christian ministry, seeing the UK as the mission field, is an important aspect of researching women leaders from backgrounds other than my own. Acceptance of a black or Asian woman church leader by the white majority population or congregation may still be open to question.

2.2.2 Gender

Since 1994, women have been ordained in the Church of England and served as curates and vicars. They have also been appointed as Deans, Canons and into other leadership roles, and will be appointed as Bishops.⁴³ In other denominations, like Methodists and Baptists, women have been appointed as clergy for many years, although, as Wootton notes, 'Before women were ordained in the Church of England, Free Church ministers were treated as oddities and largely ignored.'⁴⁴ Black female ministers are even rarer. In 1995, Kate Coleman discovered that she was the first black woman Pastor in the Baptist Union in the UK.⁴⁵ This prompted her to find out where there were other black women church ministers in the UK. Now there may be many more now with greater levels of acceptance. The women I planned to interview would have their own unique perspectives and histories to share. Some literature, after the ordination of women in the Church of England in 1994, recounts the experiences of the first female vicars. The effect of women's ordination on the congregations seemed to have elicited positive and negative responses. Some men were convinced of the rightness of appointing women, after

⁴² "The Black Church from Windrush to Obama: Changing church, changing society." Evangelical Alliance conference, October 30th 2009.

⁴³ Vote in Church of England Synod to approve legislation for the appointment of female bishops, 14th July, 2014, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28300618>> (18th July, 2014).

⁴⁴ Janet Wootton, "Introduction" in Janet Wootton (ed.) *This is Our Story: Free Church Women's Ministry* Werrington, UK: Epworth, 2007), p. 3.

⁴⁵ Kate Coleman, *Exploring Metissage*, p. 2.

experiencing a women's appointment in their parish.⁴⁶ Others said that women's ordination had, 'contributed to a current crisis of identity among men.'⁴⁷ However, this was nearly twenty years ago, so the question is what is it like now for women clergy, in particular, black and Asian women?

2.2.3 Race, ethnicity and culture

Going from a reserved culture to hot climate Liberia, I discovered parts of my personality and abilities that had been dormant and hidden. When I went to the sun, I became more extravert, more expressive, and more open. Since returning to the UK, it seems as those different parts of me have eventually become more integrated and balanced. I hoped that interviewing women with a mixed heritage would be informative for cultural and societal shifts going on in the UK.

Some of the women I interviewed have come to a cold climate from a warm, relationship oriented society and may have had feelings of displacement and pressure to conform to a more reserved culture. In Britain they may have become less exuberant, and less expressive in worship, and more formal, or they may have held on to their original expressions. Alternatively, those who are second generation, and born in the UK, may have an integrated mix of both cultures. Britain, which used to be so formal in the past, is now much less so. In many white British churches today, for example, there is a very informal dress code. Men do not wear ties, women wear jeans, people come on a Sunday not in their Sunday best, but in their 'weekend off' clothes. But this is not the norm in many Caribbean and African churches. There they dress up, not dress down. Men wear ties, and women wear their best clothes and jewellery. How black women leaders integrate all this into their styles and expressions is another level of enquiry, and relevant to church life, even though it was not the primary aspect for research.

The lack of welcome that black Christians coming to the UK often experienced is something not to be underestimated, and I suspect that the indigenous population of the UK, which is itself hybrid, has not really understood the wound that was caused. It was

⁴⁶ Hilary Wakeman (ed.), *Women Priests: The First Year* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1996), p.5.

⁴⁷ Hilary Wakeman, *Women Priests*, p. 6.

bad enough that people came from a hot climate to a cold climate, where physically life could be harder and more introvert as people stayed inside in the long winters. More than that, however, was the frosty and reserved attitudes, suspicion and rejection resulting in separation and division.⁴⁸ Now, fifty years later, hopefully, integration may be happening. Conversely, in Liberia, where I found such a welcome, there is a tribe or ethnic group, called the Kissi people. They have a tradition in their churches that when a stranger comes amongst them, they place them in the middle of the room, and stand while the visitor remains seated. Then they stretch out their arms towards the visitor, as if to embrace or hug them. At the same time, they all declare together three times ‘You are welcome, you are welcome, you are welcome!’ They may say this in Kissi first and then in English. I cannot imagine how it would have been for me if I had received rejection, as people from the Caribbean did on arrival in Britain.⁴⁹

Looking at how people have different perspectives and the need to listen, I remember a sense of satisfaction that in 2007 we marked the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. There were apologies for slavery from white to black, but for some, the issue of reparations, or compensation for all the devastating loss and suffering caused, was more important. Words of apology were one step and were appreciated. However, the deeper question was about actions, in terms of taking steps to give back to the Caribbean community in some way. In addition, was the apology just from white to black, or was there also conversation to be had between African and Caribbean?

2.2.4 Women as community builders

As I focussed on black women in Christian leadership in the UK, I was interested to discover how their gender influenced the way they built a sense of community in their congregations. The question of whether women have a different leadership style from men is relevant here, and the distinctives that a black or Asian woman brings to leadership as they develop their church congregations. I recognise that using the word ‘community’ could open up a huge dialogue about philosophical or sociological

⁴⁸ Phillipps, *Windrush*, p. 81-94.

⁴⁹ Phillipps, *Windrush*, p. 81-94.

definitions, but I propose to locate the word ‘community’ within my own experience, which is cross-cultural team building in Liberia, and in the interviewees’ experience which is church congregations. In this context, community building is understood as team building and belonging in congregations.

2.2.5 Costs and sacrifices, rewards, and fulfilments

Another potential commonality, is about costs and sacrifices in Christian ministry. This can be in terms of low pay and long working hours, or through voluntary displacement from one’s homeland. Sacrifices can be made because often Christian ministry does not always attract honour in our secular world, and sometimes invites criticism. As stated earlier (1.1.1), being displaced brings vulnerability, but it is also true that going as a learner builds reciprocal relationships and trust as people in the culture teach you about their world. Learning a language opens up greater doors for relationship and building trust, out of which ministry grows. (1.1.5) Black women in the UK may not have had to learn a language but they may have had to learn a youth or organisational culture. The learning process may not have been easy, especially if some experiences were negative.

Conversely to costs and sacrifices, there may have been many rewards and fulfilments, blessings to be counted, privileges to be enjoyed. This question gave space for participants to talk about the positives, to give thanks to God, to remember the good times. I thought it was important not to assume the negative in my research, because being a woman and being black or Asian is a positive definition of identity. How they have experienced life, and ministry will be a variety of highs and lows, with a presumption that Christian ministry can be fulfilling.⁵⁰

2.2.6 Experiences of honour

I included questions about honour and dishonour because of my own experience of living in Africa, where I was honoured, even though there was great risk from life threatening situations in the war.⁵¹ I had to define the term ‘honour’ and ‘dishonour’ because they are words with loaded content, and we have negative examples from stories

⁵⁰ Margaret Silf, *Landmarks: An Ignatian Journey* (London: Darton, Longman And Todd, 1998), p. 87.

⁵¹ Pratt, *To See a New Day*.

about 'honour killings' of women, as well as positive images from the bestowal of honours in the Honours' Lists. Malina defines honour as:

A claim to worth that is socially acknowledged' as well as 'the value of a person in his or her own eyes (that is one's claim to worth) *plus* that person's value in the eyes of his or her social group.⁵²

Rohrbaugh defines honour as, 'Put very simply, honor is the status one claimed in the community, together with the all-important public recognition of that claim.'⁵³ Thus honour has to do with worth or value, both from one's own perspective as well as others. The dictionary definition of 'honour' is, 'the esteem due or paid to a worthy person, body etc; respect; high estimation; veneration.'⁵⁴ Honour is something that is given to someone for some reason, whether that is an unchangeable characteristic, or a specific accomplishment. I defined 'honour' as 'respect' and added other words that elaborated on the notion of being honoured, such as 'esteem,' 'highly valued,' 'affirmed,' 'treated well.'

Malina compares the difference, in the New Testament world, between male honour which included manliness, courage and public or social eminence, and female honour which meant being passive, submissive, modest, focussed on staying at home, and conforming to social norms.⁵⁵ Even though Malina is describing the New Testament Mediterranean world, one can see its effect down the centuries in the Western world as women have struggled to come out of being locked into the domestic sphere, and to move into roles normally associated with men, like church leadership. I talked earlier of the difference between ascribed and acquired honour, according to Malina. (1.1.1) Lingenfelter and Mayers, similarly describe ascribed and achieved status as cultural opposites, where cold climate, western cultures are more 'status achieved' and hot climate, non-western cultures are 'status ascribed.'^(1.1.1) In western society, then, we give honour to accomplishments, which can change or be lost, and in non-western

⁵² Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 29-30.

⁵³ Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "Honor: Core value in the Biblical World" in Richard E. DeMaris & Dietmar Neufeld, *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament* (N.Y. Routledge, 2010), p. 111.

⁵⁴ The Chambers Dictionary, p. 715.

⁵⁵ Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 49.

society, we give honour to positions that are not earned, and usually inherited and unchangeable. Using that definition of giving honour to changeable characteristics, it would be inconsistent if honour was withheld because of an unchangeable characteristic, like race or gender. In other words, an unchangeable characteristic should not matter in a western culture where worth is given to achievement. Either I could challenge the above definitions of cultural difference, or I could posit that racism and sexism are such deep roots that they transcend cultural difference, whatever the definition says. Having lived in Africa as well as the UK, I agree with the broad definitions of ascribed and achieved honour as cultural opposites and therefore I suggest that racism and sexism has a deeper root than merely cultural difference.

Malina then posits that, ‘When honour is viewed as an exclusive prerogative of one of the genders, then honour is always male, and shame is always female.’⁵⁶ Primavesi’s comments on hierarchy accord with this, although here Malina is defining shame in a partly positive way, to mean ‘sensitivity about one’s own reputation, sensitivity to the opinion of others.’⁵⁷ However, female is always connected to shame in the sense of needing to be submissive, hidden, modest, and restrained and it is considered shameful to go beyond those boundaries. Linking that with the idea of ascribed and acquired honour, and looking at church and gender, I suggest that male honour is ascribed in that men who become ministers or clergy do not have to struggle for honour based on their gender, although I am sure that men do have to work hard to acquire honour through achievement, and in the sphere of Christian service, through compassionate giving of themselves. However, women who become ministers may acquire honour through achievement, but still have the hurdle or dishonour of gender to jump over in some situations, even though the scene is changing. It has to be recognised that both men and women have personality or character strengths and weaknesses which can affect their responses to situations. This would be true for those women whom I interviewed.

⁵⁶ Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 49.

⁵⁷ Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 49.

2.2.7 Experiences of Dishonour

The dictionary definition of ‘dishonour’ is ‘lack of respect or honour; shame, something that brings discredit; an affront; reproach.’⁵⁸ This dishonour may be because of an unchangeable characteristic or because of a specific behaviour or situation. Associating the notion of dishonour with the word ‘shame’ strengthens its negative power. Shame is defined as, ‘the humiliating feeling of having appeared unfavourably in one’s own eyes, or those of others, by shortcoming, offence, or unseemly exposure.’⁵⁹ Linking shame with dishonour is made doubly worse for the one who experiences it if the reason is an unchangeable characteristic. A person would surely need to develop a strong sense of self-worth and identity to combat shame being ascribed by others because of something they could not change and live in a context where their unchangeable characteristic was a minority and open to discrimination. Barton suggests that:

The powerless and the oppressed of the world have learnt how to look at their society, their church and their scripture from the perspective not of the powerful, but of the powerless. As a result they discard their false consciousness, the belief that the colour of their skin or their genitalia make them inferior to others. They claim God’s truth, and the truth makes them free to challenge the injustices of this world.⁶⁰

Could it be that this struggle to demonstrate one’s inherent dignity and self-worth in identity has developed the strength of positive faith and pragmatic theology of success in personal and church life in black churches in the UK? The black churches I have visited in London and Birmingham, all have positive messages about faith and personal success in their sermons, and contribute locally to community development schemes for the poor, young, elderly and disadvantaged.⁶¹ Being black in the UK is not immediately associated with honour. Black is suspect, different, and ‘less than’ at times. Ironically, non-western cultures like Africa and the Caribbean place a high value on honouring position, status, and age. Notions of honour and dishonour from the New Testament world still connect and inform how we view different others in the 21st century.

⁵⁸ The Chambers Dictionary, p. 431.

⁵⁹ The Chambers Dictionary, p. 1405.

⁶⁰ Mukti Barton, “Hermeneutical insubordination: Toppling Worldly Kingdoms” in Jagessar and Reddie, *Black Theology in Britain*, p. 167.

⁶¹ e.g. Mount Zion Church, Aston, Birmingham, and RUACH Ministries, Brixton and Kilburn, London.

I defined ‘dishonour’ as ‘not respected,’ ‘not esteemed,’ ‘un-affirmed,’ ‘not highly valued,’ ‘not treated well.’ I hope that by asking participants to talk about situations where they were not honoured or respected might again throw more light on the reality of black women’s experiences in Christian ministry. I needed not to assume that all experiences would be negative, nor to assume that the dishonour was automatically a result of gender, race or ethnicity. This will be discussed more in Chapter 3, in the analysis of interviews.

2.3 Conclusion

Reflecting on the contribution of women like Leymah Gbowee, and many others who fought for peace, built community and extended forgiveness, it seems obvious to me that women have much to do, give and say which can help the rest of humanity grow in mutual respect, acceptance and welcome. A black church leader, whom I met at a conference some years ago, responded to my question ‘how can I help?’ (i.e. regarding the challenges for black Christians in the UK), replied with ‘well, you can start by listening!’⁶²

Being white however, carries the obvious drawback of not being an insider, but rather an outsider who cannot fully empathise with the struggles of black women leaders. I had been warned that in order to interview some black women leaders, I would need to overcome suspicion and possibly hostility.⁶³ I would need to explain the purpose of the research convincingly. The notion of white people in the UK defining the ‘other’ as black and different, suspect, rejected, created a barrier for me to overcome. However, the subject is worthy of the challenge, as one church leader encouragingly reminded me.⁶⁴

⁶² Conversation with a denominational youth department leader at ‘Faith in the Future’ Black Majority Churches conference, Brighton 2001.

⁶³ Conversation with Black church leader, February 2012.

⁶⁴ Katei Kirby, in conversation, 2012.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

3.1. Areas for analysis from the questions of contents

This chapter analyses the interviews of black female church leaders which I conducted between April-October 2012, following the areas of potential commonality established in section 2.2. The transcribed interviews are contained in Appendix C and have been edited for clarity, succinctness and protection of participants. The six women interviewed were:

Mrs. Virginia Kpayser

Rev. Dr. Kate Coleman

Rev. Cham Kaur-Mann

Rev. Katei Kirby

Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin

Rev. Canon Eve Pitts

Details of each were included earlier. (1.2.5) I add that Rose and Eve are clergy in the Church of England, both married with children. Rose is in her fifties and Eve just into her sixties. Kate Coleman and Cham are Baptist ministers, single and in their forties. Virginia is married, is in informal lay leadership in a non-denominational church and is in her fifties. Katei is in her forties, single and is from the Wesleyan Holiness Church, but at the time of interview was working with the Methodist Church. I will refer to them in this analysis by their first names, although will include Kate Coleman's and Katei Kirby's surnames to avoid confusion. Their ministerial and academic titles are noted above, but for succinctness are not repeated in subsequent references.

I compare the six participants in terms of their experiences and perceptions as Christian ministers. As the interviews progressed, it became clear that gender and ethnicity were closely linked in the narratives, there being some overlap at times, especially relating to gender. However, I decided to preserve these two sections, because I discovered that gender could dominate the discourse at the expense of ethnicity. For this reason, and at

the risk of potential repetition, the section on race, ethnicity and culture is in its own section, after gender. Further, for the purposes of comparison and the flow of analysis, I have conflated the sections on honour and dishonour as well as costs and sacrifices, with difficulties and rewards. The areas for analysis in this chapter are:

1. Vocation, calling and mission
2. Gender
3. Race, ethnicity and culture
4. Women as community builders
5. Costs, sacrifices, rewards and fulfilment
6. Experiences of honour and dishonour
7. The state of the church today regarding women in leadership
8. What each participant needs to move forward in their ministry

I also refer back to my own experience hitherto mentioned in previous chapters in order to identify similarities and differences that emerge, and I include voices from literature in this field. I recognise that the perspectives shared by the participants were their own, and possibly not endorsed by every colleague who worked with them. However, this does not invalidate their experience, it was true for them. This issue was discussed in the methodology section. (1.2.4)

Each section will be broken down into three parts:

- a. What does the data say?
- b. How the data can be analysed: similarities and differences between respondents and the researcher, significant patterns, and key themes.
- c. What findings can be drawn from the results?

Experiences of exclusion and judgment emerge from the results, as well as patterns of strength and resilience in terms of the ways in which participants responded.

3.2 Calling, vocation and mission

3.2.1 Data

‘What God has given me is to commend Him to the next generation,’ said my first participant, Virginia. (App.C.1.1) The calling to be a mentor to the younger generation is, for her, central. She is part of a large, mainly white church in London, where she leads a team within the children’s work, and children’s Sunday class, as well as having pastoral responsibility for some adults, including those with ‘safeguarding’ issues. She and her husband, Moses, lead a mid-week house group. Virginia’s calling is lived out in the context of being part of the lay leadership. She divulged a reluctance to take on a leadership role, and that for her, being willing to be in Christian leadership was about taking a risk. (App.C.1.2)

Kate Coleman¹ described her calling as a progressive and developing vocation. First it was a clear call to lead God’s people in a church setting and now more broadly the calling is refined to:

Help develop other leaders and raise the next generation. My mandate is to influence leaders across the board, not just Christians, with Christian ethos and principles. By leaders I mean women and men. There is a huge focus on women in this season because the playing field is not level, so a lot of what I do is seeking to level the playing field to make sure women are in the space they need to be. (App.C.2.1)

This vocation grew in the crucible of difficulty and some opposition when she was first appointed as an elder in her church.² Kate stood out in her denomination as the first black woman in church leadership, and attracted some criticism. She wrote about the objections that she encountered:

Objections to the proposal came thick and fast ... the objection was related to the inappropriateness of my gender for such a task ... looking back I can see the role that unuttered racial politics played in the whole process.³

¹ I use their surnames when I refer to Kate Coleman and Katei Kirby to avoid confusion because of the similarities of their first names.

² Kate Coleman “Black Theology and Black Liberation: a Womanist Perspective” in Michael J. Jagessar and Anthony G. Reddie (ed.) *Black Theology in Britain: a Reader* (London: Equinox Publishing, 2007), p. 110-111.

³ Coleman, “Black Theology and Black Liberation”, in Jagessar and Reddie (ed.), *Black Theology in Britain*, pp. 110-111.

This was a ‘crisis of validity’ for Kate in terms of her suitability for a role being questioned, as well as the validity of her calling to leadership being doubted. However, it also signified the beginning of what she describes as an ‘emerging womanist consciousness.’⁴ The opposition did not arise from her family, but rather from her church background.

Cham was doing a degree course at the London Bible College (now the London School of Theology), not wanting to enter ministry or have a vocation, when she experienced a clear sense of calling:

In that context God called me. It was a real left fielder for me culturally because my expectations and those of my community was not that I was going to be a leader. (App.C.2.1)

She talked of her UK Sikh background, in which there was no expectation on her as a woman to be educated or pursue a career, but rather to be married. Like Kate Coleman, Cham faced opposition to and invalidation of her calling and leadership. She described her ministry as:

Pastoral, mentoring, teaching, preaching, inspirational, walking alongside people, spinning lots of plates. Gifts you don’t recognise suddenly come to the fore. (App.C.2.1)

Katei Kirby’s calling to Christian leadership grew out of a strong family background in Christian ministry. She is the daughter of a Pastor in the Wesleyan Holiness Church and has been involved in church all her life. Her response to a sense of God’s call began at about sixteen years of age with a desire to see people healed, not only physically, but in mind and soul as well, ‘Out of this I heard God’s call to use communication, listening, coming alongside people, and sharing, but in a deliberate way.’ (App.C.3.1) Her vocation developed alongside a career in marketing and the public sector. As a teenager she had described a vocation as, ‘what you did for free, self-sacrificing like Mother Theresa, or my own grandmother.’ At school, finding a career was the main focus. (App.C.3.1) However, the conviction of calling grew and found expression through ordination in her

⁴ Coleman, “Black Theology and Black Liberation” in Jagessar and Reddie, *Black Theology in Britain*, p.112.

denomination, the Wesleyan Holiness Church. Now she describes her vocation as being about communication:

When I was ordained in 1999, my response to the church that ordained me was that I said, ‘my pulpit won’t look like the one I am standing in today. My pulpit is the pavement, the classroom, the office,’ and I named all the places where I felt the gospel needed to be felt and seen, not preached in the way we would do in church because in some places it would not be allowed or accepted, but where a Christian presence or the presence of God was needed to be exhibited.
(App.C.3.1)

She describes her vocation as ‘my whole life,’ and quoted Oprah Winfrey who once said, ‘I want to bring everything I am to everything I do.’⁵ (App.C.3.1)

Rose’s commission from God came at the age of about fourteen years of age, when, in the middle of the night, she woke from a dream and opened the Bible at Luke 4. Next morning the daily reading was from Isaiah 61, giving the same reading as Luke, ‘The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me to preach Good News.’ (Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18. NRSV) She had an overwhelming sense of a calling to the ministry. Her vocation is expressed thus:

My vocation is about the proclamation of the Word. I believe that my actions that I participate in spring from what I believe. I believe that God sent His Son to die for our sins once for all and we are called to be His children and I passionately believe that God is not only interested in our spiritual lives but also in what is going on in our lives, our need for food and clothes. My calling is bound up in serving others, ‘Lord make me like you, make me like you. You are a servant, make me one too. Oh Lord I am willing to do what you do. Whatever you do, please make me like you.’⁶ I still sing that ... The position I have in the community, others may see as a position of power, but I see it as servanthood, a calling to serve. (App.C.4.1)

Eve’s calling or vocation clearly developed and emerged over time and she expressed a passion for proclaiming or preaching and for serving, as well as the knowledge that she is, ‘called to be an evangelist.’ (App.C.5.1) At first, she applied to be an Anglican deaconess, which was the only path open to her at the time. However, after women were free to become deacons from 1987, Eve was

⁵ Oprah Winfrey-source unknown.

⁶ Jimmy and Carol Owens, *Lord, make me like you*. <www.jimmyandcarolowens.com/store/music/the-witness>

appointed to that role in 1992.⁷ Then, in 1994, she was one of the first women priests to be ordained in the UK and was the first black female Anglican priest from a Caribbean background.⁸ Eve described herself as a forerunner. This is expressed through gifts and abilities like leading from the front, which means leading by example, not being afraid to roll up her sleeves and get the work done. An example would be in one parish where they needed to fundraise in order to renovate an old building. Eve talked about this:

I took my skills with me. I took those 20-25 people with me. I rolled up my sleeves and said 'Let's get this done. We worked together, we had lots of laughter, we danced for 24 hours non-stop to raise money, and I slept outside, in the dark, preached for 5 hours non-stop. I had a wonderful time. We put the roof on, re-wired, and re-did the floor. (App.C.5.2)

3.2.2 Analysis of data: similarities and differences

What struck me about four out of the six women I interviewed (that is, Kate Coleman, Cham, Katei Kirby and Rose) was their acknowledgment of a dialogue in prayer in which they each received a sense of commission as teens or young adults. This was clearly articulated, and grew as they developed in adulthood. Virginia and Eve described their calling as a present reality, defining its current focus and shape, rather than talking about how it started. I described my own sense of calling to Christian ministry earlier, which has similarities with the participants in terms of a focus on serving and developing others, as well as a conviction of hearing God 'speak' through Scripture. (1.1)

These brief descriptions of how calling began, its focus and the challenges faced demonstrate the authenticity and uniqueness of each participant. The similarities outlined below did not affect the rationale for my choices of who to ask for interview. Rather, they are highlighted as significant aspects that I discovered. Rose, Kate and Katei all expressed a strong conviction of their identity, what they brought and who they were called to be. All three have had or still have national roles or trans-local roles in their denominations or organisations. Cham, Eve and Virginia all talked about their vocation

⁷ Deacons in the Anglican church, <<http://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/women-bishops/the-women-priests-debate.aspx>> (8 April 2014).

⁸ Rev. Eileen Lake was the first black, British-born Anglican priest who was ordained within a week of Eve's ordination. See Appendix C.5.1.

more in the context of teaching, preaching and pastoring in a church community. Cham articulated a growing calling, beginning with reluctance, but now expressed in teaching and mentoring, in local church and the Next Leadership organisation she co-leads.⁹ Virginia also expressed a reluctance to be in leadership and is, at present, the only black female having leadership responsibilities in her church and in its history. Eve, Kate, Cham, Rose and Katei are all ‘firsts’ in their sphere; the first Black woman vicar in the Church of England, the first black woman President of the Baptist Union, the first Asian woman minister in the Baptist denomination, the first Black woman Chaplain to the House of Commons, the first female CEO of the African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance. They all have charted new territory in terms of women in ministry positions in churches, and are part of a small though growing number of black or Asian women who hold leadership roles. This aspect of being pioneers is a coincidence. However, because black and Asian female clergy are still rare, it is almost a tautology to state that they are all ‘firsts’ in something. They all speak of wanting to develop young people in the church community, of wanting to serve people, and wanting to see women empowered to live out lives of purpose with the understanding of God’s call to service.

I see similarities here between Katei Kirby and Cham, in their holistic view of Christian leadership, and in the variety of abilities they both use in their ministry. Both have teaching, preaching and pastoral gifts, as indeed do all the participants. I identify with some of them in my own experience, where I developed people-centred ministry out of a variety of abilities. I note that my calling to leadership emerged over time and was challenged at times because of my gender but was never challenged on the grounds of ethnicity. Rose was ordained as a priest in 1994, as was Eve, so both are part of the first group of women ordained to the priesthood in the Church of England, and twenty years later, in 2014, we have recently witnessed the procession of hundreds of women priests and supporters in the Church of England, to celebrate twenty years since that historic event.¹⁰ Rose and Eve both expressed a

⁹ Next Leadership, <www.nextleadership.org> (8 April 2014).

¹⁰ Procession through London from Westminster Abbey to St. Paul’s Cathedral 3rd May 2014. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-27265039>> 3rd May 2014.

conviction that their calling was about preaching or proclamation of the Word and serving.

3.2.3 Findings

This analysis suggests that women experience an authentic and clear calling from God to Christian ministry, which includes leadership. Christian ministry is expressed through serving others, as well as using the preaching and teaching abilities that they have. These interviewees, as women of colour, demonstrated the authenticity of conviction which drove them forward to live out their vocations, even through doubts and struggles. Determination was a hallmark of their pathway. They also named clearly what they were called to, in leading in the Church, preaching, and teaching, developing the next generation and serving.

Mukti Barton refers to men in the Church not needing patriarchal power because of Christ's command to all of us to have servant-hearted attitudes:

If male church leaders understood their ministry to be one of humble service, exercised in Christ-like manner, there would not be any more room to question whether women are called to do the same or not.¹¹

Barton's comment echoes Greenleaf's paradigm of servant leadership, expounded as early as 1970, although Barton exposes the frailty of a gender specific limitation to Christian leadership.¹² The interviewees all link ministry with servanthood which is practical as well as spiritual. In the following chapter I will discuss servanthood in its cultural context. (4.5) Loren Cunningham, the founder of Youth With A Mission (YWAM), co-authored a book about women in leadership, in which he states that women can and should be leaders in the church and mission context. One of his arguments is that if God calls women to service in leadership, who are we to dispute that calling? If God gives leadership abilities to women, then it makes no sense to deny them the freedom to use those abilities:

¹¹ Mukti Barton, "Hermeneutical Insubordination: Toppling Worldy Kingdoms" in Jagessar and Reddie, *Black Theology in Britain*, p. 173. Originally in Joe Aldred (ed.), *Sisters with Power* (London: Continuum, 2000), p. 24-25.

¹² Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader*, (The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 1991, 2008) originally published 1970.

All we need to do to refute this idea that leadership is male, is to find one woman in the Bible who was a gifted leader. Just one woman, obviously gifted, anointed, and called by God to lead. But as we look at Scripture, we find not one but several in both the Old and the New Testaments.¹³

Cunningham also points out that many women throughout history, as well as today, have had a clear sense of calling from God which includes leading others. He also questions that if leadership is male, why are there so many men who do not have leadership qualities but there are many women who do?¹⁴

At a personal level, I reflect that when I began Christian ministry training and practice, through Bible college and church youth work, women in my sphere were not expected or permitted to become pastors or elders, and I never even considered the idea. Instead, overseas missionary service opened up for me with YWAM, where I discovered abilities that had been dormant until then. However, I must record that I enjoyed and benefited from those early years in ministry, even with the gender ceiling. The same church which in the 1980s would not agree with women being leaders in a local church, adopted me as a missionary to be supported, for over twenty-five years and people there have become life-long friends. It is true, however, that now in my sixties, I consider that in another context and another generation, I might have taken the path to church ordination in order to live out my calling.

3:3 Gender

3.3.1 Data

Throughout the interviews, the two issues of gender and ethnicity were often intertwined, as the questions opened up multiple responses and views. This lends weight to the notion of ‘double jeopardy,’ which I outlined earlier. (2.1.2) This section now focuses primarily on gender.

Virginia recounted times when she preached in her church where some men in the congregation felt the need to correct her sermon. However, she was asked by the senior

¹³ Loren Cunningham and David Hamilton, *Why not Women? A Fresh Look at Scripture on Women in Missions, Ministry and Leadership* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2000), p. 52.

¹⁴ Cunningham and Hamilton, *Why Not Women?*, p. 52.

pastor to let him know who was doing this. She thought that the reason for the correction was her gender, although, as a black woman with a lot of influence, she stands out in her predominantly white-led congregation and is not someone who can easily be ignored. Whether the men reacted to her strength of opinion and position, rather than to her gender or ethnicity is unknown without interviewing them. Virginia's impression was that the correction reflected those men's attitudes to women, and their own needs.

In terms of experiences as women in ministry, Kate Coleman noted that:

Guys sometimes think they have to compete with you or cover you or direct you or treat you as if you were married to them or put you in your place. As women leaders some of the disrespect and dishonouring has come that way. It is men behaving badly and you just have to decide if you are going to engage with it or not. For the most part I don't bother. (App.C.2.2)

However, Kate also noted that not every challenge for a woman in Christian leadership was about gender, 'Obviously there is stuff that happens to you just because you are in leadership and hopefully you are secure in your leadership and not taken with this that and the other.' (App.C.2.2.)

Cham emphasised that they were not in competition with men or other women. She said, 'It is not about competition, it is about the kingdom. There is enough room for all.' Kate Coleman added, 'We say to those men, "God bless you in all that you are doing."' (App.C.2.2) She also commented about churches in the UK where women are not allowed in leadership:

Sometimes you have a conversation with a bloke in that stream who is surprised when you have an opinion and have something to say. It is going to be an interesting time for a lot of guys who embrace that theology. What happens is that because they never develop their women to a point where there is someone who might challenge them or have a serious opinion that might differ, when they meet women like that who do have an opinion, they do not know what to do. (App.C.2.2)

As Kate Coleman and Cham discussed the issue of women being included, or listened to, Cham commented:

I could be in a scenario where Kate and I were meeting with my fellow Asian men. They would address Kate and ignore me. I was an enigma to some of my

male colleagues. I don't think it was conscious. But it was the Asian woman, Asian man paradigm. The woman has nothing to say. She is passive and submissive. (App.C.2.3)

For an Asian woman in the UK, the cultural assumption is that women are silent. Kate and Cham experienced that attitude from Asian Christian men but, interestingly, not from Asian Muslim men who seemed to have a lot of respect for them. They suggested that it was the older generation of Christian men who ignored them, and now attitudes are changing amongst the younger generation. (App.C.2.3) Cham mentioned that she doesn't do 'squash' very well, meaning that she does not fit into the moulds people try to squash her into. (App.C.2.3)

Katei Kirby said, 'My gender was never an issue till someone else brought it up or made a decision based on or forgot something that did not include women.' (App.C.3.2) She recounted an occasion where she attended an international conference of church leaders, where she was the only woman at the table, apart from the secretary taking the minutes. The chairman concluded the meeting with, 'OK Gentlemen ...' and Katei immediately broke in and said, '... and ladies,' reminding him that women were also present. He apologised and admitted that he still had a lot to learn. The issue was one of forgetfulness, rather than a wilful exclusion. However, she also noted:

'The flip side is when I make a mistake, can I respond as graciously as he did? If I say something a little off kilter, can I respond as graciously as he? Are there parts of my life that don't really include others?' (App.C.3.2)

Katei also commented that she did not want her gender to be an obstacle to others:

'My gender is not an excuse, it is my packaging. It is not a 'get-out' clause for doing something less than excellently ... I want to ensure my gender does not become an obstacle to things I am doing.' (App.C.3.2)

As an example of this, Katei recounted being invited to churches where they might assume she was a man because of her title, Rev. Kirby. In that scenario, she made sure people knew ahead of time that she was Rev. Katei Kirby so that they did not have a surprise. (App.C.3.2) Katei's view is that the presence and voices of women is important in leadership meetings. She commends the World Evangelical Alliance which has deliberately included a number of female leaders of organisations, rather than inviting

regional WEA representatives only, who are mostly male. As a result, the gender balance has improved. (App.C.3.2)

Virginia remembered situations where she was asked by the pastor to visit a church member, but on arrival she sensed the disappointment because the person wanted the real leader, 'the big cheese' to come and considered her to be second best. (App.C.1.8) Most of Virginia's negative experiences were not in the UK but overseas when she worked in Mozambique, with expatriate, often North American missionaries who communicated an assumption that, because she was a black woman, she could not be a missionary. In another situation in Liberia, when she was walking along a beach with male white colleagues, other missionary men who saw her assumed she was a prostitute trying to proposition the white men. This felt very demeaning and dishonouring to her, especially as she was dressed like a missionary, not a prostitute. (App.C.1.3)

Rose answered the questions about gender and ethnicity together. Many of her responses are included in the following sections. However, I include here the following example. Rose worked at one church where the tradition was to call the priest, 'Father.' She told the church on her first Sunday, 'I am not your father and I am not your mother, you can call me 'Rose,' or 'Rev. Rose' or the children can say 'Sister Rose,' One man said to me, 'Rose, what a beautiful name!' She recalled that this man was, later, rude and disrespectful to her as a woman, and she had to stand her ground with him. She talked of needing to be aware of the 'games people play':

I will often reflect things back to people. What were you actually trying to say about that? What were you implying? I do that with a smile. I disarm with a smile but at the same time we don't need to lie down and roll over because simply we are a woman or black or Christian. (App.C.4.4)

Eve noted that:

As a woman, it has been an exciting time, not without its problems. I have never been insulted by a male. I have been told they are all terrified of me. There has been mutual respect, except in King's Norton. I have some really good male colleagues and work alongside them. (App.C.5.2)

I noted that the comment about the men being terrified of her was said in a humorous way. Eve's experiences as a black woman are included in greater depth in the

following sections, because like Rose, she talked about the issues of gender and ethnicity together.

The aspect of singleness became a discussion point between Kate Coleman and Cham in their interview. They talked of expectations from family and culture that they should get married. Kate Coleman shared how her mother ‘lamented for many years’ that Kate was single, but finally understood her daughter’s calling as a ‘holy woman.’ (App.C.2.2a) Kate said: ‘I have always said that I am called to be single because it is a ministry to single women and men coming into leadership.’ (App.C.2.2) Cham’s view was, ‘Singleness is a gift, not a stigma or a curse in our eyes. It is a gift that has been embraced. You can live life in all its fullness as a single person and enjoy the gift.’ (App.C.2.2) Katei Kirby, who is also single, did not address the issue of singleness in her interview. The three other women, Rose, Eve and Virginia are all married and mentioned their husbands and children, but not expansively.

Finally, although the dynamics between men and women in Christian leadership are sometimes negative, Kate recalled one man in her congregation saying to her that he was shocked to realise that it took a female leader to help him become the man God wanted him to be. (App.C.2.4)

3.3.2 Analysis of data: similarities and differences

Looking at the participants’ experiences of being in Christian leadership as women, there are similarities to be noted in relation to others’ attitudes towards them. Virginia and Kate Coleman perceived correction coming from men, based on negative assumptions concerning gender. Virginia and Rose both experienced reactions of disappointment or rejection when some parishioners met them in ministry situations. Cham and Katei Kirby both encountered being ignored or excluded from conversations, similar to Kate Coleman’s experiences of being judged on the basis of gender. (3.3.1)

However, Eve also articulated a largely positive view as a woman working with men, Her comment about men being ‘terrified’ of her suggests a personality strength that may

be innate but also developed through life's tough times. (3.3.1) Similarly, Virginia's experience of working with male leaders in her church was generally positive. Kate Coleman's anecdote of one man who appreciated her as a female leader is echoed and discussed in another example later on (3.5.1) in the section on women as community builders.

What was very interesting was the way in which several participants, especially Katei Kirby, Kate Coleman and Cham, expressed measured and thoughtful responses in terms of not wanting to assume every difficult situation was based on gender, or to use gender as an excuse for their own behaviour, for example, their own potential for excluding others. Participants also demonstrated maturity and emotional intelligence in the way they handled hostility. There were similarities in Rose and Kate Coleman's experiences in that Rose talked of seeking to respond courteously but firmly, sometimes 'disarming with a smile' and Kate talked of sometimes ignoring hostility, and seeking to respond graciously to those men who disagreed with her. However, there was also a strong articulation of not surrendering their own sense of worth or value as female leaders but rather responding with confidence and strength. Rose's expression of being aware of 'the games people play' and setting her own expectations of how people might address her was matched by Cham's succinct summing up of what I saw in all of the participants, that is, 'I don't do "squash" very well.'! (3.3.1)

The examples that Cham and Katei Kirby gave of being ignored reminded me of an experience in my Liberian church where I was the only white member. A male volunteer had arrived to work with our team and I took him along to church on his first Sunday. That morning, a visiting white American man was preaching and after the service he came to greet us. However, he introduced himself to my male friend, and ignored me. He behaved as if my friend, who had been in the country for five days, was the team leader. I had been living in Liberia for five years. I had to deal with my own feelings of exclusion and assume that this was simply an unintentional oversight. However, it demonstrated the subtlety of thoughtless exclusion.

Three of the participants, Katei Kirby, Kate Coleman and Cham are, like me, single. There were similarities between Kate Coleman and Cham in their family expectations on them to be married as well as their own positive embracing of singleness as a gift and part of their calling.

I note, finally, that both Eve and Rose, the two oldest amongst the participants, both linked gender and ethnicity very closely together and it will be seen later that, for them, people's attitude to race and ethnicity was a major issue. (3.4.1)

3.3.3 Findings

The results from these interviews in terms of gender suggest that there is still a perceived problem and challenge for women entering Christian ministry and leadership in the UK, although the scene is changing among the younger generation. Being ignored or excluded, being corrected, negative assumptions being made about a woman's influence, all emerge out of the interviews certainly as an historical pattern for them. There are also positive findings to suggest that these women have developed good working relationships with men in ministry, and that male appreciation of female leadership has been expressed. What also can be seen is the way these women responded to negative attitudes and behaviour towards them. They demonstrated strength of spirit and character, a generous attitude, and yet a refusal to step out of their calling, or step aside to please others.

The issue of gender in Christian ministry is a core issue in the church, and yet it is very easy to take one's gender and ethnicity for granted and not think about it if you are in the majority. Women, including those of all colour and ethnicity, are not in a minority but a majority in church membership.¹⁵ Exclusion from positions of ministry in the church on the basis of gender is not about excluding a minority, it is about excluding a majority, and therefore is based on a different dynamic than the power of the majority. In the next chapter, I develop more discussion on discrimination and why it takes place, but in this

¹⁵ Church of England's most recent statistics show for confirmations, 40% male and 60% female. Church Statistics for 2010-2011, Archbishops' Council, Research and Statistics, Central Secretariat, 2012, p.56.

section on gender, I note that for women to be excluded from Christian ministry implies an opinion on their inherent characteristics and identity. Riet Bons-Storm, a Dutch theologian researching women's experiences in pastoral care, recalled her experience of being ignored by German professors visiting her department at university. She was one of two female professors in her department but the German group contained no women. As they walked in they completely ignored her presence and did not talk with her. Bons-Storm assumed the oversight was not intentional, but:

I suppose it was because, according to their thinking, I did not wholly belong there, and thus they excluded me from the conversation.¹⁶

She describes the challenge for women who are thought to be theologically incredible, that is, unbelievable. Where men's narratives are credible, believable, and believed, women are suspect, not credible.¹⁷ The play on the word 'incredible,' at least in English, speaks the double message that although women may not be credible in the patriarchal church institution, women are incredible in its other meaning, astonishing or amazing. Being ignored, judged, misunderstood, silenced or dominated was part of the experience of women in the case studies in Bons-Storm's research. For example, a woman called Sophie went through a crisis of faith, having been brought up in a Christian home. She did not feel understood or listened to by the male pastor. She preached sometimes in churches, but because of her perspective and opinions, was 'summoned' by her church to meetings to justify the things she said.¹⁸ That a woman has a different opinion from the dominant discourse can be unacceptable and even surprising to some. Primavesi's work on hierarchy also critiques the prohibition of women to interpret Scripture, resulting in women's silence.¹⁹ It is noted that such texts, written in the 1990s reflect that decade's huge battle for a paradigm shift relating to women's ministry, and that the scene may be changing now in the 21st Century. (3.3.1)

¹⁶ Bons-Storm, *The Incredible Woman*, p. 33.

¹⁷ Bons-Storm, *The Incredible Woman*, p. 114.

¹⁸ Bons-Storm, *The Incredible Woman*, p. 44.

¹⁹ Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis*, p. 191.

Erving Goffman coined the phrase ‘faultable’ in his essay *Radio Talk*²⁰ and is referred to in Deborah Tannen’s book on gender communication in the work sphere. ‘Faultable’ means that someone can be ‘embarrassed or made to feel in the wrong because they have a particular characteristic.’²¹ She comments that a woman can become ‘faultable’ for being female in any situation at any time.²² This shows that women still have to prove their capabilities or defend their roles because there is a negative assumption about them. The white female minister may experience this ‘faultability,’ judgment or exclusion in the UK because of her gender but rarely because of her Anglo-Saxon ethnicity. During the interviews singleness emerged as a possible third ‘jeopardy.’ In other texts, ‘class’ or alternatively, ‘churchwomen,’ have been named as a third jeopardy, although adding yet another jeopardy may undermine the original force of double jeopardy, which focuses on gender and race.²³ Being female, black, and single are the characteristics of a minority in the UK, in contrast to the ecclesiastical norm in which the great majority of church leadership is male, white and married, at least in the Protestant tradition. Whether singleness creates barriers to ministry, or excuses for judgment is open to debate. My own experience in a mission organisation which values single women has been largely positive and being single has not proved to be a barrier to ministry. Another ‘jeopardy’ may be the issue of sexuality, but that is not the main focus of this research and was not commented on in any interview.

3.4 Race, ethnicity and culture

In this section I highlight and discuss the participants’ responses in terms of their experiences as women leaders with a Caribbean, African or Asian heritage who are either adopted British or British born. I have referred to their backgrounds in Chapter 1. (1.2.6) A concern emerged in this section about etymology. The word ‘race’ has a similar meaning to ‘ethnicity’ but the meaning is loaded with history. In a recent reader,

²⁰ Erving Goffman, “Radio Talk” in *Forms of talk* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1981), p. 225.

²¹ Deborah Tannen, *Talking from 9 to 5* (London, Virago Press, 1995), p. 260.

²² Tannen, *Talking from 9 to 5*, p. 260.

²³ For ‘class’ see, ‘Introduction” to Margaret L. Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins (eds.), *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology* (UK, USA: Wadsworth, 2001), p.4. For ‘Churchwomen’, see Heidi Safia’s introductory section in Mirza, *Black British Feminism: A Reader*, pp. 1-28. 31. Both are quoted in Coleman, ‘Exploring Métissage,’ p. 31.

Schüssler Fiorenza discusses the intersectionality between race, gender and ethnicity in the ancient world. She points out that ‘race’ is a modern word, while ‘ethnicity’ is a term in which ‘scholarship has swelled.’²⁴ She quotes Hasslanger who defines the difference between race and ethnicity:

One’s ethnicity concerns one’s ancestral links to a certain geographical region..... for our purposes, however, it might be useful to employ the notion of “ethnicity” for those groups that are like races.... except that they do not experience systematic subordination or privilege in the context in question.²⁵

Whether the word ‘race’ or ‘ethnicity’ was most appropriate when asking my participants about their experiences is open to question and suggests that ‘race’ has difficult connotations for a white woman to ask a black woman. I used ‘ethnicity’ and ‘race’ interchangeably in the interviews, because both meanings are relevant. However, I note the importance of ‘race’ as a construct, laden with painful history and privilege. The word ‘culture’ is slightly different in that it is a wider definition of patterns of social behaviour or customs, values and world view. Here I use it to investigate the influence on the participants of their backgrounds.

3.4.1 Data

Eve talked of the time when she studied in Birmingham in preparation for becoming a deacon she said that she felt like a trophy as a black woman, that the mentality was ‘We’ve got one!’ She wanted to study black theology but at that time in the early 1990s the subject was only in its infancy in the UK and there was no course available at Queen’s college, Birmingham. Her perspective is that she was a forerunner in the area of black theology:

I asked for black theology and they asked ‘what is that?’ There was no concept of theology through a black lens. They said ... ‘you teach it’. I said, ‘No, I am a student. I want you to help me understand.’ It was before Anthony Reddie. Eventually they appointed John Wilkinson. But I won’t let them take this away from me that the question I asked, ‘Where is black theology?’ was the beginning of black theology at Queen’s. (App.C.5.3)

²⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Introduction” in Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2009), p. 3.

²⁵ Sally Hasslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?” *Nous* 34, no. 1 (2000) p. 45, in Nasrallah and Schüssler Fiorenza, *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings*, p. 7.

Eve was one of the first black women in the UK to comment on womanism in the late 1980s and the first black female vicar in the Church of England.²⁶

Virginia's experience of being black in a majority white church is largely a positive one and uniquely different from other participants:

For me black doesn't have loaded content. But my cultural heritage defines who I am. What it does it gives me insight into situations. When I talk with a Caribbean person I realise that some black churches have focussed on the judgment of God, there is a lack of grace ... if someone starts talking about God punishing her I tell them that God is also a God of grace.'
(App.C.1.3)

As a black woman, she has been given many opportunities to serve in leadership in her church and her experience of racism has been in secular society but not in the church. (App.C.1.3) She did comment on relationships between black people and Asians:

There is still racism between Asians and Blacks. A black woman reaching out to Asians might not work, although it is changing. Five years ago, it was always a disaster when I was sent to help an Asian. Today a lot of Asians I reach out to think I am delightful because they have got to know me slowly.
(App.C.1.3)

Virginia believes that black men find it harder to rise into leadership than black women, especially in white or mixed churches because white men are threatened by black men more than by black women. (App.C.1.3)

Rose talked of being comfortable in her own skin, and that 'being Caribbean adds a certain flavour.' (App.C.4.4) She spoke animatedly of her upbringing in Montego Bay, Jamaica. This interview highlighted for me the depth of the contribution that black women church leaders bring to the UK from their 'hot climate' backgrounds. I had mentioned to Rose that I saw strength of spirit in her. She replied:

I absolutely adore being a child of God and being a messenger of His love.
I am very fortunate to do something that gives me such pleasure and joy and

²⁶ Rev. Canon Eve Pitts in Paul Grant and Raj Patel (eds), *A Time to Speak: Perspectives of Black Christians in Britain* (Birmingham, England: Racial Justice and the Black Theology Working Group, 1990), p. 29, referred to in Coleman, *Exploring Metissage*, p. 1.

yes that strength of spirit comes from my people, my faith in my people. My people are a people of faith who are dependent on God. When I was growing up I used to hear my aunts and the older generation saying and singing “In God me trust,” and they meant it. They had very little but I can’t remember them sitting down complaining. They were joyful in the Lord. When they put a pot on to cook, they did it in faith. There was food and it multiplied and it fed us and whoever turned up. I’d ask them why they were cooking so much as we were only three or four, “We don’t know who is going to come by, and we need to be able to offer food to them,” they said. That is a great generosity of spirit. The spirituals of my people have also been a source of great, great, great joy to me. (App.C.4.3)

Kate Coleman and Cham reflected together about their cultural backgrounds and cross-cultural ministry, Kate said:

You become aware of the distinctive, the beauty, the value that this is the way God has made the world. You look for ways to encourage people and affirm and value their distinctives. But there has been such a struggle. For example this wonderful plummy accent I have emerges out of being bullied as a child for having an African accent. I went home from school saying to my father, ‘I am not speaking in my mother tongue anymore!’ so I cultivated an acceptable accent which I can’t get rid of now!’ (App.C.2.3)

Kate Coleman also spoke of her Ghanaian father’s view of the importance of getting a good education and going into a good profession, and how her grandfather and great-aunt (after whom Kate had been named) had been preachers and how her family had pioneered in preaching. (App.C.2.1)

Cham talked of Sikhism’s Gudwara:

In Sikhism, hospitality is very important. We have something called the Gudwara, the common table. It was instigated at the birth of the faith to level out castism and the distinctives between Muslims and Hindus. Everyone was invited to eat round the table regardless of what your background has been. Just like Jesus’ invitation is. (App.C.2.4)

She also appreciated the strength of her father who was the first in his family to leave his village in India and go overseas, which was a pioneering endeavour, and her mother who though not educated is, ‘incredibly sharp.’ (App.C.2.1)

Katei Kirby spoke of her ethnicity and background:

I am not from the Windrush generation. I didn't have the experiences of racism like they did when they first came to this country. They were the first generation that faced that racist challenge head on and had to be confident about themselves in a very overtly racist environment. I didn't have that. A lot of the pain was born by them so I could enjoy some of the freedom ... I am comfortable with who I am, in my own skin, to encourage others to be the same in theirs. Our diversity makes us rich, not our sameness. I want to use what I have been given by nature and by God as positively as possible, rather than to push an agenda down people's throats that actually has no heart to it apart from self-serving. (App.C.3.3)

She also spoke of the Christian values inherited from her parents that helped her at school, and kept Caribbean children together, 'Quite a lot of black children were from Christian homes so we clung together, not because we were black but because we didn't like the stuff that others did.' (App.C.3.3)

Eve felt more separated from her Jamaican background and more connected to her place of upbringing, Nottingham (App.C.5). However, she understood the Caribbean character and need for dynamic worship:

Singing Amazing Grace, dotting all the notes and from the paper, doesn't marry for black people. You need to delve into your emotions and be authentic. For so long black people in the Church of England have been made to feel they have to conform to the white way of worship which is as dead as a dodo. We are passionate as a people ... we have been looked down upon, but we are people of tremendous hope, tremendous passion and tremendous faith against all the odds. but some black people believe the nonsense that they are born to fail. They are not born to fail. They are created for life.

Looking at challenges to ethnicity, Rose cited an example from the late 1990s, when she went to a parish to take up an appointment.²⁷ She was told that the only reason there were so many people at her first service was because they were expecting a male priest. Apparently, they were very put out to see a black woman there instead:

I remember being taken aback and wondered where that was coming from. So I said: 'While you are putting your cards on the table, let me ask, has it got anything to do with the fact that I am black because I had heard whispers.' The lady replied, 'Frankly, yes'. I took a deep breath and said: 'Now you have put your cards on the table let me put mine on the table, I have just arrived here and I

²⁷ Rose had originally shared another experience of discrimination, but because of its sensitivity, she requested that it be erased from the text and the transcribed interview. I reveal that here in order to make the point that there was also another serious incident based on ethnicity.

have no intention of leaving immediately and you and anyone else who isn't happy with me because I am black and a woman, you are free to go. I am comfortable in my skin and in what God has made me.' They made it difficult for me. They wouldn't take communion from me. They would come in and go out and left eventually. I think it has always been challenging in ministry for me especially as a black woman in a predominantly white world. (App.C.4.2)

In this example, it seemed that objections to Rose came because of both her ethnicity and skin colour. However, when women were first ordained, many parishioners in the UK refused to accept communion from them, purely because of their gender.²⁸

Rose also talked of the more recent experience of being appointed to the post of Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons. 'I am aware that some people have 'hang-ups' about others' gender, or colour or sexuality, but I have tried not to let this take hold of my spirit.' (App.C.4.3) However, she acknowledged being hurt. When there were comments in the press that her appointment, as a black woman, was made for reasons of political correctness, she states that since 97 people applied for the job and six were shortlisted, it would be 'idiotic' of the people appointing the candidate to choose someone if they were not good enough. (App.C.4.3) At that time, she recalled, someone sent her a general letter going out to all Church Army officers and in it there was a quote:

'Is an eagle disturbed by the traffic? No, it rises above it.... is a whale disturbed by the hurricane? No, it dives deeper.' I remember thinking: 'that's it Rose, you are going to rise above and you are going to dive deep, whatever you need to do. You are not going to allow other peoples' hang ups and issues to become your issues. It's not yours, it's theirs.' That is how I have handled these areas in my life. (App.C.4.3)

In addition, Rose expressed concern that the images of black people, were still often missing from the national picture, e.g. in adverts and the media and shops.

(App.C.4.3) She also explained her rationale for working in ethnically mixed areas:

For me I have always said I want to work in an area that is mixed. One, because I need to see images of myself. Two, because I want my children to see images of themselves. Three, I need white people to be able to receive from positive models of blackness.

²⁸Christina Rees, *Voices of This Calling: Experiences of the First Generation of Women Priests* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2002), pp. 11-12.

Eve remembered her first curacy appointment and how she refused to be intimidated by racist attitudes:

I went to a white inner city parish for my curacy (Bartley Green). It was wonderful and I had good training with the vicar. Even though it was a white racist community with the National Front around, when I arrived, I went into the pub (where I was told not to go!) and announced myself, 'I am the new curate. Who is going to buy me my first drink?' Once we become friends I was respected and loved by many. I made good friends.

Katei Kirby shared her journey of understanding in terms of her relationship with African Christians. She recognised that she had a problem with African culture, from her school days, when everything she learned about Africa seemed bad. The history of slavery made it worse, and she was brought up to be cautious about Africans, because of the difference in cultural and moral values, surrounding marriage and polygamy. When she became the CEO of the African-Caribbean Evangelical Alliance (ACEA), she purposely began to engage with African churches in the UK and in that context she discovered what she describes as 'latent prejudices':

The bicentenary year 2007 was a heart pumping year for me when historically we were remembering that it was 200 years since the slave trade was abolished. But it was only in that year that a lot of us experienced freedom in our lives, among our own ethnic group. People were pushing for apology from white to black. But within the black community there was a need for an apology from within, not on public stage but behind the scenes. Africans were volunteering heartfelt apologies. We weren't around during slavery but we are the blood line of either perpetrators or victims. (App.C.3.7)

She went on to describe the pain that was felt in the black community in the UK, between Caribbeans and Africans, and the calling to unity of heart, even in the midst of inability to acknowledge the source of that pain. She saw Africans and Caribbeans beginning to worship together, in contexts where Africans were not automatically leading. The latter would have been a 'bridge too far' for some Caribbeans, she thought. However, her perspective was:

One of and the biggest transformation to me personally and healing in my ethnicity happened in my own heart and mind was when I was at the Alliance²⁹ because I had to serve and represent out of love rather than duty, a community of people, that is, Africans. (App.C.3.7)

²⁹ African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance (ACEA).

Kate Coleman and Cham recognised that, as women of colour in Christian ministry in the UK, they had encountered ‘men and women, behaving badly, very badly’ towards them. (App. C.2.3) Kate talked of developing a ‘gracious disposition’ in order to understand these people, but also of needing sometimes to ‘withdraw’ or ‘hold people at arm’s length.’ (App. C.2.3) However, she also expressed appreciation for significant white female leaders making way for her to do studies on great Africans in the Bible, for mentoring her, and making way for her. Kate also commended Cham for taking her cultural heritage and letting it shape her teaching ministry:

Stepping into an African or Asiatic world view and seeing it from where we come from often opens the text up for both of us. Cham is very, very good at this. I have never seen anybody else do what you do, Cham, with a text, storying the text in a way that really resonates and really surfaces the underlying cultural basis. It is because you immerse yourself in your own cultural understanding and then read the text from there.

3.4.2 Analysis: similarities and differences

All of the participants spoke positively of their cultural heritage and the influence it has had on them, either through giving them understanding of their own people, or of others, and of adding value to their ministries. Every one of them has lived and worked in multi-cultural and multi-racial contexts, and their leadership has developed out of that diversity.

All of the participants experienced some difficulties with people because of ethnicity. However, it was sometimes subtle, like Katei Kirby’s school experience or Kate Coleman and Cham finding that people behaved badly towards them or Eve feeling like a trophy when she was training in Birmingham. I note that Rose is the only participant not to have been raised as a child in the UK, and the only one who spoke of blatant opposition to her ministry as a black female minister. She also spoke out her desire to work in mixed ethnic parishes and her hope that white people could receive the leadership of black people.

Virginia is the only participant to state the view that black men are more marginalised in the Church than black women. She also is the only lay leader. Katei Kirby is the only

participant who talked at depth about the relationship between Caribbeans and Africans, which is not surprising given her previous role with ACEA. Virginia and Katei Kirby highlighted tensions in relationships, between black and Asian, and African and Caribbean.

Working as black or Asian women in multi-cultural contexts led the participants to develop ways of responding with positive behaviours and attitudes. Rose and Kate Coleman spoke of developing gracious responses to people, and Katei Kirby allowed herself to be transformed in her attitude towards Africans. Kate Coleman learned as a child how to adjust her African accent to blend in culturally and as an adult, and learned wisdom in terms of knowing when to withdraw from difficult situations or people. All the participants talked of allowing their heritage and ethnicity to work for them, or help inform their ministries. Virginia's heritage, for example, gave her insight into pastoral situations, especially with Caribbeans or Asians. Katei Kirby and Cham both used their God-given ethnicity and heritage to shape their own understanding of inclusion and Kate Coleman used her heritage to pursue theological research. Eve refused to be intimidated by racists, but instead, gained their friendship and inspired her Caribbean congregation to express their culture in worship. Similarly with issues of gender, there was a common theme amongst the participants of being comfortable with their God given ethnicity and having a strength of conviction that would not allow the prejudices of others to prevent them from fulfilling their ministries.

In comparison with the participants' experiences, I cannot remember any discrimination or difficulty on the basis of my ethnicity. I know little of being an unfavoured minority; rather in Liberia I was favoured as a white woman. However, some years ago I attended a large black majority church conference in the UK where the majority were Caribbean British in heritage plus some Africans. I talked with a few leaders who were friendly, but at times felt uncomfortable and not really welcome. Then I realised that the Caribbean and African experiences are very different and began the journey of understanding that has resulted in this research. Recently I have also attended Caribbean churches in Birmingham and London where

the overwhelming sense was a wonderful unity in Christ and a welcome for me, the stranger.³⁰ This is so different from how many Caribbeans were treated when they first arrived on the Windrush in 1948.³¹

3.4.3 Findings

I found that the participants demonstrated tremendous capacities for overcoming obstacles along their pathways in Christian service, and exhibited graces of character in their attitudes and responses. Of course, these narratives are from their own perspective but as they shared the negative and the positive, with a great deal of honesty and vulnerability, I heard authenticity, strength and graciousness, all human qualities found in women as well as men. That capacity to lead cross-culturally is significant for British society, where the majority is still white, but the major cities are very ethnically mixed. A phenomenon that has been noted in YWAM over the years, is that where teams and centres have been mono-cultural in constituency, growth in numbers has been small. Where they have been more internationally and culturally mixed, growth has been greater. I suggest that these participants have developed broader ministries and become more widely known, because of their capacities to build connections and relationships across the racial and cultural divide and because of their strength of character. This development has been challenged and opposed by prejudice, but this did not stop them, because they rose above it. Other black Christian leaders who cross ethnic boundaries to influence widely across the nation are Les Isaacs who founded Street Pastors and Jonathan Oloyede, from Global Day of Prayer.³²

Bons-Storm in her research interviewed a black woman, Ruth, and at first the questions for her were related to gender, but eventually a question concerning ethnicity was asked. Ruth's answer speaks into the pressure of double jeopardy:

Of course I told you my story primarily as a woman. I certainly have experienced some things because of my race, but I try to react primarily as a human being. I am not suspicious in advance. Indeed, as a woman of colour one

³⁰ Mount Zion in Aston, Birmingham and Ruach in Brixton and Kilburn to name two examples.

³¹ Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, p. 81-94.

³² Street Pastors. <www.streetpastors.co.uk> and Global Day of Prayer. <www.gdop.com> (14 July, 2014).

is double discriminated against. Pain becomes part of one's life. One learns to deal with it by trying to be wise in the first place.³³

Here Ruth's comment, that her first reaction is as a human being, focuses my attention on the humanity, the character strength, the Christian graces that I saw in each participant, as human beings. Black women, who may be discriminated against, are primarily human, like anyone else, male or female, black or white, with the capacity to be hurt by injustice, like anyone else. The grace I see in Ruth's determination not to be suspicious, was echoed in each interviewee, and will be further seen in the following sections.

3.5 Women as community builders

3.5.1 Data

I asked the question about women's style of leadership in developing the community life of their congregations, realising that labelling a style feminine or masculine can be an exercise in stereotyping. However, the results were interesting and contained both positive and negative elements.

Katei noted, positively:

It is the intuitive understanding that women have, a 'natural nurture' if you like. This doesn't mean mothering but a desire to see people become all that they can be, and to help them birth new things. This is not exclusively female but women often identify with that idea more. (App.C.3.4)

Eve also echoed the views expressed above. She thought that women's leadership style brought more compassion, in a more overt way and reflected that she could be strong and disciplined, but also loving and tender. (3.3.5)

Kate Coleman and Cham, dialoguing together, reflected that women often bring a more relational style to leadership and building community, but this could also be a dangerous thing:

People treat you as their mothers, or sisters or daughters in a wrong way. They push you away from your mandate to lead to a mothering mandate and then can behave incredibly badly. They say things to a woman that they would not say to a man, and women are particularly vulnerable as leaders because people can be very aggressive and unhelpful. That is the negative side. But on the positive side women leaders are good at building community because there is less

³³ Bons-Storm, *The Incredible Woman*, p. 42.

competition, more facilitation, and collaboration. Women are good at including people's gifts and making room for them in the church, and fitting them into the overall vision and mission of the church. (App.C.2.4)

Kate Coleman also thought that women undermine themselves because of their desire to build 'a big family':

The problem is that it breeds the dysfunctions of family as well as the positive energy and grace. We pick things up in terms of nurture, development of community, and care of the people entrusted to us but the down side is that we can overdo all of that and infantilise people so that they become dependent on us in an unhelpful way. For some of us, we are still wrestling with male paradigms. Some of us are more masculine in our expression of leadership. (App.C.2.4)

Kate thought that this generation of women and younger men are more nurturing in their leadership style and more relational as the 'old styles are fast dying.' (App.C.2.4) Cham added, 'The younger generation that are emerging now are very different in terms of openness, interaction, and conversation.' (App.C.2.4)

Virginia's experience of building community in her church context is seen in the exercise of her skills and abilities. Being able to challenge, or confront someone directly when necessary is combined with a soft compassionate heart:

As a woman in leadership it is important to know that God wants to use the whole of me, not just my ministry skills. I am the pastor, the counsellor but He uses my sewing skills and my high value of relationships. (App.C.1.6)

Eve talked of men in her congregation who appreciated the hug at the end of the service when she stood at the door to greet people as they walked out of the church:

I am a very tender person, I might speak firmly but I am tender and not afraid to hug and kiss them. All the guys line up at the door because they know I am there. They wait for me and I hug them all. I am strong, I have strong views, and discipline, but I am very loving. (App.C.5.4)

Some of those men and women valued the affection of an older female priest. Rose cited an example of a man from another church whose wife had died. When he met Rose, she hugged and held him as he wept. He reflected back to her later that he had allowed her as a woman to do that and it was very meaningful, but if a male vicar had done that, he would have 'thumped him'! (App.C.4.4). From this example, Rose saw that women bring

a different presence in ministry and that we need both men and women in church leadership.

Rose suggested that, as a woman in leadership, it is possible that one is taken for granted because of one's kindness, 'Do not mistake my kindness and compassion and faith approach as, 'Let's take her for a ride.'(App.C.4.4) She described herself as not being afraid of confrontation, but that she always tried to do it in love. Commenting on her ministry she said:

I don't try to be like my female or male colleagues. I try to be me. This is what I bring. I come to ministry open and willing to respond to whatever God presents to me at that time ... and when I have had curates in training with me, I say to them, 'Be the best priest you can become, I don't want you to be like me. Take from the training the best you can be'. (App.C.4.4)

3.5.2 Analysis: similarities and differences

There were clear similarities in the comments about women's style of leadership. All the participants suggested that, as women, they tried to bring a relational style to their leadership roles, and that words such as 'relational,' 'kindness,' 'nurturing,' 'compassion,' 'building a family,' 'loving,' and 'tender' described their ministries. Rose, Virginia and Eve also indicated that although they could be tender and compassionate, they could also be strong and not afraid to confront. Kate Coleman and Cham uniquely spoke of the negative potential of women's leadership styles, that is, the danger of infantilising people. Allowing oneself to be pushed to a mothering role rather than a leadership role could result in lack of respect and family 'dysfunctions.' (3.5.1)

Comparing this with my own experience in Africa, I was looked on as a mother, often called 'mother' and my leadership style tended to be consultative rather than directive. However, in my context, being a mother was also seen as being a leader so that the two were not separate. Whereas Kate Coleman identified mothering as being negative in the sense of 'smothering,' Katei Kirby identified 'natural nurturing' to be positive in the sense of helping people to be all that they can be and to birth new things.

3.5.3 Findings

In the UK context, where the majority of Christian ministers are male and white, some characteristics of what it means to be a leader are often assumed and can look very male in style. There are stereotypical ascriptions about gender in that men are often seen to be rational and more logical, whereas women are thought to be more emotional and less rational. Such a view goes back to New Testament times, to the Graeco-Roman world, 'Even a 'good woman' was understood to be emotional rather than rational, physically weak, gullible, and particularly susceptible to flattery and deception'.³⁴ Rosie Ward takes a whole chapter to discuss the differences between male and female leadership styles in the church and society. She quotes a research project from 1997 which found that male clergy tended to be more directive and female clergy more team oriented.³⁵ She also referred to another study in 2000 of the first female clergy in the Church of England. Helen Thorne, the researcher, discovered that women had more collaborative styles of leadership than men.³⁶ Wheatley says that in the business world, command and control is giving way to a more collaborative, consultative style as women take their places in the boardroom.³⁷

I discovered that all of the participants articulated the different leadership style that women tend to bring to the church community, and elaborated on the benefits female leaders bring and the dangers and pitfalls they can encounter. I am not suggesting that female leadership styles are better than male. Different styles of leadership are needed in different situations. Some people defy the stereotypes anyway, as Kate Coleman suggests. (3.5.3) The point is not to try to show that women are better leaders than men, but to show that women, as human beings, can also be leaders. Otherwise it would be too simplistic to fall into the ancient competition between men and women.

³⁴ Suzanne Dixon, "The Roman Mother" (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 87 in Carolyn Osiek and Jennifer Pouya, "Constructions of Gender in the Roman Imperial World" in Richard E. De Maris and Dietmar Neufeld (ed.), *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p. 46.

³⁵ Rosie Ward, *Growing Women Leaders: Nurturing Women's Leadership in the Church* (Abingdon, UK: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2008), p. 127.

³⁶ Helen Thorne, "Journey to Priesthood", monograph published by University of Bristol 2000, in Ward, *Growing Women Leaders*, p. 127.

³⁷ Margaret J. Wheatley, *Finding Our Way: Leadership For an Uncertain Time* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2007), p. 64-74.

However, the reality is that for centuries most women have been excluded from Christian ministry and leadership, so being able to show the benefits of female leadership, as well as male, is, in my opinion, a step forward for humanity. I think that this comment identifies the struggle women have to respond unapologetically but not defensively. I hear Rose's determination not to accept implicit discrimination, but also her ability to use subtlety and kindness to make a point. Disarming with a smile can be a very powerful tool. (3.3.1)

Regarding the use of physical affection in the Christian setting, as described by Eve and Rose, I note that the 'sharing the peace' in an Anglican Sunday service, or greeting each other with a hand shake or a hug is well-known and accepted. Clearly, women in church leadership, just like men, have to know and demonstrate the appropriate boundaries of physical contact with parishioners, for which there are guidelines in all the major denominational Professional Guidelines or Safeguarding Manuals.³⁸

I thought that the inclusion of positive examples of affection was unguarded and innocent in its intent. Both Eve and Rose talk as older women, with many years of ministry experience and show a confidence in who they are. Further, I gave and received hugs from nearly all the interviewees at the end of the interviews, and I was not offended, but uplifted, because I interpreted the hug to mean that we are 'sisters,' not separated by titles or positions, or race.

As I look at differences between male and female leadership styles, I do not support the notion that women's inclusion in Christian ministry means that male leaders are devalued. I work with one male colleague who is very talented and gives space for everyone's gifts and abilities. This is partly because of his strong values of team leadership. His relationships with colleagues 'under' his leadership are as horizontal as he can make them, even though he holds greater authority and responsibility. He does not base his leadership on the power of a charismatic personality but rather on inclusive values and he has a waiting list of women and men wanting to work with him. Some female leaders can be very dominant in their style, making it hard for

³⁸ Denominational Statistics and Information, Bibliography.

others to find their own voice. This may, however, be more about personality than gender and a directive style is sometimes needed, especially in crisis.

Finally, I suggest that mothering is leadership, just as much as fathering. I recognise the innate mothering capacity in women, both as a positive characteristic in terms of nurturing or developing others, and as a negative potential in terms of the danger to keep people tied to one's apron strings, or infantilising them. I also think that male leaders can infantilise people too, through active control and the inability to delegate. And so the debate goes on!

3.6 Costs, sacrifices, rewards and fulfilments

3.6.1 Data

The costs, sacrifices, rewards and fulfilments were expressed by all in some way or another but some comments are included in the section on honour and dishonour (3.7).

Virginia told me, in response to this question:

Seeing people step into what God has called them to do is rewarding. Some of the children I took away on camp, I changed their nappies and now I work with some of them as co-leaders. God gave me Isaiah 54, where it says that my spiritual children will be many more than my own children. I have seen them develop and they will take the world by storm.

Responding to the question on costs and sacrifices, Virginia said:

I gave up a good job to go to Mozambique. I am childless because I took a lot of pounding to my belly. Street children used to jump up and hit me and bash me in the stomach. I have not given up much except to go abroad.

Kate Coleman and Cham spoke of loving their denominational tradition. (App.C.2.7)

Cham shared the cost of being a convert:

When you, as a convert, say, 'Yes' to Jesus, you cut yourself off from everything and potentially making that decision is no light thing for anybody. When you take that step, it's all out. (App.C.2.3)

They also reflected on what it is like to be the first, in their cases, the first black and Asian female ministers in the Baptist denomination. Setting a precedent or being a pioneer can be costly in terms of taking risks, and being open to criticism. They talked of not fitting in, and coming under pressure to conform. (App.C.2.3) As a result there

were times when they would have to be cautious about engaging with some leaders. Kate quoted Alice Walker, 'to survive, you have to withdraw temporarily.' (App.C.2.3) Katei Kirby did not specifically address the topic of rewards or sacrifices, but talked of her passion for communication with excellence, loving to see people become all that they can be and having a deep love for God. (App.C.3) Costs and sacrifices for her are discussed in the section on dishonour. (3.7)

Rose spoke of the joy of serving the next generation:

As a black woman, whatever I do I am always conscious of trying to make sure I to do a good job. I can't allow for mediocrity. So that is a huge weight but one that I carry. My hope is that my children and their children's generation won't need to think twice about it. So I do feel a sense of carrying it for the next generation but I am not doing it begrudgingly ... I would like to think I am doing it with a great sense of joy. 'I've got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart.' I love what I do with two churches, going into parliament, not just serving MP's but the House of Lords, and the staff. If I thought about it I would know it is impossible so I don't think about it, I just do it. I absolutely adore being a child of God and being a messenger of His love. I am very fortunate, lucky to do something that gives me such great pleasure and joy.

For costs and sacrifices, Rose mentioned that she did not take enough time off and that it came up in her annual review with her supervisors. (App.C.4.5) She remembered being appointed as a deacon to a new parish in the early 1990s. She was not sure that some in the parish really wanted her as a woman, because of their theology of headship,³⁹ and being black was not welcome either:

I remember I had surgery on my knee, so I got my husband to drop me at the parish and I hobbled around it with my stick. I remember distinctly saying, "I am not going to allow these people to say, 'she's a woman, she's black, and she can't hack it.' Because of those thoughts and feelings the knee took longer to heal. I would like to think I would not do it again, but I am not sure and that is slightly worrying to me ... to be constantly having to prove myself. (App.C.4.2)

Eve spoke both of the rewards of being a vicar and also the costs:

I loved being at King's Norton despite its difficulties. I was a team vicar ... The people in the congregation and wider parish gave me space for creativity. I

³⁹ The belief in headship of husband over wife, is taken from Ephesians 5:23 concerning marriage relationships, but sometimes applied to general male-female relationships in church, thus prohibiting women leading leading men.

wrote and produced plays. It gave me a wonderful platform to do the crazy things I enjoy. Here in Birchfield, I am aware of people's realities. I sit with them, or I go and sit in the pub. I don't want to drive, I sit on the bus. I walk the streets ... This is not a beautiful place but I meet beautiful people damaged by life, we are all disabled, screwed up by a world which says that God doesn't value a certain section of society because of the colour of their skin or social status. I am not interested in a God who is only interested in the powerful. The only God that makes sense is a God who says, I know what it is like to go into the bookie with you, love.

3.6.2 Analysis of data: similarities and differences

Some similarities between participants are for example, the expression of joy and fulfilment of being in Christian ministry. Rose and Virginia spoke of the rewards of serving the next generation, while Katei spoke of loving to see others be all that they can be and Eve spoke of loving being a team vicar and the joy of being able to use her creative talents in drama production. Kate and Cham talked of loving their denominational background, but did not specifically focus on rewards and fulfilments.

Costs and sacrifices were varied, but Rose and Virginia both identified the physical cost of their ministries, whether it was Rose's knee not healing quickly or Virginia not having children. Kate Coleman and Cham talked of the cost of being pioneers, of not fitting, of being open to criticism, and of having to be cautious at times. Eve and Rose spoke directly or indirectly of working hard, not taking enough time off, struggling or worrying at times.

3.6.3 Findings

The results show here that all the participants who answered this question experienced both joys and sacrifices in their work. There was a consistent expression of joy and satisfaction in being in Christian service, and that this was to do with seeing others grow, flourish, be helped, or ministered to. The joy was not about being in a position, or having power or status but always about how others could be helped. Here I saw the motivation for Christian leadership and of course, I am sure that this can also be seen in male clergy.

The costs and sacrifices for these participants were real and persistent. I noticed that the married participants did not talk at length about their husbands and children, although they did mention them at times (see App.C). This could be out of need to protect them, and to maintain privacy over that part of their lives, just as men sometimes do.

3.7 Honour and dishonour

3.7.1 Data: Honour

The responses that participants gave on honour and dishonour were very varied. I immediately noticed that Cham, the only participant from an Asian Sikh background, turned the question around from, ‘In what ways have you felt honoured or dishonoured’, to, ‘In what ways have you shown honour to others?’ She talked about honour in her culture:

In our culture, as you know, it is a huge thing. In our DNA, we seek to honour our parents and grandparents. The name and honour of father and mother is always upheld and I seek to do that but when the rubber hits the road, the road has to part. But I believe we can honour even in our differences. The greatest divergence is my faith walk and who I worship. I have sought to honour but that doesn’t mean colluding. There have been points where I have had to confront, not bowing the knee in every sense of the word ... however, I do believe we can honour even in our differences. (App.C.2.7)

I heard the desire to honour family in a respectful, caring manner, but also the inner resolve when her faith confronted her culture. I invited Cham to describe ways in which she has felt honoured:

I have been honoured outside my context, and recognised for gifts. Who I am and what I bring to the table has been recognised and that has been nice. But I don’t go out to seek honour, I am very clear about that bit ... honour is sometimes unexpected when it comes. But there have been some really lovely moments. We seek to honour the individual, whether in a leadership context, or somebody you are walking with in a pastoral context. We honour the humanity, the image of God in them, and that is a base line for me. (App.C.2.7)

She also mentioned that the receipt of honour had grown in her family as the elders recognised her worth. However, Cham very quickly turned the question around again from ways in which she felt honoured to ways in which she sought to honour others. This unique interpretation of honour reflects her Asian Sikh heritage, and as

the only Asian-British participant, is an important perspective from someone who has integrated her faith and heritage in such a powerful way.

Kate Coleman recognised that she was, in the past, honoured ‘outside of my own circles’ in Birmingham, but that respect in her own circle grew over time and is present now. (App.C.2.7) She said, ‘We love our denominational tradition’. (App.C.2.7) Cham added, ‘Yes, the non-conformist and counter-cultural.’ (App.C.2.7)

Rose mentioned the honour of being one of the Chaplains to Her Majesty the Queen, of meeting other world leaders, and of working in Parliament. ‘I describe my work in Parliament as a slice of history I am walking in. It is a great honour and privilege to be in that role and position.’ (App.C.4.7) She also emphasised the honour of serving her parishioners:

I am respected and held in a certain esteem in the diocese. Am I worried about that? Slightly, that is not my intention. I remember a bishop from Jamaica writing to me and saying that my appointment to Her Majesty was awesome. I thought, ‘No that is not awesome. What is awesome is when I visited a parishioner to give her communion.’ She had been sick with diarrhoea so I ended up not giving her the Eucharist but cleaned her up. It is a coin with different sides to it. (App.C.4.7)

Katei Kirby talked of the honour from African churches, which was shown in the way they treated her when she went to their churches to preach. They would give her a seat at the front of the church. Her bag or case was carried for her and she was accompanied to and from the church to the bus stop or underground station. In one example, ‘Two guys and a lovely lady put me on the train, they sat me down, gave me my things, got off the train and waved me away.’ (App.C.3.7) Katei sometimes heard children, unknown to her, call out, ‘Hello Auntie,’ as a mark of respect when she was walking down the street in Peckham. She cited this as an example of honour between the generations that is still alive.

Eve talked about the honour she received from parishioners in all the churches she has served. She has received many cards, flowers, and messages of support over the years. Parishioners in one church where she served for eleven years even organised a petition for her to stay longer. Her title of Canon in the Diocese of Birmingham is a

recognition of honour for which she is grateful. (App.C.5.7) She recounted the time at St Nicholas Church, Kings Norton, when parishioners would send her bouquets of flowers and how, on one occasion, people on the local bus going past the church all stood up and clapped! This was during a very painful time of conflict with a colleague, which became national news. (App.C.5.8)

Virginia experienced honour from the leaders in her church. She was given many opportunities for personal and leadership development, and she was trusted by her leaders to give her opinions and insight about people and situations. In addition, she appreciated the extended time that the senior pastor gave to hearing her concerns during a time of church conflict, and during times of personal loss. (App. C.1.2 and App. C.1.7)

3.7.2 Data: Dishonour

Life's been too memorable and too short to stack up the negative stuff. Any time I have been dishonoured it has been about other people's responses and I don't want to hang on to those, they're not healthy. (App.C.3.8)

This was Katei Kirby's first response to the question of dishonour. However, she did go on to remember some 'subtle exclusion,' when it was clear that she was not invited to an event or a church, during her days at ACEA. (App.C.3.8) This exclusion happened in her first year in the role, but changed as she got to know the church communities around the country. At first there had been some caution about appointing a woman for the first time to the post of CEO, for which Katei's Caribbean British ethnicity (born in the UK), was appropriate to the constituency.⁴⁰

Rose contrasted her experience of being honoured with memories of rejection, which were dishonouring. She felt the hurt of hearing someone say to her that they did not want a black woman doing their mother's funeral (App.C.4.3), or the example of another lady not wanting a black priest because the congregation was mostly white:

A beautiful older lady said 'We couldn't possibly have you as our vicar: we don't have any black people living here,' meaning black people should only

⁴⁰ ACEA - the African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance.

minister to black people. I said, ‘So it’s all right for white people to go to black areas or to Africa and minister but black ministers can’t minister to white people?’ She saw, realised and connected. I did it with a smile. I wanted her to hear me. (App.C.4.9)

This also echoes Rose’s perspective of the need for black people to have black images in the media. (3.4.1)

Eve felt very dishonoured during the conflict in the church in King’s Norton. She believed that the dishonour was due to her gender and ethnicity:

There were some problems where I had to stand up for myself as a black woman, and defend myself, not against the people of the parish, but against the church hierarchy for whom women were invisible, especially black women ... I dare to say that I won because they apologised for how they handled it. (App.C.5.2)

Virginia’s experience of dishonour was minimal, and most of it was overseas. In the UK it was about not being valued:

I have not experienced dishonour from the leadership but from people who do not value what I have to offer, not appreciating what is cost me, like the preaching I did, when I would shake like a leaf beforehand. I have had extraordinarily blessed moments of being honoured, and the moments of dishonour were so few really, and mostly to do with being abroad. (App.C.1.7)

Kate Coleman commented on the dishonour of not being valued, which was largely in the past:

Maybe the nature of it is that a prophet in their home town is not honoured. It is a failure to see the essential grace that has been given. Much of the dishonour and disrespect has come at that level. (App.C.2.7)

3.7.3 Analysis of data: similarities and differences

There were great similarities in experiences of honour amongst the participants. All have felt honoured by ordinary people whom they serve, whether Africans in churches in the UK, a sick parishioner, ordinary people sending flowers or church leaders spending time to listen. It was the genuine honour of appreciation in relationship. Rose acknowledged the public honour associated with her service to the Queen and Parliament, but emphasised the honour of serving her parishioners. This echoes the sentiment of Cham’s

view that receiving honour was of secondary importance to that of honouring others. Cham's perspective was unique in its emphasis and she was the most self-effacing in her response, although none of the participants gave an impression of seeking honour.

With regard to dishonour, there was a pattern of exclusion and overlooking in the responses. Katei Kirby's experience of 'subtle exclusion' is similar to Kate Coleman's and Cham's experience of people missing 'the essential grace' and 'being overlooked.' Virginia's experience of not being valued is also similar, as well as Eve expressing the feeling that black women were invisible.

These are historical examples and there was a perception amongst the participants that attitudes are now changing. (3.8) Rose was the only one who had experienced overt rejection because she was black. Rose and Eve both gave the starkest examples of dishonour and in the latter case, a church conflict which made national news.⁴¹ In the case of the lady who did not want a black vicar in her parish because there were no black parishioners, Rose demonstrated a wonderful ability to diplomatically confront and bring change to someone's attitude. Eve's example of conflict in a parish among clergy colleagues may have been a mixture of racism, sexism, personality clash, and cultural misunderstanding. However, it was important for Eve to have a sense of vindication, and her subsequent appointments and title of Canon show that honour eventually came. Rose and Eve, as the earliest black women clergy in the Church of England, may have been the forerunners for the following decades and as such, they seem to have had more painful experiences than the other participants. Eve's recalling of the honour she received from ordinary parishioners at that time show a level of support and value that was given her. The fact that she is still a vicar today only adds weight to her character and ability to rise above opposition, as well as to the deep inner conviction of her calling.

3.7.4 Findings

These results suggest that the participants have all experienced moments of being honoured by others in their ministries. However, they all have faced dishonour in

⁴¹ <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/there-is-a-poison-running-through-the-parish-1270927.html>> (12 June 2014).

one form or another. Kate Coleman's comment about 'a failure to see the essential grace that has been given' in someone is a pertinent summary of what dishonour looked like in these situations. However, I question the notion of their invisibility. Perhaps this is because I met them in this century, when, as they say, things are changing. They all seem to me to be very visible, strong, able, competent, professional people, who are succeeding in their work and who are valued by many. Indeed, all the five ordained ministers have national or semi-national profiles. They have far more influence than me in terms of breadth of association or network. How could I not notice them?!

What I noticed most about them, though, was not their colour or cultural origins, or the fact that they were women. What I noticed was their humanity. I had already noticed when I attended a seminar that Kate Coleman and Cham were leading, that they served a great Caribbean-African lunch, that they personally went round all the attendees to greet them, and that they helped serve the food.⁴² With the other participants, I noticed their busy homes, the welcome they gave me, their kindness, their ability to self reflect and give measured responses, and their passionate declaration of their faith in God. I did not see pretence, or trying to give a perfect image, but honesty and vulnerability.

3.8 The state of the church today regarding black and Asian women in leadership

The responses to this question covered some difference but much similarity. Virginia's perspective is that black men find it harder than black women to move into leadership roles, especially in white churches. (App.C.1.9) However, the other five participants all think that the Church has got some way to go before it fully endorses, supports, releases and champions black women into positions of authority and ministry within the denominations. Cham and Kate both think that there is more freedom now than when they first entered ministry in the 1990s.

⁴² Next Leadership Seminar 'Seven deadly sins of women in leadership,' London 2010.

Eve, one of the very early black women leaders in the UK, said, ‘If we don’t have love in the church for all people not just for white men but for black women, I will tell the church that she will die’. (App.C.5.9)

Rose talked about the Church:

The Church is still ambivalent about women. We say there is no theological reason why women can’t be in leadership, but we have a few people with theological reasons why they can’t accept it so we need to honour them. We are told: “Give up some of what you (women) have so we can accommodate them.” The church speaks with a forked tongue when it comes to women. Actions speak louder than words. From their actions we see that we are not honoured. We are always having to make the sacrifice. It says it wants to be inclusive of those from minority backgrounds but it doesn’t mean it. (App.C.4.9)

This comment was made in September 2012, before the very recent vote in the Church of England Synod, which has endorsed the appointment of women as Bishops. (2.2.2)

Kate Coleman observed that the churches from the global south, Africa and Asia, South America, etc. are emerging in influence and leadership will come from there in the future which will challenge the western church, ‘Yonggi Cho’s church (mega-church in Seoul, South Korea) has promoted women almost by default and this will have a huge effect on churches in that part of the world.’ (App.C.2.9) Kate’s perspective is that attitudes in the church in the UK are polarising in regard to women in leadership. Those who were against it are becoming even more so and those who are in favour are opening up even more. She thinks that what is happening in the church will be overtaken by what is happening in wider society:

At the level of business, education and public engagement, there is a global recognition that, unless women are empowered, development, business, health and welfare all suffer. If I look at it from a prophetic point of view I would say God is fed up with our debates in church and He is doing it outside. In the future, as women rise across the board in other sectors and spaces and as improvements for women create better conditions for all communities, it will be harder to hold on to those sorts of ideas that women can’t do those kinds of things because they are not built for it, etc. etc. The facts will be much closer to home. It will be barely avoidable. (App.C.2.9)

Kate concluded:

I think it will be like a tidal wave that washes over the bows of the boat that Christians use to fight their battles on over this matter. We will say “What was that that wet us?” God will have His way one way or the other.

Is it changing? Yes. Will it change? Yes. Will it be in our lifetime? I am not sure but what I am sure is that we need to be a part of this. (App.C.2.9)

Katei Kirby has a strong conviction and calling in her own ministry to the promotion of unity between Christians, not a structural, denominational merging, but the unity of heart between people. Her view is that:

Churches are moving forward. My prayer is that the conversations are shared. I don’t think the issues are unique to any one church or Christian tradition. Women need to hear women say that and men need to acknowledge that the dialogue is about the kingdom not just about women talking with women, otherwise we don’t have a solution, and we just have a discussion. We need a joint discussion between men and women and between the churches. The more women who talk confidently about God’s call on their lives will demonstrate to those who are saying, ‘I don’t get it’, that God is doing it whether you get it or not. (App.C.3.9)

3.9 Participants’ needs for moving forward in their ministries

I included this question, because I wanted to ask each participant for a personal reflection about their own needs for future ministry. Given the fact that this research is already in the past, and that the journey for women in ministry is still ongoing, I thought it could be useful to look forward, not only in terms of the general issue, but also in the lives of the six women interviewed. I hoped that this would be a positive question to consider.

Virginia’s perspective was that she did not need anything. ‘I feel so blessed,’ she said. (App.C.1.10) Kate Coleman immediately said, ‘We need good people’. (App.C.2.10) Cham’s thoughts were, ‘We need relationships’. (App.C.2.10) Rose said, ‘What I need is fairness, a level playing field’. (App.C.4.10)

Katei Kirby, in a longer reflection, said:

I need to stop doubting that God can and does use what He has placed in me ... continue to feel confident and happy in my gender and ethnicity and keep learning about it ... and start to see other women putting worth on what they do. I do not mean to sound commercial. It is way beyond money. However men are very quick to put a price on what they bring ... I want to see other

women being confident about their worth in the world God has placed them in. What women bring adds value. (App.C.3.10 comment edited)

The last word goes to Eve. She said:

I need to see the Church having a serious dialogue about power ... I think women should be Bishops. Get on with it! (App.C.5.10)

I let these comments stand as they are, as personal reflections of their own journey.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed the interviews with six participants who are in significant positions of church leadership. Each story is unique but there are similarities of experience and thoughts. All the women interviewed experienced difficulties, rejection, or negative projections and judgments against them at one time or another. Either their character, abilities, skin colour and gender were maligned. However, all talked of also being honoured at times and of positive experiences in ministry. All are part of mixed ethnic churches and groups, so they have all crossed the ethnic lines that separate Asian, Caribbean, African and Anglo-Saxon heritages.

An important element that emerged from the interviews and which has formed an integral part of the analysis is the way in which each participant coped with, responded to, and rose above the opposition they faced. The shaping of character through adversity never justifies that adversity, but it does give meaning and purpose to it, in the sense of bringing something good out of bad, which is a redeeming grace. Each participant found ways to respond to discrimination which enabled them to not only cope, but actually develop their own styles of communication and ministry.

The theme of women's leadership style in the church is an important one. While women are often nurturing, collaborative, and intuitive, it is true that men can be all those things too, just as some women can be decisive, directive, and task oriented.⁴³ However, there is evidence to suggest that women leaders bring added value to church leadership, and that this does not need to be in competition with men. These women participants demonstrated qualities of character that, along with men, show

⁴³ Ward, *Growing Women Leaders*, pp. 115-117.

our common humanity, rather than a division between genders. The racial, ethnic and cultural qualities of these women's heritages, as well as their British experience, all add to the distinctiveness of their leadership styles and values.

In the following chapter, I add a theological reflection, to enable further comment on the research.

CHAPTER 4

BEYOND DISCRIMINATION-TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT

4.1 Introduction

Having analysed and discussed the six interviews with black and Asian female church leaders in the UK, I want now to draw this research into a theological framework.

Evidence from the interviews indicates that the challenge for black and Asian women leaders in Christian ministry to be validated and accepted is still a very real one.

Underneath the issue of double jeopardy for women of colour is the question: why do people exclude others on the basis of gender or ethnicity? Also how did these participants deal with discrimination and what strengths did they draw on and develop?

Although there is still some contention in parts of the Church, surrounding the inclusion of women into Christian leadership roles, there is no discussion or argument about whether black or Asian people are eligible to become ministers. So what is the issue here? There is no theologically acceptable discussion in the UK about whether a black person can become a church minister, and any rejection would be very subtle and hopefully non-existent. The interviews suggest this issue about black or Asian women in ministry is rooted in prejudice and superiority based on very deeply held world views that may be unconscious. I would like to consider hierarchy, and the concept of the 'Other.'

4.2. Hierarchy and Patriarchy

The example given by Virginia, about male assumptions of the corrupting influence of a black female (3.3.1) is echoed in Primavesi's work on eco-feminism. Her discourse on hierarchy as a construct, its origins and its effects on Christianity, are helpful. Where men have been thought to be fully created in the image of God, and from 'above,' women are thought to be linked to Nature and 'below':

Both blacks and women have been associated with all that is furthest away from God on the hierarchical scale, with materiality and corporeality that must be purified, refined or baptized by white men to achieve union with God.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis*, p. 99.

Hierarchy, according to Primavesi, separates men and women, black and white.⁴⁵ A belief in a human hierarchy as a construct originates in Greek philosophy. Aristotle propounded the idea that ‘man is closer to God than woman, because she is closer to sinful nature.’⁴⁶

This thought was Europeanised to suggest that European man was closer to God, while other races were ‘slotted in between Europeans and animals.’⁴⁷ Patriarchy as a form of hierarchy is the world view that also believes male is superior to female, as spiritual is superior to physical, as angels are higher than mortals, as God is higher than man and God the Father is higher than Jesus. This led to the Arian heresy in the Fourth Century A.D. which tried to show that Christ was created as the first and highest form of creation, but created. Thus He was eternally subordinate to God The Father. The Council of Nicea in AD 325 rejected this and, ‘ruled out every subordination in the Trinity.’⁴⁸

Schüssler-Fiorenza defines patriarchy as a ‘male pyramid of graded subordinations and exploitations’ which ‘specifies women’s oppression in terms of class, race, country or religion of the men to whom we “belong.”’⁴⁹ She further links patriarchy to what she calls kyriarchy which means the, ‘domination of elite, propertied men over women and other men.’ She adds to her definition of patriarchy:

I understand patriarchy as a structure of kyriarchy, as a social and discursive system that interstructures gender, race, class and colonialist oppressions and has at its focal point women at the bottom of the socio-political and religious pyramid.⁵⁰

Patriarchy was layered onto the church, and although it was corrected in terms of the Trinity, it was not fully corrected in terms of belief in gender equality and has endorsed the superiority of the European, western race. This supported the exclusion of women from positions of ministry or leadership in the Church and the belief in the eternal

⁴⁵ Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis*, p. 96-99.

⁴⁶ Ward, *Growing Women Leaders*, p. 119.

⁴⁷ Ward, *Growing Women Leaders*, p. 119.

⁴⁸ Ward, *Growing Women Leaders*, p. 42.

⁴⁹ Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), p. xiv.

⁵⁰ Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, p. 211, note 6.

subordination of women to men and the subordinate place of women in the ‘biblical’ family, through the ‘household codes.’⁵¹ Co-equal discipleship, which allowed women, slaves and young people into the Christian community through conversion, was seen as subversive because it challenged the order of society. The household code instructions concerning wife-husband, slave-master, child-parent relationships seen in Ephesians (Eph.5:22-33, NRSV) and Colossians (Col.3:18-25, NRSV) attempted to soften the cultural blow to Roman society of the power and impact of Christian conversion. Schüssler Fiorenza states that, ‘The household code ethics is an attempt to mitigate the subversive impact of religious conversion on the patriarchal order of house and society.’⁵² She suggests that the early church was egalitarian in its practice of allowing women into the church and into positions of leadership and influence, but that changed as the church began to conform to the patriarchal society around it. How much the household codes really conformed to Roman society is debatable, but this is not critical to discuss here.

Youth With A Mission, which is inter-denominational, is relationship based and appoints leaders based on character and abilities. In 1988 at their International Strategy Conference in Kona, Hawaii, the leaders of YWAM made a commitment to release more women, young people and non-westerners into leadership in the organisation.⁵³ This grouping of youth, women and non-westerners echoes the early church constituency of young people, women and slaves being converted and playing a part in subverting patriarchal society. Slaves in the Roman world could have come from all over the Roman Empire, and were very ethnically varied. I think that an interdenominational mission, which advocates gender and racial equality, challenges hierarchy because of its heterogeneous and multi-cultural constituency. Basing leadership on character and abilities can be a positive contribution to church institutions because it brings fresh perspectives on mission. However, there is potential for such an organisation to be vulnerable to being lured by personality charisma into negative or abusive practices and it is for this reason that YWAM has been careful to establish, over the years, a set of

⁵¹ Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, p. 70.

⁵² Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, p. 74.

⁵³ Loren Cunningham & Dawn Gauslin, *YWAM Founders History Timeline*, 2010.

values and codes of conduct to protect people.⁵⁴ Weber's work on the tension between charismatic and institutional authority could be helpful to organisations like YWAM.⁵⁵

Hierarchy also works as a principle of 'separation and subordination,' Primavesi warns.⁵⁶ I suggest that building community spirit in church congregations means developing horizontal relationships based on respect rather than vertical relationships based on titles or positions of power. Freire critiques education for being a tool for domination and oppression, and talks about the need for horizontal relationships of mutual learning, between teachers and students:

Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students.⁵⁷

This could be applied to the relationship between church leader and their congregation, in the building of community spirit. In the section on vocation and calling, Eve remembered the time in one parish where she worked alongside her parishioners, to raise money for the church. She clearly 'rolled up her sleeves' like everyone else, and did not stand in a position of hierarchical aloofness (3.2.1).

Vella agrees with and expands on Freire's work in calling for non-hierarchical relationships between adult learners and their teachers, and deconstructing the modernist view of education, where information is deposited in the student's mind, which is an unquestioning receptacle.⁵⁸ Vella's model of learning is a dialogue between teacher and student, where both learn together, which results in non-hierarchical relationships. This does not strip a teacher of authority or respect, but it requires an examination of the nature of authority and influence. Christian clergy can be catalysts who bring change and growth, through fostering a community life of

⁵⁴ YWAM Values, <<http://www.ywam.org/about-us/values/>> (2 February 2014).

⁵⁵ S. N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution building: selected papers* (London: University of Chicago Press), 1968.

⁵⁶ Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis*, p. 96.

⁵⁷ Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of The Oppressed* (London: Penguin, 1972), p. 46.

⁵⁸ Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 46.

equality, mutual respect and service. This portrayal of non-hierarchical teaching can be seen in Katei Kirby's example of helping people to learn for themselves. (3.2.1)

Some analysis of exclusion and discrimination is situated within sociology, and even anthropology. Eugenics, for example, advocated the streaming out of unwanted characteristics in humans and was used in the early 20th century to justify political authoritarian practices against certain unacceptable groups (e.g. the Jews in Nazi Germany), thus indicating a preference and value judgment about the superiority of the dominant group.⁵⁹ The concept of the 'Other,' is a powerful construct to identify how people judge and exclude others, based on difference, and how the 'Other' is defined. An earlier quote from Denzin concerning the dangers of 'objective' research of dark-skinned people by white researchers is also apposite here. (1.2.3) This leads us into the subject of 'othering' and why people discriminate.

4.3 'Othering' and why people discriminate

When people are separated and categorised, then viewing people as the 'other' or 'different' or 'less than' becomes normative. Dominelli talks of 'othering' in modern society:

'Othering' is an important aspect of the processes of oppression. 'Othering' involves constructing an individual who is excluded from the normal hierarchies of power and labelled inferior or pathological. In 'othering', the normative yardsticks of the ruling group are used to reach decisions that label 'others' as inferior and legitimate the exercise of *power over* them.⁶⁰

This 'othering' produces a 'them' and 'us' mentality in which the former has less and the latter have more power: 'Those cast in the 'them' category are outsiders who are not valued as human beings on the same basis as those in the 'us' group.'⁶¹

⁵⁹ Francis Galton, the 'Father' of Eugenics, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (London: MacMillan 1883) electronic edition, 2001, 2004. <<http://galton.org/books/human-faculty/text/galton-1883-human-faculty-v4.pdf>>.

⁶⁰ Lena Dominelli, *Anti-Oppressive Social Work Theory and Practice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan 2002), p. 18.

⁶¹ Dominelli, *Anti-Oppressive Social Work Theory and Practice*, p. 18.

Neil Thompson's work on anti-discrimination practice in social work constructs the PCS model to explain levels of discrimination.⁶² P is the personal and psychological area, where individuals have negative thoughts and feelings about others, based on viewed characteristics or behaviour. This is the beginning of prejudice. C means the cultural commonalities of values and patterns of thoughts and behaviour which produces conformity to social norms. For example, it used to be acceptable to make jokes about certain groups in society. S means the structural level of social divisions, or the wider level of social forces which supports prejudice through policies, e.g. segregation in the USA before The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Individual behaviour needs to be understood in the wider social and structural context. PCS gives a grid of understanding behaviour of someone who is discriminatory, that it is not just about a personal attitude, but it is strengthened by cultural norms and structural practices. The actions of someone who rejects a black female vicar from doing their mother's funeral can be interpreted and understood in the context of personal, cultural and structural lenses. At a personal level, the person may feel negative about women in ministry and not like someone who is black. At a cultural level, a black woman vicar may be unusual in a local context, and the person wants someone who represents the societal norm, that is white and male. Thirdly, at a structural level, the public debate about women's leadership in church is still going on and some parishioners may think that women are not acceptable. Prejudice in all these levels is a strongly embedded attitude.

4.4 Categories and 'Kategor'

'Othering' separates people in categories, sections or groups, which could be class, education status, ethnicity, racial background, sexuality, age, disability, or gender. These categories then define characteristics in that group and then worth or value is given to them. A New Testament Greek scholar and friend pointed out to me, some years ago, the word 'Kategor' in the book of Revelation.⁶³ In the allegorical picture of the woman and the dragon, Satan is referred to as 'The Accuser.' (Rev.12.10, NRSV) The Greek word 'Kategor' has the meaning of accusing or being against someone in the assembly, that is in a public place. 'Kategor' is the root word for 'category', which means 'class' or

⁶² Neil Thompson, *Anti-Discriminatory Practice*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 20.

⁶³ Shirley Cox, who lives in Reading, Berkshire.

‘order of things,’ ‘attempt at comprehensive classification of all that exists,’ ‘people possessing similar characteristics.’⁶⁴ That the original word ‘accuser’ would lead to a derivation of ‘class’ might have no significance except for the fact that assigning people to a class or category has involved judgment about worth all through the centuries. An oppressive, accusing world view that puts people into hierarchical categories allows people to view others who are different from us as inferior. This gives someone permission, for example, to refuse to accept a black female vicar who arrives for a funeral consultation with a family. (App.C.4.3) In the UK today, there is a social and political drive to celebrate and welcome diversity, but there is also comfort in sameness and familiarity. Difference is suspect. Tribal groups in Africa have just the same root of suspicion and the desire to belong with those who are similar. If I accuse someone of being inferior to me or below me, then I play a part in the work of ‘the Accuser’ in Revelation by assigning people into categories that I have constructed. What starts out as an individual attitude may have profound societal implications. An extrapolated hermeneutic from this biblical text in Revelation would suggest that one of the roots of evil is putting people into man-made categories where people are judged to be less because of unchangeable characteristics. One only has to think of how many wars have been waged because of categorisation and judgment to consider the above possibility.

By contrast, in the same book, Revelation, one of the pictures painted is of people from all languages, peoples and tribes surrounding the Throne of God together and worshipping Him, (Rev.7:9, NRSV). One of Jesus’ last prayers, is about unity of heart and purpose. He prays that believers may be united just as he is united with God the Father, ‘I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me’ (John, 17:23, NRSV). This prayer was before denominations and church structures and refers to attitudes of hearts, not institutional uniformity. The Bible has been used to categorise people and so to justify slavery and misogyny, but it can also be used to bring a message of freedom. The walls of hostility have been broken down, according to Paul writing to the Ephesians, (Eph.2:14, NRSV). This example of breaking down hostility

⁶⁴ *The Chambers Dictionary* 10th edition, p. 239.

between Jews and Gentiles, which was the New Testament issue of the time, can be applied to the issues of our time, such as women in ministry, and black-white relations.

4.5 Leadership and servanthood

I was alerted to the possible dissonance associated with a discourse about leadership and servanthood in the Christian context, partly because of the substantial focus on leadership development in church and mission. Whereas in modernist times, leadership or business management was more directive, ‘top-down,’ and male, postmodernity has seen a rise in consultative leadership at the same time as seeing a rise in female managers. Wheatley talks about, ‘good bye command and control’ to signify a new era of consultative business leadership.⁶⁵ However, the leadership that is advocated by Jesus in the New Testament is more than merely consultation. In fact, as someone helpfully asked me, does Jesus talk about leadership at all? His message was about an upside down world view, seeing the ‘least’ as the ‘greatest’ (Mark 10:43, NRSV), and a leader being a ‘servant’ (Mark 10:43-44, NRSV). If one fits this into a hierarchical world view, separating people into categories, the radical message of Jesus becomes weakened, because hierarchy seems to be justified by leaders behaving in a humble, ‘servant’ like manner towards the people they lead. The ‘complementarian’ view is that men and women are equal in value but have God-ordained, unchangeable roles in this life, that complement one another.⁶⁶ Men should lead with humility and not be authoritarian but rather treat women with honour. Nevertheless, women are not allowed to be ministers or to teach men, who are the leaders. Further in a hierarchical view of the Trinity, one can justify keeping others in their lesser positions, because Jesus obeyed His Father, and submitted to His will. The notion of submission in the household codes, as seen by St. Paul (Ephesians 5: 22-24, NRSV) is strengthened by a hierarchical world view. However, without hierarchy, the heart of mutual submission is about unselfishness and love and this, I suggest, is the really radical message of Jesus.

A discourse about leadership and servanthood conveys an acceptable message in a white western setting, where historically, white people have gone around the world being

⁶⁵ Wheatley, *Finding Our Way*, p. 64.

⁶⁶ Ward, *Growing Women Leaders*, p. 17.

‘lords’ and ‘masters.’ Take the notion of servanthood and being a slave of all to a black community where the history is one of enforced kidnap, slavery, assumed inferiority, and marginalisation, then servanthood becomes something different. Grant asks the question, ‘How does one justify teaching a people that they are called to a life of service when they have been imprisoned by the most exploitative forms of service?’⁶⁷ In American society, even after slavery was abolished, black women were used as servants in white households. In the UK, black women have often held the most menial jobs and have been the lowest on the social scale. Although the Bible has been used in the past to justify slavery and oppression of people of colour, Rosemary Radford Ruether states:

Jesus as liberator calls for a renunciation and dissolution of the web of status relationships by which societies have defined privilege and unprivileged. He speaks especially to women, not as representatives of the ‘feminine’ but because they are at the bottom of this network of oppression. His ability to be liberator does not reside in his maleness, but on the contrary, in the fact that he has renounced this system of domination and seeks to embody in his person the new humanity of service and mutual empowerment.⁶⁸

Service must not be confused with servitude, for, ‘service implies autonomy and power used in behalf of others.’⁶⁹ Grant reminds us that we are all as Christians called to service.⁷⁰ The command is have the heart of a servant, like Jesus who ‘emptied Himself’ of reputation, status, and power. (Philippians 2:7, NRSV) I saw the humility of service in the interviewees and the desire to treat people equally, whether a sick parishioner or a Member of Parliament (Rose, App. C.4), or being a lay minister or leader (Virginia, App.C.1), or rolling her sleeves up and working side by side with her people (Eve, App.C.5) or coming alongside people in counselling and pastoral care, and serving leaders (Cham and Kate Coleman, App.C.2), or being a minister to whoever they meet (Katei Kirby, C.3). A calling to emulate Christ’s example empowered them to rise above difficulty and bring change in the lives and attitudes of others.

⁶⁷ Jacquelyn Grant, “The Sin of Servanthood” in Emilie M. Townes (ed) *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books 1996), p. 209.

⁶⁸ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *To change the World: Christology and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Crossroad 1982) in Townes (ed.), p. 216.

⁶⁹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Christology and Feminism: Can a Male Savior Help Women.” *An Occasional Paper* of the Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church, I (25 December 1976) in Townes (ed.), p. 216.

⁷⁰ Grant, Townes (ed.), *A troubling in my soul*, p. 203.

This is the autonomy of service, the choice to emulate Christ's example, the decision to respond with a counter cultural attitude, and not to use power to dominate others. This is not about ethnicity but rather character, but to begin ministry with the double jeopardy of being female and black or Asian in a predominantly white male church leadership culture, surely means that they had to have had some strong character traits to rise above the opposition and challenges. Thus I am not surprised that they have risen to influential roles within their denominations and society. As Proverbs says: 'Iron sharpens iron.' (Proverbs 27:17, NRSV) In this case, it is people, situations, difficulties that have shaped and sharpened these women, which does not mean that those difficulties or racial and sexist attitudes against them were justified or right. But nevertheless, it seems that God used bad things redemptively, as with the story of Joseph, in Genesis, 'Even though you intended to harm to me, God intended it for good.' (Genesis 50:20, NRSV) This is one of the paradoxes of the biblical message, that the hermeneutic of credulity can be applied to the text and justifies all kinds of horror, like apartheid, slavery, anti-Semitism, or anti-Muslimism. However, the really subversive message is that the coming of Christ signifies liberation for all who are oppressed, and evil is never justified, even when God works redemptively through it. This is founded upon a core belief in the goodness of God, which I saw in all the participants in terms of their love for God and their belief in God's goodness and plans to do good to all women and men. Suffering can be seen in the same way, in that the Gospel message is about freedom from suffering in the end, setting the captives free, justice for all, healing and salvation for all.

Yet there is in the calling to Christian ministry a mandate to identify with the sufferings of Christ, not all the way to the Cross, but in a way that Paul's letter to the Philippians talks about: the fellowship or the 'sharing' of His sufferings. (Philippians 3:10, NRSV) This applies to men and women, black and white. However it is a difficult thing to say to someone from a group that has already suffered racism or exclusion on the grounds of gender that part of their calling to ministry is to share Christ's sufferings. Yet the Christian calling is to alleviate suffering, to do good, to bring 'good news to the poor.' (Isaiah 61:1-3, Luke 4:18, NRSV) No-one is forced to this for it is a voluntary mantle like the 'evangelical poverty' described by the Boff brothers, is part of the call to be a Christian minister (1.1.3).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION-WOMEN EMPOWERED

The aim of this research has been to investigate the realities of black and Asian women's lives as Christian leaders, within an autoethnographic framework which enabled comparison with my own life experience in Christian mission leadership. While the scene for women in Christian leadership is changing with the younger generation, this research suggests that there is still more to be done. (3.9) One side effect of the growth in women in ministry is the potential for polarising opinions, as has been seen in recent debates in the Church of England, although participants' comments in this research also reveal that men can be supportive and appreciative of women's leadership in the church. (3.3.1, 3.5.1)

Discussion around the subject of male and female styles of leadership can be helpful, although caution is needed because the acknowledgement of difference can lead to stereotyping. (3.5) This research shows, not that women are better leaders than men, but rather that women, as human beings in Christian leadership, demonstrate qualities of compassion, servant heartedness, humility, perseverance, confidence, determination, capacity for hard work, conviction of calling, flexibility, and respect for others. Whilst it is apposite to suppose that men demonstrate these qualities too, one does not assume that all male leaders do, any more than do all female leaders, even though all candidates for Christian ministry would be assessed in terms of character and aptitude for pastoral work. The participants also show that there were struggles at times in terms of ethnicity and that the issue of double jeopardy was very alive in the 1990s and only in this present decade is it lessening. (3.4.1) The realities of these six women's lives show that being black or Asian is a positive benefit to them and others, in terms of the cultures and heritages that they have in their DNA. The dishonour came from some people who did not welcome their ethnicity and the value that they brought as women. 'A failure to see the essential grace' is a core component of a conclusion to this research. (3.7.2) Women, especially black and Asian women, have often been overlooked and the essential grace that they were gifted with as human beings has been, at times, missed or misjudged. When white people receive from positive models of black female leadership, it demonstrates the acceptance and welcome of black and Asian women to the ministerial

space in British churches. (3.4.1) Black and Asian female ministers in the Church bring a uniqueness of integrated lives, a flexibility to understand and interpret cultural difference, and an ability to bring a fresh perspective to the Bible, to pastoral theology, and to team building and collaboration in their congregations. The one Asian interviewee showed a unique interpretation of honour in a very positive way, which is a pertinent contribution to this topic. (3.4.1)

Interviewees in this research demonstrated character qualities and strengths that indicate the genuineness of each calling and vocation. Their service in the church has obviously stood the test of time, and the very longevity of their ministries, their tenacity and love for God, their joyfulness and self-acceptance show the validity of their chosen path in life. In crises and difficulties, they drew on the resources of their family heritages, and their faith in God to see them through. These are all qualities that male clergy may also demonstrate. If the interviewees admitted to weaknesses or poor attitudes, my question is, are those weaknesses to be attributed to gender or race, or to the fact that they are human? Conversely, do male church leaders also have weaknesses? Thus if someone were to say to me that male clergy also share similar attributes of character in terms of pastoral care and compassionate service, or experiencing judgment and criticism at times in their ministry, then I would say that this is precisely the point, though the other way round. It is not that women are so different from men, although the differences are often emphasised. It is that women are fully human, just like men and have the capacity, like men, to serve, to care, to lead, to represent God to people and people to God.

These women developed personal strategies and responses, which overcame and defused hostility, such as speaking up, disarming with a smile, refusing to be silenced, being gracious, working hard, persevering, and drawing strength from a conviction of their calling from God to be where they are. Also they demonstrate the capacity to not take everything personally, to not assume every opposition was to do with gender or ethnicity, and to be self-aware of their own attitudes and responses. (3.2.1, 3.3.1, 3.4.1, 3.5.1, 3.6.1, 3.7.1, 3.7.2) Furthermore, the interviewees are forerunners who have paved the way for others and, because of their abilities and character, they have exhibited strength of conviction, even through opposition. Sometimes that has meant that they have not been

liked or affirmed by everybody. However, their lives are examples to others of whatever race or gender in church leadership, or training for Christian ministry, as well as to me. Their stories also communicate the strength of women, that, although women may be physically not as strong as men, they can carry just as much strength of spirit and character.

The question of women as priests has now been answered in the Church of England, but in other streams and within the Catholic Church, it is still a problem. There is no space here to do justice to the topic. However, I mention here that if, as Grant argues, Christ's priesthood and representation of us to God and God to us, was based on His humanity, not His gender or ethnicity, what stops us from accepting that our representation of each other to God and God to us, is also not based on gender or ethnicity but on our humanity and individual calling?¹ Looking at Jesus, a womanist view was drawn from their history of the struggle to survive and be recognised as equal and Jesus as liberator is of first importance before any discussion on His divinity or humanity.² Storkey puts it, 'Did the Incarnate Word have to be male? I think my answer is 'no.'³ Grant reminds us of James Cone's pivotal declaration that Jesus was black, that is Jesus identified with all who were oppressed.⁴ Grant says, therefore, 'this Christ, found in the experiences of Black women, is a Black woman.'⁵ If this is not true, how could the Jewish Christ ever have been the High Priest for a Gentile?

The view that women cannot either represent humankind in a priestly function, or represent God to man, is a Catholic theology but is not exclusive to the Roman Catholic church, it is also found in strands within other denominations. Representing humans to God and God to humans in a priestly role is not accepted by Protestants who prefer the doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers.' So, for them, it does not make any difference

¹ Grant, *White Woman's Christ And Black Woman's Jesus*, p. 220.

² Kate Coleman, "Black Women and Theology" quoting Delores Williams, in Jagessar & *Black Theology in Britain*, p. 120.

³ Elaine Storkey & Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Conversations on Christian Feminism: Speaking heart to heart* (London: Fount/HarperCollins, 1999), p.50.

⁴ James Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, (New York:Seabury Press, 1975), p.134, in Grant, *White Women's Christ, Black Women's Jesus*, p.215.

⁵ Grant, *White Women's Christ And Black Women's Jesus*, p. 221.

if the church minister is male or female because there is no real priestly representation. The issue is one of authority and leadership, apparently proscribed in 1 Timothy 2:12, depending on one's hermeneutic approach.

If a Christian's primary calling is to be a servant, however, which was expressed in many ways by the interviewees, then I agree with Barton that the only authority that a Christian has is to serve. (3.2.3) Women and men can do that.

If I was consulted about who I would like to represent or intercede for me to God, (other than Christ Himself), I would say that any one of the women I interviewed could and I would feel represented, well led and well taught. That a black person could lead me, a white person is something that I have experienced in my time in missions and I relish the increased ethnic variety in church and mission leadership. When I lived in Liberia during the Civil War of the 1990s my life was saved due to the courageous actions of a black man and a black woman.⁶ How could I not accept the representation or the leadership of a black or Asian woman in my life? I count it a privilege.

I conclude from this research, that underneath a literalist hermeneutic of the biblical texts concerning women's leadership, is a deeply held world view of the categorisation of humans, which allows some to have power and others not, some to be fully made in God's image and others not, or as Storkey puts it, 'Women just tag along as reflections of men.'⁷

How much have we created God in our image rather than the other way round? The western church has been the domain of men for centuries and viewing God as primarily white and male supports that paradigm. As I consider the lives and ministries of the women I interviewed, do I think that they reflect who God is? Did I in Liberia try to show by my life the character of God? I think the answer is yes on all counts. Not perfectly, never completely. I welcome Elisabeth Johnson's seminal text on the use of the feminine pronoun for God, even though God is beyond gender and is Father and Mother

⁶ Pratt, *To See a New Day*, p.111-129.

⁷ Storkey, *Conversations on Christian Feminism*, p.54.

to me.⁸ In my context, the male pronoun used to address God privileges a popular assumption that God is male, although when talking about the ‘fatherheart’ of God, ‘motherheart’ is often used as an add-on. A recent Christian fictional book has been ‘*The Shack*’ which is one man’s attempt to explain suffering. In the story, he portrays God the Father as a big black woman, Jesus as a young man, and the Holy Spirit as an ethereal feminine figure.⁹ Although not an academic work, this is possibly the first widely read popular text from the evangelical wing of the church to suggest that God might be seen as having feminine qualities, and therefore challenging the categorisation of God as being only male.¹⁰ In the classic theological view, and in more recent feminist theology, God is seen as beyond gender. Indeed we can go back to Julian of Norwich in the fourteenth century to find a text about Christ our Mother.¹¹ Freed from hierarchy, we can see each other, as men and women, as equally made in God’s image, and equally able, though differently gifted sometimes, to be carriers of the Christian faith.

In terms of ethnicity, David Brion Davis asks the question about the negative power of Othering:

Are human beings universally inclined to dehumanise people who differ from them in physiognomy, phenotype, language, religion, social status, and even gender? When we categorize people by such criteria, temporarily repressing what we share and accentuating our differences, does the resulting Otherness inevitably debase and demean, even if it sometimes emits a surreptitious appeal?¹²

His question raises the possibility that those who are different and in a minority are often demeaned and debased. I conclude that in the lives of the participants in this research, there was ‘Othering’ taking place at times, putting them in a category of being unacceptable, suspect, and different. A positive celebration and acceptance of their

⁸ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. 10th anniversary edition. (New York: Crossroad, 2003).

⁹ William P. Young, *The Shack* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2008).

¹⁰ *The Shack* sold over seven million copies.

¹¹ Brant Pelphrey, *Christ Our Mother: Julian of Norwich* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1989).

¹² David Brion Davis, “Constructing Race: A reflection,” in *In the Image of God: Religion, Moral Values and Our Heritage of Slavery* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 307-322.

ethnicity and gender was present at times, but not in abundance. I heard, too, underneath all of their responses, a genuine desire to get on with their lives, un-noticed, in private, not always commented on, but the very battles they took on in their callings often brought notoriety, welcome and un-welcome.

The origins of racism are not the subject of this research, but my earlier debate about whether to use the word 'race' or 'ethnicity' poses a deeper question about how it came about that certain peoples were considered lower than others, and what a flimsy construction the idea of race is anyway. As Davis puts it:

Historians have increasingly recognised that the so called races of mankind are the fortuitous and arbitrary inventions of the European and American history, the by product, primarily of Europe's religious, economic and imperial expansion across the seas of the earth.¹³

The construction of racism at personal, cultural and structural levels, as Thompson explicated, is such a powerful edifice that to take it down requires action at those same levels. (4.3) Personally, it is a privilege to hear each participant's perspective and story. Culturally, I see what a contribution each gives from their heritages. Structurally, they stand in places of influence in the nation and their lives can bring change in the public sphere.

Davis also re-iterates the notion that racism originated with slavery, but that in medieval times in England, serfs and peasants were treated almost as slaves, being considered almost as low as animals, and when they gained more freedom, others were needed to fill the space of enslavement.¹⁴

At a time when the English were congratulating themselves on being the world's first truly 'free' people, could it be that Africans provided a scapegoat or removing some of the negative imagery long projected on the villeins and peasants?¹⁵

I admit, as an English person, that I feel slightly defensive about the above suggestion and ask if it might be a modern projection onto a medieval world view, which was hierarchical, and in which the belief in the freedom of all people was just beginning. The

¹³ Brion Davis, *In the Image of God*, p. 307.

¹⁴ Brion Davis, *In the Image of God*, p. 313.

¹⁵ Brion Davis, *In the Image of God*, p. 315.

knowledge of the value and dignity of all human beings has been developing for centuries, one era building on the insights of another. Does it all go back to the original divide, the one between men and women? Is that why gender and ethnicity are so linked and why, if we look at the poorest people in the world, they are generally female and mostly women of colour? These are questions that cannot be answered here but I do recognise that the increase in women's inclusion in Christian leadership poses questions for men, in terms of their view of women and of themselves, as well as a discussion about power, which Eve articulated. (3.9) The acceptance of black men leading in white or multi-cultural churches in UK Christian society is also important, as Virginia highlighted, but this is another subject. (3.4.1). I conclude from this research that having more black and Asian women leaders in the church will bring a cultural strength and passionate faith to the UK.

Women's inclusion and empowerment in the secular field, in education, development and all levels of society, is known to have an effect on the health and wealth of that society, as the United Nations Population Fund says:

Substantial evidence suggests that slower population growth and investments in reproductive health and HIV prevention (particularly among adolescents), education, women's empowerment and gender equality reduce poverty.¹⁶

Many of the poorest countries in the world are those in which women are uneducated and not free to be leaders in local or national contexts. I see no reason for not applying this principle to the Church, for the inclusion of women's leadership, voices and perspectives so that all the Church may develop and grow. Liberation theology tells me that God is on the side of the poor, and that means that God is on the side of black and Asian women.¹⁷ In the cases of the participants in this research, they may not be 'poor,' economically, for they all have paid positions and a degree of influence in British society. Their poverty might be described as being disadvantaged in terms of favour, honour and ready acceptance into the calling they pursued. Could it be that when black women from minority heritages are able to take up positions of leadership within church and mission that the church itself will grow and become healthier?

¹⁶ UNFPA, <<https://www.unfpa.org/pds/poverty.html>>

¹⁷ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988).

From this research, I conclude that God calls men and women from all backgrounds to places of service in the Church and the interviewees in this research are examples of some of the best of what women are called to be and are role models for other women now in training.

Whatever the route, all of the life journeys shared here show that women, whether black or Asian or white are called to be ambassadors for Christ as much as men. (2. Corinthians 5:17, NRSV) An ambassador is a representative, someone who speaks and makes decisions on behalf of the government that appoints and sends them.

A possible underlying fear that women in leadership will feminise the church and drive men from its doors is unfounded, unproven and not theologically sound or acceptable in today's society. Jesus has talked about the values of the Kingdom being different from the values of the world, in terms of authority and power and servanthood. (Mark 10:42-45. NRSV) If the Christian message has transforming power, then the Church, more than anyone else, needs to demonstrate the opposite of misogyny and racism. A theology that categorises and separates people becomes a slave master, rather than an empowering truth. Where theology bars someone from living out their calling, then it is the theology that needs to change. Where black or Asian women are subtly judged or excluded, then prejudice needs to be seen for what it is, so that people can be helped to instead welcome the leadership of those who are from different heritages. Much more work could be done on this research subject, but space did not allow for a more in depth analysis.

Reflexive autoethnography, as mentioned earlier, allows the possibility that research can change the researcher's way of thinking or life path. (1.2.1) As I consider my own life, where I lived out a calling and vocation primarily within an international mission organisation, it is somewhat painful to think that, in the past, some churches would send women overseas as missionaries to responsible leadership roles, but at home, would never consider such an appointment. I acknowledge some disappointment that I never considered training for ordination in a major denomination. However, I find it empowering to think of the possibilities for women today, especially black and Asian women. There is the sense of collegiality, of corporate effort. Though I did not go down

that route of ordination, I honour those who have done, like the women I had the privilege of interviewing. I am also grateful for YWAM leaders, who have pioneered by strategically including young people, non-westerners and women in leadership. I settle my hindsight reflections with a gratitude for what I did experience, not only through them, but also through early bible college training and church youth work, where I learned and was given so much. I recognise also that I thrived inter-denominational and inter-cultural work environments and living in Liberia was a unique time, for which I am very grateful.

The significant difference between the interviewees and me is that I have never had to deal with prejudice or rejection based on the colour of my skin. Rather, I have often been favoured because of my ethnicity. My experience of living in other nations in cross-cultural contexts has taught me that ignorance and relational distance breeds suspicion and prejudice. This lends weight to the previous discussion about the way that putting people in categories results in misunderstanding and judgment. (4.4)

My views on women in leadership have not changed other than to grow stronger, and I have a broader biblical hermeneutic. The foundations of my Christian faith have not changed but have become stronger, with an enhanced focus and understanding of gender and racial justice. I hope that in the UK, many women, black, Asian, white and more, will be able to pursue Christian service in the churches, through ordination, or other less formal training, to become all that God calls them to be. As the church grows and changes in the 21st century and the Christian message of reconciliation continues to be lived out and taught, it does inevitably affect gender relations. It enables men and women, black and white to break down the barriers of judgment and competition between them and treat each other with greater honour and acceptance. It seems to me that the tidal wave that Kate Coleman talked about is washing over the church and the church will not be diminished but will grow. (3.8)

APPENDIX A

Information and consent form for M.Phil research on Christian women in leadership Sue Pratt PGR University of Birmingham/Urban Theology Unit Sheffield

This post graduate M.Phil. research within the Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Birmingham focuses on Christian women in leadership. It uses an autoethnographic methodology in the reflective writing of the researcher from experiences of leadership as a Christian woman, living and working in Christian missions in Africa and Europe.

As the researcher, I want to write about my own experiences in Africa and Europe as a female Christian leader in missions, and use this reflection to act as a bridge to connect to other Christian women in leadership in the UK. Identifying some areas for potential similarity or shared experiences, I want to interview 6-8 female leaders, specifically from African, Caribbean or second generation, British born African or Caribbean backgrounds, plus a possible inclusion of an Asian background leader.

These semi structured interviews will be unique, and authentic but with a set of opening questions to which additions can be made. Any information given by those interviewed will be treated confidentially, respectfully and carefully stored on my computer which is password protected. The descriptive results which will be written in the research will be submitted to the participants to ensure that they are happy with what is written before the thesis is submitted to the University.

Participants will be anonymous in this research, unless they wish to be identified and their names included. The importance of protecting participants information from any possible repercussions for them in making their story public is paramount. With or without their names being included, I envisage that their stories will be of benefit to the wider church which is engaged in the issue and experiences of women in leadership in the 21st century. There will not be any financial remuneration from taking part in the research, neither will there be any financial costs to the participants. A typical interview could take between one to two hours of each participants' time.

Participants can withdraw from the research at any stage, if they change their minds, and their information stored on computer will be deleted. The researcher needs to know about any withdrawal by the 31st July 2012 at the latest.

Thank you for your consideration.

Researcher: Ms Sue Pratt

Supervisor: Dr. Paul Walker

Email:

Email:

CONSENT:

I give consent to be interviewed by Sue Pratt, in the pursuance of her M.Phil. research on Christian Women in Leadership. I understand that my information will be treated confidentially, respectfully and carefully, and that I can withdraw at any time from this project. I give permission for my information to be used in this research and I understand that this information will be anonymous unless I choose to be identified by name.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research on Christian Women in Leadership.

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire for interviews on 'Christian Women in Leadership' **Sue Pratt, M.Phil, University of Birmingham/Urban Theology Unit Sheffield.**

Dear

Following our recent conversation regarding the subject of 'Christian Women in Leadership,' including ordained ministers as well as non ordained, I want to thank you for agreeing to take part in this research and to be interviewed. Thank you too for signing and returning the consent form, indicating your willingness to participate. I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Below are a few questions about your experiences of ministry/leadership and space to record your thoughts on being a leader/minister in a culture which may be different from your own. I am giving you these now so you have time to think about what you feel or experience before we meet. Some questions may be more relevant to you than others, and they may also reveal other questions or issues that you want to speak about. Please feel free to use the spaces below to make notes of what you want to say. This questionnaire, however, will not be collected as information, because your responses will be recorded through writing and audio recording at the time of interview.

1. Could I take some background information?
Age range: e.g . 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, 60-70

Birthplace:

Length of time lived in UK:

Marital status and family information you may want to share:

Where do you live?

What has been your training for Christian ministry?

Education:

How long have you been in Christian ministry?

What are the main responsibilities and roles you carry in your ministry?

What major skills and abilities do you use in your role/s?

Thank you very much for this initial information. Further questions follow below.

The questions below cover five broad areas: being a woman in leadership, working cross-culturally, vocation and calling, costs and sacrifices, community building and belonging. There may be other areas you wish to speak about.

1. How do you describe your vocation, calling, mission? E.g. where is the focus? what are you called to do, who are you called to influence?
2. How is it or how has it been for you as a woman in ministry, working alongside your male and female colleagues and in your congregations or groups you lead? What are some of the positive aspects, and what have been some of the difficulties? What have been some of the risks and new paths for you?
3. Thinking about your own cultural heritage and background, what are some of the challenges and/or benefits for you in working with those who are culturally or ethnically different? How has cross cultural experience changed you?
4. What is your experience of the development of community life and a sense of belonging where you minister? in what ways, if any, has your gender and background influenced community building where you are?
5. What have been some of the difficulties, costs, and sacrifices that have accompanied your ministry?
6. Conversely what have been some of the rewards, joys and fulfilments that have accompanied your ministry?
7. Could you tell me about incidents or events in which you have been and felt honoured?
What was the honour related to? (other words for 'honour':- 'respected', 'esteemed', 'affirmed', 'highly valued', 'treated well')

8. Could you tell me about incidents or events in which you have been or felt dishonoured. What was the dishonour related to? (other words for 'dishonour':- 'not respected', 'not esteemed', 'un-affirmed', 'not highly valued', 'not treated well')
9. What is your opinion of where the church in the UK is at in terms of the recognition, inclusion and affirmation of female leadership from an African, Caribbean, or Asian background? Please feel free to reflect on your particular denomination or about the church as a whole.
10. Given your past experience, what do you think you need to help you move forward in your ministry?

Thank you very much for taking part in this research.

APPENDIX C
TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS

**The contents of Appendix C (pages 114-171) are not included
for reasons of brevity and interviewee security.**

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