

Mississippi College

**Equal in Being, Unequal in Role? An Investigation of how Gender Affects the
Career Aspirations of Christian Studies Students at Mississippi College**

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Introduction

In 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul writes, “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be quiet. (NIV)”

These verses, as well as others are controversial for Christians today because the way in which the church interprets them determines how it views gender roles. Questions such as “Can a woman be a head pastor?” or “Should a man be a children’s minister?” are debated within the church and both male and female ministers are affected by these gender questions.

While there are many different sides of the issue, the argument ultimately comes down to whether the church interprets verses such as the one in 1 Timothy literally or within cultural context. Was Paul saying that women should never speak up in church? Or was he speaking to Timothy about a specific group of women in Ephesus who were at risk of going astray in heresy? Should we apply verses such as this one to all cases of women or to that one instance? These questions of interpretation cause division among the church about whether or not women and men can possess the same roles within church ministry.

This division trickles down from the top pastoral roles even into those who are in the preparation stages for ministry. If a church only allows men and women to serve in certain leadership roles, male and female ministry students’ careers are determined by the churches. One church may allow women in teaching roles and another may not; one church may require a male Youth Minister while another is perfectly content with a woman. No matter the situation, ministers’ careers are largely defined by their gender, and in this research project I sought to learn how Undergraduate students studying to be ministers navigate this gender-ruled world of the church.

Mississippi College, as a Christian University, trains future ministers through the university's School of Christian Studies and the Arts. Undergraduate students within this department pursue degrees which will prepare them for their future ministry work. In order to understand how the gender roles within the church affect students pursuing ministry, I chose to shape my project around the Christian Studies Department. As a student within the Department myself, I have seen first-hand that women and men tend to pursue certain careers over others. For example, I've only met two women within the department interested in preaching or youth ministry, whereas almost every male student says that those are their areas of interest. While it was obvious to me that these gender roles were existent among the students, what wasn't clear was whether or not the students were aware of how their gender played into their career choices. Therefore, I decided to ask the students myself, researching two questions:

- 1. Do students within MC's Christian Studies Department feel encouraged to pursue certain careers simply on the basis of their gender?**
- 2. And if so, who or what are these influences stemming from?**

Through these two questions, I aimed to learn MC Christian Studies students' own perceptions about how gender impacts their career choices and where they are getting the ideas that their gender plays a part in what ministry roles they can pursue.

Literature Review

In order to understand how the gender debate affects students, I first investigated what exactly the dispute is about. As I researched, I discovered two terms emerging from my literature: Complementarian and Egalitarian. These two terms were repeated throughout the

scholarship to describe the two sides of the gender debate, and most of my literature argued for one side or the other with little compromise.

Complementarian

I'll first explain the Complementarian point of view. This view teaches that men and women were created by God as equals, but that also each gender has a specific complementary role (Strauch, 6). These roles are often defined as male leadership with the female submission (Lee-Barnewall, 105).

But what are these roles than men and women are supposed to stay within? Researchers seem to be unable to draw clear boundaries for the genders, and debates arise among fellow Complementarians about how these roles should be defined. For example, John Piper states that women should hold no preaching positions at all (Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 186), but Mary Kassian, a contributor for *Desiring God*, states that women can preach as long as she isn't preaching on Sundays at the church pulpit and doesn't undermine the teachings of men in the church. Kathy Keller offers her own definition of the male and female roles, stating, "Women are encouraged to be active, verbal participants in the life of the church—teaching, exhorting, encouraging, and contributing in every way except in the office of elder (or wherever juridical authority rests in a particular church), where teaching and doctrine are judged according to the canonical deposit of truth, the Scriptures. (336)"

In each instance, a clear line is drawn but in a different place. While they all say that men and women hold different roles within ministry, they disagree on what those roles should be. However, there one thing is consistent within all the Complementarian definitions: women are designed to abstain from certain leadership roles in order to be true to their gender whereas men are not restricted in this way (Grootius, 308). Piper, Kassian, and Keller all state that there

is boundary which women shouldn't cross, but there are no regulations on men. Men are given the task of leadership are not limited in any ways.

Despite the inconsistencies, the main idea of Complementarians remains the same across all researchers: men and women are equal in Christ, but that equality includes a difference in role and function (Lee-Barnewall, 83).

Egalitarian

The Egalitarian View also states that men and women are equal before God, but Egalitarians don't distinguish the roles of men and women. For this view, equality means having the same roles and functions as men, meaning that women and men can possess the same leadership roles within the church (Fee, 251).

Researchers holding this view have fewer inconsistencies among them because they aren't drawing boundaries which each gender must comply to. Egalitarians point to this inconsistency with Complementarians, arguing that by having any restrictions at all on women's roles in the church, they contradict their statement that men and women are created equal (Grootius, 324).

Rather than focusing on gender, Egalitarians state that the spiritual gifting and character of leaders should be of top priority (Lee-Barnewall, 118). Gordon Fee states, "to begin with gender rather than gifts and calling simply puts the emphasis at the wrong place. (254)" If a woman's character and spiritual gifts are better suited to leadership than a man's, for Egalitarians that means that she would be chosen to lead, whereas for Complementarians, while spiritual gifting is taken into consideration, gender also plays an important role in delegating church leadership.

The Gender Debate and Scripture

Though Complementarians and Egalitarians lie on opposite ends of the spectrum regarding, both sides use the same Biblical verses to defend their point of view. Three references repeatedly mentioned throughout my research were 1 Timothy 2:11-12, Galatians 3:28, and Genesis 1-3.

In 1 Timothy 2:11-12, Paul writes, “*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be quiet.* (NIV)” Egalitarians interpret these verses within cultural context, meaning that Paul was writing to Timothy specifically about the church in Ephesus, not giving instructions for the church in the future to follow as well. In the cultural setting of the Bible, women typically weren’t as well educated and socially accepted as men, so it is logical for Paul to advise them to stay silent and learn (*Finally Feminist*, 51).

Complementarians interpret these verses literally, using them to determine which roles women and men should hold within the church. Alexander Strauss states that in his letter to Timothy, Paul is providing “timeless, universally binding principles for all churches for all times” (74). Complementarians use this verse to determine their boundaries for male and female leadership roles in the church. For them, these verses clearly state that women should be restricted in their ministry roles, and therefore in order to adhere to Biblical teachings, women should keep from assuming authority over men in the church (Kassian).

Another Scripture reference commonly used by both Complementarians and Egalitarians is Galatians 3:28, which states, “*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ.* (NIV)” Egalitarians use this verse to support their assertion that men and women are equal in the Kingdom of God . In this verse,

Paul is writing about the church as children of God, saying that to God there is no distinction of gender. They use this interpretation to say that because there is no distinction of gender in the eyes of God, the same should be true within the church (Ware).

Complementarians disagree with this interpretation, stating that in this context, Paul is speaking about the concept of Salvation, not about the roles of men and women in the church. Men and women are equal in that they both receive salvation, but this has nothing to do with their roles in church leadership (Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 164).

The third reference commonly used by both Complementarians and Egalitarians is the Creation account in Genesis 1-3. Complementarians argue that in Genesis 1, man and woman were created equally, but the order of creation implies a hierarchy of leadership. Namely, because man was created and instructed first, he was given implicit leadership over the woman (Hess, 82). In Genesis 2, it says Eve is the “helper” of Adam, implying that God created gender roles, and Fall in Genesis 3 occurred because Adam didn’t take his God-given role as leader seriously (Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 99).

Egalitarians, on the other hand, state that “the man and woman were created sequentially in Genesis 2 in order to demonstrate the need they have for each other, not to justify an implicit hierarchy (Hess, 84).” Rebecca Groothuis expands upon this, saying that sin didn’t break down a God-designed hierarchy, but instead destroyed the loving harmony between man and woman (90).

In all three of these instances, the same Scripture references are used to argue opposite viewpoints, and both sides offer valid interpretations. However, the Bible is not the only influence on the Complementarian and Egalitarian argument. Another important influence is the culture, and how the gender roles have changed within secular society.

The Feminist Movement and Church Gender Roles

Both Complementarian and Egalitarian researchers attribute much of the church gender debate with the rise of the modern feminist movement. This movement, also called the Women's Movement, peaked in the 1960's and 70's, and it sought to end discrimination against women (Higgins). This movement continues today, and varied opinions of the movement exist within the church. Complementarians see the movement as having negative effects on the church, whereas Egalitarians celebrate it, encouraging churches to embrace the cultural movement.

The Complementarian perspective states that Feminism encourages women to go against their assigned Biblical gender roles (Miller). The term Evangelical Feminism is one repeated throughout my sources, and John Piper defines it as "God created man and woman equally and this excludes male headship." (Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 95). Evangelical Feminism is described negatively by Piper and others because it disagrees with Scripture. According to Dave Miller, "...the overall impact on American civilization has been negative, and the erosion of femininity has ushered in a host of evils that are hastening America's moral implosion." For Miller, the rise of feminism has gone too far, and that if the church is to stay true to the Bible, female leadership in the church should not be allowed.

Egalitarians have a much more positive attitude towards Feminism. Unlike Complementarians, Egalitarians argue that women have desired to serve in church leadership roles long before the Modern Feminist Movement began (Pierce, 74). John Stackhouse argues the case for believing the Bible but also supporting Feminism. He states that Paul's teachings should be interpreted through a cultural context. In their time, they lived in a Patriarchal society,

and now that we are in a culture that is more open to female leadership, the church should embrace it (*Partners in Christ*, 67).

Whether Complementarian or Egalitarian, the Feminist Movement has radically shaped the church's views on gender roles. Complementarians reject the move for female equality, and they restrict female leadership. Egalitarians embrace the movement, encouraging as much female involvement in every facet of the church as possible. However, gender roles are still prominent, and there are certain roles within the church which are predominantly male and female.

How Does This Debate Show Itself in the Church Today?

Though more and more churches are demonstrating into a more Egalitarian, there are still limits to what ministry roles men and women hold within the church. The Complementarian mindset is still dominant in church life, but Egalitarians encourage churches to consider women for more roles within the church. Rebecca Groothuis states, "If women were truly regarded as no less than men in their intrinsic capacities and inbuilt resources for leadership, decision making and spiritual understanding, then men in leadership would routinely utilize women's abilities fully in such areas as financial and administrative management, ministry to both men and women, moral and theological reasoning, spiritual gifts and insights, and biblical exegesis and exposition."

Though Egalitarians are promoting more equality in the church gender roles, most leadership and teaching positions continue to go to men, and women tend towards children's and women's ministry. Regarding children's ministry, many articles, such as one by Gene Roncone for "Christianity Today", explain why more men are needed. Within missions, another female-dominated ministry, more men are also requested ("Why are Women More Eager

Missionaries”). The only field of ministry within which men were explicitly stated to be unfit was women’s ministry (*Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 186). Therefore, However, many articles call for more men serving in female-dominated areas of ministry while I found no sources requesting more women in male-dominated areas. Even today, women are encouraged to stay within the boundaries already drawn for them in ministry (Newbell).

The Gap

But how does all of this affect MC Students? MC’s Christian Studies Department trains students to become future ministers, and as research has shown, students’ gender often determines what areas of ministry he or she is likely to pursue. Most of the research on gender in ministry has been conducted on those already serving, and little has been done to see how this gender debate impacts future ministers like those here at MC. My own research helps fill this gap because I am focusing on these ministers-in-training, learning what they believe about gender roles in ministry and how it impacts their career searches.

Methodology

Focus Groups

In order to conduct my study, I used Focus Groups of students from the Christian Studies Department at Mississippi College. I planned for two groups, one male and one female, of about five students each. After receiving approval from Mississippi College’s Institutional Review Board, I sought permission to recruit participants from Dr. Wayne Vanhorn, the Dean of the School of Christian Studies and the Arts. After receiving his permission, I hung two flyers in Provine chapel and sent out an email to all majors and minors within the Christian Studies Department. I’ve included the flyers in Appendix A.

After waiting a few days, only one potential participant responded to my poster and email, so I decided to take a slightly more personal approach. As a student within the Christian Studies Department, I approached my classmates, explaining my project to them and pointing them to my posters. I encouraged them to consider participating and to tell their friends about the project as well. This method proved much more successful, and I recruited three male and four female participants.

These seven participants made up three focus groups, one male and two females. I held two female groups because of scheduling issues. Each group lasted between 15 and 30 minutes, and I recorded each conversation on my iPhone. I then transferred each recording to my laptop and transcribed them for coding. In my transcriptions, I deleted any names or revealing information about participants in order to keep the conversation as anonymous as possible.

Information About Participants

Before I officially asked my focus group questions, I asked each participant to state their gender, affiliation with the Christian Studies Department, and what careers they're pursuing. Each of the male participants and one of the females are Christian Studies majors, and the other females are Ministry Studies minors. The participants reflect the students within the Christian Studies Department—the majors are mostly males while the minors are predominantly females.

For the most part, participants' career aspirations reflected what the Literature Review revealed. According to authors such as Kathy Keller and Lyndsey Koh, women are more likely to serve in Children's Ministry and Missions, whereas men are more apt to pursue areas which involve pastoring and teaching. However, Male 3 was an outlier because he is interested in missions. Research conducted by John Piper reveals that females make up most of the mission

force, so Male 3 is one of the few single males interested in pursuing a career in missions. However, he is also interested in pastoring churches, so he still falls under the Pastor category.

The career that I hadn't anticipated was Christian Counselor. None of my background research had mentioned this career option, so I did more research in order to understand the demographics of this counseling. According to Benedict Carey and John Smith, women greatly outnumber men in the secular mental health profession, so it makes sense for my female participants to be the ones most interested in counseling as opposed to the men. When asked if they have experienced any push-back for their career choices purely because of their gender, both agreed that they haven't. When I asked them why they think this is, they explained that "women are more concerned one-on-one personal conversations", so in a setting that requires intimacy like therapy, women are more suitable.

Male 1	Christian Studies Major	Head Pastor
Male 2	Christian Studies Major	Seminary/Higher Education Professor
Male 3	Christian Studies Major	Missionary/Church Planter
Female 1	Ministry Studies Minor	Christian Counselor
Female 2	Ministry Studies Minor	Christian Counselor
Female 3	Christian Studies Major	Children's Minister
Female 4	Ministry Studies Minor	Overseas Missionary

Therefore, the participants and their career interests support my background research with only one outlier. After learning this information, I began asking my official focus group questions.

Focus Group Questions

Using my two research questions as a foundation, I constructed six focus group questions. I've included a list of these questions in Appendix B. From the first to last questions, I centered the discussion around participants' personal experiences in finding their ministry careers while also relating it back to the gender issue.

The first three questions were intended to learn about how participants chose their careers and what particular influences helped them make that decision. I didn't introduce the concept of gender issues into the first two questions because I wanted the students to speak about it authentically, and many of them did mention their genders without my prompting. I used the third question as a way to introduce gender to the conversation, causing participants to think more deeply about how they have been influenced by their own genders and by others around them.

My last three questions were more direct, asking participants to give specific examples of influences and times where their gender played a part in their career choice. I chose to ask the question "Who or what has influenced your career decisions the most?" in the latter part of the conversation in hopes that participants would tie those influences to gender, which many of them did. My final question, "What would you think of a man/woman going into your area of ministry?" because I wanted to see where students' own gender opinions fall on the Complementarian and Egalitarian Spectrum.

Findings and Analysis

Once I recorded and transcribed my focus groups, I began coding for responses to my two research questions. My initial codes were “Mention of males and females in relation to careers” and “Influences - Positive, Negative, and Neutral”. Influences included people, situations, and anything else that participants viewed as affecting their career choices. Within these two larger codes, other trends emerged such as “Mention of Calling”, “Mention of Scripture”, and “Tradition vs Contemporary”.

As I explain my findings, I will frame my explanations around my two research questions, demonstrating how the findings answer those questions and highlight how the gender debate in the church is affecting students in Mississippi College’s Christian Studies Department.

Mention of Calling

My first code answers the research question: **Do students within MC’s Christian Studies Department feel encouraged to pursue certain careers simply on the basis of their gender?** Both the male and female students spoke in detail about their callings, but the ways in which they referenced them indicate how much resistance they’ve received for their ministry aspirations. Before I go further in explanation, it is important to understand what is meant by the term “calling”. This term is used to convey that God is directing or telling someone to do something, often referring to a life choice or a career path. Because I am researching career choices of future ministers, I expected the concept of calling to come about in conversation, and my expectations proved correct. Throughout my three focus groups, my participants referred to the word “calling” eight times. However, the male and female students differed in how often and the way in which they spoke about their callings.

The men only used the term “call” or “calling” once throughout their entire focus group. This occurred when Male 2 mentioned that he “found his calling” through teaching Sunday School and preaching in his home church. Though Male 2 is the only one who actually used the term “calling”, the other two men explained how they discovered what areas of ministry they wanted to pursue. All three males spoke about their calling as a one-time event. Male 1 discovered his calling to preach after preaching his first sermon, Male 2 realized his after teaching Sunday School and preaching, and Male 3 found his calling after going on a mission trip. In all three instances, none of them mention ever having questioned their calling or any sense that God might change it.

The women, on the other hand, described their callings more often and with a much more flexible approach. Three out of the four of them stated that they still don’t feel completely secure in their callings, and that The Lord is still continually leading them in what He wants them to do. Females 1 and 2 had almost the same experience, saying that they previously felt calls to Missions, but that God used that calling to lead them to another one, Christian Counseling. Female 4 expressed two prominent callings in her life, Missions and Youth Ministry. However, she is pursuing Missions because she feels a stronger pull towards that area. In response to Female 4’s statement about interest in youth ministry, Female 3 stated that youth ministry is an area in which women are discouraged from serving because teenage boys are less likely to open up to a woman. She expands on this by saying that in most areas of ministry, she has been discouraged by others. Her calling is much broader than the other women. While she is currently pursuing children’s ministry, she is also interested in teaching deeper doctrine. She said, “The Lord is calling me into ministry, and these are the doors being opened. I think being a

woman has paved the way because there was a place for me already within children's ministry just because I am a female."

Therefore, the gender debate does affect the career aspirations of MC students, especially the women. The men were much more secure in their callings because they had received little resistance when expressing them and feel able to pursue them with minimal challenges. However, the women must interpret their callings around the opportunities already presented to them because of the gender roles already in place within the church.

Mention of Scripture

Now that I've shown that the established gender debate does influence Mississippi College's Christian Studies students, the next two codes will help answer the question **Where do the influences stem from?** In other words, where are students getting the idea that these gender roles exist in the first place? Before I explain the two strongest influences, I want to highlight one thing that wasn't a strong influence: the Bible.

As I demonstrated in my Literature Review, the Complementarian and Egalitarian debate consists of numerous Biblical references and interpretations. Because of this, I expected one of the students' strongest influences to be the Bible, but instead I discovered the opposite to be true. Within the male focus group, the word "Bible" was said seven times, but it was only said once in the context of influencing their beliefs on gender. This occurred when Male 1 explained that he is still forming his beliefs on gender roles, and he wants to "be correct biblically", not follow a "man-made thing". Within the male focus group, the word "Bible" was said seven times, but it was only said once in the context of influencing their beliefs on gender.

Both female focus groups never mentioned the word "Bible", and only the second focus group spoke about Scripture at all. This occurred when Female 3 stated, "I think a lot of it

comes down to how people have interpreted scripture and how they believe scripture asserts the role of a woman and I believe people have interpreted it as ‘we don’t really understand what role a woman is supposed to have in the church because we don’t really understand how to interpret these scriptures but women can teach children so that’ll be fine.’” In this quote she is explaining that other people’s interpretations of Scripture have played a part in her role as a children’s minister because others have decided that children’s ministry is the best place for a woman to serve.

The takeaway from this code is that the Christian Studies Students aren’t getting their ideas about gender roles from Scripture. Though the Complementarian and Egalitarian debate centers itself around textual evidence from the Bible, students are either ignorant about those scripture passages or they are choosing not to address them. Students are getting their ideas about gender elsewhere, and in my next code, “Traditional vs Contemporary”, I’ll explain the what is actually influencing these students.

Traditional vs Contemporary

Students are influenced by their cultural backgrounds and people around them, and the two strongest influences mentioned by the students were Denominational Background and Mississippi College’s Christian Studies Department. Both of these influences were mentioned in the context of a conflict between more Traditional views on gender versus a more Contemporary mindset.

I’ll first explain how the Denominational Backgrounds influenced the participants. The male participants were more influenced by tradition than the females. The men referred to their denominations four times, expressing that their backgrounds greatly influenced their current opinions about gender roles in the church. Males 1 and 3 explained that their denominations put

limits on where women can serve in the church. Male 1 explains, “I come from a denominational background where women can be teachers and have other positions, but not a pastor, not a leadership position... I never saw a woman preach, I never had a woman teach a class I was in, I’ve only seen women work with children. I’m sure that has influenced me.”

Male 2’s denomination believes that both genders can serve in all leadership roles. He states, “I come from a denominational background that doesn’t necessarily see a reason why women can’t be in ministry.” In both of these cases, though each denomination has a different perspective, they do play a large part in the men’s current beliefs about gender, and it is hard for them to deviate from their denominations.

The women weren’t as loyal to their backgrounds, and they didn’t even mention their denominations once. They did, however, express that they believe much of the gender debate is an issue of churches not wanting to change traditions and fighting the culture. Female 3 illustrates this conflict, stating, “you have culture that’s getting away from the gender roles and then you have the church that is trying to protect the traditional roles.” She spoke of how in the church where she grew up, they believed women shouldn’t preach or hold leadership positions in the church. Until she heard a sermon by Christine Caine, a prominent female preacher, she didn’t even realize that preaching was an option for women. She now desires to preach and teach deeper doctrine, and she has grown away from her home church’s traditional beliefs about gender. Female 1 also spoke of her home church, comparing it to another church where she worked, saying that her home church didn’t provide her with as many opportunities because of its traditional viewpoint. Female 4 said that the church’s views on gender challenge her to push back. She stated, “I feel like one thing that I’ve seen that has been discouraged has been women

in pastoral roles, but in a way it has also kind of challenged me because I feel like our world is changing and we are going in a very modern direction whether people like it or not.”

The women expressed their desire to see change in the way that they answered my last focus group question. All four of them said that they would love to see more men in their fields because it would be beneficial. Female 4 recognized that there are already men serving as missionaries, and she wants that to continue. Regarding children’s ministry, Female 3 stated, “I would love to see men who are serving in children’s ministry because boys need to see men serving in children’s ministry. They need to see men serving in church just like girls need to see women serving in church. But I believe there are many times in ministry where it gets very one-sided. So I have no problems seeing a man as a children’s minister, in fact I would love that.” In Christian Counseling, both Females 1 and 2 said that if the man feels called to serve as a counselor, he should be able to without hesitation.

The men and women reacted differently to their denominational backgrounds because of how these denominations affect their abilities to serve in the church. The women are more motivated than the men to change the traditions of their denominations because they want to serve in more ministry roles. They also want to see men serving in roles that are usually given to women. The men aren’t as restricted by these traditions. In fact, they’re often at more of an advantage than the women because of them. They expressed more hesitation when asked if a woman could pursue their area of ministry because

The second influence mentioned often among my focus groups was the Christian Studies Department at Mississippi College. Both genders spoke positively about the Department, but the women indicated that they felt inadequately prepared in some areas because the Department as a whole holds onto a more traditional view of gender roles.

The men said nothing negative to say about the Department. Two out of three specifically mentioned that the professors have heavily influenced their career paths in positive ways. Male 1 states, "I've had a lot of my beliefs and views of the Bible and of God enhanced and changed for the better since I've been here." Male 2 said that the "great professors" within the department have had tremendous impact on his career choices. All three of them agreed that they feel fully equipped to serve in ministry after studying within the Christian Studies Department.

Females 1 and 2 didn't mention the department had little experience within the it. However, Females 3 and 4 both have studied within the department for a few years, so they spoke about it in detail. They spoke positively about the department, but they also said that they feel pushed towards certain careers because of the department's more traditional outlook on where women should serve in the church. Female 3 expresses a "lack of diversity", stating that "usually the idea that most people have in Christian Studies classes, whether it be a professor or other students, there's an assumption that as a woman you're going into children's ministry." Female 4 echoes this, saying that there is still a traditional mindset within the Department that women shouldn't perform other roles within ministry besides working with children and other women.

The women expressed what they believed to be the department's shortcomings, but they also suggested ways in which the department can improve when it comes to teaching women. Female 4 proposed offering a Women's Ministry class, and Female 3 expounded upon this, saying that in her experience, only one professor has even approached the topic of women in church leadership. Female 3 expressed that if the department is going to tell women that they are

limited to children's ministry, a class specifically designed for children's ministry would be helpful.

The Christian Studies Department as well as denominational influences have played large parts in forming participants' beliefs about gender roles, but with different effects. The men are benefited and content with their experiences, but the women are restricted and more willing to promote change.

Conclusion

The Complementarian and Egalitarian debate, though it focuses primarily on those already serving within ministry, does impact Christian Studies students here at Mississippi College, both male and female. Depending on where the church stands within the debate plays a large part in what ministries men and women pursue, but especially women. Men experience less resistance because of their gender, and therefore feel more prepared for ministry than women because of it.

While most researchers focus on how the gender debate affects those already in ministry, studying how it affects students is equally important because they are the future. Through this study, professors at Mississippi College and other institutions which train future ministers gain insight into what the students are experiencing and where improvements can be made. The students expressed that their professors and cultural background, rather than scripture interpretation, is making the difference in their gender opinions, which is completely different from what the Complementarian and Egalitarian debate argues. By understanding their influence on students, professors can better prepare both male and female students for what challenges they will face as they pursue their careers.

This type of research does not simply apply to Undergraduate students. It could also be conducted on Seminary students because they too are in training for ministry. Because they're one step further to full time ministry, they're more directly affected by the debate, especially the women.

This issue of gender in ministry is about more than simply letting men and women serve in the same leadership positions. It's about how the church defines equality. Does giving women and men different roles in the church still qualify as equality? Complementarians would argue yes because their inherent worth is the same. However, if men are given all of the leadership roles, are they treating women as if they are worth the same as men? The Egalitarian view defines equality as allowing men and women to perform the same roles in ministry, but does this take away the unique qualities of each gender? The church preaches that women and men are equal before God, but the question remains, do we truly practice what we preach? Unless the two sides of the debate come to some common ground and the church works together, future ministers will continue to be confused and women in the church will continue to be discouraged.

Appendix A

Volunteers needed for an ENG 471 Research Project!

Haylee Holeman, an English Writing major and Ministry Studies minor, is performing her ENG 471 Capstone Project on **the effects of gender on the areas of ministry that MC Christian Studies students pursue.**

She needs **5 males** and **5 females** to participate in Focus Groups to explain what area of ministry they are pursuing and why. Participants must be **majors or minors within the Christian Studies Department.** This includes Ministry Studies, Biblical Languages, etc. Participants must also be **interested in pursuing an area of ministry after graduation.**

Focus Groups will last for 30 minutes to an hour. The male group will meet **in Jennings 308 at 4:45pm in on Wednesday, October 10th.** The female group will meet at **4:45 on Monday, October 15th.**

If you're interested in participating, you can email Hay lee at hkholeman@mc.edu, and the first people to email her and who qualify for the study will be selected to participate.

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions:

1. What area(s) of ministry are you interested in pursuing? Why?
2. Is there a different area of ministry that you've been interested in pursuing in the past? If so, why did you decide against pursuing it?
3. Would you say that your gender has had any impact on the ministerial careers that you are or are not interested in? How?
4. Are there certain ministerial roles that you've been discouraged from pursuing because of your gender? Can you give specific examples?
5. Who or what would you say has impacted your career decisions the most, either positively or negatively?
6. What would you think of a man/woman wanting to go into your area of ministry?

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