Femininity and the Unnamed Women of the New Testament

by

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Abstract

Gender and sex are often considered to be synonymous, suggesting that males are designed to be biologically and psychologically a certain way while females are designed to be biologically and psychologically opposite and complimentary to males. As we mature and engage with society, we receive messages about what it means to be feminine or masculine from a number of sources, including family structures, media, education, jobs, interpersonal relationships, and sports. However, one area that has not been widely explored is the Bible. The Bible is highly valued in the U.S. and has great potential for communicating and reinforcing the dominant gender ideology. The purpose of this study is to investigate what the Bible communicates through stories about unnamed women in the New Testament. Results indicate that these stories reinforce patriarchy.

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Chapter I: Introduction

While Jesus was teaching one day in the temple courts, the Pharisees interrupted, dragging with them a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They forced her to stand in a front of a group of people and began telling Jesus what she had been caught doing, reminding him that the old law, which can be found in the Old Testament, commanded a woman who commits adultery must be stoned. They asked Jesus what he thought about the situation. Jesus' response was peculiar. Instead of speaking back to them immediately, he bent down and began writing in the sand. The Pharisees continued with their questions, demanding Jesus do something. Finally, Jesus stood and said to the Pharisees, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." At once, people who were watching, along with the Pharisees, began to leave one by one until eventually only Jesus and the woman were left standing in the temple courts. The woman remained silent, probably afraid of what would happen next, and Jesus said to her, "Where are they? Has no one condemned you?" Naturally, the woman said no and Jesus responds again with "Then neither do I condemn you. Go in peace and leave your life of sin."

This is a passage found in John 8:1-11. I have heard this passage my entire life, but before this study I never realized how significant Jesus' response is. This is not just a story about a woman being caught cheating on her spouse. It is not just a story about Jesus saving someone from the fatal punishment of the Pharisees. This story is much more complex and much more significant than I ever knew. This is a story about a man, whose existence has influenced societies for the past 2000 years, disrupting gender ideology.

Understanding the story from this perspective is surprising even for me, someone who grew up in church, has listened to thousands of sermons, and spent a great deal of

time personally studying the Bible. At the onset of this study, I did not expect for this theme to emerge, but instead sought to examine passages in the New Testament of the Bible about unnamed women to get a better understanding of how the Bible communicates gender, specifically femininity.

I have not always been interested in what the Bible communicates about femininity. In fact, not long ago my mind was completely closed to even discussing this topic. That changed when I read Davis (1971), who wrote an article entitled, "That's Interesting!" Reading Davis' article provoked thought for me. Gender studies directly and harshly challenged what I believed to be true about gender, about women's roles in society, and about femininity. However, I refused to believe that this challenge made me interested in gender. Nonetheless, when I spent an entire semester in a graduate Gender Communication class, it was no secret that I was constantly frustrated. I felt forced to discuss a topic with which I whole-heartedly disagreed. I dreaded class. I hated the readings. I even felt as if I was participating in some sort of blasphemy.

I grew up in an egalitarian home and my parents were unable to understand why I held such conservative views regarding gender. I believed that it was women's God-given role to cook, clean, take care of the children, and satisfy her husband's needs. I believed women were created inferior to men. I believed we could not survive without men and that our identities were and are dependent on them. Not fully understanding the implications of these statements, I was more than satisfied with this belief and spent a lot of my early life preparing to be a wife and a mother who mastered those roles. I thought it was right and Biblical.

For the most part, leading up to this time in my life, no one had ever truly challenged my views on gender. I suspect that is because many people in my area and sphere of influence agree with me. During a Gender Communication class period our discussion turned to the topic of religion, specifically Christianity. As some of my classmates began to suggest that Christianity has a profound influence on the dominant gender ideology, I became offended. While I could have formed a viable argument against my classmate's claim, I instead remained silent. This was the first time I had ever truly been challenged about what the Bible says about gender and it forced me to ask, what *does* the Bible say about gender? I knew what I had grown up hearing in church and observing in families, but I was not able to support that belief Biblically without further research.

It was at this point I realized Davis' (1971) argument for what makes something interesting is a reasonable explanation for my sudden interest in gender studies. Gender studies challenged what I believed. I started reading more, asking questions, and searching for answers. I needed affirmation that what I had believed for my entire life was true and Biblical. After all, if I claim to believe in something, such as Christianity, I should know what it means. I wondered if there was more to this newfound interest than what I initially thought. The Bible is a patriarchal text, written in a patriarchal culture and currently read by a patriarchal culture. Describing women in a way that associates certain femininity characteristics ultimately prescribes these characteristics to women today and participates in reinforcing patriarchal ideology. However, Jesus' apparent combatting of the dominant gender ideology suggests the Bible is a rich area of study.

Scholarly research on this topic is scarce. Very few people in the Communication discipline have studied the intersection between femininity and Christianity. This piqued

my interest even more. How can anyone make claims about how the Bible influences gender ideology if no one has ever studied it?

I was sitting in church one Sunday morning and the pastor was reading a passage out of the book of Esther. A particular verse caught my attention as he read the passage aloud and I remember thinking, "Wow, that was really gendered." It was that day that I decided I wanted to do a study of my own. Through more preliminary research I found that while the literature on femininity and Christianity may be extremely limited in the Communication discipline, other disciplines have addressed it. I also found that most studies that studied this intersection focused on primary female characters in the Bible, such as Mary or Mary Magdalene. This led me to wonder about the many women who are mentioned but have no name. Not providing a name contains a gender message in and of itself, but what about the rest of the story? At this, I formed my research question:

RQ: What does the Bible communicate about gender through stories of unnamed women in the New Testament?

Chapter Organization

Chapter two of this study will provide explanation about the dominant gender ideology in the U.S. Using past research as a guide, the chapter will begin with a broad overview of what the term gender means. Next, patriarchy will be explained as this concept influences most aspects of gender in a society that is male-dominated. Once the reader has had an opportunity to better understand gender and the implications of patriarchy, the chapter will narrow the topic by focusing specifically on the meaning of femininity with regards to three major themes, physical appearance, demeanor, and division of labor.

Finally, the chapter will conclude by examining past research on the intersection between femininity and Christianity.

Chapter three will provide information on the theoretical framework and methodology on which this study was conducted. The frameworks that will be discussed are social constructionism and feminist criticism. Additionally this chapter will provide an explanation of the structure of the Bible as well as more detailed background information on the specific part of the Bible chosen for the study and the New International Version, which is the translation chosen for this study.

Finally, chapter four will discuss and analyze the gender messages that emerged through the Biblical passages that were analyzed. The chapter is divided into five major sections, including patriarchy, physical appearance, demeanor, division of labor, and responses to women. Each of these sections contain the associated Biblical passages discussed in full detail followed by an interpretation of what these passages mean in terms of gender.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Before conducting an analysis, it is important to review research that has been done on the topic prior to the current study. The purpose of this chapter is to review previous research on gender communication in order to establish a common definition of gender and femininity as well as review literature concerning the cross section of gender communication and the Bible. The literature review will serve as a starting point for the current study and will provide criteria by which the data in this study will be analyzed. By using criteria from past research, I will be able to answer the current research question, which is:

RQ: What does the Bible communication about gender through stories of unnamed women in the New Testament?

Before moving forward to literature on gender, Christianity, and the Bible, it is important to first define gender. I will discuss and define gender by differentiating it from sex, which is often closely associated. Then I will explain how gender is communicated through masculinity and femininity, with a particular focus on the communication of femininity in U.S. society.

Sex and Gender

In some cultures, whether or not an individual is born a male or a female may be insignificant. However, in U.S. culture the sex of someone may be one of her/his most defining characteristic. A common misconception in U.S. culture is that sex and gender are synonymous, meaning the two words are often misused or substituted (Horan, Houser, & Cowan, 2007). For example, on many forms seeking demographic information, sex and gender are used interchangeably. Some forms may use the word sex and other forms may

use the word gender, while both are ultimately seeking the same piece of information. These questions are typically closed-ended, leaving the participant the option to choose female or male, but sex and gender are not interchangeable. The terms represent two separate characteristics with their own distinctly different meanings.

It is important to establish the distinction between sex and gender. The term "sex" directly refers to the anatomical male or female parts in the reproductive system of the body. It is a physiological classification of an individual as male or female. In other words, biology generally determines whether one is male or female (Daly, 2002; Holmes, 2009). This characteristic does not require any effort or decision making to acquire. Under most circumstances sex is assigned at birth based on the pairing of chromosomes during gestation, which guides the development of the sexual organs. In addition to chromosome pairing, hormones are present that influence development through gestation and throughout life. These hormones influence sexual differentiation and then later influence the body as it matures, such as menstruation, body hair growth, and fat tissue, to name a few (Rosenbury, 2007; Tavris, 1993).

While anatomy may be different for a male and female, that does not necessarily imply that an individual will behave in ways that are a result of a particular sex. Unlike sex, gender is learned. Instead of being an acquired biological trait, gender is an expression of unwritten socially learned behaviors, rules, and norms that people follow according to the sociocultural expectations associated with a particular set of genetic and biological factors. For men, the socially assigned gender is masculinity. For women, the socially assigned gender is femininity (e.g., Holmes, 2009; Knoblach-Westerwick & Hoplamazian, 2012; Rose, Mackey-Kallis, Shyles, Barry, Biagini, Hart, & Jack, 2012). Most people follow their gender

scripts without putting much thought into it. It is an extremely familiar part of everyday life, so much so that gendered behavior is typically only noted when it does not follow socioculturally prescribed scripts (Lorber, 2007).

Gender norms are defined differently in each culture, and the way an individual learns to communicate gender is dependent on what the culture values (Holmes, 2009). In U.S. culture, masculinity and femininity are opposite, yet complimentary, involving both communal and agentic characteristics (Eagly, 1987). Masculinity is associated with agentic characteristics such as strength, aggressiveness, independence, rationality, and intellect. On the other hand, femininity is associated with communal characteristics, including being relational, nurturing, emotional, polite, and physically attractive (Platt, 2009; Spence & Buckner, 2000).

Though there are distinct differences between sex and gender, many believe there is an innate correlation between the two. The theory of biological essentialism holds that the division of the sexes is biologically ordained, meaning the pairing of chromosomes that occurs during gestation and the hormones present before, during, and after birth dictate how an individual will behave, how s/he will think, and in what s/he will be interested (Bem, 1993). Traditionally, gender essentialism has dominated gender ideology in America, maintaining that men and women are fundamentally different by design, both anatomically and psychologically. From this perspective, sex and gender are synonymous and feminine and masculine traits are innate and fixed (Platt, 2009). If this is true, then a male will "naturally" have masculine traits and a female will "naturally" have feminine traits.

Since culture is such an influential factor in how an individual learns to behave, it is ultimately difficult to know whether or not biological essentialism is accurate. Gender

norms are strong enough that in many instances, it appears as if gender identities are fixed at an early age (West, 1987). However, it is important to consider that if gender distinctions were a result of genetic, physiological, or hormonal circumstances, then gender ambiguity would only occur in hermaphrodites (Lorber, 1994). A possible reason the essentialist perspective has remained could be that it supports the demands of a patriarchal society. It may be easier to surrender to a biological theory that upholds a culture's values than to upset and imbalance the common and dominant ideology.

The dominant ideology in America is patriarchal and androcentric. In other words, social organization in America revolves around male dominance and people generally tend to believe that this cultural ideology is the best way to organize social structure (Holmes, 2009). Patriarchy is a social development that began thousands of years ago in ancient cultures, was maintained through Western cultures and brought to the U.S., where it continues to dominate today. Patriarchal societies institutionalize male dominance and power over women and children in all of the important areas of society. This dominance and power normalizes gender roles that constitute femininity and masculinity (Farrelly, 2011; Lerner, 1986). Traces of patriarchy are manifested in U.S. society in innumerable ways, including family structure, salaries, education, communication behaviors, and religion (Atkin, 1993; Ceci & Williams, 2009; Colaner, 2009; Kantrowitz, 2005; Lucas & Steimael, 2009; Wilcox & Nock, 2006).

For thousands of years and in most cultures that have been studied, it has been documented that women participate in their own subordination. As girls and women are taught that their identity and role exists in relation to men, they learn dependence and become unaware of their potential for independence (Lerner, 1986). Women in the U.S.

continue to participate in constructing a gendered society by way of communication and ultimately maintain patriarchy.

One major way patriarchy has manifested in U.S. culture is through the public/private divide. The distinction between the theory behind the public sphere and the private sphere initially referred to the set of divisible boundaries that were difficult to explain but ultimately separated two spaces (Kaufer, Parry-Giles, & Klebanov, 2012). The private sphere refers to any space that requires special justification when intrusion occurs. The public sphere refers to any space that access is easily justifiable. As scholarship has progressed, scholars have uncovered the gendered overtones associated with the public/private divide (Okin, 1998). In a culture where male dominance is the norm, women are assigned to the private sphere, leaving them primarily responsible for the home.

While sex and gender are often considered synonymous, they are distinctly different. Sex refers to the anatomical part of the reproductive system and gender refers to the expression of a set of learned behaviors, rules, and norms. In U.S. society, men are taught to express masculine traits, such as strength, aggressiveness, and independency. Women are taught to express feminine traits, such as being relational, nurturing, emotional, polite, and physically attractive. Understanding the distinction between sex and gender is difficult because we are taught to communicate the gender associated with our sex from the very beginning of our lives. Next, I will discuss how gender is communicated.

Communicating Gender

Communication is central to the process through which an individual learns to behave in ways that are in accordance with societal norms. Gender, like all other social constructs, is acquired through interaction, one of the most common, mundane, yet critical

human experiences. Carey's (2008) explanation of the ritual view of communication in conjunction with the concept of social construction is useful in understanding how gender is communicated.

When analyzing communication through a ritual view, one is able to conceive communication as the "maintenance of society in time" (Carey, 2008, p. 15). As individuals in a culture interact, communication produces and maintains an ordered, meaningful social world that can in turn controls human action. This focus on communication is less about the transmission of a message and more about the ways in which communication creates fellowship, association, and shared beliefs (Carey, 1975). In U.S. culture, gender is communicated in such a way that shared beliefs are produced about how men and women should behave. These shared beliefs are labeled femininity and masculinity.

The process through which gender is communicated is complex. It may be analyzed on individual, cultural, and social levels. By interacting with other people in a culture or society, an individual develops an identity, learns about society's expectations, and learns how to effectively communicate with others. Each interaction gives the individual insight into how others view him or her, a concept referred to as "the looking glass self" (Yeung & Martin, 2003, p. 843) An individual's experience with the looking glass self are compiled into the generalized other, a self-concept that allows the individual to develop, maintain, or transform his or her identity (Lucas & Steimael, 2009).

On the individual level, one develops a gendered identity through social interaction. However, the individual only is able to develop a gendered identity through social interaction because gender is a social construction of society. As mentioned before, gender is an expression of socially learned behaviors that people follow according to the norms

that exist within a particular culture (Rose et al., 2012). People participate in gender every day through social interaction, whether they are aware of this participation or not (West & Zimmerman, 1987). By understanding the concept of social construction, gender as a social construct can be more thoroughly understood as well as how it persists in a culture.

Social construction is a process that occurs over a long period of time and is one way through which people come to understand knowledge about the social world. Society is an on-going dialectical process in which individuals are both the producer and the product of society, constantly influencing and being influenced by the social world around them (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Storr, 2010). In this dialectical process, the identity of something is established by how it is talked about, with specific attention to the language that is used to conceptualize it, and how social groups orient themselves to a common experience with it (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). As the dialectical process between individuals and the social world has remained in cycle, routine patterns of habitualized actions occur. Societies, in turn, institutionalize and label these habitualizations as general knowledge for future generations to view as "objective knowledge" (Andrews, 2012; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). One example of the resulting "objective reality" is gender or, more precisely, what U.S. culture has come to understand as gender.

Individuals learn about and participate in communicating gender in multiple contexts. Before a child is even born, engendering has already begun. From name assignments to the color of the onsie a baby wears home from the hospital, and even the congratulatory greeting cards the parents receive, children are bombarded with engenderment right out of the womb (Lorber, 2007; Wilier, 2001). As the child grows over the first few years of its life, it learns about gender from its parents. In a family that adheres

to the dominant gender ideology in America, women are "naturally" warmer, more nurturing, and more protective of their children, while men are more likely to roughhouse, challenge, and push their children into the harsh reality of the real world (Platt, 2009). Research about gender communication in family structures is extensive, including, but not limited to, parent-child relationships (Colaner, 2009; Few-Demo, Lloyd, & Allen, 2014; Yerby, 1995), allocation of household responsibilities (Craig & Sawrikar, 2009; Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Forste & Fox, 2012; Medved & Rawlins, 2011; Odenweller, Rittenour, Myers, & Brann, 2013), and same-sex families (Schulenberg, 1985; Sullivan, 1996; Tasker, 2010).

In addition to family structures, another major source of gendered messages are the media. The term media is used loosely here, encompassing a variety of media from television to books to social networking. Like family, media messages are gendered. Many sitcoms and movies feature female and male characters who possess stereotypical gender roles. Television advertisements script language differently when addressing females and males (Johnson & Young, 2002). Individuals using on social networking sites carefully construct messages to communicate their gender identity (Consalvo, 2006; Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis, & Kruck, 2012). Indeed the research on gender in media is vast and includes a wide variety of contexts, specifically focusing on how individuals use media in a gendered way, how media produce gendered messages, and how men and women are portrayed in the media (Barker-Plummer, 2013; Billings, Angelini, MacArthur, Bissell, Smith, & Brown, 2014; Del Saz-Rubio & Pennock-Speck, 2009; Gauntlett, 2008; Herring, 2008; Holland, 2006; Jackson, Ervin, Gardner, & Schmitt, 2001; Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008; Pedelty & Kuecker, 2014; Rose et al, 2012; Scharrer, 2001).

In addition to all of the research that has already been conducted on gender and the media, the Bible presents a new area of study. The Bible may be considered a form of media and is a highly influential text in U.S. culture. Individuals in all levels of the social hierarchy read it, from common folk to opinion leaders. Therefore, messages it communicates about gender may arguably produce the same gendered effects on society as other media forms that have been extensively studied.

Although family structure and media are arguably two of the first and most prominent sources through which individuals receive gendered messages, there are also other areas that scholars have examined to better understand how gender is communicated, such as education (Ceci & Williams, 2009; Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Pearson & West, 1991; Richmond & Gorham, 1988; Younger & Warrington, 2007), jobs (Holland, 2006; Lucas & Steimel, 2009 Spitzack & Carter, 1987), interpersonal relationships (Burleson, 2003; Cicchirillo & Roberto, 2012; Wright, 2011), and sports (Billings, Halone, & Denham, 2002; Billings et al, 2014; Delorme, 2014; Oates & Durham, 2004; Whiteside & Rightler-McDaniels, 2013). The relationship between gender and communication is well researched. Surprisingly, however, there has been remarkably little communication research on arguably one of the most important communication texts in western civilization: the Bible.

Femininity

Gender continues to be an ever-evolving social construct and femininity is a state women are continuously seeking to improve (Black & Sharma, 2001). In U.S. culture women are taught that the feminine woman is normal, accepted, appreciated, and respected, thus creating a drive in many women to achieve femininity (Krane, Choi, Baird,

Aimar, & Kauer, 2004). The norms associated with each gender may not be as rigid as they were decades ago, but gender polarization is still very much intact. Femininity is distinctly different from and opposite of masculinity (Bem, 1993; Spence & Buckner, 2000). For the purposes of this study, the focus will now shift from a broad view of gender to a more specific view of femininity.

What does it mean to be feminine in U.S. culture? Already it has been established that femininity exists in relation to masculinity, as a complementary set of behaviors (Eagly, 1987). In order to be considered feminine, a female should internalize the cultural values associated with femininity and then construct her identity according to those values (Dey, 2012). How femininity is defined may vary slightly from person to person, but research indicates some commonalities associated with being feminine, which can be condensed to three broad themes: physical appearance, demeanor, and the division of labor.

Physical Appearance

The female body is the symbol of femininity and for centuries, women have shaped their bodies according to patriarchal desires (Dey, 2012). Being feminine requires much more effort than being masculine. In fact, women are under much more pressure to strive for the ideal beauty as society defines it (Rich & Cash, 1993). Women cinch their bodies into corsets, shoes, and clothing that is uncomfortable, even painful, in order to both satisfy cultural expectations of femininity and to reify those expectations. They have to paint, moisturize, deodorize, decorate, and de-hair their bodies daily to achieve femininity. A great deal of time and money are expended in women's attempts to achieve cultural ideals of feminine beauty.

The need is so great, in fact, that billion-dollar industries are centered around beauty. Women go to beauty salons and see beauty therapists to tweak and change the things about them that do not fit the feminine "ideal" (Black & Sharma, 2001). A woman's hair is one characteristic that is particularly associated with feminine beauty, such as length, color, and style. Hair is easily manipulated and can provide immediate results when attempting to conform the body to certain standards, therefore, hair is a characteristic that women spend a great deal of time and effort maintaining (Rich & Cash, 1993).

Being feminine also means being thin, toned, and shorter than men (Brownmiller, 1984; Krane et al, 2004; Rodrigues, 2012). In most retail stores, clothes are displayed on mannequins wearing clothing sizes that are considerably smaller than the average size for women in the U.S. (Wood, 2003). To achieve or maintain the ideal body type, women exercise, diet, and sometimes even undergo cosmetic surgery to alter their bodies (Davis, 1995; Lirola & Chovanec, 2012). However, being thin and toned has parameters. Women athletes, for example, have to ensure that while they are fit and toned they are not too muscular, for muscularity is associated with masculinity and is discouraged in the pursuit of femininity (Krane et al., 2004).

The media are a prominent and powerful source for communicating the gendered ideal of femininity. By carefully structuring the words, images, metaphors, descriptions, and visuals of femininity, the media provide cultural opinions and standards for women to consume and enact (Basnyat & Chang, 2014; Dey, 2012). Magazines are a particularly rich source for articulating the ideal feminine body. Pictures of thin, sometimes impossibly thin, women are often displayed with additional advice on how to achieve the perfect body (Markula, 2001; Milkie, 2002).

More than just keeping the physical body in shape and grooming, femininity and fashion are also intertwined and mutually reinforcing as clothing is one representation of how society defines femininity (Rolley, 1990). For women, clothing is more than simple garments that cover the body. Clothing choices are also made based on socially constructed gender norms (Lunceford, 2010). Feminine clothing is typically small and restraining, yet it also shows off the curves of the body and it often produces sounds we've learned to associate with femininity, such as the click of high heels or the jingling of bracelets (Brownmiller, 1984).

Demeanor

Along with an ideal body type, femininity is expected to communicate a certain demeanor. The way femininity is enacted and the attitude a woman projects into the world is important for communicating gender. Though this aspect of femininity is evolving, there are a few prominent characteristics of feminine demeanor. To be feminine, a person must be caring, relational, and emotional.

Women are the caregivers in U.S. culture (Dummer, 2007) and communicate femininity by caring for children, husbands, elderly relations, friends, and neighbors and possibly even additional volunteer work at schools, churches, or other organizations (DeVault, 1994). This is a characteristic that requires high levels of selflessness, as many mothers, wives, and assorted caregivers put aside many of their own needs in order to care for those around them and satisfy the demands of femininity. This characteristic of femininity goes beyond the scope of the individual's daily life. It is so deeply ingrained in culture that evidence of it can be seen in the professional world. Research has shown that

women's career choices are gendered. Professions that involve caretaking, such as nursing and teaching, are held predominantly by women (Dummer, 2007).

Women are also the carriers of relational strength in U.S. society. As part of exercising her culturally assigned gender, a woman is responsible for creating and maintaining relational connections and meeting the basic relational needs of those around her. This feminine attribute is particularly important because men are taught that to be masculine is to deny and devalue relational skills. Therefore, women's relational strength and responsibility is heavily relied on, whether this dependency is acknowledged or not (Fletcher, 2001). The relationship between femininity and being relational has been found in research, showing that women are much more likely to engage in relational maintenance strategies than are men (e.g., Stafford, Dainton, & Haas, 2000). For example, in her quest to take care of her family, a woman may prepare dinner, but rather than simply providing food, she also may insist the family all eat together as a relationship maintenance exercise (Chitakunye & Maclaran, 2014).

Not just caregivers and the sources of relational strength, women are also the emotional laborers in society. While varying in degree, there are certain emotions that are strongly associated with femininity. Some of these emotions are being excitable in minor crises, being easily influenced, sentimentality, and getting feelings hurt easily. Patriarchal ideology argues these emotions are "normal" for women. Conversely, for men to exercise them is detrimental to their masculinity. Women should not show anger, for being angry may dent their attractiveness. Additionally, femininity is strongly associated with desire for whimsical, fairytale love stories and a strong, undeniable love for any and all babies (Brownmiller, 1984). While it is expected for women to spend a lot of time thinking about

and maintaining romantic relationships, a woman should only be emotionally or romantically involved with one man. Involving herself with multiple men risks her feminine identity because having multiple partners is strongly associated with masculinity (Lorber, 2007).

Relationality is so important to femininity that women are culturally defined according to their relationships with others. The most common way that women are defined in this way is through the stereotype of mothers. Figuratively speaking, through the role of mothers women are expected to take on the emotional labor in society and act as caretakers. Literally speaking, assuming the mother role results in women experiencing discrimination in the work force (Wood, 2011).

Division of Labor

Femininity is defined as being caring, relational, and emotional and these characteristics are so associated with femininity that the career paths for women are directly affected. One way these feminine attributes are communicated in daily life is in the division of labor. When the work of a day job is completed, the housework and childcare make up a "second shift" in the home. Hochschild & Machung (2012) and others have examined the "second shift" to determine how labor is divided between husbands and wives at home and have generally found that the division of labor is consistent with the socially and culturally constructed gendered norms, maintaining that the home is the woman's domain. One notion that has emerged from this research is the ideal "supermom." A supermom is a woman who works outside the home during the day, then comes home to her second shift to complete house work, take care of the children, and meet the needs of

her family, all while being efficient, organized, energetic, bright, and confident (Hochschild & Machung, 2012).

Research uncovered culture's assignments of housework and childcare to women. Women are far more responsible for care than are men and perform the bulk of housework (Chodorow, 1995; Erickson, 2005). One particular area that seems to be intimately tied to femininity in all aspects is food (Cronin, McCarthy, Newcombe, & McCarthy, 2014). As stated before, one way femininity is communicated is through loving and caring for others. Grocery shopping, managing recipes, and preparing meals are all "acts of love" that women are expected to do to maintain their feminine identity. In fact, if a woman does not cook, she may be seen as abnormal or a bad wife and mother (DeVault, 1991).

As they are primarily responsible for childcare, women are typically stereotyped as mothers (Wood, 2011). Motherhood and ambition are closely related in society (Brownmiller, 1984). This stereotype has bled into the professional world, where women are expected to take on the emotional labor for those in the workforce. For example, part of being feminine in the working world is smiling, preparing coffee and snacks, listening to others' problems, and supporting and helping others. Additionally, there are certain jobs that are traditionally feminine, such as secretaries, clerks, primary school teachers, nurses, nannies, and administrative assistants, all of which involve serving and/or caring for others (Wood, 2011).

Gender is acquired through interaction. Through this interaction, shared beliefs are produced about how men and women should behave and the result is femininity and masculinity. Individuals learn about gender beginning at birth and continue to learn how to express his or her assigned gender throughout the lifespan. In U.S. culture, femininity is

communicated in three general ways. To appropriately express femininity, women must adhere to norms associated with physical appearance, demeanor, and the division of labor. This concept has been studied in many contexts. One context that is lacking in research, however, is the intersection between gender and Christianity. Next, I will discuss gender in relation to Christianity.

Gender and Christianity

The intersection between gender and communication has been studied in many contexts, such as media, family structures, education, jobs, sports, language, and interpersonal communication. However, a particularly unexplored area is the intersection between gender communication and the Bible, which is the focus area for this study. This section reviews previous research on gender and religion, paying particularly close attention to studies involving the Bible. The literature that will be reviewed for this study will pertain specifically to the juncture of gender, Christianity and communication.

The scope of scholarship on religious studies is large and interdisciplinary. However, research on gender and religion from a communication perspective has not been widely studied. Although there appears to be a strong link between religion and gender, it is an area that remains largely undeveloped in the communication discipline. Between the years 1999 and 2009, only ten articles addressed the connection between gender, communication, and religion in the *Journal of Communication and Religion* (Sterk, 2010). Gender role research has largely been conducted without regard to religion, although it has not been completely neglected (Colaner, 2009).

Within the limited field of communication research on gender and Christianity, three main ideologies have emerged through scholarship which characterize the discourse

on gender and the Bible, all of which differ in the meaning of gender (Colaner, 2009; Scholz, 2005). These ideologies are complentarianism, egalitarianism, and evangelical. The most widely accepted of these is complementarianism, which is often referred to as traditionalism. Complementarians believe in the equality of men and women, however they also believe there are distinct and separate responsibilities for both men and women in the church and in society (Scholz, 2005). This view is the most conservative of the three ideologies, interpreting Biblical passages regarding marriage literally and maintaining that men have the ultimate authority and responsibility in marriage (Colaner, 2009). To achieve mature manhood, men must engage in Biblical headship, which makes them responsible for leadership and teaching both at home and in the church. To achieve mature womanhood, a woman must practice Biblical submission to her husband, which involves submitting to her husband's authority and rule over her (Scholz, 2005).

On the opposite end of the spectrum from complentarianism, egalitarianism is often associated with feminism. Egalitarians reject the "equal but different" beliefs of the complementarians and believe that the Bible supports the equal participation of women in church and society (Scholz, 2005). Egalitarianism supports equality in church and society and also in all aspects of life, including the home and the professional world (Colaner, 2009). Despite their belief that God gives each individual person gifts to be used in his kingdom, success for the egalitarian view has been scarce since many churches still do not ordain women ministers (Scholz, 2005). Additionally, egalitarians form their view of God around the notion that God is devoid of gender. God is neither male nor female and to speak of God in terms of having a gender identity may be considered blasphemous (Spencer, 2010).

Finally, evangelicals exist on the spectrum between complementarianism and egalitarianism. Evangelicalism is less developed than the others. It becomes difficult to explain what evangelicals believe because there is no set belief system or cohesiveness, but instead a wide range of individualism. Evangelicals hold their own individual views, some of which are cohesive while others are not. Instead of being traditionalists or feminists, some evangelicals believe that the two extremes established by the complementarians and egalitarians have created issues in North American societies as the Bible is becoming depatriarchalized. As a result of this depatriarchalization, they argue, fathering is no longer a cultural achievement and many fathers are no longer taking responsibility for their families, leaving mothers alone to raise children (Scholz, 2005).

Gender, Religion, and Culture

A common misconception is that religion is one of the foundations on which patriarchy was built. However, religion was not the cause of patriarchy. Like patriarchy, religion is also a development of culture (Miller, 2013). In fact, religion developed around a male-dominated society, so if religion is eliminated, a patriarchal society will still exist (Lerner, 1986). Instead, religion and patriarchy may be seen as independent constructions of society that continually reinforce and influence each other. Before Christianity, there were polytheism and fertility goddesses. Since then, religion has evolved and the move toward patriarchy is merely a reflection of a change in culture, not a change in religion (Miller, 2013).

In the same way that religion may communicate patriarchy, it also may communicate masculinity and femininity. Gender is a central characteristic of culture and, therefore, it may be inferred that individuals already have a sense of the gender identity

that culture imposes on them prior to their experience with religion. Religion, or Christianity in this case, communicates the socially and culturally constructed definitions of gender. Additionally, because every Christian is either identified as male or female and have thus been assigned a particular gender role by society, their ability to identify with Biblical characters will be skewed by a predisposition to gender ideology (Sterk, 1989).

Few scholars have studied a direct link between Christianity and the construction of femininity and masculinity. Much of the literature pertaining to femininity involves the depiction of God as a woman or existing with feminine characteristics (Engelsman, 1994; Greeley, 1977; Lopez-Corvo, 1997; Mollenkott, 1983). Francis (2005) sought to determine if being religious was related to femininity by producing surveys that measure the correlation between gender orientation and attitude toward Christianity. The study found that being female has a significant effect on predicting how religious one will be. Clines (1995) analyzed the David story in the Bible to better understand the construction of masculinity in western cultures. By exploring the areas of approval, success, warfare, beauty, and sex, Clines compares what is known about masculinity today to how masculinity is constructed through the David story, finding very similar themes.

Gender and Religion in Communication

Though few studies have specifically examined how femininity and masculinity are communicated and constructed through religion, the intersection of gender and religion has been studied in a variety of contexts, such as rhetoric, family structures, media, and language. Casey (2000) analyzed speeches from female public speakers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Casey's analysis discusses the origins of egalitarian gender ideology and argues that women claimed that their authority came from God, not rule

established by the church or society. Casey also argued that there was a strong rejection in these speeches of patriarchy and racism, which many women criticized as ungodly. Gayle and Lattin (1997) analyzed sermons by Mary Ashton Rice Livermore, who was an early advocate of Biblical equality for women in the nineteenth century. Gayle & Lattin (1997) argued that Livermore began the battle for woman's suffrage in religion by arguing that there is no Biblical passage that can be fairly constructed as opposing women's suffrage. Livermore successfully convinced many people that she was right by using the Bible to help her audiences understand women's rightful place in religious communities.

Spencer (2007) argued that the rhetoric within a religious community should be studied in order to understand gender identity. Much like Sterk (2010), Spencer (2007) suggests a deficiency in scholarly research in the area of gender communication and religion, and instead builds an argument based on an accumulation of research from multiple disciplines. Using symbolic interactionism and muted group theory, Spencer analyzed sermons given by U.S. Protestant pastors to better understand the relationship between religious rhetoric and gender identity. Overall, Spencer found that the most common religious messages are gender neutral and while it may still be impossible for a pastor to avoid communicating gender all together, it is possible that many pastors are sensitive to issues associated with gendered messages.

Surprisingly, gender, Christianity, and the media have received very little research. In one of the few examples, Warren (2002) analyzed a popular video series called *Veggie Tales*, which presents Bible stories in a way that is relatable to children. Warren argued that children are encouraged to identify with the vegetable characters, through which they learn about social norms. The characters are predominantly male characters and tend to

occupy positions of authority. In another analysis of religious media messages, Clawson (2005) studied both secular and Christian romance novels and found that gender was a significant source of difference between the two. Christian romance novels are more inclined to promote domesticity than secular romance novels, but they also tend to exhibit a less worldly form of masculinity. The masculinity projected in Christian novels generally depicts more expressive and less assertive behaviors.

In addition to rhetoric and media, gender and religion have also been studied in family structures. Colaner (2009) focused on the gender ideologies of evangelical communities in regard to family communication. Colaner explained that evangelical Christians are not unified regarding their positions on a spectrum between complementarianism and egalitarianism, but instead individually identify as neutral or leaning toward one side of the spectrum. Through this study, Colaner was able to examine how multiple evangelical families communicate gender in relation to the family's orientation on the ideological spectrum. Families who identify more with the gender ideology of complentarianism encourage conformity and like-mindedness in attitudes and beliefs. These families may participate in conflict avoidance, the silencing of opposing opinions, and a hierarchical structure within the family. On the other hand, families that identify more with the gender ideologies of egalitarianism may reject a hierarchical structure, promote equality between the husband and wife, and engage in communication patterns that are more conversation-oriented.

A final area in which gender, religion and communication has been studied is language. Curry & Groenendyk (2006) analyzed the differences in how women and men spoke in seminaries, particularly in regard to attitudes about the environment. They found

that women display a much more affective or communal relationship to the environment, while men display a much more instrumental or agentic point of view. Bate (1981) conducted a semiotic analysis of religious rhetoric with a specific focus on language. In this study, four advantages of inclusive language were identified. By using inclusive language, women will understand that they are included as members of the community and will be able see themselves and each other as more valuable. Eventually, women will begin to take on leadership roles within the church and the attitudes of men will change, becoming more inclusive of women. Bate additionally argues that there are issues with using exclusive language that promotes a patriarchal image of God. One issue is that exclusive language will legitimate the oppression of women.

Gender and the Bible

In general, the scholarship on gender and Christianity is lacking. A few studies have explored the relationship between gender and the Bible. These studies are very few, but include the analysis of specific Bible characters, some of which are from a feminist perspective, as well as examination of translations of the Bible.

In an analysis of the Old Testament, Sterk (1989) argued that women are typically presented in three roles: wife, slave, or mother of men who are important in the lineage of Christ. The women depicted in the Old Testament are usually seen as private, but either enhance or interfere with a man's work. In the beginning of the Old Testament, such as in the Creation story, women possess equality with men and are given names, but as the scripture progresses, fewer and fewer women are named. In the same study, Sterk (1989) also analyzed the New Testament with the same criteria. Sterk argues women in the New Testament are restored to their original position of equality. Along with equality, women in

the New Testament are seen as more than a domestic aid, but instead also travel with Jesus and are depicted as important financial supporters of his ministry. Sterk's argument is supported with scriptural examples of Jesus welcoming women as followers and being presented as dear friends of his. However, despite the attention that New Testament writers give women, Sterk (1989) argued that contemporary Christian teaching gives very little attention to the women who played key roles.

Along with Clines' (1995) study on the David story and the construction of masculinity, Dalton (1995) analyzed the story of Hagar in the Old Testament. This study specifically focuses on how Hagar's story is portrayed by both male and female writers. Through examining three explanations given by three writers, Dalton (1995) argued that all three writers present the story of Hagar with gendered voices. One writer, a male, explains Hagar's story in such a way that the readers will accept it without question. This gendered voice, Dalton suggests, is possibly an unconscious one. The other two writers, both female, depict Hagar as a slave woman and as a victim. Both of their explanations of the story encourage the reader to question and reexamine the meaning behind the story.

Many scholars have analyzed the Bible from a feminist perspective. Daly's (1985) *Beyond God the Father* is considered to be a foundational feminist critique of religion. Daly (1985) addressed androcentrism in Western Christian culture by pointing directly to the patriarchal nature of God as he is depicted in the Bible and in human imagination. Daly argues that many of our societal roles reflect the patriarchal characteristics associated with God, such as a husband's dominance over a wife.

Fiorenza (2009) developed foundational steps for feminist Biblical interpretation, a process of consciousness-raising. Fiorenza argues that this approach to interpretation is an

opportunity for women to grow in feminist awareness. It is important for women to recognize that their inferiority and oppression in society is structural and political, not personal. This idea is fundamental, yet countercultural as the gender ideology is so ingrained in U.S. society. These steps for feminist Biblical interpretation, which Miller (2009) outlined, may be applied to any feminist scholarship, not just Biblical interpretation. The first step in this process is learning to not take the Bible literally. The second step is questioning how we have been taught to read the Bible and other patriarchal texts. The third step is overcoming roadblocks to consciousness. The fourth step is developing resistant readers by reflecting critically on personal experience. Finally, the fifth step is developing liberating and emancipatory theologies and actions.

Miller (2004) examined a passage in the Gospel of Mark (Mark 16:1-8), which involves three women who are present at Jesus' crucifixion and again at his tomb. These three women are referenced periodically throughout the Gospels and arguably are qualified to be considered disciples of Jesus. Miller discussed previous arguments in feminist scholarship about how the Gospel of Mark ends with these women fleeing in fear after hearing the news of Jesus' resurrection. Some scholars argue that the author of Mark purposefully ended the gospel on a note of human failure by the women, which suggests that the author did not want to portray women more positively than men. Miller (2004) instead argued that the silence of these women at the end of the gospel simply points to the difference in power between God and humankind.

While some scholars have chosen to analyze particular passages in the Bible, others have chosen to analyze particular translations of the Bible. Clason (2006) examined a translation of the Bible called Today's New International Version (TNIV), which is a gender-

inclusive Bible translation. Responding to a call from the evangelical communities, the publishers of the New International Version decided to review the translation and produce a new translation that better accommodated the contemporary audience. The new version, TNIV, excludes the generic he. Clason (2006) reviewed and explained the debate about the gender inclusive translation and ultimately argues that dismissal of the generic he does not devalue God and scripture.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of scholarly literature on gender studies and defined the dominant gender ideology in U.S. society, with a particular focus on femininity. Additionally, it investigated the cross section of gender communication and the Bible. This cross section includes studies that have analyzed Biblical passages for messages about masculinity and femininity, as well as gender roles. I also discussed studies that approached the Bible from a feminist perspective and gendered messages within certain translations of the Bible. Due to a lack of research in this area, additional areas of study were reviewed to better understand how the concept of gender has been explored through research with regard to religion, including rhetoric, family structures, media, and language.

Chapter III: Method and Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter provided an overview of scholarly literature on gender studies and defined the dominant gender ideology in U.S. society, with a particular focus on femininity. Additionally, it investigated the cross section of gender communication and the Bible. Due to a lack of research in this area, additional areas of study were reviewed to better understand how the concept of gender has been explored through research with regard to religion, including rhetoric, family structures, media, interpersonal communication and language. Before analyzing passages to understand what the Bible communicates about gender, the methodology of this study must be addressed. I will begin by explaining the structure of the Bible and its historical relevance in U.S. society. Next I briefly explain social constructionism and feminist criticism, which will serve as the theoretical foundation. Finally, I will explain the Biblical passages that will specifically be analyzed in this study.

The Bible

The Bible is considered the central text for growing in the Christian religion and in faith. Christianity is rooted in historical events rather than an ideological foundation. If stripped of these events, which are recorded in the Bible, Christianity as a faith would be stripped of its primal elements (Niswonger, 1992). Because the Bible is so vital in the lives of Christians, it is important to understand what the Bible communicates in order to understand how messages in the Bible influence communication in daily life and in society.

Old Testament

In total, the Bible contains sixty-six books written by forty-four different authors across the span of roughly 2000 years. The sixty-six books are divided into two major sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament consists of thirty-nine books and makes up roughly three fourths of the whole Bible. The first book, Genesis, is estimated to have been written roughly two thousand years before the first book of the New Testament was written (Wegner, 2004). These books capture a two thousand year history of Israel, beginning with the creation of the world (in its earlier books) and expanding to around 400 B.C. (Rendtorff, 1991).

The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament can be divided into four general sections (Dorsey, 1999). The first five books comprise what many refer to as "The Law."[1] Throughout these five books the Israelites are given instruction and requirements for becoming God's people. Including mostly narratives, it begins with the creation of the world and ends with the Israelites' entrance to their promised land by God. The next twelve books are referred to as "historical" because each contributes to recording Israel's history.[2] The third division of the Old Testament is made up of five books following the historical books. These books are referred to as "Poetry,"[3] perhaps because the scripture in them frequently provokes emotion from the reader. More than one third of the Old Testament is considered to be poetic in nature in addition to the recording of history. Finally, the last seventeen books of the Old Testament following the poetic books are referred to as "The

[1] The books included in "The Law" are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
[2] The books included in the historical section of the Old Testament are Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.
[3] The books included in the "Poetry" are Job, Psalm, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

Prophets."[4] These books record Israel's history as it happens as well as providing guidance to future generations (Wegner, 2004).

New Testament

The New Testament consists of twenty-seven books and makes up the remaining fourth of the whole Bible. While the Old Testament developed over the span of two thousand years, the New Testament was written over a much smaller timeframe, estimated at roughly forty-six years, beginning in 49 A.D. and ending roughly in 95 A.D. However, the books are not arranged in chronological order. Like the Old Testament, the New Testament records history, particularly the life of Jesus from birth, through his death and resurrection, and to the future when he will return. While it contains some narratives, New Testament books are mostly comprised of letters written between people or groups of people, a majority being written by the same person. The letters are typically very formal and structured, often compared to sermons (Spivey, Smith & Black, 2013).

The New Testament is divided into four general sections. The first section includes four books and is widely known as "The Gospels."[5] There is no way to know the true author of these four books because the books were not written with intentions of becoming part of the Bible (Blomberg, 2009). The purpose of the gospels is to provide accounts of Jesus' teachings and ministry (Wegner, 2004). More specifically, the gospels have been classified as ancient biographies, which present somewhat different information than do modern biographies, but still serve as a mode for recording history. There is some debate about whether or not ancient biographies are reliable because the writers of these documents

[4] The books included in "The Prophets" are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

[5] The four books included in the Gospels are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

were often writing about people and events from previous generations. Additionally, access to documents that were written around the same time period that may validate information in the Gospels is very limited today. However, through research, scholars have been able to determine that the Gospels are likely reliable for attaining information about Jesus and his ministry because they follow closely with the limited number of documents that are accessible today (Blomberg, 2009).

Each of the four books communicates many of the same stories. Despite the repetition, however, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all follow a very similar pattern while John follows a different pattern (Wegner, 2004). Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because the accounts given in each of the books so often parallel, seeming to view Jesus' life from the same standpoint. The Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John agree on most historical facts that are presented. However, the Gospel of John follows a different pattern and addresses spirituality more than the Synoptic Gospels (McKnight, 2001).

Although the Gospels are particularly well known for documenting Jesus' life, there are some women who are identified specifically, including Mary, Herodias, Mary Magdalene, Mary (mother of James), Salome, Elisabeth, Anna, Joanna, Susanna, Martha, Mary of Bethany, and Mary (wife of Cleophas). However, the number of references made to unnamed women in the Gospels is much higher. There are a total of 30 references to unnamed women in this section of the New Testament, which is much higher than any other section. Because this number is so high, especially when compared to the rest of the New Testament, the majority of the analysis for this study will concentrate on women from the Gospels (who will be reviewed in a later section).

Following the gospels is the book of Acts, which is most commonly regarded as the New Testament's historical book, including information meant to serve as a record. However, unlike the historical books in the Old Testament, Acts is comprised of letters (Aune, 1988). It has been suggested that Acts was written by the same author of the Gospel of Luke and that Acts is merely a sequel to the Gospel (Winter & Clarke, 1993). While the Gospel focuses on the events in Jesus' life and ministry, the book of Acts focuses on the expansion of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire after Jesus' death and describes the first stages of the church as it emerged (Van Unnik, 1960).

Like the Gospels, there are women named in the book of Acts, including Sapphira, Queen Candace of Ethiopia, Dorcus, Mary (mother of John Mark), Rhoda, Eunice, Lois, Lydia, Damaris, Priscilla, Drusilla, and Bernice. The number of references to unnamed women in the book of Acts, however, is relatively low. There are a total of 12 references to unnamed women, many of which do not include enough information useful for an analysis. In addition to analyzing the references to unnamed women in the Gospels, I will also analyze the unnamed women in the book of Acts. However, due to the small number of references with adequate information, only a small portion of the analysis will be conducted on this section of the New Testament.

The third division of the New Testament is made up of the next twenty-one books, referred to as the "Letters."[6] Thirteen of these letters are from Paul, formerly known in the Gospels as Saul. Before his conversion, Paul was a Jew who prosecuted and sometimes executed Christians. After Jesus' death Paul converted to Christianity and dedicated his life

[6] The books included in the "Letters" are Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude.

to spreading the religion. He wrote letters to various churches throughout the Mediterranean area, to which he had traveled and mentored its inhabitants over time, with the purpose of providing instruction and persuading Christians on spiritual matters (Spivey, 2013). Following Paul's letters is a group of general letters in which the author is not confirmed but rather guessed (Aune, 1988). These letters are very similar to the structure of Paul's letters, providing instruction, guidance, and encouragement to Christians.

The letters in the New Testament, particularly in Paul's letters, make many references to named women. There is a shift between the references of named women in the Gospels and Acts and the references to named women in the letters. There are four references to unnamed women in this section, none of which provide enough information for a useful analysis. Therefore, this section of the New Testament will not be used in the analysis.

The final division is comprised of the last book in the New Testament, Revelation, and is referred to as the "Apocalypse." It is often categorized into the apocalyptic genre of literature (Mounce, 1998). It was written by John while he was exiled on the Island of Patmos and compiles detailed descriptions of visions he had during his time there (Aune, 1998; Thompson, 1997). The Book of Revelation calls on prophetic writing styles that are often seen in the Old Testament. However, a major difference between common prophecy and the prophecy of Revelation is that common prophecy projects how the future will arise from the present while the Book of Revelation projects how the future will intervene into the present. As a whole, Revelation is a story about how God promises to intervene in history to destroy all wickedness and end trouble (Mounce, 1998).

The Book of Revelation is very different from the other books in the New Testament, and the Bible as a whole. There are two references to women in this book and both are unnamed. These references are much different than any references made previously, particularly because the references are made in the midst of very detailed, unusual visions about a future time. Both references include physical descriptions of the woman as well as a description of her actions, which take place during the vision. These references were not used in this study do to the fact that the descriptions are describing visions of what seem to be angelic beings, not human beings.

Although the New Testament and the Old Testament are written very differently, there is no indication that one or the other is read or studied more frequently. Some scholars argue that the New Testament can only be understood in conjunction with the Old Testament because the Old Testament presents prophesies that are later fulfilled in the New Testament (Wegner, 2004).

Femininity and the Bible

Many prominent Biblical characters are messengers for many common Biblical messages. However, there is little insight into how these characters communicate messages about gender. How is femininity defined when these characters are described? What does the division of labor presented in these stories say about gender? For the scope of one study, analyzing the entire Bible is simply too large a task. Instead, I sought to narrow down the topic for a more manageable amount of data, which led me to analyze the unnamed women in the New Testament.

The decision to focus on the New Testament revolves around the life of Jesus who came to change the world. Jesus treated people differently than was described in the Old

Testament and his actions suggest that he was an advocate for gender equality while most Biblical information we have prior to his existence suggests otherwise. Because the New Testament is uniquely different regarding women's roles and because of the ways in which it is different from the Old Testament, I chose to analyze the New Testament instead of the Old Testament.

After deciding to analyze the New Testament for gendered messages, I discovered that the topic was still too broad. To further narrow it, I created a spreadsheet, making note of every woman mentioned in the New Testament. The spreadsheet listed each woman, a note regarding whether she is named or unnamed, the Biblical reference, the Biblical story, the manifest message about femininity, and why the reference is interesting. Upon analyzing the spreadsheet to look for common themes, I found thirty references to named women and forty-two to unnamed women. Although most women in the New Testament are unnamed, most of the studies across academic disciplines have focused on the named women, particularly major figures such as Mary and Mary Magdalene (Beavis, 2012; Brock, 2003; Brown, Fitzmyer, & Donfried, 1978; Haskins, 1993; Klyman, 2014; Ricci, 1994). There is virtually no research on the unnamed women in either the Old Testament or the New Testament, and none from the communication discipline. The lack of research on this specific topic led to the following research question:

RQ 1: What does the Bible communicate about gender through stories about unnamed women in the New Testament?

Translation

It is estimated that the Bible has been fully translated into 531 languages, and over 2000 other languages have at least some portion of the Bible translated for them (Wycliff

Global Alliance, 2014). Despite the original text being in Hebrew and Greek, the Bible is now widely available across the world, although there are still thousands of languages into which the Bible has not been translated.

Translating texts is a risky undertaking as there is always the potential for meaning to be lost in translation. The English translations of the Bible are no exception to this complicated process. The first English version of the Bible was translated from Latin to English during the fourteenth century by John Wycliff. Wycliff believed that the Bible is the ultimate and only authority regarding religious beliefs and practice, therefore every person should have the ability to read it individually rather than only hearing about it from the Roman Catholic Pope (Hills, 1965; Grierson, 1943). Since Wycliff's first translation, the Bible has been translated into the English language numerous times. There are many English translations of the Bible, although it is difficult to get an accurate list for an exact number of English translations as available lists vary in number. One popular online Bible search engine called Bible Gateway lists forty-nine English versions, of which ten are considered to be significant in terms of frequency read and amount sold (Rainer, 2014; Zylstra, 2014).

Among the forty-nine versions, there is much debate about which English version of the Bible is the most read or most popular in the Christian community. The two most popular versions according to multiple ratings of the best-selling versions are the King James Version (KJV) and the New International Version (NIV).

Sales data do not provide a complete picture of translation preferences. Scholars in The Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture at Indiana University-Purdue sought to determine the most widely used biblical versions (Goff, Farnsley, Thuesen, 2014).

These scholars found that 55% of the people surveyed reported a preference for the KJV, while only 19% reported a preference for the NIV (Goff, Farnsley, Thuesen, 2014). Research shows that over three hundred million copies of the NIV translation have been sold, fixing it at the number one spot for both dollar and unit sales. Other studies that have analyzed annual sales of the NIV have reported the same results (Rainer, 2013; Zylstra, 2014). Scholars are still investigating the reasons behind the reported preference for the KJV over the NIV and other versions, especially considering its outdated language. However, it is important to note that the same survey revealed that those reporting they prefer the NIV translation also report reading the Bible more frequently than those reporting a preference for the KJV (Goff et al., 2014).

I chose to use the NIV due to the fact that readers of the NIV report reading more often than readers of the KJV (Marlowe, 2011). This finding is important to take into consideration in conjunction with its best-seller title, as it is possible that the NIV is the most frequently read version of the Bible in the U.S., despite the report regarding preference.

Finally, selecting the NIV for this study is based partly on personal experience. I have studied the NIV extensively and am most familiar with the language in this version than any other English version of the Bible. Additionally, through experience I have observed more people using the NIV than any other English version.

As a widely sold and commonly used translation of the Bible, the NIV provides a practical translation on which to conduct this study. Ultimately, by analyzing a version of the Bible that is widely used in the U.S., I will best be able to understand what the NIV Bible

communicates about gender through stories of unnamed women in the New Testament according to already existing gendered constructs in U.S. society.

Methodological Background

This section will discuss the two theoretical concepts guiding this study, social constructionism and feminist criticism. I will describe the basic principles of these concepts and how they have been used in previous research. As theoretical concepts, social constructionism and feminist criticism provide a foundation for understanding what Biblical messages communicate about gender.

Social Constructionism

In brief, social constructionism is a process that occurs over a long period of time and provides a way for people to communicate and maintain a social world. Society is an on-going dialectical process in which individuals are both the producer and the product, constantly influencing and being influenced by the social world around them (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Storr, 2010). In this dialectical process, "identity" is established by how it is talked about, with specific attention to the symbols used to conceptualize it, and how social groups orient themselves to a common experience with it (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). As the dialectical process between individuals and the social world remains in cycle, routine patterns of habitualized actions occur. Societies, in turn, institutionalize and label these habitualizations as general knowledge for future generations to view as "objective knowledge" (Andrews, 2012; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Gender is an "objective knowledge" that has been socially constructed over time in U.S. society.

Many studies have used social constructionism as a foundation for understanding how a society defines concepts such as gender, race, and class. For example, Tinkler, (2013)

analyzes the covers of magazines to understand how society defines femininity and masculinity through pictures of men and women, in other words, how magazine covers construct and communicate gendered behaviors. Using the concept of social construction to analyze passages in the Bible will help to understand how the messages in the Bible contribute to the greater meaning that gender carries in U.S. culture.

Feminist Criticism

Taking the idea of social constructionism a step further, feminist criticism provides a framework and insights that provide the critical tools for analyzing whether Biblical texts communicate patriarchal expectations associated with femininity under the dominant gender ideology in the U.S. The intersection between feminist scholarship and a male-dominated religion is both interesting and important for understanding how gender is communicated as well as for evoking change.

Feminist criticism essentially revolves around one major goal: "describing and subverting the cultural repression of women in contemporary society" (Humm, 1986, p. 21). In patriarchal and androcentric societies such as the U.S., gender ideologies are deeply embedded in everyday discourse and generally go unnoticed (Walsh, Fursich, & Jefferson, 2008). Thus, it becomes the job of the analyst to uncover those deeply embedded subtleties in texts that result from cultural ideologies (Walsh, Fursich, & Jefferson, 2008).

Gender, being a dominant and influential ideology in U.S. culture, shapes the way individuals experience literature, including the Bible, and therefore, I will use the feminist criticism approach to carefully challenge and question the dominant message about gender.

Feminist Criticism, Gender, and the Bible

The Bible is one of the most influential religious texts and, as such, deserves extensive study regarding the messages it communicates about women and femininity. This section will discuss how messages about gender in the Biblical texts will be analyzed. In order to answer the research question, I will use previous research about gender as a foundation. By using past research as a foundation, I am able to analyze the data for gendered messages based on criteria that has already been established. That being said, one of the challenges of feminist criticism is that it does not prescribe a clear set of methodological steps; the researcher simply "applies" feminist theory to a text. Understanding how feminist critics use feminist theory to critique texts is the closest one gets to a clear methodology.

Daly's (1985) *Beyond God the Father* is considered to be a foundational feminist critique of religion. Daly (1985) addressed androcentrism in Western Christian culture by pointing directly to the patriarchal nature of God as he is depicted in the Bible and in human imagination. Daly argued that many of our societal roles reflect the patriarchal characteristics associated with God, such as a husband being dominant over his wife.

Daly (1985) used feminist criticism by pointing out the incessant patriarchal image of God in the human imagination. This image, Daly argued, has played a role in a cyclical pattern, which continues to elevate the man as superior to the woman. For example, the mere fact that God is described with words such as "he," "him," and "his" throughout the Bible automatically connects the patriarchal nature surrounding God's character in the Bible with men. In addition to the connection Daly makes between God and man and the effects the connection has on society, Daly also examined Eve in the story of the fall in Genesis 3, which tells the story of how Eve ate a fruit from a tree forbidden by God and

shared the fruit with her husband, Adam. Eating the forbidden fruit opened Adam and Eve's minds to a wealth of knowledge and ultimately resulted in punishment. Daly argued that this story poised women in a way that forever associates them with evil. For centuries, this association of the woman with evil has paralyzed women roles in society. Daly concluded by arguing that the Bible is directly connected to the social hierarchy in U.S. society and suggesting a need for change in U.S. society. Daly suggested we shift from patriarchal to diarchal, meaning neither the man nor the woman is superior but rather both are socially equal. By approaching the Bible in similar ways as Daly, I am able to uncover subtle messages about gender in the text to better understand how the text influences cultural ideologies about gender.

Fiorenza (2009) developed foundational steps for feminist Biblical interpretation, a process of consciousness-raising. Fiorenza (2009) argued that this approach to interpretation is an opportunity for women to grow in feminist awareness. It is important for women to recognize that their inferiority and oppression in society is structural and political, not personal. This idea is fundamental, yet countercultural. It combats the problem Lerner (1986) identified that women are not just victims in society, but rather contribute to the maintenance and reinforcement of patriarchy. By implementing a feminist Biblical interpretation, women may become aware of the structural hierarchies and social constructions, which bind them, and change their actions to alleviate the effects of patriarchy rather than reinforce it. Fiorenza's (2009) process of consciousness-raising is connected to the topic of the current study in that one goal of the study is to provide an opportunity for women to grow in feminist awareness. However, the process will not be used in the analysis.

Some scholars have explored the New Testament from a feminist perspective. Miller (2004) examines a passage in the Gospel of Mark, which involves three women who are present at Jesus' crucifixion and again at his tomb. These three women are referenced periodically throughout the Gospels and arguably are qualified to be disciples of Jesus. Miller's purpose in employing a feminist analysis on this passage is to provoke critical thoughts from readers about Mark's portrayal of the women as well as the preponderance of an androcentric perspective in the Gospel.

To make this argument, Miller (2004) analyzed certain aspects of the description of the women. For example, Miller asserted that the author of Mark did not focus on the resurrection of Jesus when telling the story, but rather focused on the reaction of the women. The two words Miller offered regarding the description of these women in the gospel are "fear" and "amazement." Once Miller has established these two characteristics of the women's reaction, there is discussion about how other scholars have interpreted this reaction in relation to the role of women. Moreover, Miller argued, in the events proceeding Jesus' crucifixion the women prove to be more loyal than the male disciples. Miller supported this argument by pointing out actions of the male disciples, such as Peter denying his relationship with Jesus three times.

Miller's (2004) study is not in the communication discipline, but presents useful information for conducting the current study. Just as Miller analyzed Biblical passages from a feminist perspective, paying particular attention to the words used to describe the women, I will also analyze the chosen Biblical passages in the same way.

As in the previous studies mentioned, gender concepts and previously established criteria regarding the dominant gender ideology in U.S. society will be used to explore what

the Bible communicates about gender through the stories of unnamed women in the New Testament. More specifically, the following gender concepts will be explored in depth.

Agency

A characteristic that is often associated with males in patriarchal societies is agency, which means that an individual possesses self-control and independence. Likewise, due to the fact that the female is understood to be socially complimentary to the male, femininity often is defined as dependent; agency is not a characteristic often associated with women. Further, patriarchal societies promote male dominance, giving men/masculinity social dominance and power over women/femininity. Because of this distribution of social power, women are commonly defined in relation to men (Farrelly, 2011; Lerner, 1986). In U.S. culture, masculinity and femininity are opposite, yet complimentary (Eagly, 1987). Masculinity is associated with characteristics such as strength, aggressiveness, independency, rationality, and intellect. Femininity is associated with communal characteristics, including being relational, nurturing, emotional, polite, and physically attractive (Platt, 2009; Spence & Buckner, 2000). Many of the characteristics associated with femininity not only compliment masculinity but they also support masculinity, further assigning women the subordinated role and reinforcing patriarchy.

Because patriarchy is so ingrained in U.S. society, defining many important aspects of our social hierarchy, understanding the role of patriarchy and its effects in Biblical passages may be very useful in understanding how this ideology influences society today. In order to analyze the Biblical passages in terms of agency, I will note whether or not credit for a particular action or accomplishment was given to the woman or to an associated man and also note the woman's role in decision-making.

Gendered Expectations for Femininity

As stated in the literature review, research indicates commonalities about what it means to be feminine. The dimensions of femininity in U.S. culture can be categorized into three general areas: physical appearance, demeanor, and the division of labor.

The female body arguably is *the* symbol of femininity and for centuries women have shaped their bodies according to patriarchal desire (Dey, 2012). Women go through great efforts to manage their bodies, including decorating (make up, skin care, ornamentation, manipulating hair, clothing that emphasizes or exaggerates the female shape), eliminating (blemishes, hair, body fat and/or tissue, weight, teeth, bones) and enhancing (push-up bras, corsets, "control-top" undergarments, perms, straighteners, hair coloring, waxing, etc.) moisturizing, deodorizing, decorating, and de-hairing their bodies daily to achieve femininity (Black & Sharma, 2001). Modern women also must maintain a certain physique, which is thin, toned, and shorter than men (Brownmiller, 1984; Krane et al., 2004; Rodrigues, 2012). All of these that have emerged in research define the physical parameters for what it means to be feminine. I will analyze whether and how unnamed women's physical appearances are explained, then interpret that information by asking what those messages communicate about femininity.

In addition to their physical appearance, women must possess a certain demeanor to comply with feminine requirements. The way femininity is enacted and the attitude a woman projects into the world is important for communicating gender. Though this aspect of femininity is evolving, there are a few prominent characteristics of feminine demeanor. To be feminine, a woman must be relational and emotional. Women are assigned the caregiver role and they must communicate femininity by positively nurturing children,

husbands, elderly people, friends, and neighbors (DeVault, 1994). By fulfilling this role, women are heavily relied upon to carry the emotional strength in society (Fletcher, 2001). I will use this criteria by analyzing whether and how the unnamed women in the New Testament are defined according to patriarchal definitions regarding femininity and caregiving/nurturing, then interpret those findings regarding the messages they communicate about femininity.

A woman's physical appearance and demeanor are two major aspects of what it means to be feminine and both culminate into a division of labor, which assigns labor expectations to both women and men based on the values in the dominant gender ideology. Researchers generally have found that the division of labor is consistent with the socially and culturally constructed gendered norms, maintaining that the home, or the private sphere, is the woman's domain in which she cares for the physical and emotional needs of the family (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). As they are primarily responsible for childcare, women are typically stereotyped as mothers above most other roles (Wood, 2011). As with physical appearance and demeanor, research has also provided criteria for understanding how labor is divided between men and women, further defining femininity and masculinity. I will use this criteria by analyzing whether and how the unnamed women in the New Testament are defined according to patriarchal definitions regarding femininity and divisions of labor, then interpret those findings regarding the messages they communicate about femininity.

Language

Language conceptualizes and communicates ideas and identities. In other words, as we continue about in the dialectical process of social construction, we use language to

communicate our underlying values about certain ideologies that are upheld in our culture (Flanigan, 2013; Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Through this process, language is a symbol system that communicates messages about a variety of ideas, including what it means to be feminine. By analyzing the way language is used, we are given insight into norms and values held within a culture.

Biblical language provides insight for understanding what the Bible communicates about gender. While analyzing the text, I will pay close attention to the words that are used. I will note the words used to describe the women. The descriptive words I will look for will include physical descriptions that describe the female body, such as body type and hair length. It will also include words that describe the woman's role in society, particularly referring to her occupation, marital status and motherhood, as well as words that describe her demeanor, such as her attitude or personality traits. For example, in a preliminary analysis of Luke 23:26-30, which tells the story of women who follow Jesus to his crucifixion, I would note the words "mourning" and "wailing" because these words are descriptive of the women's demeanor.

I will also pay particular attention to how a woman is described in relation to others. In patriarchal societies, women are often described in relation to others, such as wife, mother, and daughter. While analyzing the Biblical passages, I will note if this description is made and the type of relationship described. This will include words, such as "wife," "widow," "mother," and "daughter." For example, in a preliminary analysis of Acts 6:6, I would take note of the word "widow" as the woman in this passage is described. Describing the woman as a widow addresses her marital status and strongly associates her identity with a husband.

In addition to the three major themes regarding femininity and the woman's relationship to others, I will also pay attention to words that indicate agency, or independence and individualism. This idea is strongly connected to the previous criteria, the woman's relationship to others, because describing a woman in relation to others often suggests dependency, especially if the man is rarely described in such terms. However, in addition to words describing the woman's relationship to others, I will note any words that describe the sphere the story takes place in, private or public, and I will note any words used that describe the woman as an individual with her own identity apart from her father, husband, or son. For example, in a preliminary analysis of Luke 8:43-48, which tells the story of a woman who has been bleeding for twelve years and seeks healing from Jesus, I would note the phrase, "in the presence of everyone." This phrase specifically points out that this event is taking place in a public sphere.

Finally, I will pay particular attention to any words that describe the daily tasks of the women, which is closely associated with the major theme of femininity, division of labor. These words will include any descriptions that describe what a woman is doing or trying to accomplish during the story. For example, in a preliminary analysis of Matthew 26:6-13, which tells the story of a woman who anointed Jesus with perfume, the woman is described as "pouring perfume on Jesus' head." This action is a form of caretaking, a characteristic often assigned to women in patriarchal societies.

Through the criteria presented in past research, I will analyze the text for common feminine themes. I will note the words used to describe the appearances of the women, their attitudes and personality traits, whether the situation is public or private, the women's relationship to others, and any description given about the daily tasks of the

women. Ultimately, by making note of these elements, which are based on gender concepts outlined in the literature review, I will be able to argue for what the Bible communicates about gender through the stories of the unnamed women in the New Testament.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an explanation of the methodologies used in this study on gender communication in the Bible. First I addressed the Bible by explaining its general structure, which is divided into two main parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament and I explained my reasoning for choosing to specifically analyze the stories of the unnamed women in the New Testament. After explaining the narrowed topic, I explained Biblical translations and the selection process for the Biblical translation being used for the analysis in this study, which explained my reasoning for choosing to analyze the New International Version. Next I addressed the issue of gender and explained how past research will be used as a foundation for this study because it provides previously established criteria for analysis. Finally I explained the two theoretical concepts guiding this study, which are social construction and feminist criticism while also providing examples of previous studies which have also utilized these concepts. The next chapter will apply the gender criteria from past research, social construction, and feminist criticism in order to suggest what the Bible communicates about gender through stories of unnamed women in the New Testament.

Chapter IV: Analysis and Interpretation

Introduction

The previous chapter provided a general overview of the methodologies used in this study. I discussed the structure of the Bible, the difference in Biblical translations, and the decision-making process for studying the unnamed women in the New Testament as translated in the New International Version. I also discussed how past research on gender will be used to establish criteria for analyzing the Bible and addressed the theoretical backgrounds guiding this study, which are social construction and feminist criticism.

The current chapter applies the criteria laid out in past research, social constructionism, and feminist criticism to interpret Biblical messages about femininity through stories of unnamed women in the New Testament. There are 40 references to unnamed women in the New Testament. However, only twenty of the references include stories about these unnamed women. The other twenty references simply reference the unnamed woman and include no further details necessary for an analysis. For example, in Matthew 13:56 and Mark 6:3, Jesus' sisters, although unnamed, are mentioned as being present at a synagogue gathering. While they are specifically mentioned as being present at the event, there are no other details about them that enable analysis regarding messages the Bible communicates about femininity. Therefore, references such as these were omitted for the analysis. A complete list of the references to unnamed women that were included in this thesis is included in the appendix.

Analysis of the messages the Bible communicates about femininity revealed three major themes. First, patriarchy acts as a thread throughout the analysis as it has a major influence on all aspects of femininity. The second theme is alignment with the major

indicators of femininity as outlined in the literature review, including physical appearance, demeanor, and division of labor. Finally, the third theme is the response to and about women through interaction with others who surround the women in the Biblical passages.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is the ideological thread throughout this analysis, thus it is useful to briefly review the concept. Patriarchy has dominated societies for thousands of years. Patriarchal societies institutionalize male dominance and power over women and children in all areas of society, and this in turn creates specific roles for women. The ways in which unnamed women are defined in Biblical stories communicates messages about societal expectations for women. There are stories about unnamed women who are described as mother, wife, unmarried, widow, and daughter. All of these stories communicate that men possess the dominant role in society, while women's societal role is beneath and submissive to men and that women's identities are dependent upon their relationships to others.

Additional passages emphasize patriarchy by highlighting male dominance over women by making connections between women's marital status and financial status. For example, Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4 describe a situation in which people are in a place of worship and are giving monetary offerings. The passages specifically reference a widow who "put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents" and continues, "but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on" (Mark 12:44, Luke 21:4). This passage connects being a widow with being poor and suggests that for a woman, marital status correlates with financial status. These passages draw connections between poverty and marital status and communicate a larger message that extends beyond financial status.

Patriarchal values are reinforced by associating and equating widowhood with poverty and marriage with financial protection.

Similarly, Acts 6 tells a story about a meeting between the disciples to discuss what should be done regarding a group of widows who they believe are being treated unfairly in regards to the daily distribution of food. This passage states, "In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food" (Acts 6:1). Again, there is a direct connection between marital status and poverty. These passages will be analyzed in greater detail later in this chapter but, for now, it is important to emphasize that patriarchy, and its emphasis on male authority, is the underlying assumption for all of the Biblical stories I analyzed.

Now that I have discussed how these stories reinforce the idea of patriarchy by elevating male dominance, I will explain how some of the stories in the New Testament suggest women have some influence on decision-making, despite it being a primarily male responsibility. One indicator of the dominance and power given to men in societies is that men are considered the primary decision-makers. To compliment this, the woman is to be submissive to the man's decisions. Traces of this aspect of patriarchy may be found in stories about unnamed women and their roles in decision-making in the New Testament. However, in addition to this theme of patriarchy being evident in the Biblical passages, there was also evidence of women having an influence on decision-making. It is important to note, however, the women's influence operated from the private sphere while the men participated in decision-making in the public sphere.

Women's Influence on Decision-Making

As the dominant gender in society, men are invested with the primary responsibility for making decisions. Male decision-making reinforces patriarchy by literally reinforcing "father rule" (patri = father, archy = rule), in which the male's perspective on a given situation determines decisions. Interestingly, there are two stories involving unnamed women in the New Testament in which the women have strong influences on the man's final decision. The first story regarding decision-making is found in Matthew 14:6-11 and Mark 6:19-28. The passage states,

> "**19** So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, **20** because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him. **21** Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. **22** When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." **23** And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom." **24** She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. **25** At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." **26** The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and

his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. **27** So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, **28** and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother."

In this passage, Herod "feared John and protected him" (v. 19), and therefore would not kill him even though Herodias wanted him to. Herod did not want to kill John or have intentions of killing him prior to the girl's request. When the girl made the request, however, the passage states, "The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her" (v. 26). Thus, Herod apparently executed someone he both protected and did not intend to harm because the daughter's dancing was so pleasurable. Ultimately, Herodias achieved her goals by using the influence she had on her daughter even though it was a decision that King Herod was responsible for making. King Herod's decision was influenced initially by his being pleased with the girl's dancing and promising her whatever she wanted. Both of these women ultimately had an influence on the King. Herodias had an indirect influence on his decision by influencing her daughter. Herodias' daughter had a direct influence on the king's decision by moving her body in ways that pleased him enough to do whatever she asked.

The second story is found in Matthew 27:11-26. This passage describes a situation in which Pontius Pilate is faced with a profound decision regarding Jesus' life. The passage states,

"11 Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "You have

said so," Jesus replied. **12** When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. **13** Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" **14** But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor. **15** Now it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. **16** At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. **17** So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" **18** For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him. **19** While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." **20** But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed. **21** "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered.
22 "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!" **23** "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" **24** When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water

and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” **25** All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!”
26 Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.”

One way in which patriarchy is communicated in this passage is through the division of the spheres. When communicating with him, Pilate’s wife remains in the private sphere and has a message sent to him through a messenger. However, through further analysis, Pilate’s role as decision-maker and his wife’s influence on his decisions can be seen.

At the beginning of the passage Pilate questions Jesus about the accusations brought against him. The passage does not indicate Pilate’s stance on Jesus’ innocence or allude to any decisions Pilate will make. The first few verses suggest that Pilate has no strong opinion about Jesus’ innocence or guilt and instead is deliberating a verdict based on what Pilate believes the people want. While he is considering his options, he receives the message from his wife, which tells him not to have anything to do with Jesus because he is innocent. Still torn by what the crowd is shouting and demanding, Pilate washes his hands and tells the people he will have nothing to do with what happens and even claims that Jesus is innocent. Additionally, it is important to note that Pilate’s wife’s message was not a request or a suggestion, but rather a command to her husband. This message strongly and quickly influenced Pilate’s stance and decision in this situation.

Traces of patriarchy can be seen in most of the Biblical passages about unnamed women in the New Testament. Whether the passage is reinforcing male dominance by

describing women in relation to men, associating the woman's financial status with her marital status, or describing the woman's influence on a man's decision, patriarchy ultimately prevails. It is interesting that in the midst of patriarchal practices, women are still described in ways that show influence. However, whatever level of influence the women possess, the influence still operates under a man's role as primary decision-maker.

Interpretation

The ways in which the unnamed women in these Biblical passages are represented communicate and perpetuate patriarchal ideals. Patriarchy is a foundational explanation for why the unnamed women are defined in these specific ways, which is to reinforce male rule and androcentrism. The patriarchal overtones that these passages possess do more than just prescribe a certain standard for how women should behave. The passages also prescribe certain ways that women should be defined in society. Women should focus their responsibility on the private sphere and submit to man's authority.

The story of the poor widow who offers all of her money is an excellent example of how even unnamed women communicate a patriarchal message regarding women's roles. First the passage references her marital status by referring to her as a "widow," which clearly communicates that she no longer has a husband. In an ideology in which women are defined positively or negatively according to their relationships with men, this woman is not only unnamed but also is irrelevant because she lacks connection to the valued male. The passage further reveals that she is poor by stating, "but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on" (Mark 12:44), which connects widowhood with lack of money and financial standing. Similarly, Acts 6 presents the story about the meeting between the disciples to discuss what should be done regarding the group of widows who

they believe are being treated unfairly in regards to the daily distribution of food. These passages connect being a widow with being poor and suggest that for a woman, marital status correlates with financial status. Further, there is a connection drawn between poverty and marital status that communicates a more fundamental message, which is that women's economic position is determined by her association with a male. Thus, having a living husband equates with economic protection and patriarchy is reinforced.

Patriarchal values are communicated further in stories about women who influence decision-making. The story regarding Pontius Pilate's decision is a case in point. It is clear that Pilate is the authority when he is described as, "sitting on the judge's seat" as he deliberates what should be done with Jesus. Clearly Pontius Pilate has authority over the entire kingdom; he sits in the judge's seat. Interestingly, the passage suggests that his wife has influence over him since she discourages Pilate from "having anything to do with that man." But two aspects of this passage are noteworthy for the ways in which it communicates patriarchy. First, although his wife suggests a course of action, the decision remains Pilate's. Perhaps more importantly, Pilate's wife remains invisible and anonymous. She doesn't *publicly* urge Pilate to have nothing to do with Jesus. It is a private message sent from the private sphere that is her *appropriate* space from a patriarchal perspective. Thus, there is a distinct and important connection made when his position of authority is stated in conjunction with his wife's communicating with him from the private sphere.

When women consistently are described in ways that connect femininity with the private sphere and with submission or inferiority to men, which are common descriptions in a patriarchal context, social constructs are produced, maintained, and habitualized over

time. These social constructs ultimately participate in the maintenance of gendered society through reification. This is particularly true with Biblical stories. As individuals read these passages, they connect the messages about femininity with their own experiences in society. Although this process occurs in many contexts throughout society, it is possible that the Bible reinforces the dominant ideology. Regardless of how the passages were intended, readers will interpret the gender messages these passages communicate according to their own social and cultural context. For the U.S., this context is patriarchal. Therefore, the Bible, which was also written in a patriarchal society and has continued to influence people for thousands of years, communicates patriarchal messages that are reified and habitualized to the extent that they communicate what we know as our "objective" reality.

While ideas about patriarchy were supported through these passages, maintaining and reinforcing that women should participate in submission, inferiority, and remain in the private sphere, there is an interesting finding about unnamed women who had a profound influence on a man's major decision. In patriarchal societies, men are inherently the primary decision-makers. This role is a natural part of the man's designation as the gender in authority. While the Bible passages analyzed in this study do support this idea, two passages showcase a woman's influence on the decision-making process.

In the story about the unnamed girl who danced for the king (Matthew 14:6-11, Mark 6:19-28), a woman named Herodias had a goal, but failed to achieve it multiple times because the responsibility of decision-making was not hers, but rather the king's. Eventually, Herodias seized an opportunity to influence the king and reach her goal. First, the passage contains messages about femininity regarding physical appearance when the

girl is described dancing and pleasing. Next the passage contains a message about femininity when it describes Herodias' inability to achieve her goal because she is not permitted to make a certain decision. It also contains a gender message about the public and private sphere as Herodias is only discussed in terms of the private sphere while her unnamed daughter is described in a public sphere but only for the men's enjoyment. However, a final unique gender message this passage communicates is seen through the king's weakness. When Herod is beguiled by the unnamed girl's dancing and irrationally promises her anything she wants, Herodias seizes the opportunity to achieve her own goals by having her daughter ask for something the king refused previously: John's head on a platter. Because King Herod made this promise to the girl in front of all of his guests, he had to follow through with Herodias' daughter's request.

This passage suggests that there are ways in which women may achieve success despite their prescribed inferiority. Later in this interpretation, findings regarding physical appearance will be discussed in greater depth, but it is important to note that certain Biblical passages about unnamed women prescribe certain standards for women regarding physical appearance. The prescriptions for physical appearance revolve around the characteristics that constitute ideal feminine beauty, which is defined by men in a patriarchal society. Women must dress a certain way, carry their bodies a certain way, move their bodies a certain way, and maintain a thin and toned body to achieve ideal feminine beauty (Brownmiller, 1984; Rich & Cash 1993). However, this passage suggests that women may use this requirement made for them against men in order to achieve what they want and to influence decisions. Herodias achieves her goal by being very manipulative and indirectly influencing Herod. She influences her daughter, who in turn

influences Herod. This suggests that there are alternative ways women may successfully achieve their goals despite their assigned submissive, inferior role. However, in a patriarchal society, women may be required to find other, more feminine ways to do this.

A similar, yet less manipulative, example of a woman's influence on decision-making is in the story about Pilate and his wife (Matt. 27:11-26). The messages in this passage regarding decision-making are not consistent with research. The passage supports the idea that men are the primary decision-makers, which is an inherent part of male dominance, but the passage also communicates an interesting message when it reveals that Pilate's wife heavily influences his decision about Jesus' fate. In v.19, the passage indicates that Pilate's wife sends him a message regarding his involvement with Jesus' prosecution. The text states that his wife's message said, "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." Pilate's response is seen later in v. 24 when he says to the crowd, "I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your responsibility." Pilate's actions after receiving the message from his wife indicate that he followed her instruction to him.

As with most patriarchal societies, including the U.S., patriarchal themes can be expected to emerge. Because of this, most feminist studies will reveal gendered messages that are patriarchal in nature. Biblical passages are no exception to this expectation. The emerging patriarchal themes I have discussed from within these passages serve as a foundation for the rest of the analysis.

In patriarchal societies, patriarchal ideals are communicated in a wide variety of ways. The passages in the Bible that were analyzed in this study are consistent with this idea. As the analysis will further explain in coming sections, these passages reveal that

women are defined according to their relationship with other people. This defines certain roles for women, such as mother, wife, unmarried, widow, and daughter. In addition to the major roles that women are heavily associated with, there is a distinct connection between women's marital status and financial stability. In some passages, women who were described as widows were also described as poor, suggesting that having no husband lowers a woman's financial status. Both of these themes aid in reinforcing patriarchy.

Finally, some stories challenged the inherent characteristic of patriarchy, which is that men are to be the decision-makers, by emphasizing women's influence in the decision-making process. This is interesting because in patriarchal societies women are not associated with decision-making, and while these passages still operate under the influence of patriarchy, the women's influence on a major decision is still evident.

Patriarchy is an overarching theme that acts as a thread throughout the analysis. Now that I have reviewed patriarchy and discussed some general ways patriarchal themes emerged during the analysis, I will discuss what the Biblical passages reveal about the physical appearance of women.

Physical Appearance

Having already discussed patriarchy and revealed the ways that the Biblical passages exemplify patriarchy, I direct attention to the ways in which patriarchal themes are manifested through the ways in which femininity is communicated. One way femininity is defined is according to physical appearance, which is the first of the three major feminine themes discussed in the literature. This refers to the actual physical appearance of women, including the size and grooming of her body, the clothing she wears, and how a woman

should carry herself. Of the 20 references to unnamed women analyzed in this study, 2 stories referenced the woman's physical appearance.

The first example is found again in the story in which King Herod is throwing a banquet for high officials, military commanders, and leading men of Galilee. During this banquet, the passage describes a girl dancing for the crowd and states, "When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests" (Mark 14:6, Mark 6:22). She pleased the king so much, in fact, that he promises to give her anything she asks for, up to half his kingdom. Since the passage explains that she danced, we are left to conclude that her dancing led King Herod to offer half his kingdom to her. Although it is left to the imagination, it seems clear that something about the way she moved her body beguiled the king.

Another passage that communicates a subtle physical characteristic about femininity is found in Luke 7:37-50. The passage describes a woman approaching Jesus, pouring perfume on his head, and washing his feet. It states,

> **"37** A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. **38** As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them."

Several aspects of this passage communicate messages about femininity, which will be discussed later, but one aspect of it refers to one of the woman's physical attributes is her hair. The image of the woman that is described in this passage is that she has long enough

hair to wash Jesus' feet with it, suggesting that part of being feminine is having long hair. This is consistent with the literature, which argues that hair length is strongly associated with femininity as the hair is easily manipulated, providing fast results when trying to conform (Rich & Cash, 1993).

Interpretation

Both of these stories contain gendered messages about physical appearance that reinforce and maintain the dominant gender ideology, which prescribes certain characteristics for femininity. The importance instilled in women to relate with others and be accepted by others has produced a deep-rooted desire in women to appear a certain way. Gendered socialization teaches women that their appearance is critical to femininity and as a result, women spend a great deal of time and money in their attempts to achieve cultural ideals of feminine beauty. The effort women put into this process is a result of a socially constructed ideal of what it means to be feminine that has been evolving over a long period of time. One way the physical appearance has been manifested in the feminine ideal is through the way a woman carries her body. The way in which a woman should move her body, dress her body, and carry her body is defined and driven by how men, or those striving to achieve masculinity, prefer to see a woman move, dress, and carry her body.

The female body is the symbol of femininity and for centuries, women have shaped their bodies according to patriarchal desires (Dey, 2012). One of the stories in which messages about physical appearance emerged very directly indicates that men enjoy watching women dress in certain ways and move in certain ways. In turn, the women adjust their bodies to meet these needs, possibly in hopes of rewards and acceptance. The

story of the unnamed girl who danced for King Herod asserts a direct correlation between male dominance and feminine physical appearance. The king, in a place of authority, exerts dominance and reflects patriarchy while reinforcing the gender norms associated with femininity and physical appearance. He does this first by having the girl dance and again by expressing how pleased he is with how she dances, so much so that he offers her half of his kingdom. The gender message this passage contains suggests that women, who are inferior to men from a patriarchal perspective, are able to use their bodies to please males, their superiors, and ultimately gain something by doing so.

The second passage, in which the unnamed woman washes Jesus' feet with her hair, also communicates messages about physical appearance that subtly provides a physical description that aligns with and reinforces feminine gender norms found in the literature. In Luke 7:37-50, a woman approaches Jesus and anoints him with perfume. Anointing Jesus with perfume is a feminine task that involves care taking. The passage goes on to reveal that the woman wiped Jesus' feet with her hair, a task that would be impossible with short hair. In order to wipe his feet with her hair, her hair must be long enough to do so, which would suggest that femininity is associated with longer hair. As stated in the literature, hair is one characteristic that is particularly associated with femininity (Rich & Cash, 1993). Describing the woman's hair in a way that reveals its length communicates a message about femininity, suggesting women should have longer hair in order to achieve the feminine ideal.

Since the female body is a symbol of femininity, understanding how these Biblical passages about unnamed women describe physical appearance is important for the scope of this study. The way physical appearance was described is consistent with research,

maintaining that women carry their bodies, move their bodies, and conform their bodies according to patriarchal desire. This was seen through an example of a king beguiled by a girl's dancing as well as by the description of woman with long hair. Due to the fact that the Bible is a patriarchal text, written in a patriarchal culture and currently read by a patriarchal culture, describing women in a way that associates certain physical characteristics with femininity ultimately prescribes these characteristics to women today and participates in reinforcing patriarchal prescriptions for femininity. As analysis thus far indicates, even the unnamed women who appear in Biblical texts communicate patriarchal expectations.

Demeanor

Along with ideals about the physical appearance, communicating femininity requires a certain demeanor. There are two prominent and consistent characteristics of feminine demeanor. Past research argues that to be feminine, a woman must be emotional and relational. There are several passages that describe an unnamed woman's demeanor. First, I will discuss the passages that describe the emotionality of women.

Emotionality (Analysis)

New Testament women who are unnamed commonly are depicted as overly emotional, particularly by crying. A story told in both Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30, describes a Canaanite woman approaching Jesus, requesting that he heal her daughter who is demon-possessed. The verse describes her as "crying out" (Matt 15:23). Similarly, in Luke 7:11-17, Jesus approaches a funeral procession at the city gate and says to the mother of the dead man, "Don't cry." The "sinful woman" in Luke 7:36-50 visits Jesus while he sits at a table with his disciples. She pours perfume on his head and "weeping, she began to wet

his feet with her tears" in order to wash them. Finally, as Jesus carries his cross to the hill where he will be crucified, the passage reveals, "a large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him" (Luke 23:27). There is a significant connection between women and crying in these passages, which further reinforces the idea that women and femininity are associated with high levels of emotion.

Emotional (Interpretation)

Past literature asserts that the way a woman carries herself and the attitude she projects into the world is important for communicating gender. Not surprisingly, many references to unnamed women in the Bible described the women as emotional. The most common way the Biblical passages do this is by describing the women as crying.

The stories about unnamed women in the New Testament heavily align with the criteria laid out in past research about femininity. Patriarchal expectations for gendered behaviors assert that men should be rational and unemotional, which are highly valued characteristics. Conversely, behavioral characteristics that are not valued and are associated with femininity include being excitable in minor crises, being easily influenced, sentimentality, and getting feelings hurt easily. In patriarchal societies, these emotions are considered "normal" with respect to femininity (Brownmiller, 1984).

Several stories in the New Testament involving unnamed women reinforce the idea that women should be emotional. A variation of phrases was used in the stories to portray crying. These phrases were "crying out" (Matt. 15:23), "mourning and wailing" (Luke 23:27), "weeping" (Luke 7:38), and "don't cry" (Luke 7:13). All of these phrases clearly show that these unnamed women were emotional.

Using this language to describe women allows readers to conceptualize women as emotional beings. In turn, readers may identify with these characters or associate this characteristic with femininity. As this process continues to occur repeatedly over long periods of time, this idea that women are emotional, perhaps frequently crying, may be institutionalized, habitualized, and adopted by society as a characteristic of women that is "natural" rather than a characteristic that is provoked by society. In other words, being emotional is socially constructed as a "natural" characteristic of femininity and women. Additionally, men are taught that being masculine requires them to suppress emotion, which further emphasizes emotionality as a feminine trait since masculinity and femininity are defined as opposites and complementary (Brownmiller, 1984). By describing women as emotional, the Bible reinforces patriarchal ideology and further emphasizes the distinction between masculinity and femininity.

Relational (Analysis)

Women are also expected to be relational. Relationality is such an important aspect of femininity that women are often defined as the "other" in relation to people, particularly men (Wood, 2011). Of the 20 references of unnamed women analyzed in this study, 16 were described according to their relationships to others. The other 4 references to unnamed women that did not provide a description in this way, simply referred to her as "woman" or "girl."

Five of the unnamed women of the New Testament were identified as mothers. Matthew 20:20-28 describes a story in which the "mother of Zebedee's sons" approaches Jesus and asks him to grant her request. She says, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom" (v. 21). The rest of the

story describes the conversation Jesus has with the woman's sons and does not reference the woman again. Note the dual ways in which this unnamed woman is identified as both Zebedee's wife and the mother of his two sons. There is no indication of Zebedee's identity or importance, but he is named nonetheless. However, this woman is identified as the mother of a specific man's sons. It is unknown why she is not also identified as Zebedee's wife, but the identities given to her in this passage are wife and mother, making those her primary identities.

Similarly, Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30 describe an unnamed Canaanite woman approaching Jesus with a request for her daughter. The unnamed woman approaches Jesus and says, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly." In this passage, the word "mother" is not used to define the woman. Instead, her role as mother is made evident through the story.

In Luke 7:11-17, there is a reference to an unnamed woman who is described as a mother whose only son has died. In this story Jesus meets the woman at the gate of the city where many of the townspeople are gathered with her participating in what appears to be a funeral. The beginning of this passage discusses the dead man and then references the woman in relation to him. It states,

> "**11** Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. **12** As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. **13** When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."

As the passage proceeds, Jesus comforts the woman, raises the dead man back to life, after which the passage states, "Jesus gave him back to his mother" (v. 15). Not only is this woman identified as a mother, the story is told from an interesting patriarchal perspective. A particular emphasis is placed on Jesus' comforting of the woman, however, the story is structured as a story about a man who died and was raised to life rather than a story about a mother who lost a son and was given him back. Additionally, the inclusion of the statement, "Jesus gave him back to his mother" also suggests the importance of the woman's identity as mother. Her identity depends on her motherhood and that without her son her social status is demeaned.

Finally, the last reference made to an unnamed woman as mother is in Luke 23:26-30. In this passage, Jesus is speaking to a large number of people who are following him as he is being forced to carry his cross to the location of his crucifixion. It describes a group of women who are "mourning and wailing" for him (v. 27). Initially, Jesus addresses the women as daughters. However, his next statements refer to the women's identities as mothers. The passage states,

> **26** As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene,
> who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on
> him and made him carry it behind Jesus. **27** A large number of
> people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed
> for him. **28** Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of
> Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your
> children. **29** For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed
> are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the

> breasts that never nursed!' **30** Then "'they will say to the
> mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"'

An additional passage that does not specifically refer to a woman as a mother, but does draw attention to the woman's primary role as mother is in Luke 11:14-28. In this passage, Jesus is speaking to a group of people who had just witnessed him drive a demon out of a possessed man. The passage describes a scene in which Jesus is teaching the crowds after they have witnessed him drive out the demon. As the passage ends, a woman, who remains unnamed, shouts above the crowd. The passage states,

> **27** As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd
> called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed
> you." **28** He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word
> of God and obey it."

As Jesus explains what has just happened, a woman in the crowd shouts, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you" (v. 27). While this passage does not refer to a specific woman, the inclusion of this woman's statement sheds light on the idea that women are to be mothers, birthing, nursing, and raising children. This statement, made by a woman, reinforces this idea and promotes the notion that women should feel blessed and accomplished when successfully birthing, nursing, and raising children.

Even when identifying an unnamed woman as a mother is irrelevant to the story, women are still defined as being mothers. One of the references to an unnamed woman refers to a woman as a mother despite the fact that the story is not about her role as a mother. Matthew 8:14-15 and Mark 1:29-31 both refer to the same story and state, "He saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever." The rest of the story explains how Jesus

heals her of her sickness, making her status as a mother irrelevant for the story. It appears as if the purpose of the story is to shed light on one of Jesus' miracles. Therefore, her identity as a mother-in-law is unimportant, but is the only description given for identifying her.

In addition to identifying unnamed women as mothers, several passages also emphasize the woman's identity as the "other" in relation to man or other people. Six stories refer to unnamed women according to their marital status (wives, widows, or unmarried). This number includes one reference that referred to an unnamed woman as both a widow and a mother.

Several references refer to women as widows. Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4 describe a situation in which people are in place of worship and are giving monetary offerings. The passages specifically reference a widow who "put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents" (Mark 12:42). Describing the woman as a widow defines her in relation to man. It suggests that whether or not a woman is married determines her wealth and status. Using the word "widow" to describe a woman who is also described as poor correlates these two descriptions, suggesting that widows are often poor.

Similarly, Luke 7:11-17 and Acts 6:6 both describe widows. The passage in Luke 7 explained that the dead man being carried out of the city was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." It is possible that identifying this woman as a widow and a mother, who lost her only son, also indicates her sociocultural status. This would imply that a woman with no husband and no sons is at a disadvantage to women who have a husband, son(s), or both. If men in a woman's life are dead, she is left with no identity, perhaps an

outcast in society. Thus, women who never married, no longer have a husband, or do not have a son are considered incapable of fully achieving certain aspects of femininity.

The passage in Acts 6 communicates a different message than any of the other passages that refer to widows. It begins by describing an issue that was brought to the disciples' attention. Acts 6:6 states, "In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food." While this passage also alludes to the idea that women who have no husband are at a disadvantage and consequently associated with a lower socioeconomic status, the disciples are discussing this issue and considering a solution. As the passage continues, it describes the disciples' plan to nominate 7 men who are full of spirit and wisdom to spread the word of God to unite all of the Jews on this issue. This is the first passage referring to widows that indicates a need for a change and a disassociation with the marital status of women and their corresponding socioeconomic status.

While 5 references refer to the unnamed women as mothers and 6 references refer to the unnamed women as widows, one reference specifically refers to the unnamed woman as a wife. The only unnamed woman in the New Testament who is specifically referred to as a wife is described in Matthew 27:19 and is governor Pontius Pilate's wife. Unlike other stories, the reference to this woman as Pilate's wife is important for the overall story. As governor, Pilate is faced with an important decision about what to do with Jesus after Jesus' arrest. During his deliberation, Pilate's his wife sends him a message demanding that he not participate in sentencing Jesus.

There are also 2 references that specifically describe women as unmarried. John 4:4-42 tells the story of an interaction between Jesus and a woman drawing water at a well. Initially, Jesus does not draw attention to her marital status, but as the conversation progresses, Jesus eventually points out the fact that she has been previously married five times and currently has "no husband" but is living with a man who is not her husband. Unlike previous examples, there is no connection made between this woman's marital status and socioeconomic status. However, her marital status is addressed and is seemingly frowned upon, implying marrying numerous times and living with a man to whom she is not married is unacceptable.

Another reference to an unmarried woman occurs in Acts 21:9. In this passage, Paul is discussing his journey from one city to another and describing his experience at Philip's house, one of the seven men mentioned before who was sent to spread the word of God. As the passage describes the experience at this house, v. 9 briefly mentions that Philip has four "unmarried daughters." Philip's daughters are not mentioned again in this passage. It is unknown why the unnamed women were mentioned in v.9 and why there is a reference to the marital status. Mentioning the women and their marital status reiterates that the correlation between a woman and her marital status is very important.

In addition to the 11 unnamed women who were described as mothers, wives, widows, or unmarried, 3 unnamed women are referenced as daughters. The first two references, which describe the unnamed women as daughters, are similar in that both passages describe Jesus calling the women "daughter." Neither example provides descriptions of the women's relationship to her biological father, but instead a metaphorical relationship to God or her relationship as a descendant of Abraham. The first

reference is found in Luke 8:43-48, which describes a woman who has been bleeding for 12 years. The unnamed woman approaches Jesus and as Jesus heals her he says, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace" (v. 48). In this instance, Jesus is not suggesting that the woman is his biological daughter, but rather God's daughter.

Similarly, in Luke 13:10-17, Jesus heals a crippled woman. Jesus sees the unnamed woman at the synagogue, notices her crippled state, and heals her in the presence of everyone. The unnamed woman was described with no relation to another person until the Pharisees in the synagogue protest, arguing that Jesus had no right to heal someone on the Sabbath, a day meant to be spent doing nothing. Jesus responds to the Pharisees by saying,

> "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" (v. 15-16)

In saying this Jesus describes the woman as a daughter, not to her biological father, but rather to Abraham, a man described in the Old Testament through whom God promises to build his kingdom.

The third reference in which a woman is described as a daughter is in Acts 21:7. This verse was mentioned previously because these women are also described as being unmarried. In addition to marital status, however, the women are also described as daughters to a man named Philip. The verses state, **"**Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied" (v. 8-9). Describing these women as daughters in

addition to being unmarried indicates that these women were still under the rule of their father.

Although the majority of the passages reference unnamed women as mothers, widows, wives, unmarried, or as daughters, there are instances that do not describe the woman in relation to other people. In total, there are 4 references that identify women as individuals without referencing a relation to other people. The first example is found in Matthew 26:6-13 and again in Mark 14:1-11. This unnamed woman is described as entering into a house in which Jesus, his disciples, and other leading men of the city are congregating. Offering no other description of the woman than her physical actions, the passage states,

> **6** While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper,
> **7** a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. **8** When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. **9** "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." **10** Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. **11** The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. **12** When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.
> **13** Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

A passage in Luke 7 also describes an unnamed woman anointing Jesus. It is possible that this passage is referring to the same woman described in Matthew 26 and Mark 14. However, the passage in Luke 7 goes into much more detail than the previous two passages. Luke 7:36-38 states,

> **36** When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.
> **37** A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. **38** As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them."

In this passage, the unnamed woman is described by her physical actions, but is not described in relationship to other people. She is given an identity of her own.

Another example of an unnamed woman with an identity of her own is found in Matthew 27:55. The verse states, "Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs." This passage briefly describes a group of women who have followed Jesus along his journey to care for his needs, a characteristic often associated with women. However, the passage describes these women as having the ability to decide for themselves what they will do and where they will go, with no indication of relationship, obligation, or submission to a husband or a son.

Similarly in Luke 23:55-56 a group of unnamed women, possibly the same women as mentioned in Matthew 27:55, are described. The verses state, "The women who had

come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes." While these women are also described as caretakers, there is no indication of a relationship to another person, which suggests these unnamed women have an identity of their own.

Relational (Interpretation)

Defining women in relation to others is a fundamental aspect of femininity. It is difficult to define femininity without using descriptions centered on the role of wife or mother. Therefore, the aspect of femininity that defines women in relation to other people has penetrated many of the other aspects of femininity. The relational quality that women are taught as they mature in their femininity ultimately leaves women with a desire to be accepted by others and thus, putting forth a lot of effort to achieve femininity.

Most of the references to unnamed women in the New Testament identify the women as mothers, wives, widows, unmarried, and daughters. Because these women remain unnamed, we depend solely on how they are described in order to learn about their identities, which gives much insight into what it means to be feminine.

Relationality is a prominent characteristic of femininity (Wood, 2011). In one sense, this characteristic refers to the responsibility of building and maintaining relationships. As the caregivers and the emotional laborers in society, femininity is consequently defined by the ability to maintain relationships, whether romantic, familial, or platonic. However, this characteristic also refers to the idea that women are often defined by their relationship to other people. There are many ways women may be defined in relation to others, but the most common is through the role of mother (Wood, 2011).

This analysis of the Bible reveals a strong connection between the messages about

gender through the stories of unnamed women and the way femininity is defined in U.S. society today. Almost all of the references analyzed described the unnamed women in reference to another person, and more than a fourth were described as mothers regardless of the relevance of the unnamed woman's role as mother to the story. Describing the women in this way, even when unnecessary, reveals that motherhood is an important part of femininity. In order to achieve patriarchal femininity, women must bear children.

According to the literature, being a mother is often associated with caregiving, primarily assigning women/mothers with the responsibility of childcare and a significant amount of selflessness (Dummer, 2007; Wood, 2011). Additionally, motherhood is associated with ambition, meaning women often aspire to be mothers, which suggests that being a mother is an important accomplishment in the pursuit of femininity (Brownmiller, 1984). The descriptions of the unnamed women in the New Testament are consistent with the findings in literature. As mothers, these unnamed women were described in ways that reflect their primary sociocultural responsibility for taking care of children.

Some of these passages about mothers involve the women approaching Jesus and requesting his help on behalf of their children. In Matthew 20:20-28 the unnamed woman who is described as "the mother of Zebedee's sons" approaches Jesus and says, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom" (v. 21). This woman, in an effort to secure a future for her sons, requests that Jesus put them in a seat of high honor. This is the only description available about this woman, which suggests that her role as mother is essential to her identity and that her care and protection of her sons is her primary responsibility in life.

In Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30, an unnamed Canaanite woman also is

described as a mother approaches Jesus in search of help on behalf of her daughter. When approaching Jesus she says, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly" (Mat. 15:22). Similar to the woman in Matthew 20:20-28, the only descriptions available about this woman is her role as a mother and her desire to protect, care for, and heal her daughter's illness. The gender messages in this passage also communicate that motherhood and the primary responsibility of caring for children is essential to a woman's identity and important for communicating femininity.

Finally, in Luke 7:11-17, an unnamed woman is described as a mother who has lost her son to death. This passage is primarily focused on the man who has died. However, the passage states that this man is the only son of his mother who is also a widow. Jesus raises this man back to life and the passage ends with the statement, "Jesus gave him back to his mother" (v. 15). The only available descriptions about this woman are that she is a mother, a widow, and her only son has died. Jesus is comforting her and ultimately gives her son back to her. Not only do the gender messages in the passage suggest that this woman's motherhood is essential to her identity but the inclusion of the final statement emphasizes the importance of this role. Had Jesus not given her son back to her, her identity would have been compromised.

All three of these unnamed women are primarily described as mothers. The Bible's descriptions of the women emphasize how important motherhood is for women. As a patriarchal text, the Bible is prescribing a set of appropriate behaviors for women in their role as mother. These behaviors include care taking, selflessness, and protection in regards to their children and these behaviors are consistent with the behaviors that literature suggests are required of women in U.S. society today.

Not only do these stories emphasize the importance of women's role as mothers and prescribe certain behaviors for how a woman should behave as a mother, one story about an unnamed women in the New Testament also emphasizes the importance of ambition in women to be mothers. In Luke 11:14-28, a woman shouts above a crowd that is listening to Jesus teach after driving out a demon, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you" (v. 27). There is a particular significance about the fact that the person making this statement is a woman. Her statement suggests that she, and possibly other women, place a high value on being a mother, which indicates being a mother is an appropriate ambition for women. Communicating this ambition in women reinforces and maintains the dominant gender ideology, which prescribes motherhood as an essential characteristic of femininity.

Describing women in relation to others does not end with a woman's relationship to her children. Just as some of the references described the unnamed women as mothers, some described the women according to their marital status. Also similar to the women described as mothers, the marital status of the women was not always relevant to the story. Therefore, describing the women according to their marital status also suggests that being married is an important part of being feminine. Women who are not married may be subject to social discrimination and women who marry are socially accepted.

Women can be described according to marital status in four different ways. The woman is either married, unmarried, divorced, or widowed. The Biblical stories describe the unnamed women using all four of these descriptions. Only one story described a woman as married. This story is found in Matthew 27 and the unnamed woman is Pontius Pilate's wife. While Pilate, the governor, is faced with a hard decision regarding Jesus'

imprisonment and crucifixion, his wife communicates with him via a messenger about his involvement with the decision. This particular story communicates several messages about gender that will be discussed later. However, one particularly interesting message this passage communicates about gender and marital status is the connection made between marriage and social acceptance. The reference to Pilate's wife, who remains unnamed, is not only the only passage which describes a woman as married, but it is also the only passage about unnamed women in which the woman is in a higher social class.

The social class of the unnamed women who are unmarried or widowed is much lower than that of the one married unnamed woman. Three of the references to marital status were made to widows and in most instances the widow status was irrelevant to the story. All three references to widows describe the unnamed woman in ways that suggest she is poor. In Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4, a woman, whose main descriptor is "a poor widow," is described giving monetary offerings at a place of worship. The passage states that the woman put a few coins in and ends by saying, "she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on" (v. 44). Another reference to widows is in Acts 6:6, which describes a meeting the disciples are having specifically to address the fact that the widows are being "overlooked in the daily distribution of food." Finally, Luke 7:11-17 also describes a widow who was discussed previously because she was dually described as a mother and a widow who has lost her only son. In this passage, emphasis is placed on the fact that the unnamed woman is now without a son or a husband.

The way all three of these passages describes widows suggests that marital status is important for financial status and social status, thus making marital status an integral part of femininity. Because this connection between status and marriage is so emphasized,

women will prioritize marriage in their pursuit of femininity. In the process of social construction, identity is established by how it is talked about (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). By describing and associating widows with poverty, the state of being married is made more desirable which further reinforces and maintains the idea that being married is associated with financial security and social acceptance.

John 4:4-42 describes a woman as divorced. This unnamed woman is not directly described using the term "divorced," however she is described as having previously been married five times and currently has "no husband." Through this reference there is no connection between marital status and financial or social status, but instead only connections to morality. The message presented in this passage is that failing to commit to one person through marriage is unacceptable. Additionally, pointing out that the woman has "no husband" also reinforces the importance of marriage for women.

Finally, Acts 21:9 describes a group of "unmarried daughters." These unnamed women are briefly mentioned in a passage about Paul's journey from one city to another. The women played no significant role in the passage, but rather were mentioned as having been present in the house in which Paul stayed, the house of a man named Phillip. The unnamed women's marital status is irrelevant for the purpose of the story. Therefore, mentioning their marital status suggest that these women are at an age in which it is acceptable, preferred even, to be married but are still currently unmarried. This description is particularly interesting as we can only speculate why its inclusion is important. Describing these women as "Phillip's unmarried daughters" may suggest that the women are currently under their father's rule until they marry, at which point they will be under their husbands rule. This also gives insight into a woman's ability to be

independent. Regardless of the true meaning behind the inclusion of the four unmarried daughters, the passage contributes in the communication of gender messages, which suggest that being married is an important aspect of femininity.

Even when a woman is not described as a mother or according to her marital status, it is possible that she will still be described in reference to her relationship to others. If a woman is not a wife, a widow, or a mother, she is likely to be described as daughter. Describing women as daughters suggests that women are always defined according to whom they must answer, whether it is a husband or a father. As mentioned before, the unmarried daughters in Acts 21:9 are described in a way that suggests they will remain under their father's authority while unmarried.

From a patriarchal perspective, describing a woman as daughter when she cannot be described according to motherhood or marital status suggests that a woman will always be described in a relationship to a man. This relationship between a woman and any man in her life creates a clear distinction about who holds the authority and how women are defined in a patriarchal culture. If a woman is married, her husband holds authority. If a woman is not married, her father holds the authority. Regardless, it is a man who holds the authority, which further reinforces patriarchal ideology, insisting that femininity and submissiveness are strongly related.

Despite the majority of women being described based on their relationship with other people, there were some stories about unnamed women that did not describe the woman in relation to any other person. In each of these references, the women are described by what they were doing during the event. These descriptions included many feminine characteristics that align with the literature, but did not provide any indication of

her relationship to other people. While these stories deviate from the literature, the small number of stories that do this compared to the large number of stories that define unnamed women in relation to other people communicates a gendered message in and of itself. The fact that there are so few women who are independently identified reinforces the idea that relationality and femininity are interconnected.

Overall, the stories of unnamed women in the New Testament communicate patriarchal messages about femininity by reinforcing the idea that women are relational and that their identities are dependent upon being relational. Defining and describing women in relation to others suggests that a woman's identity is dependent on with whom she has a relationship, whether that person is a child, a spouse, or another family member. Furthermore, a woman's identity may be defined by who she no longer has a relationship with, such as in the case of the widows. Through the gender messages, the Bible participates in the social construction of femininity by describing women in relation to other people. Over time, as individuals in society read these passages, the underlying gender messages within the text have produced habitualized actions that have become an objective reality in U.S. society, maintaining that women are defined by their relationships.

Division of Labor

Society defines gender according to femininity and masculinity and then organizes society around these concepts by dividing certain jobs and tasks to each gender. Research has shown that women generally are primarily responsible for childcare and housework, which has also confined them to a designated domain—the private sphere, while men are designated to their own domain—the public sphere.

Biblical stories reinforce the notion that women and men belong in separate domains or spheres. Several of the stories of unnamed women occur in the private sphere. In the story about Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law, the healing occurs in her home, where she then rises and begins to "wait" on everyone. Similarly, Matthew 27:11-26 tells a brief but important story regarding Pontius Pilate's wife. While Pilate is trying to make a decision about what to do with Jesus, his wife sends him a message telling him not to have anything to do with "that innocent man." When his wife sends him this message, Pilate is in the public sphere, standing before a crowd of people during an annual festival, preparing to make a public decision. His wife, however, remains in the private sphere and is only able to communicate with him via a messenger. This story, an important element of the overall story of Jesus' crucifixion, represents an unnamed woman in her "proper" sphere or domain.

While there are some instances in which the story takes place in the public sphere, attention is drawn to the fact that the situation is occurring in public. For example, in Luke 8:43-48, a woman who has been bleeding for twelve years approaches Jesus in a crowd and touches his robe in order to be healed. Jesus recognizes that he has been touched and questions the crowd to determine who touched him. The passage states, "Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed" (v. 47). The key phrase in this verse is, "in the presence of all the people." Using this phrase draws special attention to the fact that this situation is happening in the public sphere as opposed to Pilate's wife who communicated via a messenger rather than appearing in public. Moreover, the woman "trembles" because she saw "that she could not go

unnoticed." Perhaps she wanted to remain "unnoticed" because she was not in her "proper" private sphere.

These passages define women's demeanors in very narrow ways by reinforcing the idea that women belong in the private sphere. As mentioned before, several of the stories describe women crying, which indicates women are emotional. However, in conjunction with the idea that women are emotional, these stories also suggest that women are the emotional laborers, which is also consistent with research.

Beyond the emotional labor assigned to women, these stories also define women as caretakers, which is a fundamental gender role assigned to women. There are several stories about unnamed women in the New Testament in which this message emerges, particularly regarding women who anoint Jesus. In the story about the woman who anointed Jesus in Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:1-11, the "woman came to [Jesus] with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table." The actions of the unnamed woman that are described are a form of caretaking. Two additional passages describe this same image. In Luke 7:36-50, there is a description of a woman also anointing Jesus. The passage states,

> "A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them" (v. 38).

In the same way as the woman in Matthew and Mark, this woman in Luke is taking care of Jesus. Similarly, a group of women who are described in Luke 23:55 are also described in a way that conveys caretaking. In this passage, the women "who had come with Jesus from

Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes."

Finally, Matthew 27:55 and Mark 15:41 describes a group of unnamed women watching Jesus' crucifixion from a distance as having followed Jesus from Galilee "and cared for his needs." Each of these passages focuses on the unnamed women as taking care of Jesus, and therefore reinforces the gendered division of labor that defines women as responsible for taking care of other's needs.

Interpretation

The third major characteristic of femininity as laid out in the literature review is the way in which daily tasks are assigned to each gender. The division of labor dictates what daily tasks women are typically responsible for. These tasks adhere with the characteristics that are set forth in literature on feminine demeanor and often involve housekeeping and caretaking, which ultimately assigns women to the private sphere.

New Testament stories about unnamed women reinforce the dominant gender ideology regarding femininity through connections between women and divisions of labor. Many of the stories make a distinction between a woman's place in the public sphere versus in the private sphere. Within these stories about unnamed women, attention is distinctly drawn to the fact that the event is occurring in either the private or the public sphere. Two stories focus particularly on the private sphere and then connect this sphere to certain daily tasks. In Matthew 8:14-15 and Mark 1:29-31 Peter's mother-in-law is described lying in bed with a fever. The text specifically states, "When Jesus came into Peter's house" (Matt. 8:14). Including a description of the setting draws attention to the fact that this event occurs in the private sphere. The text continues to describe Jesus healing the

woman and states, “she got up and began to wait on him” (Matt. 8:15). This connection between the private sphere and her actions upon healing reinforces the idea that caring for others in the private sphere is the woman’s responsibility and an important aspect of femininity.

Similarly, another passage found in Matthew 27:11-26 describes Pilate’s wife, also unnamed, communicating with Pilate via a messenger. In this situation, Pilate, the governor who is also responsible for decision-making regarding the citizens, is described in the public sphere preparing to make decisions about Jesus’ fate. Unable to communicate with him in person because she remains in the private sphere, Pilate’s wife sent him a message about Jesus through a messenger. Describing this communication exchange between Pilate, in the public sphere, and his wife, in the private sphere, communicates a strong gendered message about men and women’s assigned domains. In patriarchal societies, men possess an authoritative role not only over their wives and households, but also in society. In a complementing way, women are assigned to the home, a place where they are responsible for caring for others and meeting the needs of their husbands and children. Pilate and his wife held a very high position in society. However, this distinction between the public and private sphere suggests that this division infiltrates all levels of society, regardless of class.

The stories of unnamed women in the New Testament also indicate a distinction about the public sphere in addition to the private sphere. There are stories in which a woman is described in the public sphere. For example, in Luke 8:43-48, an unnamed woman is described approaching Jesus in a public place. This woman has been sick for twelve years and approaches Jesus in hopes of a miracle healing. The text specifically states this this woman “fell at his feet in the presence of all the people” (v. 47). Acknowledging

that this event is occurring in the presence of all the people indicates that this is taking place in the public sphere and suggests that a woman taking this initiative in public is unusual. Otherwise, the phrase "in the presence of all the people" would be unnecessary.

The division of the spheres into primarily masculine and feminine domains reinforces the dominant patriarchal ideology, which claims there are specific roles assigned to each gender and the New Testament's inclusion of these divisions participates in this reinforcement. As these stories of unnamed women further define the private and the public sphere by describing the women according to which situation they are in, the feminine role of caretaker and homemaker is reified.

In addition to the designation of women to the private sphere, which is reinforced by these stories of unnamed women, the passages also reinforce the women's role as caretaker, which is a significant behavioral expectation of femininity. Several passages in the New Testament describe an unnamed woman who is anointing Jesus with perfume, which is an act of care taking for that time period. These passages are found in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:1-11, and Luke 23:55. All of these unnamed women in these passages are described as using perfume to anoint Jesus.

More explicitly, a group of women are described in Matthew 27:55 and Mark 15:41 as having followed Jesus and "cared for his needs." The literature argues that women are far more responsible for care than are men and perform the bulk of housework (Chodorow, 1995; Erickson, 2005; Hochschild, 2012). This responsibility for care encompasses a variety of tasks, including childcare, grocery shopping, cooking, and cleaning. In other words, it is the woman's responsibility to meet the needs of the family by taking care of them, providing food for them, and maintaining cleanliness. Consistent with scholarly

research, the stories of unnamed women in the New Testament describe women as caretakers. Anointing Jesus with perfume is an act of caretaking and the references to this action across multiple passages suggests that women's participation in the act of anointing with perfume, or care taking, is an important part of a woman's daily life.

In patriarchal societies, the woman's role is defined as complementary to the man's role. These stories further reinforce this idea. In each of these stories, it is the woman who does the care taking, whether that is "waiting" on a man, "caring for his needs" or "anointing him with perfume." These caretaking acts aid in defining femininity. While women today may not take this passage literally and anoint others' heads and feet with perfume, this passage clearly indicates a level of caretaking that is commonly associated with femininity. Passages such as these communicate and maintain the habitualization of gendered behaviors, in which femininity is expected to attend to and satisfy the needs of others, particularly spouses, children, and extended families. This process has been in motion for as long as the Bible has been available to the masses and therefore has ultimately contributed to broader "objective" knowledge about what it means to be feminine in terms of division of labor.

Responses to Women

I have discussed ways in which stories about unnamed women in the New Testament communicate femininity and gender, with specific attention to how messages within these stories align with past research on gender. I have discussed how the stories about these women include traces of patriarchy, how women seem to have influence on decision-making despite man's primary role as decision-maker in patriarchal societies, and how the stories reinforce the ideas that have emerged about women's physical appearance,

demeanor, and the division of labor. Through an analysis of these stories, a theme emerged that is worth examining, particularly because it was not found in research. In most of the stories that were analyzed in this study, there were responses to the women and about the women from the Pharisees, the disciples, and Jesus. Some of the stories contained responses from all three of these people, while other stories contained responses from one or two.

An interesting theme emerged from the responses to and about women. While the disciples and the Pharisees almost always responded in ways that are consistent with the themes already discussed as well as with common themes in today's dominant gender ideology, Jesus almost always responded in a way that contradicted the disciples, the Pharisees, and the dominant gender ideology. This section will discuss the contradiction between the two types of responses to and about women.

The Disciples and the Pharisees

Of the 20 stories that were analyzed, 8 stories contained responses from disciples or Pharisees that communicated gender themes previously discussed. There were 2 stories in which the disciples' response did not reflect the gender themes and none in which the Pharisees did not reflect the gender themes. The other 10 stories did not involve conversation in which the disciples or the Pharisees participated.

The first story that a response can be found in is a story that is told in both Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30. This story is about a Canaanite mother who approaches Jesus in hopes of finding healing for her daughter. The passage states,

> **"21** Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and
> Sidon. **22** A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him,

crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter
is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.” **23** Jesus did not
answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him,
“Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.” **24** He
answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” **25** The
woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.
26 He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and
toss it to the dogs.” **27** “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs
eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” **28** Then Jesus
said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is
granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.”

In this story the disciples talk to Jesus about a woman who is trying to get to Jesus, as many people did everywhere Jesus went. They say, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us” (Matt. 15:23). This response about the woman suggests that the disciples were possibly annoyed or believed that Jesus should not waste his time with the woman. Additionally, the disciples describe her as “crying out,” which suggests she is emotional, a common description of women.

In Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:1-11, a story is told about the woman who anoints Jesus. The passage states,

“6 While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper,
7 a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive
perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the
table. **8** When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. “Why

this waste?" they asked. **9** "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." **10** Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. **11** The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. **12** When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. **13** Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

In addition to the passage in Matthew, the passage about the story in Mark also states, "And they rebuked her harshly" in verse 5 after they declare her action was a waste. The disciples' response indicates that the men believed the woman's action was unnecessary and possibly even irresponsible. The tone in which they responded to her reflects patriarchy in that the men responded in a way that made her seem inferior to them.

Luke 7:36-50, which was already discussed in relation to physical appearance and demeanor, tells a similar story about a woman who anoints Jesus' with perfume. In this story, the Pharisees are present and respond in a similar way to the disciples in the previous story. The passage states,

37 A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. **38** As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she

> wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. **39** When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

The Pharisees' response to this woman is one of disgust. It also, like the response of the disciples, suggests that the Pharisees believe the woman is inferior to them. The Pharisees do not directly rebuke her, but they suggest that if Jesus knew what her life was like, he would not touch her.

Another example of the Pharisees' responding to women in a gendered way is found in John 8:1-11. The Pharisees brought a woman into the temple courts and were prepared to stone her because she was "caught in the act of adultery" (v. 4). The Pharisees state, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" This response to the women is condemning, not only physically but also socially. Regardless of the fact that adultery requires two people to commit, only the woman in the situation is being accused and potentially punished. The Pharisees' response in this story reinforces patriarchy by illustrating man's dominance over women while also reflecting other gender expectations of women's demeanor.

The last two stories involving a response to or about women from someone other than Jesus is found in John 4:4-42 and Acts 6:1-7. The response of the disciples in these two passages is different than the stories already discussed in this section. While the disciples and Pharisees both have responded negatively to and about women in all of the

other stories, these stories suggest the disciples' response to women has evolved.

John 4:4-42 tells the story of a Samaritan women drawing water at a well. Jesus meets the woman at the well and converses with her, despite her confusion as to why a Jew would socialize with a Samaritan since the two groups opposed each other. The disciples are not with Jesus and the woman, but return midway through the passage. If this passage were consistent with other stories, the disciples would question the woman or question Jesus for speaking with her. They might even suggest Jesus send her away as they did the Canaanite woman. However, this passage specifically notes that the disciples did not question Jesus' association with the Samaritan woman. The passage states, "Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, 'What do you want?' or 'Why are you talking with her?'" (v. 27). It is interesting that the text notes the fact that the disciples did not question the situation in which they found Jesus. While it reveals that the disciples "were surprised to find him talking with a woman," it is important to acknowledge that they accepted it rather than rebuking or questioning. It is possible that this indicates a change in the disciples' perception of women and also does not suggest that women are inferior to men as many of the other passages do.

Acts 6:1-7 describes a story about a group of widows who are being neglected in the daily rationing of food. The disciples gather together to discuss the matter and then form a plan for resolving the issue. The passage states,

> **1** In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the
> Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic
> Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily
> distribution of food. **2** So the Twelve gathered all the disciples

> together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. **3** Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them **4** and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” **5** This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. **6** They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. **7** So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Similar to the previous story in which the disciples did not rebuke or question the woman, in this story the disciples are now speaking up for the women and suggesting that despite the marital status of the women, they should not be neglected. This is the first time in the New Testament that there is a reference suggesting change about the correlation between marital status and financial status or socioeconomic status.

In the majority of the stories involving responses to and about women from the disciples or the Pharisees, the responses are negative and reflect common gender themes. There is an exception of two stories, which occur at the end of the stories about unnamed women in the New Testament, suggesting a possible shift in messages about gender and femininity as the New Testament progresses. Now that I have discussed how the disciples

and the Pharisees respond to and about women, I will now discuss how Jesus responds to and about women.

Jesus

Unlike the responses from the disciples and the Pharisees, Jesus' responses to and about women often do not reflect the gender themes that have already been discussed in this analysis. In many instances, Jesus' responses contradict the disciples and the Pharisees as he defends women and speaks in their favor.

In the story about the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15-21-28 and Mark 7:24-30, the disciples urge Jesus to "send her away, for she keeps crying out after" them (Matthew 15:23). Jesus' response is metaphorical, yet immediately ends the disciples' urging. Jesus says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). Following his response to the disciples, Jesus listens to the woman's request, talks with her, acknowledges her great faith, and grants her request. This passage indicates that Jesus does not believe women are inferior to men as the disciples, Pharisees, and cultures do.

Additionally, both stories about women who anoint Jesus communicate the same message in Jesus' responses. Revisiting the story in Matthew 26:6-13, Jesus rebukes the disciples for admonishing the woman. After the disciples gripe about her "waste" of the expensive perfume and rebuke her "harshly" (Mark 14:5), Jesus states, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. . . . Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her" (Matthew 26:11-13). Jesus defends the woman and elevates her status, claiming she will be remembered and known throughout the world.

The same thing happens in the second story about a woman anointing Jesus with

perfume. While the Pharisees reject the woman anointing Jesus and say, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). Jesus again responds in a way that defends the woman, elevates her status above the Pharisees, and rebukes the Pharisees. After the Pharisees respond, Jesus states,

> **40** Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."
> "Tell me, teacher," he said. **41** "Two people owed money to a
> certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and
> the other fifty. **42** Neither of them had the money to pay him
> back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will
> love him more?" **43** Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had
> the bigger debt forgiven." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.
> **44** Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do
> you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me
> any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and
> wiped them with her hair. **45** You did not give me a kiss, but this
> woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet.
> **46** You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume
> on my feet. **47** Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been
> forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been
> forgiven little loves little." **48** Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins
> are forgiven." **49** The other guests began to say among
> themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" **50** Jesus said

to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace” (Luke 7:40-50).

After the Pharisees respond negatively to the woman, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees by using a parable. He elevates the woman above the Pharisees by saying what she did was right and good and pointed out that they did not participate in the same actions. Jesus’ defense in the two stories about a woman who anointed him suggests that Jesus viewed women differently than the others and his responses disrupted the common gender ideology, which often emerges in the way people in the Bible talk to and about women.

Finally, Jesus’ response to the adulterous woman in John 8:1-11 also supports the idea that Jesus talks to and treats women differently. As mentioned before, the story revolves around a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. The Pharisees are bringing the woman to Jesus in the middle of the temple courts and suggesting she be stoned. Jesus’ response changes the course of the story and ultimately saves the woman from the stoning. While the Pharisees, all being men, are angered and prepared to throw stones at her, Jesus says, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (v. 7). After Jesus says this, the passage continues on to say that people began leaving, realizing they were no different or better than her. The passage states,

9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. **10** Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” **11** “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go

now and leave your life of sin."

Jesus' response to the Pharisees about this women and his response to this woman challenge the gender ideology. Jesus gives the woman freedom and he saves her life while the Pharisees tried to destroy her.

Rather than reinforcing the idea that women are inferior to men, should be assigned certain tasks and confined to a certain sphere, or unable to make their own decisions, Jesus' treatment of and attention to women suggest that he believed in equality of the genders. This section has discussed the difference in responses to about women between the disciples, the Pharisees, and Jesus. Overall, the disciples and Pharisees respond in a way that is consistent with common gender themes found in research. Jesus' responses challenge the gender themes.

Interpretation

The way femininity is defined is dependent on the dominant gender ideology within a culture. This definition is not established quickly, but rather is the result of a dialectical process between individuals and society over long periods of time. The majority of this analysis focused on the emergence of the major gender themes that are commonly identified in feminist studies. One interesting note to make about this finding, however, is that the passages that reinforce these themes often involve an interaction between the disciples and the Pharisees. In these interactions the disciples or the Pharisees are talking to women or they are talking about women.

In most of the stories in which the Biblical passage presents the disciples or the Pharisees responding to a woman or talking about a woman, the statements reflect a general tone that can be expected in a society that is centered around the themes that

have already been discussed in this analysis. In other words, the responses reflect the idea that women are subordinate to men and should follow certain guidelines in terms of physical appearance, demeanor, and the division of labor. However, Jesus' responses are very different from everyone else's. Jesus' responses to and about women suggest a call for change and ultimately challenge the dominant gender ideology.

Femininity is a social construct developed over time by an interaction that occurs between the individual and society. An individual learns what it means to be feminine by messages that person receives from society. In turn, the individual communicates what she has learned back out into society, reinforcing and maintaining that definition of femininity and ultimately participating in the continuation and maintenance of femininity as a social construct. This cycle continues and eventually these actions become habitualized so that the definition of femininity is no longer flexible but rather objective. It goes without question and people continue to participate in the act of femininity, possibly never realizing that they are doing it.

Through the disciples and the Pharisees responses to and about women, we are able to see this habitualization in action. These men treat women in ways that reflect a definition of femininity that has already been objectified. For example, in John 8:1-11, the Pharisees brought a woman to the temple courts to stone her for having committed adultery. In this passage there is no regard toward the men with whom she slept. Only the woman is punished for an act that not only required a woman and a man to participate in, but would also make both parties adulterers. Nonetheless, the Pharisees are prepared to stone her to death. This is one of many examples in which a group of men, whether the Pharisees or the disciples, respond negatively toward women or in a way that reflects a

patriarchal gender ideology.

In any society with a dominant ideology, challenging that ideology becomes problematic. If a society is operating under a set of habitualized actions, all is peaceful until someone does or says something that does not align with that dominant ideology. In these passages Jesus disrupts the gender ideology. Any time the disciples or the Pharisees respond negatively to or about a woman, Jesus defends her. For example, in Matthew 26:6-13, Jesus rebukes the disciples for chastising the woman who came to anoint Jesus with perfume. The disciples and the Pharisees harshly scolded her, but Jesus states, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me" (Matthew 26:11-13).

While the disciples and the Pharisees respond in a way that demeans this woman and use language that reflects patriarchal ideas, Jesus does the exact opposite by elevating her, affirming her worth, and even saying she will be remembered throughout the world. Most importantly, Jesus does not describe this woman in relation to another person, but instead he recognizes her individual identity. She will be remembered forever with her own identity, not as someone's wife, someone's mother, or someone's daughter.

The disciples' response to women follows what would be expected of a patriarchal text such as the Bible in terms of gender messages. However, Jesus' responses challenge patriarchy. This is important to understand in a culture where Christianity is prevalent as Jesus is the central character in the belief system. His repeated disregard of patriarchal norms through his responses indicates that Jesus may have had a different gender ideology than that of his peers.

Conclusion

The stories about unnamed women in the New Testament communicate

patriarchal messages about gender. The messages about gender that emerged can be organized into five general groups. The first group includes messages that reinforce and maintain patriarchal ideology. This includes a distinct connection between a woman's martial status and financial stability as well as women's influence and associated credit in decision-making. Two significant stories reinforce the concept of patriarchy but also suggest that women have some influence on decision-making, despite it being a primarily male responsibility.

The second, third, and fourth groups all contain messages that are in alignment with the major themes of femininity as outlined in the literature review, including physical appearance, demeanor, and division of labor. Man of the stories analyzed revealed messages about these three themes, indicating there is a specific way that women should appear and carry themselves. The stories also frequently described women as emotional by using words such as "crying," "wailing," or "mourning," and the stories also assigned women to the private sphere. Through many of the stories about unnamed women, it was noted that most of the women are described according to their marital status, even if the marital status is irrelevant for the purpose of the story. Many stories also described women as mothers. This finding is consistent with research as women are often defined as the other in relation to man and are heavily associated with motherhood, making child rearing a major responsibility for women.

The fifth group is the response to and about women through the biblical passages. The disciples and the Pharisees respond to and about women differently than Jesus, indicating that there is a gap between the way Jesus, the most important figure in the New Testament, and the disciples and Pharisees treat and talk about women. While the

disciples and the Pharisees generally condemn women and insist the inferiority of women, which is a consistent with findings in research, Jesus challenges the dominant gender ideology.

Chapter V: Conclusion

This research project focused on the meaning of patriarchal femininity and applied this concept to stories about unnamed women in the New Testament of the Bible. The specific research on the cross-section of femininity and Christianity is very limited. Therefore, studies about femininity in other contexts were also addressed in a review of the literature. Chapter three provided a detailed explanation of the theoretical background and methodology guiding this study, which were Social Constructionism and Feminist Criticism. Using these two concepts, the last chapter analyzed and interpreted certain Biblical passages for gendered themes. All of these steps were taken to answer the following research question:

> RQ: What does the Bible communicate about gender through stories of unnamed women in the New Testament?

Answering this question allows us to understand how the Bible may influence the current gender ideology in the U.S. As my analysis revealed, the dominant patriarchal gender ideology is communicated through stories involving unnamed women.

Patriarchy is communicated and maintained within these passages in two major ways. The first way is by connecting women's marital status with their financial status. Two stories describe women as widows while also describing them as poor. This connection drawn between poverty and marital status communicates a larger message that extends beyond financial status. Without a husband, women are not financially stable.

The second major way patriarchy is reinforced is through the common gender themes of physical appearance, demeanor, and division of labor. The female body is the symbol of femininity and for centuries women have shaped their bodies according to

patriarchal desires. One way women do this is by conforming their bodies to meet the requirements of femininity. There are two major stories about unnamed women in the New Testament that reveal gender messages about femininity and physical appearance. One story describes the way a girl moves her body, which ultimately pleases a king enough to offer her half his kingdom. Another story describes a woman anointing Jesus with perfume and wiping his feet with her hair, which suggests she has long hair. Both of these stories suggest ways the women should appear physically.

Feminine women should also possess a certain demeanor, which requires them to behave in certain ways. There are two prominent characteristics associated with feminine demeanor, emotionality and relationality. Many of the stories analyzed in this study reinforced this idea, confirming that women should be emotional and relational. There were many examples of women being described as crying and more often than not, they were crying out of concern for someone else, such as their children or Jesus. In addition to their emotional crying, women in these stories were often described in relation to other people. Wood (2011) argues that relationality is so important to femininity that women are defined according to their relationships with other people. In these passages, women were described as mothers, wives, unmarried, widows, and daughters. In some instances, this description was not necessary for the story, but was included anyway, which further suggests the importance of relationships for women.

Finally, unnamed Biblical women are assigned certain tasks commonly associated with the private sphere, which is considered the feminine woman's. Two of the Biblical passages reinforce the notion of private and public spheres. First, Pilate's wife communicates with Pilate from her "proper" private sphere. In order to communicate with

him, she must send a message via a messenger. On the other hand, another story draws attention to a woman being in the public sphere, which suggests it isn't a "normal" place for her. In this story, a woman approaches Jesus "in the presence of everyone" to find healing after being sick for twelve years. Both of these stories communicate messages about how women are assigned to the private sphere.

Patriarchy is evident throughout all of the passages that were analyzed in this study whether through major patriarchal themes, such as decision-making, or through major gender themes, such as physical appearance, demeanor, and the division of labor. Not only was patriarchy reinforced by the way women were described in the stories, it was further reinforced by how the disciples and the Pharisees responded to and about women during interactions. The disciples and the Pharisees almost always responded negatively to and about women. They often pointed out flaws about the women or condemned them.

Jesus responds to and about women differently than do the disciples and the Pharisees. While the others often respond negatively or with condemnation, Jesus elevates women and gives them an identity of their own. This finding is significant because it suggests that Jesus challenged the dominant gender ideology. He was a liberator in that he freed women from the condemnation and judgment of the Pharisees by defending them against the scrutiny of patriarchy.

The ways in which the unnamed women in these Biblical passages are represented communicate and perpetuate patriarchal ideals. Patriarchy is a foundational explanation for why the unnamed women are defined in these specific ways, which is to reinforce male rule and androcentrism. The language that is used within the passages to describe the women is used repeatedly. For example, the women are described as crying by using a

variety of phrases, such as "wailing" or "mourning." From a social constructionist perspective, using this language repeatedly to convey the same message about women institutionalizes, habitualizes, and encourages social adoption as an appropriate behavior for women. Furthermore, as women participate in the behavior that is deemed appropriate for them by this habitualization, they maintain the dominant gender ideology. This process is cyclical. When society reads the Biblical passages, institutionalization of the gendered messages and habitualization occurs, thus producing and reproducing gender ideology. As individuals behave accordingly, this in turn reinforces and maintains the gender ideology and future generations only know the set of behaviors prescribed to men and women as "objective" knowledge.

The same idea may be applied to all of the findings, with the exception of Jesus' responses to women. The way Jesus responds to women in interaction challenges the dominant gender ideology. While the repetitive messages I mentioned before, such as messages about crying or messages about physical appearance, result in habitualized actions and reinforce and maintain the dominant gender ideology, Jesus' responses challenge these habitualized actions.

The findings in this study are important for communication scholarship. The Bible is a very widely read text that has influenced people for centuries. Understanding the Bible's messages about gender helps us to understand how the Bible influences and reinforces the dominant gender ideology in the U.S. Additionally, understanding how Jesus' responses are different than others' responses and that Jesus' responses challenge the dominant gender ideology is important for Christian communities to understand. Understanding this may

ultimately change the way Christians communicate about gender and shift the dominant gender ideology within the church.

Limitations

In spite of the findings this study produced, it had some limitations. The study only looked at the unnamed women in the New Testament of the Bible. While there were 40 references made to unnamed women, only 20 of these contained adequate information for conducting an analysis and many of these 20 stories were duplicated. For example, the story of the woman giving her last penny as an offering is told in both Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4. Additionally, the New Testament only comprises one fourth of the whole Bible and there are many named women in the New Testament as well as both unnamed and named women in the Old Testament. This limits the study because the number of stories about unnamed women in the New Testament is only a fraction of the number of women the Bible describes throughout.

The study's findings are limited because it was based on one translation of the Bible. It is possible that some translations contain more gendered language while others contain more gender-neutral language. While the present study indicates that the New International Version communicates gendered messages about unnamed women, these findings may not be representative of other Biblical versions and translations.

Future Research

The lack of research on the intersection of gender and Christianity in the communication discipline suggests that this study has heuristic value. By analyzing stories about unnamed women in the New Testament, I found that not only do these stories reinforce patriarchy, but also that Jesus, the main character in the New Testament and the

central figure of Christianity, challenges these ideologies. Further research should investigate the gendered messages communicated through the Bible, and do some specifically from a Communication perspective.

While studying the unnamed women of the New Testament, I realized there are so many opportunities for study in the New Testament that would aid in understanding what the Bible communicates about gender. It may be helpful to study stories about men in the New Testament to see if the same themes emerge regarding femininity. Additionally, it may be interesting to explore unnamed men in the New Testament, if there are any (which would be interesting to learn). It may also be interesting to analyze the named women of the New Testament to reveal if the gender messages found in this study are consistent regardless of whether or not the woman is identified.

There is also opportunity to reproduce the same study using a different translation to see if there is a difference in gender messages among Biblical translations. A new translation has emerged in the past decade that is of particular interest in gender studies and is called Today's New International Version (TNIV). This translation was created to update the NIV to better accommodate the contemporary audience. Many verses within the text were edited to reflect non-gendered language. For example, the translators chose to avoid masculine generic pronouns (Clason, 2006; Comfort, 2003). Instead, the TNIV uses generic terms such as "person," "people," and "anyone" when the original biblical text requires no specific male reference (Dart, 2006). Studying the TNIV for gender messages may be interesting to understand how gender messages change through the update from the NIV to the TNIV.

Closing Thoughts

As I conclude this study, I'm reminded of my initial response to Davis' article entitled, "That's Interesting!" (1971). When I first read Davis' article, I whole-heartedly disagreed with his argument. I could not understand how something that challenged what I believe could ever become interesting to me. This study taught me that I was wrong in my reaction. Gender studies deeply challenged my beliefs. By investigated further into what the Bible communicates about gender, my eyes were opened to gender messages I had never discerned and I became very interested.

I'm also reminded of my initial resistance to the Gender Communication class. For the majority of the semester I maintained a closed mind, refusing to be interested in any discussion or reading that I came across. In reality this class challenged my beliefs in a very necessary way. It ultimately led to me to conduct my own study, in which I was able to determine for myself what I believe about gender instead of regurgitating or maintaining an ideology that had been drilled into me by society from the time I was born. I learned that what I have believed my entire life about gender in a religious context was still based on what society told me gender meant. Now I know that Jesus sought to change the gender ideology and I hope that this study sheds light on this issue and provoke change.

Finally, I return to the story that opened this thesis, in which the Pharisees dragged an adulterous woman before Jesus, demanding that she be stoned. I always understood the manifest message about forgiveness when Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." What I did not understand about this story was the more subtle message about women's role and the penalties for transgressing social expectations for "proper," feminine behavior. Studying this passage from a gender perspective made me wonder, "Why are there no punishments for the men

she was involved with?" After all, it requires two people to commit adultery. However, now I understand that Jesus' response was far more significant than just a story of forgiveness. Jesus pointed out the sins of the *men* who were condemning the women. Jesus saved this her life and restored her. Jesus is a liberator.

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Appendix

Passages Used in this Study

Adulterous Woman
- John 8:1-11

Bleeding Woman
- Matt 9: 20-22
- Mark 5:25-34
- Luke 8:43-48

Canaanite Woman
- Matt 15:21-28
- Mark 7:24-30

Crippled Woman
- Luke 13:10-17

Herodias' Daughter
- Matt 14:6-11
- Mark: 6: 22-29
- Luke 3:19-20

Mother of Zebedee's Sons
- Matt 20:20-23
- Matt 27:56

Mourning and Wailing Women
- Luke 23: 27-29

Neglected Widows
- Acts 6:1

Peter's Mother-in-Law
- Matt 8:14-15
- Mark 1:30-31
- Luke 4:38-39

Philip's Daughters
- Acts 21:9

Pontias Pilate's Wife
- Matt 27:19

Poor Widow
- Mark 12:41-44
- Luke 21:1-4

Widow of Nain
- Luke 7: 11-17

Woman at the Well
- John 4: 7-42

Women at the Tomb
- Luke 24: 1-11, 22-24

Woman in the Crowd
- Luke 11:14-28

Women Watching from Afar
- Matt 27:55-56

Mark 15: 40-41
Woman Who Anointed Jesus
Matt 26: 6-13
Mark 14:3-9
John 12:1-8
Woman who Washed Jesus' Feet
Luke 7:36-50
Women who Followed Jesus
Mark 15:40-41
Luke 23: 49, 55-56

Passages Not Used in this Study

The Elect Lady
2 John
The Elect Lady's Sister
2 John 1:13
Chief and Honorable Women of the Greeks
Acts 17:4, 12
Jesus' Sisters
Matt 13:56
Mark 6:3
Daughter of Jairus
Matt 9: 18-19, 23-26
Mark 5: 22-24, 35-43
Luke 8:41, 49-56
Devout and Honorable Jewish Women
Acts 13:50
Mother of the Blind Man
John 9:2-3, 18-23
Nerus' Sister
Rom. 16: 15
New Women Believers
Acts 5:14
Paul's sister
Acts 23:16
Persecuted Women
Acts 9:2
Possessed Woman
Acts 16:16-19
Rufus' Mother
Romans 16:13
Samaritan women baptized by Philip
Acts 8:12
Servant and Maid Peter Denied Jesus to
Matt 26
Mark 14

Luke 22

Wife of Jairus

Mark 5:40-43

Luke 8:51-56

Women and children among the 5,000

Matt 14:21

Women and children among the 4,000

Matt 15:38

Women at the Place of Prayer in Philippi

Acts 16:13

Women committed to prison by Paul

Acts 8:3; Acts 22:4