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## EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS IN PREPARING WORSHIP PASTORS FOR SERVICE

Phillip Sandifer

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EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL  
INSTITUTIONS IN PREPARING WORSHIP  
PASTORS FOR SERVICE

by

Phillip Christopher Sandifer

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School,  
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and the School of Leadership  
at The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the current and historical information available, highlighting the issues and considerations, regarding Worship Pastors in conservative evangelical churches and the preparatory work for service offered by theological educational institutions and that which is expected by their prospective employers. Stakeholders for this research are aspiring Worship Pastors, Churches (their prospective employers), and conservative, evangelical theological educational institutions.

In addition to the literature review, this qualitative phenomenological study involved interviews of 15 church Executive Pastors, 1 Pastor, 2 Worship Pastors, and the Director of a professional organization that consults Executive Pastors nationwide. Also examined were current curriculums of 5 regional seminaries. The interviews, additional artifacts, and additional direct observation were analyzed, organized, and evaluated to conclude as beneficial to aspiring Worship Pastors, Churches, and conservative, evangelical theological educational institutions.

Findings indicate that theological institutions benefit aspiring Worship Pastors in the theological, biblical studies, and church history fields while lacking significant educational benefit in the artistic, developmental, motivational, and administrative leadership fields. The study increases the knowledge of those qualities sought by church leadership in order that aspiring Worship Pastors and conservative, evangelical theological educational institutions might consider developing personal or educational programs to address them. Future studies should include churches of more diverse sizes, governance, and theological beliefs.

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## CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

Many leaders in the conservative evangelical Christian community view the Church as an institution capable of finding solutions to the many problems in the United States and the world today (Early, 2009; Gish, 2020). As a transformative change agent (Pillay, 2017) it is a mechanism for spreading and facilitating the Christian ethic, which Christians believe is the key to a fulfilled life (Warren, 1995). However, as individual churches embrace this calling, debate exists surrounding the effectiveness (Putnam & Campbell, 2012) and strategies (Boaheng, 2021; Malphurs, 2005; Wagner, 2001; Zucchi, 2006) in pursuit of this goal. This study will examine one component of the conservative evangelical Christian Church's effectiveness – its preparatory institution's ability to adequately train and equip its Worship Pastors for vocational service. In seeking general efficiencies in church leadership, Malphurs (2005) maintains that a church will only be as good as the people who make up its leadership team. Therefore, having capable, trained leadership with the proper competencies in each position is an essential part of the strategic plan for becoming a prevailing church (Weems, 2010).

Some conservative church leaders question whether or not churches can, or should, apply the same strategic leadership and organizational principles to their strategies, goals, and objectives commonly found in other successful and accomplishing organizations (Budde & Brimlow, 2007). To them, such applications can appear too secular and somewhat uncomfortable in a spiritual environment (Boaheng, 2021). However, others maintain that the Church and its associated organizations should not be averse to strategies, change, and innovation (Drucker, 2006).

Churches, like other organizations, can access and implement strategies that lead to growth and value (Barna, 1999). One of the associated organizations depended upon to help churches grow and maintain quality due to the hiring of equipped personnel is the Church's preparatory institutions (Hansen, 2018). These are known as theological education institutions. The Church's work landscape constantly changes (McNeal, 2009; Weems, 2010). Some (e.g., Aleshire, 2011; Banks, 1999; McKinney, 2004) question whether or not these equipping institutions do an adequate enough job of keeping up with the training needed for today's church leaders to maintain influence. Others (Abney, 2018, Olsen, 2009) question whether these preparatory organizations help create the ongoing learning opportunities needed for church leaders to remain up to date in the specific equipping required to accomplish their work.

The remaining sections of Chapter I include background information, a statement of the problem, the purpose statement, research objectives, significance of the study, the conceptual framework, delimitations, assumptions, organization of the study, the definition of terms, and a chapter summary.

### Background of the Study

Theological education is expensive (Moore, 2011; Seltzer, 2016), and as with other academic, vocational training programs, it remains time-consuming (Wayman, 2021) for both the students and the institutions. Graduates are left paying back loans for many years (Hornsby, 2021). Debt can be challenging to manage because vocational church work garners typically a career where salaries may not be comparable to other vocations (Flesher, 2014). In addition to a Theological education's expense to students, due to the high cost of quality teaching personnel and other resources, Theological

institutions are expensive organizations to run (Seltzer, 2016). Due to this high expense, institutions may maintain programs and curriculums that may not prepare individuals properly for vocational ministry (Buschart, 2011).

Students considering a vocation in Christian ministry struggle with what many in the church feel is a calling (Culbertson, 2019). If validated by the confidence that such an education will be money and time well spent, both students and the theological education institutions they attend can become more confident about a theological institution's contribution to their vocational training (Williams, 2019). Either result should help vocational ministry aspirants choose how they might best receive the preparation they need to become successful Worship Pastors. Finally, such validation should help churches know where best to look for trained individuals (Renewing Worship, 2020). And potentially, where not to look. Without this validation, the significance of large amounts of money and time spent by individuals, institutions, and churches may not be justifiable. This study intends to aid in this determination.

A church is an organization or body of religious believers, and the clergy are the officials who manage the organization (Merriam-Webster, 2015). When individuals attend church services, the most recognizable authority present is the Pastor. This authority is due to the importance of the Sunday message or sermon generally delivered by the Pastor, head teaching Pastor, or Elder. Fisher (1996) expresses that identifying an individual as Pastor, Reverend, or Preacher conveys a specific expectation. Dillen (2014) suggests that the Pastor's recognition as the Church's authority creates a productive tension with their dual role as shepherd. That is, one who leads the congregation gently

and carefully forward. Being considered a shepherd carries an expectation by the congregation with more to do with service than authority (Sproul, 2017).

The Church's elders grant the Pastor's authority. In some ways, a church's elders function much like a company's board of directors. For instance, in some recent high-profile Pastor resignations and terminations, the Church's elder boards assumed the responsibility and met with the congregations and the public to answer follow-up questions and ongoing plans for the organization's continued leadership (Royce, 2021; Shellnut, 2019). This authority can allow Pastors both the freedom and burden to lead (Dillen, 2014). But as a leader of a complex organization, pastors are also responsible for recognizing the interconnectedness of its various parts (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001). Executing the dual roles of shepherd and manager (Farley, 2001) includes other key leaders' leadership and administrative oversight (Monahan, 1999). One of these key leaders, and often the second most visible Pastor, is the Worship Pastor. As with the Lead Pastor, the Worship Pastor role involves playing the shepherd and manager's dual roles, albeit from the second or sometimes third chair (Hicks, 2017).

Schaller (1980) maintains that as organizations grow and become more sensitive to people's needs and differences, they become more complex. This complexity, he says, almost always leads to an increase in staff. The same is true in churches (Schaller, 1980). As with all large organizations, church leadership involves individuals working collaboratively with the Senior Pastor (Vaters, 2019). In leading and serving the congregation, Monahan (1999), Schaller (1980), and McIntosh (2006) point out that society demands experts who specialize in specific leadership roles. Thus, as they grow, churches typically focus on various church segments (e.g., children, youth, young adults,

adults, and the elderly) and the ministry responsibilities (e.g., member care, worship, missions, etc.). Church leadership researcher George Barna (1999) points out that it is essential to organize the staff to reflect a congregation's needs. Therefore, Associate Pastors must become equipped for work in their specialized area (Hawkins & Sallman, 2005).

Newman (2019) maintains that, as with the senior Pastor and given their importance as often the second most visible staff member, some educational institutions must also equip the Worship Pastor with more than just the technical musical skills for leading worship. Educational institutions must also arm the Worship Pastor with the pastoral and leadership skills necessary to shepherd the congregation in the worship service, collaborate with creative and technical teams and associates on the church staff, and report to and collaborate with the head Pastor (Newman, 2019). The Worship Pastor works closely with the Pastor and staff and must obtain and maintain the collaborative skills necessary to work in a teamwork environment (Vaters, 2019). They also must typically lead large groups of musicians and technical teams participating in the Church's ongoing services (Zippia, 2021). Therefore, they must also be competent in portraying the up-front leadership skills necessary to move subordinated groups forward effectively. According to Gonzalez (2019), the need for such skills may vary from Church to Church. Each Church likely has a minimal set of ongoing leadership skills required of the Worship Pastor, contributing to the staff effectively, their teams, and leading the congregation in worship and the requisite musical skills (Gonzalez, 2019).

Larger Churches (for this study, 500 or more in weekly attendance) depend upon an Executive Pastor or will often form committees under the direction of the Executive



Pastor or Pastor when hiring essential leadership team members (Gonzalez, 2019). Typically, the church elders, Executive Pastor, or Pastor empower committees that frequently meet amongst themselves and report back to the elders and the Pastor to identify a desirable candidate. Regarding the Worship Pastor, according to church consultant and staffing firm Vanderbloeman (2016), musical qualities are often screened for and become even more apparent as the candidate moves forward in the hiring process. However, pastoral and leadership skills are more difficult to determine because a candidate cannot always be in the presence of the actual staff they will collaborate with and the teams they will lead (Vanderbloeman, 2016). If a candidate comes to the hiring Church from a previous place of employment, they can provide references and recommendations (Wagner, 2020). However, such a candidate may also arrive directly from a preparatory institution, a theological institution, or a seminary. In this case, the search committee may become involved with assessing whether such an educational institution has likely properly equipped the candidate with the necessary pastoral and leadership training (Witvliet, 2010). Being adequately prepared in pastoral and leadership skills will indicate to the search committee the level at which the candidate will effectively guide the ministry forward from the beginning of their tenure (Cooper, 2016).

#### Statement of the Problem

When institutions do not prepare the Worship Pastor for their job, burn-out (Beebe, 2007; Jackson-Jordan, 2013) can quickly occur (Beisswenger, 1996; Irwin & Roller 2000; Jeynes, 2012; Mckinney, 2004; Borthwick, 1988). Further, Karatzer (2020) offers that in arriving unprepared for church work rigor, it is not uncommon for any Pastor, Worship Pastor, etc., to become reactive to church dynamics' ongoing, non-stop

nature. If adequately prepared, such individuals can proactively pursue their positions' nuances (Kratzer, 2020). If not, Wilkes (2001) maintains that in addition to burn-out, leading reactively and thus providing poor service to the congregations they serve will occur. And the additional waste of a church's financial resources will be the result (Flesher, 2014; Scanlon, 2013). When this happens, the Worship Pastor will compromise the effectiveness of the team and thus the Church itself (Gould, 2016). The ongoing financial burden, due to educational costs (Moore, 2011; Seltzer, 2016), on the aspiring Worship Pastors themselves can also be part of the problem when educational institutions do not adequately prepare them for service.

According to Edwin Willmington (2012), theology author and past director of the Fred Bock Institute of Music of the Brehm Center for Worship at Fuller Theological Seminary, practical ministry skills (shepherd, manager, and leadership skills) are the most common skills lacking in Church hires today. These critical skills are in addition to the broad theological, and biblical training that institutions and seminaries typically offer. Job search portals such as Zippia (2021) usually list the most common skills sought by churches. Career consultant website Zippia (2021) lists the most common skills found on Worship Pastor resumes: leading small groups, planning, and leading worship services, conducting bible studies, creating music programs, and ensuring good sound quality.

Many large and growing churches employ internal leaders known as Executive Pastors (Stetzer, 2021). While Pastors can often assume the dual role of Executive Pastor, typically, the responsibility of the Executive Pastor is the leading of a church's essential Associate Pastors as well as working out sound systems and processes) in pursuit of the organization's agenda (Hawkins, 2001; MacGregor, 2001). In addition to teaching and

shepherding, the senior pastors handled these duties in years past (Stetzer, 2021). In recent years, specialized employment agencies (commonly known as headhunting firms) have also emerged (Orr, 2016). These firms focus specifically on staffing key leadership positions within churches. These staffing organizations will often partner with a church's Pastor, Executive Pastor, or search committees to fill a church's staffing needs (Lathrop, 2011).

Historically, churches have looked to theological institutions to train individuals for vocational ministry leadership (White, 2011). However, this training can often be primarily theological and not practical (Banks, 1999; Beisswenger, 1996; McKinney, 2004; Senior & Weber, 1994). Further, the training focus is often on those seeking Senior Pastor roles and not necessarily other Associated Pastor roles such as the Worship Pastor role. This lack of training can leave Worship Pastors unprepared upon leaving theological institutions and beginning their careers. According to Vanderbloemen (2016), this possible lack of adequate training may make it difficult for Church elders, Pastors, Executive Pastors, and the committees that they empower to hire effectively, thus jeopardizing the effectiveness of the Church as an organization.

#### Purpose Statement

This study will examine the specific roles, expectations, and needed skillset of the Worship Pastor. Once the roles, expectations, and required skillset is determined, the researcher will explore if church leadership believes that current theological institutions provide adequate worship leading, leadership skills, and pastoral training for a Worship Pastor's role in churches.

Additionally, the researcher seeks to explore what percentage of the overall training needed relative to other church leaders' training avenues an aspiring Worship Pastor might expect a theological institution to provide. And the study intends to benefit church leadership, pastors, and Executive Pastors in particular in understanding how much of the required skillset an aspiring worship pastor might bring with them from a theological institution when they are hired.

### Research Objectives

In accomplishing the purpose of this study, the research pursues the four primary research objectives below:

*RO1* - Describe the characteristics of the participants, their positions, and their roles concerning this study.

*RO2* - Explore the extent to which church leadership today depends upon theological institutions to adequately prepare Worship Pastors for specific vocational ministry leadership.

*RO3* - Explore the extent to which individuals who have sought a theological education can identify a direct link between their education and specific Worship Pastor expectations and job descriptions to which they aspire.

*RO4* - Explore the extent to which American theological institutions focus upon the practical leadership aspects of a Worship Pastor's equipping and whether or not they align their curriculums to the training needed by churches.

### Conceptual Framework

The theoretical foundation for this study involves the Human Capital Theory. Human Capital Theory maintains that individual workers have a set of skills or

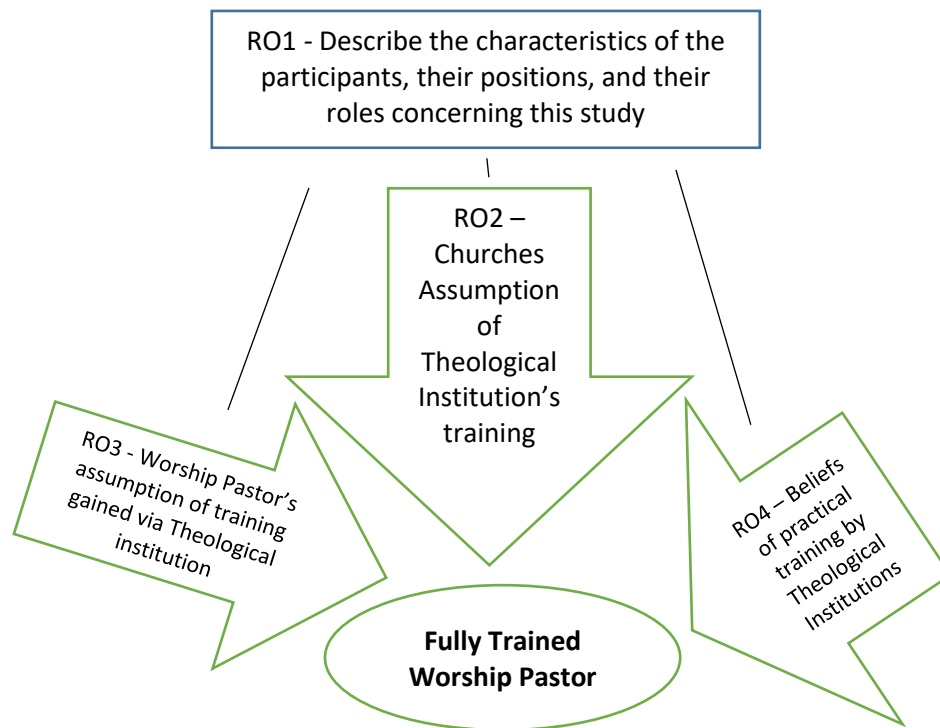
abilities which they can improve or accumulate through training and education (Becker, 1962). In this study the researcher seeks clarity as to whether Theological Educational Institutions should be depended upon by church leadership to provide such training to aspiring Worship Pastors.

The Conceptual framework for this study (figure 1) involves the relationship between institutions whose purpose is to prepare individuals for Worship Pastor positions and churches that seek prepared individuals. Simply put, the study aims to provide evidence as to whether or not church leadership (Pastors, Executive Pastors, Elders, search committees) perceive that seminaries have adequately prepared their Worship Pastors. And for church leadership post-hire to determine the extent to which theological institutions are responsible for this preparation relative to other training venues.

The study will identify and notate specific leadership factors (Irwin & roller, 2000) and competencies sought (Sheeks, 2016) in a newly hired Worship Pastor as determined from the literature review, interviews with church leaders, and artifacts. The researcher will then explore via additional interviews if a sample of the Church's leadership perceives these leadership factors and competencies to have been present or in deficit among its Worship Pastors when they initially hired them. Then, the researcher will explore if their current Worship Pastors now contain the needed skills. Further, if so, the researcher will explore which resource(s) (e.g., theological institution, specific post-Theological Institution church training, personal initiative, or some other venue) church leadership holds most responsible for its Worship Pastor's current equipping.

The researcher will examine the suggested curriculums for aspiring Worship Pastors from five well-known non-denominational seminaries (Gordon-Conwell – East Coast, Trinity Theological Seminary – Midwest, Asbury Theological Seminary –

Southeast, Dallas Theological Seminary – Southwest, Fuller Theological Seminary – West Coast). The researcher will then contrast and compare the suggested coursework with the required skills determined by the literature review, artifacts, and interviews with church leaders. The researcher will seek to determine if the proposed curriculum is sufficient to equip the aspiring Worship Pastor to be pleasing to churches participating in the interview process. Further, the study will explore the extent to which theological institutions believe they are presenting a curriculum to aspiring Worship Pastors that will fully equip them for service.



*Figure 1. Conceptual Framework*

## Significance of The Study

This study will prove significant to theological institutions and churches hiring Worship Pastors who may evaluate whether or not a theological education helps prepare individuals desiring to work within Worship Pastor positions in churches. It will also help aspiring Worship Pastors assess if the financial resources allocated and the training methodology are adequate to prepare them for their profession. To the extent that theological institutions and churches seek to be partners in theological education, a more meaningful dialog between the two could lead to updated teaching methods. These might better prepare students for ministry before graduation.

Scholars evaluating the merits of a theological education agree that the landscape has changed. That theological study in and of itself is not enough to prepare students for ministry in today's culture (Blair, 2010, Cole, 2008; 2010; Shaw, 2014). Thus, this study will help aspiring Worship Pastors, churches, and leaders of theological institutions identify the practical aspects of an aspiring Worship Pastor's equipping requiring updating. Institutions might need to be more deeply involved in Worship Pastors' practical education to accomplish this (McFarland, 2011). To what extent theological institutions contribute to practical ministry training is worth understanding.

Further, due to the decline of attendance at Protestant churches, fewer students come to seminaries through denominational pathways (Brenner, 2011; Redfern, 2015; Shattuck, 2014). Thus, there is some question as to whether or not the cost of theological education (itself more costly today) as it now stands ultimately returns the investment made into a student over time through practical, productive ministry service (Miller, 2011). This study could help justify that investment or bring into question that

investment. This study might conclude that churches are not gaining the benefit from theological institutions of prepared Worship Pastors. This finding could further explore the extent to which theological institutions might be willing to (upon further self-evaluation) change or modify their curriculums. This study could also solidify the need for the ongoing professional development of staff members for churches.

For both theological institutions and churches, this study could also encourage an evaluation of whether their current or projected significant investments in technology and teaching methods are justified (Aleshire, 2011). Outdated methods, or possibly the failure to address the fast pace of technological development, have potentially caused a disparate relationship between theological institutions and churches. Or it could be that there is something more fundamental involved, such as lack of communication, understanding of purpose, or confusion. These are tangential questions also worth considering in this study.

### Delimitations

Roberts (2010, p. 138) wrote that the delimitations section “clarifies the boundaries of your study. It is a way to indicate to the reader how you narrowed your study’s scope.” According to Roberts (2010) it is the researcher who controls the elements which will be in the study and those that will not be. Through interviews and follow-up questions, the researcher will capture the most important facts regarding church leadership's perceptions of its most current job descriptions of worship pastors as well as their perceptions of how effective American Theological institutions currently are in training individuals for these positions. Churches vary in size, governance, denominational affiliation. Seminaries vary in curriculum teaching approach. In



condensing information from these interviews and follow-up questions for review, the researcher will seek to accumulate and study those variables most familiar to most interview participants as they present themselves in learning the interviews' results.

### Assumptions

Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster, 2022) defines assumptions as “a fact or statement (such as a proposition, axiom or notion) taken for granted. The researcher, in the interviews conducted, made certain assumptions regarding the responses by the interview participants. They were: (a) that they were honest when giving their perspective on what they look for in a worship pastor as well as their perceptions of the effectiveness of theological institutions training them. (b) that they were not pressured or encouraged towards certain answers. (c) that the essence of the study was fully understood and that many of the terms and definitions used were familiar to the interviewees.

### Definition of Terms

This study will use the following definitions. They will be helpful to keep in mind and referred to if necessary:

1. *(The) Church* is "a body or organization of religious believers" (Merriam Websters Collegiate, 1997, p. 205)
2. *Clergy* and *Minister* are used interchangeably throughout this study. The clergy are the officials who manage the Church. Essentially, the officers of the organization. "A group ordained to perform pastoral or sacerdotal functions in a Christian church." (Merriam Websters Collegiate, 1997, p. 213)
3. *Pastoral* is a description of an individual leading as a pastor would lead.

4. *Pastor Track* represents that educational pathway followed by individuals aspiring to lead or teach Pastors within churches.
5. *Teaching Pastor, Lead Pastor, or Head Pastor* are terms used interchangeably for the Church's "Pastor in charge" as recognized by the staff and congregation. "A Clergyman serving a local church or parish" (Merriam Webster Collegiate, 1997, p. 850)
6. *Theological Institutions* are schools educating clergy and can be used interchangeably with Divinity Schools, Theological Schools, Schools of Religion, and Seminaries. (Foster et al., 2006)
7. *Worship Pastor* is the term used in this study for those individuals typically sought out to lead specific worship ministries within large and growing churches. They usually have musical, leadership, and pastoral equipping while not necessarily having all of the training necessary to be a lead pastor (Winkler, 2014).

#### Organization of the Study

In organizing the study, the researcher has presented the chapters accordingly: An overview of the study is found in Chapter I. This overview has included the introduction and background of the study. Additionally, the problem and purpose are stated followed by the research questions (RO's). The study's significance, conceptual framework, delimitations, and assumptions then follow, with the chapter concluding with a definition of terms. The literature review is found in Chapter II. It includes the current published historical research related to Worship Pastors, their expected skillset and training both within churches as well as that received from theological educational institutions.

Chapter III explains the methodology used to conduct this qualitative study and the selection process. Chapter IV analyzes and presents the themes and patterns that emerged from the data. Chapter V concludes with a summarization and discussion of the findings and recommendations for future research.

### Chapter Summary

Whether their goals are ambitious or to maintain a certain level of quality, growing churches may be finding it challenging to identify and hire quality Worship Pastors sufficient in training and competencies to participate in the organization's leadership towards its goals (Vanderbloemen, 2015). One reason for this deficiency may be that a portion of this lack of activity could be due to Worship Pastor training's inadequacy from the theological institutions they attend. A further gap could be the level of training the theological institution thinks it provides versus the training churches assume an aspiring Worship Pastor's theological institution is giving. This study will help individuals, institutions, and churches identify precisely the gaps in training and expectations and evaluate whether or not theological institutions are currently accomplishing the preparatory work necessary for Worship Pastor to succeed in their jobs serving large churches. Thus, identifying these gaps (if any) will help all parties determine whether or not the financial expenditures by individuals and institutions are warranted and whether or not hiring a seminary-trained aspirant is worth the investment on the part of a church.

## CHAPTER II – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will provide historical information regarding the three primary stakeholders identified in this study. These stakeholders are conservative evangelical American Theological Institutions, Individuals aspiring to be church Worship Pastors, and the individuals at churches charged with hiring Worship Pastors. First, the researcher will examine American Theological Institutions' historical background, tracing their history and purpose from their beginnings in the United States to the present. Next, the study will review literature reflecting the history of perceived vocational practice preparation by individuals who have served in the church as Worship Pastors. We will trace these expectations up to our current time. Finally, we will examine the extent to which church leaders have historically looked to its Theological Institutions to prepare individuals for their roles as Worship Pastors. The literature presented offers both a historical perspective and the current expectations of Theological Institutions, aspiring Worship Pastors, and church leaders in this regard.

### Theological Institution's Vocational Preparatory Role

Preparing individuals for pastoral work on American church staff has historically fallen to theological education institutions known as seminaries (Witmer, 2007). Likewise, American graduate education drew its teaching and training model from theology educational institutions (Naylor, 1977). Thus, seminaries served to create the prototype for American Graduate schools. Moreover, Naylor (1977) maintains that seminaries, focusing on advanced studies, laid the groundwork for what professors and presidents of other American Colleges and Universities ultimately sought to have their institutions of academic research resemble.

### *The Beginnings of American Theological Institutions*

According to Sweet (1937), the first American seminary was established in 1784 and was known as the Dutch Reformed Seminary. The first law school was established in America that same year. However, the first non-denominational seminary, known as Andover Theological Seminary and was founded in 1808. Its purpose was to "increase the number of learned and able defenders of the Gospel of Christ, as well as of orthodox, pious and zealous ministers of the New Testament" (Sweet, 1937, p. 266). In addition, the Presbyterian Church founded Princeton in 1812 to provide theological education, and Harvard established its divinity school in 1815 (Sweet, 1937).

Naylor (1977) maintains that many church plants took place as America grew throughout the 1800s. Accordingly, divinity study increased as with other academic pursuits for many vocations and was in high demand. By 1840 numerous additional Theological Institutions had been established to facilitate training for vocational church workers. The primary driver was the demand for educated theologians serving all denominations. During this time, Andover and Princeton Seminaries and Yale Divinity School established the standard of prestige and accomplishment that medical and law schools sought to emulate (Naylor, 1977).

### *American Theological Education in the 20th Century*

Some contend that theological institutions lost their vocational preparatory impact over time within the academic community (Banks, 1999; Naman & McCall, 1999). Evidence suggests that this may have been a slow erosion over time (Thangaraz, 1992). A study authorized and published in 1924 by the Institute of Social and Religious Research entitled *Theological Education in America* maintained that there was no

problem more critical within Christian education at the post-graduate level at the beginning of the last century than Spiritual leaders' adequate training (Kelly, 1924). However, at that time, spiritual leaders' activity implied theological training – biblical studies, church history, and homiletics but not real-world practical leadership and administrative tasks (Princeton, 2021).

The typical 1922 Program of study at Princeton Theological Seminary, the most acclaimed Presbyterian Seminary at the time, included significant hours in Old and New Testament, Church History, Systematic Theology, Greek and Hebrew Language study, and Apologetics as well as a few hours in Missions, Pastoral and Ecclesiastical Theology and Homiletics (the task of preaching) (Kelly, 1924). Of note is that even at that time, seminaries heavily weighted coursework toward theological studies and church history (Clark, 2011). Such coursework might generally aid the Pastor-track individuals but may have lacked the practical equipping that one might hope to accompany training toward non-Pastor-track leadership roles. However, Widner (2007) notes that some seminaries had developed apprenticeship models whereby experienced pastors would take candidates for the ministry under their care and even into their homes. Thus, a future Worship Pastor might have graduated with a similar theological education as the lead pastor. However, their education and experience as shepherd and manager may have proved wanting by his potential employer – the church unless they were the beneficiary of a seminary utilizing an apprenticeship model (Widner, 2007). Nonetheless, it does not seem to have been a priority at American theological institutions to address that shortfall through their curriculum.

### *American Association of Theological Schools (ATS)*

In the late 1930s, 37 graduate-level theological schools in the United States and Canada formed the American Association of Theological Schools (ATS). ATS now has roughly 250 member schools: 70% Protestant, 28% Roman Catholic, and 2% Orthodox (Weber, 2008). ATS does not have governance standards, and therefore it cannot mandate a certain way or field(s) of study to adequately serve the needs of those seeking more than just theological training from one of the member school's graduates.

### *American Theological Institution's Collaboration with American Churches*

Each theological institution relates to the needs of churches differently (Weber, 2008). The denominationally affiliated theological institutions tend to communicate more with churches as a particular service expectation is more than implied (Weber, 2008). There is also a polity connection within denominationally related theological institutions that maintains the institution in an accountability relationship with the churches they intend to serve through staffing.

In addition to theological institutions affiliated by denomination, a covenantal relationship can exist between churches and institutions. Weber (2008) maintains that covenantal ties are not always well defined. Rather than having official agreements or obligations to one another, they are more of a historical nature. Relationships once formed have maintained themselves in place informally yet lasted for many years. Most protestant theological schools do not relate to sponsoring or recommending churches in such a formal way (Weber, 2008). Smaller denominations may have designated or suggestive relationships with individual theological institutions. Or, churches may have, over time, built significant reciprocal relationships with them.

Regardless of its ownership or governance structure, there is debate within the theological community about whether today's theological institutions should focus on theological education or practical ministry training (Banks 1999; Jeynes, 2012).

Theological education has historically been beneficial to Senior Pastors. However, it is unclear if those who aspire to be, for instance, Worship Pastors, receive this same benefit. Cole (2008) notes that the transition from seminary to the field of ministry can be pretty tricky regardless of whether one aspires to be a senior pastor or if hired in an Associate Pastor role such as the Worship Pastor.

#### *American Theological Institutions and Worship Pastor Training*

Reflecting upon the historical role of the worship pastor and the state of worship in the church in the middle of the previous century, Professor of Music at the University of Toledo Lloyd Sunderman (1949) did identify what he considered to be an issue in the church concerning music. While his topic was primarily the quality of music, his document revealed that there did not appear to be the needed training to improve the music in churches in 1949. He maintained that most higher learning institutions did not have the staff, curricula, or space resources to train individuals desiring to pursue religious music training. Further, he even suggested that the best resource for spiritual music training is likely the college or university with a divinity school attached to it as a division (Sunderman, 1949). And nothing is mentioned by Sunderman of additional training in management and leadership.

In his paper written for the trade magazine *The American Organist*, entitled *The Role of Music in the Seminary, Where are We?* Daniel Aleshire (2005), who served as the executive director of The Association of Theological Schools from 1990 until 2017,



conveyed American theological institutions' involvement on a minimal basis in educating church musicians generally. Further, only nine institutions offered a master's degree of any kind related to church music leadership (Aleshire, 2005). While a small number of Seminaries in the latter part of the previous century and the beginning of our current century did offer advanced degrees in theological studies with music involvement, there is no mention of additional practical classes on leadership and administration.

#### *Theological Institutions and Current Worship Pastor Training Programs*

A 2004 discussion at Calvin College indicated that theological institutions had only recently identified the importance of fully trained Worship Pastors' churches. John Witvliet professor and director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship stated that he had begun noticing an obvious need from churches seeking educated worship coordinators and worship pastors. He compared churches' need for education directors that churches had surfaced 20 years prior (Huyser-Honig, 2004). This recognition appears to have been a new observation on the part of the Witvliet and his institution. However, his response was on calls from churches, not the seminary, essentially pursuing churches, asking them what they need. And still, a 2020 review of the Calvin College Master's programs indicates no master's degree programs identifying "worship" as the primary field of study. However, it does list a master's degree program called Master of Arts in Ministry Leadership. The addition of worship is one of the five fields of study and Pastoral, Youth & Family, Missional, and Pastoral care leadership fields. While music or other art forms are not in the field of study, the biblical text and theology study is with "Forming Worshipping Communities" and 6 Worship Electives as part of the core curriculum (Calvin College, 2020).

More recently, Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, believes that it has created the “gold standard” for worship leadership in their new Master of Music in Worship Leadership Master’s degree (Coleman, 2020, para. 3). According to Chuck T. Lewis, the associate dean of the School of Church Music and Worship at Southwestern, his seminary, a Baptist institution sets its sites to create the best Church Music and Worship leadership program (Coleman, 2020). In describing the 59-hour degree, Lewis stresses the importance of students gaining knowledge in three areas, serving them as fully formed Worship Pastors (Coleman, 2020). Thus, their classes align under the categories of: “robust theological training, vigorous leadership coaching, and practical equipping in the area of music and worship leadership (Coleman, 2020, para. 3).” Lewis believes that only Southwestern Baptist Seminary offers a worship degree whereby students can benefit from a high level of focus on the job description's practical aspects (Coleman, 2020).

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary has built its Master of Divinity (MDiv) in Worship Leadership upon the traditional Master of Divinity degree's heritage, the primary master’s degree for teaching and leading pastors (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020). Like Southwestern Baptist Seminary, this degree also assembles its courses within theological, biblical, leadership, and worship leadership categories (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020). It also requires students to have had some music theory level and demonstrate proficiency in music (SEBTS.EDU, 2020). The curriculums of both Southwestern Baptist Seminary and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary appear to offer practical training courses for individuals to assume

Worship Pastors' roles in church settings (Coleman, 2020 & Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020).

Dallas Theological Seminary also offers a Master's degree of value to individuals wanting become Worship Pastors. Dallas Theological Seminary markets this degree to other worship programs such as worship leaders, videographers, and those holding different technical roles. Its stated purpose is to "provide graduate-level training for those who desire to integrate a sound biblical and theological education with training and media arts experience" (DTS, 2020, p. 2). Its coursework as listed in the 2020 overview publication includes: 22 hours of prescribed Bible Exposition courses, 18 hours of Systematic Theology courses, three hours of Christian Life and Witness courses, and 6 hours of Media Arts courses. Also, 2 are in Media Arts & Worship apprenticeship in which the student develops a professional portfolio. The student also takes 15 elective hours. Thus, this degree appears to contain a solid mixture of theological and biblical courses along with some practical equipping (given the apprenticeship aspect of a portion of the curriculum (DTS, 2020).

One unique program that began in the 1990s is the Institute for Worship Studies by author and theologian Robert Webber (IWS, 2020). Webber believed that the Christian church comprises very diverse denominations in their theological preferences for worship (IWS, 2020). There needed to be an advanced degree, the application for which needed to have comprehensive admission standards (IWS, 2020). That conviction became the Doctor of Worship Studies (D.W.S.) and began with 22 Doctoral students in June of 1999 (IWS, 2020). It did not require an advanced degree from another theological institution to allow an applicant to enter doctoral studies (IWS, 2020). For most

theological doctorates at the time, a master's degree in Divinity was required (IWS, 2020). The institute began a master's degree program (Master's in Worship Studies (M.W.S.) in 2002. Five hundred twenty-two individuals comprised of over 90 denominations have graduated from the master's and doctoral programs at the Institute for Worship Studies as of June 2017 (IWS, 2020).

James R. Hart, the current president of the Institute for Worship Studies in its 2020 catalog (IWS, 2020), explains that the institute intends to create a curriculum that addresses, as much as is possible, the highest quality and most practical worship education to meet the needs of the current worship environments. However, while evaluating the doctoral degree program does focus primarily on the Worship Pastor's role, it does not appear to offer practical classes in working through the day-to-day leadership aspect of leading a ministry (IWS, 2020). The current Doctor of Worship Studies focuses upon the Development of Christian Worship, Congregational Spirituality, Music and The Arts, Sacred Actions and Ministries of Christian Worship, a practicum Course plus a thesis. One of its core values declares "IWS offers an ongoing critical appraisal of Christian worship, with an open mind and heart to an authentic faith and practice in the twenty-first century (IWS, 2020, p. 9)". Therefore, the program seems to assume that its participants are already working in a church in some worship-related capacity (IWS, 2020).

The master's degree of Worship Studies program involves Biblical Theology and History of Christian Worship, a cross-cultural perspective in Christian Worship, and standard biblical and scriptural courses (IWS, 2020). However, the master's degree program also focuses on the contextualization and spirituality of Christian Worship and a

ministry internship requirement. The course catalog states that the master's degree program "is specifically designed for church leaders including worship leaders, pastors, music ministers, parish musicians, professors, worship teachers, liturgists, artists, missionaries, etc. Every course deals specifically with worship yet integrate the classic theological disciplines as well (IWS, p. 31, 2020)."

Another educational institution that offers a master's and doctoral degree in Christian worship is Liberty University. One of the school's programs focuses specifically on preparing students for the Worship Pastor role. It is the Master of Arts in Worship – Leadership Master's degree. This degree is entirely online and appears to focus on individuals already working in church worship ministry (Liberty, 2020). In its degree description, it speaks to providing students with essential skills in leadership and music development. It aspires to teach the student to be effective and purposeful in worship leading (Liberty, 2020).

Liberty's Doctoral degree in Christian Worship (Dmin, Worship) assumes that students are already in leadership roles in the church and appears to continue to focus on the Worship Pastor and the Senior Pastor's relationship. Along with the biblical foundations for leadership, the Liberty program endeavors to teach the students about the history and philosophy of Worship, examine current issues in worship leadership, and the practical aspect of the worship leader and their essential relationship with the senior pastor (Liberty, 2020). As with the master's degree, Liberty's Doctoral degree is entirely online (Liberty, 2020).

Many resources on worship and some degree programs intending to prepare students for worship pastor positions seem to discuss worship equipping and preparation

as isolated from church leadership. Worship pastors must work well with the teaching or leading pastor (Winkler, 2014). According to worship pastor and author Caleb Holgerson (2017), the Worship Pastor and Senior Pastor relationship intuitively is a vital relationship. He has dedicated an entire chapter in his book *Becoming a Worship Pastor* to this dynamic. In the chapter *Following Your Leaders*, Holgerson (2017) explains that the Senior Pastor, not the Worship Pastor, sets the church's vision and worship service. Therefore, it would seem that a critical component for a worship Pastor would be to learn how to be a good follower and implementer. Practically speaking, he explains, there are so many components of the worship service and its preparation capable of interrupting this positive relationship that needs to exist between the worship pastor and the senior pastor. Some of these include the loudness of the music, the worship team's attire, and the worship team's attitude in general. Holgerson (2017) explains that the worship pastor's perspective is essential in leading by example and modeling the importance of honoring your leaders. Therefore, it would seem like this would be an integral component of the Worship Pastor equipping included in preparatory programs. That Liberty's degree programs (both master's and Doctoral) would dedicate curriculum to this dynamic appears to indicate its belief in this dynamic.

Regent University offers an M.A. in Practical Theology – Worship & Media (Regents, 2020). As with Liberty's degrees, it is available entirely online (Regents, 2020). In addition to the study of worship, generally, its curriculum (Regents, 2020) expands into the role of media in current worship settings. In addition to the typical survey of worship history and biblical mandates, it also focuses on leadership skills. One course description reads, "The worship leader is a catalyst for spiritual development and

ministry effectiveness. It focuses on effective leadership, corporate worship expression and experience, and missional application in ministry settings (Regents, 2020, p. 1).” This description indicates the importance of the worship pastor’s equipping with the requisite leadership skills. From the researcher’s view, this course of study does not appear to specifically focus on the Worship Pastor and Senior Pastor dynamic as with the Liberty University degree. Nor does it seem to have an internship component to the curriculum (Regents, 2020).

Regent’s master’s degree (Regents, 2020) seems to recognize and imply that the modern-day Pastor of Worship needs a much greater understanding than just music involvement. Depending on the context, the Worship Pastor could be leading leaders of the tech teams (lights, sound), a videography team, leaders who coordinate ushers, greeters, and worship service components such as the offering communion. In his book, *The Worship Pastor* Author and worship pastor Zack Hicks (2016) discusses the necessity of not just being a curator of the worship service, and all that implies. Instead, depending on a Church’s given worship mandate, he encourages Worship Pastors to go further depending on their background in worship history, biblical studies, and creative skills. Additionally, Worship Pastors should be, in Hick’s words, “An Artist’s Chaplain.” That is, it’s not just enough to have the creative skills to engage in the creative and technical language with his teams' leaders. They should also understand the importance of relating to their lives (Hicks, 2016). Hicks speaks of the importance of recognizing that the Worship Pastor, who needs first to embrace themselves as an artist, needs to understand how to lead other artists. They need to understand their leaders and their life stories and understand them well enough to lead them towards an ever-improving level of

creativity and teamwork based on their talent level. Another component to leading the leaders, according to Hicks (2016), is to receive the leader's insights into the city the church serves and their aesthetic wisdom about the areas in which they operate. Pastor and author James Emory White (2011) recognizes this "drawing the leaders in" (and helping them realize what they can become) as an essential aspect of the leader's role – whether they be the Worship Pastor or another Associate Pastor leading teams in the church. As Worship Pastors listen to them, learn from their observations, appreciate their art and contributions, they can better point them toward their potential.

In his book, *Essential Worship* Greg Sheer (2016) speaks to a Worship Pastor's quality, understanding how the heart and soul are involved in the worship service. He notes that in addition to loving God with our minds – the worship attender learning from the teaching, which takes place in the church, people also love God with the heart and the soul. Creating an atmosphere that is not just a learning atmosphere but also an inviting atmosphere of the potentially dynamic response is essential. Thus, as with the Regent degree offering, understanding how the component teams (sound, lights, multimedia) work together is vital in a more modern-day church setting where such components are involved.

Christian Colleges and Universities offer many advanced degrees in Worship, Worship Studies, and Worship Leadership. However, very few Seminaries extend such offerings (Barnhart, 2015). An unanswered question is whether Seminaries see themselves primarily as places where theological thought and research are pursued or seen as being in concert with preparatory institutions. Or both (Perry, 2021)? This question posed to higher learning institutions is generally sought in an article entitled *The*



*Day The Purpose of College Changed* (Berrett, 2015). The author proposes that a turning point in higher education occurred in 1967 in which institutions, due to budget cuts and a push to eliminate some considered unnecessary courses. He argues that higher education institutions are far more than just a place that prepares individuals for jobs. This assessment was a competing point of view with California's governor when the budget cuts took place. Berrett (2015) notes that Ronald Reagan, the Governor of California, and his administration had a different vision of what a college education should accomplish. Other than those required courses explicitly intended to equip a student for their chosen professions, their view was that courses that one might deem extracurricular are unnecessary. Even though these courses intend to help students from a philosophical or creative point of view, to Reagan, they were not something the government should in any way subsidize. In other words, college helps one prepare for a job, and all coursework should support that end (Berrett, 2015). The Los Angeles Times (Berrett, 2015) proposed a competing point of view, stating in an editorial piece that college education should also teach one how to think and encourage intellectual curiosity. They believed that college the government should subsidize education, as it is more than just a trade school. The newspaper stated the belief that students should learn to pursue curiosity, to explore. If not, then it is an inadequate higher education (Berrett, 2015).

This philosophical question of should a seminary's pursuit be to teach its students to think outside the box and feed their intellectual curiosity versus merely preparing them for a job is also one that must be entertained by American seminaries today. James Anthony Cooper (2016) concludes that the best part of graduating with a degree indicating some form of Worship study is that the student knows that it is a degree

program that serves a need in the church world. However, he questions the extent to which all such programs practically prepare students for the jobs they seek to obtain.

The Senior Pastor's preparation does not seem to require an answer to the practical versus philosophical education question. Regarding the senior pastor's role, most likely, seminaries would articulate the importance of both in preparation (Woodnough, 2019). However, would most Seminaries embrace, as their additional responsibility, the role of preparing worship leaders in both the practical and philosophical aspects of education? Many Christian colleges and universities seem to have embraced this preparation as part of their responsibilities, even while the trend is to consider either ministerial or secular vocations (Creative Studio, 2021). In contrast, there is not a great deal of evidence that seminaries have fully embraced the equipping aspect of their existence. Seminaries today seem to continue to perpetuate the view of their being more ivory tower institutions focused on theological thought than the practical aspect of teaching other disciplines other than those serving the needs of the aspiring senior pastor (Williams, 2017).

There appears to be a problem in seminaries' lack of engagement with the church's needs generally. For instance, even in towns where a seminary is based, there is often little interaction with the local churches (Wheeler, 2001). An Auburn Center Study entitled *Is There A Problem* (Wheeler, 2001) notes some theological institutions' invisibility in their city and region and within their supporting churches. Regarding their relationship with churches, the study (Wheeler, 2001) noted that most faculty and students mostly kept to themselves. For a small circle of insiders, primarily members of their denomination or church leaders and executives related to their academic pursuits,

they (those associated with the seminary) and even the seminary itself were not known about or engaged much the local community. That is, members of the educational institution did not seek ways to apply their ongoing education within the churches near their learning place. This type of engagement could benefit the community and themselves to learn practical applications of their studies. This disconnect points to the possibility that while theological institutions are well developed educational institutions certainly capable of preparing individuals for vocational church leadership, they may not be fully in touch with the needs of the recipients of these individuals – the churches themselves (Aleshire, 2008; Blair, 2010; Cannell, 2006; Frame, 1984).

The study has examined literature regarding the history of vocational ministry preparation in the United States by the theological institution. And an exploration of some thoughts about the needed practice for an aspiring Worship Pastor today from the theological institutions' point of view has taken place. Further, we have considered current degree offerings by some theological institutions seeking to meet the perceived need for the current skillset required to be a Worship Pastor in today's churches. Next, exploring the literature regarding today's theological institutions' impact on aspiring Worship pastors will follow. That is, how well they are prepared for their vocational pursuit as Worship Pastors by their preparatory institution's programs. Examining the costs and other considerations associated with that preparation both to the individual and the institutions themselves also follows. ‘

#### The Worship Pastor's Point of View of Vocational Preparedness

In their chapter from Allan Cole's *From Midterms to Ministry* (Cole, 2008), Gregory Jones and Susan Pendleton observe that pastors enter churches with many

dynamics already in play. Churches can be healthy or unhealthy. How the leadership has historically treated the staff can vary. Preparation for such dynamics is also vital for the Worship Pastor. They also address the critical aspect of loss, particularly for the Worship Pastor, coming from an academic setting with likely defined parameters for success. Aspiring Worship Pastors would benefit from some level of experience, for instance, the internship requirement built into the Institute of Worship Studies master's degree, which could help bridge the gap between academic study and the immediate realities of vocational work in churches.

#### *The Deficit of Practical Vocational Training for Worship Pastors*

Practicing Pastors have expressed that, while appreciative that there are many excellent seminaries in the United States, they are aware of some of their shortcomings. Brian Croft, the Senior Pastor of Auburndale Baptist Church in Louisville, KY, maintains that generally. Simultaneously, there are many great seminaries in America, and many come up short on the practical training and tools that aspiring church leaders need (Hansen, 2018). Pastor James Emory White (2011) concurs. In Dr. White's book *What they didn't teach you in Seminary*, he lays out many practical, day-to-day, on-the-ground things that Pastors and Associate Pastors (including Worship Pastors) must prepare to deal with their ministries (White, 2011). Fundamental among these things is the importance of developing leadership skills, understanding how to build community within your teams, and the reputation of dealing with relational conflict within the sections that you lead and those you work with on staff.

Additionally, Pastor White (2011) addresses some of the common pitfalls, such as a Pastor falling into inappropriate relationships with both people. These situations can

result from not establishing “Sexual Fences.” These cautions are all born from experiences he has encountered with church staff as a senior pastor over his years of ministry experience. White, a senior pastor at a large non-denominational church in North Carolina, reflects on his own experience upon leaving seminary and beginning his work as a senior pastor “I was prepared academically to begin a life of teaching, which is, of course, invaluable. But in terms of the vocation of ministry beyond teaching? And even regarding teaching, how to teach effectively? Not so much (White, 2011, p. 15).” As a senior pastor evaluating the contribution of seminaries, he believes that we need seminaries. However, Dr. White also believes that “in fairness to a seminary education there are certain things it will never be able to impart (White, 2011, p. 15).”

In his book *A Guide To Worship Ministry*, author and Worship Pastor Gregory B. Brewton (2018) reminds Worship Pastors that though training in music and musical experience is essential, the heart and soul of their jobs is working with people, not music. He maintains that some individuals take positions as Worship Pastors out of their love for music. Rather, the Worship Pastor should love people mainly and gain the practical musical equipping needed from the many available resources. Indeed, if this is the case, the aspiring prepared Worship Pastor must receive training with the leadership and shepherding of people and teams before beginning one’s ministry in the church (Brewton, 2018).

In his book, *Thriving as An Artist in The Church*, Rory Noland (2004), a worship and creative arts pastor, suggests some additional pursuits for Worship Pastors and ministry leaders desiring to lead effective ministries. Specifically, learn how to keep their passion alive, cope with rejection, cultivate confidence, deal with their issues while

leading growing churches, raise and teach others how to rise and lead others above artistic differences. These are not skills commonly obtained within the often-solitary weekly work of a Worship Pastor's journey. However, they are skills that Worship Pastors often wired more as artists need. As Noland maintains, artists do often fit the stereotypes assigned to them. That is, tending to be non-conformists and, in many cases, free spirits. He points out that such traits are not necessarily the best traits to be exhibited when being asked to fit into the culture of a church staff (Noland, 2004). Therefore, it would help develop collaborative people skills and organizational skills before walking into a ministry leadership position (Noland, 2004).

Worship Pastor and author Caleb Holgerson (2017), reflecting on his journey to becoming a Worship Pastor, writes in his book *Becoming A Worship Pastor* what he believes to be a common occurrence by creatives. Caleb himself assumed that he was singing his songs with a congregation that worship was likely happening. He believes that in many cases, novice worship leaders are only leading church congregations in the songs, but not worship. They need to restructure their thinking to understand that atmosphere and culture are part of what the Worship Pastor creates. At the core, that is a significant part of their jobs. Holgerson recounts the on-the-job lessons that helped him understand and grow into his church's Worship Pastor's role. He also explains that he wrote his book to help worship leaders become Worship Pastors (Holgerson, 2017).

Zac Hicks (2016) was motivated similarly to Caleb Holgerson. In addressing the misconceptions about what a Worship Pastor does, he writes that it is much more than applying natural ability. The Worship Pastor's methodology and manner go directly to shaping and impacting the congregation. Learning these skills, that is, how to pastor, is an

essential part of a Worship Pastor's preparatory work (Hicks, 2016). As Hicks (2016) recounts the history of worship in the Evangelical church, he reflects that up until recently, experiential worship did not have a great deal of space in the worship service. He shares that the early pastoral work had nothing to do with musical leadership. Instead, it was essentially only preaching. He maintains that worship's ancient history is essential, worth discovering, and brought into our modern context. However, by current context, he does not mean the Worship Pastor as a rock star. Preferably, as a studied professional who understands Worship's purpose, the Worship Pastor receives the proper training to lead people into that reality while developing their skills and giftings. He believes that colleges and seminaries should use the information in his book as a resource to provide what seems to be missing in many Worship Pastor preparing curricula. He relates that he has had contact with the leaders of worship departments in colleges and seminaries. They have needed a resource such as his book to give aspiring Worship Pastors an inspiring, accessible, but thorough articulation of their pastoral call. Thus, this type of full unpacking of the skills and responsibilities seems to be missing within today's theological institutions (Hicks, 2016).

#### *Educational Models for Worship Pastor Training*

In his treatise, *Rethinking Seminary Education*, author Brian E. Woolnough (2019), through his work at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS), discusses his belief that future church leaders' preparation in today's culture is wanting. Having met with church leaders from all over the world, he advocates updating the traditional Western methods of preparing Church leaders. Because of the inadequacy of seminaries to properly prepare individuals, such as students who will become tomorrow's Worship

Pastors, Woolnough instead maintains that institutions should increase students' opportunities to work in the field from the earliest stages of their education (Woolnough, 2019). Woolnough articulates the mindset that seminaries and churches should work together on a student's education. As students pursue courses and introductory biblical and theology (ideally courses focused on practical ministry), such courses' input should be partly the classroom and fieldwork (Woolnough, 2019).

George M. Hillman Jr. (2008) also advocates field education as part of seminary education. He recounts that he determined to publish his book *Preparing for Ministry: A Practical Guide to Theological Field Education* primarily as a resource for churches considering either starting an intern program or improving the one that might already have up and running (Hillman, 2008). However, it turned into a ministry preparation book recommended for higher education individuals preparing for vocational ministry. He maintains that “formal theological education is about much more than just reading books, listening to lectures, and taking tests. While there is always a vital cognitive part of any educational process, theological education is far beyond intellectual growth or competency development. At the heart of theological education is the heart of the student. The heart of leadership is the leader's heart (Hillman, 2008, p. 11).” One chapter of *Preparing for Ministry: A Practical Guide to Theological Field Education*, written by Katherine Kyte (Hillman, 2008), assistant director of mentored ministry at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, deals with the importance of a seminary student setting goals and objectives and covenanting with another leader toward their accomplishment (Hillman, 2008). Many individuals enter ministry with lofty goals in mind, like in many professions. Katherine maintains that as students take those lofty goals, create



accompanying objectives, and break them down into smaller, incremental, obtainable steps, it will serve them well. She says this is not difficult for people wired to think ahead and who already sets goals (Hillman, 2008). However, to a person not wired that way, it can be beneficial. As an aspect of this, students must establish a covenant relationship with a mentor in their institution's field education environment. Thus, accomplishing one's established goals is an element of accountability and a resource for knowledge and encouragement. Therefore, according to Kyte, the student is not learning in isolation like the Worship Pastor in his day-to-day work environment. Rather, they have a partner who is also ultimately invested in their learning and vocational success. She notes that as part of the required learning covenant, students must create a job description. Creating a job description helps take them through the actual thinking process through the day-to-day work they will be doing. This pursuit helps connect the academic work a student is doing with the practical daily, weekly work and helps them become accustomed to goal setting, creating objectives, and thinking incrementally to accomplish their goals. Depending on the envisioned church setting identifying competencies for one's position and those ultimately serving under the aspiring Worship Pastor is also part of the field education approach (Hillman, 2008). Some churches may take the approach of "here are your people; make it work." While others seek a certain level of quality in their worship, they may accept building teams within identified competencies identified for certain positions. The final component of the field education approach is that of evaluation. Evaluation involves both the goals themselves and the results when goals and objectives are essential.

Worship Pastors and authors Holgerson's (2017) and Hick's (2016) words ring optimistically that theological institutions will embrace the principles that they have formulated and taken the time to capture in book form. That is, seminaries should find value in their foundational vocational characteristics and pass along their experiences as on-the-job Worship Pastors. And that, at least as Hicks (2016) articulated, such resources would become part of the curriculum for aspiring future Worship Pastors. Further, Brian E. Woolnough's (2019) and Katherine Kyte's (Hillman, 2008) insights that potentially future courses in higher education might call upon some combination between the classroom and field education are certainly valid aspirations. However, Anthony L. Blair (2010), an author, and member of Eastern University faculty, a Christian college in Pennsylvania, see the historical tension between the Church and the academy. In his book *Church and Academy in Harmony*, he points to a great deal of tension between higher education institutions founded by the church and the church itself. And that these tensions have been increasing for the past several decades (Blair, 2010).

Blair (2010) argues that many cultural differences exist today between the institutions and churches, which keep them in tension. One example that he writes about is that the church today has become competitive as they reach out to attract families to join their attendance roles in their area of town. They may very well compete with the church down the street and may want to pursue strategies that give them a competitive advantage. For instance, a better method for, say, youth ministry or a better, more secure organizational system of taking care of kids in Sunday school. Indeed, they might consider hiring the current rock star worship leader singing the newest, most popular worship songs for maximum effect. Much like self-help books for individuals, books

such as *The Purpose Driven Church* (Warren, 1995), *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (Murrow, 2005), and *Simple Church* (Rainer & Geiger, 2006), etc., offer processes and steps to be pursued to make one's church more attractive. And while these strategies might be currently the best strategies for attracting one's church to the demographic it seeks, they may not be in step with what the seminaries are teaching (Wardlow, 2005). Some seminaries might not conduct a strategy because they lack experience (Blair, 2010). A professor teaching worship theology, for instance, just may not have led worship himself. Another reason for specific methods possibly not being taught might be the sheer rejection of a particular seminary of such practices being biblically and theologically sound (Blair, 2010).

Though there are bound to be ongoing differences of opinion, Blair (2010) believes that the church and the academy (higher learning institutions) will get on the same page through cooperation and collaboration. In the final chapter of his book entitled *Models for Collaboration* (2010), Blair lists some thoughts that should give the aspiring Worship Pastor some hope. One is the Ecumenical Model, where Seminaries teach, for instance, aspiring Worship Pastor from many faiths, being mindful of their differences as the curriculum is developed. Another is the Incarnational Model, using his university as an example. In this model, social transformation is a crucial element. Therefore, individuals attending, and sponsoring churches would need to understand Eastern's commitment to ongoing social change as they implement what they are learning. Thus, they know by applying and the feedback, assessment, and reassessment they get as they use. This Incarnational Model is similar to what is proposed by Brian E. Woolnough (2008) and Katherine Kyte (Woolnough, 2019).

A third model Blair (2010) advocates are the Contextual Model. That is, recognizing the diverse, postmodern, and post-denominational nature of our society in which students will ultimately be working. In his view, there would be a recognition that different philosophies towards, say, reaching college-age students through worship implementation might be pursued and studied in the Worship Pastor's seminary education. However, practitioners of more traditional methods might not embrace them. They are still fair game to explore.

A final model Blair (2010) considers valuable is the virtual model. Students may already be in ministry in this collaborative model but can access their master's degree through distance education. This model is heavily embraced, for instance, by Liberty University. They offer many Worship & Arts-oriented degrees via online learning.

#### *Costs Associated with Worship Pastor Preparedness*

An additional consideration to the pursuit of seminary equipping by the student aspiring to be a church Worship Pastor is the education cost relative to the equipping gained. In 2010, the cost per credit hour was roughly \$400.00 - \$500.00 per credit hour. So, for a 3-hour course, one would have spent \$1,500.00 or a 36 hours master's degree, roughly \$18,000.00 (Ammen, 2010). Ten years later, the cost has not increased to an excessive level. Dallas Theological Seminary's per credit hour cost in 2020 was \$595.00, so for their 66-hour master's degree in Media Arts and Worship, the tuition cost would be \$39,270.00 (DTS, 2020). Liberty University's per credit hour cost in 2020 was \$565.00 for the full-time student and \$615.00 for the part-time student. So, a part-time student seeking Liberty's 42-hour Master of Arts in Music and Worship would pay \$25,830.00 in Tuition (Liberty University Catalog, 2020). Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's 54

hours master's degree in Worship Leadership will cost an individual \$25,650.00 as the per-credit-hour cost in 2020 is \$475.00 per credit hour (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020). The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary also offers a discount per-hour price if the student is a Southern Baptist Convention member. Thus, denominational affiliation can be helpful.

#### *Additional Financial Considerations*

As with most educational decisions, the aspiring student's particular situation will likely dictate their likelihood of pursuing the additional education of a degree with a Worship Pastor focus. However, as one considers Seminary's cost, one must also factor in that church salaries may not necessarily be comparable to commercial market salaries depending upon many factors, including a specific church's policy and culture (Cartwright, 2018). Therefore, it depends on a given individual's situation. Whether they will pay tuition out of pocket, savings, or seek to take on student loans, significant current and future budgeting must be considered. As with all vocations, this consideration includes the cost of living where they hope to live and the average salaries for Worship Pastors in that envisioned area (Turner, 2020).

According to Zip Recruiter, the average Worship Pastor's full-time salary for 2020 is \$44,500.00. The wages on the low side of the scale are \$21,000.00, with the high-side salaries being \$65,000.00 (Zip Recruiter, 2010). PayScale, a compensation consulting company, shows that Worship Pastors on the shallow end of the sale can earn as little as \$26,000.00 per year. They offer a median salary of \$45,000.00 and the high salary of \$70,000.00 (PayScale, 2020). Indeed, one of the most significant job boards in the United States pegs the average Worship Pastor's salary at \$43,407.00, with the low

wage being \$14,000 per year and \$103,000.00 being the salary on the high side. Indeed disclaims their salary estimates from 675 employees, users, and past and present job advertisements within the Indeed online portal from the last 36 months (Indeed, 2020).

Once a leader has been on staff with them for a period, it is not uncommon for some churches to offer some manner of financial help for Seminary costs as part of an employment package. Naturally, that usually is on a case-by-case basis and whether the church will invest in the long-term education of those they consider to be long-term employees. Or if by paying for their additional education, such experience and degree achievement might make them more attractive to a larger church or one with more significant salary resources.

As with most graduate education, scholarships and grants can be available through denominations or other organizations a student might affiliate with, through the seminary itself, or other outside specialty offerings (TBS, 2020). For instance, Cru, an international parachurch organization, has developed partnerships with Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Dallas Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, Bethel Seminary, and Talbot School of Theology (Strider, 2020). If an individual were a former or current staff member of Cru, discounts and scholarships might be available. Through its Fellows program, Grace Bible Church in College Station, Texas, offers a program whereby members of the program receive credit for a portion of their Seminary education in exchange for serving in the Fellows program (Grace Bible Fellows, 2020). The students benefit from receiving real-world, on-the-job experience from which they get Seminary credit and having a portion of their seminary paid for—

however, students still need to raise their financial support. Nonetheless, contributions from families and friends are tax-deductible.

### *“Aging Out” Considerations*

Finally, another equipping consideration the aspiring Worship Pastor must consider given the ongoing and often rapid changes in music and media is the possibility of aging out of a position within a church's confines. Many Worship Pastors begin their careers as worship leaders. Often, churches have a specific style of music that they lean towards that the worship leader embraces. However, as a church continues to grow, new music styles are often adopted, or occasionally the church may abandon the old style entirely for a unique style. As is often the case, the type may remain contemporary, but the Worship Pastor as worship leader may have aged out of the role. The Worship Pastor must be adept at leading in multiple styles or recruiting and showing others who can assume these leadership positions. Therefore, they must pay attention to this equipping when considering seminary training.

Author Russ Hutto (2015) recounts the common refrain from congregations regarding a Worship Pastor's aging. That is that his church is primarily younger and intent upon reaching a younger demographic. Further, many church leaders believe that the older worship leaders need to get out of the way and let the younger worship leaders create and implement the worship culture accordingly. Both can be perfectly valid petitions. However, it is essential, maintains Hutto, that churches approach this issue to understand multi-generational interaction's togetherness (Hutto, 2015). To the Worship Pastor, this requires experience in leading teams and developing systems that allow recruiting and training younger individuals to become part of the process. Also, it

requires the Worship Pastor's maturity not to view this time in their career as bad. Instead, to understand critical team-building aspects, they seek to grow their worship team by essentially replacing themselves as the worship leader while maintaining the Worship Pastor role. For instance, author Greg Sheers (2016) points out that the Worship Pastor must know who should lead worship, who should not lead worship. Also, how to grow the team in both size and spiritually. Finally, in addition to the foundational theologies that a particular church's worship builds upon and the level of musical quality expected (Sheer, 2016).

The current literature about the history and current state of offerings for education, training, and equipping, which theological institutions believe they have provided for aspiring Worship Pastors, has been examined. Further, evaluating the state of affairs regarding preparation from the Worship Pastor's perspective has taken place. Additionally, the study considered current elements equipping aspiring Worship Pastor. These include, among other things, the creative talent, the leadership skills necessary, the giving consideration to the financial commitment and longevity issues. Attention will now be given to the current literature reflecting the current perceptions churches have of theological institutions' contributions to prepare Worship Pastors.

#### The Church's Point of View of Worship Pastor Preparedness

Church's needs for a Worship Pastor are very diverse. Renewing Worship, Inc. (Renewing Worship, 2020) suggests that the search committee ask some critical questions upfront when searching for a new Worship Pastor. These include: What worship should look like in your church. What are the qualities needed for the job? And have such considerations as; does the person need to know how to work with a band?



Does the person need to understand how to conduct a choir? Does the person need to know how to play an instrument? There are many more considerations that a search committee or an Executive Pastor in charge of hiring must understand even before considering where to look for the right candidate (Renewing Worship, 2020). Therefore, when a church seeks to form an assessment of the contribution of a candidate's seminary or theological school, precisely equipping their church needs of the aspirant might make it a challenging prospect.

#### *Theological Training Is Desirable*

In his study *Why Worship Leaders Should Study Theology*, David M. Toledo (2013) asserts that churches should also expect the Worship Pastor to be competent in theology and biblical studies in addition to music leadership. His view is that Worship Pastors lead congregations through the nature of the spiritual activity, and they mustn't receive just musical training and quality theological training. He also notes that understanding foundational liturgy based on biblical principles, such as one's response to having the truth revealed to them, is essential in a worship leaders' mindset. He (Toledo, 2013) believes that this will deepen the Worship Pastors knowledge of his craft and the theological dynamic taking place and allow a more meaningful approach. That is, a complete understanding of God and his activities and how we should respond to him and them.

#### *Worship Pastors as Mentors Is Desirable*

In his doctoral dissertation, *Mentoring Worship Leaders to Become Mentoring Worship Leaders*, Robert Todd Craig (2019) points out the importance of mentoring. That in addition to the musical proficiencies and an understanding of the biblical and

theological underpinnings of worship, the Worship Pastor in a church environment must also have training in what it means to mentor others, including other worship leaders that they will lead. In his research, Craig reflects on a mentor's nature as trained in providing experience from one's career to a more junior person. The comparison draws from how Jesus led the twelve disciples. The individuals' Sheer calls Jesus's inner circle are Peter, James, and Jon (Sheer, 2016). Sheer explains that the bible makes it clear that it was imperative to Jesus to model the faith. And that instead of writing and distributing a book or fully articulating his plan, he planted seeds. Ultimately the ongoing work that Jesus spoke of was entrusted to this small group of people that he mentored.

In Craigs' dissertation research, he also asserts that in addition to providing mentorship of one's experience and skill to another in a church environment, a leader must even understand what it means to disciple others. Leaders often use the terms mentor and disciple interchangeably. Individuals mostly use discipleship in a biblical or church environment (Craig, 2019). So, the passing along to others of biblical principles as an ongoing aspect of the Worship Pastor's job is an essential aspect of their daily work. For training for a Worship Pastor position, as Craig did in his dissertation, it is reasonable to refer to "mentoring" and "discipleship" as synonyms of one another. It is sensible that youth pastors mentor aspiring youth pastors or missionaries to specific countries mentor missionaries. Thus, Craig believes that worship personnel should mentor and disciple other worship personnel given the particular nature of worship leading involvement and the regular work. Craig (2019) further notes that he has learned from his mentors that the best individuals to lead artists are other artists.

### *Worship Pastors as Competent Teachers and Coaches are Desirable*

In addition to the creative skills, the biblical and theological foundation, and the training and willingness to mentor and disciple others, Craig also maintains that a church should expect a Worship Pastor to come prepared to teach and coach their teams. He argues that there is a difference between the two. Teachers, he believes, are geared more towards instructing or teaching individuals broader concepts and principles. However, coaches are more like trainers, typically focused on specific skills or fundamentals (Craig, 2019). For instance, in a large group setting, the Worship Pastor should convey to all the teams some of the ministry's broader principles that they, as team members, are to buy into and assign cultural and biblical value to these principles. Also, they should be able to take aside a team member and impart specifically to the individual how they might see those principles or expectations play out in the specific contributions that team member is making to the team (Craig, 2019). The researcher concludes from the teaching and mentoring as well as the coaching examples that the Worship Pastor must essentially be able to accomplish the “up-front” work as well as the more “relational,” “one-on-one” work within their worship ministry.

### *Pastoral Leadership, Shared Worship Leadership, Understanding Authority*

Finally, there are three essential leadership aspects of a Worship Pastor's role: a church should expect the Worship Pastor to become prepared. These three are the pastor's pastoral leadership in worship, the shared worship service leadership with the teaching pastor, and an understanding of the teaching pastor's authority and collaborative methodology. And the submitted, ongoing creative collaboration with the Pastor.

Scheer (2016) points out that the Worship Pastor in the congregational setting is a “boss” who leads with love. He takes charge of the worship service, and the church's leadership expects that he will ensure that all of the right things occur so that the expectation for worship and the quality thereof happen in a particular manner. In his collaboration with the Pastor, it is essential to remember that while he is undoubtedly a leader and shepherd, the teaching Pastor is ultimately the conveyer to the congregation of biblical truth and the authoritative teacher. Therefore, the Worship Pastor must be adept at essentially sharing the up-front role and making sure to watch for opportunities to defer to the teaching Pastor. This deferring can come from needing to drop a planned song (likely leading to the disappointment of someone who prepared all week to sing or play that song). It can come from canceling a reading, a monologue, or any other service element. The pastor may sense additional time should be spent on something on their mind.

A third leadership consideration is the day-to-day, week-to-week service planning and processes that the Worship Pastor must patiently share while submitted to the teaching pastor. In the real world of church life, there are many demands on the senior pastor. Therefore, while the church's collaborative process is in place, likely, due to these demands, they will not always be able to be kept. Thus, the Worship Pastor must exercise patience and skill regarding the run-up to the service planning that typically takes place between the Worship Pastor and the Teaching Pastor. Style is also a consideration. Sheer (2016, p. 263) points out that “Worship directors will often say there are two extremes of a pastor: those who micromanage (‘Here are the songs that I want on Sunday’) and those who are hands-off until there's a problem (‘I'm hearing that people want more upbeat

songs’).” He says that over time trust will be built between the two leaders. Thus, the envisioned working chemistry and personality adaptability are essential when assessing a potential Worship Pastor's hiring.

### Summary of the Literature

The study has examined the currently available resources related to exploring perceptions about American Theological Institutions' preparation of Worship Pastors for Service. The researcher has presented Literature reflecting the beginning history of American theological institutions through programs available to aspiring Worship Pastors today. Current literature related to the Worship Pastor’s perceptions of vocational preparedness was then reviewed. These include perceptions of needed practice as well as practical considerations such as life balance and ongoing finances. Finally, the researcher examined Worship Pastor training expectations from the church's point of view concluded the chapter. The next chapter of this study will explain the methodology that will pursue the new data to aid an up-to-date assessment of Worship Pastor preparedness by American Theological Institutions.

## CHAPTER III – METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research study explores perceptions about American Theological Institutions' preparation of Worship Pastors for Service. The qualitative approach gathered rich amounts of descriptive data about the participants' lived experiences directly from the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The study aimed to narrowly examine and understand the specific role, expectations and needed skillset of the Worship Pastor. Further, the researcher explored if church leadership believes that current theological institutions provide adequate worship leading insights, leadership skills, and pastoral training for a Worship Pastor's role in their churches. The researcher has limited the analysis to Conservative Non-denominational, Evangelical Theological Institutions. These institutions serve diverse denominationally affiliated and Non-Denominational Evangelical Christian churches (ATS, 2021).

In chapter I, the researcher introduced the topic and gave a thorough statement of the problem. That is, aspiring Worship Pastor's leaving Theological Institutions possibly unprepared for vocational work. Then, the researcher offered a more detailed description of the purpose of the study. That is, to gain from Church leaders an evaluation as to the contribution they believe Theological institutions are offering to the preparedness of future Worship Pastors for vocational work in their contexts. The research objectives and the conceptual framework were then presented, followed by a description of the study's significance, listing the study's terms and limitations. Finally, a summary pulled the chapter elements together and introduced the purpose of the following chapters.

In chapter II, the researcher presented current literature concerning Worship Pastor's training from the theological institutions' perspective, the aspiring Worship

Pastors, and the Church's where they will ultimately serve. Then, the researcher presented the research design and methodology, which would result in a new understanding of the topic in chapter 3.

This chapter will explain the research methodology, data collection methodology, analysis procedures, validity, reliability, and trustworthiness. The researcher will also explain measures to ensure the dependability and transferability of the data. The researcher will also discuss the choice of research participants. In addition, an explanation of semi-structured interview methodology will take place. Finally, background information regarding the questions asked will be detailed.

#### Research Objectives

The research involved four primary research objectives in evaluating whether the equipping gained by an aspiring Worship Pastor from Non-Denominational Evangelical Theological Institutions is worthwhile. They are:

*RO1* - Describe the characteristics of the participants, their positions, and their roles concerning this study.

*RO2* - Explore the extent to which church leadership today depends upon theological institutions to adequately prepare Worship Pastors for specific vocational ministry leadership.

*RO3* - Explore the extent to which individuals who have sought a theological education can identify a direct link between their education and specific Worship Pastor expectations and job descriptions to which they aspire.

*RO4* - Explore the extent to which American theological institutions focus upon the practical leadership aspects of a Worship Pastor's equipping and whether or not they align their curriculums to the training needed by churches.

### Research Design

Phenomenological qualitative research design was the research method chosen. Creswell (2013) suggests that a phenomenological approach emphasizes exploring the meanings individuals attach to their lived experiences. From the literature review, we learned; (a) That individuals typically need a minimal skill set to be successful as Worship Pastors. (b) Many Worship Pastors attend conservative Non-Denominational Evangelical Theological Institutions to gain training for themselves for vocational work in American Evangelical Churches. (c) That Worship Pastors embrace a range of vocational activities depending on the churches' size and structure that they serve in. (d) That not being adequately equipped can lead to some adverse consequences for both the Worship Pastors and the churches they serve. We do not know how well conservative evangelical church leadership believes the Non-Denominational Evangelical Theological Institutions prepare the Worship Pastors they hire to perform in their contexts. The lived experiences of Worship Pastors, as seen through the eyes of the church leadership that employs them. This is what the research will explore.

### *Qualitative Research*

Author Carol M. Roberts (Roberts, 2010, p.143), quoting Straus and Corbin (1990), offers that qualitative research should be considered, among other things, when “(a) a conviction of the researcher exists based on research experience. (b) to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is known. (c) to give



intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods.” Additionally, Sharon B. Merriam (2009) suggests that qualitative researchers are concerned with “the meaning people have constructed how subjects make sense of the world and the experiences they have in it (Merriam, 2009, p. 13).”

### *Phenomenological Study*

The phenomenological research study involves an emphasis on experiences that take place. And how those experiences are interpreted (Merriam, 2009). We desire to get at the construction of curricula currently at the 5 Non-Denominational Evangelical Seminaries the researcher will be contacting. We are asking the question, “is what they are doing working” to the satisfaction of the ultimate customer they serve – the churches.” In gaining this understanding, the researcher has addressed aspects of this experience's foundations from the Worship Pastor's institutions and the churches through the literature review. The researcher seeks to know whether the current educational undertaking or “experience” as interpreted is currently accomplishing the desired result.

The researcher has built a body of data based upon semi-structured interviews directly with those conservative evangelical church leaders charged by their churches with the authority to hire Worship Pastors. The choice of semi-structured interviews has been encouraged as helping to build a complete story when applied to research questions (Galletta, 2013). Further contributing to this body of data will be direct observations, artifacts, and content analysis. This research is a study of the educational constructs that have been in place for a long time; individuals historically have depended upon and lived within these constructs to varying degrees. Yet, an evaluation of such constructs has not occurred. Thus, this is appropriately a qualitative phenomenological study.

## Instrumentation

The primary instrument for gathering data in this study took the form of semi-structured interviews with church leaders typically responsible for hiring Worship Pastors. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate in that they allow for addressing the study's specific dimension and leave space for the participants to offer new meaning (Galletta, 2013). Two aspects of this study encouraged the use of semi-structured interviews. First, the interview participants have previously worked through the criteria and evaluation of Worship Pastors in their churches. They are, therefore, the individuals most familiar with the data. Second, they are also the most likely to convey the impressions of the staff's balance and the congregations they serve. This impression can be counted upon because they are in the unique position of overseeing the entire team if they are the Executive Pastor. Or because of their first-hand knowledge if they are the Worship Pastor. Following is a description of the process leading up to the instrument's use and an explanation of the tool itself.

Once the researcher established the sample, the first email, as previously mentioned, was sent to the population group. Following is the sequence.

- Email of Initial Inquiry (Appendix A) - The purpose of this email was to reach the decision-maker who is in charge of Worship Pastor hiring, see if they meet the requirements of the study, and obtain their willingness to be involved in the research ongoing. Once the researcher has sent this email, five business days later, the researcher sent a second email.

- Email of Initial Inquiry (Follow Up) (Appendix B) - The researcher sent the follow-up email; a 2nd email to be a squeaky wheel to determine if the first email was received and asked if the recipient had any questions.
- An email confirming possible participation in the study (Appendix C) - Upon receiving a return email with a listing of the decision-maker and that person having affirmed the qualifying question, the researcher sent out a third email. This email thanks them for their willingness to be involved and offered further instructions about the process and timeline.
- Once the researcher had received all the affirmative return emails, he divided the churches into five regions based on geographic location and randomly, through blind drawing per region, select three per region. Then, the researcher sent out a fourth email to those chosen and not chosen.
- Email of Exclusion to potential leadership (Appendix D) - This email let the church's decision maker know that the researcher did not choose the church to participate in the study.
- Email of Inclusion to church leadership (Appendix E) - This email invited the participant church to join the study, gives them additional information about the study, and includes the "informed consent form" to fill out and send back.
- Finally, the researcher sent the email Scheduling a Zoom Interview (Appendix F) to all 15 of those randomly selected churches and scheduled one-hour interviews with the church's decision-makers.

- Once the interviews were complete, the researcher sent out a final email of thanks to the church, thanking them for their willingness for participating in the study (Appendix G).

### Role of the Researcher

The researcher has chosen a qualitative study to explore the perceptions of Worship Leader preparedness. The researcher himself was at one time a Worship Pastor. Greenbank (2003, p. 792) asserts that “Wilst researchers may attempt to eliminate the effect of bias, they are unlikely to eradicate it totally.” Further, Creswell (2013, p. 147) contributes that “qualitative research is interpretive research. As such, the biases, values, and judgement of the researcher become stated explicitly in the research report.” In other words, removing the researcher’s experiential perspective can be difficult. Given (2016, p. 77) says however that “Researchers need to name and understand their biases, to see how their beliefs may affect the study’s design. Researchers can then, very consciously, create neutral questions that do not presume a particular outcome.” Accordingly, the researcher has addressed his previous experience in a subsequent section of this study. And, he was attentive to this experience when constructing the questions for the research participants.

### Population and Sample

“A population consists of all the objects or events of a certain type about which researchers seek knowledge or information (Allen, 2017, para. 1).” Using a phenomenological approach, the researcher essentially asks “how did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is (Merriam, 2009, p. 199).” Phenomenological studies such as this one therefore engage a smaller sample size as the time spent pursuing,

capturing, transcribing and making sense of the information gained can be considerable. (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

The researcher selected a sample of 250 Evangelical Christian churches published to have over 500 people weekly. This population representation came from a list of 1,667 churches by size maintained by the Hartford Institute for Religious Research (Hartford, 2020). The researcher sorted the churches into five United States regions – Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, Southwest, and West Coast considering possible regional disparities. The researcher conducted interviews with representatives from fifteen churches – the goal was initially three from each area. This size is reasonable because the goal is to arrive at a manageable sample of a homogenous population (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The sample size allows for richly textured information relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. In addition, the study seeks a depth of knowledge that three churches per region will be able to provide through semi-structured interviews (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

### Sampling Procedure

Having narrowed the population to 250 Evangelical Christian churches, the researcher sent an “initial email of inquiry” to the 250 people. This email of initial inquiry (Appendix A) explained the study's purpose and listed three questions. The purpose of the three questions was to identify those churches that meet the criteria of size, have an active worship ministry, and be comfortable theologically receiving candidates from the seminary noted in their region. The first question asked if their church has an active worship arts program whereby the Worship Pastor is an actual full-time position on their staff and would typically oversee several creative teams. As noted in the

literature review, churches of this size usually need a more extensive staff, whereby the second hire after the lead Pastor is often the Worship Pastor. The second question asked whether the church is an elder-led church and if its elder board consists of at least four or more individuals. The third question asked if the church would be comfortable having senior church staff that attended one of our study's seminaries theologically. The fourth question asked them to confirm if their church has (in regular times) a weekly attendance of 500 people or more. Finally, the fifth question asked if the church would be willing to participate in our study.

After sending a follow-up email as a reminder (Appendix B), the researcher organized the return emails indicating an affirmation of the questions and place them in a smaller population. The researcher assembled the final sample and then let the churches know about the narrowed list (Appendix C). Ultimately, the researcher informed those chosen for the sample (Appendix E) or not (Appendix D). Finally, the researcher sent all 250 from the larger population a “thank you” email (Appendix G) and began to negotiate with the 15 remaining churches to find time for interviews (Appendix F) according to the study tasks and timeline.

Each of the churches chosen as being considered indicated a conservative theology such that following Non-denominational Seminaries would likely be acceptable educational institutions to their church leadership: Dallas Theological Seminary (Dallas, TX - Southwest), Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, CA - West Coast), Trinity Theological Seminary (Deerfield, IL - Midwest), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (Boston, MA - East Coast) or Asbury Seminary (Wilmore, KY - Southeast). The research focused on these institutions because of their diverse locations (Northeast, Midwest,

Southeast, Southwest, and West Coast). They are also the top 5 non-denominational seminaries by headcount and full-time enrollment in the United States as recorded by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS Annual Data Table 2019-2020). They teach conservative theology and non-denominational means that they are not beholden to or servicing a specific church denomination.

The population from which the sample comes is conservative, evangelical Christian churches with 500 or more in weekly attendance in normal times. Additionally, the churches should have active arts programs and be elder-led. Finally, the churches qualifying for the interview should have confidence in the theological input to their staff typically offered by one of the five non-Denominational theological institutions previously mentioned.

#### Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

The researcher contacted The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee and present the study for authorization before getting its sample. The church leaders agreeing to participate in this study did so on an entirely volunteer basis and could have discontinued their involvement at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits according to the guidelines set for by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This process of review will maintain the integrity of the studies that involve human subjects following federal regulations. The IRB granted approval and the researcher has attached such consent in the appendix (Appendix H) section of the study.

## Data Collection

Merriam (2009) states that “data collection is about asking, watching and reviewing” (Merriam, 2009, p. 85). While the literature helps give context to the history of theological education broadly, it is somewhat scarce in documenting the educational journeys of Worship Pastors. Simultaneously, the avenues for discovering the historical and current educational pathways for senior or teaching pastors are many. As Merriam (2009) suggests, through interviews, the researcher will be able to collect “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” (Merriam, 2009, p. 85). As such, the real-life experiences of decision-makers who hire Worship Pastors would allow us to accumulate a current understanding of their attitudes towards the recent contributions of the Non-denominational Evangelical Theological Institution’s contributions to their vocational equipping. Therefore, the researcher used semi-structured interviews as one of our vehicles for data collection. The researcher sought information from 5 separate regions in the United States. As mentioned, the information was gathered by identifying a sample from a larger population and using the technology of Zoom Audio Video to schedule and conduct the semi-formal interviews.

In addition to interviews, the researcher collected additional data through additional interviews, observations (both participatory and non-participatory) and by obtaining artifacts. Further, the researcher performed data analysis by accumulating the data through interviews, observation, and the collection of artifacts. The researcher then analyzed the data by identifying patterns, interpreting those patterns, and discovering themes that helped to answer the research questions (Pell Institute, 2020).



## *Interviews*

Prompted by information from the literature review, the researcher has formulated the following questions relevant to this study. They are:

1. In growing American churches, what criteria of expertise does leadership seek regarding Worship Pastor staffing? That is, how is expertise quantified (years of experience, education, post-graduate training, etc.) and qualified (level of previous success, recommendations, awards, church growth, “we just like you” ...)? Further, how is expertise kept up to date to ensure “best practices” (training, professional development, etc.) and by whose measure?
2. Are the actual competencies specific to a church’s Worship Pastor position generally articulated accurately in job descriptions?
3. In growing American Churches, what measurements does church leadership apply that help Worship Pastors assess their success as influential leaders on an ongoing basis?
4. How is the need for additional training and equipping leading to Worship Pastor success typically assessed by church leadership?

After obtaining the population and sample procedures and timeline established, the researcher scheduled a one-hour online Zoom interview with the person charged with hiring the Worship Pastor for that individual church. As it turned out these were all church Executive Pastors. The researcher’s complete interview questions are in Appendix, Exhibit H. These questions' construction was motivated by the questions the researcher believed the literature review left unanswered.

### *Direct Observations*

An additional element of research for this study are direct observations by the researcher of Worship Pastors. In qualitative research, “the researcher can assume one of several stances while collecting information as an observer; stances range from being a full participant-the investigator is a member of the group being observed -to being a spectator” (Merriam, 2009 p. 124).

The researcher was a Worship Pastor for 15 out of the 20 years he served the church. Before that, the researcher was a worship leader. Thus, the researcher will offer information as a full participant in this study to equip oneself with the proper tools to be an influential Worship Pastor. Further, having left the Worship Pastor role and then left vocational ministry entirely, the researcher has also collected data as a complete observer. These observations can occur because of the many Church and Theological Relationships the researcher can still access.

### *Artifacts*

According to Merriam (2009), documents are an existing source of information and data, and a resourceful, creative researcher should use them when available.

Artifacts include documents and symbolic materials and non-symbolic symbols – tools and furnishings (Merriam, 2009). This study's primary artifacts are the job descriptions from the church leaders interviewed.

In addition to the job descriptions obtained from the churches interviewed, the researcher requested a suggested curriculum from each of the five seminaries targeted to be part of the study. In this request, the researcher asked the admissions counselor to offer a suggested study program that they believed would offer the most significant

preparation to a student aspiring to be a Worship Pastor at a church. This email request is Appendix J., and the artifacts themselves are listed as exhibits as well.

Table 1 *Data Collection Plan and Timeline*

Week	Task
Pre-Study	Gain approval from the USM Institutional Review Board.
1	Send email of initial inquiry to sample candidates (Exhibit A). Send Email seeking suggested curriculum to seminaries (Exhibit H).
2	Send a follow-up email to sample candidates (Exhibit B).
3	Send email confirming possible participation (Exhibit C). Send email of exclusion (Exhibit D). Send email of inclusion (Exhibit E).
4,5	Emails setting up interviews (Exhibit F). Revisit Artifacts. Revisit Observation Notes.
4,5,6	Interviews
7	Analyze Interview Data. Send out emails of thanks to participants (Exhibit G)
8	Analyze Interviews, artifacts, and observations.
8	Create data display

### Data Analysis

The researcher accumulated the data (literature review, interviews, observations, and artifacts) and then initiated data reduction. This reduction involves reducing the data into an organized, meaningful representation of the findings (NSF, 1997). The intent of reducing the information is to organize it in such a way as to make it possible to speak to

the terms, timelines, and facts discovered in a meaningful way. The researcher tried to focus narrowly on the research questions but remained open to the possibility of finding new meanings from the organized findings (NSF, 1997).

Creswell (1994) maintains there is no “right way” ...that it is “eclectic”. And Merriam (2009, p. 176) describes data analysis as “moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation”. Specific to the semi-structured interviews, in order to best implement a process of data reduction and maintain a manageable organization of the data, the researcher chose to implement an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) process (Frechette et al, 2020). IPA allows for the analysis of the data to generally begin at the same time as it collected allowing the researcher to preliminarily analyze trends, highlights and differences while maintaining notes and memos regarding such. This process involved the following steps as suggested by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014).

Step 1 - Total immersion in the data by the researcher in order to make sense of it.

This will involve multiple readings of the transcripts and making notes.

Step 2 - Transforming the notes into emergent themes.

Step 3 - Noting the relationships between emerging themes.

Step 4 - Discuss the emerging themes broadly while displaying key quoted material from the interviewees.

In its back-and-forth approach (Merriam, 1998) the researcher gained a sense of the organizational steps needed to assemble the data into identifiable themes from the interviews with those from the other sources for display and further discussion. After the

researcher had sufficiently reduced the data, a “Data Display” display was created, which visually illustrates some of the critical data (“systematic patterns and interrelationships”) frequently noted in the literature, interviews, observations, and artifacts. This reduction to a visual representation is essentially an exercise in transferring observed textual data into a resource that allows it to be visually displayed (NSF, 1997).

Once the researcher organized the data into display form, he stepped back, evaluated, and ensured that no essential data was missing in the reduction process. Finally, the researcher detailed conclusions about the data and considered how these conclusions have answered the research questions and what implications might be drawn (NSF, 1997).

#### Verification

Once the researcher drew some inferences, the researcher verified that these conclusions are plausible, sturdy, and in general, approaches conformity (NSF 1997; Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 11). The plausibility of the conclusion of this research project is an important and obtainable goal. And the sturdiness of the findings will require further research. However, “conformity” has the potential to be contested due to the limited research in the field about Worship Pastors preparation for vocational service. In contrast, the educational and vocational training for senior or teaching pastors is more defined. In addition, Worship Pastors, being creatives, exhibit a certain amount of non-conformity in their career choices and direction. Further, there already may be a level of innate resistance by current or aspiring Worship Pastors to the equipping expectation of church leadership (Englund & Gerdin, 2020). Nonetheless, the accumulated expectations of church leaders remained an achievable goal.

## Validity and Reliability

The conclusions must be considered valid. That is, credible and can be defended and withstand alternative explanations (NSF, 1997). However, the process for establishing validity can vary from study to study when pursuing such within qualitative research (Merriam, 2009).

Tisdale and Merriam (2016) maintain that “Regardless of the type of research, validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study’s conceptualization and how the data are collected, analyzed and interpreted and how the findings are interpreted (Tisdale & Merriam, 2016, p. 238).” Tisdale and Merriam (2016) also stress the imperative of professionals to trust research results. Ultimately, such research will be applied professionally and directly affect the lives upon whose professions the result applies. Therefore, the research and inquiries must be approached ethically as the qualitative research must be considered valid and reliable (Merriam, 2009).

The researcher established validity by using established data collection methods (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010). The researcher used established collection methods for this study. These methods included questionnaires to help screen the participants of the study. The researcher also used semi-structured interviews. In addition, the researcher obtained concrete artifacts from theological education institutions, and other artifacts from industry organizations, churches, and other sources.

The researcher has previously gained some informal insight from the Executive Pastors and staffing firm executives, which has helped create casual curiosity about this study's subject matter. The researcher guarded against an approach that might lead him to

formulate certain opinions or methods in this study to prove certain conclusions as a former Worship Pastor and church leader. Instead, the researcher remained in a neutral position and let the data dictate the results.

The researcher was still concerned that he was a Worship Pastor at large churches and preceding that a worship leader and more recently responsible for hiring worship leaders that his own experiences might bias him. Neal Roese and Kathleen Vohs (2012) have identified this threat to validity as “hindsight bias.” Hindsight bias can occur when someone feels like they sort of always knew something about the topic. For example, maybe they had a sense of the answers to their questions, etc. (Roes & Vohs, 2012). These can be memory’s beliefs about events that occurred, distorted recollections about events that took place, even knowing differently about those even now, among other things. Roese & Vohs (2012) suggest that the way to avoid such a bias is to raise a person’s awareness of other possible explanations and linkages and to call upon expertise where possible (Roese & Vohs, 2012). In this study, the researcher was aware of this possibility and, as suggested, used others’ data wherever possible. Further, the researcher sought to mitigate his own experiences wherever possible and defer to experts.

The researcher identified interview participants by locating a large population drawn from an established industry resource organization – the Hartford Institute for Religious Research (Hartford, 2020). Further, the researcher used this data to narrow the population to 250, a manageable population identified by the Harford Institute’s data characteristics. Also, in choosing credible theological education institutions, the researcher has not relied on his field knowledge. Instead, the top 5 Non-Denominational

Evangelical Seminaries, as tabulated by the industry-leading Associate of Theological Schools (ATS) was chosen from their yearly accounting of such enrollment information.

The researcher located churches that exhibited specific pre-contact characteristics to narrow the participants in the study down from the 250 population to a reasonable and manageable sample. The purpose was to narrow the group to a manageable number and protect against the researcher's bias; therefore, once potential study participants were reduced from the original population of 250, the researcher randomly chose the sample's ultimate participants. Given that the researcher is a former Worship Pastor and church leader, this process protects against selecting participants whose characteristics are already familiar. Thus, the study protected against what is known as selection bias - the result of using a non-randomly sample chosen instead of the one being randomly selected (Fink, 2003; Schutt, 2012; Shadish et al., 2002).

Finally, the researcher does not currently work with any organizations that might positively or negatively affect the study results – either a church or a theological educational institution. While having attended seminary and working in large churches, the researcher is currently not aligned with such organizations either by employment or by theological leaning (Evangelical, Conservative, Liberal, etc.).

#### Summary

This qualitative, phenomenological study seeks to evaluate how American Theological Institutions effectively equip and train future Worship Pastors. The research focuses on churches with over 500 people in weekly attendance, are elder-led, and have worship arts programs considered active. Interview participants are those who would typically employ the Worship Pastors.



The researcher has chosen to involve the data gathering methodology of 15 randomized informal semi-structured interviews with decision-makers in church. The churches selected came from one of five separate geographical regions in the United States. These regions were identified by having one prominent and significant seminary identified by the American Theological Schools organization as being the top 5 Non-Denominational Seminaries by enrollment. Further, to the chosen churches, each Seminary's theology was acceptable to them as they would feel comfortable having staff taught there. These interviews with Church leaders (either Pastor, Executive Pastors, or other key staff members) consisted of questions designed to fully inform the researchers' research objectives to answer the overall evaluative question. Accompanying the interviews, the researcher also examined artifacts and observational (participatory and non-participatory) data as part of the comprehensive data evaluation.

Finally, once the researcher had gathered the data, he condensed it. Once the researcher thoroughly examined and evaluated it, a "data display," verified for plausibility and then reviewed again with issues of validity and reliability of the data was further considered.

## CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

The purpose of this study has been to examine the specific roles, expectations, and needed skillset that fully equip the Worship Pastors of churches for service. Once determined, the researcher intended to explore if church leadership believes that current theological institutions provide adequate worship, leadership skills, and pastoral training for a Worship Pastor's role in their churches. Additionally, the researcher sought to explore what percentage of the overall training a theological institution provide relative to other training avenues an aspiring Worship Pastor might have access to.

More specifically, this qualitative phenomenological study intends to provide a resource to aspiring Worship Pastors, church leadership, and educational institutions that each might have an added level of understanding regarding the perceived contribution of established theological education training in providing aspiring Worship Pastors readiness for service. The researcher was able to identify and interview a reasonable and manageable sample of a homogenous population allowing for richly textured information relevant to our purpose and goal (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

This chapter begins with a description of the data analysis methodology. Then, a discussion for validating the results follows. This discussion involves ensuring confidence that the results are reliable and valid. The researcher also describes the participants from which he obtained information in the face-to-face Zoom interviews conducted. This will allow the readers to understand the demographic makeup and experience from which the interview participants formulated their insights.

Next, the researcher presents details from the collected results from the semi-structured interviews (Vasileiou et al., 2018) accompanied by an explanation of the

reflective journaling undertaken (Ortlipp, 2008). And a presentation of the themes which developed follows. Upon identifying such themes as perceived through the careful parsing of the interview data, the findings of the study are reported. The four research objectives are then discussed and compared to the investigation's findings.

### Data Analysis

The researcher interviewed 15 Executive Pastors from diverse backgrounds geographically and demographically who fully fit the profile discussed in chapter III (methodology) of this study. In addition, the researcher interviewed an individual who had previously served as an Executive Pastor at large churches and has since started an organization to help Executive Pastors. Finally, the researcher also interviewed an individual currently serving as a pastor at a smaller east coast church but who had previously worked as an Executive Pastor in a church which fit the profile of interviewees for this study.

Each Zoom interview began with introductions and casual conversation and then the researcher focused the discussion upon the guiding questions with the instructions to the interviewees to offer as much detail as possible even if that detail might seem to them peripheral to the discussion. Upon completion, each interview was transferred from the Zoom platform to the researcher's local computer and saved by name and date into a digital folder entitled "dissertation interviews." Once the Zoom interview was saved to the folder, the researcher converted each interview into a digitally written text transcript copy. The researcher utilized a software platform known as Sonix. Sonix converted the Zoom interviews from audio to text. This was done by directly viewing the videos in question and making corrections to the text version. Once the conversion had taken place,

the researcher again saved the text transcript version of each interview and then evaluated the results. The researcher edited for clarity those areas which needed more accuracy. Once the video interviews had been converted and corrected, the process of analyzing the content of the semi-structured interviews began.

As noted in Chapter III, in undertaking data analysis, Creswell (1994) maintains there is no “right way” ...that it is “eclectic”. And Merriam (2009, p. 176) describes data analysis as “moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation”. To best implement this process and maintain a manageable organization of the data, the researcher implemented an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design presented by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014). Utilizing this design involved the following steps.

Step 1- Total immersion in the data by the researcher to make sense of it... fully understand the various contexts and resultant answers. This involved a detailed reading and rereading of each transcript, digitally creating marking and highlighting important and relevant data. During this process, the researcher assigned a “code” in his notes so that he could refer back to those items easily. This coding is the process of creating categories under which seemingly consistent responses are grouped (Williams & Moser, 2019). The researcher read the transcripts twice and noted specific points, highlighting and coding the information. Then, a second reading took place with the researcher’s context now broadened by the complete reading of all of the transcripts. Additional notes and quotations were captured, and coding of the data was made including the

perspectives, experiences, and unique information of the interviewees where helpful and additions to the depth of the material.

Step 2 - Transforming the notes, highlighting the material, and the coded items into emergent themes. Creswell (2013) defines themes as large pieces of data that form a familiar concept. This discovery of themes involved a third back-and-forth process of revisiting the numerous interviews and notes, then creating a coding identification. The researcher then labeled “themes” that emerged because of the back-and-forth process of comparing each interview’s data and notes. The researcher specifically noted in the margin where answers related to the objectives RO2, RO3, or RO4.

Step 3 - A noting of the relationships between the codes which emerged. The resulting relationship is known as “clustering” and this process again involved a continuous back and forth revisiting of the transcripts and “themes” that had previously been identified and defined. Sometimes this involved a redefining of the emerged theme. This accumulation is known as “clustering analysis” and is used to identify groupings, behaviors, responses, etc., which are similar to each other (Allen, 2017).

Step 4 - A broad review of the themes and resultant clusters while displaying key quoted material from the interviewees. The researcher then created an emergent theme clustering page (Appendix K) visually highlighting relationships between the interview responses. The clustering resulted in the study’s final seven themes.

After implementing the IPA design process with regard to the semi-structured interviews and gaining confidence regarding the emerged themes and clusters as reflected

in the clustering page (Appendix K), the researcher then compared and contrasted the themes and clusters which emerged from the alternative interview as well as the artifacts. The researcher then noted the data consistent or peripheral to the data which emerged in the interviews.

### Validity and Reliability

As noted in Chapter III, Tisdale and Merriam (2016, maintain that “Regardless of the type of research, validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study’s conceptualization and how the data are collected, analyzed and interpreted and how the findings are interpreted (2016, p. 238).” Through the use of semi-structured interviews along with the inclusion of artifacts from the Theological Educational Institutions and Direct Observations (both participatory and non-participatory), the researcher used established and acceptable research.

The researcher implemented what Carter (Carter, et al., 2014) describes as a method triangulation, which is the use of more than one option to collect data. In addition to the 15 primary subject interviews, the researcher also interviewed two current Worship Pastors, a Pastor and an individual with extensive experience as an Executive Pastor who started and currently leads an organization that works with Executive Pastors. While not fitting the profile of the interview participants, each had significant insights into Worship Pastor responsibilities and training needed to meet ongoing vocational responsibilities from a separate point of view. Additionally, the researcher has included artifacts as well as both participatory and non-participatory direct observation in this study.

## Participants

*ROI - Describe the characteristics of the participants, their positions, and their roles concerning this study.*

Meeting the goal of the first research objective, the researcher interviewed fifteen Church Executive Pastors, from different conservative Christian denominations in one of the five different regions of the country whose churches would be comfortable receiving candidates for a Worship Pastor position from one of the five Theological Educational Institutions listed in the initial email.

The final participants in the study were the result of an email campaign to a church list that was comprised of The Hartford Study's (Hartford, 2020) top 1500 churches of which 820 emails that could be found were sent. Additional emails were sent to 104 Bible Churches, 349 Evangelical Presbyterian Churches, 1562 Presbyterian Church of America Churches, and 254 Presbyterian Church United States of America whose email addresses could be found. The number of initial emails was expanded due to limited responses from the 250 initial emails envisioned in chapter III. From the initial emails to these churches plus one additional comprehensive email to the entire database, 95 of the churches engaged the researcher. Of these 95 respondents, 46 indicated a desire not to participate in the study, 63 filled out the qualifying survey which specified the desire for churches that had an active worship ministry such that a Worship Pastor was employed by the church. Additional criteria included elder leadership of the church, 500 people in weekly attendance, and the acceptability of receiving staff from one of the five Non-Denominational Seminaries listed. Of the 63 churches engaged, the responding Executive Pastors of 15 churches were qualified to continue the study to the interview

stage. All of the churches who responded but were not qualified were sent a thank you email and asked that if they want a finished copy of the study to please indicate so to the researcher. A number of them indicated that they would like to receive a copy of the final study.

Initially, the researcher sought to qualify three churches from each region in which one of the Non-denominational Seminaries is located. However, in qualifying the participants only one was able to be qualified from the East Coast region, seven were qualified from the Midwest region, two were qualified from the Southeastern region, two were qualified from the Southwestern Region and three were qualified from the Western region. Table 2 reflects this dispersion of the geographical locations of the Executive Pastors and which of the Theological Education Institutions would be most within their region. To protect their anonymity, the researcher has given each of the participants the simple titles of “Participant 1 (P01)”, “Participant 2 (P02)”, etc.



Table 2 *Participant - Qualifying Profile - Geographical Dispersion*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Institution</b>
Participant 1 (P01)	East Coast	Executive Pastor	Gordon-Conwell
Participant 2 (P02)	Midwest	Executive Pastor	Trinity
Participant 3 (P03)	Midwest	Executive Pastor	Trinity
Participant 4 (P04)	Midwest	Executive Pastor	Trinity
Participant 5 (P05)	Midwest	Executive Pastor	Trinity
Participant 6 (P06)	Midwest	Executive Pastor	Trinity
Participant 7 (P07)	Midwest	Executive Pastor	Trinity
Participant 8 (P08)	Midwest	Executive Pastor	Trinity
Participant 9 (P09)	Southeast	Executive Pastor	Asbury
Participant 10 (P10)	Southeast	Executive Pastor	Asbury
Participant 11 (P11)	Southwest	Executive Pastor	Dallas Theological
Participant 12 (P12)	Southwest	Executive Pastor	Dallas Theological
Participant 13 (P13)	West Coast	Executive Pastor	Fuller
Participant 14 (P14)	West Coast	Executive Pastor	Fuller
Participant 15 (P15)	West Coast	Executive Pastor	Fuller

All the participants were men. Each is responsible for overseeing the leadership of the Church staff and in particular the Worship Pastors of their church. Not all of the participants had hired a new Worship Pastor though all understood that they would be the leaders of the process should the need to hire a new Worship Pastor arise. As such, all felt comfortable offering their impressions and insights as to the proper equipping of a Worship Pastor within the context of their work environment.

In qualifying the interviewees from the original email sent out, a Pastor at a church smaller than the profile yet in the Eastern Region where the researcher lacked participation by the churches fitting the profile indicated an interest in being part of the study. As the researcher lacked broad participation in that region and with the view that such participation would add to the validity of the study through triangulation the

researcher interviewed the pastor. This pastor is coded TRP01 to protect his anonymity. In addition to the church pastor, two full-time experienced worship directors also indicated a desire to be part of the study. As the churches represented by these individuals did fit the profile of the study, the researcher, believing that this participation would also add depth and further validity through triangulation scheduled them to be interviewed. These two Worship Pastors are coded TRP02 and TRP03 to protect their anonymity.

Finally, as a result of information received from one of the interviewees, the researcher discovered that a professional organization that counsels church Executive Pastors exists and is well regarded. Following the advice of the interviewee, the researcher contacted the organization in Texas, and conducted an interview with its director and founder. The information gained from this interview additionally served to triangulate the data discovered from interviewees who participated in the planned protocol methodology. This organization’s director is coded TRP04 to protect his anonymity.

Table 3 *Participant - Method Triangulation Profile - Geographical Dispersion*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Institution</b>
Participant 1 (TRP01)	East Coast	Pastor	Gordon-Conwell
Participant 2 (TRP02)	East Coast	Worship Pastor	Gordon-Conwell
Participant 3 (TRP03)	East Coast	Worship Pastor	Gordon-Conwell
Participant 4 (TRP04)	Southwest	Professional Org.	Dallas Theological

## Codes

The codes were developed, built upon, and revisited as the transcripts were analyzed by the researcher. In some cases, the interviewee described an attribute without giving it a name which the researcher would often ask clarifying questions to discern if a developed code or perhaps assign the description a new one. The total number of codes was 14 and each code typically described an attribute sought in a Worship Pastor. The codes are found in Appendix K with a full description of the meaning of each code and which interviewees subscribed to each found in Appendix L. Additionally, there were a number of attributes that only one interviewee mentioned. The researcher has included these as “outliers” and they are also found in Appendix L.

## Themes

From the semi-structured interviews conducted with the fifteen (15) qualified participants, all of whom are currently serving in the capacity of Executive Pastors at large conservative evangelical churches, a number of themes presented themselves when analyzing the codes. An analysis of the data led the researcher to discern seven (7) themes relating to the research objective for this study. The interview transcriptions and the subsequent coding and analysis resulted in the following themes listed below.

- Theme 1 *Pastoral, Developing, Discipling Leadership is desired*
- Theme 2 *Quality Musicianship & Theological Balance is desired*
- Theme 3 *An inconsistency of evaluation methodology takes place in churches*
- Theme 4 *Team Orientation, Relational Leadership is desired*
- Theme 5 *Expert leadership of volunteers is desired*
- Theme 6 *Desire for practical leadership skill upon arrival*

- Theme 7 *While providing networks for hiring possibilities, Theological*

*Institutions do not provide training in many desired practical, day to day leadership skills.*

#### Themes Associated with General Equipping Desired in Worship Pastors

*RO2 - Explore the extent to which church leadership today depends upon theological institutions to adequately prepare Worship Pastors for specific vocational ministry leadership.*

*RO3 - Explore the extent to which individuals who have sought a theological education can identify a direct link between their education and specific Worship Pastor expectations and job descriptions to which they aspire.*

Interviewees were asked to describe what competencies and qualities they would like to see in a fully equipped Worship Pastor. This question did not imply a source for this equipping. However, these questions led up to the questions as to whether or not they and/or their Worship Pastors perceived these attributes as being taught in the theological institutions generally looked to. Typically, the interviewees reflected upon their current Worship Pastor and mentioned whether or not that individual currently exhibited these qualities in their opinion. In some cases, interviewees mentioned that they felt their current Worship Pastor could use some additional equipping in order to be less deficient in one or more of the qualities listed. This was typically the case when reflecting on themes 1, 2, and 3. For instance, the most common attribute sought in a Worship Pastor, mentioned by 11 of the 15 interviewees was that they are “Pastoral” in their leadership of both the congregation in Worship as well as in the leadership of their teams.

*Theme 1. Pastoral, Developing, Discipling Leadership is desired.* One of the interviewees described when they hired their current Worship Pastor:

- There was a desire at that time that we wanted and needed someone who could really be a shepherd to the people who serve within the worship ministry. And I think again, just kind of within the size of the church at the time, ministry philosophy, again, some things going back to the previous guy. And one of the things that was appealing to that search committee, in... two thousand six was when, you know, the guy was candidate, said “I'm not a Worship Pastor, I'm a pastor who leads worship.”

Another interviewee describes the desire for their Worship Pastor to pastor his music team:

- I mean, that's really what it comes down to me because he can be as gifted and talented as anybody out there. But if he doesn't love Jesus and he doesn't have a desire to build up other people's lives, then I don't want somebody who's not going to build into the people around him. And so, that's been part of the beauty of having this guy who's thirty-five years old. He's been here for seven years. And when the Worship Pastor before him left, they did a national search and then came back to this guy who was doing video on the staff because Isaac had great ability. But again, he had such a heart and such an ability to say he wanted to build into the next generation of musicians that he rose to the top of that. And that's why they hired him.

Another Executive Pastor reflects on his church's priorities:

- Our tendency is very pastoral, and so we are interested in a lot of pastoral-type things before we're interested in musical talent or some of those kinds of gifts. Now, of course, in a Worship Pastor role, those things are important and those are things that we consider as well. But the higher priorities for us are our pastoral gifts and, you know, willingness to roll up the sleeves and do the work. Comfort with people. Just kind of shepherding pastoral kind of gifts.

Finally, an example of an aspirational situation where there is some difficulty in the worship team not feeling “pastored:”

- There can be a disconnect between those two pieces and or the belief that there aren't two separate pieces, but they're all one and the same. Ok, that because I'm the worship leader, I'm the Worship Pastor. And what his team has been telling me is that, hey, he's a really good worship leader. He's not a good Worship Pastor. They're not feeling the, you know, the shepherding element of it, the care piece of it. And just him not coming alongside them, putting his arms around them. “Hey, love you. Praying for you.” But even to demonstrate that he has their best in mind because he's putting them in a position to not feel foolish on a Sunday?

*Theme 2. Quality Musicianship & Theological Balance is desired.* Another key theme that arose in the interviews with Executive Pastors is the desire to see a good balance between a skilled and quality musician and musical leadership and a grasp of the theology of worship and the theology espoused within the context of the particular church being served. 9 of the 15 Executive Pastors viewed this as an important quality. For instance:

- So, I would say that would be number one on the list. They just have to be a gifted musician. And number two is I think they have to have an understanding of what the overall theology of worship is about, where that sits in the larger function and goal and mission of the church. Where worship is and that they have a grasp of that. Probably...to back that one up just a little bit and put it in context...it's that sometimes you get a worship leader who thinks worship is everything. You know that the whole church revolves around worship, right? And then there are others that get it to where they don't really see it as anything other than we're going to sing a couple of songs, then be done. We're somewhere in between in that we look at a Sunday morning that part of it is coming together.

And in the context of an Executive Pastor where his church's theology puts a high value on development and discipleship:

- So, I think four or five years ago, we would look for kind of almost what you would anticipate from a worship leader. Are they musically capable? You know, do they know how to piece together a worship service? Hmm, you know, do they know how to lead and develop some of the musical volunteers? You know, things like that. Nowadays, I would say, you know, all of those are important, but we would also really be looking for somebody that knows how to develop people not only in their gifts, talent and skills but also in their discipleship. So, we've really come a long way. I think in saying this is great, we can put together a heck of a worship service. I mean, where the spirit is active and you know, the music supports the message and all those kinds of

things. But if we're not taking responsibility to develop the people from their own discipleship path, then we're missing an important part of the equation.

One Executive Pastor mentioned his appreciation for some of the theological training his church's Worship Pastor did receive in Seminary:

- He got great training theologically and in pastoring, which I think does translate to the Sunday morning service because he's taking his sense of who he knows God to be who we are and what we do. It's not a high liturgy, but we do a liturgical format. We'll do a call to worship. Yeah, to start the service. And then at some point, we'll do a confession of sin, assurance of pardon, a pastoral prayer kind of shaping the service in a gospel, you know, flow leading up to the preaching of the word and all that has been informed from his training and stuff like that.

But this same Executive Pastor, who had been to the same seminary as his Worship Pastor seemed to feel like there could have been even more taught specifically to Worship Pastor training:

- I think his overall worship training probably included...maybe two other electives he took that I didn't take that maybe should be taught. Yeah, and but there wasn't like a strong minor or anything like that in worship leading or the theology of, you know, planning a service?

The importance of a Worship Pastor living his theology sincerely and daily, portraying the kind person leadership hopes the church's teaching leads to was touched upon by one of the interviewees:



- So again, we were looking for somebody that is spiritually sincere. We don't want somebody that can flip a switch on the stage and then during the week, be different. We want somebody that worships in private. Before they can lead us to worship in public, we want somebody that is theologically grounded. We're not asking them to teach a lot of theology. But we don't want somebody that's off on their theology, but boy, they play a nice guitar.

One interviewee touched on the difficult subject of the Church's Worship Pastor coming to a difficult moment of questioning whether or not he could continue to support the Church's theology. And as a result, needed to immediately take a leave of absence and cease leading on Sundays:

- Ok, so we don't currently have a Worship Pastor. The guy we had for a long time, and it'll be interesting as I read through some of your questions...some of the premises. He approached us a little more than a year ago and basically he was questioning his salvation. He didn't even know if he was a Christian at that point, and I don't know if he was deconstructing his faith or if he was just questioning that it's a little bit strange. So, that hurt, that stung. He'd been around for quite a while. Yeah, it felt like, especially for our pastor, it felt like more than just a staff turnover. It was a pastoral blow. Yeah, he was on our leadership team. How do we handle this guy, this call?

*Theme 3. An inconsistency of evaluation methodology for Worship Pastors takes place in churches.* One of the more interesting things about the data is that each of the interviewees seemed to have a different way of evaluating or measuring the extent to

which they are achieving success with their Worship Pastor. Only one Executive Pastor mentioned an annual review done with significant intentionality:

- We're intentional. Yes, we do an annual review. But in addition, we basically...in all of our directors, all of our supervisors were we're asking them to do monthly one on one with their direct reports. And in this case, it would also include some form of regular sit down with the volunteers so that we're not just, you know, because one of the problems with just an annual review is you've got the, you know, the recent bias, right? It's whatever happened in the last month or two kind of biases the whole review. Whereas if you're meeting with people monthly. You're, you know, getting a much better picture throughout the year. But it's not just performance related.

One mentioned a 360-review process. Another mentioned “periodic reviews”. Another discussed the staff taking strengths test. It’s clear that churches have a wide variety of ways to give feedback to their Worship Pastors. At least with the interviewees in this study, most of the processes leaned towards the casual. For instance:

- We kind of adopted what he calls it hungry, humble, smart. Those are the characteristics the hungry is. Is somebody a go-getter? Are they or are we going to have to prod them along? Or are we going to have to hold them back? We're looking for people that we have to kind of hold back. So, we kind of test questions around hungry. What have you done? What have you developed? What’s typical? What motivates you? Those kinds of things. And humble is...do they have a sense that they're just part of a team? They're not, you know, one of the things with worship guys, especially as we really have to

watch for, is what I call the prima donnas...the ones that want the stage and the spotlight because of the stage and the spotlight, you know. And so, we really try to test, are they...do they have a humble spirit? Are they servant leaders? Do they talk about volunteers that they've brought along or people they've mentored? Do they use the terms we use. "I" versus "we" you know, "we did this" versus "I". And then smart as just do they seem to have emotional intelligence? Do they interact well with people as they come and go from the interviews? Do they ask the right questions? Do they have a sense of that? Also, one of my friends in a church nearby here started using a thing called the culture index.

One of the interviewees gave the researcher the sense that church leadership viewed evaluation as more burdensome, just something more that they knew they should be doing, than something that was purposeful and intended to improve the contribution of the Worship Pastor's performance:

- There's an annual review and annual goal-setting process, so we try to have... say like once a quarter...like a check-in. Yeah, just to check in and try to not make it oppressive. And I mean, none of us has the time or frankly desire to spend oodles of time on a bunch of goals and paperwork, especially for those of us who have multiple reports. That gets burdensome in a hurry. But you know what? We're still trying to make it meaningful. Yeah, our Worship Pastor reports directly to our lead pastor. Oh, and they meet on a weekly basis just for, you know, for service planning, for debrief or evaluation. And I think

that they're able to keep just an ongoing feedback loop. And play that way.

Which yeah, that's very helpful.

Four of the Executive Pastors described their evaluations more as informal semi-annual check-in designed to give them a “sense of things.” One response reflects this process in describing how the leadership and a previous Worship Pastor came to the conclusion that he was not right for the job:

- It became pretty clear within the first year that while we felt like his sort of skillset probably didn't match us, he felt the same thing about our skillset. They didn't match...we didn't match him. And so it very naturally became a situation where he started looking for a different position and got one. And you know, he's doing well. No, hard feelings or anything. And we probably don't use necessarily reviews in a traditional sense here, but through regular meetings, updates and conversations, we probably were spurring that on a little bit, maybe encouraging that, you know, that kind of move to happen with him.

One Executive Pastor expressed a strong desire to see their Worship Pastors and other leaders doing well in all aspects of their life and describes their approach.

- We do twice a month direct reports and for supervision and a system for documenting our direct reports time. We have a system, a set of shoes to walk through. And we also think we are a very high personal touch staff in terms of a good portion of at least one of the two direct report times a month is geared to what's going on in the person, what's going on in their home, what's going on with their kids if they have them? Yeah. And trying to convince them we

care. We care more about who they are than what they do for us. We do care about what they do and what they do is important we want. But if we can convince them we care about them, then then they're more likely to listen when we talk about what they do. So, every supervisor is...that's the type of relationship we're trying to build in, trying to know them well so you can help them with whatever their weaknesses are.

These three themes were representative of the majority of the Executive Pastors interviewed. The first two (Pastoral approach and balancing of musicianship and theological astuteness) reflect qualities of a Worship Pastor which likely would take experience in the job to develop. The third theme speaks to the diversity of processes that church leadership uses to essentially evaluate how effective the Worship Pastor is in these first two qualities in addition to other aspects of the job.

#### Themes Associated with Equipping Desired in Worship Pastors Pre-Hire

In analyzing the data from the Executive Pastor interviews, it became clear that most of them view the musical and theological equipping as different from additional types of equipping needed to be a successful Worship Pastor. While neither the Worship Pastors themselves nor the church Executive Pastors seem to look to the Theological Educational Institutions to imbue these two qualities into Worship Pastors, there are other aspects of their equipping that they believe these institutions could play a role in but are not currently.

*RO4* - Explore the extent to which American theological institutions focus upon the practical leadership aspects of a Worship Pastor's equipping and whether or not they align their curriculums to the training needed by churches.

*Theme 4. Team Orientation, Relational Leadership.* Ten of the Executive Pastors interviewed specifically mentioned the importance of the Worship Pastor having a team orientation. That is, to be a good staff teammate (team player) as well as being both a team leader and good teammate for those they are entrusted to lead. For instance:

- So, we have a worship leader, Danny, he's really, really good. Recruiting volunteer care, getting people into groups, really supporting all of what is important to us. This role is going to provide leadership for worship, but basic production or online in our communications teams, they report to him as well. Ok. So, you know, budgeting is one of those generic, but you know, more logistical things. But I think what we really want is as a motivator, somebody who can inspire, recruit, develop people. I don't think we do a great job of this. When we audition, and they say gently, "you're not good enough, but keep working at it and try again next year." That's good. But we want somebody to say "yeah, you're not good enough, but you know what, if you've got time, I'll get with you every week or once a month or we're putting together this thing. And so, we're going to help you develop your skills."

Another response indicates that a better job needs to be done in the team orientation area:

- Our current Worship Pastor, he's a friend. You know, I love him and his family. He's trying really, really, hard, but he's missing some hard and soft skills that prevent him from being really excellent. And so, I've tried to coach him through both of those. But we're just getting to a place where I think the challenge is too great in terms of his capacity, his ability. One of the areas that

he's really struggling in is that comes off as an extrovert, but he lives like an introvert. In terms of people would experience him as...hey, how are you doing whatever? I see it and it's like, OK, well, there's a shield there. He's protecting himself and he's actually very reserved and he's hiding behind that. And so, he's not built teams well and he's not retained teams well.

And generally, as this Executive Pastor expresses, they look for a good staff-mate to work together with that knows how to develop, be developed, and be part of a cohesive developing leadership team.

- We look for development. We want to develop young talent and utilize even students in our worship. So, we want somebody that can take time to do some lessons and mentor and that sort of thing. And then, we're staff, so we want a team player, not somebody that runs off and does their own little kingdom unwilling to work as part of a team.

Another Executive Pastor expressed:

- So, it's more of... you are part of our team. We're all trying to build teams with nobody. We don't want one lone ranger on this staff. We want teams. And that includes the worship guys. And, in particular, worship is a vehicle for people to use their gifts. So, you have to be willing to have an open door that allows folks to contribute their gifts at whatever that level those giftings are. "How can we use them?"

*Theme 5 Expert leadership of volunteers is desired.* Closely related to being team-oriented is the skill of leading volunteers. One Executive Pastor described the complexity of that activity.

- There needs to be a leading element that goes beyond just being able to play your instrument and sing. But you know, we're dealing with contracted musicians, we're dealing with tech teams, we're dealing with volunteers and being able to have some competency in just managing people. I mean, it is a pretty key role. And then there's something that I don't think is emphasized enough often with this particular area of churches, which is a shepherding quality. I think they have to be able to see themselves as having a pastoral role up there in shepherding people from up front and even things when it comes to non-Sunday issues like getting the email or the phone call from someone who wasn't happy.

Another Executive Pastor indicated a Music Pastor's strength on the creative side but makes it clear that being good at leading volunteers is also an important part of the job:

- It really was mainly that he was really strong with, you know, just from the musical standpoint. But in terms of, you know, leading volunteers and a lot of those kinds of things, it wasn't necessarily his strong suit.

*Theme 6. The desire for practical leadership skills upon arrival.* Within the process of collecting the data in the semi-structured interview process it is clear that Executive Pastors have an expectation that Worship Pastors develop broad leadership skills:

- And I think leadership is, you know, leader development is something that probably doesn't get stressed enough. Yeah, you know, we try to. We've got a fairly large staff. We're about thirty-eight people and we try to remind



ourselves that from a leadership standpoint, our ministry is developing the ministry leaders and that they are the ministry, not people who do ministry for us. And so, I think personally, I mean, I don't know, maybe when I retire, maybe I'll see if I can get a teaching gig at a seminary where we can talk about leadership.

One Executive pastor, reflecting on his own training in leadership at the theological educational institution he attended shares:

- So, we had a couple of classes with him that were super helpful in leadership. But honestly, most of my leadership development has been on-the-job training. Just learning as situations arise. And then I've taken some (classes). Uh, there aren't even really classes for credit, they were just kind of there.

Some of the Executive Pastors expressed situations in which their Worship Pastors had sufficient musical skills and even had a solid grasp of the church's theological expectations but have been missing some of the additional leadership skills and knowledge needed to accomplish many of the responsibilities of their roles. For instance, just understanding and properly leading through ongoing church dynamics:

- And understanding just the dynamics that anxiety plays in the system. Ok. And when you have an anxious leader or an anxious team member, how does the whole system kind of shift? Yeah, compensate. And if you don't address it and work through it? Yeah, super. So, it's been super helpful there. And then the other. I like books from other great resources. There is a book called *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*.

*Theme 7. While providing networks for hiring possibilities, Theological Institutions do not provide training in many desired practical, day to day leadership skills.*

While all of the Executive Pastors interviewed indicated that they felt Theological Institutions do a good job of teaching Worship Pastors theology and biblical truth, they do not believe that they prepare Worship Pastors for service in the three thematic areas mentioned – developing a team orientation, being an expert volunteer leader, and practical/administrative leadership. This desire for seminaries to do more was expressed by the majority of those interviewed.

- Bob Burns wrote the book Resilient Ministry. Ok. So, I did a couple of forums with them on the development and a bunch of reading. But yes, a lot of it's just sort of been on-the-job training. I wish there was a ton more of it in seminary because they don't teach you or at least, I don't think we got a lot of exposure to the idea. I don't know how much you've read up on, like the church as an emotional system like and just how healthy the emotionally healthy church stuff that piece is. Scazzerro, or whatever his name is. ... Well, yeah, especially if you're at a larger church, there's so much involved in the worship leading that is organization. You know, the teams and the schedules and the rehearsals and the, you know, I think, yeah, any on-the-job training you could have while in seminary would be super advantageous and just even equipping people with systems to that.

I mean, there are so many things that pastors do, especially if you're in a niche role of like worship. In my role, I have to have some technical

knowledge about website development and communication and databases and that kind of stuff that like you, just I'm just figuring it out, you know? And I know seminaries' primary job is to train in biblical literacy and theology, which is great. I wish that there were more electives that were that would be very tangible. And so, I think, for instance, worship directors and Worship Pastors would be super helpful to have electives. How do you lead people so that they actually are being led and engaged? Yeah. How do you how do you plan? How do you organize a team? How do you how do you? I mean, one of our biggest things is how do you recruit new musicians?

Another Executive Pastor expressed a desire to see a systems orientation taught:

- If the school could help...if education can help. I think one would be the ability to create and maintain systems. I think that in a church of our size, you know, I haven't checked our numbers, but we probably ran 500 people this weekend between our two campuses. And you've got to have systems or things do not work. And a lot of times somebody comes in, they know how to play the guitar and sing loud. So how do you create systems to not let things fall through the crack, not fail to be productive? You know that sort of thing. So, I think systems. And then the other thing again, I've always said it, people know how to be on a stage that's in our schedule. That's two hours a week, 20 minutes per hour. The rest of your time. How do you do? How do you do people? How do you do personal development? How do we develop them? We need to, but we expect them to develop them. We expect them to look and say, "I want to grow and be better and to come to us and say, I think I need

this. I think I need to go take this class or I'd like to attend this conference that specializes in this, or I'd like to read this book and then sit down with you and let's read it together.” So, personal leadership!

Another Executive Pastor wishes seminaries would teach management and strategic thinking/planning skills:

- I would encourage...I feel like seminaries are producing really well, gifted musicians and people that understand the Bible and understand the theological side. I think what they lack and what they have to supplement a lot is a basic understanding of how to manage people, how to set goals, how to have a one-on-one meeting that isn't just, you know, a light conversation, but how do we move? How do we move this thing somewhere? How to do a brainstorming session or strategic plan? I think it's all the things that go along with the corporate side of the Bride of Christ. You know, the hiring, the coaching, the encouraging volunteers. Those are things that I don't think seminaries do a lot with.

An orientation towards the administrative skills and daily work is desired as well:

- But when it comes to the practical skills, I mean, unless they've been able to do some really focused, you know, field placement or internship or it's just their part-time job and they've been taken a couple of classes here and there and finally have the degree done. Maybe my experience is skewed because of you know, the couple of schools that are closest nearby to us. But my guess would be that when it comes to just the practical every day of worship leading, that's something that would just to get through the experience of

leading it. And similarly, with the administrative side of it. Probably even more of a learn as you go, because again, I think within you, within the church, you know, the context that you can have in one setting, a certain set of things that would be on your plate and you can switch settings and have more things or fewer things or different things on your plate, you know, and that's probably not unique to worship ministry. That is, the church is going to vary. But yeah, I think the seminary, I think they would do well with the theology. But the other two categories, I would not expect that their seminary experience provided them with.

One Executive Pastor recognizes that the Theological Education institutions are, in fact focusing some now on organizational development but felt primarily for the benefit of Pastor track students. He wondered if, in fact, Seminaries even see their responsibility as being to “vocationally stock the church:”

- And you know, they've all jumped into leadership and organizational development too, primarily for folks on a pastor track. And that's the question, if seminaries are intended to vocationally “stock the church,” if you will? That's kind of a layman's way to say, do they even want to, you know, explore this second most visible guy thing?

In analyzing the data from the Executive Pastor interviews, it is clear that there are skills that there is a broad expectation that Worship Pastors will likely need experience in their jobs to fully develop. These include becoming more Pastoral and more oriented towards developing and discipling the people they lead as well learning how to balance musicianship and the church's theology on a regular basis as well as developing

consistent systems for gaining ongoing assessments of their success in their role. It is also clear from an analysis of the data that Executive Pastors would like to see Worship Pastors equipped with certain qualities prior to being hired. These include a team orientation/relational leadership mindset, expert leadership of volunteers, and practical leadership skill. Further, it is clear from the analysis that the Executive Pastors do not have the expectation that Theological Education Institutions are developing these skills in their students aspiring to become Worship Pastors.

Table 4 depicts the relationship of the 7 themes that have emerged to the 4 research objectives of the study:

Table 4 *Research Objectives and Themes Relationship*

Research Objective (RO)	Themes
RO1	Interview Protocol form and descriptions of interviewees
RO2 & RO3	Theme 1: Pastoral/Developing/Discipling Leadership Theme 2: Quality Musicianship & Theological Balance Theme 3: Inconsistency of evaluation methodology
RO4	Theme 4: Team Orientation/Relational Leadership Theme 5: Expert Leadership of Volunteers Theme 6: Practical Leadership Skills Theme 7: Theological Institutions Do Not Provide Many Desired Practical Leadership Skills.

#### Validity and Triangulation

The researcher interviewed a Pastor, two full-time Worship Pastors, and the founder/director of an organization established to work with Executive Pastors and in whose previous career had been a full-time Executive Pastor at a number of large churches. The results of the interview were very similar, especially with regard to

emergent themes. For instance, in highlighting the importance of musical and theological balance one interview reflected upon a Worship Pastor finding this balance:

- And of course. All things being equal. I would probably not hire somebody who had no real theology of worship. I wouldn't necessarily expect them to. To have it all worked out and developed. If they're just starting out. Have you committed to it? Are they teachable?

Speaking to the importance of evaluation yet not having a standard format but desiring a heart for such by the Worship Pastor one offered.

- Well, that and just in general, having a good working relationship where the door is open to further conversation, where the pastor is open to having questions directed back at them. Hmm. And I've, you know, I've been on staff at two different churches where sadly the pastors or egos couldn't be bothered by their underlings when they called.

Another participant mentioned their process.

- Right now, currently, we don't have a process for finding out work performance and frustrations. We just recently formed a committee, staff compensation, and care committee, and they meet with each staff member, particularly the pastoral staff. But they deal with all the staff to find out how things are going and how, how they feel like they're doing. But what we probably need is some sort of evaluation process where the elders or whoever can determine, you know, we see a problem here or we see something really excellent here, we want to develop it.

Speaking to whether or not Worship Pastors are equipped for service by the Theological Education Institutions they attend one interviewee offered the following:

- I taught an online course for Trinity that was mainly aimed at worship leaders. And I'm supposed to do it again this coming spring semester. You know, for whatever reason, that didn't even pop up on my radar when you first threw out these questions. But yeah, you know, one of the things I'm trying to do in teaching this class is to put all this on their radar. So that they can be proactive and not wait for the pastor to initiate things. I mean, you know, we're essentially taught how to read and interpret scripture, how to lead a Bible study, how to preach. Then you do your field where you might. Go and learn how to be with people when they're dying or visit people in the hospital and all that good stuff, but you know, you're not taught how to run a session meeting, you know, conflict management.

One of the current Worship Pastors reflected their experience.

- And so, we did have pastoral management or whatever you want to call it, class. And we read this very dull, but I think somewhat helpful, book some sort of pastoral management book. But my experience about working on staff was from doing it. Reading about how it works...it doesn't tell you anything. And a lot of the guys had worked in churches before. But you know, I think Bryan Chappell said he wished that people would do what I had done. And you work on a church first then go to seminary because then you know what they're talking about.

Here, is a somewhat cynical response to some of the equipping questions.



- I know that's a very broad thing, but we've hired some people at our church in the last several years that only got the job because they were living breathing bodies. They weren't. Obviously, they didn't have the credentials, but they were available. And so, the church decided, oh, well, they're here and they know enough to be dangerous because they read a couple of articles online about it. So, we're going to put them in the staff position. And then, of course, a year later, they're like, well, what have you done in your first year in employment? Our director of missions was an example. And he had read a couple of books on how to be a missionary. Literally a How-To book on how to be a Christian missionary.

Some summarizing responses from the alternative interviews in triangulating the information obtained from the primary interviewees are helpful:

- If you go with somebody off the shelf, you're going to get off-the-shelf material, which is standard evangelicalism. I preferred and still do the master's degree to help someone know what they don't know. That's the biggest limitation in all of pastoral ministry. People can do the job, but they don't know what they don't know. So, it's like your experience at Covenant. You go deeper. You hear from people who you may not worship with every week, but they have something in their tradition that's meaningful to you. And by and large, master's level education is waning for church staff. People think they can just do it. And you know, that's fine if we don't want a well-trained leader. But I prefer a really well-trained leader who has more than enough on his plate to spill over.

- Most seminaries are designed to give theological content. Yeah. So let's give them an A for that. But in the Executive Pastor room, very few seminaries are teaching people how to lead a church. From books to management to teams. So, then you look at, well, what events, conferences or events do they go to? So, if they go to a praise and worship event, great. But what are you taking away from that?

#### Artifacts from Theological Institutions

Exhibit L reflects the five responses from the individual seminaries in the five regions studied (East Coast – Gordon-Conwell, Southeast – Asbury, Midwest – Trinity, Southwest – Dallas Theological, West – Fuller). Notable from the responses is that four out of the five do not have an actual track for an individual desiring to be a full-time Worship Pastor. Further notable is that even where courses might be pieced together to form a hybrid Worship Pastor curriculum, such curriculum may not address the qualities desired by the Executive Pastors interviewed. In particular, those practical/administrative leadership qualities – team building, leading volunteer, etc. which the Executive Pastors viewed as an important part of the skillset desired and that they would have an expectation of potential Worship Pastors already displaying some level of equipping in these areas pre-hire.

#### Summary

Chapter IV details the data analysis process that was used to develop the codes, themes, and ultimately the results of the study. Also included in the chapter are sections outlining the process of triangulation which was used to ensure the validity of the results. This included excerpts from interviews with Church leadership holding different titles including two Worship Pastors. Also, artifacts were additionally presented in support of

the validating process of triangulation. The titles of the participants and the regional variation were conveyed in a table with a narrative regarding the participant's responsibilities. Additionally, excerpts from the semi-structured interviews were presented with the responses leading to the 7 themes which emerged. In conclusion, Table 5 displays the relationship between the research objectives and the themes which emerged. Chapter V discusses the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION

The intent of this study has been to explore perceptions of the preparation of Worship Pastors for service by Theological Institutions. To that end, in addition to the literature review, this study has focused primarily upon the staff leadership of churches to gain insights and information. The particular leaders interviewed were the Executive Pastors of churches. They were chosen because ultimately, they or someone functioning in their capacity are the church leaders that the Worship Pastor will report to and thus are in the best position to judge the extent to which they have been prepared for service.

Chapters I through IV of this study presented the statement of the problem, the research objectives, conceptual framework, significance of the study, an extensive literature review, research methodology, and the research findings. In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the findings, submit, and discuss conclusions as well as give recommendations that are practical and actionable in the field. The recommendations will focus upon the issues presented or discovered in the research. In addition, the researcher will review and discuss the limitations of the research and offer suggestions for additional areas of study.

### Summary of the Study

The purpose of the research was to examine the specific role, expectations, and needed skillset of the Worship Pastor. Once the roles, expectations, and required skillset was determined, the researcher explored if church leadership believed that current theological institutions provided adequate worship leading, leadership skills, and pastoral training for a Worship Pastor's role in their churches. The researcher used a qualitative

phenomenological approach to collect the data. Guiding the study were the following research objectives.

*RO1* - Describe the characteristics of the participants, their positions, and their roles concerning this study.

*RO2* - Explore the extent to which church leadership today depends upon theological institutions to adequately prepare Worship Pastors for specific vocational ministry leadership.

*RO3* - Explore the extent to which individuals who have sought a theological education can identify a direct link between their education and specific Worship Pastor expectations and job descriptions to which they aspire.

*RO4* - Explore the extent to which American theological institutions focus upon the practical leadership aspects of a Worship Pastor's equipping and whether or not they align their curriculums to the training needed by churches.

Phenomenological studies such as this one engage a smaller sample size as the time spent pursuing, capturing, transcribing and making sense of the information gained can be considerable (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The sampling procedure for the study involved narrowing an initial population of 1667 churches identified as Evangelical Christian Churches to those with over 500 in normal weekly attendance. Then, through a set of qualifying questions, the population was further narrowed to a final sample of 15 participating Executive Pastors from 15 separate churches in five regions of the United States – East, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West). The churches were qualified as being elder-led, with an active Worship ministry that includes a full-time Worship Pastor and whose theology would allow a Pastor level employee to receive their theological

education from one of the five theological institutions listed (Gordon-Conwell, Asbury Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Seminary, Dallas Theological Seminary or Fuller Theological Seminary). This sample size is reasonable because the goal was to arrive at a manageable sample of a homogenous population (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The sample size allowed for richly textured information relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. In addition, the study sought a depth of knowledge that the researcher believed three churches per region would be able to provide through the semi-structured interviews (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

In addition to the primary sample, the researcher qualified two full-time Worship Pastors with the same criterion as the Executive Pastors, a Pastor with Executive Pastor Experience, and a former career Executive Pastor now heading an organization that consults Executives pastors. All four were also interviewed with semi-structured interviews. These additional interviews were helpful in analyzing the data by providing a resource for triangulation and in providing additional expert data in order that the researcher might mitigate his own experiences and avoid selection bias. Adding to the data were artifacts sent to the researcher from the five theological institutions providing information indicating course offerings that are currently part of the curriculum that can be offered to aspiring Worship Pastors.

Once the semi-structured interviews were concluded the researcher collected the data and interpreted it using the IPA method and the geographical dispersion of the participants was displayed. Seven themes resulted from the IPA process. These seven themes include:

- The desire for pastoral, developing, discipling leadership in their Worship Pastor.

- The desire for quality musicianship and theological balance in their Worship Pastor.
- An inconsistency of evaluation methodology.
- Team orientation, relational leadership.
- The expert leadership of volunteers.
- Practical leadership skills.
- The belief that Theological Institutions do not provide many desired practical leadership skills.

### Summary of Results

RO1 was satisfied by a description of the interview participants from whom the researcher collected information. 14 emergent themes arose from the analysis of the interviews which were then clustered into the seven final overall themes. Three of the seven themes supported RO2 and RO3. Four of the seven themes supported RO4. Digitized transcripts from all 19 interviews were referenced in support of the seven themes.

### Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations

*Finding 1: Church leadership believes that Worship Pastors should be equipped to be pastoral, developing, and capable of discipling others in their leadership of the congregation and the specific teams that they oversee.*

Participants indicated that they desire Worship Pastors be pastoral in their leadership. That is, capable of not only displaying consistently the spiritual attributes of what it means to be a Pastor in their context but also possessing a shepherding quality that allows them to gently but authoritatively lead the congregation throughout the worship services. Further, church leadership desires that Worship Pastors be capable of

developing those that they lead. That is, they see the potential of their involvement and the contributions those they lead are capable of and develop them to fuller and higher levels of participation. Finally, they are capable of Discipling those they lead on their teams. The literature pointed out the distinction between Discipling and mentoring. Discipling has a spiritual aspect to it which involves the Worship Pastor leading authentically by Christian example and teaching those he is charged with leading to be more Christlike, which is the aspiration of the Christian church.

*Conclusion.* That the Worship Pastor is a Pastoral, Developing, and Discipling leader is supported by the literature. Newman (2019) maintains that the Worship Pastor must collaborate with the head Pastor in shepherding the congregation. Scheer (2016) notes that the Worship Pastor leads with love in collaboration with the Teaching Pastor. Craig (2019) asserts that passing along of other biblical principles as an ongoing aspect of the Worship Pastor's job is an essential aspect of their daily work. Leaders often use the terms mentor and disciple interchangeably. Individuals mostly use discipleship in a biblical or church environment (Craig, 2019).

*Recommendations.* The participants believed that the Pastoral, Developing, and Discipling aspect of their job has historically been one which they have seen successful Worship Pastor develop into themselves as they gain more experience. In other words, while prior employment training is desired in this area, effectiveness in this regard is often something that is grown into. However, a prerequisite is clearly the willingness to embrace these roles as an aspect of the job. It seems clear both from the literature review as well as from the research data that an unwillingness to embrace these roles is a disqualifier for the role of Worship Pastor. As such, any discipleship training through



small group involvement and leadership, courses on developing others that may be available as well as developing networks of associates in similar positions in one's region would be recommended.

*Finding 2: Church leadership desires a balance between quality musicianship and theological depth in their Worship Pastor.* Each interview participant initially mentioned either the importance of the Worship Pastor being a quality musician or of their having a substantive grasp of the theology that the represented church espouses. When questioned further, it is clear that a balance is desired. In other words, they do not expect the Worship Pastor to be as significant a teacher as the Pastor. However, they do expect that they can teach. Further, while the level of musicianship may differ from church to church, there is an expectation that the quality is such that respect of the congregation and the music teams are capable of being maintained. A clear representation of quality musicianship and theological substance is clearly an expectation of church leadership.

*Conclusion.* The need for a Worship Pastor to maintain a balance between quality musicianship and theological substance is supported by the literature. Toledo (2013) maintains that in addition to their music leadership, Worship Pastors should be competent in theology and should receive training in theology and biblical studies in that they lead congregations through the nature of the spiritual activity. Willmington (2012), while listing the most common skills missing in Worship Pastor hires today does not list an understanding of theology as one of them. He lists those skills (shepherd, manager, and leadership skills) as additional to the assumption of broad theological, and biblical

training. Brewton (2018) also mentions that while training and musical experience is essential, the heart and soul of their jobs is working with people.

*Recommendations.* Participants expressed that theology equipping is a desired attribute among Worship Pastors. However, they did not broadly list this as a missing quality currently in their assessment of Worship Pastors. Moreover, it was clear that they wanted there to be a balance between the musical qualities a Worship Pastor has and their theological understanding. An ongoing tension in church worship circles is the style and biblical compatibility of the lyrics of the songs chosen for worship. It is important, given the desire of church leadership, that church Worship Pastors remain informed as to the particulars of ensuring that songs selected and presented are biblically compatible and comport with the theology of the churches they serve. Therefore, theological education from a seminary or other theological institution would be helpful in this regard. Also, it is important that Worship Pastors maintain and continue to improve their musical skills. Therefore, a continual program of improvement through lessons and continuing education would be wise. Finally, the ability to create a balance between music quality and theological substance might invite a regular, collaborative review by the Worship Pastor, the Executive Pastor, and the Teaching Pastor to make sure that the Worship Pastor in their planning and presentation is maintaining this balance.

*Finding 3: There is an inconsistency of evaluation methods in churches with regard to the assessment of their Worship Pastors.* Most of the Executive Pastors indicated some manner of regular review; however, only a small portion of them indicated that they had a formal review process. Most of the processes were casual check-ins and took place on an infrequent basis. However, all of the Executive Pastors indicated

a desire to have an improvement in the manner in which they reviewed their Worship Pastors. Most seemed to embrace this as their responsibility, not the Worship Pastors.

*Conclusion.* Interestingly, measurement and regular reviews of the Worship Pastor were not noted in the literature review. As with senior-level church staffing in general, whereby the qualities sought and continually demonstrated, should be treated in a more professional way, the conveyance of expectations to the Worship Pastor on a regular and ongoing basis should follow. Organizational management is generally a fairly new focus of the modern church. Due to the sizes of the churches studied, whereby all had an Executive Pastor, such was clearly on the minds of those interviewed. However, the majority of the participants seemed to still be wrestling with the best way to go about regular reviews which lead to improvement in performance.

*Recommendations.* In the Literature Hillman (2008) discussed the final component of field education as being that of evaluation. In other words, if one is to learn in the field, they should be evaluated as to whether or not they are accomplishing the tasks to the quality level that their superiors seek. Churches must develop consistent feedback systems. Additionally, Worship Pastors should themselves pursue an avenue for a regular and thorough review and recommendation for improvement at their churches. It appeared from some of the negative stories gleaned from the Executive Pastor interviews that at times, the church leadership and the Worship Pastor were operating on different pages. The interviews reflected that this does not generally end well for the Worship Pastor. Also, because there is often an assumption that the Worship Pastor can potentially be categorized as having artistic temperaments and therefore not keen on corporate seeming reviews, the Worship Pastors themselves can assuage this view by inviting this

evaluation with a humble heart. This will express to leadership the desire to continually improve and assure them that they and the church leadership are following the same agenda...improvement of the church and its mission as a whole. The Worship Pastor should do some research among associates and find an evaluative and review process that seems to work in similar settings. Then, they should work with the Executive Pastor or their direct report in honing the contents of that process and memorialize the process for their own use but also for those that follow in their footsteps and serve under them in the church.

Additionally, the subject of measurement, evaluation and review should be given larger visibility in theological circles generally. While this might feel very corporate to some, a feedback loop is a good thing. Therefore, it is suggested that Theological Institutions give the subject more visibility in their curriculums. And it would be wise that a cultural tone becomes established at the educational and vocational levels. That is, making consistent and candid reviews and, an ongoing willingness to give and receive those reviews part of the ongoing church staff culture.

*Finding 4: There is an expectation, on the part of church leadership, that its Worship Pastors develop relationally, organizationally, administratively and have a team orientation with the staff, those they serve with, and those they lead. A number of the interview participants mentioned that the organizational and volunteer leadership skills needed to be taught to incoming Worship Pastors. And they found that this generally fell to them or to some other means of input and instruction that they generally needed to assign or direct. Some of the Worship Pastors that the Executive Pastors had either observed or had overseen had a knack for these organizational skills and some did not.*

Some Worship Pastors have the benefit of extended budgets which allow for the payment of musicians and support personnel. This can delay the actual learning of how to effectively lead volunteers. Therefore, it is generally the preference of church leadership that Worship Pastors learn how to coach up teams in quality and thus not have to depend upon or extend payment to paid musicians or support personnel who may or may not be part of the church ministry generally. Further, they expect that Worship Pastors are not an island unto themselves. Rather, they become solid, relational, participating teammates with other members of the staff which often include Youth Pastors, Small Group Pastors, Mission Pastors, etc. in addition to the Lead Teaching Pastor and in many cases the Executive Pastor. The Executive Pastors prefer that these expectations are built into the Worship Pastors prior to hiring and some indicated that they try to flesh out the level of these skills as Worship Pastors undergo the consideration for hire processes. However, sometimes difficulties in these areas – staff relationships and lack of volunteer leadership do not become apparent until after Worship Pastors are hired. Or, other skills, such as musical quality or even past working relationships with staff members are considered more prominently in the hiring phase.

*Conclusion.* Finding 4 is consistent with the information gleaned from the literature review. Newman (2019) points out that the Worship Pastor must be armed with the leadership skills necessary to shepherd the congregation in the worship service, collaborate with creative and technical teams and his associates on the church staff as well as report to and collaborate with the head Pastor. Vaters (2019) maintains that the Worship Pastor must have the collaborative skills necessary to work in a teamwork environment. Leading large groups of musicians is often part of the job description

(Zippia, 2021). While Gonzalez (2019) expresses that the extent to which these skills are required can vary from church to church, nonetheless and maintain the collaborative skills necessary to work in a teamwork environment (Vaters, 2019). They also must typically lead large groups of musicians and technical teams participating in the Church's ongoing services (Zippia, 2021). Therefore, they must also be competent in portraying the up-front leadership skills necessary to move subordinated groups forward effectively. According to Gonzalez (2019), the need for such skills may vary from Church to Church. Nonetheless, each Church likely has a minimal set of ongoing leadership skills required of the Worship Pastor, contributing to the staff effectively, their teams, and leading the congregation in worship and the requisite musical skills and therefore it is important that the Worship Pastor is equipped with and developing this skillset ongoing.

*Recommendations.* If an aspiring Worship Pastor has not come up through a ministry that exemplified and taught the requisite organizational and team building and leading skills to its member should identify an ongoing ministry at a church that does. It is unlikely that they will receive such training in a Theological Institution as this is one of the additional findings to be discussed next. There are also conferences and seminars which might be helpful resources. Such skills are often better “caught” than “taught” and exhibiting them in action in an ongoing capacity along with studying accompanying literature on organizational structures, leading volunteers, and collaboration would be helpful if one is not able to access a formal program training such qualities into individuals. Another resource would be church members who have developed such skills working for non-profit organizations separate and apart from the church. While not

necessarily music or creativity-related, certain skillsets for volunteer leadership and collaboration are likely transferrable.

*Finding 5: Theological Institutions, while excelling in providing Worship Pastors with theological and biblical training and insights do not sufficiently equip them with the leadership skills needed to lead teams of volunteers, associate with staff and volunteers relationally and advance their ministries with the practical and administrative leadership skills required for the job.* Most of the participants in the semi-structured interviews had themselves undertaken some level of Theological Institution training. Therefore, all seemed to speak authoritatively about what the Institutions they are familiar with do equip individuals going into vocational ministry to do and what they do not equip them with. All were very complimentary of the extent to which Theological Institutions equip individuals (including aspiring Worship Pastors) with Theological constructs training such as biblical studies, church history, and general theology. They were also very clear about the fact that these institutions do not sufficiently teach and equip aspiring Worship Pastors in organizational, leadership, team building, and administrative skills.

*Conclusion.* The finding of the study that Theological Institutions do not prepare aspiring Worship Pastors in such skills organizational, leadership, team building, and administrative is consistent with the information gleaned from the sources of the study's literature review. Historically biblical studies, church history, and homiletics but not real-world practical leadership and administrative tasks have been taught to aspiring vocational ministry students (Princeton, 2021). Nonetheless, acting as a manager (Farley, 2001) and conducting administrative oversight (Monahan, 1999) is part of the Worship Pastor's role. Perry (2021) believes that an important question that Theological

Institutions need to answer is whether or not they see themselves as purely places of Theological thought and research or whether or not they are also to be considered preparatory institutions. Cooper (2016) encourages the attainment of a degree program exhibiting some worship study. But he questions whether that study would prepare the student for the real job of a Worship Pastor.

*Recommendations.* The most ambitious recommendation in satisfaction of addressing what appears to be a deficiency of Theological Institution's training of Worship Pastors for service is for the Institutions to retool their programs to include a real-world, on-the-job, competency-based curriculum focused upon genuinely training aspiring Worship Pastors for their jobs. Some have suggested internship programs that collaborate with classroom work. The first thing, however, that needs to be answered is whether Theological Institutions desire to offer preparatory training to Worship Pastors as an offering. To the extent they do, it would be helpful to give attention to church leadership in the way this study has in order to properly address those skills needed and sought after by the church of today.

#### Limitations

Limitations of a study are factors that the researchers cannot control, but they can significantly affect the research and interpretation of the results (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). They allow the researcher to place the research findings in context and properly interpret the scientific work (Ioannidis, 2007). It is important to address the limitations of this qualitative phenomenological study. Several limitations exist in this study.

While the researcher analyzed the data from the lived experiences of the Executive Pastors, not all churches have Executive Pastors. The researcher focused upon



churches of a certain size as such churches due to their size will have a full-time Worship Pastor. The extent to which the results of the study can be extrapolated to smaller churches presents a question for further study.

A second limitation in the study was the extent to which the researcher sought a geographical dispersion of responses. In responding to the researcher's inquiry only one Executive Pastor from the eastern region and two Executive Pastors from the Southwest region were able to be qualified for participation in the study. While the researcher was able to qualify more participants than were needed from the Midwest with adequate participation from the Southeast and West region. The extent to which Midwest churches are generally more responsive to research inquiry or that the other regions are less responsive may be cause for further research

A third limitation to the study is the extent to which the researcher limited the involvement of actual Worship Pastors to the literature review and as a part of the triangulation process. The researcher's decision to focus on the existing literature, some of which gathered information from Worship Pastors, and candid responses from those to whom Worship Pastors typically report was purposeful in gaining concrete expectations and in some cases deficiencies in the training of Worship Pastor. While creating depth to the study, more than the two Worship Pastors interviewed may have provided further data.

A fourth limitation to the study is the extent to which the researcher was able to access curriculum information from the Theological Institutions noted. While the attainment of curriculum information from representatives of the institutions helped to validate, in particular finding 5, depth could be added to the context of the conclusion.

As a qualitative phenomenological study is interested in the lived experiences of the participants in the study, cause for a further study might seek to know more about why the institutions do not offer extensive curriculums to Worship Pastors in the way that they do for, for instance, teaching pastors.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Future research may involve further the lived experience of Worship Pastors themselves. Potentially it could involve their families, friendships, and coworkers other than authority figures or direct reports. Additional research also could examine the extent to which curriculums specific to Worship Pastor training may have been initiated at some point in the past at Theological Institutions, given trials or discontinued. This may answer some of the questions as to why there are so few current curriculums addressing the training of Church Worship Pastors specifically.

The Christian faith is a very broad landscape with numerous denominations and differing beliefs. Further research could narrow the extent to which the findings of this study can be applicable to the many divisions and beliefs of churches. Additionally, the effectiveness of size generally, the quality of worship sought at Christian churches generally could be investigated in assessing even the basic need for Worship Pastors ongoing.

#### Discussion

The study of Worship Pastor preparation involves the many preferences that exist when it comes to worship in the Christian church. Style of worship, attire for worship, sound, lights, certain settings, and other accompanying elements can be very specific to certain denominations and individuals. However, the skills needed by the Worship Pastor

seem to be consistent as the study has shown. Though previously a Worship Pastor himself, the researcher was able to approach the subject dispassionately and with the hope that the field itself can benefit by this research. All the participants were extremely accommodating and forthcoming with regard to the questions asked. In fact, they each asked to be given a copy of the study recognizing its relevance to the ongoing preparation of individuals that are daily in their midst. The researcher believes that one of the motivating factors for the participants is an improvement of Christian Worship generally and ultimately those which serve in their particular churches.

Given the findings, the study should have value for individuals aspiring to be Worship Pastors as it offers insights into what church leadership deems most important. The study should also have value for Church leadership in offering an articulated document of qualities to consider when contemplating a new Worship Pastor hire. Finally, this study should have value for Theological Institutions intent on serving churches by potentially offering an expanded curriculum in preparing Worship Pastors for service.

### Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to summarize the data gathered in this study. Past the literature review, the study concentrated on the lived experiences of the individual most likely to recognize the equipping or lack of equipping of the Worship Pastor in churches of today. The methodology applied was a qualitative phenomenological approach with IPA methodology used to assemble, assess and interpret the data.

The researcher's hope is that the Churches, aspiring Worship Pastors, and Institutions offering Theological training will give consideration to the results and findings of this study. The hope is that it gives church leaders and aspiring Worship Pastors, in particular, more information regarding the avenues to provide the best preparation possible for Worship Pastors in providing excellent leadership in their ongoing positions and positions that they may aspire to.

## APPENDIX A – Email of Initial Inquiry

Hello, my name is Phillip Sandifer. I am a PhD student at the University of Southern Mississippi. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study entitled “Exploring Perceptions about American Theological Institutions in Preparing Worship Pastors for Service”. Part of this exploration involves receiving input from church leadership’s impressions.

Would your Pastor, Executive Pastor, Worship Pastor search team leader be willing to participate in this important study?

Participation will involve, in addition to this “email of inquiry” filling out the answers to some brief questions in written form and participating in a one hour interview via Zoom in either December of this year or early January of 2021. If you’d be willing to participate, would you mind answering the following questions and reply back with this form.

### Qualifying Questions:

1. I Would be willing to participate in this study (Y/N)? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Does your church have an active Worship Arts ministry such that you employ a full time Worship Pastor? (Y/N)? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is your church an Elder led church consisting of at least 4 elders or more (Y/N)? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is the theology of your church such that your leadership would be comfortable receiving senior staff from at least 2 of the following 5 seminaries (Y/N)? \_\_\_\_\_  
Gordon-Conwell (East Coast), Asbury Theological Seminary (Southeast), Trinity Theological Seminary (Midwest), Dallas Theological Seminary (Southwest), Fuller Theological Seminary (West Coast).
5. Does your church (in normal times) have a weekly attendance of 500 people more (Y/N)? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for considering participating in the initial stage of our research study.

Warm Regards, Phillip Sandifer

Phillip Sandifer  
PhD Candidate, The University of Southern Mississippi  
[Phillip.Sandifer@usm.edu](mailto:Phillip.Sandifer@usm.edu)

APPENDIX B – Email of Initial Inquiry (Follow-Up)

Hello, I sent the following email to you last week. However, knowing the business of this time of year on church staff, I know it's possible you either did not receive it or set it aside. I am hopeful that you might give consideration to participating in a research study I am conducting.

My name is Phillip Sandifer. I am a PhD student at the University of Southern Mississippi. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study entitled "Exploring Perceptions about American Theological Institutions In Preparing Worship Pastors for Service". Part of this exploration involves receiving input from church leadership's impressions.

Would your Pastor, Executive Pastor, Worship Pastor search team leader be willing to participate in this important study?

Participation will involve, in addition to this "email of inquiry" filling out the answers to some brief questions in written form and participating in a one hour interview via Zoom in either December of this year or early January of 2021. If you'd be willing to participate, would you mind answering the following questions and reply back with this form.

Qualifying Questions:

1. I Would be willing to participate in this study (Y/N)? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Does your church have an active Worship Arts ministry such that you employ a full time Worship Pastor? (Y/N)? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is your church an Elder led church consisting of at least 4 elders or more (Y/N)? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is the theology of your church such that your leadership would be comfortable receiving senior staff from at least 2 of the following 5 seminaries (Y/N)? \_\_\_\_\_

Gordon-Conwell (East Coast), Asbury Theological Seminary (Southeast), Trinity Theological Seminary (Midwest), Dallas Theological Seminary (Southwest), Fuller Theological Seminary (West Coast).

5. Does your church (in normal times) have a weekly attendance of 500 people more (Y/N)? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for considering participating in the initial stage of our research study.

Phillip Sandifer  
PhD Candidate, The University of Southern Mississippi

## APPENDIX C – Email for Possible Participants

Hello again,

I hope that all is well. Thanks so much for being willing to participate in our study. As a reminder, I am Phillip Sandifer, a PhD student at Southern Mississippi University. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study entitled “Exploring Perceptions about American Theological Institutions In Preparing Worship Pastors for Service”. Part of this exploration involves receiving input from church leadership impressions.

We are in the process of receiving the original email responses back from our population of 250 churches. In the next few days we will see how many of them qualify for our sample. Of the qualified responses we will be selecting 2 per region (Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, Southwest and West Coast) to become part of our final samples that will participate in the one hour Zoom interviews and answer some brief written questions.

Again, thank you for being willing to potentially be part of our study. I will connect back with more details.

Warm Regards,

Phillip Sandifer  
PhD Candidate, The University of Southern Mississippi  
[Phillip.Sandifer@usm.edu](mailto:Phillip.Sandifer@usm.edu)

## APPENDIX D – Email for Excluded Participants

Hello again,

I hope that all is well. Thanks so much for being willing to participate in our study. As a reminder, I am Phillip Sandifer, a PhD student at Southern Mississippi University. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study entitled “Exploring Perceptions about American Theological Institutions In Preparing Worship Pastors for Service”.

Thank you so much for filling out our initial questionnaire indicating your willingness to be a part of this study. However, upon selecting our random sample of 2 churches per region (Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, Southwest and West Coast) your church was not selected.

I really appreciate your willingness to be a part of this study. If you like and indicate so I would be happy to send you the results of this study once they are available.

Warm Regards,

Phillip Sandifer  
PhD Candidate, The University of Southern Mississippi  
[Phillip.Sandifer@usm.edu](mailto:Phillip.Sandifer@usm.edu)



## APPENDIX E – Email for Included Participants

Hello again,

I hope that all is well. Thanks so much for being willing to participate in our study. As a reminder, I am Phillip Sandifer, a PhD student at Southern Mississippi University. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study entitled “Exploring Perceptions about American Theological Institutions In Preparing Worship Pastors for Service”.

Given your responses to our initial questionnaire and the fact that your church was, from a group of churches that filled out and sent back the questionnaire, chosen as one of the 2 churches per area (Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, Southwest and West Coast) to participate in the Zoom interview portion of our study.

I’ve have attached an “Informed Consent Form” to sign indicating your willingness to participate with this study. It also has attached to it permission for me to perform this study from the University of Southern Mississippi’s Internal Revue Board.

I’m hopeful that you will be available for me to schedule this 1- hour interview sometime in the coming weeks. Please look for my follow up email with regard to this scheduling.

Again, I really appreciate your willingness to be a part of this study.

Warm Regards,

Phillip Sandifer  
PhD Candidate, The University of Southern Mississippi  
[Phillip.Sandifer@usm.edu](mailto:Phillip.Sandifer@usm.edu)

APPENDIX F – Email for Scheduling Participant’s Zoom Calls

Hello again,

I hope that all is well. Thanks so much for being willing to participate in our study. As a reminder, I am Phillip Sandifer, a PhD student at Southern Mississippi University. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study entitled “Exploring Perceptions about American Theological Institutions In Preparing Worship Pastors for Service”.

Is there a best day and time (we are needing about 1 hours) for your to be available for a Zoom conversation sometime in the next week weeks? Also, please find attached some general questions that will guide our conversation.

Again, I really appreciate your willingness to be a part of this study.

Warm Regards,

Phillip Sandifer  
PhD Candidate, The University of Southern Mississippi  
[Phillip.Sandifer@usm.edu](mailto:Phillip.Sandifer@usm.edu)

APPENDIX G – “Thank You” Email for Narrowed Population Group

Hello again,

I hope that all is well. Thanks so much for your participation in our study. As a reminder, I am Phillip Sandifer, a PhD student at Southern Mississippi University. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study entitled “Exploring Perceptions about American Theological Institutions In Preparing Worship Pastors for Service”.

While you may have been just in our original population or the final sample, your participation, however brief or lengthy is very much appreciated. Please let me know if you are interest in receiving the final results of my study.

Warm Regards,

Phillip Sandifer  
PhD Candidate, The University of Southern Mississippi  
[Phillip.Sandifer@usm.edu](mailto:Phillip.Sandifer@usm.edu)

APPENDIX H – Informed Consent Form and Copy of IRB Approval



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
**STANDARD (ONLINE) INFORMED CONSENT**

**STANDARD (ONLINE) INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURES**

The Project Information and Research Description sections of this form should be completed by the Principal Investigator before submitting this form for IRB approval. Use what is given in the research description and consent sections below when constructing research instrument online.

Last Edited February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Today's date:		
<b>PROJECT INFORMATION</b>		
Project Title: EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS IN PREPARING WORSHIP PASTORS FOR SERVICE		
Principal Investigator: Phillip Sandifer	Phone: 512-423-6035	Email: phillip.sandifer@usm.edu
College: Business and Economic Development	School and Program: University of Southern Mississippi	
<b>RESEARCH DESCRIPTION</b>		
<p><b>1. Purpose:</b></p> <p>The purpose of this study is to evaluate the extent to which church leadership at Evangelical Church feel like the Evangelical Non-Denominational Seminaries are preparing potential Worship Pastors for vocational ministry at their churches.</p> <p><b>2. Description of Study:</b></p> <p>This is a qualitative phenomenological study examining th impact of theological education institutions on the preparation and equipping of worship pastors for service.</p> <p><b>3. Benefits:</b></p> <p>There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more about the effectiveness of Non-Denominational Evangelical Seminaries preparing Worship Pastor for vocational ministries at churches like yours.</p> <p><b>4. Risks:</b></p> <p>You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion/interview if you don't wish to do so, and that is also fine. You do not have to give us any reason for not responding to any question, or for refusing to take part in the interview. All information provided will be kept confidential. All quotes or responses used in the final report will be attributed to a privately coded participant. None of the information provided will be used to negatively impact your job or work evaluation.</p> <p><b>5. Confidentiality:</b></p> <p>We will not be sharing information about you to anyone. The information that we collect from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only the researcher will know what your number and it will not be shared with or given to anyone.</p>		

**6. Alternative Procedures:**

At present, there is not an alternative procedure being pursued.

**7. Participant's Assurance:**

This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.

Any questions about this research project should be directed to the Principal Investigator using the contact information provided above.

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

I understand that participation in this project is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Unless described above, all personal information will be kept strictly confidential, including my name and other identifying information. All procedures to be followed and their purposes were explained to me. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to me if that information may affect my willingness to continue participation in the project.

**Include the following information only if applicable. Otherwise delete this entire paragraph before submitting for IRB approval:** The University of Southern Mississippi has no mechanism to provide compensation for participants who may incur injuries as a result of participation in research projects. However, efforts will be made to make available the facilities and professional skills at the University. Participants may incur charges as a result of treatment related to research injuries. Information regarding treatment or the absence of treatment has been given above.

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

By clicking the box below, I give my consent to participate in this research project.

Check this box if you consent to this study, and then click "Continue." (Clicking "Continue" will not allow you to advance to the study, unless you have checked the box indicating your consent.)

If you do not wish to consent to this study, please close your browser window at this time.

## APPENDIX I –Church Leadership Guiding Questions

1. Mostly small talk, connecting on more of an interest level to establish a level of rapport.
2. What are some of the specific equipping are sought at your church with regard to Worship Pastor staffing? Also, how is expertise quantified (years of experience, education, post-graduate training, etc.) and qualified (level of previous success, recommendations, awards, church growth, “we just like you”...)? Further, how is level of expertise kept up to date to insure “best practices” (training, professional development, etc.) and by who’s measure?
3. Do you have a formulated and published list of the actual competencies that are specific to Worship Pastor position? Is this generally articulated accurately in their job description?
4. What measurements (metrics), if any, are applied at your church which help your Worship Pastor assess their personal success as an effective leader on an ongoing basis?
5. How is the need for additional training in order to attain success as a key Worship Pastor typically assessed at your church?
6. Before you hired your Worship Pastor how much of his Theological Training did your church take into account as possibly contributing to his preparation to work at your church? Please explain.
7. How do you perceive your Worship Pastor’s Theological Training as helping your Worship Pastor in fulfilling the responsibilities of his job? Please explain.
8. Do you see any deficiencies in the work of your Worship Pastor which may have benefitted from additional preparation in their theological education? Please explain.
9. Do you have any additional information about Worship Pastors becoming prepared for service that might be helpful to our study.
10. Thank you so much for your time. I will certainly circle back with he results of our study.

APPENDIX J – Seminary Request – Worship Pastor Curriculum Suggestion

Hello!

My name is Phillip Sandifer. I am a PhD student at the University of Southern Mississippi. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study entitled “Exploring Perceptions about American Theological Institutions in Preparing Worship Pastors for Service”.

Part of my study involved collecting artifacts and information from seminaries regarding the course and resources available to them in preparing aspiring Worship Pastors for vocational service.

Would it be possible for you to send me a suggested course of study for someone desiring to be a full time Worship Pastor with a full worship ministry at an Evangelical Church of more than 500 people which is governed by elder leadership of more than 4 elders.

If you have the time, I would be happy to give you more background information in order to obtain this suggested course of study.

Warm regards,

Phillip Sandifer  
Phd Candidate, The University Of Southern Mississippi  
[Phillip.sandifer@usm.edu](mailto:Phillip.sandifer@usm.edu)

**RO2 & RO3**

**Worship Pastor Expectations (WPE) – perceptions of who provides them**

WPE – P – Pastoral leadership

WPE – MTD – Musicianship with Theological Depth

WPE – REL – Relational more than Goal Oriented

WPE – CHAR – Character

WPE – FLEX – Traditional/Contemporary Music Flexibility

WPE - EM - Evaluation Methodology

**RO4**

**Do Theological Institutions Focus (TIF) on the Practical Leadership Equipping?**

TIF - LM – Leadership Competency

TIF – TB – Team Oriented – Team Player/Builder/Leader

TIP – PH – Personal Health

TIP – L – Longevity

TIP – MD – Musical Discernment

TIP – VLO – Volunteer Leadership Orientation

TIP – HTD – Heart To develop and disciple people he works with

TIP – NPV – Believe Networking is currently the primary seminary value



APPENDIX K – Coding, Clustering, and Emerging Themes Page (Cont.)

**Pastoral/Shepherding leadership (WPE – P):** P01, P02, P03, P06, P08, P09, P010, P011, P013, P014, P015

**Musicianship with Theological Depth (WPE – MTD):** P01, P02, P03, P06  
(Comfortable with basic tenets but does not have to go too deep. P04 (Comfortable with basic tenets but does not have to go deep or know tons of theology, even though their guy has gotten a lot of schooling. P07, P08, P09, P10, P15 (Comfortable with high skill, competent with theology but does not need to teach.

**More relational than goal oriented. (WPE – REL):** P06, P09, P11

**We can equip skills, but we can't change Character (WPE – CHAR):** P03, P05, P13

**Comfortable and competent with the current music offerings and style but also can call up traditional music easily (WPE – FLEX):** P03, P04, P013

**Evaluation/Measurement ((WPE – EM):**

- a. Periodic Reviews to identify issues, stay in touch: P02
- b. Measure through 360 reviews: P03
- c. Mainly informal frequent check ins, reports directly to the senior pastor. P05
- d. Annual Review and Monthly check in. P012
- e. Weekly service evaluation P015
- f. Not traditional reviews. But semi - regular meetings, updates and conversations and giving the Pastor and Exec. Pastor a sense of things. P08, P10, P11, P15
- g. Strengths Tests: P02

**Overall leadership competency (TIF – LM):** P04, P06, P07, P09, P013, P015

**Team Builder/Player (TIF – TB):** Takes a back seat to other team members, prepares others for leadership correctly: P02, P03, P04, P05, P06, P07, P09, P10, P11, P015 (can be taught)

**Longevity (TIP – L):** Preparation for the future (team and personal (himself): P01, P03, P06, P07, P10, P14

**Musical Discernment (TIP – MD):** Practical Discernment over musical content choices: P01, P02, P09, P013

**Personal Care / Emotional Health (TIP – PH):** P01, P09, P10, P12

**Leading Volunteers needs to be a strong suit (TIP – VLO):** P08, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, (can be taught)

**Heart to develop and disciple the people (TIP – HTD):** P06, P08, P010, P11, P12, P14, P15

**The Network that a Seminary has is the primary value in identifying a Worship Pastor Candidate (TIP – NET):** P02, P05, P08, P12, P15

**General Statements about seminaries:**

Seminaries (DTS) not really known for personal development, administrative and creative skills: P06, P07, P08, P015

Seminaries should teach setting goals, leading people strategic planning, moving a ministry from point a to point b. Seminaries not good at the creative or organizational development stuff. Good at teaching theology. P03, P06, P8, P12

**Outliers:**

“Seminary Cohort was a good place for mentoring to take place”. P08

“Innovative and creating new ways for people to get involve and deepen what they do.”

P06

“Seminaries should help aspiring Worship Pastor attain the qualifications of a church elder”. P08

“Discernment when it comes to Social Media”: P07

“Hungry, Humble, Smart”: P03 (Coined the phrase).

“Creating, developing fellowship and creating colleagues in and around your city can help in professional development”. P06

“For more training we would try to get him with someone to be apprenticed or with another respected Worship Pastor in our circle”. (P08)

APPENDIX K – Coding, Clustering, and Emerging Themes Page (Cont.)

“We want to help them maximize their strengths and not make them sure up say administration, if that’s their weakness. We can help them with that with people and technology”. (P05)

“Better to be humble and sensitive and be encouraged by say, the pastor to be more passionate than to feel entitled to it and ran passion and your agenda down people’s throats”. (P05)

The ability/capacity to embrace and negotiate big projects and planning. P07

Understanding of “Transcendence” in Worship: P01

“A seminary class on how to lead creatives is one I would take”: P013

“If you’re gifted and called by God, you’re going to be equipped by the spirit”. P011

“Create their own original material”: P03

“Battles between Pastor and Worship Pastors for more time on Sunday”: P014

“Must have/maintain a certain level of humility and respect for authority, never arrogance”. P014

## APPENDIX L – Responses from Theological Education Institutions

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**Admissions** <admissions@gordonconwell.edu>  
To: Phillip Sandifer <sandifer.phillip@gmail.com>

Mon, Feb 7, 2022 at 10:45 AM

Hello Phillip,

Thank you for your email!

While Gordon-Conwell does not offer a track specifically for Worship Pastors, we have a number of programs which could equip Worship Pastors for ministry, including the MDiv or MA in Christian Ministries. Our website includes the list of required courses for each of these degree programs: <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/degrees/>. In addition, you are welcome to check out our Graduate Certificates: <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/degrees/graduate-certificates/>.

Please let us know if you have any further questions. We hope your PhD continues to go well!

Best,

**Courtney Vereide**

Assistant Admissions Representative

**GORDON CONWELL**  
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## APPENDIX L – Responses from Theological Education Institutions (Cont.)

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**Jonathan Powers** <jonathan.powers@asburyseminary.edu>  
To: Phillip Sandifer <sandifer.phillip@gmail.com>

Tue, Feb 1, 2022 at 8:25 AM

Phillip,

No problem! Glad to chat about all of this. Currently we do not have a specific degree program specifically focused on worship leader training. We have concentrations within other degree programs where a student can specialize a degree (Masters of Arts in Leadership, Masters of Arts in Ministry) in worship studies, but that is only nine hours of a forty-eight hour degree. The student is able to choose nine hours (3 courses) from any of the following classes: The Theology and Practice of Worship; The Theology and Practice of Preaching; Sacramental Theology; Private Music Lessons (choir/guitar/piano); Chapel Band; Public Reading of Scripture; Songwriting and Theology; Independent Research in Worship.

We offer a lot more co-curricular and extracurricular training than actual degree programs right now. For instance, our students who are seeking to be worship leaders are invited and encouraged to be part of the chapel band as well as the chapel planning team. A lot of training occurs in these settings, though it isn't for course credit (although, a student can choose to take chapel band for credit). We also have regular training events, songwriting workshops, and a Worship Institute specifically designed for training current worship leaders in the church. The institute is a year-long program that offers a non-accredited certificate.

I hope something in there is helpful. This is an area we are seeking to develop more. Let me know if you have any additional questions! Blessings.

Grace and peace,  
Jonathan

**Dr. Jonathan A. Powers**  
Assistant Professor of Worship  
School of Practical Theology  
Asbury Theological Seminary

APPENDIX L – Responses from Theological Education Institutions (Cont.)

**Naydenov, Emanuel** <enaydenov@tiu.edu>  
To: Phillip Sandifer <sandifer.phillip@gmail.com>

Tue, Jan 25, 2022 at 9:11 AM

Dear Mr Sandifer,

Thank you for your email and kudos on the topic you have selected to research. Unfortunately I am not the right person to speak to these questions as TEDS does not offer any masters degree in worship. Just off the top of my head I cannot think of any specific school that may help your studies. However if you go to the Association of Theological Schools' website you can search the membership schools according to degree nomenclature. The ATS has at least 4-5 masters degrees in worship and alike and probably as many in Liturgy and liturgical arts. These same numbers are replicated on a doctoral level as well.

Hope this helps your research.

Best, Emanuel

[Quoted text hidden]

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Emanuel D. Naydenov, PhD  
Director of Masters Programs, Extension and Affiliated Education  
Associate Professor of Theology (TEDS Undergraduate)  
Trinity International University  
[2065 Half Day Rd.](#)  
[Deerfield, IL 60015](#)  
[ph. 847 317 6552](#)

## APPENDIX L – Responses from Theological Education Institutions (Cont.)

Sarah Bowler <[sbowler@dts.edu](mailto:sbowler@dts.edu)>  
To: Phillip Sandifer <[sandifer.phillip@gmail.com](mailto:sandifer.phillip@gmail.com)>

Tue, Jan 25, 2022 at 8:08 AM

Hello Phillip,

Your study sounds intriguing. I'd love to hear more about your findings once you've compiled the results. Our division is currently swamped with preparations for a system transfer later this year, so we don't have the bandwidth to provide an in-depth plan. However, I'll provide you with some information that should still be helpful.

At DTS, our students in the Media Arts and Worship degree program currently complete 66 hours of coursework. Approximately 43 of these hours constitute courses that students in most of our various master's level courses here take. The remaining 23 hours are specific to the MW program itself:

- MW5101 The Art of Media and Worship (3 credit hours)
- MW5103 A Christian View of Art (3 credit hours)
- MW Electives (15 credit hours)
- MW5102 Media Arts Apprenticeship (2 cr. Hours over a two semester period)

I am attaching a degree planning worksheet that we make publicly available on our MAMW advising page: <https://students.dts.edu/advising/degree-planning/ma-in-media-arts-worship-mamw/> The first page will likely be the most helpful for your research. The second and third pages give suggested sample plans, but students typically do a wide variety of plans and are not required to follow a prescribed plan (though some courses do have prerequisites). My specific advice for our students varies depending on a wide degree of factors. However, if a student were hypothetically already doing full-time ministry in a church setting with more than 500 members, I'd most likely recommend that she not follow the sample two or three year plans but take a slower pace and only start with a max of two courses per semester.

If you need additional information, you may find some of these links helpful:

- Media Arts and Worship department page: <https://www.dts.edu/academics/academic-departments/media-arts-worship/>
- DTS Current Schedule Page: [www.dts.edu/schedule](http://www.dts.edu/schedule)
  - MW5705/Songwriting = brand new course this semester
- MW Faculty: <https://www.dts.edu/academics/academic-departments/media-arts-worship/mw-faculty/>
- Current Catalog: <https://www.dts.edu/academics/catalog/>

Warm Regards,

Sarah

 DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

## APPENDIX L – Responses from Theological Education Institutions (Cont.)

**Edwin Willmington** <edw@fuller.edu>  
To: Ruth Schmidt <ruthschmidt@fuller.edu>  
Cc: Phillip Sandifer <sandifer.phillip@gmail.com>, The Brehm Center <brehmcenter@fuller.edu>

Fri, Feb 4, 2022 at 12:34 AM

Hello, Phillip

This sounds like a very interesting study...and I'm sure that many in both mainline and evangelical circles would be interested in your findings.

As for Fuller/Brehm Center...we are going through some transitions in faculty, both now and in the immediate future. I will tell you a bit about the courses and other things related to worship leadership preparation, some of which are still in place and some in the recent past. First of all, the Brehm Center is inside of Fuller Seminary, so we do not have a music school, as other seminaries have...nor do we have an attached undergraduate school that acts as a feeder institution. We do have not only strong theological programs, but also schools inside of Fuller that emphasize psychological and intercultural degree programs, which most seminaries do not have. Our worship, theology, and the arts classes crossover into all of those programs at some level. Even though our courses do have that crossover to other disciplines, the majority of those planning on worship leadership professions are MDiv or MA theology students. For those people, we have recommended a set of courses for them to integrate into their degree programs. Those courses have been a mixture of liturgical theology and artistic disciplines, mostly for musicians. The titles of some of those courses are: Worship On the Lord's Day, Worship In the Season's of Life, Worship Leadership: Formation and Skill, and Music As Theological Expression. In addition, we do have a particular strength in the area of Theology and Culture, and many of the worship leaders find a class or more to be helpful in their preparation process. In addition, we have offered internships in local churches and Fuller's Chapel program to offer practical supervised experience to combine with the study process.

We have also been active in offering seminars at many conferences related to worship leadership, and as Ruth mentioned, we have offered a 10 week online worship leadership cohort that is a non-credit educational program. Also, through the Brehm New Music Initiative, different students have been encouraged to write music of all sizes and shapes, both for worship and artistic performance...and in some cases these have been an entrance for students into first-time official publications.

That is my quick little synopsis for you, and I hope it's helpful in some way.

Thanks, and best wishes on your study.  
Ed

Edwin (Ed) M. Willmington, D.M.A.  
Director, Fred Bock Institute of Music  
Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and the Arts  
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