

DOCTORAL RESEARCH BRIEF

Developing a Mentorship Model to Empower Women Leaders

Dr. Yolanda White | Doctor of Ministry, United Theological Seminary

**Women were leading.
But too many were leading alone.**

THE PROBLEM

Across the ministry contexts studied, women were already serving and leading, yet intentional systems of mentorship and leadership development were limited. The project addressed the isolation women in ministry can experience when relational support, structured development, and mentors who understand their leadership realities are not readily available.

THE QUESTION BEHIND THE WORK

What happens when mentorship becomes intentional instead of assumed?

THE PROJECT

The research developed and implemented a structured six-week mentorship training program designed to strengthen relational support and leadership formation among women leaders. The study was grounded in the ministry contexts of Saint Mark United Methodist Church and University United Methodist Church in Wichita, Kansas.

RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

APPROACH	Qualitative research
MODEL	Structured six-week mentorship training
DATA SOURCES	Workshops, surveys, interviews, journaling, focus groups
FOCUS	Women, mentorship, leadership, faith, community

Six weeks. One intentional journey.

The public brief intentionally summarizes the learning journey without reproducing the complete curriculum, instruments, or facilitator materials.

01 FOUNDATIONS

Mentorship as intentional relational support.

02 LEADERSHIP & COURAGE

Leadership expressed through service, courage, and faithful action.

03 IDENTITY & DIFFERENCE

Attention to how identity and social context shape leadership experiences.

04 HISTORY & ADVOCACY

Learning from women whose calling and leadership persisted through resistance.

05 FAITH & COMMUNITY CARE

Mentorship understood as care, formation, and communal responsibility.

06 SUSTAINING MENTORSHIP

Moving from participation toward continued mentoring and future commitment.

FOUR FOUNDATIONS

BIBLICAL

Shiphrah & Puah

Courage • calling • preservation

HISTORICAL

Jarena Lee • Fannie Lou Hamer

Voice • persistence • advocacy

THEOLOGICAL

Wesleyan & womanist theology

Formation • grace • community care

INTERDISCIPLINARY

Intersectionality & leadership

Race • gender • identity • social context

From uncertainty to intentional practice.

WHAT CHANGED

BEFORE

“It just happens.”

- Informality
- Hesitation
- Uncertainty about readiness

DURING

“Mentorship requires intention.”

- Increased clarity
- Leadership ownership
- Communal learning

AFTER

“I feel prepared now.”

- Empowerment
- Responsibility
- Continuity

LET THE WOMEN SPEAK

“I realized I can lead too.”

“We built community here.”

“I feel more confident mentoring now.”

“This showed me mentorship should be intentional.”

EIGHT THEMES THAT EMERGED

- Relational Understanding of Mentorship
- Mentorship as Communal Responsibility
- Awareness of Social Context
- Intentionality in Practice
- Growth in Leadership Confidence
- Courage and Advocacy
- Theological Integration
- Emotional Healing and Reflection

The final evaluation reported increased confidence in mentoring skills, greater clarity around leadership identity, and a stronger sense of responsibility to support others. Participants also described mentorship less as something accidental and more as an intentional practice connected to community wellbeing.

Connection came first.

This is Dr. Yolanda's interpretation of the pattern visible across the qualitative findings: participants grew through relationship. As connection and intentional mentoring took shape, participants described greater clarity, confidence, leadership ownership, responsibility, and readiness to mentor others.

RELATIONSHIP

People develop through people.

LEADERSHIP

Confidence and identity are strengthened in community.

MULTIPLICATION

Mentored leaders become people who mentor others.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The project suggests that mentorship should be treated as an intentional leadership-development practice rather than left to chance. The six-week structure gave participants sustained space for reflection, shared learning, relational support, and clearer ownership of their capacity to mentor and lead.

The work also points beyond a single congregation. Its broader contribution is a practical and theological framework for communities seeking to cultivate environments where women leaders are supported, leadership is nurtured, and mentoring relationships can continue beyond one program.

FROM RESEARCH TO REAL LIFE

Dr. Yolanda White is a leadership strategist, speaker, mentor, minister, and executive whose work spans corporate real estate, entrepreneurship, ministry, mentorship, community leadership, and collegiate athletics. Her doctoral research gives scholarly structure to a conviction she has practiced across those rooms: leadership development is relational.

WHO'S COMING BEHIND YOU? is informed by this research and strengthened by more than 30 years of developing people across leadership, business, ministry, community, and athletics.

Bring Dr. Yo to Your Room

Leadership conversations on mentorship, succession, relationships, access, belonging, and developing the people who come behind us.

dryondla.com | dryo@dryondla.com

Public research brief. This document summarizes selected elements of the doctoral project and intentionally does not reproduce the complete dissertation, research instruments, participant-identifying information, facilitator materials, or full curriculum.