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Constructing Identity/Answering The Call: A Qualitative Analysis Of The Narrative And Rhetorical Strategies Of Six Clergy Women

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CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY/ANSWERING THE CALL:

A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVE

AND RHETORICAL STRATEGIES OF SIX CLERGY WOMEN

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Kathryn A. Broyles

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2011

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Title: Constructing Identity/Answering The Call: A Qualitative Analysis Of The

Narrative And Rhetorical Strategies Of Six Clergy Women

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The present study investigates specific details in the narrative strategies of six women clergy in order to identify thematic patterns reflected in their personal call narratives and to interrogate the socio-culturally situated identity reflected by these patterns. By conducting a cross-disciplinary study of six second-career women who understand themselves to be "called to the ministry," I unpack and foreground the transformative experiences they undergo in their journey as scholars and ministers. Each woman had recently earned, or was about to graduate with, a professional theological degree, the Master of Divinity. Each was between the ages of 35-55, having maintained a previous career in an entirely different field before returning to graduate school for a theological professional degree.

The data garnered from this study suggests that women pursuing the Master of Divinity Degree (Professional Graduate Degree) undergo a personal transformation which is not only evidenced in their speech and their construction of personal narratives, but which shapes their own perception of themselves as public figures. This identity transformation reveals itself as participants strive to negotiate between personal identities, goals, and priorities and the requirements concerning public verbal and written expression of their call to ministry they feel obligated to meet in the context of their disciplinary and ecclesial discourse communities. Borrowing insights from the

disciplinary fields of rhetoric, narrative inquiry, discourse analysis, performance and feminist theory, and theology, this study provides a portrait of some of the ways women "called to preach" use words and rhetorical strategies to create their ministerial identity as well as to validate that identity to themselves and to others. The study concludes by offering suggestions on ways both the church and the academy might respond more positively to women seeking to participate in ordained ministry.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One's education is never a solitary endeavor, dependent only upon one's intellectual ability, personal fortitude and commitment. It is always and in every way a community endeavor, linked through one's life by the strands of care and concern shown by family, friends, teachers, professors, and mentors. My own educational journey began in a loving home where reading and learning and asking questions were and are celebrated and with parents who have made sacrifices through every step of my journey so that I would reach for all I was capable of reaching for, become all God had created me to become, and so that I could, myself, look back in later years knowing I had given it my all. Even as I finish this, my third post-graduate degree, I find I still lack the language to convey the depth of my love and gratitude for such a family. This dissertation is as much a testimony to their constant love and encouragement as it is evidence of any intellectual or scholarly abilities and commitments I may possess.

Other strands of care and concern that tie together my personal and intellectual growth and which lead directly to finishing this dissertation include the joy I found in school as a child, in racing to know times-tables, in winning mystery prizes for spelling bees, in the constant challenge and encouragement provided me by my fourth grade teacher, Mr. Petorock. I never stopped loving learning after that year, no matter what happened. The enthusiasm and the discipline linked with learning formed first at home, but defined by Mr. Petorock, was further shored up throughout the remainder of my schooling by sometimes magical, sometimes frustrating, but always rewarding moments I can still remember: in sixth grade by Mrs. Ruby Carter and arguments over algebra rules; in eighth grade with Dr. Williams, memorizing *Desiterata,* Polonius' speech to Laertes,

Crossing the Bar, and all twelve tenses in the English grammar book; in reading

"classics" every grading period in order to get the "A" you'd already earned from Mrs.

Burke in high school English, and then finding in college someone who believed in your

potential, even though your test scores belied your abilities to move on to graduate

school. Without the encouragement of Dr. Helen Deese, I would never have moved

beyond a baccalaureate degree I suspect, much less have gone on to earn a Ph.D. in

Composition & TESOL. Dr. Linda Null, Ms. Wanda Jared, Dr. Carol Viera, Dr. Alfred

Wilhelm and Dr. Kurt Eisen at Tennessee Tech also played key roles in keeping me

moving forward. It was Dr. Eisen who advised me to go for a Ph.D. only "if you've got a

book in you." This is my book! And then finding, upon my return to the U. S. and to

TTU, after five years abroad, an able mentor and friend in Dr. Heide Weidner, who

invited me to explore with her the world of academic conferences and the commitment of

scholars to writing, research, and teaching, and who always treated me as a colleague and

friend. She has remained an integral part of my personal and intellectual journey up to

this point and I am humbled and grateful for all she has done for me.

This final leg of my educational journey has been enriched by more individuals

than I can name here, family friends like the Vances, the Bynums, the Baynes, and the

Deans, and special individuals like Micky Caban, Mike Poore, Joy Hamby, Margaret

Beth Gill, Jeanette Stokes, and Radek Vasa, who have constantly encouraged me and

cheered me on in my efforts no matter how many times my answer to their questions was,

"No. Not done yet." They never gave up on me.

In addition to these intrepid friends, I want to especially thank those professors

both at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and at Duke University who have most

recently challenged me, inspired me, and encouraged me as I've made my way towards this monumental personal goal: Dr. Gian Pagnucci, Dr. Mark Hurlbert, Dr. Mike Williams, Dr. David Hanauer and Dr. Jerry Gebhart at IUP; and Dr. Mary McClintock-Fulkerson, Dr. Thea Portier-Young, Dr. William Kellon Quick, Dr. Amy Laura Hall, Dr. Esther Acolatse, Dr. Allen Verhey, Dr. Kathy Rudy, and Dr. Kathi Weeks at Duke. Like a crazy person, I tackled two degrees at once at these fine institutions because in my mind the commitment to both was essential. I am sure that at the Ph.D. level my moving between two institutions gave some pause and concern about divided loyalties, but in the end, I hope the work I have presented here is evidence that I was fully committed to learning all I could from both institutions. I am grateful to have had the privilege to study under all these individuals as I made my way towards this culminating work.

I have not yet named my committee in the acknowledgements above because I want to single them out for their extraordinary efforts in not only fostering my intellectual and scholarly growth, but also challenging me in their respective seminars and encouraging me over the long haul as I asked them to support me in a rather unorthodox educational path, doing course work first at IUP, moving on to a professional degree and graduate certificate at Duke before turning back to the dissertation, hoping to combine the learning from both institutions into a worthy cross-disciplinary project. My deepest gratitude to Dr. Jeannine Fontaine, my intrepid, ever patient and ever encouraging director; Dr. Ben Rafoth, my research methods professor and valued committee member; and finally, to Dr. Paul W. Chilcote, on faculty at Duke University when he agreed to be a part of my committee, whose expertise in Wesleyan studies—particularly his commitment to scholarship concerning the history of the ordination of women within the

Wesleyan movement—proved invaluable to my education and to this study. I also want to thank my sister Rebecca Ponder and my dear friend Dorothea Dickerson; their unfailing encouragement, notes of kindness, and Dorothea's extraordinary editing skills meant this project's completion. Rebecca Garvin, Roseanne Gatto, and especially Mai Hassan were friends through course work and continue to be fellow sojourners and I hope, lifelong colleagues and friends.

And finally, and most importantly, I want to thank every woman who participated in this project. To name them here would break our arrangement for anonymity, but they know who they are. To each of them I am profoundly grateful not only for their willingness to participate but also for their own commitment to the project and their unflagging energy and candor as they shared with me their lives and sought in every way to articulate faithfully their call to ministry even as it was still unfolding.

A testimony to the fulfilling the promise of God relating to such women who through the pouring out of Gods Spirit upon them are become prophetesses, daughters, and handmaidens: and their prophecying, teaching, preaching, and praying through the operation of the Spirit of Christ, in the church proved lawfully by several plain Scripture testimonies and examples, out of both the Old and New Testaments, both under the time of the Law and also in the Gospel despensation, and the common objection alleged against the same from the Apostle Pauls words in I Cor. 14, 34 and I Tim. 2, 12 &c. clearly answered : recommended to the consciences of all that value the testimony of Holy Scripture / by one who hath diligently searched the Scripture, and hath had an high esteem thereof from his youth.

--Thomas Camm, 1689

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A hush settles over the crowd as the stately procession begins down the aisle. The wafting incense, a visible symbol of the presence of the divine, permeates the atmosphere—somehow sanctifying the space, making it "other" than the every day. Through the haze, the stately procession wends its way towards the altar and the cross. First the crucifer and the cross of Christ glide by, the torn and wretched body of the savior still pinned in permanent agony to the gilded rod, held there by gold flecks, by an artist's skill, and by humankind's sinfulness. Then comes the scripture, the holy book of stories, of words, of wisdom, and of confusion—another link with the divine that keeps seekers seeking. It gives answers to questions but raises them as well, demanding that the divine be sought always, never allowing itself to become mistaken for the way to the divine. In the wake of these symbols come the servants of the altar, gloriously clad in robes of white and crimson, gilt thread and green. These are they who have committed their lives to the service of God and to the service of God's people. Their lives are not meant to be more extraordinary than anyone else's lives. They are no more holy than those they glide past. Nevertheless, being set apart for service, their lives become test cases and models for how a relationship with the divine is indeed central to the purpose of creation. They are likely to be overly sensitive, these servants—overly intense, apt to fall. But they are also quite admirable and loving; and in their willingness to be marked, to be set apart, they teach us something about commitment, follow-through, and sanctity.

As the collective makes it way to the end of the aisle, mounting the stairs to the altar and then swinging around, each disperses to a designated position in this display of worshipping readiness. The one stationed behind the altar emerges from the haze of holy spirit incense and causes murmuring among the congregation. Peering at them from

behind the altar is a woman! It's shocking! The divine as feminine? The symbol of the

Way as smooth cheeked with a lacy collar? Can this be so? Isn't the divine strong and

solid, a rock to be represented by a barrel chest and broad arms? Isn't virility and

strength a better human symbol of the Divine? But, then again, is there ever more

strength and more love present than in a dangerous labor room where death is risked so

that life can emerge? Where a woman might endure pain for as long as or more than a

day before a child is born? Isn't this as representative of the throws of agony cast upon

the gilded cross which preceded these servants up the aisle?

The struggle of the congregation above as it attempts to see God through the

female as immediately as it does through the male presents both reality and metaphor for

the resistance any woman faces who comes to understand herself as "called" by God to

serve as a pastor, priest, or preacher in a congregation of believers in Christ. Women have

not regularly stood in the pulpit of most churches, ancient or modern, and so have not

been models of ministry for the majority of Christians. As a result, whether or not a

woman has a right to preach or to administer sacraments—either according to scripture or

tradition—her gendered body remains marked (Berger, 2003, 2005; Shuman, 1993). She

is never simply "the minister." She is always, a "woman minister" or "a lady preacher." It

is my contention, then, that the process she goes through in positing identity for herself

through language, working out who she is and what she represents in this world of

symbols of the divine, remains an exercise which warrants close analysis.

Defining the Project

Women in ministry enter a field that is traditionally male and a field that carries

heavy historical and cultural significance as a traditional source of spiritual and moral

authority, while at the same time often standing at odds with post modern agendas of multiple truths. Thus women seeking ministry occupy a complex social location. Their entry into their chosen profession is not unlike the challenges of entering the cult of the academy, as so humorously posited by Meredith Clermont-Ferrand:

> In many ways, there is little difference between going to graduate school and joining a cult. In both cases, they take your money, give you an identity, tell you what to say, restrict most of your interactions to like-minded converts, require you to perform a series of rituals that are celebrated only within your sect, confront you with a hierarchy of guardians and interpreters of sacred texts, and determine your social status and perspective on the world. The process of applying is a sort of initiation rite where you have to tell them why you're worthy of entering their temple and under what priest you wish to study. Early in the process there is a moment of Faustian hubris in which you realize that you've signed away your life to a devil of your own choosing. As you move on, they keep increasing the stakes and the challenges. You soon learn that only their manner of reading the sacred texts is acceptable. The culmination is like becoming a Mafia member where you have to kill someone to truly belong. In our case, you are required to analyze the life out of a text. This killing of a text by close reading is called the dissertation. Despite all this, and occasionally wondering why I didn't become a snake handler, I still believe in the Ph.D. cult I chose to join all those years ago. And am proud and gratified to now be a priestess and spread the doctrine of my specialty. (Meredith Clermont-Ferrand, a recent Ph.D. recipient in medieval literature, quoted in Turner et al., 2002, p. 57)

Clermont-Ferrand's tongue-in-cheek reflection on the novitiate experience of graduate schools delivers both levity and insight. Getting into the temple is no easy feat, and becoming a priestess (or priest) requires an elaborate (re)making of one's identity. So how does one become a part of the profession, a part of the particular cult of one's calling? Particularly, what if one's calling is literally to become an interpreter of sacred texts, the voice in the pulpit, a minister? By conducting a cross-disciplinary, micro-ethnographic study of six second-career women who understand themselves to be "called to the ministry," I unpack and foreground the transformative experiences they undergo in their journey as scholars and ministers. Each woman has recently earned, or is about to graduate with, a professional theological degree, the Master of Divinity. Each is between the ages of 35-55, having maintained a previous career in an entirely different field before returning to graduate school for a theological professional degree. She has herself been confronted by the processes of the cult of the academy, both in her previous college experience and in her time in seminary.

Borrowing insights from the disciplinary fields of rhetoric, narrative inquiry, discourse analysis, performance and feminist theory, and theology, this study creates a portrait of some of the ways women "called to preach" use words and rhetorical strategies to create their ministerial identity as well as to validate that identity to themselves and to others. In one of the only disciplines and professions where open discrimination is not only common, but undergirded by claims of supernatural propriety and supported by particular interpretations of scripture, how do these women, each acknowledging and then following a ministerial call, carve an identity? Specifically, this study interrogates the socio-culturally situated identity reflected by these choices.

Acknowledging the Dispute

Fundamentalist and conservative theologians and congregants point to several

passages in the New Testament as proof that women's roles are fixed by God, not by

culture. 1 Timothy 2:12, for example, reads: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to

usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." (King James Version. All scripture

references are KJV unless otherwise noted.) Ephesians 5:22-33 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-

35—both scriptures attributed to the teachings of the Apostle Paul—remind wives to

"submit to their husbands" and for women to "remain silent" and "be in submission."

Fundamentalist theologians conclude that a woman who steps outside the parameters of

her role, or rather pursues a role they understand as assigned by God to men, usurps

man's authority as leader of the house and of the congregation and flouts God's

natural/supernatural law. A number of current scholars (Bilezikian 1985, 2006; Chilcote,

1991, 2002, 2007; Groothius, 1997; Kroeger & Beck, 1998; Mann & Nystrom, 2004;

Phelan 2005; Torjesen, 1993) as well as historical theologians (Roberts, 1891; Wesley,

1771) reject this interpretation of scripture and provide substantive biblical and

archeological arguments for God's choosing whom God wills, regardless of gender, to

serve and/or to lead God's people.

I have not argued for or against women in ministry in this work; rather I have

examined how women who *believe themselves called to ministry* understand their call

and adapt their language in the face of this gender conflict. Even in denominations who

accept, condone, and even encourage their presence, women leaders and ministers face

resistance from colleagues and parishioners who occupy a theological or social location

that defines gender as binary and women as submissive or silent. In denominations that

formally reject all women's "call to the ministry," this resistance can be ferocious and

can even take the form of public censure and accusations of biblical heresy. Women in either situation face intellectual and emotional pressure from the awareness that others, whom they would ordinarily consider "fellow believers" and "brother or sister Christians," consider their choice to pursue public ministry as anathema. Even women from supportive family and institutional frameworks reflect this tension in the ways they choose to speak about their ministerial and scholarly identities and their call to ministry.

The women in this study, in their writing and speaking, regardless of their background, tended to reflect the evangelical community's assumptions about the language of "call." Call in this context is understood as either a literal or metaphorical invitation from the Divine to participate in a specific way in the Christian community. In this sense, there is a "call" and an "answer" as one responds to the invitation *to act* or *to be* in particular ways. Call is also understood as an unfolding comprehension of the purpose of one's life in the context of one's relationship or commitment to one's God. The women in this study have patterned their own stories, their call narratives, along previously proven narrative forms of testimony. The language of these narratives and personal reflections illuminate a continuing need to defend a woman's private call to public preaching and teaching. It also reflects, however, a purely individual construction of the self, influenced—but not unduly shaped—by overarching professional and theological paradigms.

In taking up a subject vehemently disputed in religious circles, the "proper" work of women within the church, and the intersecting and equally contentious topic of religion in the academy, I acknowledge that my study, in examining the language of six women ministers, is by definition a limited first glance at the language of women opposing a religious norm. Nevertheless, I hope this study will lead to serious academic

and ecclesial reflection as to what might constitute best practices in deliberate pedagogical attempts to shape pastoral identity for women. The study also examines some of the complexity with which religious convictions are formed, transformed, and maintained and shows that each woman has applied intellectual and self-reflexive rigor when discerning her call—none just insensitively "jumped right in." Each had to undergo a complex process of transforming her own view of herself with regards to holding authority in the church and with regards to how gender roles complicate church leadership.

Designing the Project

In designing the study, I was particularly interested in developing an "engendered" (Sullivan, 1996) ethnography of the formation of participants' professional identities as theologians and ministers by developing a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the sociolinguistic development of these women scholars within their chosen discipline over a particular span of time. The details of their development and any cohesive patterns which might order that development then emerge from the voices and the narratives of the women themselves, not from parameters superimposed upon the process by already existing theories of pastoral and spiritual formation. The seminary or divinity school as field-work site proved especially rich, as it sits at a multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural intellectual intersection further enriched by very situated literacy practices (Bohn, 1981; Kapitzke, 1999) which might at once be classified as scholarly, religious, superstitious, historical, engendered, and faith based.

In attempting to make transparent a complicated and private process, this study provides insight into and gives careful consideration to the ways traditional expectations and understandings of who clergy should be, and how they should behave, both hinder

and help the Christian community. Acknowledging that women have always preached and ministered matters. Noticing how women answer the call to preach and minister matters. This study provides a glimpse into these processes from a rhetorical standpoint.

The questions initially guiding this study were as follows:

1. To what extent does a woman experience identity transformation during and after the course of study leading to a Master of Divinity, judging from both her written call narrative and her verbal self-report?

2. How does she construct a sociolinguistic identity as a pastor both publicly and privately, in the course of her development, judging from these written and oral sources?

3. How does she talk about allowing herself to be formed by, and acquiring agency in, the discourse of the Divinity School?

4. How, if at all, does she change/grow as she interacts with this discourse? Does she see acquisition of new linguistic forms as a necessity or does she resist acquisition, and in what ways?

As I underscored earlier, the divinity school occupies a unique academic position—it functions at once as an academic institution of great historical significance, a participatory member and articulator of key Western philosophies and schools of thought, as well as a purveyor and preserver of ancient languages and texts, both eastern and western. The institution represents both a modern and an ancient discipline; given this, it strikes me as the perfect site for examining the process of the initiation and self-actualization of the (female) novitiate as she moves from self-identifying as a student to self-identifying as a scholar and pastor, formed by and fluent in the *acquired* language of her profession.

Theoretical Background

Turner, Miller and Mitchell-Keenan (2002) issue this challenge in their article "Disciplinary Cultures and Graduate Education": "If we'd like to know something about what animates a disciplinary culture, we should look more carefully (in ways that few have done before) to how that culture educates its novitiates" (p. 58). In taking up their challenge, I turn to a recent article in the *Texas Journal of Women and the Law* which provides, indirectly, a focal point for my study. In "Making Peace with Difference: A Hermeneutic of Inclusive Conversation," Judith E. Koons (2002) asserts that "in cultural imperialism, the terms of the discourse are determined by those in power, who construct a 'privileged language' of explanation. The partiality of the dominant language is hidden and also made to appear 'universal' and 'natural' [and] the 'common-sense' way of understanding the world" (p. 8). The truth of this statement is, in terms of class structure and racism, foregrounded in Ellen Cushman's (1998) work *The Struggle and the Tools: Oral and Literate Strategies in an Inner City Community;* but it also strikes me as the kind of lens through which one ought to examine a professional, academic discourse community (culture), where those in power (faculty, published researchers, church administrators) construct the language that discourse novitiates must master, or the cant of the cult, to extend Clermont-Ferrand's amusing metaphor.

A tantalizing complication is the notion of examining what role gender, or gender as performative construct (Butler 1999; Shuman, 1993), might play in the acquisition of this language. Koons (2002), drawing from the work of Mary Hawkesworth (1997), asserts that "by the construct of gender, the dominant discourse has organized the world according to the 'natural attitude' toward gender that is bottomed on the assumptions that perceived biological factors determine a woman's life course" (p.8). How radical is the

identity transformation of a woman scholar then, when her life course leads her to pursue a field of study and to seek membership in a professional discourse community still dominated by men and socially constructed as male? Particularly, how is that transformation complicated when the position this woman seeks—the position of the pulpit (the hermeneutic voice of sacred texts)—is understood by many to be *supernaturally* ordained as exclusively a masculine purview? These emerging questions further complicated this study as I sought to examine this complex and dichotomous (public/private) transformative process.

In Second Language Acquisition research, an ongoing debate rages concerning the *Critical Age Hypothesis*, the notion that there is an age at which the maturational constraints of a language learner prevent her from ever mastering a second language in the way she has mastered her first. There is empirical evidence to support both sides of the argument, and certainly neurological researchers and linguists are in agreement that beyond a certain age, if a child has not interacted with language as the result of extreme isolation and/or deprivation, a first language cannot be successfully acquired. But what about the second language? Can an individual learn a second language successfully as an adult? Some research says "yes" and some "no." Hakuta is among those who say "yes," pointing to numerous instances where the only debate rests actually in defining "perfect acquisition" or "native-like" ability and whether such is possible. Hakuta argues that we know, well and good, that many individuals learn to operate with facility in a second language even when their exposure to that language comes well after the latest "critical age" posited (onset of puberty).

A similar idea, i.e. of a kind of critical age, never metaphorically enters the discussion concerning the language of professional discourse or of professional discourse

communities, "groups of people held together by their characteristic ways of talking, acting, valuing, interpreting, and using written language" (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 10). Granted, one usually joins communities whose language of interaction coincides with some version of one's first language, but whose choice of vocabulary and semantics is shaped by notions of identity, ideology and purpose. Nevertheless, I find it quite reasonable, particularly from a pedagogical standpoint, to identify specialized discourse, particularly that of the academy, if not as a "second language" of sorts, at least as a privileged new "dialect." Concurrently, when I read comments like Cushman's cited here, my fascination with the notion of a "second discourse community," analogous to a second language, increases:[1]

> [L]earning to mask language (something one must do when participating in "other" discourse communities) in order to work within institutions ...[causes] individuals' implicit assumptions about race and politics [to] often move to the realm of the explicit, the front of the mind, where they consciously determine the point at which using prestige dialects will compromise too much of their cultural identity...(p. 125)

For some entering a discourse community, this pattern creates even more of a contrast between the language the candidate uses (at whatever level of facility that exists) and the

[1] A related idea worth considering is that inadequate educational background and/or lack of preparation for academic pursuits at the university level, particularly as a result of socioeconomic disparity or institutional discrimination, might reasonably be construed as the situation of having been isolated or deprived of real facility in what the academic community assumes as one's "first language." See Bartholomae (2003).

language of the discourse community she needs or desires to be a part of in professional or academic circles.

How then does an individual, regardless of age and "first language" ability, go about learning the discourse of a professional community (a metaphorical "foreign dialect")? Specifically, how does one acquire fluency in a particular institutionalized discourse, and how does that acquisition affect and even create identity? Studies like the seminal work of Shirley Brice Heath (1993) take an ethnographic approach to similar questions, and numerous works, particularly from the emerging perspective of multiple literacies and critical literacy study (Gee, 1991; Kellner, 2005; Street, 1995), shed light on versions of these two questions. But I can find little research which reflects particularly on the fundamental assumption that one *will* learn the second language of the profession to be successful, and that that language will inevitably deeply alter the ways in which self and identity, both public and private, are experienced. Because, as Cushman (1998) argues, "Learning institutional language means learning to be critically conscious of the politics and presumptions that lead one to use these skills in the first place" (p. 123). Inasmuch as language plays such a crucial role in the academy, and since the academy plays a crucial role in both maintaining and challenging society's theoretical and philosophical constructs in profound ways, I think more careful attention should be paid to the ways identity is constructed in and affected by the academy, and the ways in which its "other" languages and privileged dialects are acquired.

This qualitative study, then, seeks to explore how a woman called to the ministry uses language to create and describe who she understands herself to be, first as a "privately called" and then as a "publicly practicing" minister. The data shows that women pursuing the Master of Divinity Degree (Professional Graduate Degree) undergo

some kind of linguistically mediated transformation which not only marks their speech as "acceptable" to the professional discourse community and to future parishioners, but also shapes their own perception of themselves as ministers of the Word. Interestingly, these women both recognize and resist the professional discourse of their new field to some extent when it limits their agency as female individuals. For the women in this study, all between the ages of 35 and 55, previous work experience mitigated some of the uncertainties much younger women may face concerning the validity of their call to ministry, as the study participants had had the opportunity to develop a prior professional sense of self in a domain other than ministry. In fact, they have had to be so certain of their present call as to surrender their previous careers in order to pursue full-time Christian ministry.

Glimpsing the Outcome

Following this introductory chapter on theoretical position and intellectual motivation are Chapter 2, a review of pertinent literature, Chapter 3, a careful discussion of methodology and two subsequent chapters exploring study findings. In the final chapter, Chapter 6, I discuss the findings at length and consider the key implications of the study as well as reflect on the project as a whole.

This study listens carefully to the call narratives shared by participants and explores the ways in which participants are integrated into their professional fields and communities of discourse as well as how they attempt to revise their own gendered identities as they accept, adjust to, or resist that preferred discourse and its accompanying public identity. Previous work experience, personal conviction, intellectual theological argument, and innate self-awareness and self-reflexivity were all tools used to a varying extent by each participant as she shaped a response to the linguistic demands of her

profession, to the formation of her public personae by the divinity school. These tools also shaped her response to others (external voices) and to emerging self-understanding and personal identity as a minister (claiming the call/inner voices).

As participants strive to negotiate between their own self-conceptions and the requirements they feel obligated to meet within their disciplines and congregations, they frame and reframe who they are by making deliberate linguistic choices, both in public speech and during internal dialogue. The study also reveals that these women recognize and resist this professional discourse when it limits their agency as female individuals, yet they are adept at both accommodating and manipulating discourse in order to pursue their call more successfully.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

To situate my project within a larger intellectual framework has warranted a multi-disciplinary approach to its development, methodology and implementation. Both theoretical and research-oriented literature touching upon gender and performance, gender and discourse, and the rhetorical and narrative construction of identity have provided background for the project. I have also built upon a number of works involving language and religious identity, feminist theology, and both historical and modern perspectives on women's roles in the Christian church. By offering varied disciplinary approaches to identity formation and to qualitative research, each of these fields makes room for marginalized discourses in a way that opens up the wider academy not only to more inclusive practices, but practices and discourses which might be said to be more humanistic, more life-affirming. I deliberately choose this notion of "life-affirming" as necessary for power-holding institutions such as universities and the academy at large, as such institutions hold the most potential to make inroads into societal discourses of conflict with positive result.

Before moving on to specific themes from the literature that inform the present study, I would like to highlight the spirit in which these sources were sought and chosen. I do not mean to stray too far afield from the focus of this study, however; I only wish to invoke here the notion propounded by feminist ethicists like Sara Ruddick (1989), who "affirm the feminine psychological traits and moral virtues that society associates with women" (Tong, 2006). In her work *Maternal Thinking*, Ruddick (1989) identifies those practices which are constitutive of maternity: preserving the life of a child, fostering children's growth, and training children in order that they might become concerned citizens. These practices ground maternity and ought also to be foundationally

paradigmatic, Ruddick argues, for all ethics. Ruddick's ideas reveal the possibilities not only of a more peaceful, life-affirming world, but succinctly delineate the call of radical discipleship for a Christian (Bonhoeffer, 1959), the call which shapes the vocational trajectory of the women in this study. The present study addresses, then, notions of "calling," as well as ideas of "mothering" and "discipleship," as they are defined by the Christian community, and as they are delineated and experienced by the women in this study.

To be sure, I have not provided an exhaustive review of any one category of literature, but have focused my discussion on only those texts and ideas that have had a direct bearing on the background, development and approach I have taken with this study. Much work has been done on identity in composition and excellent work has been done on religious language, on women's preaching and on faith development; but these areas of research are interconnected, and the themes they explore when they intersect lie at the heart of this study. In the sections that follow, I discuss the works I found most informative from a number of disciplines under the following headings: *Performing Gender; Rhetorical and Narrative Construction of Identity; Rhetoric and Religious Identity; Feminist Perspectives and Christian Community;* and *Ecclesia: Women's Roles in the Church.*

Performing Gender

Performance Theory and its Relation to the Study

Postmodern performance theory seeks to define gender, in the performance of every day life, as an effect of discourse, and to define sex as an effect of gender. Drawing heavily on Foucaultian analytics and ideas of the nature of all society as constructed, performance theory allows one to think of gender "as a process of structuring subjects

rather than a structure of fixed relations" (Morris, 1995, p. 568). It argues that privileging a biological binary opposition (male/female) "reflects and enacts an epistemology in which reality is reduced to appearance, to visible surfaces" (p. 569). Performance theory rejects such an epistemology, insisting instead that the experiential or artistic and the analytic must commingle (Conquergood, 2002).

In addition, Conquergood (2002) introduces the concept of "co-performative witness" as a methodological approach to doing ethnography. He sees performance as embodied behavior and the investigator, participating with the subject, as a more useful way of approaching the study and record of lived performance in any kind of interpretive way. Performance, then, is a way of "doing gender," of both embodying a particular notion of gender as well as a way of conceiving of the activity of being in the world in particular ways. While I do not draw heavily on performance theory, it warrants introduction here as providing an analytic framework for talking about what women in ministry are or are not doing when they talk to themselves and to others about who they are, and the ways in which they actively use language as ministers. Their performances as ministers within the community are an embodiment of their understanding of call.

In particular, the heavily weighted traditional Christian perception of ministers as exclusively men makes this one of the only fields of study and professional modes of practice where open discrimination is not only common, but is backed by claims of supernatural authority and supported by particular interpretations of scripture. How, in the face of such attitudes, expressed or not, do women called to pastoral leadership carve an identity? As noted earlier, this question is central to my own motivation for conducting this study, but also reflects a reality in the composition of the professional clergy that warrants exploration here.

Despite the efforts of recent scholars to bring to light two millennia of women preachers and prophets sprinkled throughout the history of Christianity (Cohick, 2009; Eisen, 2000; Kienzle & Walker, 1998), and the overwhelming move of women into the public workforce in the last century,[2] women represent a small percentage of the total number of clergy in leadership, and in many sects and denominations they are simply denied any formal, participatory role in public worship and other rites. In fact, many denominations that support full gender equality in other areas of community life continue to formally deny women access to pastoral leadership on the grounds of complementarity. They argue that males and females each have their own respective roles to play and pastoral leadership they define as an exclusively male role (Chaves, 1997).

A 1994 study that surveyed more than 5,000 clergy in sixteen denominations discovered that the highest number of women clergy ordained in any one denomination never reached more than 30% of the total number of clergy ordained (Zikmund, Lummis & Chang, 1998). A glimpse into the self-reported statistics of one particular liberal, mainline denomination tells a similar tale: according to statistics released by the Presbyterian Church (USA), the total number of ministers of Word and Sacrament (meaning ministers holding full rights as sacramental leaders) was 21,360; of that number, only 4,735 were women and of those women, only 54 were head-of-staff pastors in congregations of 500 or more members ("Church Leadership Connection," 2006). It is not an exaggerated stereotype, but a substantiated fact supported by research, that

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[2] According to a Fact Sheet released in 2006 by the AFL-CIO, women workers numbered 5.1 million in 1900 and accounted for 18% of the total work force in the United States. By 1996 there were 65.7 million representing 46.6% of the work force.

congregations seeking a new pastor "tend to want a man under 40, preferably married to a nonworking woman who volunteers on church committees" (Dart, 2004). According to the study by Zikmund, Lummis and Chang (1998), "Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling," in 1994 the percentage of women clergy in several major protestant denominations numbered thusly: American Baptist, 12%; Assemblies of God, 8%; Church of God (Anderson, IN), 10%; Church of the Brethren, 12%; Church of the Nazarene, 11%; Episcopal, 12%; United Methodist, 15%; and United Church of Christ, 25%. The first wave of the National Congregations study directed by Mark Chaves puts these numbers in even better perspective. According to initial data reported in 1994, 90% of American congregations had male leaders while only 10% had a female in senior leadership. Said another way, 94.4% of U. S. worshippers were in congregations led by men and 5.6% in congregations with female leaders (Chaves & Anderson, 2008).

Newer research in the form of the second wave of the National Congregations Study (2008) does not reveal much shift in numbers. In fact, even though 46.6% of U. S. congregations represented in the study permit women in leadership, as Table 1 below indicates, only 24% of congregations self-identifying as "liberal" were led by female clergy in 1998, and in 2006-07 that number had grown to only 38%. Certainly, 14% is a marked increase, but liberal congregations represent only 9% of total U. S. congregations surveyed. Even more striking are the percentages revealed in the data comparison provided in Table 2. Only 4.6% of U. S. adults experience women as senior clergy. The vast majority of women in leadership shepherd smaller congregations ranging from 5-250 members while none of the largest churches have female senior clergy.

Table 1

Congregations Permitting Female Clergy Leadership

Women permitted to: Be head clergy person or primary religious leader				
Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
YES	702	46.6	46.9	46.9
NO	770	51.2	51.4	98.3
DON'T KNOW	25	1.7	1.7	100.0
Missing	8	.6		

Note: Table generated using *Explore the Data* website tool and employing Wave 2 data (2006/07) of the National Congregations Study directed by Mark Chaves & Shawna Anderson. Used with permission.

Table 2

Congregants Led by a Female Senior Pastor

Number of adults that regularly participate in the congregation	Sex of head/senior clergy/religious leader		
	MALE	FEMALE	Row Totals
5 to 49	91.3%	8.7%	9.2% (134)
50 to 99	90.5%	9.5%	13.7% (199)
100 to 249	93.6%	6.4%	22.6% (329)
250 to 499	95.6%	4.4%	15.6% (227)
500 to 999	99.6%	0.4%	14.2% (207)
1,000 to 2,499	99.1%	0.9%	16.5% (241)
2,500 to 4,999	96.7%	3.4%	5.8% (84)
5,000 to 9,999	100.0%	0.0%	1.9% (28)
10,000 or more	100.0%	0.0%	0.5% (7)
Column Totals	95.4% (1391)	4.6% (67)	100.0% (1459)

Note: Table generated using *Explore the Data* website tool and employing Wave 2 data (2006/07) of the National Congregations Study directed by Mark Chaves & Shawna Anderson. Used with permission.

The conflict within particular denominations over women's ordination varies in intensity. In addition to the statistics above, anecdotal evidence as reported recently in two news articles from the U. K. provides an interesting perspective on the shape of the continuing conflict within the Church of England. While Jonathan Wynne-Jones reported for *Telegraph.co.uk* on 12 August 2007 that by 2025 the number of women who served

as Anglican priests was expected to equal the number of men serving the church in that capacity, on 3 May 2010 in the same news source, Martin Beckford reported that the nearly 300 Anglican parishes who disapprove of women priests may take up an offer made by Pope Benedict XVI to defect to Rome. Clearly, regardless of the denominational affiliation or particular experience of encouragement and mentorship any of the women of this study may have experienced, they are entering into a profession where being "male" is the still the primary expectation.

Performance in the Church

Expectations of personal performances of faith vary from group to group within the Christian tradition, but they might include notions of appropriate dress, public reputation, and ways of managing money and family. For many Christians, the notion of "true" or "authentic" faithfulness is that it finds daily expression in the mundane tasks of household management, in business dealings, and in personal political decision-making regarding controversial issues. While not all members of a congregation see such behaviors as obligatory for a lay member, without exception all groups seem to hold the professional clergy up as examples of what overall one might be, or how one ought to live in the context of that community's doctrines, teachings, and traditions. This notion of marking or setting aside has some basis in Christian scripture; however, it is also used as a means of eschewing personal responsibility by lay people in a congregation, and as a means to "other," or hold to a different standard, those who act publicly as official clergy (Carroll, 1981; Hammond, Salinas & Sloane, 1978).

Public performance in the context of this study, in addition to the general ideas discussed above, includes those facets of behavior which indicate either to the actor herself or someone observing her that she is a professional member of the clergy—a

career religious. Such acts might be performed in the contexts of holy rites, but might also include visiting the sick and/or imprisoned, making house calls on parishioners, conducting counseling sessions, or providing support in crisis to individuals and communities. Expected performance should also be understood to include behaviors which reflect essential understandings of character by parishioners, parishes, and observers in general (e.g. truthfulness, praying in public, and sexual chastity are among some of the more common expectations placed upon religious professionals either by formal vow or by public opinion).

In this context, then, female clergy negotiate a kind of double marking, having to deal with both public ministerial expectations and marked gender roles. An odd kind of performativity develops, subtle and rarely recognized, in which there is played out a demand for a kind of visual and physical code-switching of the corporeal rhetoric of "the minister." A woman minister has to be "good," but she also has to "read male" (Lawless, 1994; Lummis, 2003). A male pastor remains unmarked and most accepted as a model of the way to perform as a congregational minister. (This is not unrelated to the firmly held Catholic doctrine that clergy literally represent a male Christ (Lummis, 2003).) Beaman's study (1999) notes this negotiation as an "attempt to preserve the sense of self and agency in a culture that demands much self-sacrifice as a model of Christian being" (p. 3).

In her study of evangelical women writers, Reneslacis (2005) found a pervasive phenomenon in many churches: women leaders tend to lead only women. She notes that 28% of the 50 bestselling books on the Christian Booksellers' Association List were written by women, a misleading statistic that upon first glance seems to point to women as influential in the church. The majority of these bestsellers, however, were not only written by women, but for women, and seemed to focus on romance and motherhood

almost exclusively (p. 8). She concludes that this percentage would seem to indicate that the majority of evangelical women "have accepted the restriction that they should preach to and teach only other women" (p. 8). The pervasiveness of such attitudes in Protestant circles, whether mainline or more conservative, while less likely to be publicly affirmed by more liberal denominations, nevertheless filters into the everyday, ordinary population of churchgoers. In shaping notions of calling then, the women of the study must ignore, resist, or directly argue against this narrative as they compose their own identity verbally and in public performance.

Other studies of American women's preaching allow further insight into the gendered performativity (Brooke, 1991; Chop, 1989; Lawless, 1991, 1994) of answering God's call to parish leadership as a female. Mountford (2003) studies the preaching style of three female ministers who overtly challenge the "manliness" of "acceptable" or "traditional" preaching, either through style, subject matter, or dress. In addition, Chilcote (2002), Collins (1997), and other earlier researchers (Brereton, 1991; Griffith, 1997; Lawless 1988, 1989, 1991) also examine women's ways of using religious language in various faith communities.

Rhetorical and Narrative Construction of Identity

Narrative research methods investigating language and identity are in use extensively across the human and social sciences (Elliot, 2005; Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997; Pagnucci, 2004). Some common themes linking the broad range of subject areas that pay attention to respondent narratives include:

1. An interest in people's lived experience and the temporal nature of that experience.

2. A desire to empower research participants and allow them to contribute to determine what is most salient (themes).

3. An interest in process and change over time.

4. An interest in the representations of the self.

5. An awareness that the researcher him or herself is also a narrator. (Elliot, 2005, p. 6)

Furthermore, Elliot (2005) emphasizes that "a narrative can be understood to organize a sequence of events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood through its relation to that whole. In this way, a narrative conveys the meaning of events" (p. 3). In the humanist tradition of sociology, trying to understand the meaning of behavior and experience from individual perspectives, narrative can be "understood as a device which facilitates empathy since it provides a form of communication in which an individual can externalize his or her feelings and indicate which elements of those experiences are most significant" (p. 4). This kind of weighting of experience factors into the construction of the narratives examined in this study. By making editorial decisions, rearranging even as they recount experience, the participants of my study also created rather than recapitulated an entirely new narrative—constructed for me and for themselves—one they believe recounts their growth towards "answering a call of God."

Locating (Female) Identity

Identity is not a fixed concept, but a social construct (Butler, 1999, p. 7) dependent upon a combination of acts (Sedgewick, 1990), varied cultural constructs (Kellner, 1995, 2003) and hierarchical social categories (Butler, 1999). It includes, but is not limited to difference and representation, as well as race, class, gender, and education (McLaren, 1995). Identity functions as a complex construction produced and reproduced

through stories by and about the self, through embodying positions of conviction and faith and through participation in wider social institutions. According to Geertz (1973, 2005), through "deep play" (community activities which on the surface seem related only to leisure, but which hold, communicate and reinforce much deeper symbolic meaning), whole societies "tell themselves about themselves" (p.82). According to Currie (1998), individuals also claim themselves through storytelling; the narrative reports on known features of identity, but also opens up new identities in the telling.

Atkins's (2004) investigation of female identity formation interrogates "[female] discourse through a critical, post-modern lens [in order to] understand the ways [that conforming] to cultural scripts requires the formation of multiple identities" (p. 2). In her study, she argues that media—and fantasies perpetrated by media—shape an unrealistic but inescapable notion of ideal womanhood, an ideal that is all the more unreachable for being mutable and subject to the whim of culture. The women of my study, likewise, have been shaped by and continue to be shaped by cultural scripts. Relevant to my own study are cultural scripts extrapolated from biblical as well as cultural traditions within the Christian community, particularly attempts to define individual gender roles in a static way.

Linked to this idea is a classic study of women's own sense of self as explored in writing by Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (1988). Heilbrun notes that for women who step outside the majority narrative, the accepted cultural script, "the price is high, the anxiety is intense, because there is no script to follow, no story portraying how one is to act, let alone any alternative stories" (p 39). The women in my study find this still to be true more than two decades later, particularly for the woman minister. Another fascinating aspect of Heilbrun's study is her reflection on the woman who has reached

past middle age, found herself a *self*, and in doing so, found the courage to denounce those things that kept her from seeing herself sooner. Heilbrun notes that such pronouncements are inevitably eschewed as unreasonable or unjustified by others. Nevertheless, she remarks (concerning women of the 1980's):

> [E]ven today, after two decades of feminism, young women shy away from an emphatic statement of anger at the patriarchy. Perhaps only women who have played the patriarchal game and won a self despite it can find the courage to consider facing the pain that the outright expression of feminism inevitably entails. It is worth nothing that writers and critics who would have modulated their language in other contexts felt free then (and now) to indulge in tirades against feminist attitudes. [Virginia] Woolf knew what she had to fear, but at fifty she thought she had found the courage to bear it. (p. 125)

There is not a direct correlation here, but Heilbrun causes me to pause and wonder what continued forces the women of my own study square up against and believe themselves strong enough to tackle (fully 20 years after Heilbrun's study) in claiming a call to ordained ministry. Certainly, overall attitudes to women in positions of power have been somewhat mitigated in the twenty years since Heilbrun wrote her study, but then again, the women of the present study, second career women all, would have been just the young women Heilbrun had in mind when she penned the lines above.

Where to situate identity in relation to the writing process is also dealt with in important ways by structural social theorists such as Patricia Bizzell (1986), Marilyn Cooper (1986) and Kenneth Bruffee (1984, 1986), who insist that

> neither the cognitive models [of identity] nor the expressive models are complete, for composing [an identity in writing or otherwise] does not occur only for an

individual (expressive) or in the head (cognitive), but also in complex social
settings, which affect the ways in which both basic and professional writers write.
(Bishop, 1999, p. 11)

I would argue that such complex social locations also affect the ways in which
both beginning and well-established professional women compose a public self. Roz
Ivanic's (1998) overarching argument is applicable as well: "Writing is an act of identity
in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities for self-hood,
playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and
the values, beliefs and interests which they embody" (p. 32). The women of this study,
both in writing and in recorded speech acts, compose an act of identity and embody self-
hood. As the chapters that follow this literature review will show, the women revealed
would heartily agree, I think, with Bishop's (1999) declaration that "[t]here is something
very satisfying about working to become a convincing 'I,' although that 'I' changes
regularly" (p.183).

Also relevant to this project is the notion of relational identity as an exercise "of
grafting several cultures onto a single body" (Min-ha, 1992, p. 144). The intersection of
these cultures fixes a performative space, or representation of the self. Relational identity
presupposes the composition of the self as a plurality of subject positions (Atkins, 2004;
McClintock-Fulkerson, 2001; McLaren, 1995; Sarup, 1996) where an individual might
define herself within and against socially constructed paradigms. Through representation
and discourse, the self relates to others (Britzman, 1998), though that expression of self
may be limited to and dictated by the available representational constructs (Fausto
Sterling, 2000; Gilligan, 1982; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). There is a sense that the
subject is known, but is also always becoming known. The "becoming" is the idea I am

after in this study—the saying in the moment and the saying in another moment—so that some kind of emerging whole might be recognized. These are "different identities and social positions we each recognize in different settings" (Gee, 1999, p. 12). For the women in my study, it is the juxtaposition of the identities and social positions within the framework of a "holy calling" that is central.

Narrative, Rhetoric, and Religious Identity

Two works are especially relevant to the theoretical framework of my own study with relation to narrative and rhetorical analysis as well as to religious identity: these are Hindmarsh's (2005) careful study of the evangelical conversion narrative and Dana Anderson's (2007) exploration of rhetorical identity strategies as revealed in conversion narratives. According to Hindmarsh (2005), Christian conversion accounts, when considered as narratives, "remind us to look not only at the episodic level of the story, but also at the emplotted level, the intelligible whole that governs the sequence of events in any story" (p 7). While Hindmarsh's particular interest is in seventeenth and eighteenth century conversion narratives of early modern England, he goes on to argue that conversion narratives recount intellectual arguments, literary influences, as well as individual moments of charism, in an effort to construct an identity or to self-identify within a particular religious tradition. Some narratives, over the course of a lifetime, also serve to posit a re-making or self-revisioning, but in the Christian context, not rooted in decentering or deconstructing post-modern ideology, but in ways that root the self within the self-transcending community of faith. Such faith-rooted self-construction, I believe, is reflected not only in the conversion narrative, but in call narratives as well. These stories string together experiences and imbue them with meaning.

Where Hindmarsh offers a way to envision scholarly analysis of a deeply personal

religious narrative, Anderson (2007) goes a step further and ties such an analysis firmly

to the discipline of rhetoric. Beginning his study by offering the conversion narrative of

the Apostle Paul as a paradigm for all ensuing Christian conversion narratives, he asks,

> Is the telling of stories about ourselves not fundamentally an exercise in
>
> emphasis? In composing these self-stories, do we not, as De Waele and Hatre[3]
>
> assert, necessarily shape them in response to the "cultural setting" and other
>
> specifics of the occasion in and for which we compose them, whatever personal
>
> realities we mean them to express? (p. 3)

Implying, of course, an emphatic "yes" to both questions, Anderson goes on to argue that

looking at how conversion narratives wield identity, reflect changing beliefs, and respond

to actions of an audience as they are composed (reflecting an ability to express a sense of

self), means bringing identity's rhetorical function into the critical foreground. Identity,

then, is "constituted in these narratives and...exercised toward persuasive ends" (p. 5).

Ultimately Anderson draws on Burke's "A Rhetoric of Motives" to argue that the

narrative construction of identity should be a central concern of rhetoric. Where

Anderson, then, through the bulk of his study considers how *rhetors* constitute their own

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[3] Anderson, here, refers to J.P. De Waele and Rom Harre, coauthors of

"Autobiography as a Psychological Method" published in *Emerging Strategies in Social*

Psychological Research, G. P. Ginsberg, Ed., pp. 177-224, New York: Wiley, 1979.

There they make the argument that each person has a whole repertoire of

autobiographies, each appropriate in a particular social location or cultural setting, and

that most people are able to construct new biographies for new occasions quite easily.

identities through recounting experiences of conversion in ways that would persuade, my own study looked similarly at the experience and narrative of call to occupation, vocation, or life pursuit. The audience being persuaded by the elements of narrative, however, is not just the listening audience, or the witness to the oral performance (hearers of Christian testimony), but the rhetorician (here the participant) herself reaching to explain, shape, and accept herself and her new ministerial identity.

Becoming and self-conception are notions central to the work of feminist theologian Nicola Slee (2004), another scholar whose study served as not only a theoretical but also a practical model for my own work. Where the present study, however, looked at the rhetorical construction of identity specific to the call narrative, Slee tackles the more expansive notion of women's faith development. Her study is broadly informed by grounded theory, but draws eclectically from other qualitative approaches to research. Overall, the study pursues two main strands of theory: (1) An investigation and critique of James Fowler's work (1981, 1991) on the stages of faith development that posits "faith as a human universal;" and (2) an argument that faith is part of a meaning-making journey in which cognitive, affective and behavior aspects of the individual change over time. Finding Fowler's model useful, but inadequate, to address the lived experience of women involved in, or on the fringes of, Christianity, Slee develops an alternative model rooted in feminist theology and psychology. She argues that women's faith development, rather than being rooted in the notions of individuation and separation, concepts emerging from male psychoanalytic approaches that virtually ignore women, is instead rooted in connectedness to others and an ethic of responsibility and care.

Slee posits six strategies to describe the process of faith development. She

identifies these as active stages of "faithing" and they include: conversational,

metaphorical, narrative, personalized, conceptual, and apophatic.[4] Three over-arching

generative themes that represent the basic and recurring patterns evident in women's faith

lives, she proposes, are paralysis, awakening, and relationality. These build upon but also

are in direct contrast to the individuated approach whose culmination is separation, as

propounded by Fowler (1981, 1991). Fowler's model—tied closely to traditional models

of psychological development based on individuation and separation, such as those of

Erikson (1980) and Kohlberg (1981, 1984)—is useful, Slee acknowledges, but is still

inadequate when applied universally, regardless of gender. Slee's generative themes,

then, offer an alternative heuristic, one that points towards the need to develop further

theoretical models for examining and describing women's religious experience. For me,

this heuristic validated the notion of women's identity as inextricably tied both to

progressive self-understanding and to interaction and relationship rather than to

individuated self-actualization.

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[4] Drawing upon the contrast between apophatic and catophatic, or positive and

negative images, within mystical traditions, Slee posits apophatic faithing as being able to

say what faith is not. Where the other strategies listed describe different ways of speaking

of faith explicitly and positively, "through language, image, and concept, apophatic

faithing describes a way of naming faith, not in explicit and direct terms, [but] as implied,

indirect, negative or contradictory terms" (p. 24). For a detailed discussion see Slee's

article, "Apophatic Faithing in Women's Spirituality," in *The British Journal of

Theology*, Ed. 11. 2 (2001), pp. 23-37.

The final body of work I would like to discuss in this section is the volume edited by Alyson Jule, *Language and Religious Identity: Women in Discourse* (2007). Like the study by Nicola Slee, this work reaches across disciplines and yet roots itself in feminist theology in a way that provides an intellectual research model rather than an apologetic. A collection of ten studies by various scholars, it explores the intersection of gender with sociolinguistics and religious life, particularly the notion of "intersecting identities in religious contexts" (p. xii). The volume makes an argument directly pertinent to the potential for my own study, that "religion can be seen as an important 'epistemological site' for gender and language study; that is, one which provides special insight into the societal and discoursal construction, negotiation, and contestation of gender more widely, as well as into the actual discoursal performance of gender and gender identity itself" (p. xii).

Each chapter in Jule (2007) explores a specific situation where language and religious identity are positioned together with a specific focus on women at the center of the discourse. How do women perform a religious identity? What are the words used to do this? Authors of these studies worked in different domains, from Hispanic churches in the United States, to an on-line religious community, to traditional cultures in Brazil and Thailand; my study seeks company with this wide variety of approaches.

<div align="center">**Feminist Perspectives and Christian Community**</div>

Feminist Theology

As noted in Chapter 1 of this study, Christian scripture and traditional Christian practice have often led to biblical interpretations that are generally oppressive to women (Geisterfer, 2005; Pagels, 1989; Ruether, 1983; Schussler Fiorenza, 2002) and are particularly positioned against women in ordained ministry. Jule (2007) argues against

this oppressive tendency in her chapter on gender constructions and biblical exegesis. Her work stands in the company of a great many scholars who continue to argue for wider understanding of biblical equality (Cunningham, Hamilton & Rogers, 2000; Hess, 2008; Pierce, Groothius & Fee, 2005; Womble, 2008),

Tamara Warhol (2007) takes Christian scriptures concerning women's roles in life and in the church and examines what student scholars in a seminar setting have to say in response to them. I touch on her theoretical arguments again below. In her argument, she presses the dialogic nature of language as propounded in Bakhtin (1982, 1984) such that no voice can exist in isolation. Viewed from this perspective, individuals come together in Christian community to develop biblically-based moral stances and in doing so, respond to biblical narrative, to subsequent exegeses, and add to the milieu their own perspective on meaning. This notion of recursive dialogic led Warhol to explore classroom discourse in a divinity school seminar. Her findings, she argues, support that while

> the intentions of the original author [of a scriptural passage] regarding gender relationships may not be revealed [particularly when issues of appropriate translation and interpretation cannot substantiate a singular understanding], a heteroglossic exegesis may illuminate religious dimensions in the text for its modern audience. (p 68)

Such exegesis, then, may lead to multiple meanings, including readings that are open to or even supportive of gender equality. This same recursive dialogic is at play in the motivations for my own study, and the same heteroglossia is present in the narratives of ministerial call I examine.

In *Changing the Subject: Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology* (2001), Mary McClintock-Fulkerson also reveals that the dialogical perspective opens up feminist avenues for the study of discoursal narrative as related to theology. Fulkerson's study reaches for a "theological feminist analytic of women's discourse through the logic of feminist criticism of the 'politics of identity'" (p. 8). In other words, Fulkerson is trying to argue that the experiences of individual women are valid, but they are *not* normative. Therefore, a post-structuralist approach to the common methodological assumptions of feminist theological thinking, she believes, must offer categories that "take seriously the way in which subjects are constructed out of social relations" and as such are always unique and always shifting. Feminist theologians and researchers must recognize that "feminist theological reflection is not liberating praxis based upon women's experience, but is itself a produced cognitive practice inextricable from social relations;" such as must be "distinguished from feminist theology as a discourse in women's communities and political practices outside of the academy" (p. 7).

Paradoxically, my own study attempted to straddle the two contingent feminist theologies Fulkerson distinguishes: (1) theology that understands subjects only as constructed by social interaction and (2) theology as a discourse on the broader community. The women in my study are shaped by and relate their own call in reaction to the academic disciplines of the divinity school, but in their own lives their narrative becomes a part of discourse outside the academy, of the lived experiences of their church communities. As well, I admit to the wisdom of Fulkerson's post-structuralist argument that "identity is not something we have and then share or use as a basis from which to define the other," but is instead "rendered by the others it creates" (p. 12) and that it cannot be understood apart from social location. However, the women of this study did

understand themselves as real "selves" even as they understood themselves as "in progress" or socially and culturally situated. While they would likely have agreed that they did not "have an identity" and then "share it" as if it were a fixed possession, they did share themselves in the research in a way that rooted itself ontologically in the notion of a singular, knowable soul, an entity of everlasting value.

A Feminist Ethic of Care

One of the stereotypes women in leadership press against is the view that their primary vocation should be the care of the home and family. The notion of maternity thus conceived is often used to preclude women from leadership in the church. While feminist theologians like the ones discussed above push back against such notions, secular feminists offer a way of viewing maternity as a theoretical construct that offers a more expansive view as well. Sara Ruddick, in *Maternal Thinking (1989)*, identifies those practices which are constitutive of maternity as providing a foundation for a public ethic of care. Other scholars writing about *maternal ethics* include Virginia Held (1983) and Caroline Whitbeck (1983) and Eva Feder Kittay (1999). Ruddick argues that the activities we identify as "good mothering"—such as preserving the life of a child, fostering children's growth, and training children in order that they might become concerned citizens—are the practices which ground maternity and which ought also to be paradigmatic for all ethics. This notion of mothering as paradigmatic, while not an infallible ethical construct, is useful to my research in that it provides a way to understand the impact of visible care work on a particular community.

There exists a theological position that all Christians are called to be good Samaritans (Luke 10:29-37), to be servants and to embody the kind of love that "lays [life] down for a friend" (John 15:13). If that is the ideal attitude of all Christians and that

is the attitude to be inculcated and fostered in children, then mothering, seen paradigmatically in the way Ruddick imagined, could be posited as essential to Christian catechism. This would make mothering a way of "doing ministry," a formative and identifiable aspect of leadership in Christian communities and churches. In this way, feminist notions of emotional labor (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2004; Hochschild, 1989) and care work (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007) and sociological ideas of reproductive labor (Przybylowicz, Hartsock & McCallum, 1989; Willis, 1993) provide analytical tools for this study. Such approaches posit mothering as a form of church leadership—not a gendered vocation, but a way of exercising gifts and abilities. Rosemarie Tong (2006) sums up Ruddick's work very powerfully and in a way that links it clearly to the concerns of the present study with ideas of ministry:

> Caring for a child imposes a set of demands—for preservation (survival), for growth (development into a healthy adult), and for acceptability (enculturation that ensures fitting into a community). Meeting these demands involves a range of activities that are governed by a distinctive set of values: protecting a fragile existence, acknowledging the limits of one's power and the unpredictability of events, cheerful determination to persist despite setbacks, responsive adaptability, sensitivity to the child's subjective viewpoint, and tolerance for inconclusive processes of disclosure. Although the practice of mothering places no premium on independence, self-interest, free choice, power, advance planning, or control, it clearly calls upon a wide range of interpersonal and reflective skills and enlists caregivers' agentic capacities.

The demands of mothering seem to resonate with the responsibilities of *Christian disciples*, particularly notions of service. Dying to self, living to give life, caring: these

make up the call of discipleship. Recognizing mothering as a critical aspect of community life, a catechetical vocation, and therefore as a model for pastoral care, supports rather than precludes female leadership and allows the juxtaposition of feminist notions of care work with Christian models of servant leadership.

Interestingly, early Methodism, the denominational affiliation of the seminary from which I drew my study participants, and its 18th century embrace of women preachers, grew naturally out of the notion of the shepherding and care of the community as "Housekeeping." Wesley's view of *Housekeeper* as a critical position of biblical leadership further attests to this visibility and sanctity of the domestic within Wesleyan circles (Chilcote, 2002, 1991; Erickson, 1997). As a result of such viewpoints, women and men who were otherwise disenfranchised began to develop a new sense of self esteem and purpose. Unlike in the public religious celebrations of other Christian communities of the 1700's, in the setting of the Methodist Society every individual, man or woman, was encouraged to testify and to pray. "The equality of women and men in early Methodism [began] in the simple fact that both had stories about their lives to tell, and all honored the testimony of their faith" (Chilcote, 2008, p.2). Thus women's preaching can be found in the roots of the Wesleyan movement in England even before its revivals swept the United States (Broyles, 2008; Chilcote, 1991, 2002, 2007; Collins, 1997). It is not insignificant that the women of this study chose a seminary affiliated with the current iteration of Wesley's Methodists.

Current postmodern experience of the inextricable ties of gender and religion is very different, however, from that of women in the 18th century. Early Methodist groups—while perhaps not making the kind of radical calls to common property and daily living as were concomitant groups like the Oneida or Shaker communities—were

nonetheless, by nature of their very structures of individual accountability and group formation, just as radical in their reconception of authority. The practices of early Methodist pioneer women, then, also provide a window into ways of understanding faithful women at once as free sexual beings and as individuals who can be radically faithful to conservative biblical doctrine in the midst of that freedom. These women, in their exercise of discipleship, made a serious attempt to construct a mythology and praxis which merged *household* and *community work*, thus rendering women and reproductive labor visible in the process.

<div style="text-align: center">Ecclesia: Women's Roles in the Church</div>

An Historical Perspective

The difficulties women face when attempting to participate in positions of leadership within many religious organizations today (particularly fundamentalist and Catholic) are not reflections of real, physical constraints on being a female (you must always be pregnant and therefore the primary caregiver of children). Rather, they are rooted in a long history of perceived notions of femininity as singularly, or at least primarily, domestic (as a good woman you ought to be pregnant and a primary caregiver of children). These notions seem to persist for inherently conservative communities across denominations, a uni-dimensional bias which misses the sociological and theological moves of 18th century reformers like those mentioned above. This is just one of many reasons why the stories of the women pioneers and of present day women of faith should be woven into the academy's frame of reference concerning religion and into the church's collective social and theological memory. Even out of a conservative impulse to live a "truer" or "holier" life, radically altered notions of gender, sexuality and leadership can emerge.

Esther Braude, in her work *Radical Spirits* (1989), provides an historical lens through which to view religion as the location of liberation and agency for women. Though Braude's focus is on spiritualism as a movement, her insights are applicable to women of any faith community, including the participants of this study. Braude notes that revivalist groups, groups that pay heed to more "spirit-led" community practices, function as enabling conduits for a publicly accepted "woman" voice. Braude also makes the important observation that women's authority plays out cyclically and seems always to be rendered invisible when more "orderly" traditions are brought to bear on what begins as a spirit led movement. She emphatically asserts that "historians need to analyze the cyclical rise and fall of women's leadership. Women play significant leadership roles in a variety of new or emerging movements, only to have their leadership repressed and forgotten as those movements become either institutionalized or marginalized" (p. xx). Braude also asserts that much academic work, including that done in historical women's studies programs, contains a kind of "tone-deafness to religion" (p. xxi) that unfortunately overlooks this historical aspect of women's agency and the potency with which present religious notions might be redirected towards positive scholarship on women's faith.

One recent collection of studies meant to address this need is the volume *Reimagining: The Religious History of American Women,* edited by Catherine A. Brekus (2007). A collection of 12 essays on the particular experience of women in American religion, the work as a whole is a collaborative attempt to explain why women's history should be an integral, not parallel, subsidiary, or silent part of religious history and American religious history in particular. It builds specifically upon Anne Braude's *Radical Spirits* (1989), the study discussed above, as well as Braude's (1997) later work

"Women's History *Is* American Religious History" and her exploration of how current interpretation of American religious history focuses on "plots" for structure. These standard plots, however, are in fact derailed with a bigger picture when women's experiences are included in the narrative. The essays in Brekus's book examine very specific groups or events—such as the experience of Catholic women in early America, or Mormon women's popular literature—as a form of theology and ask how the overall narrative would change if this or that account of women were also studied. The present study, too, was meant to diminish that deafening silence in women's studies pointed out by Braude.

The Language of Call and Women's Leadership

Several studies explore current evangelical women's roles in their faith communities (Griffith, 1997; Lawless, 1988; Stacy & Gerard, 1990; Beaman, 1999). These studies suggest that women continue to claim leadership, just as they did in early Wesleyan circles, either by claiming God's supernatural call in their lives or by negotiating a place of leadership within a system that has now become more patriarchal. In these situations women accept male leadership, but exercise personal power within the limits of the position requiring their "talent" or some equivalent ability that is deemed "appropriate."

The notion of a supernatural call, however, is not a device of feminist usurpation of patriarchal standards, nor a bald attempt to circumvent male-dominated traditions. As has been discussed earlier, it is, itself, firmly rooted in Christian tradition as an extension of life post-conversion. The etymological history of the term *vocation* links inextricably to the notion of a summons from God, or a divine appointment, or a *call* to particular religious service or ecclesial position. The term *calling* is used to depict a sense of

passion, giftedness, a direction one longs for and a sense that God has placed this longing on one's heart. In their various translations, the Christian scriptures themselves utilize language that defines the discourse:

> God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God's generosity can flow through you. Are you called to be a speaker? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Are you called to help others? Do it with the strength and energy that God supplies. (1 Pet 4:10-11, New Living Translation)

There seems to be then a particular call to vocation for each individual, ineluctably tied to physical and spiritual gifts. More than a duty or obligation, vocation is a "listening to the calling that comes from a voice within [God?], calling [the individual] to be the person [he or she] was created to be" (May, 2004, p. 231).

In the context of this study, such a notion of "calling" plays a key role in the rhetoric of identity construction undertaken by the women in this study and reflected in the call narratives they shared. As they consider themselves not only to be Christians, but to be "called" to Christian vocation, the women of the study embrace their vocational endeavor as being "supernaturally ordained" and themselves as "gifted" or provided with the abilities to fulfill the role of leader/speaker for a particular community of Christians (Kienzle & Walker, 1998).

Conclusion

My use of these studies and theoretical perspectives has forged a lens through which I viewed current attitudes about women in ordained ministry, and has provided a way for me to approach this study and the clergywomen involved. While much work has been done on identity across disciplines, on gender and language, and on religious

language, the interconnectedness of these facets of research remains to be fully explored. This study steps into that gap, particularly building on the work of Dana Anderson and Nicola Slee, as it builds a bridge between the lived experience of shaping a rhetorical space for one's self as a female minister of the Word, and a view of the rhetorical strategies exploited in negotiating that space within one's own mind (self-perception) and in relation to others.

In the next chapter, Chapter 3, I discuss the scope and design of this project and detail the qualitative methodology I employed in its execution.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Two commitments intertwined to inform the scope and design of this project and to shape its methodology. The first is a feminist commitment to examine, "with integrity and sensitivity, the hidden spaces of women's faith lives" (Slee, 2004, p. 43). In keeping with this first commitment, I recognize the need to "reassert the importance of agency," and to adopt a perspective which "recognize[s] the multiple and shifting subject positions we inhabit at work and play" (Kirsch, 1993, p. xxi). In short, the first commitment is to represent the reality of my participants as they perceive and experience it.

The second commitment involves a belief that qualitative research methods more readily allow for "non-hierarchical, non-manipulative research relationships...between researcher and researched" (Slee, 2004, p. 44). In addition, as Wendy Bishop makes clear in *Ethnographic Writing Research* (1999):

> Ethnographic inquiry represents a researcher's grounding in a different set of beliefs—naturalistic, holistic, subjective beliefs—about empirical research. [That all research] is rhetorically situated and all research reports [are] rhetorically structured and that researchers within both the positivist and the ethnographic traditions make arguments from their structured observations as well as from their philosophical beliefs. (p. 5)

Bishop acknowledges here that neither qualitative nor quantitative research is value free, nor entirely objective, and that both are rhetorically situated. This is in keeping with this second commitment I have made: to pursue an approach to research that does not pretend that the researcher stands apart from her work, but that the work is of value because the researcher is honest about that connection. This approach also treats women's faith narratives and lived experiences as worth examining, not only in the light of societal,

masculine, or androgynous norms, but in their own right and on their own terms (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1997; Bons-Storm, 1996).

With these two commitments as a basis, this qualitative study has explored how women called to ordained ministry within a Christian community have used language to create and describe who each of them understands herself to be, first as a privately called individual and then as a publicly practicing minister. Because the nature of sociolinguistic identity is not easily quantifiable, I used a cross-disciplinary, qualitative approach to the research design and to the collection, interpretation and reporting of data in order to unpack and foreground the transformative experiences of the study participants.

Additionally, I wanted the data I collected to be historically and culturally situated. Using rhetorical analysis and grounded theory as tool and basis, the study examines data from two main sources: formal documents providing background information for analysis; and two one-hour, semi-structured, face-to-face, open-ended interviews. These sources were enriched and amplified by information from my own research journal and notes, as well as responses from a focus group of all participants able to attend as a wrap-up to the study. From these diverse sources of data, a wealth of material emerged—more than could be dealt with in this dissertation. Therefore, I narrowed the focus of this study to only the rhetorical strategies employed by the participants in their interviews, arranging them thematically in order to interrogate the socio-cultural identity reflected by these rhetorical maneuvers.

In *Disciplinary Cultures and Graduate Education*, Turner et al. (2002) contend that "many important features of graduate education derive from the culturally constituted presuppositions of academic disciplines, and that [graduate] student

socialization and training is a process of disciplinary enculturation." Because of this, the authors emphasize that researchers "should expand [their] conceptual horizons, develop new modes of inquiry, and engage more fully in the type of collegial (indeed cross-cultural) dialogue that helps provide some answers" (p. 67) to questions concerning the advantages and disadvantages of the ways in which graduate study is currently pursued. Although I did not anticipate, nor did I aim to provide, a quantifiable outcome from my study, nevertheless my study did, in many ways, attempt to answer the implicit challenge of Turner et al.'s article. At the least, I felt that we need to be aware of the assumptions underlying graduate study programs, and to be aware of how these relate to the needs and perceptions of those who enroll in those programs.

Precedents for the Present Study

In designing this study, I built upon a number of excellent inquiries into women's religious language, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. It is worth highlighting here the particular studies that were most useful as models for the present study. These included Reneslacis' (2005) dissertation on evangelical women writers at the college level, and Mountford's (2003) study of the rhetorical strategies of three women preachers as they press against sexist assumptions about good preaching. Also pertinent to this study were Winkelmann's (2004) examination of the ways that residents of a shelter for battered women constructed personal theological narratives of strength and healing. Other helpful literature studied particular communities and women's ways of communicating within these communities, including Belenky et al. (1997), Lawless (1988, 1991, 1994), Brereton (1991), McClintock-Fulkerson (2001), Griffith (1997), and Collins (1997). I also drew upon Teresa Berger's approach to faithful liturgical histories, which write women's voices into the primary narrative, not deconstructing existing narrative, but

completing it. Like Nicola Slee's (2004) investigation of the patterns and processes of women's faith development, balancing the tension between finding patterns across the narratives and yet attending to the differences between participants and within a given participant's own narrative, I also tried not to assume that every participant "speaks with a coherent and consistent voice, [because] the self in dialogue is likely to be constantly situating and resituating itself in shifting relation, both to the other person and to its own rehearsed and retold meanings" (p. 48). The identity that emerged for the participants as a result of both the tensions and the resituating of the dialogue was at the heart of this study.

Research Design

Initially, I planned case studies as the best way to explore how these clergy women were enculturated into their professional fields and communities of discourse, as well as how they attempted to revise their own gender identities to accept or to resist aspects of the preferred discourse in their communities. Instead, the sheer volume of data emerging from the study dictated a more grounded approach: analyzing themes emerging from among all the candidates' narratives, rather than analyzing individual cases. In Chapters 4 and 5, I outline in detail the resulting division of the data into six primary categories of developing self-awareness and self-acceptance of call. The emergence of these themes provided my central heuristic and indicated that previous work experience, personal conviction, intellectual theological argument, and innate self-awareness were all tools used to a varying extent by each participant to navigate towards her new identity.

Study Site

Both data collection and data analysis for this study occurred in and around Durham, NC. Participants were drawn from the student body and alumnae of one of the

youngest seminaries in the country, Duke Divinity School (DDS). Though student ages

ranged from 24-66, the average age of the typical Duke seminarian is only 26, and the

population breaks down in terms of gender, with 45% of the 550 students being women

and 55% men. More than 30 denominations in the Christian faith are represented at DDS;

students come from 32 states and several foreign countries. Interviews (including the

focus group) were conducted in locations in and around Durham where participants

indicated they felt most comfortable (i.e. private homes, local gardens, local restaurants,

etc.).

Characteristics of the Participants

Because of the diversity of students who attend Duke Divinity School, I was able

to recruit subjects who fit the outlined inclusion criteria for this study as discussed below

and obtain a pool that, while small, was quite diverse. Each of the six women selected for

this study had recently earned or was about to graduate with the professional theological

degree, the Master of Divinity; each either presently holds, or will soon be actively

seeking, a position directly related to that degree. These women represented four distinct

denominations within the Protestant and Evangelical faith tradition. Three were

Methodist, one Baptist, one Lutheran, and one Moravian. Three of the women self-

identified as Caucasian, while the other three self-identified as African American. All of

these women were "second career" women between the ages of 35 and 55 moving

towards ordained ministry within their respective faith traditions. Each had made

significant progress in their initial careers, often holding positions of power within the

various organizations for which they worked. Four of them already held graduate

degrees, and of those, two had completed Ph.D. degrees before relinquishing their earlier

careers and returning to school to pursue a Master of Divinity as seminary preparation for their newly emerging commitment to full-time ministry with the Christian church.

Though from varied denominational backgrounds, each woman also self-identified as Christian and evangelical; this background meant the women were personally subject to, or aware of, the theological position in more conservative Christian circles where women are considered unsuitable for church leadership. Such assumptions added a dimension of complexity to the formation of public personae within the profession. I anticipated that this dimension might directly affect the rhetorical strategies of the women studied, as they verbally and in writing composed a public self during their seminary training, their ordination processes, and during their participation in this study. This indeed proved to be the case, and aspects of this are addressed specifically in the section of Chapter 4 entitled "Moments of Negation."

Method of Participant Selection

Participant selection for this study was purposive (Patton, 2001). A theoretical sampling as identified by Agar (1980) proved a key strategy for this research; in this selection process, "the [researcher] chooses in a self-conscious way the next people to interview to obtain data for comparison with the group she already has talked with" (p. 172). My participant selection was consistent with this description. I talked about my interest in conducting this study in a number of informal gatherings of seminary students. In each case, several women indicated an interest in the work and made gestures towards providing information and support for the study. I invited these women to participate with me in the study and from them, I learned of others who might be interested based on the study criteria. For this study, I identified participants who were able and willing (1) to provide two formal documents for textual analysis (application essay and middler

evaluation,[5] or comparable ordination paperwork); and (2) to participate in two one-hour interviews and a follow-up focus group. Based on the interest the project provoked in casual conversation, I informally approached individuals identified as fitting the criteria above, via e-mail, about their interest in participating in the study, and provided an explanation of what the study required of them in terms of time commitments and willingness to share written documents. Upon a positive response to this initial inquiry, I sent participants a formal letter reiterating the invitation to participate in the study and outlining the elements of participation necessary for the successful completion of data acquisition. This formal request for participation also outlined deadlines for document receipt and provided a calendar of potential dates for interviewing, as well as a consent form modeled closely on the form recommended by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Internal Review Board (IRB) protocol publication (see Appendix A).

Outline of the Methods and Procedures

I proceeded according to the following series of steps:

1. Approached subjects informally about their interest in the study.

2. Formally invited subjects to participate in the study and provided a consent form.

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[5] A requirement of seminarians at Duke Divinity School, in pursuing the Master of Divinity, is a lengthy self-assessment and re-examination of both academic progress and personal grown in light of any shift in understanding of call from the point of matriculation until the completion of the second (middler) year, at which time the evaluation is due.

3. Collected documents from individual participants in person or via electronic mail.

4. Parsed and analyzed documents using standard qualitative coding procedures, "chunking" related data, in order to generate descriptions of the setting, subjects, categories, and themes recurring in the texts.

5. Interviewed subjects using a set of questions prepared in advance, refined on the basis of patterns of speech and recurring content themes uncovered by the document analysis and from literature review.

6. Conducted one-on-one interviews (two semi-structured, open-ended interviews, one hour each, at least two weeks apart) with each subject, at a time and location determined by the subject.

7. Upon completion of all twelve interviews (2 interviews with each of 6 participants), and transcription of those interviews, I repeated the analysis and coding process and added findings to those obtained in Step 4.

8. Scheduled a focus-group, four months after the interview process at a time that accommodated as many participant schedules as possible. At this focus group meeting, participants discussed their interview experiences and reflected upon what they had learned about themselves so far as a result of the study. They also had the opportunity to respond to the diverse experiences expressed by other participants. While I had, of course, anticipated using insights from the focus group, I found that the interviews provided more data than could be covered for the scope of this study. As well, while the focus group was a rich and rewarding gathering, it took on a much more intimate tone than initially could have been anticipated. One of the study participants,

Vashti, died unexpectedly a few months before the group met, and her passing

at age 42 gave the group pause for serious contemplation about the shape of

the remainder of their lives as well as how some of them had been touched,

encouraged, or challenged by Vashti. Therefore, while the focus group was

not a sad affair (both laughter and tears were a part of the afternoon), the

gathering was intensely reflective. The passing of someone special always

brings sharply into focus what to do with the remainder of one's own life. As a

result, any findings from the focus group seemed to me best left to a separate

and later study, when life has taken a new shape.

9. Gave participants an opportunity, given their advanced professional status, to

provide a letter of reflection on their experience of participating in the study to

be included in appendix to the study (Appendix B). These reflections are not

part of the findings, but are discussed in conjunction with my own conclusions

for the study in Chapter 7.

Approach to the Interview

I used a semi-structured approach to interviewing (Schensul et al., 1999;

Walkerdine & Melody, 2001); the interview responses formed a primary source of

qualitative data. The questions focused on key elements or themes evident from the close

examination of the written materials obtained earlier in the study. Among these essential

themes were family background, development of world view and theological position, as

well as definitions of and recognition/confirmation of call to pastoral ministry. I chose a

semi-structured format in order to leave room for the conversation to unfold naturally

(Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Donald Murray (1989, 1993) insists that writing tells the

writer what to write—that having explored one area, one paragraph, one idea, a

previously unrecognized connection to another, as yet unmentioned idea, is likely to occur. The result is a piece of writing that could not have been anticipated by the writer at the outset. Framing my interviews carefully, but using a semi-structured and conversational approach, made room for the same kind of serendipitous composing to which Murray refers. In this case, inviting the subjects of my study to explore with me their composed and composing selves left room for connections to unfold.

As mentioned before, these interviews, in conjunction with the two written documents provided by each participant, resulted in more data than I could use for the current project. As a result, during the course of my investigation I ultimately narrowed my analytical focus to words and phrases echoed throughout the material scrutinized (written works and interview transcripts), and from woman to woman. I paid attention to the "discourse in Discourse" (Gee, 1999, p. 7), the language given meaning as a result of social context, both constitutive of and reflecting the identity of the speaker. The life history approach to qualitative research and interviewing (Atkinson, 1998; Bell &Nkomo, 2001; Denzin, 1989; Geile & Elder, 1998), using semi-structured questioning in order to better capture the subjective, not easily quantifiable, experiences of a lifetime, influenced my own approach to interviewing. One of the reasons such a long-term perspective is essential—even though my study is particularly interested in the graduate student-to-professional transition—is that formative faith-building influences and events, the substance of the "call narrative," and even the self-recognition of that call as legitimate, began well before my own interjection into the lives of my participants and will continue long after our acquaintance draws to a close. Also, I wanted to avoid the pitfalls of research on women noted by Bell and Nkomo (2001), where women are examined too simplistically and superficially despite "a considerable body of literature on adult

development indicating that women experience more complexity in career choices and career experiences because of the effects of early sex-role socialization, when they learn what roles are and are not important for girls" (p. 20). This point is important to the present study, as the participants were socialized in a context where church communities tended to feature men as ministers and encourage males to pursue the calling to ministry.

As much as possible, I wanted participants to narrate their own lives and their own call narrative without the imposition of my prompting. To garner similar basic data from each participant, however, I did formulate 10 questions which I inserted as naturally as possible into the developing conversation. Additionally, I had prepared notes and question ideas after combing the written documents submitted by the participants for personal, professional, theological and conceptual notions that stood out as significant to the participant uniquely, or connected to ideas another participant had addressed in some form. The ten basic questions included family and childhood faith experiences, particularly where these were affected by mentors, as well as ideas about other individuals, lifestyles, or approaches to faith that framed the women's experiences and/or shaped their theological convictions. Self-awareness of abilities and gifts that might mark a fitness to ordained ministry and personal experiences of conflict involving others' opinions of personal call were also discussed. [6]

The bulk of my data, stemming from the intensive interviewing, "permit[ed] in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience and, thus, [proved] a useful method for interpretive inquiry" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). The resulting primarily autobiographical narratives transform and construct the self because they do more than provide a uni-

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[6] See Appendix A for a list of these questions.

dimensional representation of each participant. The resulting transcribed discourse was

dialogic in nature, the discourse on-going between the self and its own sense of being (an

internal dialogue), between the self and other (whether conceptual, literal, or an internal

representative of an external voice), and between the self and the researcher. "Narrative

discourse functions not only to represent characters and events but also to establish

relationships between the narrator and the audience in the intentional event of story-

telling" (Wortham, 2001, p. 1). But the "audience" is not, for my participants, just me, the

interviewer; it always includes a complex of internal selves, aware of the history of

Christianity, aware of the opponents of Christianity and of gender, and aware of the

"proper" or "theologically correct" position or set of values learned since being in

divinity school.

In addition to guiding the individual interviews as discussed above, the documents

helped prepare for and shape the collective experience of the focus group. At the focus

group I provided each woman a *tag cloud* created from the documents she had submitted

at the start of the study. To prepare these I used the open-web software, *TagCrowd*, "a

web application for visualizing word frequencies in any user-supplied text by creating

what is popularly known as a tag cloud or text cloud. It was created by Daniel Steinbock,

a doctoral student in Design and Education at Stanford University" (Steinbock, 2008).

Darker font colors and larger font sizes correspond directly to word frequency. Figure 1

below illustrates a tag cloud created from Priscilla's middler evaluation. We used these

concise visual summaries of work the women had spent hours composing as spring

boards into conversation and reflection throughout the group discussion.

Figure 1 Tag cloud example.

Methods of Data Analysis

Theoretical

For my data analysis, I tried to uphold the postmodern, feminist advocacy of "experimental modes of writing that disrupt the conventional fiction of a unitary author and disperse authority across the various voices and points of view encompassed in the text" (Sullivan, 1996, p. 106). In other words, I did my best to allow my participants to tell their own stories in their own voices, not subscribing to them a particular narrative subjectivity, but allowing their own account of themselves to form the basis for any analysis (Belenky et al., 1997). The emotional connection to research—which feminists acknowledge as a strength of feminist research—also undergirded my own approach to this study (Belar, 1997; Belenky et al., 1997; Bizzell, 2001, 2003; Meyerhoff, 1979; Mountford, 2003; Reneslacis, 2005). In addition Creswell (2003), in *Research Design*, identifies six steps key to analysis and interpretation:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis by transcribing interviews, scanning materials, typing up field notes and sorting and arranging data into different types.

2. Read through all the data carefully, forming impressions and recording ideas.

3. Begin detailed analysis by using a coding process to "chunk" or group materials, finding ways to interpret data as well as ways to conduct future data collection.

4. Use the coding process to generate descriptions of the setting, subjects, categories, and themes which arise from the data collected.

5. Advance how the themes and description will be represented.

6. Make interpretations, drawing conclusions as well as noting implications. (pp.190-95)

For my project, all six of these steps were essential. Also critical were the two features Agar (1980) identifies as key to ethnography: (1) that "whatever the interests of the [researcher, she] must understand the way that group members [of the culture being studied] interpret the flow of events in their lives;" and that (2) the researcher "in her struggle to describe" the schemata and frame which group members bring to their own understanding of cultural events and experiences, she should "turn to the holistic search for pattern as a guide" (p. 242). Maxwell (1996) calls these "contextualizing strategies"; I viewed them as fundamental for me to maintain faithfulness to the situatedness of my informants.

In particular, grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006; Flick, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967, 2001) which "aim to develop conceptual categories [and to] illuminate properties of a category and relations between categories [in order to discover] what research participants take for granted or do not state as well as what they say and do" (Charmaz , 2006, pp. 18-19) were used in analyses of the data collected for this study. This qualitative approach is based on inductive analysis, with "no preconceived categories or hypotheses, thereby allowing the data to speak for themselves rather than

serve as examples supporting or refuting existing theory" (Pitt, 2010, p 61). Moving out of a social constructivist viewpoint, such an approach attempts to "pursue varied emergent analytic goals and foci instead of pursuing a priori goals" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 180). It was my realization of this commitment, coupled with the sheer volume of rich data as mentioned earlier, that led to my deliberate decision to follow more closely the narrative approach to analysis versus the formal discourse analysis I had anticipated pursuing initially.

Procedural

First, I carefully listened to interview recordings, making note of repetition of ideas and of moments of emotion or insight. Second, I transcribed all of the interviews as well as hired assistance to transcribe a copy to be sure that interviews were captured accurately. I then reread the transcriptions carefully, making notes of significant connections to my research questions, cross references or correlative ideas connected with the literature and theory discussed in Chapter 2. Studying these notes, I worked to identify main ideas emerging across interviews. I further chunked and coded the transcribed responses, grouping them based on their qualitative similarity, until even more focused generative themes or over-arching patterns emerged, thus providing me with a rough heuristic of conceptual theoretical categories of analysis. Further consideration led to six recursive analytic stages used to organize my findings. Both stages and findings are discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Next, I returned to the interviews, noting where excerpts fell into any of the six thematic stages, even if they fell into more than one. At this point, I moved to even more focused coding, chunking data according to the stage(s) various transcription excerpts reflected (Bishop, 1999; Charmaz, 2006; Wolcott, 2001), thereby creating a document of

the collected material for each thematic stage, with color coded text so as not to lose track of individual speakers. Following this stage of analysis, I then dealt with each of the documents created in the last step, further considering the recurrent strategies employed by the various speakers. I considered whether participants were reporting internal dialogue, conversation with others (that had happened previous to the interview and provided an example or illustration of an idea they wished to convey to me), or utterances spontaneous to our own exchange. I also noted passages that reflected speakers employing literary tropes, providing metaphors, similes, concrete images, or definitions, and where such passages revealed emotion and particularly, where they addressed social locations or ideological commitments (Wortham, 2001).

Finally, I identified excerpts which fell into further discrete sub-categories within each theme. From there, I considered the whole list of excerpts carefully, in light of my research questions and in light of what the participants had made clear was central to their understanding of themselves, and organized those excerpts to flow in a way that might be logical to my reader, weeding out even then some excerpts as repeated information already dealt with or as too dependent upon previous knowledge as to make sense as excerpted. This selection and organization of excerpts formed the basis of the contextual findings explored in Chapter 4 and experience findings explored in Chapter 5 and were in keeping with the feminist commitment to "hear into being" (Slee, 2004) the stories of women as well as to avoid conflating complexities of identity and expression (McClintock-Fulkerson, 2001).

Researcher Background

My own position as a fellow alumna of Duke Divinity School who has undergone, at least to some extent, the same sociolinguistic identity transformation I wished to

examine, might be seen as unduly influencing my observations. I believe, however, that my position as an academic, having already completed two Master's degrees and the course work for the doctorate, to a large extent helped me to understand the language struggle I explored in my peers' strivings to enter the "academic temple" and to negotiate the pull between the academic and the religious world. As well, there are both *emic* and *etic*[7] advantages to my rather unusual position as participant/observer in this community.

The Divinity School is a rich field-work site complicated by very situated literacy practices—which might at once be classified as scholarly, religious, superstitious, historical, engendered, and faith-based. To be trusted to give a fair account of an identity transformation that extends beyond simple public presentation to a personal identity grounded in spiritual conviction, one would have to be considered not just a sympathetic observer, but an "insider." Furthermore, to be able to give a fair account of such a critical sociolinguistic phenomenon, one would have to be trained in rhetorical and sociolinguistic theory. As a seminary graduate and as a student of the Composition and TESOL program at IUP, an academic with previous degrees in English, and more than

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[7] Used primarily in cultural anthropology, there is not absolute definition agreed upon for these two terms, but as they have gained broader interdisciplinary use conceptually and as I intend them here, *emic* refers to the kind of insider or culturally specific knowledge essential if a researcher is to have both intuitive and empathic understanding of a culture under scrutiny. *Emic* knowledge is also a source of inspiration for *etic* hypotheses drawn upon for analyzing ethnographic data. *Etic* knowledge, or outside theoretical perspective, allows for cross-cultural comparison and the imposition of more standardized analytic or discipline-based categories.

twelve years teaching experience, three of which were at a Christian institution, I was uniquely positioned to conduct this research.

Still, it is important that I disclose here my own bias towards women in ministry as positive. I do not question the appropriateness of the vocational plans of my participants, either from a biblical or a moral or sociological standpoint. Even so, I do not believe that my positive outlook on women in ministry distorted my findings, as I was not intending in any way to defend the vocational decisions these women made. I meant only to explore the sociolinguistic processes and rhetorical strategies at work as they navigated the experiences which their own decisions put into play. In fact, my positive bias was an asset to this study in that the participants, being aware of my whole-hearted acceptance of their call, felt more comfortable and less threatened by the whole interview process; they also readily turned over unaltered documents, trusting me with very personal information about their very public pastoral identities. It is quite possible that this research would not exist at all had I not first accepted the claim for women in ministry as legitimate.

Validity Issues

By triangulating data collection, examining data from multiple sources and multiple participants, I have been able to "build a coherent justification for themes" (Creswell, 2003, p. 197) as they are identified in my data, particularly with my "insider" interpreter status. I constantly informed this perspective by revisiting the data sources. In addition, the focus group allowed participants to review findings in progress as well as to reflect further on their own experience in order to ensure accurate reporting of product and process (Belenky et al., 1997). The process enabled me to convey a credible, detailed narrative account of the sociolinguistic features of the identity formation of these women with regards to their view of themselves as ministers.

CHAPTER FOUR: EMERGENT THEMES (CONTEXT)

"Every act of defining is rhetorical: it constrains thought from entertaining many possibilities and channels into one" (Sterk, 1989, p. 24).

The rhetorical construction of identity—as conveyed through the call narratives of the six clergywomen of this study—supports viewing call narrative as a genre. The call narrative genre reflects the tradition of Christian testimony and, more specifically, Christian conversion narrative, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. Also noted previously, these women represent four distinct denominations within the Protestant and Evangelical faith tradition. Three are Methodist, one Baptist, one Lutheran, and one Moravian, as shown in Table 3 below. Three of the women self-identify as Caucasian, while the other three self-identify as African American.

Table 3

Participant Characteristics[8]

Name	Denomination	Age	Race	Marital Status	Level of Education before M.Div.	First Career
Esther	Lutheran	51	Caucasian	M	M.B.A.	University Development Officer; Cellist (Local Symphony)
Deborah	Methodist	39	African American	M	Ph.D.	Psychologist (University Faculty & Private Practice)
Hannah	Moravian	40	Caucasian	M	M.B.A., M.S. (Engineering Management)	Engineer, Marketing Strategy Manager
Mary	Methodist	53	Caucasian	D	B.A.	Photographer
Vashti	Baptist	42	African American	S	B.A.	Director of Community Outreach and Media, American Social Health Association (ASHA)
Priscilla	Methodist	38	African American	S	Ph.D.	Clinical Psychologist

All of these women are moving towards ordained ministry within their respective faith traditions, though depending on the demands of that tradition/denomination and their own understanding of their call to ministry, each finds herself at a different juncture

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[8] Because I have dealt with emerging themes grounded in the data rather than developed case studies, I have introduced readers only to the general characteristics of my participants. Further biographical information on each woman is available in Appendix C. To be sure, social location is a central aspect of each participant's self-concept. Yet it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the impact of each marker of social location. Therefore, characteristics such as age, race, or denomination are henceforth highlighted only when a participant raises such as an issue or when the implications of a remark can be understood only within a particular cultural, denominational, or theological context.

in the formalities of the ordination process. Having conducted two one-hour, semi-structured, face-to-face, open-ended interviews with each woman based initially on formal papers they provided me, I found myself with a wealth of data. Their interviews reflected how the women position themselves both sociologically and linguistically within Christian tradition; within academic expectations of intellectuals; and within their own narrative of what a minister is, is not, and should be; and who they are as they move towards professional clergy positions.

Rather than superimposing an outside analytical structure on the data discussed in this and the following chapter, i.e. rather than categorizing it heuristically, I grouped, categorized, and presented the data based on themes emerging from the narratives themselves. These themes pointed to what one might identify as stages of developing and claiming an identity of pastoral leadership, though the stages cannot be and should not be understood as reflecting a consistent linear process. What emerged, instead, were six grand movements of a rhetorical dance, reflected in both external and self-reported internal dialogues, with each woman moving back and forth between stages, sometimes "living in" one or more of the stages several times before moving finally into a kind of actualized peace or self-acceptance, a firm, public, rhetorical stance as a minister. These movements have been subsumed under the following headings: Dimensions and Definitions of Call, Models of Leadership and Ministry, Moments of Negations of Call, Moments of Resisting and Doubt, Moments of Affirmation, and finally, Losing and Becoming (Claiming Ministerial Identity). The first two movements are dealt with in this chapter; the remaining four in Chapter 5.

The six stages were recursive in much the same way the writing process for an author is recursive. Authors move back and forth between the generative exercises, then

draft and revise, only to move back to the generative stages as the development of the draft sparks new ideas or provokes responses from early readers that demand revision. Even the most successful professional writer moves back and forth through these stages until what emerges, for that moment, or for that editorial deadline, can be made public as a product.

An oft told tale in Southern literary circles of the famous novelist, William Faulkner, claims that he rarely managed to willingly leave the recursive process of writing; in many instances his work was finally completed simply because his editor took the manuscript away from him in desperation to publish something...*anything*! It took his editor's intervention to break the recursive cycle. Even still, early printings of some of his major works exist to this day with marks in his own hand of revisions he had wished to make. The women of this study, too, moved through the stages of the rhetorical construction of themselves as ministers, coming to grips with and attempting to communicate their answer to the call they feel in their lives by moving recursively through the stages that I have identified. Also, not unlike Faulkner's experience, each woman finally left the cycle or was pushed towards making her journey through the process public by an individual, an event, or a situation that interrupted the process.

I do not claim that clergywomen everywhere will experience all of these stages nor that any answer to a divine call must reflect these stages. However, they did offer a valid window into the richness and complexity of the issue and experience. Even here, in my own data, there was such an abundance of material that further studies and claims could certainly emerge from these narratives. However, in order to present my findings in a way which provided logic and structure for the reader, and which enabled justified reflection on the material, I offered up these six categories or themes as providing a

pattern of the movement these women made as they understood and expressed themselves and their call.

The diagram below (Figure 2) illustrates the recursive stages each of the women in this study moved through as she first related or narrated her call and then explored, engaged and finally accepted that call as legitimate and that narrative as self-defining. The stages illustrated also reflected her eventual willingness to embrace, enact or inhabit the identity of "pastor" or professional clergywoman she understood the call to demand. While *Dimensions and Definitions of Call* was not more important than any other stage or movement in the process, it was the one stage every woman returned to constantly and remarked on the most. It was fundamental to her experience of the other five. It is illustrated here, then, as encircling the other five because its definition shaped and colored all the others.
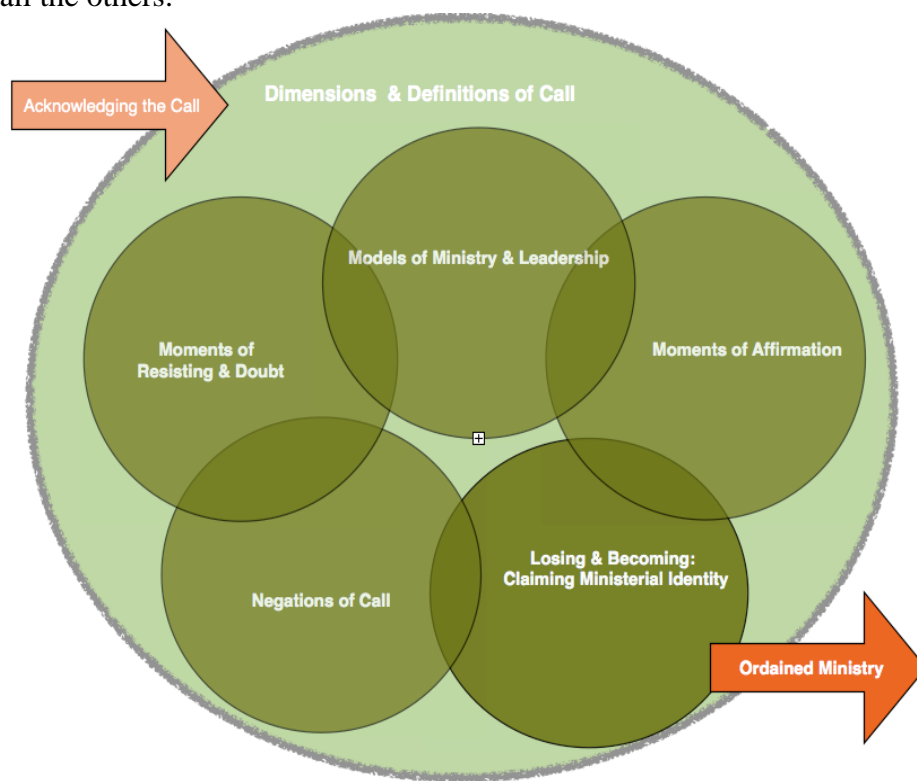
Figure 2 Exploring the journey towards pastoral identity: Six recursive stages.

Dimensions & Definitions of Call

The conventional career narrative—the story of how one is to be a "successful" minister at work—competes with the narrative about the call, the spiritual content of the work, a narrative about who they are supposed to be rather than how they are to move up a ladder. (Charlton, 2000, p. 423)

In this oft visited stage of the recursive process, *Dimensions & Definitions of Call,* each woman grappled with an elusive, evolving, highly personal conception of call. Each rooted her understanding of that term in Christian tradition, experiencing herself as turning towards a new life and being converted to the possibility of herself as a leader. She moved towards being willing to say, "I am something other than what I was before." She was also involved, as Dana Anderson (2007) argued, in an act of persuasion: persuading herself and others of the legitimacy and appropriateness of her own "conversion" from lay person to church leader.

However, despite the women's unanimous agreement that each of them is "called," what that meant and how they talked about its effects varied widely. In Christian tradition, the intertwining notions of conversion and the possibility of a call on one's life are based upon a number of stories related in both the Old and New Testaments. In these scriptural accounts, individuals going about their ordinary lives are somehow singled out to perform a divinely ordained task, or even to live the remainder of their lives in a particular kind of service. Since these stories played an important role in the participants' answers, I note them briefly before moving on to the interview data.

The Old Testament story of Noah and the ark is one such tale of life-changing events (Genesis 7–9). Another from the Old Testament often pointed to is the call of Moses to free the people of Israel, an event marked by the miracle of a "burning bush,"

the outcome of which is still remembered symbolically in Jewish communities around the world with the traditions of Passover (Exodus 3–12). In each case, the individual in question is going about life's daily work until a set of extraordinary circumstances, either based on impressions from within (an inner voice) or without (an event seen as miraculous or even a life crisis), changes the direction of the individual's life.

One of the most famous call narratives of the New Testament is that of the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–9). Combined with having a strong Jewish identity and zeal for Judaism, Saul (his given name) was a Pharisee trained under the great first-century Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 5:34). When Saul encounters a blinding light and experiences a theophany in the midst of his journey, he becomes convinced of the truth of the budding religion he has been zealously persecuting, Christianity, and his own understanding of himself as a defender of Judaism is radically altered. He immediately embarks on an entirely new life seemingly bent on rectifying past wrongs and yet colored as intensely with religious zeal for the new "way" he has come to believe in as he once was for maintaining orthodox Judaism (Acts 9:20). Anderson notes that "along with this new missionary life, Paul also established, albeit indirectly, the idea of "conversion" that is expressed in the terms of the Latin root, *conversio*: a "turning," a re-orientation of the soul...a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right" (Nock as cited in Anderson, 2007, p. 4).

The women in this study drew often upon these biblical figures as both models and metaphors as each related her call narrative. As well, each seemed to understand the idea of conversion and call in two ways: first, as a Christian conversion, a transformational turning from one way of being in the world and holding one particular understanding of life to a new kind of life entirely; second, as a more particular turning to

the "new," as affecting one's professional and vocational identity. "Walking as a

Christian," an expression the women used to explain how they conducted or developed a

lifestyle around the policies and practices of Christianity, can lead not only to new

conduct, but also—as it did for Noah, Moses, and Paul—to a new vocation.

Vashti, a 42-year-old Baptist, and the former Director of Community Outreach

and Media for ASHA,[9] in her attempt to address call directly, reflected both the very

personal and the very elusive nature of her definition:

> Call I think is deeply personal, but I think there's a struggle of what really is call.
> And for me [it is] saying to God, "OK I thought I was going to get some big
> sign." And I finally decided, "You're not going to send a trumpet that comes
> through the clouds, and you don't have to blind me like you did Paul. I don't need
> a burning bush, but send me some kind of demonstration."

Here, in admitting she would accept even a small reassurance that her sense of call was

legitimate, Vashti's plea with the divine—which she reported as a kind of internal

dialogue—invoked both the call of Moses and the call of Paul. For Vashti, her call to

ministry did not involve a "burning bush" moment, but because such an event was part of

her paradigm and because she perceived some kind of extraordinary legitimating

experience as an expectation of others as well, she struggled to perceive and acknowledge

her own experience as valid.

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[9] The American Social Health Association (ASHA) is a non-profit and advocacy

organization committed to improving public health outcomes concerning sexually

transmitted infections. More information on ASHA is available here:

http://www.ashastd.org/about/about_overview.cfm

In her second interview, Vashti built upon her definition of call and clarified her sense that it involved much more than a one-time epiphany; instead it involved active, on-going discernment of what God demanded. She felt God also shaped the behavior or action He demanded.

> So I hope to...continually hear from God. I don't think that God is finished with my call. I don't think that my call has been completely made clear. I hope to be able to remain in a place mentally and physically...spiritually where I can hear God, and not do what is my tendency to do when I'm afraid of something which is to shut off...close off. Yeah, and I hope to be able to respond. You know, the whole mind, body, spirit...I hope to be able to respond.

Vashti also listed the expectations of others for how call might work and, relatedly, what pastoring should look like. In doing so, she continued to build on the dimensions of call, while also reflecting on some public misconceptions.

> I think people in general don't realize all that it takes to be a pastor. [They think] God calls you and, in that moment of call, equips you with everything you will ever need. [There are] the people who feel [pastors] should never go to school, that going to school is a sign that you're not really called. Because if God called you, God would have equipped you through osmosis. They don't understand that it's the rare person who is a preacher, a teacher, and administrator and really has a pastor's heart for people.

Acknowledging the call was just the beginning for Vashti. Training and discernment were part of "turning" her life in a new direction. In fact, formal training was recognized by all the women in the study, as each has turned not only to seminary studies, but seminary studies in a demanding, university setting. For Mary, 53 and a

former photographer, call was "who you are." It was "inside you," as compared with a vocation which was "what you do and where you go daily to make money." She explained:

> Well, I've been in a vocation for 20 years, so I know what that's like. That's a job, and I got up and went to it every day. I got really good at some things; that's where I perfected my photography, and that's where I became a writer. That's where I learned how to do international special events and those kinds of things and I loved it. But when I was a teenager, I felt the Lord speaking to me, and guiding me into ministry...it was like something that incubated within me...evolving, but organically.

According to Mary, too, answering a call was different from the kind of goal-setting associated with career moves or "forging" a career. For Mary, one did not forge a call; a call seemed to unfold. Setting goals could actually shut God out. She explained it this way:

> [In answering a call] you don't have an ultimate sense of life. Call is something that keeps evolving—like I didn't know I had a calling to the Prison ministry until one day I got a letter, [an invitation] to teach Disciple Bible Study in the prisons. And I just thought, "Finally." You know I get this letter, and I'm at the right place at the right time.

This notion of unfolding that Mary introduced was echoed by both Esther and later, Hannah. In fact, Esther imaged call as unfolding much like an elaborate Japanese origami figure of art, with each fold representing a different event or facet of experience shaping the individual and the call.

The first fold for Esther, who in her previous career had been a development officer for a very prestigious university law school, was her own realization of a desire to "preach," even before really owning up to a call as minister. She saw "preaching" and "pastoring" as distinct activities for several reasons. Among the most important was the vocational stability and strong professional persona she had already established working in fundraising and university development and the fact that her liturgical tradition made room for active lay leaders apart from ordained clergy. Asking to preach, though, set in motion a chain of events and moments of self-realization Esther had not anticipated; and so this preaching impetus truly was the first leaf of the unfolding of her call. She recalled,

> In the middle of [a significant class on women in scripture] I said to the woman who was the education director at my church, "I want to teach a Sunday School class...I think...how about the Mother of Jesus as an advent Sunday School class?" And then I said in the spring, to my pastor, "I think I'd like to preach. Would you let me preach?" And he did. He said, "It's the last thing I ever thought I'd hear you say, but yes. How about preaching a sermon about Mary...on the day of Mary, the Mother of our Lord, August 15th?"

Thus the "call to ministry" that unfolded for Esther was early on affirmed by a woman in a class on women in scripture. Her involvement in the course had prompted her desire to preach in the first place. Even as Esther herself was denying her unfolding interest, seeing it as no more than a simple desire to become more deeply involved as a parish lay leader, she was being told, "Consider more. I see more in you." There is a dilemma here, since one can initially experience a clear motivation to study, learn and commit, but not to be "ordained." Three of the women, Deborah, Priscilla, and Vashti, reported this dichotomy too when they sought to explain the idea of call as definite, but

also unfolding. Each initially intended to preach but not necessarily pastor. Uncertainty about assuming a pastoral identity was linked in part, as Esther explained, to the public implications of such a call: "A pastor is who you are. It's not just a job, it's not just a profession. It is...it's a vocational calling...and I still am not...entirely clear at as to where that will lead me . . ."

Only later in the unfolding process, Esther explained, did she begin to envision her call as one to ordained pastoral ministry. Her understanding of call further unfolded when she realized that her limited involvement in the lives of others, as merely a lay leader or chaplain, would be too constraining. It no longer seemed to encompass her understanding of call:

> I would like to spend time in a parish as a parish pastor because I want to be involved in the celebrations in people's lives, and not just the crises in people's lives [as I would as just a chaplain]. Being a minister is not a title; it's a way of being in the world on a daily basis in community with others. I think God has been maybe just narrowing me in...hemming me in, in a sense so that I moved out on the path. I see calling as walking on a path...and there's a wonderful verse in Isaiah 31 that says that "if you turn your head to the right and to the left, you'll hear a voice behind you saying this is the path. Walk in it."

In addition to her metaphor of an unfolding origami form and the image of journey or path used by all the women, Esther, and later Priscilla, spoke of specific events that seemed both to point to the call as a supernatural designation and to shape the path involved in answering the call. Esther talked of a literal experience from which she derived what she reported as "supernatural confirmation" that she was being "hemmed in" on a path to ministry. "God doesn't just call," she exclaimed,

God calls on the telephone! I was called to see if I would go to the emergency room...God called on the telephone to ask me to baptize premature twins [during clinical pastoral training]. He called on the telephone to ask if I would go and sit with this injured kid. So...yeah...that's where it is. God calls on the telephone.

Esther interpreted these special requests as a sign that she was being drawn to ministry. Esther pointed out too, that not only does God call, and call women, God calls second career folks in particular. Forging an identity she could identify with when none was offered in traditional interpretations of scripture, she noted that most people think of the disciples of Jesus as "twelve men called by Jesus" to a new vocation. But Esther focused on their call "*away from* a vocation" to a "new vocation"; so the apostles were second career, just as she is!

Mary continued with the idea of the dimensions of a call to ministry as a career vs. ministry as way of life, as she explained,

There are many people who are ministers. I think we all have that opportunity and privilege and obligation to minister to other people. We are called as a collective whole to be the priesthood of believers. Yes. But I believe some people are called beyond that. I believe that there are some people who are in it that are not called. I believe that they...sometimes bad things happen to congregations when people understand ministry as a [job] and not as a divine calling. So it's not an 8:30 - 5:00 pm job where you know, it starts and ends...it's really who you are.

Every woman, in some way, also echoed Mary's understanding, as expressed here, of the dimensions of call as involving the dailyness of grief, joy, pain, birth, and death:

I need a congregation whom I can work with and meet where they are; in their

pain, in their grief, in their joy, in their journey, in the birth of a baby, in the death

of a parent and all, and be a healthy person in that. And, you know, that's the

beauty of it. And I do this because I'm called to do it, not for some unmet needs

that I have...it's a privilege and a responsibility.

Hannah, 38, who left an executive engineering job in order to attend divinity

school, defined call as something emerging from her own realization that her life should

move in a new direction, and she expressed certainty of the *existence* of the call to

ministry, but uncertainty as to the *shape* it would take. Her explanation pointed to a

tension (also discussed below by Deborah) surrounding giving up a first career. Hannah's

first career, as an engineer and businesswoman, was based on family expectations; it was

a career she chose "because that's what my dad did." As she became more and more

involved in church after marrying and having a child, she began to experience a personal

happiness and satisfaction at church that she had previously thought was only the

emotionalism of a child or teenager enjoying being part of a meaningful group. Hannah

explained:

And as I slowly started to realize that in fact that wasn't a teenager thing...that

wasn't a way that you had to give up feeling after high school, I started to think

about that in more detail and tried to listen to what that was saying to me. You

know, someone at this point introduced that Buechner quote to me about the

"world's need and your passion."[10]

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[10] The reference here is to novelist and theologian Frederick Buechner's statement,

"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's

As Hannah became more and more involved in Bible studies and mission trips with her congregation, she noted,

> I was feeling alive and awake in a way that I wasn't in other places in my life, even though work was fun and mostly rewarding and challenging. And I started to sorta joke that maybe someday I would go back to school to seminary.

Hannah's moment of certainty that she should attend seminary came during a "labyrinth walk," a medieval contemplative practice of walking a pattern and praying along the path. The path Hannah followed had been set up by a large, local church open to the Durham community during the Christian season of Lent.[11] The outcome of Hannah's labyrinth walk was a clear sense that "[church] was where I felt alive, this is the way ministry was...a way of engaging with people that felt right and genuine." Also, in her contemplation, she decided that the example her life-choices set for her child would be much more reflective of who she was if she were attending seminary than if she continued working for a Fortune 500 company.

Like Vashti, Hannah offered a definition of call drawing on stories from Christian scripture, including the story of God's call of the Old Testament prophet Samuel: "What I read in Scriptural accounts of call...is that call is from beyond ...so it's not logical in the

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deep hunger meet." Published first in *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 95.

[11] Lent is the forty day season between Ash Wednesday and Easter on the Christian calendar. It is generally understood as a season of inward reflection, of contrition and fasting as Christians prepare to celebrate Easter.

context; it doesn't make sense necessarily." That a call does not *have* to be logical was very important to Hannah as a mathematician and engineer, because her choice to abandon a scientist's identity for this new emerging identity as minister and scholar was not, itself, logical to her former self, nor to others in her life outside her congregation.

The "Dimension and Definition" aspect of Hannah's view of call was strongly affected by her faith tradition, the Moravian church, which strictly defines ministry roles. Her scholarly abilities and call to teach as well as preach move beyond the fixed definitions of Moravian "ministry"; so it was necessary for her to obtain permission from her supervisory board to "diverge" from the "normal" ordination path in order to pursue a Doctor of Theology degree (Th.D.). In the meantime, she has not set aside her own call to ordained parish ministry. Instead, she serves her Moravian church province in different ways while she "waits" and "works on the Th.D."

Hannah explained that she saw the typical parish ministry of teaching, preaching, pastoral care and church administration as part of her call. But she also had a sense of "having something to teach seminary students...something to say to them." Much as Esther's experience of being "called on the telephone" to baptize a dying infant helped Esther recongnize her call, a singular event helped Hannah to imagine how one might intertwine university teaching and parish ministry. Hannah's participation in the International Women's Gathering at Hermhut (seat of the Moravian Church), where she served on a committee wording a resolution concerning violence against women, enabled her to "hear" and "sift through" many ideas and to interject a theological perspective on the issues the committe discussed. This experience allowed her to see how university teaching and parish life might be combined; "This was the place where I could see combining knowledge and gifts..."

Priscilla, who had completed her Ph.D. in Psychology and worked in the clinical setting before attending seminary, provided a definition of call that added to what the others had described. She insisted that a call involves "God using my skills, calling me into *doing* something. Into using the gifts that God has given me to do a work of ministry for him. For me it happens to be the preaching." Like Esther, supernatural confirmation of call played a part for Priscilla in even imagining the definition or shape of call. She reported that an earlier dream experience from 1995 had foreshadowed her call to ministry:

> In the dream it came to me, John 15:17; and I got up and went to my bible. "This I command ye that ye love one another." Okay...I'm doing this diversity stuff [for my doctoral dissertation], it's about love. I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing and kept pushing forward with the notion of multi-culturalism, diversity, equity.

It was only after she was established in her profession as a clinical psychologist and after she felt drawn to obtain a seminary education that Priscilla reinterpreted her dream as a call to preach rather than to practice psychology in a particular way. The call—as for Esther—was ultimately confirmed by a critical event. For Priscilla, a kind of extended crisis emerged during her first field education experience after entering divinity school. When working under the direction of an unsupportive male pastor, a situation she had not anticipated, she was compelled to fall back on her own trust in her call and its meaning for her:

> I went to Reedsville, NC, and my pastor found out she was going to be leaving. Because of the itinerary system, [she was being] reappointed to a different United Methodist Church...When the new pastor came, he was a male and he wasn't too supportive [of my being there]. It didn't make it smooth for me. It was okay. God

made it tough so that it confirmed for me that I was to preach, because seven of

ten of those Sundays, I preached. And it was only God who got me through. And I

knew I followed the Spirit that I believe spoke to me. And "Yes," it was the right

thing to do. And as I was in seminary it was just a confirmation to me throughout

the three years, every time I preached, that I'm doing what I'm supposed to be

doing.

Priscilla echoed the idea of the call as an unfolding and a journey too, when she said,

I don't know how it's going to work out but I know it will. It's a faith journey. I

can honestly tell you, I don't know how it's going to work out. This is a real step

of faith for me. I'm leaving my job. I worked so hard to obtain the Ph.D., to

become licensed, to practice, but I believe that this is what I'm called to do, what

God is beckoning me to do.

Priscilla further expressed her understanding of a call to ministry as involving a

minister's openness towards public exposure:

This is the thing. I think to some degree you must accept the responsibility of

leadership, but I also think that at the same time we have to be transparent and

human enough to let people know that, "Guess what?...I am not perfect." We're

all being matured to perfection. I have flaws. I have struggles. Now you may not

get there and enumerate all your struggles for people or go into details about your

struggle, but you have to be transparent enough to say that, "You know what, I'm

not perfect."

Like every woman in the study, Priscilla left plans for what's ahead unarticulated.

She did not know what lay ahead on the "journey" or what would "unfold." The

"Dimension and Definitions of Call" were not finite. She did articulate elements of a

multi-faceted identity she hoped would develop, but she reflected the same willingness to serve others as did all of the women in the study. She preferred to think of a call to pastoral ministry as service and resisted seeing it as an opportunity to conquer and excel in the traditional sense of pursuing a successful career. She also affirmed call as an unfolding process difficult to define and dependent upon time. She explained,

> I still don't know how A and B hang together. But at the same time, I have the trust that A and B and C are all gonna hang together, by the grace of God. And I think that that's one of my greatest strengths, is the faith that I have cultivated, that I've developed throughout life...I remember being very sad and even suicidal as a child because all my friends had both parents and I didn't. And I struggled with relationship with my birth father. And now God has turned that around, and now we have a solid, good relationship. But I didn't know that when I was 15 years old—that it would be this way at 37. It took some time. It took another 15 years, actually, for it to be different, so who knows what happens in the next fifteen years? You know? I don't know!

Like Esther and Priscilla, Deborah did not initially envision answering the call as meaning a surrender of her current professional identity. As a tenure-track faculty member in the psychology department at a well-known research university, she imagined that answering the call would mean only a new layer of complexity, a shift in commitments:

> I would go to seminary part-time for 3 years, still working on my grant and doing what I needed to do for my career. I was going to shift the focus of my research...so at the time I was looking at how parenting affected adolescent outcomes in African American families, and I was just going to add another layer,

which was looking specifically at mothers…how they were functioning both in terms of spiritually and physically and emotionally and how that in turn affected their parenting, and how that affected adolescents.

"Seeing" and "hearing" the lives around her, "the stories" of women put in her path, became part of an inescapable call to her: "Something outside of me felt that God just kept putting in my path stories…When I wanted to turn away from it I couldn't. I kept hearing these stories and feeling like I should be responding to them." Others asked her, "Why be a minister when the 'hope of the gospel' you express is something that any Christian might express?" She reflected on that question; and she realized that she could certainly express her Christian values as a psychologist or lay-leader. But ultimately, Deborah felt that she was inexorably drawn to a call that went beyond the lay level. Referring to the call to ministry, she said, "I've felt like I can't get away from that! I've tried!"

Deborah further characterized the strength of her call as encompassing all aspects of her daily life. But interestingly—like all of the women in the study—Deborah had come to understand that a key piece of the puzzle was preaching and doing it regularly, as a part of ordained ministry.

It's a push and a pull that I feel from outside of me, beyond my control. Most certainly you can do these things [ministry and preaching] without being in ordained ministry and without being a parish pastor. One doesn't preclude the other. One doesn't assume the other. But there's still something in me that feels that would be incomplete. And [it's clearest to me] when I preach.

Also, she too saw call as "journey" and something unfolding, and not something that was not goal oriented in the way her earlier career had been. There was a tension to live in, not knowing how everything would work out.

The questions aren't as easy anymore. It's not so much I'm an assistant professor who wants to be tenured and who wants to be full professor in a certain number of years, and here's my tenure plan and this is how I'm gonna do it. Now it's, I don't know. I'm just doing whatever I'm supposed to be doing at this moment. I can't tell you what I'll be doing next year. When next year comes, I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. I think I try to be faithful now in where I am.

Models of Ministry & Leadership

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. (1 Timothy 3:2-4)

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. (Acts 2:17-18)

The next theme emerging from the data, the next step in the recursive dance of progress towards an owned identity as minister, is that of important and influential models of ministry and leadership. Models holding currency in today's world come in many forms. They range from the rapid-fire, think-on-your-feet, cut-throat abilities

lauded on popular television shows like *The Apprentice* or *The Lion's Den*, to those

conveyed in modern classic treatises such as *How to Win Friends and Influence People*,

or timeless classics from centuries gone by, like *The Art of War* and Machiavelli's *The

Prince.* Christian history is not short on models for leadership either. Biblical models

range from the fiery and zealous Apostle Paul, discussed earlier in this chapter, to the

gentle, rabbinic leadership of Jesus, and from the brave Old Testament Judge, Deborah,

to the co-laborer in ministry with Paul, Priscilla. Scriptural models run the gamut of style,

substance, influence, and outcome. In a march through time, the church might also point

to the gentle Francis of Assisi, the cerebral and iconic Augustine, the shrewd and

magnanimous Hildegaard of Bingen, as well as the deeply spiritual Theresa of Avila.

Clearly, there are as many ways to lead as there are gifted and talented

individuals, and those ways are shaped profoundly by the fundamental values in the lives

of each individual. When it comes to the clergywomen of this study, the models that

functioned as paradigms for ministry and leadership for them, while often drawn from the

kinds of models listed above, also moved beyond them to fall into four loose categories:

community models, scriptural models, pastoral models, and professional ministry models.

Community Models

Deborah, Mary, Priscilla, Esther, Hannah and Vashti all connected ministry goals

to "real" and "tangible" results in a community and to being an integral and responsible

part of that community. Vashti began her discussion of models, however, by reflecting on

her own limitations as an introvert. As a result of these limitations, she was unable to

view herself as an ordained minister in light of traditional expectations for a constantly-

available pastoral figure (whether those were accurate expectations or not).

When God calls, he gives you a pastor's heart. It means you don't have a life of your own...and I require a lot of time to myself. And I don't know that I honestly...well…care for people…I love people. But I don't particularly LIKE people, or being with people.

Being with people in their day-to-day circumstances and crises was something that all of the women pointed to as a draw for them to the ministry; but clearly there was ambivalence as to the price in personal freedom involved in accepting such a model.

Mary, too, noted that accepting a call as pastor had clear ramifications for one's personal life, particularly in terms of community expectations of the pastor as a role model for behavior, as the following excerpt from our interview demonstrated:

Mary: I think [answering the call to be a minister] makes you a different person. There are certain things I wouldn't do now that I did in my previous life. I'm very careful about that. "Well there's the pastor...if she can do it…"

Kathryn: So there's a kind of moral authority that you're vested with…whether you deserve it or not…that you wouldn't have been if you were a photographer?

Mary: Right!

In addition to community demands and the kind of vested moral authority that impinged on private life, Vashti also talked about community expectations in terms of "fitting in" to the community in order to minister to it appropriately:

If [in a hospital visit] I talk to a person who is an elderly African-American Baptist, I will use some of the words that my elderly African-American Baptist family members use. If it's a person who is in a liturgical church, I use a [little different] speech and manner…and sometimes I just do it all!"

Using language in this way to project the expected image of a minister meant meeting the need of individuals and enacting a ministerial identity which may not have been comfortable, but which conformed to the model of outside expectations of "being ministered to."

Deborah echoed Vashti and Mary as she used the metaphor of a journey for life and for the ministry of "being with" people and meeting the needs of a community. She also used the same metaphor for her own journey of becoming a pastor. She wanted to "journey with the people" rather than being an observer of specific moments...moving in and out of their daily lives as she used to do. She explained, "As a psychologist, you don't journey with people the same way. You're not there the day after somebody's husband dies. You're there two weeks later when they make an appointment to come in for an hour...And I've found that the journey with people fits me more than being a psychologist."

Not only being with people in a community, or being involved in church and broader community life, but being visible to anyone in the community as a pastor also informed the community model. Wearing a tangible sign of her identity as "minister' was very important to several of the women. Esther, Priscilla, and Vashti described the clerical collar as representing a "familiar" identity to many, still evoking a mostly positive response from the public, regardless of theological views on women in ministry; they felt that it helped them to "wear" the authority symbol of their identity as "minister." Esther talked about it specifically in relation to her chaplaincy experiences.

At UNC you don't [wear a collar], but your name badge identifies you. So everyone is always looking at your name badge. And my friend the doctor at UNC said, "When I wear that white coat and people walk into my clinic, they

know they can put their life in my hands." And I was like, yeah! And that's why you dress to set yourself apart. You know...[So wearing a clerical collar] really does make a difference. I mean it really is amazing when I have worn it – how differently I'm viewed and treated.

On the other hand, all three women also acknowledged that "wearing" the identity literally sometimes invited the expression of theological resistance to women in ministry. A glimpse of this is reflected in the following excerpt the interview with Esther:

Kathryn: I'm wondering if the collar helps you have any authority as a woman that you wouldn't have in more traditional female dress?

Esther: I believe it does; I believe it does. And my Lutheran Pastor friend in Rocky Mount wears her collar all the time in pastoral situations, and she wears it when she's sort of on any official duties. And she said that she's been stopped and asked if "I'm a priest." [She] says "Yes." I do think it gives you an authority…[even though] some people would be insulted, particularly people who don't think women should have authority as pastors.

Was this tangible rhetoric, the literal clerical collar, of more import than the intangible and unrecorded, everyday speech and carriage of these women as they lived into their call? Whether they rejected wearing the collar daily (and none of the women in this study eschewed it entirely), or accepted it, there was a sense that it held a familiar identity for the community. They knew others are more likely to "see" a pastor when they see a clerical collar.

Overall, for the women discussed here, community models consisted of ideas that a Christian community, such as a church or parish, might hold collectively about what the persona of a pastor should be and how authority should be exercised. Community models

also reflected wider considerations involving quality of life for neighborhoods, ethnic groups, and other ways that a broader culture might dissect itself. Some community models drew upon what I identify below as scriptural models, or pastoral models. However, the idea of a pastor as a caregiver and as a daily presence in the life of a group of people was key to the responses that I have grouped here under community models.

Scriptural Models

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I touched briefly upon the theological disputes surrounding the question of whether or not Christian scripture permits a woman to "teach or to preach or to hold authority over men" (1 Timothy 2:12)—whether or not she has any right to understand herself to be called by God to ordained ministry and leadership. The controversy rages, at least in some Christian quarters, because some lines of scripture seem—when taken literally—to forbid such activity, though scripture remains replete with examples of women in leadership. Therefore, scriptural models of leadership, both male and female, play a central role in pastoral identity for the women in this study, particularly when embracing that identity publicly.

For Esther, studying the scripture with a circle of women helped to sort out confusion over her own spiritual journey.

> We looked at the "Mother of Jesus," we looked at women in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, and who they were and where they came from. And we talked about our own mothers, and a genealogy of your mother because, you know, most genealogies are son of...son of...

Esther further explained that studying particular women's lived experience in the scriptures specifically led her to a realization of the gifts of women, of positive images and models of women in ministry, and of never before grasped feminine images of God.

Mary, too, found that the scriptures authenticated rather than rejected the leadership of women. Her realization of her own convictions about that truth led her to refuse church membership at one point rather than join a community that did not recognize women's leadership as legitimate. Deborah and Priscilla both joined the United Methodist church in order to participate in a faith community that read the scriptures through an egalitarian lens. All of the women in the study, of course, have had to wrestle with the scriptural models of pastoral leadership and decide whether or not they would join the ranks of women through history who have been an integral part of the shape of the church writ large; but it is their references to Paul, to Judith, and to other biblical figures as models of leadership that occupy more of their thinking than any biblical defense of themselves as women pastors.

Pastoral Models

For the women of these interviews, intertwined with scriptural and community models of ministry and leadership were pastoral models. A number of these, of course, emerged directly from scripture and the records of the ways in which members of the early church in the New Testament "held things in common" (Acts 4:32-35) and cared for "widows and orphans" (James 1:27) and preached "the good news" (Matt.4:23; Mark 1:14-16). However, others arose from the witness and example of literal pastoral role models: individuals who shaped, whether positively or negatively, how these clergywomen understand pastoral care as well as how they envision their own possibilities for ministry and leadership. These pastoral models were often individuals who also affirmed the call of the women of this study when they first began their tentative steps towards acknowledging themselves ministers. Good pastoral models and affirmation were closely allied.

Esther pointed to affirmation and encouragement from a variety of "models" for ministry: in particular, the pastor of her church in Durham for much of her professional life, who presided over the congregation when she first began exploring her own call to ministry. By contrast, Deborah identified a hierarchical lens, based on childhood pastoral models, by which she operated initially as a psychologist and in the early days of discerning her call: race, gender, and Christianity.

> My church nurtured that sense [of hierarchy] because it really was a black nationalist church in some ways. Faithful…very faithful. But definitely faith through the lens of race. Our Pastor was one of those pastors that had been involved in the Civil Rights Movement, so it was *that* type of church. So we brought Jesse Jackson in and Andrew Young. People like that came to speak at our church...So I saw living out mission in terms of helping with problems of race. I felt that as long as I was doing that part, I was doing it. [I thought] that was what God had called me to do. And that was enough.

Hannah spoke of a model of ministry as servant, as exemplified by her grandfather in a St. Louis Baptist church for 70 years. Her language reflected language used in church: to "be present" or "very present," as the Holy Spirit is present. Like most of the women in this study, she did not have daily models of women in parish ministry, but because of the small size of the worldwide faith community of Moravians, she has met the women who were first to be ordained in the U. S. as well as the three present female bishops. The cultural divide between the Northern and Southern provinces of the Moravian Church in the U. S. also played a part in the numbers of women in parish

ministry to whom Hannah was exposed: 30% of pastors in the Northern province are women, as compared with only 9% in Hannah's province of the south.[12]

Pastoral models identified by several of the women were not ordained, professional ministers, but key individuals who seem to model positive influence and caring in relationships, or who seemed to enact Christian worship and ideals in a way that affected daily life. Mary's father was instrumental in forming her ideas of "right" and "ministry." She explained:

> [My models] were not ministers. In fact, when I took that pastor's vocation class, the first question they asked us in our small group was, "What pastor has had the most influence on us?" I realized, at that point, that I had not really had a pastor who meant anything much to me as a model...So, when it came my turn to answer, I told them the person who had the most impact on my life in terms of being a minister was my father. He was not ordained, but he was called...certainly called beyond anyone I had seen...To have someone love the Lord like my father does, that's where my model comes from.

Two final recurring themes in the discussion of pastoral models should be noted. First, each woman seemed to have learned to understand "serving" a church as distinct from the idea of "self sacrifice" that is sometimes used against women who do not give what others think they should. Also, all six women insisted that churches incorrectly put the pastor "on a pedestal." Pastors were models, perhaps, and models who impacted their

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[12] Southern Baptist and Church of Christ, both denominations which stand against ordaining women, exercise a strong influence on Southern culture in general and this likely affects Moravian congregations despite theology.

own call, but they were not always ideals. They saw each individual as equally engaging in a personal journey, pastors as well as lay people.

Professional Models

The women also spoke of professional models: persons they had never met, but whose writings or preaching had influenced their call and whose work had drawn attention and provided food for thought or shaped conceptions of ministry. As Priscilla talked of professional models for ministry, she focused mostly on a pastor who had done what she aspired to do: combine pastoral ministry and psychology.

> [The individual] I have found to be a pastor with a psychological perspective is Bishop Noel Jones out of California. I always admire him and he's just a brilliant man. He's nondenominational. He's at the City of Refuge which is outside LA. He grew up in an Apostolic church, very Pentecostal, Church of God, like I grew up Pentecostal. But often times, his messages are psychological in nature and he's looking at mind and heart.

When asked about any female models of pastoral ministry, Priscilla—like the majority of the women in this study—could not point to any regular, influential models. However she did point to something several other women hinted at, but did not elaborate on, and that was the extent to which they admired professional female models, high-ranking women ministers from a variety of backgrounds they had come to know through books, television, and DVD's. Priscilla explained:

> Through the years, when I've thought about women preachers, I really used to like Paula White. She's out of Tampa Florida—and Joyce Meyers' [ministry]. And sometimes I would listen to Taffy Dollar, and there would be times I would look at other people like Cheryl Brady...There would be women who came to preach

[at my home church] from time to time, but primarily men. But usually the

women would be, say, the women's day speaker, or the missionary; never really

the preacher.

Even as she reached for female models, it was only the professional models that remained

unchallenged by Priscilla's local congregation's attitudes towards women.

Deborah's experience of congregational attitudes was even more striking than

Priscilla's and clearly affected the length of time it took for Deborah to reconcile her self-

perception to her call-perception. Even though psychology was a "call," it was a

"permissible" call where she could serve God. Deborah never saw a female preacher until

college, and even then she still could not conceive of that for herself: "Ministry was never

in mind because I had never seen a female minister. The first female minister I had seen

was in college—Cynthia Hale. One of my friends attended her church, and I would go to

her church and I would see her preaching and think, "Wow! That's amazing!" and never

ever considered it for myself."

Her experience echoed Priscilla's move towards professional models to

contextualize her developing understanding of ministry and being a minister. Other

models Deborah pointed to as having shaped her idea of "pastor," even before she saw it

as her call, were public figures, both ministers and theologians:

Women that I have heard preach like Vashti Mackenzie and Renita Weems, I

guess, and even Juanita Bynum. And there's this woman who wrote *Preach

Woman! Preach*, [with] various testimonies of women preachers. There's a lady,

Millicent Hunter, I don't remember the church denomination, but she has written

some good books. She's been a senior pastor and she writes this book *Pot-Liquor*

for the Soul and *Don't Die in the Winter*. And so I read them and they resonate.

And this is even before I ever realized I was called to the ministry.

Dimensions and Definitions of Call and *Models of Leadership and Ministry* were just two of the six stages which encompassed the construction of pastoral identities explored in these study findings. Chapter 5 continues the report of findings, covering the remaining four emergent themes: *Moments of Resisting and Doubt, Negations of Call, Moments of Affirmation*, and *Losing, Claiming & Becoming*.

CHAPTER FIVE: EMERGENT THEMES (EXPERIENCE)

This chapter continues the exposition of findings begun in Chapter 4. The preceding chapter dealt with two emergent rhetorical themes, *Definitions and Dimensions of Call* and *Models of Ministry and Leadership*, which, in broader terms, provided context to the journeys undertaken by the women who participated in my study, as well as representing the most global stages of what I have called a "rhetorical dance." This chapter explores the remaining emergent themes, those more specifically concerning personally important moments within the larger "rhetorical dance": *Moments of Resisting and Doubt, Negations of Call, Moments of Affirmation*, and *Losing, Claiming & Becoming*.

Moments of Resisting & Doubt

In response to every life endeavor, goal, or plan, nay-sayers abound. In this investigation, most of the women encountered individuals who insisted—often more than once—that their call to ministry was a delusion, an impropriety, or even an outright obscenity. Moments of self-doubt are frequent enough when one weighs gain against cost for any new endeavor; but such moments may take on a special poignancy in connection with a life plan that is perceived as having spiritual consequence. Admitting a call to ordained ministry is an unusual enough declaration among the general population, and is an even rarer event among women; therefore, it is not surprising to find that self-doubt played a huge part in the series of moves these woman made before embracing such an identity publicly. The findings here revealed the discouraging effects self-doubt had on the women, stoking their own resistance to their call as well as other impetus for questioning that call.

Clinging to the Old Identity

Resisting the call to ministry and doubting themselves as called started well before entering seminary for all of the women in the study. Most also questioned whether they were actually called to ordained pastoral ministry, as compared with simply being called to pursue further theological education, perhaps leading to a more meaningful and substantive approach to the career already in place in their lives.

Priscilla's call initially emerged as a call to preach just as she was beginning the final work for her dissertation and clinical psychology licensure, but she reported that she resisted the call, preferring, instead to believe herself called to "teaching":

I [had just] moved to Cincinnati in September 2000 and during that time I started having more dreams, and I was like, "Okay God, what are you doing to me?" And it was like [the answer was] I Corinthians 1:17 "What is this?" I thought. Well, it says "I have called you not so much to baptize but to preach and to preach the word so that the effect of the cross will not be lost, not with simple words." And I was like, "Oh God!" I tried to find *every* translation I could that said "teach" and not "preach" and I told one of my church mothers, "Help me! Look in your translations and see. It *can't* be preach!" And I was like "No! No! No! Surely I got it confused."

Priscilla then decided that she could interpret the term *preach* somewhat indirectly—that she was perhaps just "supposed to do church ministry as a Christian. [Because] all [Christians are] called to be ministers in the body of believers." However, she remained conflicted about whether the message she felt she had received was "to teach" or "to preach"; either way, she realized, she would need more theological training.

She reported in her first interview that she then obtained information on a number of seminaries; but at that point, she still resisted moving beyond her work in psychology:

> Somewhere in the early winter/spring...I was sitting at my desk and the spirit kept tugging me, "You better look at those applications." And so, 3 days later, I looked at my attaché case and saw, "Oh my God! This is due in 3 days at Duke!" It was the first one due. I looked at Duke, Fuller, ITC and Wake Forest. The Duke application…was due first and I was like, "God, you gotta make this happen." I had already asked references to serve for me, so that wasn't last minute at least, but it was still a hassle to make the date. I was resisting, if I use a psychology term.

Like Priscilla, Esther was not convinced initially that her call entailed leaving her current profession, especially because within her Lutheran tradition, seeking formal lay leadership rather than ordained leadership would still enable her to minister as an avocation. Initially, she reported, she did not connect "biblical scholarship" and call and actually denied a call to ordained ministry until well after her seminary studies began. Actually attending seminary precipitated an identity crisis. She explained her resistance this way:

> I kept asking myself, "What is my right livelihood?" Making this move and this decision [to attend seminary] caused a crisis of professional identity and direction for me. I really do think that was a shift. That all of a sudden I was thinking, "What is my right livelihood? Do I continue in this fundraising track [as a university development officer], or do I try to figure something out differently?" I saw lay leadership as an alternative to being a minister that allowed for vocational stability and a way to maintain my professional identity.

Vashti, too, resisted the call, to ministry and resisted the identity of *minister*. She matriculated into Duke Divinity's dual degree program (a program earning a Master's in Social Work as well as the M.Div.) instead of the "straight up M.Div.," as she referred to it. She explained:

> I sorta hoped that God agreed with me that I didn't need to be there. For years I always thought, "I would just love to go and study theology. I think that's the most exciting thing in the world. But of course, I don't want to be a minister." ...And so the reasons I actually applied to the dual degree program...(Even though my mother was a social worker, and I always said to myself I would NEVER be a social worker) was because the Social Work degree made the Divinity Degree palatable. Couldn't I be a Social Worker who just happened to take the profession in a different direction?

Deborah also thought of straddling Social Work and Ministry, seeing this as a safer intersection by which to "[acknowledge] the call and yet maintain a *safe* place, a good home." She admitted that, even after saying to herself she was not leaving psychology, she had shifted her academic department from psychology to social work in order to maintain a part-time faculty association while attending seminary part-time, but only "because they had the joint degree program with the divinity school. So it felt like that was a good home…that it helped me to make that shift professionally a little bit better."

Deborah echoed the sentiments of other participants in her desire to keep her previous professional affiliation to some extent, imagining ministry as an "added layer…as…associate ministry in a small church, but *in addition* to [her] academic career." She reported,

> I saw myself primarily as a Mental Health researcher who had this developing interest in spirituality, and then in terms of my life in ministry. That was something else; that was the church. And I really thought I would be at a little church and be with them forever as an associate minister.

Even after she was several semesters into her seminary education and had "entered the ordination process," having finally admitted to herself the call to ministry was real, she confessed,

> I wasn't planning on being a preacher...so I just thought I'd be exempt from [the ordination formalities]. I remember just panicking, thinking "What? I've got to preach? This is not what I signed up for! I'm a psychologist, you know. Not a preacher!"

Pushing Against Assumptions

In addition to clinging to an already established and well-respected professional identity, resistance took other forms as well. One of these was pushing against outside assumptions about what ministering and ministers should look like. All of the women mentioned wrestling against gender expectations, and five of the six women articulated such expectations as among the reasons they had resisted the call even when they felt it to be true. Vashti mused,

> I mean, is it too big a leap to say [that] because you're a woman or [because] you conceive of service and of being in people's lives so many ways besides the way other people define *The Minister* or *The Pastor,* that what they're saying to you [about who you should be] is out of their own box?

She went on to admit that the teaching that women cannot be ministers provided her a rational "out" for resisting the call in spite of her admitting its validity. "It never

occurred to me that [women in ministry] was not possible. But it's an easy out when you don't want to do it. Like when I didn't want to be worship leader, I said 'Oh I don't think I could do that because women aren't allowed in that pulpit.'"

Vashti also articulated resisting the "traditional expectations of ordained leadership as being administrative," which differed from her own ideas of simply *pastoring* or *loving* people. At one point, she cited a comment by her mother, who was joking about Vashti's love of the elderly as compared to her lack of interest in practical matters like paying an electric bill:

My own resistance in that is juxtaposed with my mother, a preacher's kid, who keeps laughing every time someone says "Vashti's called to be a minister." She responds "Not unless it's a church of people over 70 because they are the only people Vashti has any patience for!" And you know, unless they like a lot of candlelight services [or] were big enough to [have] someone who paid the bills [they wouldn't want me as a minister]…I couldn't be responsible for doing that or they would be having service in the dark.

During the interview, Vashti also elaborated on this theme of pushing against the expectations involved in defining ministry roles in this excerpted dialogue, when she worried about how congregations tend to "expect everything from one person":

Vashti: You know, now where it's not working so well right now is people keep suggesting to me that they believe I'm called to pastor [not just to minister], and I don't know if it's true.

Kathryn: And you see ministry and pastoring as different things?

Vashti: Well, yeah…in that you can play a pastoral role perhaps, but pastor in the very confining, "You are the Pastor of 1st Baptist Church on the corner of such

and such and such and such, and you are responsible for the leadership of this church."

Kathryn: So you're not sure that's a part of your call to ordained ministry, the traditional role of pastor?

Vashti: I feel pretty sure that it's not…At least not today…It's the rare person that can do it all. And probably, um...a large part of what's wrong with all of our churches is that we've so limited people in what the role of minister looks like. It's too overwhelmingly masculine and too much in terms of expecting everything from one person: "If God calls you, you can do all these things, and you can do them well."

Mary, like Vashti, looked for ways to imagine what being in ministry would mean for her, but unlike Vashti, she early on saw ordination as the goal. Her efforts then were centered on discovering what being a woman in ministry means. As she searched for models of ministry, she found herself resisting the definitions readily presented as part of her seminary training as too confining and clearly, overtly, and exclusively masculine. In fact, she reported that women's voices were absent from the reading list of a course on the formation of pastoral identity, a class nearly half of which was itself composed of female seminarians. Instead, the class was given only a single opportunity to read a woman's experience of ministry out of the ten works required by the course curriculum.

Esther's struggle against outside assumptions about the definition of a minister prompted her to resist, as she explained it, "letting go of a more acceptable public identity." In a subtle morphological play, even after reaching the point of admitting to herself she had a "ministry call," Esther would not admit being "called to be a minister." So she applied for a position on the Lutheran lay roster, not a position on the list of those

seeking ordination. Esther revealed that it was only after she entered seminary, when she realized there was no way to maintain her level of professional work and still pursue theological studies, that her attitude finally shifted under pressure imposed by practical constraints. Leaving her current position in the development office, she explained, "was the breaking point of actually, I think, realizing that…there would be no going back."

Even after adjusting to her shift in profession, there was another layer of resistance for Esther: the desire to "stay put in Durham" where she had roots, a home and acquaintances. She explained,

> I had applied to be a candidate for a lay roster position, not an ordained position, because my conversation with the Bishop's office here was like, "Well, if you were a lay roster person, you don't have to go to a Lutheran Seminary, or you don't have to do a Lutheran year." That meant not giving up so much: my house, my friends.

Like Esther, Priscilla did not imagine she would need to surrender her initial identity in order to preach. Instead, she continued to question the expectations involved in ministry in her initial interview. The expectations of a public unaccustomed to women ministers, as she perceived them, kept her from fully embracing the idea that her call to preach in any way involved parish ministry as a pastor.

> I'm just not convinced it's me. I've really been thinking about that and praying about that lately...I just saw women speaking, but never a woman pastor when I was growing up. I don't think I've ever been under the tutelage of a woman pastor, period. Some women who were like assistant pastors in my adult life more recently were mentors, but never anybody who really, as a woman, had administrative or senior pastor authority. So when I think about myself, I'm not

convinced God has called me to be a senior pastor, but I think some of my not

being convinced is my own spin on it.

Priscilla's ambivalence regarding the call to ministry went beyond gender or practical

burdens, and focused on the moral responsibility she understood such a position to carry,

as ministers are viewed as powerful role models. Like Vashti, she talked about the

expectations of others that certain "stupid, crazy, sinful stuff" must be given up by

someone whose "walk is to be exemplary," and who is seen as "a witness." She

bemoaned and resisted the limitations that she felt came with being a pastor:

> You really have to be mindful of your walk. Not that as a Christian you aren't
>
> mindful of your walk anyway. But you *really, really* have to be cognizant about
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> your walk [as a pastor] and I feel like that maybe there are things that I have not
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> done, but that perhaps maybe I'd like to do. What if I want to just do stupid,
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> crazy, sinful stuff? Which I shouldn't…but I know I shouldn't…and so that has
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> kind of been the kicking and screaming thing in a way, but more so because I
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> cannot take it lightly. I need to be very sure...work through my mess before
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> saying, "Okay. I'm answering this call to pastor." You know?

Deborah observed and resisted only particular aspects of accepting a public

identity as a minister. She was not fearful of the label, nor did she see it as limiting in the

way Priscilla expressed, but she resisted what she viewed as the improper and overt

authority with which congregants in the black church community too frequently vested

the position:

> I'm still resisting and negotiating that "public identity." I think part of the issue
>
> for me is that I don't wear (I don't think) my authority. Part of that I think has to
>
> do with my personality and who I am. Part of that is also intentional. I just don't

particularly like the way that in the Black Church, the Pastor has so much authority. I try not wear my authority in that way. I think that's also consistent with who I've been as a psychologist, which is to try to be careful of my power…there's always going to be a power differential, but to try to mitigate it as much as I possibly could was and is important."

Hannah's one moment of resistance in terms of outside expectations was linked to an idea that was also mentioned by Esther as significant to negotiating the call to be a minister: familial relationships. Like Esther, Hannah noted that in following her call, she is asking Gary, her husband, to be married to someone different than the girl he proposed to and live with her in a new way. Her public life had implications for him. Her observation might also be related to Priscilla's resistance to "acceptable ministerial deportment." Hannah explained it this way:

Right...in multiple ways this is an experience that affects people around me...I talked about my Mom earlier and her new identity as having a daughter who is a minister instead of a daughter who is an engineer. [R]ecently, Gary was picking on me on the way home. It was a Sunday I had preached. He said, "You know, you're a public person." "I'm not a public person," I insisted. He's like, "Hannah. You're a public person. You just stood up in front of 200 people and gave a sermon." But it made me realize that part of my call is that Gary is married to a public person, and I don't know, but I doubt that all careers affect close relationships in the way that a call to ministry [does]. I think it would be different if this was just an academic career...I think that that would be different because I think that a call reaches deeper places within me and that it affects relationships,

and causes hard work for Gary. I am trying to figure out, "What does this mean for him? What does it mean for me?"

Negations of Call

Negative moments featured prominently in the participants' narratives, and ultimately fed the self-doubt and resistance revealed above. These moments stemmed from external sources, and consisted of both conceptual and verbal obstacles placed in front of the study participants, particularly by those in their lives who could not accept their "new" direction.

Some discouraging moments were merely gentle teasing and involved humorously casting doubt on the sanity of the decision to become some kind of "religious." Others involved outright denial of the call as logical, biblical, or sane; a few even precipitated unwarranted loss of professional standing. The moments of negation discussed at length and recurring in nearly every interview came from four broad social or relationship sources: (1) Family (2) Church (3) Pastors (4) Professional Colleagues. These all involved individuals with whom the women interacted regularly and in whose opinion they vested value or authority.

Family

While family relationships and responses to call were, not surprisingly, important in every case, their negative complexities were particularly noted by Hannah and Esther. Hannah explained that her parents were very surprised by her decision to go to seminary. They did not actively try to discourage her, but their response—especially her mother's—reflected Hannah's own initial ambivalence in understanding the shape of her call. Hannah explained that accepting her own emerging identity as a minister or as "called" made her realize that her mother's resistance was tied to self-perception and self-esteem.

Her mother's own identity was "defined by what her children did. It mattered what she could tell her friends her daughter did. It took time for her to be just as proud of her 'daughter the minister' as [she had been of] her 'daughter the engineer.'"

Esther's parents were more resolute than Hannah's in their negation of her call. They did not see the consequent move towards seminary and ordained ministry as reflecting a sane or reasonable decision. Esther reported that such opposition was as formative for her as was any affirmation she received. When asked the most significant source of opposition to her call, Esther immediately responded, "My parents." The following exchange narrated their negative reaction revealing why Esther felt them to be her greatest opposition initially:

> **Esther**: My mom was a big "muckety-muck" in the institutional church, but a lay leader, not a pastor.
>
> **Kathryn**: So then were you surprised by the opposition from your mom? Was it because you haven't been [and weren't planning to be] the lay power she felt was critical against the clergy?
>
> **Esther**: Right! [But] I think mostly what the opposition was ...[because] they were born during the depression and were children during the depression—money and security is their biggest value. So when I said that I was thinking of going to Divinity School full-time, the very first words out of my father's mouth were, "What are you going to live on?" And I said, "I kinda think God will provide." And that was the wrong answer!

Esther went on to explain that this initial opposition actually made her more certain of her decision because it demanded an answer. "It made me more determined to make it succeed and [to figure out] how I was going to manage."

Church

Following negative remarks by family members, relationships at church formed the next most critical source of moments of negation. That the church or congregational community should be central in the decision to pursue pastoral leadership was not surprising. What was surprising, rather, was that it should compose the most vociferous opposition.

Hannah noted that in a church setting, much as in a corporate setting, women are often held as representatives of their gender rather than being taken as individuals. She asserted that this marking even happens a bit more quickly in the church than in the workplace. In general, expectations of what a clergywoman should do generally did not differ from the expectations for her male counterpart. Nevertheless, *how* a particular woman did or did not engage in ministry or meet congregational expectations then was projected onto all other women ministers, while similar projections did not occur for male ministers. This perception, even when negative criticism was not at play, tended to dampen the enthusiasm of the participants.

Mary echoed this sentiment and expanded on it when she identified the two groups who most readily opposed her as a woman in the pulpit in her present position. The first group usually came to accept her and the second did not:

> I only get [criticism] from two kinds of people—usually the old men first. They
>
> tell me, "I wasn't sure about you at first, but ah! You're so called. You know I've
>
> come to really love you." The other segment of the population I have trouble with
>
> are other women who are usually very submissive to their husbands and haven't
>
> worked outside the home. [They seem to need] a male authority figure.

Both Mary and Hannah also noted marital status as affecting the "acceptability" of women ministers within the congregational setting and as a source of negation of women's call. While most churches prefer pastors to be married, their ability to minister, if they are men, does not seem to hinge on their marital status. However, as women, both Hannah and Mary more than once spoke of fielding questions about marital status; and while Hannah's married status was acceptable to congregants, Mary's single status often was not:

> I think people are a little puzzled by me because I'm single and middle aged and have been for quite some time. They don't really know what to do with people like me. I don't fit the norm: a married woman with two children, or at least a woman with a family, a norm clung to not just in the church, but in America.

Mary also noted that her growing awareness of theological bias against women in ministry didn't crystallize until late in adulthood when she had resumed a single lifestyle:

> I was seeking to return to the church after a difficult divorce. I was preparing to join the church and through the process realized they didn't believe in women pastors. At that time, I didn't realize I was called, but I felt completely discouraged by that realization and did not rejoin the church at that time.

Priscilla and Deborah also made reference to the importance of marital status in the church, but for different reasons. Deborah's experiences are discussed in the following section on pastors, and Priscilla's later as they factored into her own *Moments of Resistance* to her call.

Esther's experiences in the Lutheran denomination were quite affirming of women in ministry and in congregational leadership, but she still acknowledged the wider Christian church (especially the Catholic Church) as sometimes still a place of resistance

and negation, a place that wounds women and denies them expression of their gifts for ministry. Her relevant remarks stemmed from her experiences in the formative course on women in scripture discussed earlier in this chapter, an experience that was key not only to Esther's definition of call but also to her understanding of herself as called. Esther saw in fellow classmates "the pain caused by denying rights to women [who were] clearly called in the Catholic Church. The women were in such pain because they couldn't …they can't…take on any sort of sanctioned leadership roles in their church. Yet they have stayed in Catholicism."

Resistance to women in ministry (even to her own identity as a minister) stemmed for Deborah from growing up in a Baptist congregation. Her experience of church shaped what she imagined was possible for her own call, and provided a lens through which she

> could only imagine a certain shape to this new layer or complexity in [my] life. And so I really did see myself as being very much circumscribed as a women's minister rather than a woman minister. In retrospect [that was] the only thing I would accept, or would see myself as because I had grown up in a church where women were not ministers. [In my childhood, if] a woman stepped on the altar, [even] a little girl just playing around, you know, on Tuesday afternoon because her mom was in choir rehearsal, stepped up on the altar, you would get this shriek from everyone in the church. I mean it would be like she stepped into the Holy of Holies! It was awful!

Deborah went on to explain: "Little boys, if they got up on the pulpit, [it was] not as bad. People might say, 'Get down from there. That's just for the Pastor.' But a little girl? It would just really erupt." As a result, Deborah confessed,

I simply believed [that] ordained ministry to preaching and to parish ministry was just not a possibility for me. My roommate my freshman year—her mother was a minister, but again, that didn't make any sense. I knew people who were female students in the divinity school through the choir, and that didn't make any sense either. So because of the way I grew up thinking about myself as a minister, and thinking about a call to ministry as related to ordained ministry and to preaching, I thought, "It's just NOT a possibility."

Deborah recognized she even missed an opportunity to explore the idea further because of the lens of her childhood church experience on issues that included both gender and race. She explained,

I was viewing ministry and the possibility to minister within the church not just as a woman, but in particular, as a black woman. I missed out on a great opportunity to really connect with a woman minister and with new ideas about that possibility…because the minister was a white woman…

Pastors

Pastors and pastoral models, as expected, figured greatly into all aspects of the data collected for this study. Important to recognize, though, is that they factored into the journeys toward claiming ministerial identity as much in negative ways as in positive.

Deborah admitted that even in her present position teaching pastoral theology at an historically black seminary with a prestigious civil rights history, "I struggle with the idea that I teach in a place that is black and predominantly Baptist and Pentecostal, [and] which does not necessarily support women in ministry. And so then, I'm forced to wear both academic and pastoral authority in some senses as a way to protect myself against abuse." Faculty, pastors, and seminarians who did not recognize women clergy as

legitimate presented a challenging impasse and charged the seminary classroom with tension.

Deborah continued to talk about her public identity in terms of women at risk, not only in having to demand authority in her classroom in ways she would prefer not to have to do, but also in interacting in a professional gathering of clergy where her name tag identified her as a minister. Rather than bringing her increased respect among her peers, the tag resulted in an inappropriate advance by a male colleague. As a result, she reported, she felt in danger in this gathering of pastors in a way she had not felt when networking at conferences as a psychologist. "Public identity as a minister can take unexpected forms," she insisted. She explained her feelings about this encounter with a man, who, she had assumed, was simply a colleague interested in the shape of her call; she discovered instead:

> He was just looking for a wife. He was a single minister…and the fact that I was actually a minister just made me all the more appealing to him. He didn't care that I was already married! I just thought, "This would never have happened at a Psychology conference! I never would have felt like this." I called my mom and told her I'd come to the realization that if I ever get invited to a church to preach, I can't go by myself. And she said, "Oh. You're just now realizing that? Absolutely not! It's not safe." And I thought, "This is insane! Suddenly because I'm a woman, I'm not safe…like in the church of all places, I'm not safe and none of my credentials matter!"

There was, Deborah realized, no escaping external expectations that women should occupy particular roles in particular ways—for instance, that performances linked to gender, rather than professional identity, were what were noticed first.

Priscilla's experience was as sharply discouraging as was Deborah's realization that being a clergywoman made her more, not less, vulnerable to inappropriate male attention in the church. Priscilla, screwing up the courage to admit for the first time that she believed herself called to the ministry and sharing her "dreams and emerging call" with her own congregational minister, found herself immediately rebuffed and reprimanded. Her pastor responded "negatively and even in a rude way out of his own situation." She reported,

> When I went to the pastor of the church, I couldn't run from [my call] any more. God would wake me up all night, mostly at 3:33 am. So, I said "Okay God." And I went to talk to my minister. His response? "Everybody wants to be a Big 'P' and nobody wants to be a little 'p'!"

This pastor, rather than acting as an encourager and affirming Priscilla's gifts and talents, gave vent to his own frustration over people's unwillingness to be workers in the church rather than leaders, mapping this frustration onto his perception of Priscilla's call. In doing so, he failed to respond to her as an individual. The one person she thought would understand her dilemma and her hopes, she explained, was instead the first to reject her conviction as unreasonable.

Professional Colleagues

Every woman in the study struggled with shifting her professional identity from her original area of vocational success to one that encompassed her call to ordained ministry. Every woman also reported losing the respect of former colleagues and acquaintances, to a certain extent, when her new pursuit was made public. Sometimes this was because of a nondescript, often unarticulated, discomfort with religion in the public square. Other times, negative reactions from colleagues were motivated by a loss they

perceived as unnecessary and inexcusable, i.e., giving up a promising professional future: it was simply illogical to choose church work over corporate success. Only Esther had more colleagues who admired and supported her change in direction than those who were disappointed in her decision. On the other end of the spectrum, Deborah and Hannah encountered the most drastic negative responses in terms of loss of professional networks and colleagues.

Despite stellar work records documented by grants, promotions, and statistical project success, Deborah and Hannah had their fundamental competencies as professionals challenged once they made their plans to study theological public. As noted earlier in the exposition on *Dimensions and Definitions of Call*, most of the women were unsure, at least initially, whether to give up their professional situations for full time seminary work. Almost to a woman, because of both economic concerns as well as personal ambivalence towards the call, their intent was to test the water by attending school part-time first in order to be more certain of the rightness of the move and the shape and direction of the call.

So while Hannah did anticipate eventually leaving her executive engineering position, she did not anticipate doing so immediately, nor did she suspect that her plans would precipitate a brusque and shocking invitation to "hit the door." Nothing about her professional performance warranted her supervisor's harsh rejection of her continued employment. Additionally, her call was baffling to her very successful CEO brother-in-law with whom she had attended MBA school. She explained that his reasonable resistance to her "illogical" move actually echoed her own internal struggle. He asked the questions she was asking herself about her decision to pursue ordained ministry and as a result, he became the voice in her head with which she argued about her "new" ideas for

life. He represented the ideals she once held herself as "his world is motivated by money and achievement. I think he's probably my conversation partner in my head because to some extent...he's the old me."

As disheartening as Hannah's experience was, Deborah's was the most dramatic. Colleagues at her former job as a full-time faculty member at a major research university represented the primary resistance to Deborah's call. In fact, despite her anticipating resistance from family, the only real opposition came from her job. "Everything fell apart!" she explained:

> The whole scheme I had organized, planning to move to a part-time faculty position in order to continue working on my NIH grant project and to support that work with seminary courses, crumbled. I really began to be under discrimination because of the announcement of my call to ministry. I honestly did not realize that there were people that were that prejudiced against religion. I guess I had always been sheltered from it. I hadn't realized how anti-religion psychology was, even though my advisor in graduate school had been an atheist. But he was also an extremely sensitive and compassionate person. And so…
>
> **Kathryn**: He hadn't been against you being a Christian?
>
> **Deborah**: Right. He had never been against it. Suddenly people at work began to say that I was not interested in a research career when the opposite was true. I ended up losing my grant…because it was a mentored grant. And one of my mentors,…actually…as best as I figure it out, sent an email to NIH informing them that I was leaving the school [which wasn't true]…[He said] I was leaving all the criteria I had to hold onto the grant.
>
> **Kathryn**: …that sabotaged your credibility…

Deborah: …that started the sabotage process. And when the NIH called one of

my mentors, he told them that I was no longer interested in a research career

because in his mind, ministers weren't researchers. And so…

Kathryn: …he couldn't conceive of theology as a complimentary and valid

academic discipline?

Deborah: No…It was awful. I not only lost my professional position, I lost my

whole social life. That was a really painful period because all the people whom I

thought were my friends walked away. They thought I was absolutely crazy.

Science and faith were incompatible to her colleagues:

My departmental mentor thought that I had really gone off the religious deep end

and…I had people tell me later you never should have told him. And I just

thought, "How would I have known that he would have reacted in a way that was

so irrational?" But he just had in his mind that you could not possibly be a

scientific researcher and be a committed Christian and be especially a clergy.

Moments of Affirmation

External affirmation and negation worked together in some ways as the study

participants responded to each type of input. Family acceptance, spoken word

encouragement, spiritual conviction or intuition, and supernatural signs were the four

sources identified by the study participants as positive keys to moving them towards fully

embracing public identities as ministers.

Family Acceptance

As noted earlier, Vashti struggled with the traditional theology that women *cannot*

be ministers and even relied on it as an "out" for rejecting her own conviction of a

personal call. Nonetheless, in spite of the pressure towards the "right" position of

rejecting women in ministry, affirmation—family love and humor—gradually won out.

I think that my family's perception of me changed, but also my perception of

them. I think CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) impacted how family and friends

saw my ministerial role too, partly because my father was hospitalized while I

was working in ICU (Intensive Care Unit). And my aunt was hospitalized soon

after. They not only saw me, but they saw the other chaplains and had to connect

me to them. They had to say "Oh yeah, she's part of this pastoral care

department." They saw the white jacket that said "pastoral services" and the

multiple pagers. That and also seeing and hearing me preach. To have my uncle

say, "Hey Reverend! How ya doin'?!" or "The preacher's here!" was very

affirming.

Looking back at a family reunion incident where, invited to lead worship in a

church which normally did *not* allow women in the pulpit, Vashti pointed to joking

remarks that evoked an unexpected and powerful instance of familial affirmation. The old

church building, groaning under the weight of the many family members gathered inside,

actually collapsed at the rear, with several pews falling into the floor. A few teasing

remarks, remarks which she herself took to be light-hearted and funny, were directed

Vashti's way: "See what happens when you put a woman in the pulpit!" Continuing on

with the mirth, Vashti pulled an uncle aside. This uncle, she explained, had "not always

been keen on religion, and definitely not keen about women in particular." She

exclaimed,

"Uncle Rupert! They're saying that the floor fell in because I was in the pulpit!"

And I started laughing. And I realized he wasn't laughing with me. And he said,

"That's absolutely not true, baby. Don't you believe that! That floor had nothing to do with you in the pulpit. It's them being too damn cheap to spray for termites!"

Uncle Rupert's unexpected response was, for Vashti, a formative experience. Affirmation came unexpectedly and from a family reunion for Deborah as well:

I haven't gotten [affirmation] in places I thought I would have [like my former colleagues]. I wasn't sure I would get it from Grandfather, because he idolizes the pastor of my home church in Atlanta that doesn't allow women in the pulpit except on "Women's Day." But I *did* get it from my family. I had an opportunity a few years ago to preach the family reunion. And that was very scary for me because my Grandfather was sitting up there. And presiding over it was my uncle, the deacon and the son of the Pastor of this church that says women cannot approach the pulpit.

Kathryn: And they didn't resist your call?

Deborah: No! And it was interesting. One thing that was said to me, "It's funny how people change their views when it's their Granddaughter!" Because when I called my Grandfather to tell him that I felt called to the ministry, he started saying that I would make a good preacher because I loved to read! After I preached the family reunion, he cried! He cried and cried. He told me and my husband as we were leaving, "I always knew you were a strange child, now I know why!"

Esther experienced the affirmation of family as well—only slowly from her parents, but almost immediately from her husband, despite the fact that he himself was not a Christian. One of the reasons, she explained, that her parents worried so about her

move towards divinity school was that she, with her prestigious position as the development officer of a university law school, was the primary breadwinner in her marriage. However, Esther's husband responded readily to the need to switch financial roles and embraced change for himself as much as for Esther initially, even to the extent of training for an entirely new career in order to help her decision to pursue the ministry become a reality.

Despite misgivings about not living up to family expectations for her to become an engineer, Hannah found her father immediately supportive when she timidly and indirectly shared her sense of call and her musing about perhaps attending seminary. "He said, 'You know my mother was trained to be a missionary when she met grandpa.' And so hearing some sense that this call of mine wasn't such a foreign idea was a good thing. [My grandmother] ended up being a public health nurse and going into the inner city of St. Louis and doing all sorts of other cool things." So to be linked in the family with another who was admired, Hannah felt, instantly provided room for her to move forward with her decision despite its divergence from what she had always perceived were family expectations and parameters already set for her.

For Priscilla, family affirmation provides a constant underpinning of her forward progress towards her goal. She noted particularly feeling affirmed by the pride of other women in her family who "live through her" endeavors. "My mother tells me that she and my cousin and aunts say they live life through me and it's an adventure sometimes. I laugh and say, 'Well, I just hope we all enjoy the ride!'"

Words of Encouragement

The second outside affirmation of call, spoken words of agreement or encouragement, interestingly fell into threes. Deborah, Mary, and Esther all named at

least three instances which remained vividly etched in their minds as moments when someone voiced an agreement that they indeed were "called"—that something about them as individuals evinced a certainty that their decision to pursue ministry was the right one.

For Deborah, this recognition came from others even before she would admit to herself that she was a minister or was called to become a minister.

It started out from other people…even initially. As I was fighting and fighting [with myself about whether to be in divinity school full-time], I kept getting strangers who would walk up to me. The first week of seminary, a student, maybe a year or two ahead of me, just walked up to me and said, "You're called to be a pastor, aren't you?" And I thought, "What?" He's like, "Yep. You are."

Deborah went on to explain that being at Duke Divinity School did not necessarily indicate that one was training for ordained ministry, as it was a graduate school in its own right with ties to the Duke Graduate School of Religion, as well as with the Chapel Hill graduate program, so students there might be studying for a number of degrees besides the classic ministerial preparation of the M.Div.

I would have other people say things to me too…My entire American Baptist congregation was affirming to the extent that their support allowed me to think of myself at all as a woman called, if not a woman called to ordained ministry. Not just the pastor was affirming but the entire congregation. I do not think I would have perceived my call to ministry at all had I not been in that congregation. They allowed me to step up to the plate…and sometimes they forced me to step up to the plate. They were pivotal for me. I don't think my pursuing ministry would have happened without them.

Another significant encouragement that Deborah named as pivotal was an encounter with a divinity school chaplain concerning her election as the president of the black seminarians union, a position that, up until then, Deborah had thought of as scholastic and political.

> She basically told me that I had been elected "Pastor," which, you know, freaked me out! But over the course of that year I realized how right she was. Also that year, she called me "Pastor" when she met me in the halls. I always knew she was very intentional about doing that, and that she was trying to get me used to that new identity.

A final instance Deborah discussed featuring words of encouragement also involved the issue of denominational acceptance of the ordination of women. She explained,

> We were at church one Sunday and the pastor had really just preached himself into a very emotional state. And he got to the altar call[13] and he was too emotional to give it. And he looked over at me and pointed at me, told me to come and gestured. And I looked around and said, "Who, Me?"

> Responding to this request was Deborah's first public act as someone "called."

This same pastor, she explained, recognized that her gifts would not and could not be

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[13] Deborah refers here to a liturgical practice in some churches, particularly the more conservative evangelical, pietist, Wesleyan and holiness churches, of inviting members to come forward and kneel in prayer around the altar in response to the gospel message delivered in the sermon. The practice is also known as "the invitation" and more informally as "the altar call."

used in the Baptist tradition of the congregation, and he pushed her towards a denomination that would—Methodism:

> The church could have [ordained me], but [my pastor] knew that although the American Baptists ordain women, the chances that I would actually get [to pastor a church] were slim to none...He pushed me even after I left that congregation, "You need to be where your call can be recognized."

> Mary encountered individuals who were not necesarily church goers or even Christians and who told her things about herself and who she had been called to be. At one stage, a bible study she was conducting as a part of a prison ministry was filmed in conjunction with a denominational outreach program. Viewers of the finished film made comments like, "Mary, now I understand who you're called to be. I saw it! I saw it in your face when you were teaching the inmates."

> Another public speaking opportunity which confirmed for Mary that she was called to preach occurred during her tenure at Duke Divinity School. Like Deborah's encounter with the faculty chaplain, Mary experienced words of affirmation from two very notable faculty members after she had the honor of preaching in a Divinity School chapel service. Her church history professor began to address her as "preacher" on campus, though she had struggled mightily in his course. And another professor made a point to say to her, "Mary, you need to understand something. We cannot teach what you just did. We can't do it. You have something. You need to understand that. Don't take that for granted, and understand how powerful that is in the Lord." After her initial reaction of goosebumps and amazement, Mary explained, "That really made me understand that God had given me something special. It's not just that I get up in front of the church every Sunday and give a sermon...it's much more."

As mentioned in Chapter 4, concerning Esther's progressive discernment of her call, Esther received encouragment and affirmation from a seminar classmate before she'd even entered seminary:

A Lutheran Pastor said to me at the end of the class, "I'll be praying for you in this time of discernment." And I was like, "What are you talking about?" So she saw something happening that I was unware of in that class, and unaware of in myself at that time. But looking back, I see that as affirmation."

Esther's being invited initially to attend this seminar was the result of her Pastor's recommendation. He, too, saw something happening in Esther that she, at first, did not see herself:

My pastor saw that the sustained learning seminar was going to be taught by Theresa Berger. The topic was women in Christian history and leadership. [He nominated me to attend] because I was saying to him [at the time], "Why do we talk about the Holy Spirit as a male? Why do we, in our translation of the creed that our church is using, why do we call God, *He*? He's not a *He*."

Esther's third significant source of external words of affirmation and encouragement came from a group of long-time friends she called her "tribe." These were, she said,

a group of friends that [my husband] and I have had for the 15 years we've lived in Durham. We go to the beach with them twice a year and then, there's kind of a core group, and kind of a more extended family...It's a community. I call it my "tribe!"

One of the first things to occur once Esther shared her intentions to pursue ordained ministry was that she was invited to perform a marriage ceremony for a couple from the tribe.

It was a true honor to do it…and they [began] viewing me as a spiritual leader, sort of. I got a lot of teasing from them, but very good natured teasing like, "Oh! It's your spring break; Seminarians gone wild!" And they found a website where you can make your own Baptist Church sign and they made me signs. They're very supportive of it all even though they are not Christian believers mostly. It "made sense" to them that I should become a minister.

Spiritual Conviction

Their own conviction of their call sometimes functioned for participants more like an external voice than as an extension of an internal debate. Crystalized certainty of this almost-tangible form most often arose as the result of a crisis event. For both Esther and Deborah the event precipitating the certainty was having to deal with a death. For Priscilla, the crisis involved discrimination and unfair demands as a part of a summer field placement following her first year at seminary.

Esther reported early on in her interview process that her Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) experience had been formative and formidible, challenging her on a very personal level, and had also been instrumental in shaping her ideas about the definitions and dimensions of call. A singular event during CPE transformed her understanding of herself and later led directly to her decision to formally pursue ordination.

A call came to chaplain services about a critical situation in the maternity ward. New born twins were in crisis and would likely not survive...I took the message,

[went] to the maternity ward, and introduced myself. They explained "We think

we want to get the babies baptized, but we're waiting for the family to gather.

You're on call right? Would you just do a little blessing while we're waiting

today?" The husband of the family was a solider in Iraq, so it was the in-laws who

had been called in and had not yet arrived. So, I said, "Sure" but I was thinking,

"huh?!"

One of my chaplain colleagues had the service for a Thanksgiving for the

birth of a child, so we adapted that for Thanksgiving and concern over the birth of

these really premature babies. I did a blessing over them. It wasn't a baptism, but

it must have made an impression on the family because they later called to ask me

to participate in the actual baptism two days later. When I'd started my CPE, I

remembered a conversation with a social work intern from Duke Hospital who

had warned me, "Oh yes! You will baptize premature babies!" And I'd thought,

"Oh no. I don't think so." But it was like...I could do it. I could just do it! It's not

me, it's God that does it. I'm just his hands. It wasn't too long after that, they

needed to withdraw life support [from one of the babies].

Engaging in the activity of ministry shifted Esther's thinking of herself profoundly. It led

her to a recognition and conviction that she was called and a willingness to be ordained.

The experience of "ministering" during a crisis of death provoked an epiphany for

Deborah just as it did for Esther. It crystalized not around a sacramental task, however,

but around the realization that her training as a psychologist, in a way, was insufficient in

the moment. "Being a pastor is where it felt right, where the sense of call crystalized. I

felt like, 'This is what I'm called to do: be with people through these changes in life.'" In

completing a field education placement for the divinity school, Deborah had been placed in a small parish church.

> I was in field ed. and my supervisor was on vacation when a parishioner's husband died, and I had to be the one to go. And initially I told myself, "I can handle this because I am a psychologist after all, and I know how to deal with people and their pain, and I'll just be there for her and I'll listen." And I found myself, instead, walking out saying, "I wasn't a psychologist in that room! The way I reacted there was completely different than what I would have done as a psychologist!" And it felt right to be there with her, not as a psychologist but as a minister. It felt like that's what I'm called to do—to be with people throughout those life changes.

One other event that crystalized Deborah's call to be a minister was an "aha" moment during a class, a moment that pulled the disparate pieces of her own identity together for her and led her to see how she could envision the work she was convinced she had always been called to do—that is, to work at "healing identity politics" and "racial reconciliation" in America.

> At seminary, sitting in Willy Jennings' class on the Black Church, and for so much of my life [having] perceived the world in terms of race, and perceived myself and my goals in terms of racial issues, sitting in his class one day, it [suddenly dawned on me], "You mean there's actually an answer to this? And it's the gospel? You mean there's hope for this problem?"

For Priscilla, it was the experience with discrimination and the negative experience of a field placement crisis already mentioned in Chapter 4 that helped to shape the dimensions of her call, that crystalized in an undeniable, inner conviction of her call.

However, unlike Deborah's experience, gender and social context, rather than race, played the key role in these events. After being hired for a parish placement by a female pastor, Priscilla discovered upon actually taking up her summer internship that the pastor who hired her was moving and the pastor placed in her stead was a male who was none too supportive for two reasons: first, Priscilla was a woman and second, Priscilla was from Duke.

> It didn't make it smooth for me...[I think], God made it tough [on me] so that it confirmed for me that I was to preach...I preached seven out of ten of those Sundays [most students preach once or twice the entire summer]. And it was only God who got me through it...It was confirmation to me throughout the three years [at divinity school], every time I preached, I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing.

Supernatural Signs

Faith in supernatural signs pointing an individual towards a path, or confirming that their recent steps are along the right path, is a long-standing conviction and recognized form of affirmation in the Christian tradition. While it may be true that Priscilla's own background in a Pentecostal church might have increased her proclivity to look for, or her sensitivity to identify, such signs, all the women in this study, regardless of denominational ties, spoke of the notion that extraordinary and unexplainable circumstances or events functioned as signs from God in their discernment process. They also pointed to the conversion and call narratives from scripture as examples of the possible manifestations of a sign. Four of the women, however, related detailed narratives involving signs they took as confirming their call. For Esther and Priscilla, the signs were

sensory. For Vashti and Mary, the signs were couched in the working out of a challenging circumstance.

Esther, an avid orchestral musician, found strong affirmation and a supernatural sign in overhearing a tune she had been laboring on diligently while traveling home to Durham from a job interview with another ivy league law school. She explained,

I was standing in the lobby about to check out and go back to the airport. I heard a piece of music over the Musak system, a cello piece by Claude Bolling which I'd been working on myself for a long time with a friend, so I knew it. I was startled, "Oh!" I said, and went and stood under the speaker and listened and listened to the entire work. Then I checked out of the hotel, got on the metro, headed to the airport and thought to myself, "Something...somebody...is trying to tell me something." This music is important to me [my cello playing in the local symphony], and that piece of music is so familiar to me. I can play it. I don't want to give that up! And I kept going over it and over it in my mind. I thought, "This is a sign." I really did think of that as a sign! I eventually turned that job down. After that sign from God in the hotel lobby is when I said to my Pastor, "I wanna preach." I didn't realize I wanted to minister, but that was it...the first step.

Esther connected this experience to her call to ministry because she had already begun her tentative steps towards theological training and was a special student at this time at the divinity school. NOT taking the job (or having a sign that she should stay in Durham) was the same for her as saying "stay on the path of ministry" since staying in Durham meant staying in seminary. Taking the law job meant a firm foot in the direction of not pursuing theological studies.

Priscilla's sign involved a dream:

So I started dreaming of myself preaching! And so, I was like, "Okay, I'll go."
And even before I came here [to seminary] I had a dream I was in the mountains
and I was in this area that was flooded with people and I had to preach and the
Holy Spirit fell on me and I slayed demons in my dream. I associated the dream
metaphorically to things here and so I was like, "Okay God. You gotta make [this
preaching thing] happen. I'll go [to seminary] but I don't know where I'm going
and I don't really want to go back to school..."

Although acceptance at an institution of higher learning may seem like a mundane
event, Mary cites the moment of her acceptance to seminary as a trigger for an inner leap
to certainty about her calling. She had already taken the first tentative steps towards
formal ministry in the United Methodist church, the inquiry process, but she saw the rigor
of not only being accepted to graduate school, but being accepted to a school like Duke
as a supernatural sign:

We started on the process; it's called an inquiry process. And I started it, and I got
a hold of an application from Duke and I just felt like—I filled it out...and
doggone if I didn't get accepted! I couldn't believe it! Well, that's the
biggest...that's how you know you're called: you get into a competitive school
academically that you know there's no way you're going to get into! *I GOT
ACCEPTED AT DUKE???? And stayed in?* So, I mean, God's grace went [blast
off sound] all over the place, erupted! And kept erupting the whole time [I was at
school]. So that's my answer. I was called!

For Vashti, "talking with God" and hearing answers was part of the experience
she reported. She explained that she could "hear" God in the expression of amazing
circumstances and "beating the odds," particularly when it came to being accepted and

being able to afford seminary. She felt that unexpectedly favorable outcomes to what

seemed daunting challenges in her life provided her proof that she should follow one

direction or another. She said,

> God removed the barriers to attending school and the excuses for not doing
>
> seminary by providing full tuition. After I received a letter from Duke that said
>
> my tuition would be zero as a result of a financial aid package, I thought, "I have
>
> to...I have to do this! Because all my excuses are gone."

Ambivalence and Embrace of Identity: Losing, Claiming & Becoming

As explored in Chapter 4, the category *Definitions and Dimensions of Call*

identified a rhetorical stage that is no more important than any of the six stages of identity

development emerging from the data; however, because of its nature, that theme affected

the perception and experience of all other stages. Similarly, I identified a stage which I

call *Ambivalence and Embrace of Identity*, in which three internal phenomena seemed to

interact and weave together. Because the entire process of coming to accept her call was

recursive for every woman, this stage, too, colored all others. Though it recurred for most

participants several different times, it was always the final stage of the process,

whereupon she embraced her call and finally saw herself in a new light, firmly on the

path to ordination, and publicly acknowledging her call to pastoral ministry. As the subtitle

of this stage implies, *Losing, Claiming & Becoming* involved three intertwining events or

phenomena that emerged as illuminating more specifically the inner struggles and self-

evaluative reflection of participants and served to bring both closure to uncertainty and to

allow the participant to own the identity of an ordained minister—ending the rhetorical

dance of internal and external dialogue about the call—and instead, "living into" the call.

Though I grouped these three elements together and saw them as intertwined, I discuss each below in its own section.

Loss

Loss of professional identity #1. Loss of professional identity emerged as an aspect of Moments of Negation earlier in this chapter. It was noted then that both Deborah and Hannah lost professional standing very abruptly once their call to the ministry and their interest in attending seminary became public knowledge at work. Here, the loss of professional identity was seen in more specifically internal terms, and was in many regards positive, in that it helped each woman move to embrace her newly forming identity, or reflected the point at which she did finally embrace it.

Hannah was the first to articulate the implications of telling a new story and taking on a new professional identity as minister, and to speak of the loss it entailed both literally and metaphysically. Seeing her acceptance of the call as illogical but freeing, she noted, "That starting salary I had in 1991 as an engineer, I may never, never see again. Letting go of that and of the loss of future earnings was hard, but easy. Maybe hard, but freeing." Esther, too, saw that moving to a ministry career implied losing not only financially, but socially.

> I think the second career folks, men and women, I think we know we've given up a lot to be in Div. school. And we have conversations…I mean we've actually had funny conversations about what our salaries used to be and what we imagine they will be in the future—what fraction of our former salaries we're probably going to be making! But people have changed their lives around to be able to come to Div. school to follow this call, to…pursue ministry, to pursue learning. I think there's a sense of understanding…understanding that there's a past life that we have to say

goodbye to. But there's a lot of experience that we can draw on as we move

forward in ministry.

Esther went on to explain that a retreat of silence she attended soon after her divinity

school matriculation precipitated her recognizing the loss of her first identity. The silence

helped make space to say that "goodbye" to the first identity.

As we entered the silent time, I realized, well…I…I just started to cry. And I sat

outside the retreat center blowing my nose and bawling and hoping that nobody

could see me, though they could all hear me. After a while, I finally realized, "I

am saying goodbye! I am leaving this other life behind me. That is what this

[weeping] is all about. I am mourning the life that I have left behind…the

profession and all of that. I didn't sleep much that night. I kept thinking [about]

the sort of, the "ice breaker" for that retreat where they handed around a picture of

Michelangelo's *Creation* from the *Sistine Chapel*. You know, God reaching to

Adam? And where are you in this picture? And I said, "I'm hanging for dear life

at the bottom of this little ribbon down there with God sailing through the air with

all these angels. And there's just this ribbon down there, and I'm just hanging on

for dear life." And in the middle of the night, I thought, "I've let go! I've fallen

off."

For Vashti, saying "goodbye" to a particular professional identity other than

minister and seeing herself in that new light happened much later than for Esther. It was

not until her second year of divinity school when she was supposed to formally transfer

to the School of Social Work at UNC Chapel Hill to complete her dual degree that she

reached this point. She did not transfer to UNC, and instead completed the M.Div. at

Duke the following year.

Kathryn: So what let you finally let go of the Social Work?

Vashti: Just this real sense that my call was not to be a social worker. It was a call to be a minister, maybe in a non-traditional ministerial setting. That maybe I do need some of the courses in social work, some of the learning. At some point I may have to take those courses. But God was not calling me to social work. And I realized the only way to keep myself out of my own way, was not to have an MSW degree.

As mentioned above, and as with Esther and Hannah earlier in Chapter 4, before admitting her interest in pursuing ordained ministry, Deborah had a stellar career in clinical psychology and was on a path to succeed even more. The willingness to "answer the call" forced a choice that had been unanticipated, but seems to have made room for personal and public transformation of identity that would not have been possible otherwise:

In retrospect, I'm grateful that it happened [losing my NIH grant and losing my job]. But it was very painful because it was an identity that I was doing very well in…my career. I understand now, though, why my colleagues sabotaged me. In this idea of religion where you are ascribing to the beliefs and values of a community, and it has to do with acknowledging a power out of your own control. A lot of psychologists don't like that.

I remember meeting one person who said in her graduate program, they were explicitly told that anyone who believed in God had no reason to be there. "If you believe in God, you don't belong in this program." Even when I was struggling to figure out where I fit in Christianity, I still had a pretty strong sense

of faith and connection to God, but I definitely submerged my Christian identity

to my professional identity.

I think the way that psychology has managed its so-called value-neutral

position is to actually ignore religion. It really is a "don't-ask-don't-tell" policy:

"You can be religious, but it can't at all be a part of who we know you to be in the

academy."

Deborah believed she had violated this "rule" by making public her valuing

religion in the academy and in her life-goals. She talked at length a number of times

about her experience of loss surrounding her NIH grant, but also of the need to lose in

order to gain.

I would still be plugging along in part-time status. And I don't think I would have

been able to give myself over to the process as much, and to be formed the way I

was. So being able to be co-coordinator of the [divinity school] women's center

[my second year at Duke]—that wouldn't have happened if I had still been

working. I was really doing well in my career. I was the first person in the history

of the department to apply for and receive a grant their first year...From NIH...I

think probably 4 years ago had you asked people to name who were the "up and

coming" Black psychologists, my name would have come up. And I felt really

good about where I was.

Like Vashti, Deborah said, "It wasn't really until the second year that I was just

going to give myself over to being a student. And so that's when I stopped my private

practice. I stopped everything else." She went on to explain:

[It was then] I decided to go in for an individual appointment with [a divinity

school chaplain] and told her about the struggle I was having with all the

identities I was trying to navigate. And she said to me…"You probably need to stop practicing psychology for a while. Give up your practice. Give up anything that has to do with psychology for a while and just be a student." And I said, "I can't possibly do that because I need the money." And I remember walking out of there, but by the end of that year, I realized that she was right. And I said, "I'm not hearing God. I'm not hearing God because I'm trying to do too much stuff right now. I'm trying to hold on to psychology too much right now."

Loss of family and friends. Just as Deborah and Hannah lost whole circles of professional friends and colleagues, Esther and Hannah faced even more intimate loss during the course of their deciding to pursue seminary and then ordination. Esther and her husband were discussing whether to separate. At the end of the second interview, Esther was heading to her Lutheran year in another state. The outcome of the "risk of losing" the marriage at the point interviewing ceased was not known. Her husband continued to be supportive of her and of her call and they were in love, but whether they could continue as married was not resolved. Hannah experienced the complete dissolution of her marriage during her second year at divinity school. She explained that this deep loss was precipitated by circumstances other than her full-time pursuit of ministry, but was linked in that her complete change gave her husband the freedom to make a complete change as well. She struggled with this personal loss through the remainder of divinity school, though her marriage was restored before this study ended.

Both Hannah and Esther pointed out that accepting the call was not only personal. It asks a spouse to live with a "new person." This can happen in other marriages, but since ministry involves public expectations of the spouse and household, it is a significant factor in a marriage. As with Hannah, loss of marriage in accepting this radical new

identity was on the table for Esther too. Here she refers to talking with her husband about

the fact that the marriage may not last.

> **Esther**: It had to be said out loud, and I had to face it because I was the one that
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> was having a whole lot of trouble facing it. And after that came out, it sort of…the
>
> fear lifted.
>
> **Kathryn**: The fear of?
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> **Esther**: The fear of saying that we might not make it, or I'm going to hold on to
>
> this thing as tightly as I can, and no matter what. The fear lifted and we both said
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> that this year [Esther's "Lutheran study year," a requirement for her ordination] is
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> a time where both of us need to grow a certain way. I need to be up there [PA
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> Lutheran seminary] learning and doing, and my husband needs to be here taking
>
> responsibility for the household, and taking responsibility for this job, and all this
>
> sort of stuff.

The process in accepting the new professional identity and the demand to move to

a Lutheran seminary precipitated by ecclesial authorities meant loss for Esther; her

marriage might not survive, and she would have to "be leaving these friends I've had for

15 years…also…Seminary friends…Yeah, my new Div. school friends who I have

struggled and studied with, and prayed with, and eaten with and…you know, cried with.

All that stuff for the last two years."

Claiming

While loss was a significant challenge for all the women who named it, it also

played directly into their ability to begin claiming or accepting their new identity more

fully. Such claiming emerged most often as the result of internal reflection on one of

three significant categories of experience: dialogic self-assessment, opportunities to

preach, and the overall experience of divinity school. Claiming reflected the process of embracing the new identity, a process not yet complete. It also reflected a process quite unique to each individual.

Dialogic self-assessment.

Mary. Internal reflection and dialogue played an essential part in Mary's grappling with her own embrace of her call. In the excerpt below she worked to explain the internal struggles necessary to repel her own doubts about her abilities to perform effectively as a teacher and preacher in an effort to move towards fully claiming her identity as a minister. She settled on self-confidence and personal devotion as the key.

> I have internal dialogue all the time, and it's very noisy in there...A whole committee! And the hardest thing has to do with when the noise is all about all the things you do wrong. It beats you up if you let it. That's the self-care: not letting that happen because then you start doubting yourself, and start thinking you're not a good preacher, you're not a good teacher, and...and...and it could be just one person saying this [that joins the chorus in your head], but it completely shrinks you down…and you don't do your job. You have to have confidence in who you're called to be. And…and stand firm on that foundation. Spend your time with the Lord so that's where your strength is coming from. And so the voices don't get too loud. Those negative kind of voices destroy you. They're clergy-killers.

Hannah. Walking the labyrinth at Duke Chapel led to a moment of internal certainty or clarity for Hannah. The outcome was a clear sense that ministry "was where I felt alive, this is the way ministry was—a way of engaging with people that felt right and genuine." This was an engagement for her with the whole notion of being happy to *be*

this person, a ministering person, an internal conviction that she was on the right life path, versus having "right" based on ability or external affirmation, to say she had a bona fide call to ministry. Also, further internal debate about the example her career choices set for her child and how those choices affected the ways she lived them out daily in her own life made Hannah see seminary as much more reflective of who she was than her IBM position was. "The shape of my faith...despite the fact that I can't describe it, continues to evolve and have more texture and more questions and different answers."

Positing a difference between gifts and skills as a further example of her own internal vision for herself as a minister, Hannah provided an example of how she had changed as had moved toward claiming her ministerial identity:

I think of gifts as something you are given, and skills as things you acquire. You might have the gift of preaching, but there are skills involved in preaching that you can work on. I also feel like gifts, more than skills, are something to be deployed to further the kingdom…to do something with that is not purely self-serving. Gifts have more of that sense to me than do skills. In my pre-seminary life, I probably would've talked about abilities as skills, but now, post-seminary life gives me the language of gift…an idea that lets some of the ability come from beyond. Serving as a lay person didn't seem to fully take advantage of what I sensed I had [been gifted] to offer.

Deborah. Before claiming her identity as a pastor or as "called to ministry," but beginning to move towards exploring that idea, Deborah reported it was hard to imagine how to merge the "value-neutral" psychologist in her with the committed Christian. She expressed it in terms of speaking two entirely different languages:

Even for me, when I began to make the shift, I actually had an experience where I realized how ill-equipped I was, in spite having grown up in church—in spite of being a Christian—when it came to merging my clinical practice with my beliefs. I couldn't do it. I had no idea how to do it. I had a colleague once who was a Columbian native. And so her first language was Spanish, but she had an MSW. She was trained to do therapy in English. And she would say that she was no good at therapy with Spanish speaking people because even though Spanish was her native language, her clinical language was English. Her therapeutic language was English, and when she tried to make that shift, she couldn't. And I think for me it was the same way in terms of psychology and religion.

Deborah also reported a lengthy internal conflict about accepting her identity and call as pastor. Rather than being a part of her resisting her call as discussed in Chapter 4, however, the internal conflict here addressed the struggle as an essential part of resolving self-doubt and claiming the new identity:

I go back and look over my journal entries from the past four years and see how much I struggled against it, and how in one entry I would say, "Okay. It's clear to me. It's affirmed again. I'm called to be a pastor." And in the very next entry, I'm talking about some job I'm going to apply for in psychology...I'm still negotiating that public identity.

Priscilla. Dialogic self-assessment did not end in Priscilla's specifying "career goals" for herself in the same way it might have had she been considering a secular vocation. In fact none of the clergy women, even in struggling to claim and moving towards embracing ministry, defined such ministry in terms of career goals such as they reported younger classmates were apt to name—what kind of salary they wanted, what

kind of church they wanted, what kind of living circumstance, etc. As Priscilla reported

the internal process of claiming, she seemed first to waffle before talking herself into a

moment of confidence or of recognition of that claiming. After generalizing initially in

the excerpt below, she then made a more definitive statement embracing God's

sufficiency in the process:

> [Being a minister] can be wonderful, I believe, but it will be a growth process. It's
>
> exciting as well as a little nerve-wracking to think about what God has ahead. But
>
> I have learned from my adoptive dad that "you have to trust Him when you
>
> cannot trace Him." And so, that's where I am in life. "Okay God. I don't know
>
> what's going on. I don't know when the next job comes if ordination comes and
>
> that's the job. I don't know any of it, but I know you are a provider and I know we
>
> are in a relationship and we have an agreement—a covenant together—and so I
>
> gotta do what I'm led to do and do my part because I know you're gonna do your
>
> part." Even when I'm falling short, I know God is gonna do God's part. And I
>
> have learned in this life that God's grace is sufficient and we just have to call on it
>
> because it's there and available to us. That's kind of been my experience.

At this stage, embracing ministry and herself as a minister also involved, for Priscilla,

thinking through the expectations others might have for her as a minister. In wrestling

internally with herself about the shape of her call, she recognized that choosing ministry

is a more public decision than being a psychologist. Her reflection was particularly

influenced by her recent reading of St. Gregory,[14] an exercise leading her to ask herself

---

[14] Pope Gregory I, a prolific writer, also known as Gregory the Great. He held the

office of Pope from 3 September 590 until his death on 12 March 604.

whether she really could be a caretaker of souls:

> People still have an expectation for a psychologist, but they don't look to a
>
> psychologist to say, "You're the caretaker of my soul." [As a psychologist] you're
>
> the caretaker of perhaps someone's mind. Perhaps people talk to you about what
>
> they're struggling with, or emotional, mental distress—behavioral things that need
>
> to be changed. And it can be life or death, but it doesn't tend to be unless it's
>
> suicide. But pastoral-ly...preacher-ly—it's life or death. And it's not just physical
>
> life or death, but it's spiritual life or death, eternal…that's what St. Gregory said,
>
> "You're the curer or carer of the soul."

Priscilla's internal dialogue finally led her to what she reported as a fusing of

professional identities:

> At first I was like preaching on the right hand—psychology on the left. I have
>
> been in that place, but more recently, I have said I am a preaching psychologist
>
> and I cannot separate the two. I can operate in a particular role, but that's my
>
> identity. That's who I am. It's then time for me to grow in that. The comfort of
>
> that.

Preaching. A fundamental responsibility of most ordained pastors is preaching.

While preaching was touched upon in Chapter 4 as part of the Definitions and

Dimensions of Ministry, it is discussed here on more intimate terms, as fundamental to

how participants saw themselves as preachers. The act of preparing and preaching

sermons functioned as a particularly formative set of experiences for the participants of

this study, both before and during the final stage of embracing a ministerial identity.

Priscilla. Priscilla decided to emphasize the importance of her call as a preacher

by finding an illustration representative of her developing identity. By her second

interview, she had ordered business cards that demonstrated her preaching identity as superseding her identity as a psychologist.

> I decided I'm going to do two businesses, one of them being Jones-Hudson's consulting, but on my card I'm gonna have the preaching psychologist. And I think that's funny because it just came to me one day and I believe my preaching identity has taken over. I try to walk a balance, but I really believe it has taken over, or it is going to be taking over. And I think I hold that in greater esteem than the psychology. I'm continuously being transformed, but I think that my identities are being intertwined. I believe that my psychological skills are certainly transferable to whatever I do. But at the same time, I have to flip that and say the ministerial skills are transferable to whatever I do psychology-wise. And often times when I thought, "I don't have a theory, I don't have an intervention, I don't have a tool psychologically to use...something spiritual has to be done in this case." And I think. "That's wonderful!"

Mary. In contrast to Priscilla's practical view of intertwining and superseding identities, Mary reached for metaphor to relate her experience of preaching as a creative and transformative process, and not just a public event or ministerial responsibility.

> Preparing a sermon is a kind of birthing process, or like in dark room, a "creating" experience…something emerging…every week. And then you spill it out on the paper, and then you speak it, and then it lands on everybody's ears in a different place, wherever they are in their journey. So everybody hears it differently…a different sermon. It's that same thrill of creation that I got when I found a …scene as a photographer. And then birthing that in the dark room and manipulating it all…same thing with the sermon process. And then you know, framing it, hanging

it on the wall, or putting it up for sale is the same thing as giving a sermon. It comes from the exact same place.

Hannah. Through her theological training, her awareness of the power of the word has increased for Hannah, as well as the pleasure of considering the scope of changing carefully-chosen words and what the revision can bring about.

I think I realized in the 1st year [of] seminary that there is logic to words like there is logic in numbers. And I know for a lot of people that's not interesting, but for the engineer in me, it was. But now [four years later], I still think I'm having fun exploring the logic of words and what they can do and how they can be powerful. So I get to play with that in a different way...in an academic way [in the Th.D.] as well as in a sermon.

Vashti. Discussing her willingness to deny the call because of "nay sayers," or the need to make a living, prompted such passion in Vashti that she expounded for a full 735 words without stopping and barely stuttering. The "preacher" and the lover of the power of the word were clear in the portion below:

I'll hear a phrase or quote and I write it down; I may never use it again…I may never know where it is, but I have to have it. I love the imagery of it, and I think it's very important because words *do* shape our images. And so, I'm thinking of a favorite phrase of mine from a Zora Neal Hurston book…a favorite line…but I'm also thinking (I'm trying to keep it to ministry) of a sermon that I preached for preaching class. And I preached it at my field-ed. church…on the 2nd chapter of James…the power of the tongue. Where it says, "Not many of you should be teachers, my brothers and sisters." That scripture makes me think of the idea of the word "survivor" versus a "victim." When we use words like "invalid"…we

"invalidate" these people and we assume that we have the definition of what is normal and functioning.

I'm not saying it now as poetically as I did in the sermon, but…people were so blown away…People have come up to me, and they shake my hand and say "Yeah, when I say AIDS victim, I think of this poor, wretched, dying, dirty person." And it used to be that way with cancer 'til AIDS came along. And all of a sudden we had cancer survivors, right? Words matter! Language is SO critical. And maybe, maybe that's why I find writing sermons so incredibly painful and difficult. But why, to God be the Glory, that they resonate with people. Because I really take the time to find the Word that I actually need. Or that I think that God is trying to say to me…and I try to very careful not to use…use trite phrases and things that are ambiguous, and things that can be painful to someone just because, you know, it makes a really good "zingy" kind of phrase.

Deborah. Deborah, like Hannah and Vashti, was as acutely aware of the power and importance of preaching. She felt preaching was crucial for her and for the church. "Not just the glamorous reconciliation of preaching; the mundane part too. Even though I don't want it to be what I'm called to, when I do it, it feels right. It feels like this is where I'm supposed to be. So, it's in those little moments that make me feel like I'm where I should be."

Divinity School. The three years in seminary were crucial to developing and recognizing a ministerial self for every woman, as were her preaching experiences. Each woman spoke at length about seminary as formative, even though I never asked questions specifically about seminary as a whole (though I asked about discrete moments of learning). The "permission" to be open about faith in divinity school was the most useful

element for Deborah in terms of her emerging professional identity. She explained that it gave her "permission" to be a Christian and a realization she could integrate two lives she felt previously were in conflict.

>More than anything, it helped me know it was okay to be Christian…The big surprise of Seminary was being in an environment where everybody was excited about their faith. No matter whether different denominations and backgrounds that people were from…just being in an environment where no longer did it have to be this hidden thing. And this thing I did on the side and I didn't talk about in my normal vocation…suddenly it was ok; it was expected. Also, it meant something more than traditional expectations of not smoking or not drinking, for example, though. It meant something about how you spent your money; it meant something about who your friends were. It meant something about…what you supported with your life. I think that helped me to begin to adopt this attitude that…I think kinda what I was looking for was this integration of the two parts of my life. I had really gotten to the point before Seminary…of just feeling like I was being torn in two. That I was living this one life as an academic psychologist, and that there was this other life I had in my church and in my home and my family, and that I was beginning to feel really kind of dissociative.

Deborah went on to express how her theological training directly influenced her psychology practice even before she reached the point where she abandoned it entirely after year one of the divinity school:

>I think I realize that there is not a form of therapy that doesn't have a values system behind it. It's just whether or not you are explicit about what your value system is...What my theology training has helped me to do is to name the values

system—to be explicit about it. Theology is not just a religious shift, but a methodological shift. I was beginning to think much more broadly about things. Even though I have always been interdisciplinary, I began to engage these larger questions. I began to see connections that I hadn't seen before. Problems [like racial disparity] I thought were pretty intractable when I was looking at [them] from a psychological standpoint. What do you do for this from a psychological point of view, when you're thinking about dealing with the individual? But then looking at it from a theological perspective, I found new hope for the problems that I had been looking at.

In response to my asking for an example of how this might look, Deborah provided a long explanation of the shift in thinking from quantitative only to qualitative. She also explained psychology as dealing superficially with individual lives in terms of identity and belonging, and seeing theology as striving for answers to "the deeper issues." Here is an excerpt of what she shared:

Before thinking about all the models, the statistical models I had in mind for the different variables we had in the equation—what dropped out and what stayed in—identity was clearly one of these that dropped out. And now from a theological stand point, it's very much back in for me. I learned very quickly from being in divinity school that in psychology we read and think very superficially because we are really focused on the project, and not necessarily the deeper issues like theory. It's not rewarded. And so you don't think about the deeper issues, you think about what you're gonna measure, how you're gonna measure it, who you're gonna measure it on, and then how you're gonna try to tie it together

statistically. Whereas in theology and in the humanities, you really probe a lot deeper to think about what things mean.

Hannah's seminary experience has extended farther than the other women in the study, because she served first as a preceptor (a kind of graduate assistant) in the divinity school after receiving her M.Div., and then successfully matriculated into the Doctor of Theology program. So her focus and interest by her second interview had not shifted from ordained ministry, but included her current pursuit of Th.D. She saw her continued study as not leaving the journey towards ministry, but broadening and enriching it. She is particularly interested in pastoral care as done by the congregation "and how theological beliefs shape action." She explained,

> I realized I was good at school when I did my M.Div. degree. I …realized I really liked studying this stuff, and finished [the M.Div.] with so much left to learn and so much more I wanted to read…Both as a pursuit in and of itself, but also to equip me for ministry to be able to dig more deeply theologically and to answer more questions or to do a better job about talking about things for which there are no answers.

Also, her "dual" call to be scholar and minister added a dimension to the future that was hard to anticipate.

> Both of these seem alive to me...So I don't know how those will work out or if they will be in parallel or in series, and where they will be…I recently met the new President of Moravian College and Moravian Theological Seminary, and sort of said..."You know if you need someone to teach in a few years..." whether that's to teach there...and then I...I also can't shake the Moravian church [and the call to the parish]. All this would be much easier if I guess I'd go be Presbyterian. If this

were logical I would be Presbyterian, but I don't feel that Presbyterian, and I feel

Moravian...I feel a particular call from this strange little church.

Becoming (Self-Acceptance and Moving Ahead)

By interview #2, Hannah had been asked to write an article for a journal

distributed nationwide to the North American Moravian Church. "So that will be my first

national voice. And will get printed in the magazine." Hannah then saw herself as

merging both new identities (ministerial and academic) in providing the article on the trip

to Germany for the national internal journal (one available in academic seminary

libraries). The by-line for the article merged the identities as well: "'a candidate for

ordained ministry in the Southern Province.' I think I said that first, and then 'a member

of Raleigh Moravian church, and currently pursuing…Doctorate in Theology at Duke

Divinity School.'" Her hope, she says, is to use words to "build" faith that gives hope in

the midst of suffering. She explained that she understands this hope to be exemplified in

her own life, in the hope and the positives that emerged through the brokenness and then

reconciliation of her marriage, and in the rich resources education has given her to take a

look at situations and to be able to use words to deconstruct and reconstruct the situation

in ways that were hopeful.

> I love realizing that the words are deconstructed and sorted and put back
>
> together...with logic to form this strong building that has something to say
>
> worthwhile about answering, "What difference does Jesus make amidst horrible
>
> suffering?" Well I guess that's the kind of work I hope to be able to do.

Esther, too, could identify differences in herself and relate these by thinking about

herself in third person:

The Esther Ellerby that entered Duke I don't think really knew what she…where she was headed. I hadn't applied for candidacy for ordination. In a way I felt I was…I was not a seeker, but I did know that if I didn't go to Div. school I would really regret.

Regarding the "later Esther" who entered PA seminary for Lutheran year, she said, "So the Esther heading to Philly…is looking forward, and not so much over my shoulder."

Kathryn: She's on the ordination track?

Esther: She's on the ordination track. She has a picture of what ministry is. The Esther Ellerby who went to divinity school was really concerned about how little Biblical knowledge I had. I felt like I was way behind a lot of my classmates who had large pieces of the bible memorized…and…had been really faithful Sunday School goers. And I hadn't been. I think I was intimidated by that. I'm not really intimidated anymore by the academic work load. The Esther headed to Philly is fully embracing a new "identity" as a minister.

Becoming, for Deborah was as clear as for Esther:

Yeah, I think my identities are unifying! I think…I've gotten to the point now where I can't pull them apart the way I used to. And I can't tease apart the different aspects of myself the way I used to. Here's this psychologist who's going to integrate this interest in spirituality, and over here I'm going to do this women's ministry in my local church, and then over here I'll go to seminary. I can't…I can't pull those things apart anymore. I have lost vocabulary for how to define myself...like when you do your taxes, and they ask for your career; I have no idea what to put anymore. "Minister" doesn't quite capture it, "professor"

doesn't quite capture it, "Psychologist" definitely doesn't capture it. I have no clue what to put any more. Anytime I'm faced with that question, I'm like, "What do I say to this?" because I feel who I am and all of the ways that I feel called to be personally and professionally, they just defy any one simple term…career label. Yeah, they're all I think merging together.

The first time Priscilla's adopted father heard her preach, he was concerned that she herself needed a psychologist! But as she held fast to the "journey," his own conception of her has altered. The last time she preached to his congregation, she said, he was moved to tears by the power of her message.

They know I'm doing what I was called to do. And if nobody else ever is, I am. And that's what matters…God has enlisted me in His service to do a work. And to me, that is what call is—when God enlists you—because God can use anybody and everybody, and He uses us differently. But to know that this is what God has said specifically, "This is what I want you to do for me," and to just to do it to the best of my God-given ability, but also to have a heart and a desire to do it. This is important to me. [I've realized] I've got to live into this call…and I really do…Now if somebody tells me I can't preach…I got a problem with because that's what I know God has called me to do.

Even in what seemed the last of the stages of constructing identity, Priscilla still made a distinction between preaching and ordination, but moved from trying to be the preaching psychologist, to being committed to ordination in some form.

"God, if you want it to happen, you make it happen." And that's what God did. So, I'm walking in it. And you know, as long as I'm in the UMC, I'll be able to preach. You know? So, deacon, elder, whatever, I don't know…deacons can

preach, of course. Elders can preach, certainly. Or even just as a lay person. But I
know that there is ordination in my life. I believe that.

For Mary, assuming the "identity" of being a pastor was not playing a role, but
was assuming "privilege and responsibility."

> Too many unbelievable things have happened to me in the prisons that tie back to
> the church…it's really caused me to look at preaching, worship, and the
> incarcerated—who are the bottom...just the bottom of the world that we have
> tossed aside. Those people are created in the image of God, and we are to love
> them regardless of what the...*in*justice system has done to them. And regardless of
> what they've done. After all, who am I? You know, I believe that people who
> gossip in church are as bad as people who've murdered somebody. And I just
> believe, because gossip is a murder...you're killing someone's spirit and all...I
> have no line or division any more where people are concerned or where sin is
> concerned. It's not "us and them." So I see God's people more as a hole in my
> heart. You know, so those things have changed my life and my calling, and
> affirmed my calling.

Mary was already looking past the present to the future, dreaming big dreams for
preaching.

> I'm hoping that I wouldn't even be confined to a church. That I could preach all
> over the world. That I could develop seminars. I've got some in the hopper, you
> know…on laughter, on women becoming strong, and not making stupid
> decisions, based on the fact that they think they have to because the way
> society…you know, the way we're raised in society that you've got do this, this,

and this. And we don't. So, I'd like to teach and preach, but I'd like to do it my own way.

Rich Language as a Bridge to Findings

As noted in Chapter 3, once this study was underway and I was in the midst of gathering data, it became apparent that I would have to make choices as to how best to explore and present the data, which precluded my original plans for the study. My initial impetus to analyze the discourse formally was replaced by a commitment to keep in tact as much as possible the narrative of my participants, while still moving beyond the story to the strategies at play in their composition. As discussed at length in this and the preceding chapter, the narratives themselves, closely considered individually and in relationship one to the other, provided an emerging heuristic or set of themes. Using these themes as the analytical basis for a reflexive and narrative analysis of the interviews proved the method of analysis best able to convey the richness and complexity of language at play. A lengthy discussion of the resulting findings is provided in Chapter 6.

Before moving on to that discussion, however, I would like to highlight briefly here some of the ways both image and metaphor provided an affirmation of the rhetorical skill, the sharp candor, and keen personal insight with which each study participant examined and then reported on her call. Such language richly conveyed her developing understanding of her call as well as her own identity in relation to that understanding.

Imagery in Metaphor

The depth and color with which each clergywoman shared her experiences and her understanding of herself and those experiences as related to her call involved two sorts of metaphors: (1) explanatory metaphors used to extend an understanding of process, and (2) ordinary metaphors used in an effort to reach for both clarity and color in

the act of sharing a story. All of these images are provided in context in the interview

excerpts of Chapters 4 and 5, but isolating them here clearly demonstrates the vitality of

the language participants reached for in an effort to convey the very personal and

complex nature of their shifting identity as ministers.

Explanatory Metaphors	Ordinary Metaphors
Call as Japanese Origami "unfolding"	Sustaining faith as cultivating faith
God calls on the telephone	Dealing with challenges as crossing a bridge
Answering the call as being alive or awake	Outside expectations are a box
Considering the call as journey through labyrinth	Refusing new identity is submerging call
Ministry as journey with people	Sermon as strong building (offering shelter)
Imagining call as gazing into the background of a portrait	Pastor as caretaker
Accepting new identity as falling into unknown—falling of the ribbon in Michelangelo's *Creation* in the Sistine Chapel	Pastor as shepherd
Preparing sermon as birthing process (life emerging)	Uncertainty in new identity is lost vocabulary
Preparing sermon as photographer in dark room creating art	Uncertainty in new identity is not being able to fill in "profession" on a tax form
Delivering sermon as framing art or putting it up for sale to the public	
Preparing sermons as playing with and exploring the power of words	
Theology as a methodological shift in approaching life's problems	

Imagery in Word Clouds

In addition to the vivid language highlighted above and evident throughout the

study in the narratives related by participants, one other striking representation of the

creativity and consistency of the language used by participants, both in speaking and in

writing, was the literal visualization of word frequency as generated by *TagCrowd*

software. As noted in Chapter 3, I provided a tag cloud to each participant at the focus

group as a spring board into our collective reflection on the interviews. The example

provided in Chapter 3 was of a middler evaluation, but the images that provoked the most

surprise in participants and also invited them to closer scrutiny of their own strategies in

communicating call were the tag clouds generated by the combined content of each

participant's two interviews and those of the ordination papers submitted early on in the

study. Below are two ordination paper clouds about which much discussion ensued in the

focus group.

baptism believe body called care career challenge christ church cpe duke entered faith family friends gift god grace ground jesus lead learn life live love lutheran minister ministry moment morning pastor path people person point potentiality promise responsibility sacraments school semester seminary speak talk traditions true understand work worship year

Figure 3 Ordination tag cloud: Esther

0j 3q affirmed aj believe bible calling children christ christian church cj experience faith gd gifts god heart hn include influence jesus life lord love methodist minister ministry mission ordained order ordination parish pastor people personal powerful practice prayer school serve service spiritual strive sunday taught united work worship years

Figure 4 Ordination tag cloud: Mary

Shared priorities, as reflected in the frequency of key words highlighted in the

clouds, were striking to participants, given their very different backgrounds.

Though the focus group materials have been set aside for now while completing this

dissertation, they will be taken up with enthusiasm in future research, as will more

formal discourse analysis in future work. The glimpse at the language of the

ordination papers above and of the interviews themselves that the tag clouds below

provide clearly echo the themes emerging in the study.
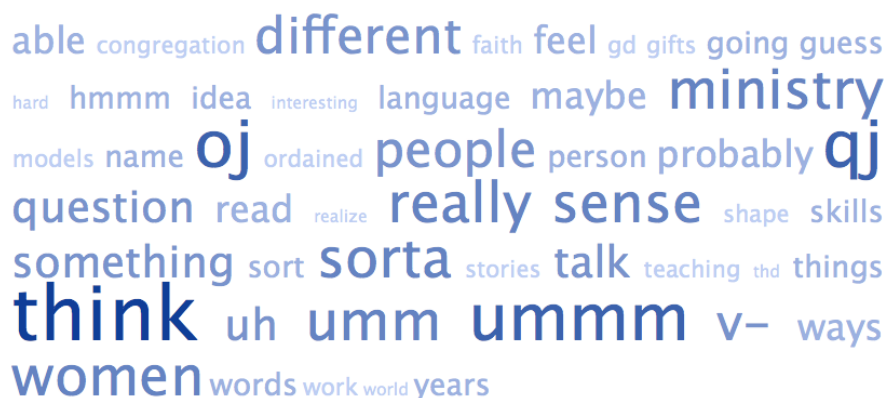
Figure 5 Interviewing tag cloud: Hanna
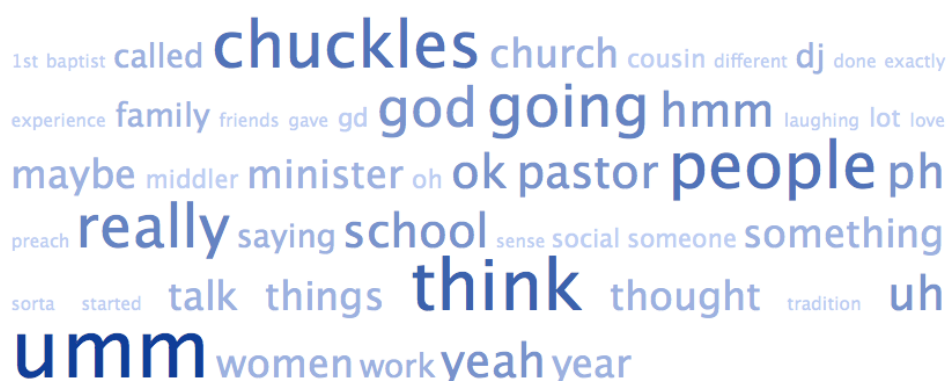
Figure 6 Interviewing tag cloud: Vashti

Concluding Remarks

This chapter, in conjunction with Chapter 4 has reported findings. In the next chapter I turn to a detailed discussion of the findings. First, I discuss in broad terms the results of this study as they touched upon narrative and identity. I will then comment upon a number of themes that came to the fore as a result of analyzing the findings, and that offered a way of understanding the interconnectedness of each of the stages explored.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

And now, my dear sisters, do not be startled, when I tell you that you have been ordained for a great work. Not by the imposition of mortal hands, or a call from man, no, Christ, the great Head of the church, hath chosen you, and "ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." ~ Phoebe Palmer (19th century preacher)

This study has presented the language used by a group of professional women pursuing a career in ordained Christian ministry, a vocational trajectory not traditionally linked to women and one in which they sometimes encounter not only social, but theological resistance. These women were carving out new professional identities after having already met with marked success in previous professional domains. In analyzing the open-ended interview responses of these participants, I have verified my original sense that their discourse regarding their holy calling would reveal the ways in which they rhetorically construct a new professional and personal identity. The findings demonstrate both how they viewed themselves and how they engaged others in constructing that view. The findings also revealed some of the ways in which their perceived identities changed as they came to accept and then actively pursue their call to ministry.

Dana Anderson (2007), in *Identity's Strategy: Rhetorical Selves in Conversion*, delineates the act of communicating self-understanding, or narrating self, and the rhetorical stance inherent in that act. It is always, she claims, a rhetoric of persuasion:

- This is me.
- Believe who I am.

- Be convinced of this judgment of me.

- See me with this potential.

- See me in this light.

- See me as legitimately performing all of the moves of the traditional

  narratives.

- See my interpretation of my right to be what I claim as legitimate.

Throughout this study, the clergy women who shared with me their call

narratives, and who reflected on their corresponding shifts in identity, by participating in

each interview added to that identity when they reached to express it or to define or

defend it more fully, and in doing so exercised just the kind of rhetorical actions listed

above. This rhetorical positioning was reflected in every instance and by every

participant—but in order to fully unpack not just the rhetoric, but also the shifts in public

identity and self-conception, it became necessary to understand whether there were any

overarching processes at play.

Six themes emerged from the data to provide an heuristic for more closely

examining such narrative processes. As I explained early in Chapter 4 of this study, I

came to think of these emerging and discursive processes as a kind of rhetorical dance.

Encompassing the other five, but not more important than the others, was the notion of

call itself: how to define it and how to discuss its dimension. As each participant

approached the challenge of defining the notion of "call," she began to build—for herself

and her audience—the parameters within which she imagined and explored the

implications of labeling herself, or allowing herself to be labeled, a minister. The five

additional moves of the dance were *Models of Leadership and Ministry*, *Moments of*

Negations of Call, *Moments of Resisting and Doubt*, *Moments of Affirmation*, and finally, *Losing and Becoming (Claiming Ministerial Identity)*.

By paying attention to contingent and interactional patterns, the "contextualizing cues" (Gumperz, 1982, 1992) evident as a result of analyzing the call narratives, I noticed a number of additional themes in the data that further illuminated the complexity of the transitional or emerging identity. In this chapter, I will first discuss in broad terms the results of this study as they touched upon narrative and identity. I will then comment upon a number of themes that came to the fore as a result of analyzing the findings, and that offered a way of understanding the interconnectedness of each of the stages explored. These include: Testimony and Tradition; Spiritual Leadership and its Costs; Identity in Relationship; and Identity as a Process.

Narrative and Identity

Telling stories about ourselves is fundamentally an exercise in emphasis. It is an edit of the things that are and are not self. Identity within a religious community, too, depends on constitutive rhetoric. It "calls forth" an identity audience and constitutes that audience of "believers;" what is expressed—a new idea or rhetorical move—can complicate theology or make room for theophany. Narrating their call did both for the women of this study. In conducting this study, I listened carefully to the call narratives shared by participants and explored the ways each clergywoman struggled with accepting and validating her call to ordained ministry. I examined the ways she articulated—and by articulating, imagined—how to "live into" that call with authenticity.

In each of the interviews conducted for this study, the women talked with me and over me, our discourse overlapping. To some extent, this is because we were at least casual friends and the conversation, though formal and demanding, was still comfortable.

However, some of this layered conversation is also the way of women conversing together (Kimura, 2002; Tannin, 1995). In fact the identity emerging in a study of this kind is absolutely dependent upon that form of interaction. By listening to their story at all, I am validating that they have a story and that it is worth telling; this identity is "real" because it's being studied. Identity, as Anderson (2007) argues, is always a persuasive rhetorical act.

As I paid close attention to both the content and construct of these narratives, the study revealed how each participant, in her own way, integrated the verbal, mental, and emotional skills of her previous professional field and discourse community into her current pursuit of "the call." As each disengaged herself from that initial professional identity, she moved back and forth between affirmation of the "new" call, negation of that call, and moments of resistance. She initially struggled to understand the implications of living out a new call, but finally claimed a new personal and professional identity.

Testimony and Tradition

Intertwined with the content of the narratives that emerged in this study was the concept of *testimony*, a term that was profoundly meaningful to these participants and that influenced their own view of the responses they gave in the study. The nature of "giving testimony" seemed clearly understood by each participant regardless of her denominational affiliation. As it is an ancient practice based on Christian scriptures, early church practices, and history, testimony has played a crucial part in giving voice to men and women of any socio-economic status, regardless of background or education, within the walls of the sanctuary as well as in any community setting where one's beliefs or one's fundamental stance is at issue. Believers are encouraged to "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with

meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15, New King James Version). Consequently, "Who do

you stand for and why?" are questions frequently addressed in a variety of ways by

personal testimony. That tradition of "giving testimony" proved layered for the women of

my study. By sharing their "call narrative," in a real sense giving testimony to what they

saw happening in their own lives, each clergywoman carried the additional burden (or

joy) of also providing an exposition and defense of her understanding of call in general

and her personal call in particular. To tell her story, to be ready to give testimony, is not

an unfamiliar demand. Only the context of the interview as academic project sometimes

proved alien territory for the enunciation of personal testimony. The experience of

divinity school, however, seemed to have made ample, if uncomfortable, room for each

of these women to view her heart's conviction, and her life's call, as a valid subject of

analysis. Her need to position herself as adequate intellectually in the academy during

seminary constantly colored her faith expressions within that context, and continued to

color her expression of that call during this study. In that sense, my interviewing each

woman within the context of the research project became more acceptable and my

attention to the details of the story both made room for and validated her story.

Spiritual Leadership and Its Costs

What did each of these women have in common, aside from the elements which

identified them as appropriate project participants (educational level, age range, second-

career status, and gender identity)? They also shared an understanding of women as

spiritual leaders, women as institutional leaders, women as teachers, women as worship

leaders, women as incisive, decisive, and strong. All of these notions are rolled up into

most parish and lay person expectations of the "shepherd of the flock." Interestingly, the

way these elements are defined, however, frequently resembles the CEO model, with a

senior officer dictating programmatic and marketing policies and interested in the bottom line of the organization. This differs considerably from the model of discipleship offered up in scripture by the example of Jesus—that of a servant leader willing to do menial labor[15] and famous for compassion.[16] But for the women in this study, that tension between being a corporate-style leader versus being a servant leader was like a fulcrum, where the two views sat on opposite sides; each woman piled her gifts, talents, abilities, expectations, and demands on either end of the scales and then tried to balance the two sides depending on the congregation or ministry she served or anticipated being called to serve.

Note that the word was always "served," not "lead," for these women. Unanimously, they all saw the power and authority of a leadership position in a congregation or parish as a point of responsibility they were hesitant to embrace. They never framed their plans in terms of personal ambition, but always in terms of supernatural call, predicated on the presence of gifts and abilities that validated one's competence for and selection by God for service. In other words, ordained ministry is not about gender. It is not about any individualistic perception of call and gift. It is about the church listening to the Spirit, calling forth its own gifted members, and joining their call to that of the Spirit. The laying on of hands does not turn the ordained person into a "third

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[15] In John 13:1-17 Jesus washes the feet of his disciples at their last Passover meal together, meaning to model "real" leadership for them.

[16] In John 8:1-30, Jesus teaches an angry mob a lesson by showing compassion to a woman caught in adultery and pointing out to the crowd that they themselves were not without sin.

sex." It does not put them into an alternative human category. It is, rather, the church's way of recognizing that while all God's people are priests, some are called to make sure all those spiritually gifted "priests" use their gifts for the furtherance of God's kingdom. Some are made "servants of the servants of God"—not to exercise power from the top, but to demonstrate servanthood from the bottom (Phelan, 2005, p. 74).

In addition, since all of these women emerged from faith traditions within Christianity which theologically sustain women in ministry, it is interesting to note that each of them resisted the call and had to work to embrace it. However, the prejudice against women in spiritual leadership in other denominations and traditions and in the wider community seemed to add a dimension to the already weighty decision to accept a "call." Ordained ministry puts one on display as a "leader," which demands a kind of personal sacrifice that other positions do not.

Priscilla, especially, pointed to this when she revealed her own internal dialogue as she wrestled with wanting the opportunity to do what she knew she ought not, i.e., as a young woman wanting to enjoy life, dancing or going clubbing with friends, for example. As a Christian, she did not indulge in much risky or socially inappropriate behavior anyway, but she still saw taking on the mantle of parish leader as demanding an avoidance of even innocent past times because others might judge them as inappropriate, without any theological reasoning for that judgment. Tradition weighs heavily on such situations. As well, the readiness of most communities, not just faith communities, to judge women much more quickly than men—and for that judgment to reach towards the personal rather than the practical—was at issue. As nationally prominent women like Hillary Clinton, or Dr. Condoleezza Rice before her, have regrettably discovered, when one is a woman, what one wears seems to matter much more than how powerful or

prepared an intellect one might exercise. Similarly for the woman pastor, social behavior can matter more than one's theological veracity and depth. Outright immorality (within the bounds of that community's moral ideals) on the part of a pastor will always be rejected in the Christian community, regardless of the gender of the offender. But rejection of a woman for being a woman as a basis for resisting her leadership—or rejecting a woman for much more personal and "none of your business" issues—are common occurrences that never seem to touch men in power. The women in my study seemed acutely aware of this problem.

It is worth noting here again the sense of loss expressed in some way by each of the participants, even though they had all come to see entering the ministry as something exciting and important. I believe that for the participants in this study this sense of loss may serve to mitigate the notion of parish leadership as power in a way that it is perhaps not muted for men or for younger individuals who enter the profession from the start of their wage-earning careers. For these second-career women, ordained ministry required tangible sacrifice of public and private identity, not to mention family time and previous financial stability. Thus their ministry was chosen out of a sense of call and not a sense of privilege. This complicated their experience, then, invoking a struggle against the traditions that portray scripture as insisting that women be in servitude and worship in silence. These women reflected an awareness of these views, not because they believed they should be silent, but because women have historically always been servants. As discussed earlier, parish leadership may be considered servant leadership, but it is still leadership. In many Christian eyes, the women fit naturally into the servanthood role, but not into the leadership role. So taking on church leadership is resisting a stereotype that sees women as only serving in the home or only serving only as lay leaders and never as

ordained clergy. To seek ordination is to be labeled a feminist by most, a usurper of men's headship by more than a few.

Identity in Relationship

In the case of these women called to the ministry, "Identity" is always a negotiation between the one "called" and the key players in her life as well as those with whom she interacts at any given time. Identity rarely exists independent of relationships. Family members, friends, and colleagues perceive taking a second career to pursue the call as risk-taking, with all its financial and social implications. Indeed, every single one of the participants in this study experienced a significant relationship loss in her life when she committed to pursuing her new identity as a minister. Deborah and Hannah actually experienced outright hostility from former co-workers, and Esther and Hannah both acknowledged the challenge their decision presented to their husbands. For a spouse, being married to an engineer, an executive, or a university development officer entails quite a different experience than being married to a minister.

Hannah's goal, when she entered seminary, was to become a resource to her denomination at the parish level, either as an ordained minister, a scholar, or both. She had, up to that point, been a parish lay-leader, and had represented her denomination at an international level at a World Council of Churches meeting. Her own notion of herself as a minister was already "in process." Though it was only germinating, a few roots had shot out from a seed that had been planted during her most visible lay leadership roles, but had yet to send up shoots that others in her life could see as a public "identity."

As for many of the other women in this study, however, once this plant began to unfurl above ground, and be something visible, public—whether or not it had yet entered the arena of conversation—the new leaves became a point of internal conflict and often

led to a point of external conflict. Hannah's parents, in a way similar to Esther's, interpreted the choice to enter "full-time" ministry on some level, initially, as irresponsible in economic terms. To give up a "perfectly good" job, or a "real" job, in order to be a "poor" preacher made no sense. Both sets of parents were, however, loving parents and have come to not only understand, but be proud of their "daughter, the pastor."

All of the women in this study finally reached the conclusion that in order to pursue their calling as ministers, they had to resign from the professional bodies/positions they occupied at the time they became fully convinced of that call. This departure was usually precipitated by their taking public action that "lived in" to their call as ministers (preaching, attending seminary, etc). This necessity for both resigning and "going public" was not just precipitated by the demands of attending seminary full-time, however, as might be anticipated. These women, like most busy professionals, were accustomed to working longer than the traditional forty hours a week; so while attending graduate school and continuing to work presented a significant challenge, their assumption that they could tackle both was not naive. However, they discovered something they had not anticipated. The role of minister, while a still widely respected role in general in the community, was a contested role for those who already identified with them as engineers or researchers, or whatever professional identities they already wore. It was, in effect, colleagues and friends whose relationships had to be renegotiated (and were sometimes lost) if each woman was to fully pursue the meaning and possibility of a new or altered public persona as minister.

In her interview, Hannah commented that her boss—despite Hannah's work ethic, high productivity and proven track record as a valued employee—"invited me to the

door, basically." Both Deborah and Hannah were alienated by individuals whom each had previously experienced as supportive both personally and professionally. Or rather, these were professional relationships which seemed to have grown roots that reached to the personal, but when tested, were lateral and profession-bound relationships, not truly rooted in concern for the women individually. While having anticipated a rearrangement of priorities in their lives, the women had not always anticipated the deep loss of personal ties wedded to previous public identities.

Identity as Process

Given the life stage of the participants in this study, it is not surprising that their language reflected their view of identity as a fluid concept, emerging over time and not standing firm at some point in the present. In this section, I will look at the particular ways in which this notion of process played out in the narratives of various participants independently as well in relation to other clergy women of the study. Esther, Hannah, Priscilla, and Deborah, in particular, offered insight into the ongoing "journey" of the call, even as they offered views of themselves as having accepted and embraced that call.

Hannah

Hannah made clear the notion of identity as a contextual process. She offered eloquent expression of both the power of experience and of the need to contextualize and articulate that experience. She also noted how difficulties shape future ministry: "I think my experience of despair and pain absolutely shaped [me] as I was able to conceptualize the ways and places that pain and despair bump against faith. And to [ask myself] 'What should we do about this? What does this mean?'"

In addition to being willing to tackle the challenging questions and circumstances of life as part of the sermon preparation process, Hannah enjoyed preaching, relishing it

as a craft requiring deliberate rhetorical moves. Crafting sermons, she realized, was constantly changing her perception of truth and of herself and the work she did:

> I'm amazed; words happen in form and you know, thoughts go into words. It's just a fun process and [I feel] I revved up...I enjoy the process...even if I don't completely understand how it happens, I enjoy the process of the words unfolding to form a sermon...Last night I went for a walk and I described it to Gary...I had to go upstairs so I could write some things down. 'Cause it's like I went for a walk with a "tangled ball of yarn" and as I walked, you know, it got untangled. And so there's something about that process that feels...I mean, it feels good in that it's using intellectual skills, and I think that's fun. But I like using intellectual skills in a way that might be useful to other people. I don't presume that any particular sermon will be for anyone, let alone everybody. [But it] fits in how...how I feel God has called me to be in the world. Which is not necessarily to give answers, but to wrestle with things and pose questions and insight. I mean that feels valid!

Clearly, Hannah saw preaching not as a performance that provides answers, but as the process of wrestling with ideas and questions that might give insight into how to live differently or better in the midst of a complicated world. She understood her sermon preparation, as well as the act of preaching, as modeling the struggle and the thought processes and arguments for and against various approaches to life's challenges; as she prepared her sermons, she sought answers to tough questions. "In my field placement [I was asked], 'How would you describe your preaching style?' [I explained] 'It's the same way I view teaching, which is sort of...letting people in on discoveries.'" As she had done earlier, she again used the metaphor of a tangled ball of yarn as an image for the scrambled ideas that get put into a smooth order by the intellectual work of generating a

sermon. Hannah was very aware of her rhetorical moves as a writer and speaker, as were the other women of the study; she saw sermon preparation and delivery as a struggle of process and discovery. She was emphatic and decisive in these examples and in the other rhetorical moves highlighted in Chapter 4, and yet, despite her certainty, or at least, even in the midst of her certainty, she saw her identity as developing moment by moment, and yet to be fully discovered. In this she exemplified what seemed to be true of all the participants as well: at the intersection of public performance and private conviction of personal call, struggle resulted in growth which was never, apparently, finished. This conflation of certainty and uncertainty, I would argue, relates to the notion of gender identity "as a process of structuring subjects rather than a structure of fixed relations," (Morris, 1995, p. 568) as was mentioned in Chapter 2. Here though, the view delineates not just gender as process, but self-conception as well—accepting the self as both a contextualized performance, and a structuring of the subject.

Priscilla

Priscilla used episodic narrative to relate chronologically how she moved towards divinity school by first going all the way back to her first Ph.D. school and then to a formative internship in psychology. Only then did she consider how she ended up at divinity school and how that had forced her to renegotiate her own identity with others and with herself. Unlike the other women in this study, Priscilla's background was Pentecostal, even though she now resides firmly in the United Methodist Church. Thus, her conception of the ways in which one might experience the divine were more broadly metaphysical and even esoteric than were the more practical ideas expressed by Hannah, or the kind of inevitability of conviction expressed by Mary and Vashti. Priscilla comfortably moved between two persona: one took dreams and inspiration quite

seriously, which she referred to as "getting a Word" from God, a phrase common in charismatic circles. The other persona used the quite formal diction and expression of a well-heeled, well-educated clinical psychologist. This multivalent discourse is important to note as it, in itself, reflects identity as fluid and in process. In a way, Priscilla's experience of the divine and the language with which she expressed that interaction opened up room for her to conceive of herself as a minister, despite everything else about her being geared to a different profession entirely. Another experience that made room for this transition was Priscilla's losing out on a job *because* she was a Christian. Ironically, she had already decided that the next job she pursued would be *because* she was a Christian. Interestingly, despite these experiences, Priscilla remained the most ambivalent about the call at the close of the study. Though she talked with passion about preaching in a way that exceeded that of the other women for the task, it remained a goal that she viewed as distinct from ordained parish ministry. It seemed she only submitted to that formal, institutional process of ordination, despite her ambivalence, because it was the only way her preaching could be sanctioned. Like Hannah, writing and words and preaching gave Priscilla real joy:

> I believe one day I'll be an ordained elder in the UMC, but that ministry and psychology continue to merge together and who knows what God is gonna do? Like I told you, my dream is to write. I want to write Christian romance, but every time I write a sermon, it's an incredible feeling for me, to execute the passage, to put it in the form of a story, and to preach it, it's incredible. I know that I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing. And I never could have imagined this when I was in tenth grade when I said, "Oh no, I'm not going to be a pharmacist."

In contrast to Hannah (though not in opposition), Priscilla saw ministry as centered on Love of others, while Hannah focused on Hope for others. Priscilla explained:

> Like I told you before we started the tape: Love. It's all I know how to do. But there is a joy and a freedom in that. Just to love people. It's not always easy. It's not. Actually sometimes it's very difficult, but to see how God transforms me in the process...I can look back and see, "Oh God, it's not so hard to love that person any more." That's beautiful. And to know that's the ministry that not only impacts my own life but it's the ministry work that helps me to impact other lives, or helps them to have that same testimony. Then I think, "What else would I like to be doing?" I can't think of anything else I'd rather be doing.

Priscilla asserted that she could not "know how [her call would end] up"…what shape her ministry would take. But she did articulate an image of how she would be in the midst of the "not knowing."

> I don't know how it ends up, Kathryn. But I've been thinking about it a lot lately as I consider my call to ministry. [I ask God:] "What is it that you ask me?" And if you look behind you, that picture. (She pointed to a painting in her living room.) That woman looking up the road at the cross. Standing there, contemplating… sometimes if you look at the colors, you can see the sun kind of shining, dawning, coming up. But at the same time it could be going down in the clouds. And you know it is sometime betwixt and between. And I just say, "Okay." I see myself looking ahead at the cross and saying, "Okay God. When? Where? What?" But I guess the key is to keep my eye on the cross and I'm trying to do that.

The painting Priscilla described evoked a discourse within a discourse, an internal dialogue with an internal self. In turn that self turned to God in prayer and then back to Priscilla's internal listening, and the matter was settled again. Sitting in the "betwixt and between" was not easy but it was stasis, and that was okay.

Deborah

Perhaps because Deborah's first built a career as a psychologist and university faculty member, her reflection on the shift in her self-understanding and conception of personal and public identity often insightfully articulated ideas hinted at but not as thoroughly expanded upon by the other participants. For that reason, I discuss her more at length, not only in an effort to analyze further what I learned from her in the study findings, but also for the ways she elaborated on concepts applicable to all the women.

As discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, early on Deborah understood "Christian community" as formed along racial and sectarian lines. Like gender, this gaze placed parameters on what she imaged was possible for her in order to answer her call:

> I certainly got the idea that White Christians were something altogether different. Like they weren't a part of our family. Umm…I mean you pretty much had to be Black and Baptist to be a part of our family. "You're supposed to be Baptist! Especially if you are Black, you're supposed to be Baptist! They're one and the same!"

Then for her, the process of moving towards her identity as a minister was as much as a process of embracing a fuller concept of the value of the individual, regardless of race and gender, as it was seeing herself as a minister. In doing so, she could finally move to a more inclusive understanding of Christian community and away from the scars of the juxtaposition of a church community founded upon and pivotal in Civil Rights, but

one who at the same time screamed at little girls to get away from the pulpit. Her denomination had provided positions of power for men who were oppressed and disrespected outside the church, but they were not prepared to share the power with women. Deborah explained, "The Civil Rights movement is really narrated in terms of race and not race and gender oppression. So that 'patriarchy' is alive and well and vigorous." Thus, in order to see herself in the pulpit at all, she found she had to see herself in the pulpit of churches that were more radically inclusive.

The notion of whether women are allowed in the pulpit was complicated for Deborah, initially, more by (or at least equally by) the social function of the Black church than by any theological perception of a ban on women preaching.

[Though] women [are] holding up the church, they are also often content to take the back seat. Because this is the place where we build up our men. Especially because…the perception that black men are in such crisis, and that black men are really targeted and victimized by society. So then the church has to be this safe place for black men, and so the women sort of take the back seat. And there's a lot of chivalry in there that makes it appealing to women...Ironically even when I considered myself a feminist in High School, when I first heard and perceived a calling and this longing to work with Black families, I still narrated in terms of the problems that affected black men—not black women.

Further conversation revealed the necessity of "audience" for the identity of minister. "Being a minister" is not only a personal identity, but a relational and rhetorical one, even the fulfillment of a sacred calling, just as an expression of identity is a rhetorical act Anderson (2007). The shaping of identity happens in the "interplay" with people "in those interactive spaces" of daily life and the life of a Christian community.

Deborah said it was "strange" that despite being an introvert, she felt affirmed in her new call and saw most clearly the shape of her new identity in public acts:

> [It's] strange because I'm such an introvert, which is really why I would like this *not* to be what I'm called to do. (I would like to just hole up in my corner of the world and with my own friends, and leave all the rest of those people alone, but again it's when I'm in those interactive spaces, those church dinners [or] seeing someone at the hospital…all those things that I always thought would really freak me out…don't. The things that just call me to being with people. Not trying to fix anything, not trying to come up with some grand plan to being with people. It works for me.

Becoming, for Deborah, was as clear and as multi-faceted as for Hannah. As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, but worth noting again here, Deborah explained:

> [M]y identities are unifying! I think…I've gotten to the point now where I can't pull them apart the way I used to. And I can't tease apart the different aspects of myself the way I used to...I have lost vocabulary for how to define myself. Whenever I get something like when you do your taxes, and they ask for your career I have no idea what to put anymore. Minister doesn't quite capture it; professor doesn't quite capture it; psychologist definitely doesn't capture it. I have no clue what to put any more...they're all, I think, merging together.

Even though she was experiencing a more integrated perception of herself, she still struggled to find the language to express her new identity, a problem she named above. It occurred to me that the reason for her struggle was not her own internal difficulty. It was also a struggle with having to interact rhetorically with those outside herself who define things (and people) in specific ways. She had to find language for a

rhetorical stance that permitted her experience of an integrated, though complex identity, one that communicated legitimately with an "audience" or which built a way for that audience to make sense of her new image, without having first to disassemble it in order to make sense of it in pre-defined ways. Her efforts pointed back to the need several women expressed to incorporate into both their speech and dress the signifiers of a professional minister—such as the privileged or marked speech of a seminary graduate at ease with theological terms, and the pastor in the pulpit robed in garb appropriate to the denomination.

Unlike Esther, who ended her job in her own time, both Hannah and Deborah were ushered to the door for voicing the desire to attend seminary. Hannah threw herself into her new world, while Esther and Deborah took time to fully commit to the process of seminary education and formation. For Deborah, the grief at losing friends prevented her, until the Second year of Divinity school, from making "the turn" to really pursue the new life fully. She said, "It wasn't really until the second year that I was just going to give myself over to being a student. And so that's when I stopped my private practice. I stopped everything else."

The identity that emerged from seminary training had "many layers" and was not easily defined, but was a "good place" for Deborah. She commented that she received an "amen" from some of the other women in the study when she voiced her difficulty finding a label for herself during and after the seminary experience:

> Like I never know how to label myself now. Yeah, like on the Facebook profile
> they ask me about religion. Mine is still blank. What's up with that? Methodist
> certainly doesn't describe who I am. Baptist turned Methodist doesn't…I mean,
> yeah, there's so many layers. Am I happy? Definitely. I wouldn't trade it for

anything the world. I think it's one of the best things I did. Even though I had lots

of problems with the institution sometimes, and the process, and the way people

were formed in some ways, but at the same time I am so grateful for the shaping

that I went through and…and I'm still in awe that it happened.

For Deborah, like for Priscilla and Hannah as discussed earlier in this chapter, and

as reflected at some point in nearly all of the narratives of the clergy women of the study,

"what shape" full time ministry would take was unknown. Was this a strategy to mask

continuing uncertainty? I do not think so. It could be called hedging, but I took it at face

value. The women did not approach the notion of "serving as a minister" as simply a

vocation with career goals, but as a "journey" that unfolds "in relationship" with others

and for which there is no map. The making of the person, and the making of the journey,

are dialogic, as Bakhtin (1982) would say. Emergence was not an endpoint in a faith

narrative, but a constant, at least when it involved a "call to preach." Even as one still

struggled, Deborah explained, "with the how and what shape," ministry might take,

identity shifted gradually as active involvement in the identity increased.

The complexity of forces driving and governing the women's new direction—

denominational requirements for ordination, personal conviction to fulfill calling, the

ambiguity of their futures—factored into the internal dialogue for each participant as she

interrogated her own perceptions of herself and who she was to become. Each woman

moved back and forth during the interviews between reporting her own internal dialogue

and the dialogue she had had with mentors, family, and friends. Conversation was clearly

critical, and dialogic reflection essential to the way she thought about who she was and

who she was meant to be. The talk itself seemed to reflect the emerging shape of

ministerial identity as she asserted the necessity of earning "sacramental privileges" and

continuing along the path to ordination, in whatever form it would take in her

denomination and in her life.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I first discussed in broad terms the results of this study as they

touched upon narrative and identity. I then outlined and discussed a number of themes

that came to the fore as a result of analyzing the findings, and that offered a way of

understanding the interconnectedness of each of the stages explored. These themes

include: *Testimony and Tradition; Spiritual Leadership and its Costs; Identity in*

Relationship; and *Identity as a Process*. In Chapter 7, my final chapter, I will consider the

practical implications of my research, particularly with regard to the public performance

of ministerial identity, offer some suggestions for application of the research to ecclesial

and academic practices, and then reflect on my experiences in conducting this research

and my plans for future work.

CHAPTER SEVEN: IMPLICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

In this closing chapter, I consider the practical implications of my research. I trace the place of ministry and leadership and the complications they bring, particularly with regard to public performances of identity—in dress, speech, and action—to the lives of my study participants. I also consider the implications of my research and make some practical suggestions for its application in both the church and academia, before finally turning to my own reflections on the process as a researcher.

Implications

Women's Place in Ministry and Leadership

The experiences reported by the women of this study echo the statistics presented by Chaves (1998) and Zikmund, Lummis and Chang (1998) on gender and clergy in American congregations: "being male" is a primary expectation of nearly all clergy in all denominations. As the two rounds of the National Congregations Study (1998, 2006) affirm, promoting women to ordained congregational leadership is an ongoing issue; women have not been and continue not to be seen as pastors. As the figures in Chapter 2 demonstrate, women do not fit the standard model of ordained ministry in the majority of Christian congregations. Therefore, it is not surprising that the women of this study interpreted their first stirrings towards preaching and church service as aimed at deeper lay participation or as a call to be in a secular helping profession, a more usual (and more stereotypical) path for women. The implication, then, is that mentors—particularly those responsible for spiritual formation within congregations and within seminaries—need to be aware of this and need to proactively engage and challenge such assumptions and cultural scripts when they conflict with the theological position of the school or denomination involved.

Having an official denominational policy of accepting the ordination of women has not translated into a significantly wider acceptance of their leadership as pastors. As this study reveals, the absence of proactive engagement and the lack of deliberate proffering of female models played a significant part in how these women understood themselves as called and how they envisioned a way to embrace that call; it was difficult for them to envision what they had rarely seen or even read about. Women need help to explore their incipient urges to holy vocation and to sort out which of the vocational trajectories possible (secular vocation, lay ministry, or ordained ministry) they should pursue.

The Complications of Commitment: Public Identity

Turning to a related point, the path to ordained ministry was not only unusual but also required overcoming significant personal challenges for these women; thus their path to a call unfolded only gradually. Lacking personal role models and facing personal or public resistance further delayed the discernment process. As the study results indicated in Chapter 4, these obstacles often led to a paradoxical outcome: women with a strong commitment to theological training, yet who were unsure of pursuing ordained ministry. This dilemma became especially complicated to negotiate for this study's participants, as second career women. There was also a dichotomy involved, in that accepting a call and knowing what it involved were not always mutually inclusive. Deborah, Priscilla, Esther and Vashti reported such a dichotomy when they sought to explain the idea of call as definite, but as also unfolding. Each initially intended to preach, but not necessarily to pastor. The reluctance to embrace the ministry fully had various reasons: for instance, as Esther went on to explain, being a minister had profound implications for public identity: "A pastor is who you are. It's not just a job; it's not just a profession." This also

supported Slee's (2004) conclusion that women's narratives often reflect "the ability to hold in tension paradox and polarity [and] to live self-consciously and creatively with ambiguity" (p. 164).

Because women clergy often do not obviously fit into the position they are often drawn to, the study revealed that they often rely on perceptions of public performance as a means of rhetorical engagement. In particular, they give a lot of thought to dress. They often eschewed masculine attire, but did adopt symbolic dress, like the clerical collar or liturgical vestments, embracing either as a kind of gender-neutral sign of their call. Here, too, there was a sense of paradox. All the women also acknowledged that "wearing" their new identity literally, by wearing clerical garb, particularly the collar, sometimes invited the expression of theological and cultural resistance to women in ministry. Such external signs, however, also invited respect and removed issues of gender in other instances. For example, individuals sometimes responded to the position the collar represented first, and then to the wearer, thus enabling a positive relationship to form more quickly as roles were clearly defined. In short, because the collar can help a woman establish a clerical identity, women may not be as hasty to drop the collar as are men.

Male priests and ministers often want to avoid the overt sign of their ministry; (presumably) they feel they can reach people better if they are not "set aside" by anything they wear. But, for women, viewing the collar as gender neutral, or even as reading "traditional" and therefore, in a sense, "reading male," makes it not an obstacle to interacting with others, but an avenue for a defined relationship. Liturgical garments, though not discussed in these interviews at any length, as their use and style are exclusive to particular worship traditions and locations, still played a key function in negotiating public identity. People notice what women wear. What men can accomplish with a nice

suit and tie is not as easy for a woman to accomplish in terms of meeting public

expectation. People notice and make remarks as to whether a woman is attractive. They

make judgments about whether she is too sexy or not sexy enough—musings a pastoral

figure seeks to discourage. A man's suit and tie rarely invites such overt remarks of

sexual innuendo, whereas an equally formal Sunday dress might for a woman. Liturgical

garments, then, like clerical collars, tend to erase gender, much like school uniforms

erase economic class, making room for the individual.

Not only dress, but also language was tied into issues of performance and

acceptance for the women of this study. The investigation showed how the respondents

employed "privileged language" only in formal settings. To gain acceptance, they tended

to weave in ecclesial language when writing ordination papers and interviewing senior

pastoral and denominational administrators, but they admitted that they deliberately

eschewed privileged language in casual conversation, also to gain acceptance. For

example, in Mary's ordination paper, she wrote, "In ordination, the church affirms and

continues the apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit. Those

who are ordained make a commitment to conscious living of the whole gospel and to the

proclamation of that gospel to the end that the world may be saved." But when speaking

on the same topic when interviewed, she expressed this same idea much differently:

"Like, I'm called to preach, and worship…to plan worship and create worship moments

for people. And I love pastoral care and shepherding. And it's about getting into, and

living into that calling." The women also regularly rejected privileged language as

intrusive to and inhibiting relationships—engagement they considered central to their

concept of ministry. This is a reflection, I believe, of what Slee (2004) noted as "the

sacredness of the ordinary" (p. 152). It is not in formal recognition but in everyday living that real ministry takes place.

Selective use of privileged language also demonstrated an adherence to Cushman's (1998) findings discussed in Chapter 1. Just as she describes, my participants "masked language" to gain acceptance in "other" discourse communities in order to work within institutions or with individuals. But eventually, the foreign dialect begins to "move to the realm of the explicit, the front of the mind, where they consciously determine the point at which using prestige dialects will compromise too much of their cultural identity" (p. 125). Clearly these participants were weighing how much prestige dialect, how much overt evidence of their theological training and sophistication, they could use without compromising not only their cultural identity, but also a sense of self in relation to a faithful expression of their ministerial calling.

The privileged dialect for the participants of this study was comprised of both the language of the divinity school as well as of the preferred performance of ministry as a masculine construct. They were very aware of life as a text. Performance theory makes it clear that gender affects discourse. Morris (1995) asserts that privileging is a biological binary which "reflects and enacts an epistemology in which reality is reduced to appearance, to visible surfaces" (p. 569). Participants demonstrated awareness of this conflation of individual complexity by their care in positioning themselves rhetorically in speech acts and by wearing the collar or other symbolic signs of their ministerial call. Their performance as ministers is an engendered embodiment of their call.

Women who may feel they have a call should be guided in ways that lead them to understand the special importance of these public performances and signs of ministry. This can be done in multiple ways, many of which benefit the broader community as well

as the women ministers-to-be: by open discussion forums and sections of courses, seminaries might address the power of as well as the expectations and limitations of gendered public performance so that symbols of ministry, liturgical vestments, and privileged dialect are understood not only in terms of theological implications but in terms of their sociological impact for women. The home congregation has a role to play as well, since youth groups are an excellent place for the awareness of gender in ministry to begin.

Cultural Scripts

I claimed in Chapter 2 that cultural scripts, culturally acceptable behaviors and roles as determined by outside forces, such as mass media images, community expectations, etc. (Atkins, 2004) are relevant in my study. Indeed, I found that cultural scripts, heavily influenced by biblical scripts within the Christian community, tended to define quite static gender roles. For whatever reasons, even modern Christian communities and leaders often ignore striking biblical examples of women in leadership when defining clergy, when defining expectations of ministerial leadership, and when shaping future clergy as they grow and embrace their call. Nearly every woman in my study discussed in depth the way that "correct ministry" is constantly defined for her by others. The women resisted these defining scripts; in fact, they often resisted even the label "minister" until they were so sure of their calling that they could shape their own definition of "correct ministry" without or despite these scripts they rejected.

When I first considered Heilbrun's (1988) assertion that, for women who reject traditional expectations of vocation, "the price is high, the anxiety is intense, because there is no script to follow, no story portraying how one is to act, let alone any alternative stories" (p. 39), I saw it as likely indicative of the women in my study. I also understood

her conclusion that "[p]erhaps only women who have played the patriarchal game and won a self despite it can find the courage to consider facing the pain that the outright expression of feminism inevitably entails" (p. 125) as paradigmatic of her entire study and argument. This paradigm seemed to relate as well to how the participants in my own study might locate their identity in relation to institutional power. I realize now, indeed, that these two quotations are not merely key to summarizing Heilbrun, but provide a lens directly applicable to the women of my study. For them, there was seldom "a script to follow, [seldom a] story portraying how one is to act" (p. 39). My findings showed that at least in my participants' cases, they had to write their own scripts because even inclusive divinity schools and congregations too often failed to promote examples of women theologians and church leaders in their curriculum and hierarchy, respectively.

If seminaries and congregations fail to promote and engage women, the church risks losing these women's gifts and risks preventing them from even acknowledging a call. I cannot argue that examples of women in church leadership are never brought to light in seminaries and congregations, rather that they are not readily apparent. The lack of engaging and promoting women in ministerial leadership as a norm is most striking in seminaries that actually allow and encourage women's enrollment. Course syllabi and reading lists could and should be revised in such institutions in ways that provide substantial cultural backing for women moving toward the ministry.

Allow me to explain. The participants of this study recounted that though they attended seminaries which obviously admitted and graduated women, those same seminaries did not sufficiently promote modern and historical women theologians in their curriculum. The participants themselves could easily name lists of well-known women in ministry who preach publicly (in national venues and on television) and who publish

widely. They drew strength from public figures, preachers and scholars such as Vashti MacKenzie, Renita Weems, Joyce Myers, and Milicent Hunt, and from historical figures such as Hildegaard of Bingen, Theresa of Avila, the martyr Macrina, and from Wesleyan figures like Mary Bosanquet and Susanna Wesley. But such lists of women did not hold a prominent place in the culture of local congregations—even where ordained women were allowed to minister or in the theological schools and seminaries—even though women were admitted to study. More often than not, participants reported, they were left to read themselves into Augustine (or as Priscilla did, into Gregory the Great).

In addition, Mary reported, and the other women concurred, that women were absent from the reading list of a course on the formation of pastoral identity, a class nearly half of which was itself composed of female seminarians. Instead, the class was given only a single opportunity to read a woman's experience of ministry out of the ten works required by the course curriculum. Deliberate fostering of a gender-inclusive picture of ministry is especially needed during the transitional time divinity school represents, when women are forging ahead in the context of a vocation that has been and remains a male domain, despite biblical arguments and biblical and historical examples to the contrary. To echo Slee (2004), women's religious education needs to "bring into greater visibility the unacknowledged realities of women's lives and affirm them as authoritative and creative" (p. 171). Models of ministry should not be assumed to be androgynous and so mask women's unique challenges and lived experiences in pursuing such a call. In a more general sense, religious educators should help their students at all levels to understand something of the phenomenon of call so that they will have a better understanding of themselves or of others who are drawn to pastoral ministry.

Attitudes in Academia

The narratives revealed in this study made transparent the seriousness with which the women examined their very personal religious convictions. Secular universities—not just religious studies programs, congregations or seminaries—need to recognize that religious convictions are founded upon serious self-reflexive rigor. University faculty should acknowledge the complexity of seeking a call and holding fast to religious conviction and practice, or a religiously informed world view, as deserving more respect than is accorded, for instance when educators see religious practice as merely a valuable cultural artifact within select ethnic communities. To offer religious courses at any level in an institution should mean to acknowledge the legitimacy of a religious world view. Even in a secular institute, in majors involving vocations other than ministry, a religious person's identity should be acknowledged and validated by faculty who guide students.

Thus, the implications for this study go beyond seminary studies and women's studies and extend to students and teachers of discourse studies. Notions like "call" and "testimony" should be given serious intellectual weight, or at least a place of more prominence in general courses on rhetoric and discourse. These terms, call and "testimony," should be treated as more than historical genres connected only to classical rhetoric; they should be explored as vital patterns of discourse still providing narrative context and structure for people of faith.

Summing up the Implications

It is hoped that this study will offer some help to women already in ministry, as well as those seeking to find their way, since it sheds light on some of the difficulties they have overcome or may have yet to face. The study validates those experiences as well as broadens the community of experience. Findings may also assist current women ministers

in being more sympathetic to women who want to follow in their footsteps and more likely to articulate the nuances of their own path in order to guide others. Pioneers can make their personal struggle public in order to make the trail easier for future ministers.

Reflections on Participation

As I discussed initially in Chapter 3, one of the commitments underpinning this study was balancing the tension between finding patterns across the narratives and yet attending to the differences between participants and within a given participant's own narrative. (Slee, 2004) I also tried not to assume that every participant "speaks with a coherent and consistent voice, [because] the self in dialogue is likely to be constantly situating and resituating itself in shifting relation, both to the other person and to its own rehearsed and retold meanings" (p. 48). The identity that emerged for the participants as a result of both the tensions and the resituating of the dialogue was at the heart of this study from the beginning and remains its central outcome.

Two additional commitments of the design of this project were to:

(1) Bring together the participants in a focus group. The group functioned as both an opportunity for me to gather and clarify data and as an opportunity for the study participants to make personal connections with one another, a kind of alternate remuneration for participating in the study.

(2) Give participants an opportunity to reflect and to respond in writing, sharing formally about their experience of the study and any meaning participating might have held for them.

The focus group, held at a private home one winter afternoon, gave the women a chance to compare study experiences as well as their personal and professional journeys so far. It also gave them a chance to enjoy encouragement and to form friendships that

might be of assistance as they each continued to press ahead attempting to discover the full meaning for their lives of pursuing ordained ministry. In addition, the gathering took on an added energy and poignancy as we were all aware of the one participant missing—Vashti. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, Vashti had passed away unexpectedly from a stroke at the age of 42. Her death occurred only a few months after she had assumed her first full-time ministerial job as the Director of Church Membership and Development at an historic, urban church in Virginia. As a result, while it turned out that the individual interviews alone, once transcribed, provided more data than could be covered in the present study and so the focus group materials remain for a future project, on a personal level, the gathering proved full of laughter as well as tears and deeply cathartic for all involved.

As is usually the case with the passage of time, most of the study participants have moved on in their lives and the work they now do in both church and community is vital to those whom it touches. Two participants, Hannah and Esther, however, took the opportunity to look back and formally reflect on where their faith journeys have gone. They wrote about their efforts to establish a new identity, to understand and answer their call to ministry, and they attempted to explain the shape of that identity today. These are documents I treasure and voices I am happy to provide a venue and allow to speak for themselves. I have located these reflections in Appendix B for any interested reader.

Reflections on Research

"Time and trouble will tame an advanced young woman, but an advanced old woman is uncontrollable by any earthly force." ~ Dorothy L. Sayers (20th c. theologian and writer)

I started this study as a way of trying to tie together in some cohesive fashion my own layered and varied interest in and commitments to composition and rhetoric theory, practical theology, and feminist intellectual endeavors, both secular and spiritual. The life of the mind and the life of the spirit, internal passion, intellectual curiosity, and personal commitment are, for me, ineluctably tied together. The only way to do honest scholarship in light of this symbiosis—and at the same time contribute to the work of the academy— was to try to straddle disciplinary fences. I hoped to make more room for women of faith within feminist intellectual circles and more room for feminism within faith circles.

It also seemed to me that the group which might most interestingly embody this struggle of faith and feminism with regards to strategies and rhetorics of composition of self and text, and with compelling narratives, were women already striving to embody the place of most contention within the church, and perhaps of least concern to feminists: ordained church leadership. For me, the most difficult part of this project was to imagine how to draw comparisons between these extraordinary women in order to drill deeper into the significance of the information they provided me, primarily via their interviews. Each of them, not surprisingly, is an articulate, logical thinker, and quite emotionally available and intuitive. In that sense, conducting an interview with them was really "setting up" the interviewer because each of them, by virtue of her training and abilities, and by virtue of the ways she understands the sacred value of individual communication and of lived experience, was naturally able to respond at length to every question with very little hesitation and only a limited self-consciousness. And yet, each was constantly aware of her affect on her hearer.

Previous work experience, personal conviction, intellectual theological argument, and innate self-awareness were all tools used to a varying extent by each participant as

she shaped a response to the perceived demands of her profession, to the formation of her

public persona by the divinity school and other ecclesial bodies, to other (external)

voices, and to emerging self-understanding and personal identity as a minister (inner

voices). I was only able to scratch the surface of this complex intersection of faith,

personal conviction, intellectual commitment, and vocation in what I came to think of as

Phase I of the analysis of the rich data this study generated—narrative analysis. It is my

intention that Phase II should take up the more formal examination of both documents

and transcripts collected in the initial phases of this study using discourse analysis.

Concluding Remarks

Where did my participants place themselves interactionally with respect to the

study, orthodoxy, Christian conversion narratives, and the tradition of testimony? My

participants moved through a web of texts, or strands of meaning[17] which, woven

together, built the "pastor" self or the ministerial identity. Despite sometimes fragmented

and disparate narratives (Bloom, 1998; George, 1994; Jelinek, 1980) and cultural scripts

that occasionally challenged the value, even the validity, of their call, the women did not

try to conflate the experiences and meanings of the varied narrative strands, but instead

found creative ways to live in the spaces between them. In summary, these women are

much like Virginia Woolf, not because they are feminists in a context within which

feminists are rare, but because they, like Woolf in the second half of life, have a clear

idea what they fear and have "found the courage to bear it" (Heilbrun, 1988, p. 125).

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[17] I think of the layering or strands as what Bakhtin (1982) would call

heteroglossia. See also Wallhausen (1990), p. 38.

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APPENDIX A: INVITATION AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Invitation to Participate in Research

You are invited to participate in this research study on the linguistic construction of identity of women called to parish ministry. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. You are eligible to participate because you have recently graduated or are about to graduate with the Master of Divinity degree and are a female between the ages of 35-55.

The purpose of this study is to explore how a woman, called to parish ministry, uses language to create and describe who she understands herself to be, first as a "private calling" and then as "publicly practicing" minister. Using discourse analysis as the primary tool of inquiry, the study includes examination of formal documents which provide longitudinal information for analysis, two formal taped interviews with each individual subject as well as a videotaped focus group interview, and the development of six case studies. The study will attempt to investigate specific details in language use to identify patterns in usage and syntax and to interrogate the socio-culturally situated identity reflected by these choices.

Participation in this study will require approximately two (2) hours of your time for two one-hour interviews and the submission of the following documents: (1) Application Essay reflecting your "call narrative." (2) Middler Evaluation or "ordination process" essay reflecting your current understanding of yourself as a minister, and your attitude towards your "call." You will also have the opportunity to participate in a focus group of approximately two (2) hours in which you will be able to discuss the findings of the research up to that point and to interact with other participants of the study. You will

also have the opportunity to add to or to reject portions of the manuscript draft current at the time of the focus group. Finally, you will have the opportunity to review the research findings in their entirety before their formal submission to the dissertation committee if you so desire, and to provide a letter for an appendix reflecting on your experience in this research.

Hopefully, you will find your experience as part of the study enjoyable. As well, because this study seeks to combine insights from the disciplinary fields of rhetoric, religious studies, performance and feminist theory, applied linguistics, and theology, in order to create a portrait of some of the ways women "called to preach" use words, use linguistic and rhetorical strategies, to create their preaching identity as well as to legitimate/validate that identity to themselves and to others in one of the only fields of study and professional modes of practice where open discrimination is not only common, but undergirded by claims of supernatural propriety, and supported by particular interpretations of scripture, your participation in this study can contribute to the overall discussion of how seminary students should be shaped. As well, in attempting to make transparent a very complicated and private process, this study has the potential to provide insight into and careful consideration of the ways expectation of and traditional understandings of clergy both hinder and help female participants in Christian communities and organizations. Your participation in this study will also provide you the opportunity to make professional connections with other participants and to receive feedback on the information reflected in your document submissions so that you might use those documents more effectively in the future if they should play a part in job searches and career advancement for you as a clergy member.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from this study at any time by providing a signed document to the researcher clearly stating your desire to terminate your involvement in the study and stipulating whether data collected from you up to that point may or may not be used in study outcomes. Any data you do not wish to allow to remain a part of the study will be destroyed.

If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence; you will never be identified by name in formal documents emerging from the study. All data collected for this study will be stored electronically and password protected. No information with subject identifiers will be released to anyone except the researcher's dissertation director, though focus group participation will not be anonymous as it is meant to give you an opportunity to make professional connections as well as provide feedback to the researcher on the data collected to that point.

No copy of any recordings of interviews (individual or focus group) nor of any written material obtained for this study, will be released in any form in which you may be recognized without your review and explicit consent. All data collected for this study will be retained for at least three years in compliance with federal regulations. The information obtained in the study may ultimately be published in professional journals or be presented at academic meetings, but your identity will always be kept strictly confidential unless you have given explicit permission that you may be identified.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement below and return it to the researcher. If you choose not to participate, please indicate that decision as well.

<div style="text-align: center;">

Project Director:
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</div>

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

Sample Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your childhood and family. From whom did you first learn about faith and when?

2. Who would you consider has been the most influential individual in your life in terms of shaping who you are now?

3. Is the same person pivotal in your understanding of yourself also pivotal in your understanding of your call to be a pastor?

4. Who first identified your gift/call to Christian leadership?

5. Have you ever met with resistance from other Christians concerning your call?

6. What about you do you consider to be "why" you've been called to be a pastor?

7. Which is more essential to good pastoral leadership: inner life or public

personae? Explain.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS

Esther's Reflection

Then the LORD said to Abraham, "What is Sarah laughing about, saying, 'Truly will I give birth, being so old myself!' Can such a thing be beyond the power of the LORD?" Genesis 18:13-14a (Esther's translation)

On my 22nd birthday, I knew exactly where I was and where I was headed. I had just driven from Los Alamos, NM to Binghamton, NY to enter a graduate program in arts administration. My journey toward my first career began at the age of 16 when I decided not to become a professional cellist. And so during college, I set out to create for myself a career in the business side of the arts. And I succeeded. My career journey took me from dance company management to fundraising, from Binghamton to New York City to Durham, from Ballet Hispanico to Duke University.

Twenty-four years later, in the lobby of an Atlanta hotel, I received what I consider to be a sign from God that signaled to me the beginning of the end of that career. I was at a conference, where had I spent much of the time talking with representatives of another university about a fundraising position. I was about to leave for the airport when I heard piece of music over the hotel sound system. It was the first movement of a jazz suite for cello that I had been rehearsing with a pianist friend. I stopped dead. I stood under a speaker and listened to the entire track. And as I headed to the airport, I realized that I wasn't going to pursue a new job opportunity. Something in the music told me that there was more I needed to do to feed my soul. Not long after that, I told my pastor that I wanted to preach a sermon. "That's the last thing I ever thought I would hear you say," he said. "But you're on." And not long after *that*, I called Duke Divinity School to make an appointment with the admissions director.

On my 48th birthday I entered Duke Divinity School as a full-time student.

I stop and think about Sarah and Abraham whenever I begin to think that I am too old to be entering ministry. Sarah is the first of many women in the Bible to receive God's promise of a child in extraordinary circumstances. The divine messenger tells her that she will have a second career – that of mother and matriarch – beginning at the age of 90! She finds the idea so preposterous that she laughs out loud at the news. To which he retorts, "Can such a thing be beyond the power of the Lord?"

As Christians, we laugh with Sarah at the idea of ourselves as instruments of God's promise. We find our own cynical retorts, whatever they might be – too old, too young, too set in our ways – answered by God's question: "Can such a thing be beyond the power of the Lord?" God poses a question and we have to be the ones to answer. It is an uncomfortable question, and an uncomfortable situation in which to find oneself.

The past three years of seminary and one year of internship have been joyful and terrifying, challenging and unsettling. I have come to understand I learn the most when I am most uncomfortable. God has shown me gifts to share that I did not think I had. Like Sarah and Abraham, I had to move to follow this call, from Durham, NC to Philadelphia, PA to Waltham, MA. I left a career behind, and my husband, friends, family and congregation have supported me in every way.

One of the people who has been there as I have heard and explored this call has been Kathryn Broyles. I met her in orientation at Duke, as I "dipped my toe in the water" as a special student at the Divinity School, exploring whether I could manage academics once again. We sat next to each other and she handed me a tissue as I cried in fear and excitement. She and others have told me that my journey, my constant testing to make

sure that this call is really of God, and how I have expressed myself as I talk and write about it, have been an encouragement to them as they consider their own vocations.

On my 52nd birthday, I will have my final interviews for approval for ordination as a Lutheran pastor. After that, I will wait for assignment to a synod and first call to a parish. More anxiety and discomfort, more chances to see the Holy Spirit working through the people and situations of my life.

> O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. (From the liturgy for evening prayer.)

Mary's Reflection

This project has really helped me to see how much I've grown since my first interview two years ago. It is an eye-opener to see how your spiritual journey never ends and always evolves, especially if you are intentional about what God has for you in your calling. I realize more and more that our gifts are ever changing and God is always calling us to something that surprises us! I love it! This project has intensified my love for the spirituality of women and helping other women understand who they can be instead of following the boring and false path the world sets up for you. I hope to be a bigger part of this process in my future life and ministry.

Priscilla's Reflection

October 6, 2010

Dearest Kathryn,

When I met you several years ago and learned you were in the process of working on your dissertation, I thought, "Wow…you can and will do an excellent dissertation project!" As you continued to flush through ideas and finally decided on the current project, I looked forward to the work God would permit you to create. Never did I imagine how it would minister to me in my understanding of the work God wanted to do in and through me.

When I left clinical practice to attend Divinity School and answer my call to ministry, I had no intention of returning to clinical practice. I simply knew God had called me to preach, and I was going to do just that…nothing more and nothing less. Yet, I knew I had to determine the connection between my first occupation—psychology—and my new vocation—theology.

Initially, I thought the interlink evinced itself in the type of sermons God permitted me to craft because they were inclusive of substance for both spiritual and psychological transformation. In the meantime, people kept inquiring as to whether or not I would be a pastor. While I really wanted to say, "Not on your life," I responded, "God has not told me yet; but, if God says so, I will."

Throughout divinity school and for a while thereafter, I kept waiting for God to clarify my assignment. In trepidation, I waited for an assignment to a church for pastoral ministry. The assignment never came. Correction, it never came in the traditional format of being assigned to a local church but, the clarification was crystal-clear. I was to return to clinical practice. In fact, I was to start my own practice—Tree of Life for Healing and Wellness. Furthermore, God made way for me to affiliate with a group practice as well.

Every day I am blessed to serve as an instrument of healing for people with emotional, mental, behavioral and spiritual distress. While I am indeed called to preach

the Gospel and really do love "rightly dividing God's word in truth," I believe my parish—my office—is an extension of the local church. Notwithstanding, God is providing opportunities for me to preach and teach. Believe it or not, I am still on the ordination track to become an Elder in The United Methodist Church. As well, I am writing my first Christian Romance.

Kathryn, over the years, I have discerned and shared this conviction with you, "My vocation is to be one whereby I can: preach, teach, write and combine my clinical psychology skills with pastoral counseling." Your dissertation work has helped me to sift through and solidify this conviction in the company of some dynamic sister! Thanks to God working in and through you, I am able to identify myself as a preaching-psychologist…Glory to God!

Miracles and Blessings,

Priscilla ---- , Ph.D., M.Div.

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

Deborah's Biography

Deborah is an assistant professor of pastoral care and counseling at North Carolina seminary and a candidate for ordination in the United Methodist Church. She is married and has one son.

Deborah is a licensed clinical psychologist, minister, and writer. Born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, she received two Bachelor's degrees in Psychology and African-American and African Studies from Emory University, and her master's and doctorate degrees in clinical psychology from the University of Miami. She also earned her Master of Divinity from Duke University, where she received the McMurry Richey Award for Outstanding Student in Mission and was named an Alumni Fellow of the Center for Reconciliation.

Deborah has served on the faculty of the University of Florida, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Duke University. She currently serves as an assistant professor of pastoral care and counseling. Licensed to preach in a Baptist congregation in 2004, she is a candidate for ordination as an elder in the United Methodist Church.

Deborah feels strongly called to stand at the intersection of the local church, the community, and the academy, and to assist in the formation of Christians who take seriously Christ's call to personal renewal, reconciliation, and social justice. She is actively involved in her Methodist Annual Conference, serving as Vice Chair of the Multicultural Team and also as a member of the Strengthening the Black Church, Monitoring and Accountability, and Sexual Ethics committees. She has a strong interest in racial and gender issues, and has written and lectured on topics such as the strong black woman, racism, and racial reconciliation.

Esther's Biography

Esther was born and raised in Los Alamos, New Mexico. Her parents were both employees of the nuclear research laboratory there, and were active in church and community. They are retired and now live in Loveland, Colorado, near to where some of their forebears homesteaded. Esther is an only child.

Esther in her own words:

I have a background in music, dance and theater. As a child, I studied piano, cello and guitar and taught myself to play alto saxophone. I played in orchestras from the age of 9 years old through college. I played in the high school jazz band. I began to sing in a choir when I was 10 and from then on, church music was an important anchor. I discovered dance in college, and studied modern dance, jazz and Afro-Caribbean techniques from my late teens into my 30's.

I went to college at Washington University in St. Louis, where I became aware of arts administration as a career. I went on to graduate school immediately, earning an MBA from the arts administration program at SUNY- Binghamton. From there I headed to New York City, where I had decided I must live to pursue a career in the arts. And I succeeded. My first job was as company manager of a small dance company. From there I moved into fundraising, initially for a small consulting firm, then at a symphony orchestra and later at a community arts school. My career was on exactly the path I had mapped out for myself.

I lived and worked in New York City for eleven years. I met my husband, during those years and we married in 1987.

In 1993, my husband and I moved without jobs to Durham, NC, taking an enormous risk to have something more than we could in New York. I worked for six

years at NC State University, as director of development for the School (now College) of Design. From 1999-2006, I was a development officer at Duke University, initially for the Law School and then for Trinity College of Arts & Sciences. My husband went back to graduate school in the mid-1990's to get a degree in Organizational Development. He became a consultant, coach and outplacement counselor. He is now an employee assistance counselor at Workplace Options in Raleigh, NC.

I am a lifelong Lutheran. Although I fell far away from the church during and after college, I began attending church again while living in New York. I find it remarkable that it was in New York – where I had gone try to be somebody different, to escape from my small-town upbringing – that the Spirit led me to renew my relationship with God. Since returning to the church, I have been an active member of two congregations. At the same time, my husband has been following a Buddhist path. It might seem extraordinary for me to seek to become an ordained Lutheran minister while my husband is not a Christian believer. But I know that my situation is no different from many people in the pews. We live an interfaith relationship, and respect each other's practices and beliefs.

I began to understand that God was calling me to something more than lay ministry in 2004. Over the course of the next two years, I took two classes at Duke Divinity School, prayed and explored this call. In 2006, I quit my job and entered Duke Divinity School as a full time student.

I entered seminary unsure of whether or not I was called to ordained ministry. That question was answered in CPE. I truly believe that God's call to the sacraments came to me over the telephone, in the form of a request to baptize premature twins, born at 24 weeks. Standing in the NICU, touching two tiny heads with water, speaking the

name of the Triune God, I knew that God's grace was raining down, and I knew in that moment that I stood on sacred ground.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America requires its ordained pastors to spend at least one year studying at a Lutheran seminary and one year in an internship, learning the ropes of pastoral ministry. I spent two years at Duke Divinity School and one year at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. I graduated from Duke Divinity School in May 2009. As I write this, I am completing a year of internship at First Lutheran Church in Waltham, MA. Four years after returning to school full time, my call to word and sacrament has been confirmed through this internship, and I know that I have found a place within myself from which I can serve others.

My final interviews for ordination will take place in late August, following which I will be assigned to a geographical region called a "synod." Lutherans do not ordain pastors until they have received a call from a congregation, so I will then work with the bishop of the synod to which I am assigned to find a first call.

I can see myself leading worship, celebrating the sacraments, teaching and working with adults and children, caring for God's people in their joy and sorrow, helping people to understand God's presence in their lives. There is still much uncertainty ahead, but I know that Jesus walks with me and the Holy Spirit whispers in my ear.

Hannah's Biography

Hannah, born July 29, 1969, St. Louis, Missouri, is presently a fourth-year Th.D. student at Duke Divinity School with concentrations in American Religions History and Theological Ethics. She has recently begun work on a dissertation that will explore American Protestant responses to mental illness in the twentieth century. Over an 18-month period, Hannah served as a volunteer chaplain at one of North Carolina's state

mental hospitals and this experience led her to her current academic research. She anticipates graduating with her Doctorate in Theology in 2011.

Hannah graduated summa cum laude in 2006 from Duke Divinity School, earning her Master of Divinity. Prior to this she earned a Masters of Business Administration and a Masters in Engineering Management from Northwestern University, J. L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management. Her Bachelor's Degrees include a Bachelor of Science in industrial engineering and a Bachelor of Arts in economics. Her professional work prior to attending Divinity is best characterized as primarily management positions in marketing and engineering in the technology industry.

Hannah is a member of Raleigh Moravian church and a candidate for the ordained ministry in with the Southern Province of the Moravian Church. Her progress towards ordination is presently in a holding pattern while she completes the Th.D. Ordination requires a two-semester stay at Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem, PA, a commitment Hannah has yet to fulfill largely because she is unwilling to live apart from her husband, son and extended family in NC. Despite the challenge, Hannah reports:

I've yet to be able to shake a sense of call to the ordained ministry alongside a call to teach. While I don't know that the process for ordination will change, I pray that it may, someday. Thankfully, there are those around me who affirm my call and those who pray with me (or on my behalf) that there is an alternate route to ordination. Primarily, my call is rooted in a desire to teach – to teach about God's word and about God's people. (Thus, my dual Th.D. emphasis in American Religious History and Theology.) Deciding to remain at Duke for the Th.D. program allowed me to: 1) prepare to teach, 2) answer more of my own questions, and 3) postpone a decision about ordination (fearing that if I were a "free agent," that I might have to step off of the ordination track.) While I

sometimes wonder how I'll write a dissertation, whether I'll ever be ordained, and if I'll find a teaching job, I often marvel at my good fortune to spend my days reading, writing, and teaching. I sense, strongly, that I'm just where I've been called to be.

In addition to her graduate work, Hannah is committed to a number of ministries but the ministry that she loves the most right now is called Coffeehouse. It takes place monthly at a local Lutheran Church and is a gathering for adults of all abilities. Most of the adults that attend have mental disabilities of a variety of degrees. Typically there are 15-20 volunteers and 175-200 guests that fill the gym at the church. While some folks arrive as individuals and/or with family members, many live in group homes and come together. Hannah loves greeting folks each month at this gathering and has been known to dance with a few when a band plays. Dinner is served each month, and working on the food line has "a Eucharistic sensibility" Hannah insists. "It seems clear that participants enjoy this gathering; it brings me tremendous joy each month and syncs with my sense of what the church should be (and how church space should be used)."

Mary's Biography

A native of Greensboro, NC, Rev. Mary received her undergraduate from Elon University and her graduate M.Div. from Duke University. She is a United Methodist Pastor, currently serving in the Western North Carolina Conference as a parish minister. She has a passion for social justice and has worked and led churches to outreach ministry in the North Carolina Prison System; Crisis Ministry; homeless and hungry; HIV/AIDS victims; local tornado victims of Lexington, NC; Haiti earthquake victims; Pakistan flood victims; and Zimbabwe, Africa missions.

She has a deep calling and passion for preaching the truth, and enjoys the entire spiritual process of birthing a sermon. More recently, Mary traveled to Tucson, Arizona

to incorporate her spiritual journey with her life-long gift and passion for the desert, photography and other art mediums. Expressing life and ministry through art is a powerful tool and thoroughly therapeutic and a large piece of her daily spiritual journey.

Mary recently became a foster mom for the Newfoundland Rescue Foundation and is the mom of two amazingly wonderful "goofy Newfies": Duke, and Frannie, who have added the element of unconditional love to her life.

In a more intensive plan to work with young women, Mary also recently became a Girl Scout leader and has troops of all ages meeting at her church, where girls learn early in life how to grow into strong and outstanding women through serving in their community and participating in numerous, expansive projects.

A second-career pastor, Mary's former career was in the fields of marketing, writing and photography. She is the mother of two outstanding and fascinating young men. She refuses to call her son, Ruffin's, new wife a "daughter-in-law" and claims her as a daughter.

Mary is addicted to spirituality, adventure, travel and art and hopes this decade of her life brings about many new pallets upon which to learn and experience new ways to combine, teach and preach from her passions. She is open to whatever the Lord has for her. Her license plate reads: "IFEARNOT!" And she means it!

Priscilla's Biography

Priscilla ---- was born September 15, 1970, in Vero Beach, Florida. She received her primary and secondary education in Indian River County Public Schools and is a 1988 graduate of Vero Beach Senior High School. In 1991, Priscilla received the Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Florida Atlantic University. She continued

her studies at Florida Atlantic and earned the Master of Arts degree in Developmental Psychology in 1997.

In 2001, after completing her pre-doctoral internship at Cincinnati VA Medical Center, Priscilla received the Doctorate of Philosophy in Psychology from the University of Rhode Island where she concentrated in Clinical Psychology. Her dissertation focuses on organizational development and multi-culturalism in the 21st Century.

After obtaining numerous awards and many years of academic achievement, Priscilla received a surprising call from God to go into parish ministry. In 2005, Priscilla enrolled in Duke University's Divinity school to receive her formal theological training and to follow the command of Christ. Much to Priscilla's surprise, it was this degree that she credits to the transformation of her life's work. In 2008, Priscilla earned the Master of Divinity degree from Duke and now has an overwhelming desire to combine her psychological studies with theology. This work will focus on producing Christian publications and novels that will effectively provide strategies to enable others to experience the many complexities of love in relationships. At this time, Priscilla is writing her first Christian Romance Novel.

Priscilla is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist in Fayetteville, NC, where she is a practitioner at Cardinal Clinic, LLC. She is also the executor of Tree of Life for Healing and Wellness. Prior to obtaining licensure in North Carolina, Priscilla practiced psychology in both Kentucky and Ohio. When Priscilla is not working or studying, she enjoys cooking, reading, writing, jogging, traveling, fine dining, and good music.

Priscilla was raised in the Pentecostal and Baptist traditions; yet, in 2006, she became a member of The United Methodist Church. She is a member of Asbury Temple United Methodist Church where Reverend Shane Benjamin is the pastor. At Asbury

Temple, Priscilla serves as the Worship Committee Chairperson. Presently, Priscilla is on the ordination track in the North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. Priscilla proudly lives by the words of Christ in Mark 12:30, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

Vashti's Obituary

DURHAM - Vashti ----, 42, of Durham, departed this life on Saturday, December 13, 2008 at St. Mary's Hospital, Richmond, Va. after a brief illness.

Vashti was born July 2, 1966 in Paterson, New Jersey. As a young child she embraced her faith and was baptized at the age of eight. Her church memberships have included the Calvary Baptist Church and the Christ Church United Methodist of Paterson; the First Baptist Church of North Brentwood, Maryland, and White Rock Baptist Church of Durham. She was a graduate of the Montclair Kimberly Academy, Montclair, New Jersey and received a BA degree from the University of Maryland at College Park in May 1992.

Between 1992 and 2004, Vashti held several professional positions at the American Social Health Association (ASHA), Research Triangle Park, culminating in Director of Community Outreach and Media Relations. Vashti advocated for people whom she felt had no voice or were de-valued in any way. She was active in fighting the AIDS epidemic in this country and on the African continent. She had the opportunity to make four visits to the continent, including the countries of Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. She was a soft but powerful voice for teenage and women's health, and the equality of women throughout society. Her love for the elderly was enormous and her devotion to compassionate care, particularly at the end of life was inspiring.

In 2003, she acknowledged her calling to ministry and began matriculating at Duke University School of Divinity in 2004. While at Duke, she was affiliated with the Duke Institute on Care at the End of Life. She completed her ministerial internship at the Union Grove United Methodist Church, Hillsborough, and served as the president of the Black Seminarian's Union. She completed her studies for the Master of Divinity degree in December 2007.

In November of this year, Vashti assumed the position of Director of Church Membership and Development at the historic Centenary United Methodist Church, Richmond, Va. Even in her very brief affiliation with Centenary, she developed new friends and touched lives.

She is survived by her parents, a sister in Maryland; a great aunt, of New York City; many uncles, aunts, cousins and a host of colleagues and friends.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that contributions be made to:

Duke Institute on Care at the End of Life, Duke Divinity School, Box 90966, Durham, NC 27708-0966.

[From the *Herald-Sun*]