A Different View from the Pulpit:
The Life Stories of Female Episcopal Priests

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Nancy R. Wemm
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This dissertation titled
A Different View from the Pulpit:
The Life Stories of Female Episcopal Priests

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this work is to examine the personal narratives used by female Episcopal priests to validate and explain their work and their relationship with the organization to which they belong. Communication scholars recognize that organizational members use narratives or stories to understand the institution to which they belong (Czarniawska, 1997). Narratives are shared among the members to compare experiences, to create culture, and to indoctrinate new members. The Episcopal Church also makes vocational narrative one of the criteria for membership. The Episcopal Church was the last mainline protestant religious organization to accept women as members of the clergy and clerical offices. The federal government of the United States does not regulate hiring practices because the separation of church and state exempts religious organizations from mandated inclusionary hiring. In 1974, a self-identified ad hoc group of women participated in an irregular ordination in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to protest this discriminatory condition, and force a reluctant system to recognize their calling to the priesthood. Since then, female priests have had experiences which are formulated into narratives which need to be acknowledged and analyzed. The women who participated in this study were from the north central to mid-Atlantic regions; their ages ranged from mid-twenties to over seventy. They have served the church in roles ranging from deacons, vicars, counselors, to bishop and Presiding Bishop. Their narratives encompass
such topics as recognition of the vocation, training and education, seminary experiences, leadership styles and concerns, family concerns, as well as harassment and discrimination.

Their life stories closed with discussions about their current situations and again most of them had achieved a degree of satisfaction, respect, and recognition within their chosen field. They shared stories about their congregations and families which illustrated a personal satisfaction or appreciation for their current situation. This does not mean that several do not have goals or interest in moving up in the organization, but that they acknowledge what they have achieved so far.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Jerry L. Miller

Associate Professor of Communication Studies
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Walter and Wilma Raach who instilled curiosity and perseverance in me, to Stephanie and Alex who prove that there is a brilliant future for all of us because of exceptional men and women like them, and most of all, to Dennis, my sanctuary and my patient, indomitable, and eternal partner.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the many people who made this dissertation possible, especially Dr. Jerry Miller, Dr. Claudia Hale, Dr. Caryn Medved, and Dr. Adah Ward Randolph. Without them, I could never have completed this work.

I cannot sufficiently express my appreciation of the women who generously shared their time, openness, and their stories. I was constantly amazed by their devotion, sincerity, and courage.

And a special thanks to Beth Burkowski for her assistance transcribing interviews.
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CHAPTER 1: WHY STUDY FEMALE PRIESTS

When I began my college career a few decades ago, I was oblivious to the idea that I was benefiting from the hard work and sacrifice of women who had championed women’s rights. The idea that women did not work was an idealistic, but not realistic, concept that existed on television in shows such as The Dick Van Dyke Show or Father Knows Best. My mother had worked until a week before I was born and returned to full-time work when my younger brother started first grade. Most of the mothers in my neighborhood also worked part-time, if not full-time, jobs while taking care of the house and children. My parents expected us both to be competent and self-sufficient in the garage, the kitchen, the woods, and the workshop, as well as educated. No excuses, no exceptions. That same mind-set existed in the theatre department at Kent State University Trumbull Campus where I began my college education. If a job needed to be done, it did not matter if you were male or female, just get it done. This was the culture in which I flourished, especially as a theatre techie and generalist.

By the time I entered college, I had divorced myself from organized religion, just as many cynical and pessimistic students of my time had done. To further solidify my disenchantment with institutionalized religion, I met my husband who had also become disillusioned with the “CHURCH.” He had been raised as a Catholic and I had been a Methodist. To return to the Catholic Church, he would have had to go to confession and do penance because of our premarital relationship. If we were to marry in his church, I would have had to convert and promise to raise any children according to church doctrine. Neither was going to happen. We avoided the issue when we got married by
having a Jesuit priest and a Methodist minister officiate, but that did not provide a long
term solution. We still believed in something, but we had to find a common ground
before we could even consider organized faith, religion, or worship.

When our children arrived, we felt a need to initiate them into the mainstream
faith culture in which we had been raised. We were going to give them a firm foundation
upon which to build their own teen rebellion. Despite our own church experiences, we
felt that we could find a denomination which would accommodate our needs. This desire
led us to shop for a church and we found ourselves drawn to the principles of the
Episcopal Church. Success! I found the contemporary Episcopal Church to be
theologically open-minded, intellectual, progressive, and politically moderate, which was
different from its conservative and privileged reputation from a generation or two ago.
We joined the Episcopalian Church in 1988. I was surprised to learn that the ordination of
women was a new practice, only established within the last decade. As a Methodist, I
came from a denomination in which women had been major players for decades.

When we joined St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Glenville, WV, the church was
served by a small ministry team, which attended to a four- or five-church congregational
cluster, and consisted of a diverse group of celebrants: young, new priests or deacons,
older semi-retired priests, two or three men and one woman. The dedication of the
celebrants was appreciated by the very small congregations as financial restrictions
prevented the individual congregations from securing a full-time priest. But with the help
of the Bishop, mission grants, and by working as a team, we could have a priest on most
Sundays. A trained and licensed lay reader led Morning Prayer services on the Sundays
when a priest was not available. As I became a member of this denomination and
developed a close acquaintance with these priests, I became aware of the disparity,
challenges, and resistance that confronted the women who had decided to answer a
calling in this men’s club: the Episcopal Church (EC/USA) and the Anglican
Communion.

As a doctoral student, I found myself drawn to gender and organizational
communication and I wanted to find an area of analysis that would integrate both of these
interests. The Episcopal Church provided the perfect venue for study. The issues of
women’s ordination and deployment are still volatile and divisive in this organization
which is male dominated and shaped by male hegemony. The ordination of women is not
unanimously recognized on the national or international level, even though the EC/USA
elected Katharine Jefferts-Schori, PhD., to serve as the first woman Primate in the
worldwide Anglican Communion and the 26th Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church
in June of 2006.

Thus began my interest in studying an organization to which I belonged and one in which
I served as a congregant, a vestry member, treasurer, and convention representative. To begin
this study, I familiarized myself with the rich history of the Episcopalian Church, women’s
ordination, and its current political and religious orientations. I turned to sociology of religion
research (Albee, 2000; Charleton, 2000; Chaves, 1996; Chaves & Cavendish, 1997; Gosline,
1996; Heyer-Gray, 2000; King, 1995; Lummis & Nesbitt, 2000; McDuff, 2001; Nesbitt,
psychology of religion (Celeste & Walsh, 1997), biology of religion (Ashbrook, 1997), theology
(Bacon, 1999; Boyer, 2001; Gillespie, 1992, 1995; Schaab, 2001; Schmidt, 1996), statistical analyses (Crew, 2002; Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998), gender and religion (Kollontai, 2000; Konieczny & Chaves, 2000; Laird, 2000; Norén, 1991; Olson, Crawford, & Guth, 2000; Osborne, 1994; Parker, 1999; Pidwell, 2001; Prelinger, 1992a, 1992b; Priest, 2003; Rathschmidt, 1996; Robbins & Francis, 2000; Robinson, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e; Spong, 1992, 1998; Woodard, 1996; Zikmund & Lummis, 1998; Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998) and I still did not discover how women create meaning in and for this organization. Through this research, I found that I wanted to give voice to these dedicated and diverse women. How do they understand, interpret, and tell the stories of their journeys through this organization and through their faith? This knowledge will increase the understanding of how individuals resist and surmount marginalization and trivialization, especially in an organization which is exempt from federal protection and hiring mandates.

Before I could begin to formulate either the research questions or the interview questions, I needed to better understand the foundations of this organization and its Anglican identity, as well as the history of women’s ordination. The next chapter explores the origins of the Episcopal Church and then hurdles over the next 300 years to focus specifically on the first women’s rights movement and the demand for equal participation in the church. Once I had a layperson’s understanding of the political and social machinations behind the separation from the Catholic Church, I studied the feminist heritage of women’s quest for ordination. The organizational structure of the contemporary Episcopal Church was the next component which needed to be reviewed so that I could understand the construct of the obstacles which faced women petitioning to
join the Episcopal priesthood. Many mainline protestant denominations began admitting
women to the ministry during the mid-1800s; I needed to grasp the Episcopal justification
for denying women full participation in a purportedly modern, enlightened, and socially
astute organization. I learned that women had to confront and combat cherished traditions
while still respecting the core precepts of the denomination. It would have been easier for
some of the aspirants to change denominations, but the intellectual and liturgical
dimensions of the Episcopal Church were just as compelling as the call to the priesthood.

The last sector I explored before commencing the literature review was the
secular and pop culture image of the contemporary Episcopal Church in literature, in
film, and on television. This research gave me an insight to how the organization and its
members were depicted and perceived by the general population. Also, I was able to
understand some of the dynamics of the relationship between the priesthood and the laity,
as well as why some women were compelled to become liturgical leaders.

During the last fifty years a significant amount of literature has been generated
concerning women and religion. Reviewing the literature and data available revealed that
studies had been conducted which examine religion and the church as a locus of
interpersonal, organizational, gender, family, feminist, and political studies. At one time,
thetical research would have been limited to the area of exegesis and homiletics, but
now the social sciences such as philosophy, sociology, history, psychology, and
communication (especially rhetoric) investigate why and how people experience and
express faith. The natural sciences such as biology, physiology, and neurosciences have
joined into the analysis of humans and religious participation. Instead of focusing on
areas which have already been scrutinized in depth, I wanted to focus on how female priests experience and negotiate the organizational maze of the Episcopal Church. Female priests are still a relatively new dimension and many members of the organization are still adapting to the change.

The Episcopal Church is not only an arena for spiritual exploration; it also functions as a socially and politically influential organization. The issues of communication styles, deployment, leadership, participation, inclusion, occupational trajectory, and feminism contribute to the perceptions and attitudes of its constituents and how they experience the church.

Using semi-structured open interviews to gather the life stories of female Episcopal priests provided me with the means to analyze their motivations, challenges, and identity. Czarniawska (1997) explained that the easiest way to get people to provide life stories is to simply ask them. Requesting stories encourages the participants to share their interpretation of an event, action, or experience by framing in a familiar form, the narrative. The interviews averaged about one hour in length but ranged from half an hour to almost two hours.

Twenty-six female priests were willing to share stories which illuminated their journeys into the priesthood. The participants were from a widespread region, from northern Ohio to North Carolina. The youngest was in her mid-20s and the eldest was approaching 70; 13 were or had been married (several were divorced), and 13 never been married. Marital status, gender orientation, and parenthood were not criterion for participating, but those topics occasionally entered into the narratives, especially when
those issues impacted on their ministry. The boundaries between their vocation and their personal lives were thin and permeable. This is an occupation where the priest’s private life is open for inspection and assessment, or at least that can be the feeling of members of the congregation. The participants were willing to share all aspects of their trials and tribulation along the path to ordination. The stories they shared included topics such as call narratives (which identified the first time a participant fell drawn to the ministry), invitation into the “brotherhood,” sharing ministry with a spouse, leadership and status issues, hostility and harassment, and, on a more prosaic level, the lack of a proper or agreed upon title.

As a researcher, I learned from their perseverance and courage. I was deeply moved by their stories. At times, I was angered and frustrated that sexism, racism, and bigotry still exists within an organization which professes acceptance and tolerance. I had to remind myself that even though the members are joined by a shared goal, individuals can succumb to human frailties. The National Church provides seminars, training workshops, and caucuses to address these problems for both clerical and lay members, but participation is not mandatory.
CHAPTER 2: THE HISTORY OF WOMEN’S ORDINATION: AN EPISCOPALIAN STANDPOINT

Anglican Roots¹

The Episcopal Church (originally derived from the Church of England, subsequently the Colonial Anglican Church) began as a politically active organization as well as a socially conservative denomination. The organization itself dates back to the English Reformation and Henry VIII’s estrangement from the Pope and the Holy Roman Catholic Church. The acrimony between Pope Clement VII and Henry VIII actually had its roots in the political machinations of Pope Julius II, Henry VII, and Ferdinand and Isabel of Spain and not in religious reform. They had requested and received special dispensation so that Catherine of Aragon (the widow of Henry’s older brother, Arthur) and Henry VIII could continue the politically beneficial alliance. When their union failed to produce a living male heir, Henry sought to have the dispensation overturned and his marriage declared null and void. When he was denied his annulment, Henry repudiated both his wife and the authority of the Pope. In retaliation, Pope Clement excommunicated Henry VIII, and in 1534, Henry VIII responded by declaring himself Head of the new Church of England, a move that was not unanimously accepted among his heirs or his

subjects. The divergence was a result of a political reformation instead of a theological enlightenment.

Even though the Roman Catholic Church no longer governed the new Church of England, the newly seceded church retained its fundamental Catholic structure after the bifurcation. Not until the reign of Queen Elizabeth I did the Anglican Church develop its own liturgical and ecclesiastical identity. This dedicated patron of a new national church, a strong-willed political strategist and feminist, mandated that the liturgy to be delivered in the native tongue (following the model of Martin Luther); however, the Archbishop of Canterbury retained the organizational control.

Elizabeth I also required that *The Book of Common Prayer* (which had been written during the short reign of her younger brother, Edward VI) and a translated *Bible* to be distributed to every parish, thereby giving the Church of England its distinctive identity (Dawley, 1963; Holmes, 1993). The clergy followed a standardized liturgical service and every member of the congregation that could read was able to follow and participate in the service. The role of the priest no longer exceeded the act of worship. This directive created a fringe benefit: increased literacy, because the translated *Bible* and the *BCP* became de rigueur reading for both males and females of the merchant class.

*The Feminist Heritage*

Skipping ahead a few centuries, women’s quest to be ordained clergy in contemporary mainline denominations was not simply another manifestation of the 1960s feminist and civil rights movements. The campaign to be acknowledged and heard began much earlier, with the mid-nineteenth century crusades for social, legal, political,
industrial, moral, and religious reform (Whitaker, 1999). Social reform advocates, male and female, spoke from many platforms in the struggle for abolition, suffrage, and temperance, including the pulpit (Campbell, 1989a, 1989b, 1993; Yellin, 1990). While campaigning for the rights of others, women became abundantly aware of their “lack of legitimate public voice” (Wood, 2001, p. 65) and found that they were even hindered from speaking in their own churches. This obstacle inspired those who were already advocating for others to organize and campaign for themselves.

The first wave women’s rights movement coalesced at the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention for Women’s Rights. This convention was organized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Coffin Mott following Mott’s thwarted attempt to speak at the 1840 London Anti-slavery Convention where Mott, an official delegate, and other authorized female delegates were refused seats because of their sex. According to Whitaker (1999) “Elizabeth Stanton supplied the philosophical background and Lucretia Mott who always remained the moral force of the movement.” (p. 5). These two forces of nature, in the company of the inspirational strength of Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and others, triggered a formidable avalanche of change.

Stanton, Mott, Martha Coffin Wright, and Mary Anne McClintock wrote the keynote speech, the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, for the Seneca Falls convention; which Stanton presented to the approximately 300 sympathizers (including 40 men) attending this historic event. The composition of this document emulated the Declaration of Independence to highlight the prevailing gender inequity. Their argument

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2 As noted by Julia T. Wood (2001)
is presented in two complementary sections. In the *Sentiments* portion they include this grievance:

He allows her in Church, as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from and public participation in the affairs of the Church.

*(Seneca Fall Declaration: 1848, 2004)*

Women were not only restricted in the public and political arenas; they were also denied participation in the public domain of the church and this participation was generally limited to gender appropriate contributions. Consequently, women’s religious, moral, and political reform discourse was rigorously subordinated in most denominations. As organizations, the traditional mainline denominations[^3] can be seen as the consummate manifestation of repressive patriarchal domination (Chaves, 1996; Crew, 2002; Gundersen, 1987; Nesbitt, 1997a; Nesbitt, 1997b; Niebuhr, 1997; Seymour, 1995; Shaw, 1994). Women were welcome to act as handmaidens to the church and the clergy through subordinate roles in the altar-guild, fund-raising bazaars, playing the piano or organ, or preparing pot-luck meals, but they seldom were permitted to contribute as lay-readers or to preach in the church. The minister’s or pastor’s wife was expected to lead these womanly endeavors and support her husband’s important calling. Women would deal

[^3]: The term “mainline denominations” is a phrase accepted throughout the sociology of religion discourse to identify the following American denominations: the American Baptist Church, the Disciples of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, The Presbyterian Church, the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and the Universal Unitarian Church.
with issues of morality from within their home, for that was the appropriate location and forum for matriarchal expression.

The Society of Friends or Quakers of the mid 19th century had been more tolerant of women’s participation than most other denominations. Lucretia Mott, ordained at the age of 28 as a Quaker minister (Whitaker, 1999), as well as Sarah Grimké, Angelina Grimké, Prudence Crandall, Laura Haviland, and others attempted to use the Quaker meetings to advocate antislavery sentiments when they were denied participation in other public forums. When the Quaker denomination changed its stance on abolition to a more politically neutral one, women, such as the Grimké sisters and Mott, who desired to use the church and the pulpit as a forum, were constrained from speaking and were chastised for being unseemly (Campbell, 1989b). This attitude was one of the issues challenged at the Seneca Falls Convention.

Three of the twelve resolutions included in *The Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions* specifically dealt with women’s rights and duties to participate fully in the church:

Resolved, That inasmuch as man, while claiming for himself intellectual superiority, does accord to woman moral superiority, it is pre-eminently his duty to encourage her to speak and teach, as she has an opportunity, in all religious assemblies.

Resolved, there. That, being invested by the creator with the same capabilities and the same consciousness of responsibility for their exercise, it is demonstrably the right and duty of woman, equally with man, to promote every righteous cause by
every righteous means; and especially in regard to the great subjects of morals and religion, it is self-evidently her right to participate with her brother in teaching them, both in private and in public, by writing and by speaking, by any instrumentalities proper to be used, and in any assemblies proper to be held… Resolved, That the speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of both men and women, for the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit, and for the securing to woman an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions, and commerce. (The Seneca Falls Declaration: 1848, 2004)

This document, signed by sixty-eight women and thirty-two men who attended the convention, was subsequently published in the New York Herald. The publisher, James Gordon Bennett, intended to mock and deride the event and the document, but instead, as Cady Stanton commented, provided an opportunity for unprecedented exposure: “Imagine the publicity given to our ideas by thus appearing in a widely circulated sheet like the Herald. It will start women thinking and men too; and when men and women think about a new question, the first step in progress is taken” (Seneca Fall Convention, 2000, p. 3).

Cady Stanton, the Grimkés, and the Motts might not have been permitted to speak on social injustices within their particular churches, but they did find platforms or pulpits within other institutions. Not only did the Congregationalist Church invite female social reformers to speak, but the church itself was one of the first Protestant Christian denominations in the United States to ordain a woman: Antoinette Brown in 1853, just
five years after the Seneca Convention. Shortly thereafter, in 1862, the Anglican Church accepted unordained deaconesses. The crusade to include women as ordained deacons, priests, or bishops in the Episcopal organization was mired for the next 100 years.

Other, more liberal or progressive, denominations such as the Society of Friends (in the early 1800s), Universalists (in 1863), Salvation Army (in 1865), and the Christian Scientists (in 1876) were among the earliest organizations to adopt the ordination of women. The Methodist Church ordained female preachers in 1880, ministers in 1920, and priests in 1956 (“Chronology of women’s’ ordination”, 2003). Paul Sullins (2000) reports that among the professions, the clerical was one of the first to encounter proposals to admit women, and one of the last to actually do so; the acceptance of women clergy is far from universal or uncontested even today.

The Organizational Structure of the Contemporary Episcopal Church

Many of the women who have decided to serve as clergy within the Episcopal Church might not consider themselves feminists, but they are entering a field which can still be considered a bastion of men. Approximately eleven percent of the clergy positions in the United States are filled by women in all other denominations and, within the Episcopal Church, less than 30% of the clergy positions are filled by women⁴ (Chaves, 1996; Crew, 2002). Women strove for equal participation in many faiths⁵ and that fight was an integral element of the campaign for women’s rights. Even though

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⁴ Other mainline denominations, such as the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Lutheran churches, show the same level of female participation as the EC/USA (Chaves, 1996)

⁵ Women were ordained as rabbis as early as 1972 in Reformed Judaism, in 1974 in the Reconstructionist Jewish movement, and in 1985 in the Conservative Jewish faith
women began petitioning for increased participation as early as the mid 1880s, the Episcopal Church was one of the last mainline Protestant churches to adopt the ordination of women. Part of the reason that change was so slow to come to the Episcopal Church arises from the method of administration or governance of the organization.

The Episcopal Church (EC/USA) is a complex, international institution in its own right as well as being part of the larger Anglican Communion. The base of the organization is composed of 7,350 churches (with almost 2.5 million members) which are classified as congregations, parishes, or missions. These institutions are served by priests, rectors, or vicars depending upon the size and financial independence of the church. Each of these institutions is administered by a vestry which consists of the priest and congregationally elected lay persons. In rural communities, several missions can be clustered or yoked and a priest or vicar officiates on a rotating basis with each church maintaining separate vestries. All of the churches within a geographic region belong to a diocese which is presided over by a Bishop. In the United States, there are 100 dioceses which are then divided into nine provinces which are presided over by a Synod which elects officers from the lay and clerical members. Active congregational membership in a province is not mandatory while every church must belong to a diocese and the national church to be considered a part of the Episcopal/Anglican communion. This communion

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6 A governing council consisting of a House of Bishops and a House of Deputies; membership includes every Bishop Diocesan, Bishop Coadjutor, Bishop Suffragan, assisting Bishop, and all retired Bishops as well as lay membership elected from every diocese within the Provincial district (Constitution and Canons, 2003)
of dioceses is lead by the Presiding Bishop, so the General Convention supersedes the provincial organizations (Constitution and Canons, 2003).

All denominational changes in the canons⁷ must progress through this hierarchy via a complex system of review, discussion, and repeated voting. In many ways the process resembles that of our state and federal governments’ process of making a law. To illustrate the complexity of the system of governance, a proposal traveling up the organizational chain begins with discussion within the congregational meetings. The church vestry convenes to discuss the issue and to determine the next action. A majority vote from the congregation will move the proposal to the next level. The resolution might then be sent on the central diocesan office. The next step involves one or more committees that exist at the diocesan level. Members of committees at this stage contain clerical and lay persons from various churches within the diocese which will review the motion. Alternatively, an individual may submit a motion to the standing committee for discussion at the annual diocesan convention. The resolution will be then be distributed back to all the congregations within the diocese for more discussion among the congregations and vestries shortly before the annual diocesan convention. The congregational delegates from each church will attend the annual diocesan conventions. Lay persons and clergy have separate but equally influential votes. The lay delegates should vote according to the desires of their congregation (at least during the first round of votes) while the clergy are generally expected to vote their conscience or their

⁷ The formal, official rules and interpretations of scripture used throughout the history of the Episcopal Church
understanding of God’s will. It might take several ballots before the convention members reach a majority decision. The Office of the Bishop will then communicate the resolutions and results to the national office of the Presiding Bishop. The election of a diocesan Bishop follows the same process. Rather than the Bishop being assigned or appointed from the national office, he or she is elected by the convention delegates and clergy at the annual diocesan convention. If the diocesan ordination occurs within six months previous to the National Convention, the House of Bishops votes on the appointment and the Presiding Bishop consecrate the elected bishop there. Otherwise, the Presiding Bishop and a convocation from the House of Bishops will vote to sanction (or not sanction) the election and consecration. The Presiding Bishop seldom overrules the vote of a diocese regarding the election of a bishop, having faith that the decision was based in God’s will and is supported by the diocesan membership.

The process of resolutions becoming canons during the General Convention is slightly different than from the diocesan level. The number of delegates from each region is determined by population of Episcopalians within the diocese. The House of Deputies (similar to the U.S. House of Representatives) consists of clergy delegates and the lay delegates from each diocese. These are divided into clergy and lay person voting units. If there is a split decision within the either the clerical or lay delegation from each diocese then the majority determines how the votes will be registered. For example; if there are three negative and two affirmative votes in a delegation that has five members then the vote from that delegation is recorded as five negatives. This means that a minority segment as small as thirty percent can stop a resolution from being adopted (Holzgang,
2000; *Constitutions and Canons*, 2003). This detail became very important when the resolution to ordain women was being considered.

If a resolution passes in the House of Deputies, it then advances for further discussion and action. The second governing body (paralleling the U.S. Senate) is the House of Bishops which, as the name implies, is comprised of all the Diocesan, Suffragen⁸, and retired Bishops in the Church. Both houses must approve a resolution before it is sanctioned and entered into the Canons. The democratic nature of this process within an apostolic and catholic denominational organization is unique. Unlike the Pope of the Catholic Church (another apostolic denomination), the Presiding Bishop cannot determine church policy without the consensus of the membership. Decisions concerning the doctrine are made through a voting process which includes not only the clergy but also the lay membership (*Constitutions and Canons*, 2003). One major characteristic which distinguishes this process from the U.S. Federal government model though is the fact that a relatively small lobby group can stop any canonical reform.

Also, to further complicate the issue, each diocese is autonomous (similar to a state’s independence). Neither a Bishop nor a diocese is bound to adopt the changed canon because the EC/USA does not have a standing disciplinary agency to assess or enforce compliance. At this point in time, three American dioceses still do not recognize the ordination of women: Fort Worth, Texas; San Joaquin, CA; and Quincy, IL. The dioceses of Eau Claire, WI; and the Navajoland Area Mission Diocese do not officially or

⁸ An assistant bishop without right of succession and (usually) without specifically designated areas of jurisdiction (Webber, 1988)
publicly refuse to accept female priests any longer, but no female priest has been deployed to congregations within those dioceses yet, nor have any women been entered into the ordination process (Crew, 2002, 2008). The consecration of Bishop Gene Robinson in New Hampshire (an openly gay priest in a long term relationship) has been challenged and censured by dioceses and individual congregations throughout the United States as well as by many Anglican and Episcopalian Communions around the world. The investitures of Bishop Robinson and Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori have been followed by the secession of individual congregations and dioceses requesting Alternative Primatial Oversight. The international communion of the Episcopal and Anglican Church has still not reached consensus on ordaining women and the ordination of a gay bishop in the United States might have a negative impact on the continuing liberalization of the Episcopal and Anglican Church. Both issues were major topics of discussion during the 2008 Lambeth Convention.

The Archbishop of Canterbury\(^9\) hosts the Anglican Lambeth Conference which is held in England every 10 years; the last conference met in 1998 and women bishops attended for the first time. Eleven female bishops (eight from the U.S., two from Canada, and one from New Zealand) participated in this international event for the first time (Robinson, 2003). At this conference, the world wide Anglican and Episcopalian Communion meet to discuss issues concerning international doctrine, as well as ecclesiastical and canonical consistency. This conference basically acts as an opportunity for the different communions to maintain a semblance of uniformity, continuity, and a

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\(^9\) The Archbishop of Canterbury is the titular head of the world-wide Anglican/Episcopal Communion
shared ecclesiastical community without forcing universal ectype. The canonical revision
which permitted the sanctioned ordination of women in 1976 in the North American
continent has still not been universally accepted throughout the international Anglican
Communion. The acceptance of the ordination of women has almost reached fifty
percent participation within the international Anglican and Episcopal communities
(EC/USA website, 2008), but American priests who still oppose the ordination of women
have been known to approach the Taiwan Communion (which still declines to ordain
women) to be ordained.

The Lambeth Convention allows a demographically diverse, heterogeneous group
which shares a common liturgical and doctrinal heritage to maintain a sense of
community and accord. The Episcopal Church eschews the autocratic organizational
structure of the Roman Catholic Church while at the same time claiming the
corresponding genealogical heritage of apostolic succession; as well as recognizing the
canonicity of the scriptures of both Old and New Testament (also referred to as the
Hebrew and Christian Testaments). The Episcopal Church has ostensibly eschewed the
papal paradigm, but the structure of service is conspicuously reminiscent of the medieval
ceremonial style of the parent organization because most of the composition, ritual,
liturgy, and symbology are indistinguishable from a Catholic service.

*History of Episcopal Women’s Ordination Crusade*

*Well-behaved women seldom make history.* Laura Thatcher Ulrich, (2007)

The Society of Friends’ theology and scriptural discernment is based on a
fundamental belief that God’s spirit exists in every human soul; therefore all persons are
considered to have intrinsic and equal worth which is independent of gender (Robinson, 2002). This theological philosophy was embraced by Episcopal women who felt the need to serve their church in a more significant and visible manner. The EC/USA does have several orders of sisters or nuns which serve in educational, nursing, missionary, and contemplative societies which are indistinguishable from similar Catholic societies. Lay women were able to participate as early as 1862 as unordained deaconesses, a low status position which persisted for more than 100 years (Darling, 2001).

The feminist political and religious transformation of the 1960s affected this ecclesiastically and politically moderate institution. The sixties can be perceived as an era of pseudo, avant-garde, and new age religions, but the mainstream churches were also being transformed by men and women who wished to achieve a more satisfactory participation within the more traditional faith communities. Accordingly, recommendations made in a 1934 minority report to the General Conference were finally put into effect in 1966 when the canonical terminology was changed “that deaconesses were ‘set apart’ to ‘ordered’” (Darling, 2001, p. 2). This significantly increased the standing of deaconesses to actually being considered associates in the ordained diaconate, but this level of inclusion did not remain satisfactory for very long.

Women were able to serve as ordained deaconesses, but this accomplishment served to inspire them to strive for fully vested participation. The social climate of the time served as a catalyst for more active cooperation from male members of both the priesthood and the diaconate for women’s ordination (Darling, 2001; Hiatt, 1983). The initial response from the House of Bishops/Deputies was to request those women
petitioning for membership to the priesthood to be patient, wait, and, consequently, another committee was formed to review and discuss the proposal. The first step to ordain women had taken 100 years, the second had taken more than 30 years, but the women of the 1960s were more impatient, confrontational, and militant than the previous generations of petitioners and they did not intend to wait decades for the church establishment to give them permission to minister (Hiatt, 1983).

During the 1968 Lambeth Convention, the organization’s membership also agreed that deaconesses are actually within the diaconate, but the ordination of women was referred back to the member communions for further discussion. In 1969, a special General Convention was called to authorize women as lay readers and chalice bearers. Another major accomplishment for women within the Episcopal Church occurred in 1970: they were finally permitted to be voting delegates at the General Convention, a resolution which had taken over 50 years to pass. The 19th Amendment might have given women the right to political vote in 1920, but Episcopal women were not eligible to be representatives of their faith until fifty years later.

Women were accepted into Episcopal seminaries or divinity graduate programs as early as the 1950s even though they were denied the privilege to serve as deacons, priests, or bishops. They could be directors of educational programs or act as choir directors for so-called ‘tall churches.’\(^{10}\) Some considered these changes in policy to be achievements while others considered these actions simply another way to delay the

\(^{10}\) “Tall Church” is colloquialism that is used to identify large, conservative High Church (the rituals and ceremonies are very reserved and Catholic) congregations.
inevitable. The process of study and contemplation became synonymous with tactics to delay dealing with the issue of women’s ordination (Hiatt, 1983).

In the United States, female deaconesses and lay members created the Episcopal Women’s Caucus in 1971 to discuss strategies for social and church reform. But this was not the first organized gathering to discuss and strategize the crusade for equal status. Early in 1970, the women of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship sent out a call to women on their mailing list that they were sponsoring a conference to discuss the status of women in the church. Many of the members of this group were experienced protestors and community organizers. Their experiences in the secular world would prove invaluable in the fight for women’s ordination.

During Orthodox Easter weekend in April, 1970, a group of almost seventy Episcopal women gathered at Graymoor House in Kingston, NY, for a retreat; there they discussed their future in the church. Among the women attending this conference were those who were seeking the priesthood, including those who would become known as the ‘Philadelphia 11’ and the ‘Washington 4’ (Darling, 2001). The atmosphere at this conference was probably very similar to the atmosphere at the Seneca Fall convention, one hundred and twelve years earlier. Suzanne Hiatt (1983) describes the experience:

It was a difficult conference, as it had attracted a very diverse group of women. There were young, militant feminists who felt peripherally connected to the church but much wounded by it. There were seminary-educated women of all ages, many of whom had never found fulfilling ministries within the church. There were laywomen just barely hanging on, and nuns and clergy wives who felt
trapped and exploited by the institutional church. A few of the women had owned their own vocation to priesthood (p. 577)

This emotionally turbulent weekend was a defining moment for the future of EC/USA. Hiatt (1983) writes that after much fighting, crying, and honest dialogues, these women decided that they were no longer going to approach the church establishment as supplicants or beggars, but that they were going to claim their vocations as equals. They (following the example of Stanton and her cohorts) composed the “Graymoor Resolution” which labeled the institutional EC/USA as “racist, militaristic, and sexist” and that “its basic influence on our own lives is negative” (Hiatt, 1983, p. 577). The EC/USA had avoided taking a stand on the political and social upheavals going on at the time, preferring to maintain an aloof and reserved decorum, and continuing the study-delay tactics that had been so successful in the past.

These church women were cut from a tough, more militant cloth than their polite predecessors who had waited so patiently for the church to acknowledge their presence and their contributions. The authors of the Graymoor Resolution demanded equal representation and participation in their church and within the document listed every office from which they had been excluded (Hiatt, 1983). The resolution was forwarded on to the National Church as well as distributed to every province in the communion. Unfortunately, this momentous weekend did not result in a united and strategic campaign, but at least congregations were meeting to discuss the issue openly and to share what they had been privately sensing and thinking.
A commission had been formed during the 1967 General convention to review the issue of women’s ordination, but they had never convened a meeting. Commission members were challenged by the representatives of the Graymoor Conference to meet; subsequently that committee prepared and presented a resolution at the 1970 General Convention. The resolution was debated in open session, voted on, and passed the first round of votes among the clerical and lay delegates, “but losing by a narrow margin in the clergy order due to the technicalities of how the votes are counted” (Hiatt 1983, p. 578). It is important to remember that this was the first General Convention to allow women, after 50 years of petitioning and voting, to be seated as delegates. The church administrators were expecting the women to be grateful that they were permitted to attend and instead they were facing women who were turning hostile because of yet another thwarted aspiration. There was one achievement though: at the last minute a resolution passed which raised the status of female deaconesses to regular deacons so that women could be ordained to the diaconate with equal status as men. During the next three years, women seminary graduates were ordained as deacons, but this did not deter women from striving for more significant participation.

The next General Convention met in 1973 in Louisville, Kentucky, and many of the delegates were confident that the issue of women’s ordination would be satisfactorily resolved. Sympathetic bishops, priests, and laymen had been enlisted to assist in the lobbying, but the majority of the work during the previous three years had been done by the Episcopal Women’s Caucus which had been formed after the defeat of the resolution for women’s ordination at the last convention. Regional branches had been formed to
prepare an organized campaign for this conference. Meetings, educational events, the
distribution of literature, and even street theatre events had been used during the ensuing
time to highlight the inequality in the ecclesiastical orders (Chaves, 1996; Darling, 2001).
At one point, five women deacons had presented themselves at the same service in which
their male colleagues were being ordained into the priesthood, repeating the vows with
the men, but the Bishop of the New York Diocese refused them the final blessing and
laying on of hands (Darling, 2001). Since the Episcopal Church believes in apostolic
succession, the “laying on of hands” is essential to the ritual for this symbolic act
connects these contemporary apostles back to the original twelve apostles. This incident
was covered by the *New York Times* and the controversy within the EC/USA was moved
into the secular news.

The issue of women’s ordination again dominated the agenda and the public
media at the 1973 General Convention and, according to Hiatt (1983), the general feeling
was that it was finally going to pass. The resolution to ordain women did succeed in the
vote by the House of Bishops, but this time it did not pass the House of Delegates even
though a majority of the delegates had actually voted in favor of the amendment. Several
priests and bishops resigned their positions in protest over the setback.

The consequences of this disappointment actually acted as a catalyst for those
women who felt the need and calling to be ordained to take the matter into their own
hands and to no longer wait patiently and politely for the church to recognize them.
During a 1974 meeting of the EWC, the atmosphere was charged with emotions and the
discussion, according to Hiatt, led those who felt the strongest need to be ordained to
contemplate unsanctioned or irregular ordination. A self-appointed committee from the EWC gathered together on July 10, 1974 to plan an unauthorized ordination. Hiatt (1983) and fourteen of her cohorts would compel the clerical and lay constituents of the EC/USA to deal with them seriously. The decision to act progressed quickly and the word of the “irregular ordination” spread quickly. It was also met by resistance and anger by those who opposed women’s ordination. Participants received threats and many sermons that week were filled with “heavy rhetoric” against the ordination of women (Hiatt, 1983, p. 581).

On July 29, 1974 at Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, three retired or resigned bishops (Daniel Corrigan, Robert L. DeWittt, and Edward R. Welles,) assisted by Bishop Antonio Ramos, ordained 11 deacons to the priesthood: Merrill Bittner, Alla Bozarth (Campbell), Alison Cheek, Emily C. Hewitt, Carter Heyward, Suzanne R. Hiatt, Marie Moorefield, Jeannette Piccard, Betty Bone Schiess, Katrina Welles Swanson, and Nancy Hatch Wittig. This direct defiance of Presiding Bishop John M. Allin and the General Convention was not accepted stoically or passively by the parent organization or by lay members who opposed this action. The House of Bishops called an emergency meeting in the middle of August which convened in Chicago’s O’Hare Airport. Most of the Philadelphia 11 were present, as well as the officiating bishops. At this meeting, the institutional church declared that the ordination did not happen and that the women were still merely deacons. Sanctions against the officiating bishops were decreed, and they were tried and convicted in ecclesiastical courts for disobeying their Presiding and Provincial Bishops.
Actions such as these did not stop churches nationwide from inviting these new priests to celebrate the Eucharist with them. Many of the priests who invited these new female priests to officiate were also tried and convicted in ecclesiastical court for disobedience and were admonished or suspended by the institutional church. The debate to ordain women continued. To add fuel to the debate, on September 7, 1975, four more women were ordained at St. Stephen’s & Incarnation, Washington, DC by retired Bishop George W. Barrett. He also was tried, convicted, and reprimanded by the institutional church. These ordinations did have the effect that the House of Bishops wanted; their actions were covered by the national press and sparked increased debate within the Anglican Communion. In 1975, a commission of the Anglican Church of Canada met to discuss issue of women’s ordination, to hopefully avoid the public or secular scrutiny that was plaguing the EC/USA.

Finally, at the next General Convention of the EC/USA in 1976, the resolution to ordain women was once again presented for a vote and the resolution passed. The new canon, to be ratified on January 1, 1977, would change the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church to grant women privileges of the priesthood. The House of Bishops had originally contemplated granting the fifteen irregulars only conditional ordination, but the House was persuaded to by the other delegates (lay and clerical) to simply accept them as priests. That January, the irregular ordinations were recognized and granted regular status and standing within the presbyterate (Hiatt, 1983).

This action is not to suggest that all controversy concerning this issue was eliminated. That October, Presiding Bishop Allin submitted his request to resign from his
position because he could not reconcile himself to this decision. The House of Bishops declined to accept his request and issued a letter affirming their belief in his leadership and the institutional church adopted a statement that no one would be penalized for opposing or not supporting women’s ordination. The consequences of this statement are still being dealt with by the institution.

Secular and Pop Culture Influence

The issue of women’s ordination and status within religion is a topic of renewed secular interest as illustrated by the popularity of programs on the History Channel and books by John Shelby Spong. Debate continues inside and outside the world of religious organizations on the history of Christianity and of women’s role in the early church. A significant amount of research and writing has been devoted to this topic in sociological, anthropological, religious, and even popular literature. Using a minister or priest as a central character in fiction is not a new concept though the Episcopal Church has only occasionally been used as a venue. At this point, I have not found any films which feature female Episcopal priests, though occasionally male priests are central characters: examples include films such as Signs and The Bishop’s Wife. Generally speaking though, Episcopal priests, male or female, do not appear nearly as frequently as those from other denominations.

Jan Karon’s best-selling Mitford series features an Episcopal priest, Father Tim Kavanagh, who is the idealization of an Anglican Vicar: older, reserved, contemplative, male, and, until shortly before his retirement, single and celibate. Father Kavanagh occasionally mentions a female Episcopal priest, but one has never been included as a
significant or contributing character in the Mitford series. Gail Goodwin has also drawn on Episcopal priests for inspiration; she is the author of *Evensong* (2000), a novel featuring a husband and wife Episcopal clergy couple and *Father Melancholy’s Daughter* (2001), a novel featuring an Episcopal priest and his daughter, who also becomes a priest. In these works, Goodwin focuses on interpersonal relationships and uses the Episcopal Church as the environment or context for marital and parental interaction. Kate Gallison writes the Mother11 Lavinia Grey mysteries featuring a female Episcopal priest who is reminiscent of Jessica Fletcher from *Murder, She Wrote*. Joining those same ranks, Julia Spencer-Fleming writes mystery novels featuring the Rev. Clare Ferguson, rector of Millers Kill Episcopal Church.

For those who are drawn to the more traditional venue of spiritual writing, the Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor, an Episcopal priest in Georgia has written twenty books of essays and sermons, as well as having prepared recordings (CDs, DVDs, and tapes) of services, music, and readings. She joins C.S. Lewis, A. Huxley, Peter J. Gomes (with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.), Jonathan Edwards, E. Lee Hancock, etc. who have published collections of their sermons for spiritual benefit of those interested in reflecting upon their words, an old practice of those who serve in a pulpit.

*In Television*

In 1994, the Anglican Church (twenty years after the Episcopal Church) approved the ordination of women. The BBC used that decision as an opportunity to launch a new

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11 Most of the female Episcopal priests I interviewed prefer to not be called “Mother,” and find the use of “Father” rather humorous, and occasionally use the title “the Reverend.” The title “mother” is more common in the New England region than in other parts of the USA. Some male Episcopal priests have also adopted the title “the Reverend.”
series: *The Vicar of Dibley* (1994-2000), starring Dawn French, a popular British sketch comedienne. This is the only television production to have a comparatively young woman who is a priest/minister as a central character. Her character, the Rev. Geraldine “Gerry” Granger meets vehement resistance from the town’s councilman, parish president and resident curmudgeon, David Horton. The Rev. Teresa Wayman (personal communication, 2005) shared how much watching *The Vicar of Dibley* had helped her to maintain a sense of humor and to keep her own ordination process (and tribulations) in perspective. In the United States, Dan Akroyd portrayed Episcopal priest, Rev. Mike Weber on *Soul Man* which ran for most of the 1997 television season. Apparently the Episcopal clergy do not provide noteworthy opportunities for the entertainment industry.

Most of the arguments against women serving as priests were based on the issue that none of Jesus’ twelve apostles were women, but that topic has been the center of significant debate recently. The A & E channel’s BIOGRAPHY: “Mary Magdalene: The Hidden Apostle” and TIME MACHINE: “Banned from the Bible,” were concerned with alternative interpretations of Mary Magdalene’s relationship with Jesus and examinations of the eight recovered books which were not included in the Bible following the Nicene (or Nicean) Council.¹² One contemporary argument can be made that women are striving for reclamation of participation and inclusion which might have existed during Jesus’ mission. Brent Shaw’s (1994) research in biblical texts, archeological sites, and historical documents (including the eight recovered scriptural books) supports the argument that

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¹² The Nicene council was convened in 325 BCE after Constantine defeated Emperor Licinius and ended the persecution of the Christian church.
women were among the original disciples and were active “presbytera” (priest) through the fifth and sixth centuries of Christianity’s diffusion. These new anthropological discoveries give credence to women’s argument to be included in the priesthood.

**Secular-Theological Literature**

The following books are examples from a much longer list on the growing interest in identifying early female apostles and disciples, especially since both the Catholic and Episcopal Churches claim apostolic succession. According to liturgical history each deacon, priest, and bishop can trace their ordination, by the laying on of hands, directly back to the original apostles. Therefore, the question of whether Mary Magdala was a confidante and apostle of Christ takes on extraordinary significance. The question of women acting as disciples during the early years of Christianity also has significance because Paul, an apostle, might have sanctioned women to pray, prophesy, and act as witnesses.


*Born of a Woman: A Bishop Rethinks the Virgin Birth and the Treatment of Women by a Male-Dominated Church* by John Shelby Spong (1992)

*The Easter Moment* by John Shelby Spong (1998)

*Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers in Exile* by John Shelby Spong (1998)


Mary, called Magdalene, by Margaret George (2003)


Each of these books present the argument that women (beginning with Mary of Magdala, in particular) were responsible for much of the early Christian ministry and that their exclusion had as much to do with the increased financial holdings of the early church as it did with priests’ gender. According to Shaw (1994), there are multiple references in New Testament (especially within the books of Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, Peter) which refer to women prophesying, preaching, and proselytizing. Upon one point biblical scholars can reach agreement: women have been thoroughly involved in the institutional church from its inception, the degree and manner of involvement is question. The increased recognition of women’s participation in the early church as well as books providing exemplars of practitioners support the rights claimed by contemporary female priests and ministers.
CHAPTER 3: THE PRIESTHOOD AND THE FEMALE SUPPLICANT

The church still has a long way to go in its ability to recognize and affirm the leadership abilities of women. Women need not be regarded as interchangeable with men, but their experiences and perspectives, often different from men’s, can enrich the whole and enhance the calibre of leadership for the whole church.

Committee for the Full Participation of Women in the Church; Reaching Toward Wholeness: The Participation of Women in the Episcopal Church. (2003)

The last half century has been distinguished by a significant growth in the study and analysis of religion as a locus of interpersonal (Coopman & Meidlinger, 2000), organizational (Cantrell, 2002; Carlson, 1997; Chang, 1997, 1997b; Chaves, 199; Chaves & Cavendish, 1997; Glanville, 2000; Kollontai, 2000; Nesbitt 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1997b, 1998; Sullins, 2000;), gender (Akiyama, 2001; Albee, 2000; Byfield & Byfield, 2002; Gillespie, 1992, 1995; Heyer-Gray, 2000; Laird, 2000; Lind, 2005; Robinson, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e; Zikmund et al, 1998), family (Holzgang, 2000; Lummis, 2004), feminist (Foss, 1996), and political studies (Djube & Gilbert, 2002; Finley, 1994; Hunt, 2001; Konieczny & Chaves, 2000; TeSelle, 1999, 2000). At one time, theological study would have been limited to the realm of exegesis and homiletics, but now the social sciences such as philosophy, sociology, history, psychology, and communication (especially rhetoric) investigate why and how people experience and express faith. The natural sciences such as biology, physiology, and neurosciences (Ashbrook, 1997; Boyer, 2001; Bulkeley, 2005; Sitze,
2004) have also joined into the fray, analyzing the physiological, neurological, and evolutionary origins of religious participation and expression.

Women, and their participation as congregational members, lay leaders, unordained deacons, and ordained clergy, have been a specialized area of study for more than 25 years; since first and second wave feminist movements have been recognized as major influences upon women’s membership in all organizations. As a communication researcher, I examined the degree and manner in which the communicative interactions of female Episcopal priests demarcate the permeable boundaries of gender, organization, and family communication processes. The experiences of female clergy (including those serving in alternative or non-traditional callings), their families, and their congregations are areas which have been studied, analyzed, and interpreted by social science researchers, but the focus has been on how these elements impact the faith and careers of women in the ministry. How do they utilize language, narrative, and communication to explicate their experience? The answers to that question are revealed through a review of gender communication, female leadership competence, and interpersonal communication performances. An examination of the deployment trends within the organization also revealed that career opportunities for female priests are still delimited by hiring committees trying to find the stereotypical “ideal priest.” This is compounded by the impression that the hierarchy of religious organizations has been unenthusiastic about allowing women the same power as their male cohorts.
Gender Communication Considerations

The second wave women’s movement initiated a paradigm shift for those who thought they understood the communication modes of men and women (Kuhn, 1974). The old roles and rules were no longer correct, politically or socially. Stereotypes were, and still are, being challenged in traditional venues such as mainline Christian denominations, organizations anchored in customs, rituals, and history (i.e. the Episcopal Church). It is essential to understand the traditional or conventional gendered communication behaviors of people and then recognize that those paradigms are no longer inflexibly applicable but still might have an influence on communication expectations. The early gender based popular literature such as Marabel Morgan’s *The Total Woman* (1973), John Molloy’s *Dressed for Success Book* (1975), *The Women’s Dress for Success Book* (1977) and more recently, Dr. Toni Grant’s *Being a Woman Fulfilling Your Femininity and Finding Love* (1988) are biased and inadequate to act as a realistic guide for professional women, especially for those entering a career in the ministry. “Women and men who were once offered prescriptions for communicating effectively with each other, now find them outdated” (Pearson, et al, 1991, p. 28).

Zoey A. Heyer-Gray (2000) observed that, through history, the Christian church has been gender segregated: men lead the services and perform the sacred rituals while women do the unpaid feeding or kin work, work which has traditionally been less visible and less valued. An early question during the first and second feminist movements was whether or not women had the Biblical right or privilege to act as priests; more recent questions have to do with gender communication behaviors: does the gender of the priest
or minister affect his/her relationship and communication with the congregation and the
teaching of the liturgy? The separation of members by gender in the church derives from
two challenges: the male hegemony of the church and the stereotyped gender tasks of
men and women. When representatives of an organization no longer acquiesce to the
traditional roles, members (both lay and clerical) are faced with embracing, suffering, or
rejecting the new paradigm. Eventually, the new paradigm will be accepted, either
because of attrition (those who rejected the new paradigm eventually leave or die off) or
by natural organizational evolution (Chaves & Cavendish, 1997)

Gender communication has been the focus of both pop culture and academic
studies in interpersonal, family, rhetorical, organizational, and political communication
and this research will be utilized to enlighten the study of gender communication within a
religious organization. As women increasingly occupy the pulpit, their communication
performances are going to be scrutinized and compared to their male predecessors. Wood
(2001) noted that the study of gendered communication has been active since the early
1970s, following in the wake of the second wave feminist movement. This
chronologically corresponds with women successfully breaking down the barriers to
ordination in main line Protestant denominations.

Researchers acknowledge that there are differences between masculine, feminine,
and androgynous communication performances, but how those differences are produced
will be a debate for a while yet. The debate as to whether men and women communicate
differently because of physiological, biological, or social/cultural/political reasons still
flourishes as actively as it did when the issue was first addressed (Brehm, Powell, &
What is important to recognize, for the purpose of this work, is that differences do exist in use, either in the perceptions of those interacting or in the actual communication behaviors of the participants.

According to research conducted by Vollmer, “men generally conceive themselves as more active, independent, superior, and self-confident than women. Women describe themselves as more gentle (sic), helpful, understanding, and warm than men do.” (1986, p. 353). These self-portrayals of the masculine versus the feminine could be considered the basis of gender communication differentiation. These self-concepts are not usually developed until age three and can be modified by a home environment which incorporates nontraditional roles (married or single working mothers or fathers who are active caregivers) or might be intensified by educational institutions which tend to reinforce traditional roles (Bell & Carver, 1980; Moss, 1970; O’Kelly & Carney, 1986; Spence & Buckner, 1995). This does not mean that masculine or feminine communication styles are exclusively preordained to males and females; actually most people incorporate both masculine and feminine characteristics and any stereotyping is less definitive when actual communication behaviors are analyzed (Giles, Scholes, & Young, 1983; Haslett, 1983; Kramer, 1977; Lakoff, 1975; Shimanoff, 1987; Spender, cited in Pearson, et al, 1991; Bem & Bem, 1993; Bem & Bem, 1973). Instead of being discussed as polar opposites, it would be more accurate to discuss masculine and feminine behaviors as intersecting continuums or as Cartesian quadrants (Spence & Buckner, 1995). Accordingly, it would be also be more conscientious to be aware that different professions might require communication behaviors which might also be placed
in masculine/feminine/androgynous sectors. For example: educators, nurses, ministers/priests, artists, or homecare providers might be favored professions for someone who uses more feminine to androgynous communication, while those who are adept with the more masculine quadrant would be drawn to professions which depend upon masculine or authoritative styles such as a police officer, trial lawyer, politics, airline pilot, engineer, or even a mechanic. Few practitioners of these professions can claim that one sex automatically functions better than the other, but they might agree that certain communication behaviors are de rigueur.

Ideologically, masculine behavior is “viewed as instrumental, task-oriented, aggressive, assertive, ambitious, and achievement oriented. Women, on the other hand, are viewed as relational, socio-emotional, caring, nurturing, affiliative, and expressive,” (Pearson et al, 1991, p.122). The stereotyped male is aggressive, dominant, independent, in charge, and engaged in exciting activities which collect rewards; men are serious, confident, competent, and in high status positions, hard, tough, sexually aggressive, unafraid, violent, in total control of all emotions. Communicatively, men dominate conversations, tend to focus on solutions, play in larger groups, focus on rules, and are organized with little need to discuss: insiders already know the rules and expectations. The feminine stereotype describes women as dependent on men, enmeshed in relationships, or housework, less outspoken, subordinate to men, victims, angels, martyrs, and loyal wives; feminine types tend to focus on process and not on rules but on roles.

These supposed differences impact on language use, conversational behaviors, immediacy, paralinguistics, self-disclosure/self-assertion, conflict management, and
organizational participation. The reality is, as usual, much more complicated and individualized than the stereotypes would indicate. For example, researchers found that when studying conversational behaviors that men actually interrupt more than women (which was contrary to early expectations). Subsequent studies found that gender is not a strong predictor of who interrupts conversations more, but is, instead, an individualized characteristic. A person (gender inconsequential) might have a habit of interrupting others frequently. Interruption behavior is more likely to be an indication of someone who is enthusiastic about the topic and is impatient to share his or her thoughts or someone who considers themselves to be of higher status. Gender communication differences do exist but in more subtle ways than stereotyped communication behaviors might indicate. The intent, purpose, and affective use of communication are more important than superficial behaviors.

Men’s speech is more task oriented, a way to exert control, preserve independence, entertain, and to enhance status (Lewis & McCarthy, 1988; Saurer & Eisler, 1990; Tannen, 1990). Talk is used to establish one’s status, negotiate prestige, telling stories of accomplishment, and personal reputation. Tannen (2001) and Saurer & Eisler (1990) found that showing sympathy might actually be interpreted as being condescending and establishing a one-up position. Men will disclose differently than women, focusing more on accomplishments, knowledge, or skills and the focus might be more on problem solving efforts (which is a more acceptable way to establish a one-up position) than on feelings or emotional support.
Women’s speech is “a primary way to establish and maintain relationship with others…Talk is the essence of relationships” (Johnson, 1996, p. 81). The important concern is to show support for others and to use communication to empower others. Questions are used to prompt a more in-depth exploration of feelings and perceptions of and experience. Conversation is used to confirm the other’s statements and encourage elaboration even if the listener does not agree with the speaker’s statements. Also, women’s conversation tends to include more personal disclosures (which might be used to establish empathy, for example: “I know just how you feel because I had a similar experience”), anecdotes, and a more personal character which will help sustain interpersonal proximity.

Androgyny refers to those who are behaviorally flexible and able to draw on either masculine or feminine communication or behavioral modes, dependent upon the circumstances and communicants. High empathy, which is usually identified as a component of a more androgynous communication style, would be considered a highly desirable trait in those in church leadership roles. A repertoire of masculine and feminine communication behaviors would be an advantage for someone who has to lead a congregation and also has to act as a personal and family counselor for individual congregants because they will be able to successfully project empathetic listening. The actual differences between male and female priests might be found more in the expectations, perceptions, and explanations ascribed by congregational members than by genuine gender-based characteristics and hiring committees will be making their decisions using assumptions rooted on those stereotypes.
Deployment Issues

The role of a priest should be considered a mid-level management position with the priest acting as steward of the congregation, as counselor, as the central or primary officer of a management team (the vestry), and as a representative to the larger organization. A priest applying for a position as rector or vicar is in a unique situation because the diocese or the National Church employment office has the stance of encouraging diversity in hiring. However, the search committee, the congregation, and the vestry will determine who the final successful applicant is (Mickelsen, 2004). The congregation, the vestry, and the search committee (which should be separate from the vestry) are all consulted while developing the job description and each person will have their own ideal priest in mind while the search is in process.

In 2001, Catherine Fobes reported on her experiences as a member of what she called “communion chapel,” which was a chapel in the southeastern United States on the campus of a major research university. She was a member of the church and was asked to be on the search committee while a graduate student there. She used the opportunity provided by the search process to act as a participant/observer as part of a qualitative study she was doing in sociology of religion. Her experiences exposed the barriers which face women applying for positions within a tradition bound organization. The greatest opponents to the hiring of women in management positions are other women, especially those who are very traditional or conservative in philosophy (Cooper, 1997; Fobes, 2001; Mickelson, 2004). Also, at another church doing a search for a new priest, an elderly conservative matriarch of the congregation expressed her opinion that the ideal priest
should be male and single because “clergy kids were all bunch of juvenile delinquents. And I don’t know want a gay priest, either” (Mickelsen, 2004, p. 59). When she was informed that the exiting priest (whom she idolized) was gay, she decided that was better than a married priest, male or female. This is associated with another impediment for women priests because many of them are or were married, have children, and might be entering the priesthood as a second career. Being part of a nuclear family is a social arrangement that is usually considered a benefit for male clergy job applicants, in part because the priest’s wife can be called upon to teach Sunday school, play the organ, or host a dinner party, but the spouse of a female priest seldom offers his services gratis to the church.

According to participants in an ethnographic study conducted by Fobes (2001), “a real priest is a man with a wife and a family.” (p. 91). Accordingly, a decision was made by the diocesan office supervising “communion chapel” to use the limited applicant travel funds to pay for a male candidate’s wife’s travel instead of interviewing a fourth choice applicant, a woman. In the Fobes (2001) study, ostensibly, the search committee tried to act without gender bias, but Fobes contended that it became very apparent that gender and race were unspoken elements in the hiring process. A male applicant asked to visit the campus and chapel before the committee had scheduled the interviews because he would be in the area. Even though the diocese felt that it was improper for him to invite himself to visit, it would be allowed if he did not interact with any of the search committee members. The church secretary acted as his contact and even though she followed the letter of the law (so to speak), she did introduce his wife to the vestry and
the visiting applicant to congregational members. This gave this candidate an advantage over the others because he had already had the opportunity to “be nice” and friendly with those who could influence the search committee. Committee members were influenced to favor a male candidate when he took the initiative to visit the church before an interview (something that is considered to be breaking protocol) and brought his family along. The male candidate fulfilled other tacit criteria such as being ‘nuclear family man’ who met paternal responsibilities and had a supportive, personable, and attractive wife, which impressed the search committee, even though the applicant avoided interacting with the committee personally (Fobes, 2001, p. 7). Considering that “liking” is an important element in the hiring process, the committee was already inclined to be in favor of this candidate. This was one of the more obvious ways in which a male candidate was given consideration over female and minority applicants.

Leadership Concerns

According to Cooper (1997), “males and females have been found to be equal in leadership competence, self-confidence, perceived power, initiative, and effort,” (p. 483) but women are still evaluated differently. Women who perform on par with their male cohorts are not evaluated as being as competent or as successful. Cooper (1997) found that they often have to deal with a different set of criteria and resistance from an unexpected segment of the organization: other women. The concept of homophily is a strong indicator of what type of leadership style will be accepted by a team or group. In her study, the women who participated were classified according to Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp’s (1975) short version of Attitudes toward Women Scales (AWS). Women
from the diametrically opposed quadrants were chosen to participate. Four group
categories were created: traditional group with traditional leader, nontraditional group
with nontraditional leader, traditional group with nontraditional leader, and nontraditional
group with traditional leader. Her findings concluded that nontraditional women
responded positively to female leadership while traditional women responded negatively
to female leadership in general. However, their responses were especially negative if they
perceived the female leader’s manner to be nontraditional (more feminist and assertive)
and different from their own standpoint.

Stereotypes continue to operate within many followers, especially female
followers. Females are likely to be harsher judges and more competitive and to
stereotype more and exhibit more jealousy with female leaders that with male
leaders. Women may be a more critical factor than are men in the failure of
female leadership (Cooper, 1997, p. 492).

Women who aspire to be priests need to be aware of this potential area of conflict.
Instead of finding support from women within the congregation, a new, inexperienced
female priest might find that she is a victim of what Cooper calls the Queen Bee
Syndrome theory of female competition.

Female priests might also have trouble being accepted into leadership positions
because of gender stereotypes associated with leadership positions which are considered
masculine and unfeminine. The command-and-control model of management is still the
most familiar in the United States and this style of management is contrary to how most
women function as leaders (Rosener, 1997). Women usually function best through an
interactive leadership model that encourages individual development, shared responsibility, multi-directional feedback, flexible communication and interpersonal skills, and is nonhierarchical (characteristics of organizations which are in a cycle of change or flux). Demographically, contemporary congregations are older, female, conservative, and more accustomed to traditional or stereotypical leadership. A female priest represents the unfamiliar and her presence transforms church. As stated earlier, this demographic segment of society often reacts negatively to female leadership (Cooper, 1997). This is just one more challenge with which a female priest has to contend. The important factor is that they need to be aware of a potential problem and not be caught off guard if they have problems establishing rapport initially. The priests participating in Mickelsen’s (2004) investigation found that time and discourse often changed the perceptions of their opposition.

**Gender and Organization**

Historically, traditionally, and philosophically Judeo-Christian faiths, as well as a significant portion of other faiths, are led by a male clergy. As organizations, most traditional mainline churches (the exceptions being the Salvation Army and the Universal Unitarians which have reached female majority) can be seen as consummate manifestations of patriarchal dominion (Chaves, 1996). First and second wave feminism changed the inherency and legitimacy of that hegemonic condition. Most mainline denominations (including the American Baptist Church, the Disciples of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, The Presbyterian Church, the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and the Universal
Unitarian Church) no longer maintain, a priori, that women, simply because of gender, may not preach in the church, perform the sacrament, or lead congregations. Women are no longer restricted to the home when dealing with issues of morality and probity, which had been considered the appropriate venue for their influence. The second wave feminism of the 1960-70s precipitated social shifts, legal changes, and the advent of feminist criticism of the bastions of traditionally male/patriarchal organizations such as the military, the legal field, medical, and organized religion (King, 1995).

Social scientists have studied the effects of societal reformation, including minority groups (African Americans, women, gays and lesbians, etc) demanding recognition and equal participation, during the last half century. Religious organizations, their representatives, leaders, and members provide the social science disciplines with fertile fields to harvest for data studying the effect of women’s participation in organizations in which legal intervention did not attempt to level the playing field (because the constitutional separation of church and state restricts legal actions from mandating forced equality). Instead, societal changes, along with new exegesis of scripture, the so-called lost books of the Bible, and the Gnostic texts have increased the pressure on the administration and constituency of mainline denominations to amend resistance to women religious leaders.

The Episcopal Church, (EC/USA) has a unique position among mainline Christian denominations because this organization provides the historical and theological link between traditional Catholicism and post-Reformation Protestant denominations, concomitantly maintaining qualities of both perspectives. Thus, it is “paradigmatic of the
larger ecology of church organizations” (Sullins, 2000, p. 244). Additionally, the EC/USA was one of the last mainline religious organizations (other than Roman Catholicism) to recognize and legitimize the calling of women to the ordained ministry; therefore many members of this denomination have pre and post women’s ordination perspectives.

The organizational structure of this denomination acknowledged the rights of autonomous dioceses (the equivalent of states’ rights) to determine if women will be accepted as ordained representatives of the Church; consequently, several dioceses and church leaders still resist women’s ordination as deacons or priests. Acceptance of women’s priesthood was a voluntary, inter-organizational decision of the national church in toto while compliance on a diocesan level remains a semi-voluntary choice. This has been referred to as “local option,” a compromise made in 1976 which was predicted to dissolve by the turn of the century. Unfortunately, this has allowed non-compliant dioceses to continue avoiding women’s ordination. A diocese might actually embrace women’s ordination and require individual parishes to follow the dictates and canons of their diocese, but the final decision as to who is hired lies with each individual parish and its vestry or hiring committee. “Or as more than one woman priest has said, Ordination is one thing, deployment is another” (Schmidt, 1996, p. 26). Former Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold was reluctant to force individual dioceses or parishes to accept female priests because this could create greater schism in a church already facing bifurcation (DeLa, 2001). The national office might embrace and promote women’s ordination and deployment as priests, but the autonomy of each parish means that power belongs with
the hiring committee. The acceptance of women priests has to come from the
constituency and be incorporated into the social structure of the institution. The issue of
deployment of female clergy has been managed differently by the United Methodist
Church which has had greater success in deploying women ministers because the national
office of this denomination guarantees all ministers accepted into the seminary
employment and is responsible for individual deployment.

Canonical reform in the EC/USA occurs after much discussion and open debate
within each level of the organization (parish, diocesan, and national). Boden (1994)
argues that “social structure is both a resource for and a product of social interaction” (p
11). It is difficult to think of an organization for which this is truer than organized
religion; which is created through and, historically, by communication. The Episcopal
Church as locus in quo of women’s organizational participation and influence has not
been extensively studied by communication scholars thereby making available an
opportunity for new research within the communication sphere to investigate how female
priests negotiate the permeable boundary among the integrated components work, family,
and faith.

Many of the women ordained during the 1970s as well those being ordained now
could be classified as “feminists” simply because they are entering a profession that until
the 1970s was strictly and is still substantially, a male domain. A record number of
women have entered seminaries, but the majority of ministers in this country are male
(DeLa, 2001; Sullins, 2000). Albee (2000) characterized the liturgical and social
orientations of the majority of women entering the ministry as having a liberal or reform
feminist orientation even though they might not personally identify themselves as “feminists”. This resistance to the label is neither new nor limited to a specific profession (Ashcraft, 1998). Most women priests are socially conscientious, eco-justice directed and proactive and do not have an anti-male orientation which the feminist label has been construed to imply (Olson, Crawford, & Guth, 2000). The anti-male characterization attached to the term “feminist” is more unpopular than the psychological, philosophical, and behavioral aspects of the designation. Many clergy women have what could be classified as a liberal political perspective and support women’s and gay’s rights (Simon & Nadell, 1995). These more liberal attitudes could be disturbing or complicated for traditional or conservative members of a parish or congregation. It becomes the responsibility and aspiration for new (male and female) clergy to reassure the established members of a congregation of the sacramental trust while at the same time making the church responsive to new or returning congregants.

Objections and Rejections

The current Bishop of Fort Worth, The Rt. Rev. Jack L. Iker, appointed The Very Rev. William A. Crary, Jr., The Very Rev. Christopher T. Cantrell, Rev. Quintin Morrow, and Rev. Canon Robert L. Young to publish five essays in 2002 concerning the traditionalists’ objections to women’s ordination and defending their noncompliance. Their arguments are based on the Pauline doctrine of women’s submission to men, the scriptural absence of women as apostles, history/tradition, maintaining the Catholic birthright, and the decline in the prestige and influence of the Episcopal Church Communion. Morrow (2002) argued that the ordination of women suborns the laws of
Moses, specifically: “the priesthood required a male descendant of Aaron without disease or bodily defect” (p. 10) and represents a return to the pagan practices of the pre-Christian era. Cantrell (2002) held the ordination of women accountable for the decline in organizational membership (from over 3 million in 1980 to and to 2,333,624 in 2000). This is ignoring the national trend of declining attendance in all mainline, moderate Christian denominations (Crew, 2002). Rev. Young (2002) equated the ordination of women as a passing secularly influenced phase that will be reversed when reason prevails over secular prejudice:

Aryanism once appeared to be triumphant in theology. For centuries slavery and the divine right of kings were similarly regarded as ‘givens.’ Likewise fascism, National Socialism and Soviet communism were at one time considered inevitable, irresistible forces in the modern world. A merciful God has seen to it that each of them has been consigned to history’s dustbin.

It is reasonable then to hope that women’s ordination may likewise come to be viewed as an experiment that failed, a concept that seemed rational enough at first, but eventually was recognized by more thoughtful generations as hollow and counter-productive. (p. 25)

It is evident that Young equates women’s ordination to significant social evils which once plagued the earth and have been denounced by most socially progressive nations.

The three dioceses (Fort Worth, Texas; San Joaquin, California; and Quincy, Illinois) which still strongly resist the ordination of women are small, but they are influential and vocal. Rev. Samuel Edwards, ordained through the Fort Worth Diocese,
was called to serve in Maryland. His new supervising Bishop, Jane Holmes Dixon, filed charges against him because “he will not respect her authority and will not promise to keep the parish within the Episcopal Church” (“Bishop delays probe,” 2001, p. 13). The independent investigator is Bishop Jack Iker of Fort Worth. This is a particularly important issue considering the fracas caused by the ordination of an openly gay Bishop in New Hampshire. The conservative wing had predicted that the ordination of women would pave the way for such scandal (“Episcopal Bishop blasts,” 1994; Schrof, 1994). The threat to withdraw from the EC/USA is an example of “local option” taken to its extreme, which is why Bishop Dixon is so determined to command Rev. Edwards resolve and faithfulness.

It is worthy to note at this point that the EC/USA was not the first Episcopal-Anglican communion to petition for women’s ordination. That distinction goes to Bishop R. O. Hall of Hong Kong who laid hands on (the presbyterate blessing) Florence Li Tim-Oi to ordain her in 1944 (Crary, 2002). This development was not received well by the rest of the Anglican Communion and Li Tim-Oi refrained from functioning as a priest to protect Bishop Hall from reprimand and censure. The Province of China petitioned four years later for the ordination of women and was denied.

These arguments have been debated and rebutted by theologians, scholars, and others who are much more informed on the ecclesiastical issues than I am. Martin E. Marty (1995) pithily reasoned that those insisting upon a literal interpretation of the scripture should be aware that they could also be required to comply with the same standard. Rebecca Laird (2000) argued that women’s ordination (which arose as early as
1845 in the Wesleyan/Holiness denominations) is supported by the following lines of reasoning:

First, creation. Women are created as equal inheritors of God’s image, and the subsequent subjugation of women is a sinful consequence of the Fall. Faith and new life in Christ restore the created intention of God and eliminate this distortion.

Second, public proclamation. Both testaments record the faithful and fearless service of women, including prophets like Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and the Corinthian women who were told to cover their heads when prophesied. Jesus chose a woman as the first to hear his charge to proclaim his resurrection.

Third, God’s new order. The same Paul who told unruly women at Corinth and Ephesus to be quiet in worship, declared that in Christ there is neither Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female.

Fourth, the Spirit’s calling. Pentecost made it plain that God pours out his Spirit upon all flesh so that “son’s and daughter’s prophesy. (p. 106)

The purpose of this dissertation is not to re-argue the ethical, ecclesiastical, and secular discourse of whether women should be ordained or not. That issue is superseded by the fact that women are being ordained in most mainline Protestant Churches. As one of the priests interviewed stated, “They need to get over it: we won, and we’re here.” I therefore will be focusing on how women priests have experienced their call, their experiences interacting with a wide spectrum of people touched by their ordination, their experiences in the church as an organization, and how their calling might affect their
families and the efficacy of the work/family environment. So, as Rebecca Laird (2000) asks, “What has gender go to do with it?”

*The Gender Question*

As stated before, those who resist the ordination of women base their arguments on several fundamental issues: Scriptural exegesis, phenomenological arguments (Jesus was male, the twelve disciples were male, and they are conspicuous and intentional representatives of a patriarchal God), and Judeo/Catholic traditions. Does this affect the ability of a woman to spiritually and professionally lead a congregation? Zikmund and Lummis (1998) recounted that when asked to self-report on the differences between leadership styles, women were more likely to report that they used a democratic, relational, and cooperative leadership style than their male colleagues while male priests reported that they did not observe a significant difference between men and women in leadership roles and any differences were more likely attached to personality characteristics than to gender. Zikmund and Lummis (1998) extrapolated that this disparity might exist because women are basing their comparison on male priests from their youth, their residency, or from their educational experiences while male priests might be basing their opinions on how open and enabling they perceive themselves to be, especially if compared to “some of the autocratic women in their local congregations” (p. 2). They also postulate that contemporary gatekeepers to seminaries are supportive of individuals with personalities with predominantly feminine characteristics such as nurturing, openness, empathy, cooperative problem solving, etc.
An extension of this issue is the concern of the purported feminization of the church experience. The feminization of the church refers to the aspects of religious life which privilege the feminine rather than the masculine (Woodward, 1996).

This is not a new phenomenon. As sociologist Rodney Stark demonstrates in “The Rise of Christianity” (Princeton University Press, 1966), early Christian communities were disproportionately female…Christianity extolled marriage and family life, protected and enfranchised women as members of the community… In American religion, American women have always made up the bulk of Christian congregations. And churches, as cultural historian Ann Douglas has demonstrated, played the central role, from the middle of the nineteenth century on, in what she calls ‘the feminization of culture.’ (Woodward, 1996, p. 11).

Woodward (1996) argued that “within American Christianity, ‘the altar and the pulpit’ represent the last bastions of male presence and, within the liberal mainline Protestant denominations; those strongholds are rapidly giving way” (p. 132). Byfield and Byfield (2002) speculated that this is because “real men” resist organizations and memberships which can be perceived as feminized or “emasculated by turning all males into sweet, insipid, caring, and sharing ineffectual goodie-goodies that shrink from all “violence” (p. 51). Combine this attitude with the scheduling conflict between televised sports events on Sundays and a distressing struggle for some men is created. Does this mean that the presence of a female minister contributes to this dilemma? Kenneth Woodward (1996) explored this question and found that contemporary ministers live in a woman’s world even though men dominate pastoral leadership. Women serve on the majority of
committees, organize most of the fund raisers, educate the children, organize the social
events, and lead the Bible study groups. At one time, certain roles might have been
reserved for men: the vestry, the greeters, and the men’s choir, but with the general
decline in attendance, that is not always realistic. Historians of American religion have
observed that there has been a substantial prevalence of women over men in the church
for the past three centuries (Taves, 2002). Concerns over the lack of the male presence
have been noted as far back as the mid-seventeenth century in male led Puritan
congregations. There were questions at that time on how to increase male attendance and
participation. That is the same question that many denominations are still asking. But has
the presence of women priest precipitated a new crisis?

Adair Lummis (2004) evaluated 2,220 surveys to investigate participation issues
that had been distributed across the country in 2002 by Committee on the Status of
Women in the Episcopal Church. Part of this survey targeted perception’s concerning
men’s participation and the impact of female priests. To summarize Lummis’ findings:

1. The presence of a female priest does not significantly decrease men’s feeling
   of being appreciated or welcome in the institution.

2. Both men and women feel more valued if they are participating in specific
tasks, on specific committees, or are elected to the vestry (church governing
board)

3. Young men feel more appreciated than old men (Lummis refers to this as the
grumpy old man syndrome)
4. Women’s age does not affect feelings of appreciation or willingness to participate.

5. Men prefer jobs or tasks with specific objectives and delineated time frames. The nurturing atmosphere and family oriented purpose of church experience does feminize an organization whose objective is to teach empathy and morality. This does not mean that men are being intentionally marginalized or excluded, but that church administrators (male and female) must encourage the development of a broader spectrum of activities which appeal to a diverse congregation.

Career and Occupational Issues

A career in the ministry is not a delimited profession such as engineering or architecture; this profession incorporates many skills beyond theology and homiletics because a priest’s responsibilities not only embrace the altar but also encompass the spiritual and emotional needs of the congregants (Spong, 1992). Secondly, this is also a profession which does not respect the existence of a priest’s family time and space. Most meetings are scheduled during the evenings, at the convenience of the laity. Many family activities are scheduled for Saturdays and Sundays which is the primary time to also schedule religious celebrations. Conflicting schedules are an additional source of stress. Hochschild (1989, 1997) reported even when women work full-time outside the home, they are still responsible for the majority of family and home maintenance actions. This is no different for priests who are also wives and mothers. Third, a priest often must act as a grief counselor, family and marriage counselor, youth coordinator, historian, therapist, interdenominational liaison, community leader, career counselor, administrator,
chauffeur, and still be able to quote and extemporize from the scripture (Nesbitt, 1997a, 1997b).

This is a challenging career that is not without its own professional hierarchy. The range of career opportunities and job descriptions provides ample opportunity for advancement for those who aspire to elite career postings. Professional ambition is not anathematic to clerical vocations. Chang (1997a) built on the work of scholars who have studied career trajectory for women in other fields and found concurrence between secular and ministerial career path obstacles. Female clergy can be disadvantaged in achieving high status organizational positions such as becoming the senior rector in a large, financially independent church, achieving a position with a central diocesan office, or entering into a career track to episcopate rank because it requires either relocating the family or establishing dual residences.

The hierarchical structure of this denomination provides an ecclesiastically and secularly accepted task construct which is reflective of most other mainline denominations and provides a recognizable hierarchical system. Nesbitt (1997a) was able to divide 156 job titles into a “nine-level occupational job ladder” (p. 197), with three career groupings or status differentials. These levels were then clustered into three groupings with levels 1-3 consisting of entry level or low status placements, 4-5 consist of mid-level placements, level 6 represents placements within self-supporting churches with fewer than 500 members, and levels 7-9 represent the elite or senior positions (p. 198). The elite level within the organization include Bishop, Dean, Archdeacon, parishes with at least 500 members, senior faculty; the mid-level ranks include rector, canon,
chaplain; and the entry or low status rank includes vicar, monastic, interim, assistant pastor, supply priest, and non-stipendiary clergy.

Chang (1997a, 1997b), Nesbitt (1995a, 1995b, 1997), Sullins (2000) and their associates have spent a significant portion of their academic and research careers analyzing how gender, age (at time of ordination), marriage, divorce, children, career stage shifts, education, and seminary/institutional status affected the career trajectory of women clergy. Much of their research is based on reviewing the EC/USA *National Directory of Priests* and the Church Pension Fund rosters by using the biographical data from those publications, supplemented by surveys and interviews to compare quantitatively the careers of male and female priests. In their studies, Chang (1997), Nesbitt (1995a, 1995b, 1997), Sullins (2000), and Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang (1998) try to diminish the impact of longevity (priests ordained before 1974) upon career shift and trajectory by analyzing cohort groups. The EC/USA *National Directory* included all ordained priests and deacons who are receiving a salary and benefits, but it did not included priests and deacons who were in non-stipendiary positions until the 2006 edition. This limits the arena of analysis because decreased church attendance and correspondingly decreased budgets have changed the financial status of small congregations in the EC/USA. There has been an increase in part-time and unpaid priests serving as vicars in small, rural parishes, and these individuals have not been completely represented in data collected. There has also been an increase in priests who are members of cluster teams and serve more than one congregation. As mentioned in chapter 1, a cluster team is created when two or three priests and deacons serve at multiple parishes.
and rotate sacramental services; certified lay leaders lead Morning Prayer services on
Sundays that are not celebrated by ordained ministers. Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang
(1998) recognize that these positions exist and are often filled by women, but because of
the “volunteer” nature of these placements, it is difficult to compile data for a quantitative
analysis of these low status positions from the EC/USA benefit and retirement records.
Women serving small, obscure congregations as well as these missions are not likely to
climb the clerical career ladder because they are excluded from “fast track” positions
(Chang, 1997). It takes a female priest two to three times as long to find a placement as a
male priest and therefore, financial pressures increase the probability of “accepting part-
time work, off-track work, or underemployment” (Chang, 1997, p. 615). Gender is still
the primary element impacting upon career achievement, more so than age, marital or
parental status, or education combined (Chang, 1997; Nesbitt, 1997; Sullins 2000,

Multiple factors are related to this ecclesiastic organizational barrier or “the
stained glass ceiling” (Nesbitt, 1995; Sullins, 2000; Van Biema, Kauffman, McDowell,
Michaels, Sikora, & Van Dyk, 2004). On the national level, the church is committed to
supporting the deployment of women. In 2001, The Episcopal Women’s Caucus wanted
then Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold to force compliance of those dioceses and
Bishops who still resist (either actively or by passive-resistance) the ordination of women
(DeLa, 2001). The Presiding Bishop and his staff did not consider this to be a viable
solution and suggested that natural attrition would be sufficient to eliminate the faction of
older, more obdurate clergy and laity. The new Presiding Bishop has been very careful to
respect the autonomy of the dioceses. Overt resistance is not the major barrier; Fobes (2001) was a participant/observer on a campus chapel hiring committee and documented how more subtle, but effective resistance to female priests occurs while avoiding overt expressions of gender and race preferences. The search director and senior warden were able to preview applications before the whole search committee reviewed applications. They were able to advocate those (male) candidates whom they felt were better qualified while at the same time marginalizing the applications of women who had equally impressive résumés (Fobes, 2001).

Van Biema et al. (2004) interviewed women who have managed to rise above the stained-glass ceiling to learn how they succeeded in achieving elite assignments. They found that even when the goal is in hand, success is not guaranteed. Reverend Joanna Adams was hired as co-pastor for Chicago’s Fourth Presbyterian Church, a prestigious “tall-steeple” church. She was to eventually replace Rev. John Buchanan who planned on retiring. She managed to stay almost three years before conceding that the congregation was undermining her authority and she returned to Atlanta.

Adams’ high-profile disappointment mirrors a larger-scale feminist frustration.

The percentage of female seminary students has exploded in the past 35 years, from 4.7% in 1972 to 31% (or roughly 10,470 women) in 2003, and it continues to accelerate at 1 to 2 percentages a year. Yet women make up only about 11% of the nation’s clergy. (Van Biema et al. 2004, p. 58)

Vashti McKenzie had to campaign aggressively for position of Bishop in 2000 (after losing the promotion in 1996.) She followed the strategy of any contemporary politician
including distributing t-shirts, and buttons, and making campaign visits to dozens of churches, soliciting support. Sarah Jackson Shelton is one a small group of women ministers within the Southern Baptist convention. She had served long stints in appropriate “women’s jobs” (such as education minister or associate pastor) for 20 years before finally ascending to a pulpit of her own. Susan Andrews built a stellar career within the Presbyterian denomination, but this required her to limit her residency at any one church and to be willing to frequently move to higher status churches. She describes herself as needing a “bigger arena.” Her husband is a hospital chaplain which is a flexible calling which accommodates relocation. Their advice: Build a strong résumé, be prepared to seek desirable positions actively and aggressively, be ready to relocate, have faith, and to have a thick skin (Van Biema et al., 2004).

According to Chang (1997b) many denominations have changed the manner in which clergy are hired by developing centralized databases with a pool of candidates who prepare identical resume/application forms. The Church Deployment Office of the Episcopal Church provides all candidates with the opportunity to apply for any position within the EC/USA, parish or alternate ministry position (such as teaching, youth, music, publishing, or diocesan) without being dependent upon an informal so-called good ole’ boy system. This change is at least giving female priests the opportunity to apply for positions which they might not have had opportunity to if they had to depend upon informal networks. This still does not change the congregational vision of the ideal characteristics of the perfect priest which in the end, determines who gets hired.
At one time, Protestant male clergy, applying for entry level positions, were expected to be young and energetic, married (i.e. settled); their wives were often perceived as unpaid but essential help. Their family became the social nexus of the congregation. According to Nesbitt (1995a), marriage and children no longer accrue benefits for male candidates as they once did. Contemporary applicants (male and female) are often older, single or divorced, and are entering the ministry as second careers. Female applicants are not always at a disadvantage though. Women priests are stereotyped as more sensitive, intuitive, and nurturing and more congregations are amenable to the feminine management style (Zikmund, et al., 1998).

As in any professional occupation in which demeanor and impressions are important, women in the priesthood must also be aware of appearances. As in any highly visible organizational position, their manner of dressing, the behavior of their children, and even their private lives are scrutinized by their congregations. Being fashion conscious can be important to presenting a professional and influential image. Rev. Christine McSpadden of St. Bartholomew’s Church on Park Avenue eschews attire she considers dowdy and matronly. She observes that the standard jumper over a clerical shirt with “dog collar” or with a dirndl skirt would not impress or inspire authority in her congregation (Hayt, 1999). This is not simply a matter of being fashion conscious: jewelry, skirt/dress length, accessories, and shoes all impact on audience perceptions. Episcopal priest, Rev. Denise Haines (age 59) was told that she failed an interview for a bishopric because she had worn a dress (basic black) that was cinched at the waist with a
narrow belt and had a slight v-neck. One of the male priests who conducted the interview said later that “Some of us were not comfortable with what you wore” (Hayt, p. 2).

Congregations might also be intimidated when their young female priest becomes pregnant or has young children. If the priest is lucky, the congregation adopts a proprietary air concerning her pregnancy, but undoubtedly some parishioners will find the image difficult to accept (Michelsen, 2004). As any parent is aware, children will misbehave during church, but at St. John’s Episcopal Church in Minneapolis, Rev. Mariann Budde’s son interrupted communion (as she placed the communion wafer in his hand) to ask his mother if he could go to the mall after church. She responded as any mother would: her fingers pressed firmly into the palm of the hand and she gave the Look. At least she was able to subtly handle the boy’s attempted trap (Mickelson, 2004). What if the crying baby or the toddler running down the aisle belongs to the priest at the altar?

“People always said, ‘Well, I’m so glad your kids act up as much as mine do,’” Rabbi Zimmerman laughs. Still, in private, clergy moms sometimes wince at such remarks. The public nature of the job puts their kids – and therefore their mothering abilities under special scrutiny. Their husbands tend to get a free pass on the traditional tome of rabbi’s or minister’s wife. No one asks them to teach Sunday school or host dinner parties… Meanwhile, most congregations still want their female clergy to be devoted wives and model mothers – that is, paragons of the Balanced Life. (Mickelsen, p. 60)
Actually, being a working mother can be a major obstacle to any appointment. Some parishioners consider children a distraction from the job at the very least and potential “juvenile delinquents” as a probable occurrence (Mickelsen, p. 59). It is still not uncommon for hiring committees today to hear from the laity that a woman or a gay priest is not acceptable.

Religion and Social Activism

The principle of social justice and the opportunity to work for social change are important for women of faith and Faver (2000) found that spirituality and the need for social justice motivate and sustain women’s activism. This link between spirituality and the desire to improve the world is recognized by all clergy, but female priests speak out on political issues somewhat more than male priests (Djube & Gilbert, 2002). The recency of their own social rebellion can contribute to the need to speak out for others who are still silenced or marginalized. Also, over the last decade, female clergy have become more comfortable speaking out on controversial social issues because of the increased number of their cohorts and increased job security which sustains a new confidence to address issues of special interest to women (Olson, et al., 2000).

The attitudes of the congregation, the community, and the diocesan administrators impact upon the eagerness with which any priest speaks. As an employee of the diocese and the congregation, an astute rector seldom overtly contradicts their bishop or alienates congregants to the point where attendance declines. A successful rector has the ability to temper the rhetoric while still either chastising or galvanizing their audience. In terms of delivery style, women priests more often use a narrative form to address their audience
(Simon & Nadell, 1995). The narrative or storytelling style allows the priest to invite the congregation into story and to empathize with a situation or controversy which can be unfamiliar or disturbing without alienation occurring.

Clergypersons feel that it is their responsibility to speak out on controversial social issues as “representatives of a social institution (organized religion) that is explicitly designed to provide moral guidance” (Olson et al, 2000, p. 141). Occasionally a minister becomes directly involved with politics, but more often clergypersons feel that it is their responsibility to speak on social issues which are being debated in political arenas as those topics impact upon their neighborhood and the world-wide community. Many ministers lead prayers for wisdom, insight, and good judgment and honesty among political and public leaders. As community leaders themselves, clergy feel that it is their responsibility to provide moral guidance on societal issues. The desire to right the wrongs of the world and the spirituality are conjoined sentiments.

“The adult experiences of women in a profession that has been dominated historically by one gender—in this instance, the ministry—may also play an important role in shaping their political attitudes” (Olson et al, 2000, p. 142). Clergy are more likely to speak out if they feel that media coverage has opened the discussion first, softened the effects on the congregation, and might even have tipped the scale towards the clergy’s personal perspective (Djube & Gilbert, 2002). For example, following the 1998 murder of Mathew Shepard, a significant number of sermons focused on gay tolerance and opposition to violence (Olson et al, 2000).
Table 1. 1988 Study of Sermon Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1988 Study</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>1998 Study</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Mean Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economics and social welfare</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Economics and social welfare</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public order</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tolerance and rights</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense and foreign policy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Public order</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality and morality</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gay rights</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance and rights</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Political process</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay rights</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Defense and foreign policy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>+0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Process</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Spiritual and morality</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Olson, L. R., Crawford, S. E. S., & Guth, J. L., 2000.

In 1988-1989, Olson, Crawford, and Guth conducted a major survey of clergy women (eight denominations, 200 clergy women) to determine what they considered to be the most pressing social agenda or issues of significance. Olson and colleagues followed this survey up in 1998 with surveys and in-depth interviews with 48 clergy women from five of the eight denominations previously represented. The researchers were interested in determining if there had been a shift in social agenda and what might have precipitated any shift. The following chart compares the rankings between those two studies. Rankings are determined by the number of times the issue is referenced by participants.

The issues of social justice, economics, tolerance and rights are central elements emphasized by both mainline Protestant seminaries and denominations (Olson et al, 2000). Unfortunately, neither study included the perspectives of male clergy which would
have provided an excellent opportunity to analyze the degree that gender influences these rankings.

**Feminist Theological Aspects**

Feminist theologians speak out against the patriarchy of all major religions including Christianity, being an early recipient of criticism. “(P)atriarchy may be regarded as any system…that rests upon male privilege and power and that perpetuates a model of relationship built upon domination and subordination” (Schaab, 2001, p. 344). Prominent and prolific feminist theologians and authors such as Mary Daly, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Carter Heyward, Luce Irigaray, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Starhawk, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton address the issue of gender, feminism, and Christianity. Many feminist theologians/philosophers advocate that it is not possible to be a feminist and a Christian because the principles and purposes of each perspective are diametrically opposed and exclusive of the other (Schaab, 2001). Mary Daly’s publication of *The Church and the Second Sex* in 1968 and *Beyond God the Father* in 1973 articulated the battle between the male-centered and anti-woman biases in scripture and theology. Daly specifically argues that it is not possible to be an enlightened self-fulfilled woman and be a Christian. Other feminist theologians such as E. S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, published in 1982, uses the rhetorical strategy of reinterpreting and restructuring the scriptural message which has been distorted by a patriarchal society (Ruether, nd).

Feminist theologians’ standpoints fluctuate from hostile and antagonistic to revisionist and conciliatory. Because there are as many opinions and theories concerning
feminist theology as there are authors, Schaab (2001) proposes using a kaleidoscopic framework for feminist theological methodology and theoretical orientation. She proposes that the image of the mandala created by the kaleidoscope metaphorically represents the focus of theology forming of a sacred circle directed toward the center or God. It will not be possible to give this immense topic sufficient scrutiny at this time, but it is important to recognize that it does have an impact upon how women priests are perceived, received, and perform within the church. They have to personally reconcile the opposing perspectives and justify their need to be part of this vocation.

One outcome of the feminist movement has been the use of inclusive language in church (Bate, 1981). The ministry is principally a rhetorical occupation and rhetorical sensitivity is strongly encouraged. In an endeavor to encourage inclusiveness, there have been attempts to rephrase portions of the Book of Common Prayer in a more gender neutral style. Hymns and creeds have also been revised to use more encompassing language during special events, services, and church camp. These well-intentioned efforts have not been adopted by the EC/USA after brief trials in regionally diverse congregations. Instead priests are encouraged to use gender inclusive language when preaching.

Inclusive language will reduce the ambiguity women often feel about whether they are included or not in phrases such as “the nature of man” or “he who would follow.” Research has shown that females take longer than males to process words like “him” when the contexts are not clear. In a church a woman’s
uncertainty as how to respond can hamper her ability to identify with the active, initiative-taking facet of the Christian life. (Bate, 1981, p. 12).

*An Organizational Transmutation*

Despite Biblical scripture that has been interpreted to dissuade women from the clergy, the social reforms galvanized by the second wave feminist movement have created change in traditionally patriarchal organizations. There are arguments from both sides concerning the improvement or decline of religion in general (and the Anglican/Episcopal tradition, in particular) because of the inclusion of women clergy. The decline in church attendance could be blamed on the decline in patriarchal wisdom or guidance, especially by those arguing for the maintenance of traditions which reinforce the apostolic and liturgical traditions from the Catholic origins of the Anglican/Episcopal Communion (Byfield & Byfield, 2002; Lummis, 2004).

The decline in church attendance prompted many religious organizations to reevaluate their place in the community. In 1983, the Ford Foundation funded an extensive study of the experiences of male and female clergy person across nine mainline denominations (Chang, 1997b). 1,435 clergy (male and female) and several hundred laity were interviewed to determine the attitudes, expectations, and experiences of those actively participating in organized congregations at that time. It had been ten years since the majority of mainline denominations permitted women to enroll in seminaries and many of them were being placed with their first church. The following chart prepared by Father Louie Crew of Rutgers University illustrates the participation trends of both men and women being ordained in the Episcopal Church since 1974. There was an initial
surge of women entering the seminary, enrollment has basically held steady during the second decade with a slight decrease in enrollment in the last decade. The number of men being ordained within the church has had a sharper decline within that same time period though there has not been a corresponding decline in men as congregational leaders (Van Biema et al., 2004).

**Figure 1.** 24 years of women’s ordination.

Alternative career opportunities and changes have prompted both men and women to leave the congregation based employment which frequently provides low salaries and limited benefits. Women are still being tracked in lower levels of occupational advancement within the current organizational structure and have found that it is more difficult to raise a family while balancing the demands of a congregation. Chang (1997) cites a longitudinal study done by Joy Charlton in 1987 which found that over half of the women who were initially interviewed in 1977-1978 had permanently left the parish
ministry, some had taken temporary leaves of absence (due to burn out) and more were still considering leaving their parish. This supports the 1984 findings of the Ford Foundation Study: “Women of the Cloth.” This study documented the struggles that women clergy were having within church organization. Clergy placement with congregations usually depended upon two influences: the directive of the higher church administration and the hiring committees within the congregations themselves (Chang, 1997a; Fobes, 2001). A decade later, the second stage of the study was completed through the support of the Lilly Foundation. This second study included more denominations and a respondent base of approximately 4,500 male and female clergy (Chang, 1997; Zikmund, et al. 1998). The findings of this study paralleled the Ford Foundation study which had found that women tend to enter the ministry later than men, were more likely to be single due to divorce or having never married, and were more likely to have had a successful secular career prior to entering the ministry. These differences would give women clergy a different perspective than the younger male seminarians. These life experiences should give their ministry greater depth, but the consequences of these differences were that women were often placed with smaller congregations with less opportunity for advancement into the hierarchy of the church.

The Episcopal Church has a higher national average of women in the ministry (almost 14 %) (Crew, 2002) compared to 10% for all denominations as reported by the Department of Labor in 2000. In 1998, the Diocese of West Virginia reported that its ministry was over 17% women; the three dioceses of Pennsylvania reported 15% of their ministry was comprised of women and Ohio reported 14% of their clergy were women.
The Presiding Bishop and the national office have not required all bishops and dioceses recognize and ordain women. The Dioceses of Fort Worth, Texas; San Joaquin, California; NavajoLand Area Mission (NAM) (which overlaps parts of Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico); and Quincy, Illinois did not recognize the priesthood of women until two years ago and still send women who wish to be ordained to neighboring dioceses that are female-priest friendly. The Diocese of Eau Claire, Wisconsin has ostensibly changed its policy, but no women priests have been placed in that community as of this time. The following chart from L. Crew’s website illustrates that the distribution of occupational status by gender is definitely distributed unequally.

Table 2. Occupational Distribution: Male versus Female Clergy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Deacons</th>
<th>Priests</th>
<th>Bishops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Crew, 2002.

These same patterns are reflected in the dispersement of women in each of the three orders of ordained ministry within the Episcopal Church. The position of deacon is congregationally placed residency for all graduates from seminaries as well as those from diocesan education programs. Deacons usually serve a 12 to 18 month deployment in a parish with large congregation or with a parish cluster which has a shortage of priests. After serving as a deacon (which includes all ceremonial privileges except sacramental), the candidate will be interviewed and evaluated by the Commissions on Ministry again, at which point it will be determined if the candidate fulfills the requirements for the
priesthood.

Nesbitt (1994) found that the dual ordination tracks for men and women in the Episcopal Church were not parallel, with women having less opportunity to participate in the creation of church policy because they were infrequent members of the higher administration positions. Another inequality exists between the seminary and diocesan educated (similar to a continuing education program) priests. Seminary trained priests have a Master of Divinity as well as a Bachelor’s degree while the diocesan priests, originally identified as Canon IX priests, rise up from the community based parish and are taught through extension courses led by seminary trained priests. This second category of priests is typically bi-vocational clergy performing the same tasks and responding to many of the same issues as seminary trained priests but are usually relegated to small congregations and work under the supervision of a seminary trained priest and the diocesan bishop (Episcopal Church, 2002).

Grounds and Motivation for this Inquiry

One significant advantage exists for men entering a profession such as the priesthood: the existence of multiple male role models. Role models and mentors in any organization provide new members with behavioral examples as well as a system for learning the unspoken rules that exist within any organization (Heath & Bryant, 2000). During their adolescence and passage into the vocation, a male who elects to enter the priesthood usually has had a greater opportunity to observe diverse male priests interacting with the congregation, community members, and their families while it has been less likely for a girl or young woman to have that same opportunity. Not only would
the observer be able to absorb the multiple styles and comportment of their role models, but they would be able to learn very practical performance data. Carol M. Norén in *The Woman in the Pulpit* (1991) examines the practical features of preaching that are not usually covered in academic or theological training. She postulates that male role models do not help female priests gain knowledge of how to modulate her voice during a service. A woman’s higher pitched voice does not carry as well as a male’s and tends to be distorted by the acoustics of a larger worship or performance space; only by observing another woman preach is it truly possible to gain this information. Male priests do not usually have to be concerned about how their attire in or out of the work environment (i.e. the church) will be perceived by the congregation while a female priest’s appearance and apparel is often scrutinized and critiqued.

Because a female priest is still unique, she must be more cognizant of the image projected by her clothing, make-up, and hair. These choices will impact upon her ability to maintain her authority and the respect of the congregation (Hayt, 1999). Norén (1991) notes that in every culture, some gestures and body language are “exclusive property of each gender; how does feminine body language ‘work’ when a woman is preaching?” (p. 40). A woman priest might be able to observe a male priest whom she admires, but it would not be practical or wise for her to try to imitate his manner. Beyond observing the style and mannerisms of other women priests, it is also important to have role models for learning how to use self-disclosure, craft inclusive language, and manage congregational interaction.
These skills can best be learned by observing other women in the pulpit. Most of the women priests who participated have mentioned someone who eventually acted as a role model, but they only had access to a limited number of women priests to observe and eventually emulate. Similar to other major organizations, it is easier for a male priest to act as a role model and mentor for a male protégé than it is for a male priest to act as mentor for a female protégé. “In denominations with ‘supervising elders’ or official advisory relationships using other nomenclature, males are more likely to have genuine constructive (and comfortable) relationships than women” (Norén, 1991, p. 41). This is not a new predicament, but it became part of this study to understand how the participants managed this issue.

The experiences of those ordained within the last five to seven years might be significantly different from those who were ordained early simply because women who were ordained during the first wave might feel an obligation to those who follow in their footsteps. Veteran women priests can help novices navigate pitfalls that result from inexperience. For example, novices might assume complete responsibility and guilt if the priest-congregation relationship is initially difficult and uncomfortable, while an experienced priest would realize that there is a transition period before a new priest and a long-standing congregation is able to fully connect. It would significantly decreases anxiety for the new priest if she had a mentor and counselor that had similar experiences. I incorporated interview questions which examine how the participants navigated these phases.
Several different intentions exist for this research. The primary objective would be to analyze how female priests use communication competence to understand, describe, and navigate their journey as priests and its impact upon work, family, and personal life. They have constructed personal narratives which verify and validate their calling to a profession that, until recently, had marginalized and subordinated women’s contribution and participation (Torjesen, 1993). Secondly, an analysis of the narratives should be able to reveal if recent ordinands (within the last 5 to 7 years) describe their experiences differently from early adopters (those ordained over twenty years ago). I expect that the more recently ordained might find themselves facing different problems as well as some of the same old issues. And thirdly, since the pool of participants will originally be from different regions of the country, it might be possible to determine if the sponsoring diocese or seminary has an impact upon the participants experiencing resistance or acceptance at the time of their ordination and during their initial dispersement.

With genuine respect for Dr. Norén and her work, I wanted to take the research outside of the seminary classroom and the pulpit and examine how female priests describe their efforts to manage the call to preach, find role models, employ leadership, and contend with organizational conflict, both national and local. Therefore, the research questions should be delineated as follows:

RQ 1: How do female priests experience and articulate “a calling” to this profession?
RQ 2: How do female priests learn the performance skills to effectively fulfill the wide variety of skills required by this profession?
RQ 3: How do female priests describe and exercise authority within the congregation and the organization?

RQ 4: How do female priests decide or handle the issues of title, appearance, attire (at the pulpit, “on the job” in the office and during off-time?)

RQ 5: How do female priests describe the impact this profession has on personal relationships?

To investigate these research questions, I used the semi-structured, open, reflective interview methodology as delineated in *Qualitative Research Interviewing* by Tom Wengraf (2001). Using a semi-structured interview allows the participants to relate their life-stories as they have come to understand their choices and the ensuing consequences.
CHAPTER 4: LIFE STORY RESEARCH

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, the purpose of this work is to examine the personal narratives developed and used by female Episcopal priests to justify and explain their work and the organization to which they belong. Organizational members use narratives or stories to understand the institution to which they belong (Czarniawska, 1997). Narratives are shared among the members to compare experiences, to create culture, and to indoctrinate new members. The Episcopal Church also makes vocational narrative one of the criteria for membership. Previous organizational research of religious organizations has focused on either the sociological aspects or the theological significance of female ministers and priests but not on the social construction of identity or learning organizational competence. Both gender and organizational communication studies are used to explore this unique group of professional theologians.

The pilot study for this dissertation grew out of research papers prepared for EDRE 750: Introduction to Qualitative Methods and EDRE 751: Qualitative Interviewing. The pilot study allowed me to evaluate the viability and validity of the enquiry and to develop interviewing competence and data analysis skills. The next stage involved connecting with individuals interested in sharing their life stories, which was accomplished through personal referrals from the initial participants or by using the EC/USA Clergy Directory. The participants were from the central states and Mid-Atlantic regions of the country, regions that had been overlooked by previous researchers because of the low concentration of group representatives. New England and the Pacific coast regions have a higher concentration of female clergy which is especially helpful for
quantitative research. Professional isolation creates another challenge for female priests in the central and Atlantic regions.

Women who aspire to the priesthood in the Anglican tradition face challenges on multiple fronts. Historically, the organization is a patriarchal institution which broke from the über-patriarchal institution of the Roman Catholic Church. The hierarchy is still predominantly male despite accepting women for ordination 30 years ago. The role and image of a minister and priest has been visualized as male, following the traditional interpretation of 12 male disciples following a male Christ who is descended from and speaks for a male deity. The leadership and management functions of female priests are also in variance with the traditional roles of mother and wife. Since the church is expected to promote and support conventional and traditional family values including familial hegemony, a woman as priest could be in conflict with the perceived goals and mission of the organization. As a woman proceeds through the spiritual and ordination process, she must not only study theology, philosophy, church history, scriptural interpretation, she must also assimilate all her identities.

This study focuses on how a representative group of female Episcopal priests have negotiated and continue to manage their multiple identities including, but not limited to woman, wife, parent, and priest. The principal participants in this study were from the eastern and central region of the United States, specifically those who are working in Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Virginia, and Western Pennsylvania. This provided a geographically and philosophically diverse group of women because many of them have migrated to this region from other parts of the
country and have studied at different seminaries. The age ranged from 25 to 65 years of age, though a specific age was not a requirement for participation. A diversity of age and experience was desired because this allowed the inclusion of generational differences for comparison as well.

The first two participants I recruited were female priests who lead congregations in or near my home town. I had many opportunities to watch and listen to these women while they were preaching and interacting with their congregations. These two priests suggested several others who would be interested in participating in this study and they offered to act as intermediaries within an expanding pool. I also had an opportunity to meet other female priests throughout the target region through my participation in diocesan conventions, meetings, and events. Subsequently, five priests were interviewed, and this initial research, including literature review, observations, and discourse analysis, provided the foundation for the proposal and the validity of continuing research in this organization. I was able to recruit several participants through personal recommendations while other participants were contacted and recruited through public diocesan directories, diocesan websites, and monthly diocesan magazines and newsletters. Only three of the female priests that I approached about the study refused to participate. A priest from the Cleveland region thought that she was not enough of a feminist despite the fact that I reassured her that that was specifically why I would like to include her perspective. She had actually been recommended by one of the more outspoken priests who understood that I wanted varying perspectives. The others were from the Pittsburgh Diocese which is in extreme organizational conflict currently. They were afraid of their Bishop’s censure.
while others from the same region were very glad to tell about their experiences because it gave them the opportunity to ensure that their stories would not be lost.

*Life Story*

The term *life story* has been used by the both natural and social sciences to include everything from the history of the developmental changes undergone by an organism from egg to its death in maturity, or one series of such changes, as well as the story of a person’s life. It is a concept that was promoted by social psychologist George Herbert Mead and later appropriated by the University of Chicago Sociology Department (aka, the Chicago School) for their studies during the 1920s (Becker, 2002). It incorporates the features of an autobiography with a narrative, first-person point of view. It is obviously subjective to the standpoint of the participant. “As opposed to these imaginative and humanistic forms [referring to literary and dramatic genres], the life history is more down to earth, more devoted to our purposes than those of the author, less concerned with artistic values than with a faithful rendering of the subject’s experience and interpretation of the world he lives in” (Becker, 2002). The style of narrative which the participants are most familiar with follows a pattern which has developed in Western cultures (Wengraf, 2001).

The concept and use of narratives has significantly grown beyond its original literary (short stories, films, novels) and dramatic (theatre, film) ancestry. The narrative form is embedded in “journalism, legal and forensic discourse, scholarly books and monographs, conversational interaction, and the various forms of public discourse” (Jasinski, 2001). Just like the term “theatre,” which can mean an art form, a building, a
social experience, or a business, the term “narrative” can identify multiple levels of structure. An individual’s life history can be analyzed as a meta-narrative which is composed of stories which follow narrative structure.

Narratives are used to explain an action or experience by framing it in a story thus creating a narrative account (Carr, 2008). Narrative is constrained by temporality, people, context (which provide orientation), action, conflict, certainty, and resolution (Woods, Roberts & Priest, 2002). According to Wengraf, “when asked to tell the story of their life, normally socialized adults have a culturally developed sense of what is required” (p. 114). They generally follow the classic anecdotal construct delineated by Lobov and Waletsky (Wengraf):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘what it is going to be about’</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>BACKGROUND</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complicating action</td>
<td>CENTRAL EVENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘something disturbing the normal’</td>
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<table>
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<th>Events</th>
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<table>
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<th>Climax</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘turning point, resulting in’</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resolution</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘returning to [a new?] normality’</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation: ‘the point of the story’</th>
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| Coda ‘that was it’ | CODA |


*Figure 2. Classic anecdotal construct.*
This six step process includes six elements (a) the narrator uses partitioning or previews the story, (b) includes information which will orient the listener in context, (c) relates the series of events including complications, (d) states the results of the action, (e) explains the results and the point of the story, (f) and then returns to the present before starting the next narrative. Using an open interview structure allows the participant to relate their story from their specific standpoint and how they interpreted the reality and veracity of the situation.

To understand why someone behaves as he does you must understand how it looked to him, what he thought he had to contend with, what alternatives he saw open to him, you can understand the effects of opportunity, structures, delinquent subcultures, social norms, and other commonly invoked explanations of behavior only by seeing them from the actor’s point of view. (Becker, 2001, p. 80)

Encouraging the participants to tell their story in a semi-structured interview process permitted them to tell their stories as they understand it, in an episodic format with which they are familiar. The participants are comfortable with a narrative style because this is similar to the techniques which they use for discernment and exegesis process. Life history can be as in-depth as the studies done by the sociology researchers of the Chicago School or it can be more delineated for a single study. Many of those early studies actually intertwined and acted as corroborators of correlating evidence and results (see: The Ghetto, The Gold Coast and the Slum, The Gang, The Polish Peasant, as cited by Becker, 2001). Life histories were initially the commodities of psycho-sociology, but
the methodology has been appropriated by other disciplines such as education, language & communication disorders, and communication studies.

Harsha Kathard (2001) in his article, “Sharing Stories: Life History Narratives in Stuttering Research,” focuses on one aspect of the participants’ lives, stuttering, and explores how it has impacted on other parts of their lives. Rather than producing a biography which tries to include every aspect of an individual’s life, the research is limited to one attribute which had a significant impact upon the participants. The primary participant in this study was Nhlanhla Neville Zondi who became a commissar (group leader) in an underground wing of the African National Congress (Kathard, 2001).

The participant related how stuttering actually assisted him in developing political and public speaking skills because he was able to use the slowed rate as an opportunity to halt briefly and encode his message into a more strategic form. He relates how he slows down, takes the time to breathe, and to maintain control of his emotions. Kathard chose this method of study because it allows the participant the right to speak in his or her own words and it can “locate the personal experience in a broader social reality” (p. 53) I tried to achieve that same dynamic in the analysis of the narratives of contemporary female Episcopal priests.

The participants were fundamentally familiar and comfortable with semi-structured, open question interviewing since, as part of the ordination process, seminarians participate in a series of reflective group discussions and individual interviews which focus on their commitment to the church and their spiritual development as future representatives of the Episcopal Church. The participants had
already practiced and delivered their stories. Also, priests are regularly cross-examined and assessed by their sponsoring Diocesan Committee on Ministry. This committee determines if a candidate is ready for ordination upon the completion of his or her education and can assign further residency or training requirements before the seminarian is approved to serve as a Deacon, the next step on the ladder to being ordained as a priest. Both the seminary trained and diocesan trained priests have to go through this same process.

Some of the participants entered the seminary before women could be fully ordained (pre-1977), while the majority have been trained and ordained within the last two decades. This provided a range of experiences which incorporated sociopolitical shifts that have occurred over the past thirty years. Their descriptions of their personal experiences were analyzed to identify similarities and disparities, common narratives, organizational metaphors, and common (or unique) solutions.

During the original pilot study, I was able to assemble a more diversified group than I anticipated because none of the original priests were native West Virginians. The fortuitous diversity supported my goal that they provide a broader perspective which included both rural and urban experiences. They had moved to this region for various personal or professional reasons, and at least half were identified as not being cradle Episcopalians\textsuperscript{13}, but were converts to this denomination. This provided them with a unique standpoint from which to analyze their accomplishments and challenges.

\textsuperscript{13} The term \textit{cradle Episcopalian} is used to refer to those who were born and raised as an Episcopalian.
To further corroborate the validity of this research, I have compared the data obtained from the interviews with a quantitative study conducted in 2002 (published in 2003) by The Committee on the Status of Women, a sub-committee within the Episcopal Church. The 2002 study was a follow-up to a statistical study done in 1987 conducted by the Committee on the Full Participation of Women in the Church. Both studies were developed and analyzed by the same researcher, Adair Lummis, and used the same core dioceses as the first study plus including several new ones. The committee specifically invited the dioceses of Quincy, San Joaquin, and Pittsburgh, all of which are currently in variance with the National Church, but their bishops declined to participate. The Fort Worth Diocese (Texas) was not asked to participate in this particular study, no reason was given. Lummis attempted to create a sample that was representative of the diversity within church. The dioceses of West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Northern Ohio were not participants in either of these studies while the diocese of Southern Ohio and Eastern Virginia did participate. This means that the participants from the region I covered have not yet participated in a formal survey.

Reverend Carol M. Norén’s (1991) *The Woman in the Pulpit* is a limited ethnographic study of individuals who were studying at The Divinity School of Duke University, where she taught classes on homiletics. She generated a provocative and discerning analysis of women’s performance styles, role models, authority, self-disclosure, and rhetorical exegesis from a multi-denominational perspective. The book is fashioned as a handbook or manual for female preachers who might not have access to a mentor or who might not have verbalized their challenges and experiences. This work has
provided an insider’s perspective on their experiences which has helped to formulate the specific questions for this study.

*Interview Structure and Questions*

After agreeing to the interviews, the participants in the pilot study were sent either an email or a letter which outlined the intent and focus of the interview. This allowed the participants to reflect upon their experiences and to allow them to prepare for the direction of the interview. The intent has shifted somewhat since the first interview because of how the interviews have progressed. I found that I learned the most when I let the contributors reflect upon the following questions for a short while before the interview. Not all of these questions can be answered because semi-structured in-depth interviews allow the contributor to control what and how much she or he would like to disclose, though the interviewer can prompt the contributor to expand upon selected elements via verbal and non-verbal cues.

The central research questions listed above lead to the development of the following interview questions for the primary participants:

I’m interested in your life-story as it relates to choosing a career as a priest:

How would you tell your story? Could you describe events or circumstances which led you to choose this career or path?

Do you have any memories from your childhood that affected your choice to become a priest?

Do you think that your gender has given you a different perspective than male priests?
How would you describe your experiences in the seminary, during internship, or as a deacon? Did your gender affect your experiences?

How would you describe your experiences with your faculty?

Did you have a mentor? Could you describe that relationship?

What were your experiences while seeking deployment?

Do you think that congregations relate to male priests differently than female priests, and how would you describe your relationship with your congregation?

Does this career choice impact upon developing personal relationships?

(If the priest is married or divorced or has children)

How does this type of career affect family interaction?

How would you describe your partner’s interaction with your congregation?

Do you feel that the congregation expects him to contribute in the same tradition as a priest’s wife contributed to her husband’s work?

If you have children, are or were they members of your current congregation?

How did they deal with mom/priest? Any anecdotes you would like to share?

As I progressed with the interviews, I found that I severely edited the number of questions and focused on paying attention to what the informant was trying to share. It was more important to let the participant determine the order in which she shared the information than following the questions in order. As stated earlier, socialized adults are highly aware of their personal narrative and know how they want to tell their story. The challenge was to keep myself and the participants on target and to encourage them to
elaborate sufficiently on portions of their story which relate to the primary research questions of this document.

After thanking them for agreeing to talk with me, I sent each priest or Bishop a short, basic list of questions outlining the areas I would like to discuss:

I’m interested in your life-story as it relates to choosing a life in the church.
I would like to know about the circumstances or events that lead you to choose the path you have walked.
Do you have any memories from your childhood that affected your choice of vocation?
I’m also interested in your time studying in the seminary: Do you think that your experiences were any different than your male cohorts?
As a priest, do you think that your being a woman has given you a different perspective than you male counterparts?
Do you think that congregations relate to you differently because you are a woman? Do they have different expectations? How would you describe your interactions? Did you have any interesting or serious conflicts with congregational members? And how did you handle them?
One last area of discussion: How do you think this profession/calling/vocation has impacted your family? How do you negotiate demands for your attention and time? Have members of your family expressed their feelings about your vocation? Could you tell me a story that illustrates how your husband or kids have dealt with your job?
Data Collection and Analysis

Each of the respondents participated in an interview which lasted between one and one and one-half hours. All interviews were audio recorded. The interviews were conducted at a location in which the contributor felt comfortable, such as their office, home, or at a location of their choosing. The only exception was when I interviewed Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori. This interview was conducted via the phone because of her tight schedule. It was the only time it was necessary to conduct an interview this way. Using the preceding questions as a basic guide, the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner allowing the participant to decide on how to tell her life story. The objective was to allow the respondent to give a full account of her work, her congregational relationship, and her family’s experiences and its meaning in her life. Each respondent was asked to describe her life path, her motivation, obstacles, challenges, as well as her emotional and spiritual rewards.

Following Wengraf’s methodology and the use of in-depth interviews, the analysis of the data actually began before the interview was transcribed. He stressed the importance of immediate debriefing and suggests that interviewers allow at least an hour post interview to record their thoughts or to “memoize” (Wengraf’s term) reactions to the interview. This allows the interviewer to record information which might impact upon interpretive notations during the transcribing phase as well as providing a record of immediate impressions and interpretations. I usually was able to use the time traveling back from the interview to reflect on the results.
The next phase of data collection began during the transcribing. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed according to procedures described by Wengraf (2001) but adapted to focus on the narrative episodes. This stage involves a double purpose, not only is it important to record what is actually said, but to also include notes concerning paralinguistics. To accomplish this, a three column matrix was used to organize material:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Line no.</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>001</td>
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</table>

*Figure 3. Three column matrix.*

The content of the interview was separated by speaker turns, fine-brush or small (phrases) units of meaning, or by broad-brush or larger (one or two sentence) units of meaning. This phase provided the second opportunity to analyze the interview which can trigger “significant stimulated memories and theoretical memos” (Wengraf, p. 209) which can lead to important theoretical developments, which is the intent of grounded theory methodology. Those impressions were recorded in the last column.

After the interviews were transcribed, I was able to take advantage of a long commute to and from work to just listen to the interviews again. This enabled me to immerse myself into their personal narratives, reflect on analogous episodes, and to dissect the narrative arc of the life stories. I just listened to the conversations as I would an audio-novel or talk show. I was able to step back and try to get a holistic feel for the
participants’ experiences. This allowed me the opportunity to make connections and identify common experiences among the participants’ stories.

The factors which sustained the participants while they pursued this career path were identified and coded through the cross-referencing of the transcripts as well as listening to the original transcripts several times. Listening and reading concurrently allowed me to incorporate paralinguistic interpretation into the overall analysis of the discourse. According to David Silverman (2000), it is important to not romanticize the open interview process and to realize that all the contributors’ accounts are representative of their experiences and are therefore subjective and dependent on the interpretation of the researcher.

The final phase of the coding and indexing involved employing a system which identified topics, themes, patterns, shared metaphors, comparable episodes, and common experiences. In the beginning, I did not prepare a list of predetermined codes or categories; instead, I allowed each segment of a narrative to inspire a descriptor or identity term. I maintained this open approach to the narratives until a term was repeated frequently, at which point I used it to identify a unit. I then reviewed the units, sorting the terms and concepts by theme until the data crystallized into larger subdivisions.

I initially found that I had over 30 subdivisions as I sorted them into related concepts. These subdivisions coalesced into five major categories: (a) articulating or recognizing the calling, (b) learning performance skills, (c) developing status, authority, and leadership behaviors, (d) issues of appearance, and (e) dealing with hostility and harassment which will be reflected in the organization of the next chapter. I also
identified a consistent chronological pattern. After providing expository information, most of the life story narratives began with a need to explain how and when the priests were first drawn to this vocation. The participants were most comfortable with this chronological pattern, though occasionally it would be necessary to back track the story or to request clarification.

**The Participants**

I eventually interviewed 26 women for this study which resulted in 530 pages transcribed material. The territory included six states. This allowed me to access a variety of female priests whose stories and perspectives covered a wide spectrum. I made sure that my participants came from different venues of education and training and from a variety of seminaries or divinity schools and diocesan programs. I was also able to include women of varied marital statuses and, though I did not ask anyone their sexual orientation, I am aware that I included both straight and gay participants. Only ten of the priests are cradle Episcopalians, which means the other 16 had converted to the Episcopal Church. These 26 women included the first female Bishop (retired) and the first female Presiding Bishop. I agreed to use pseudonyms for the remaining participants, but these two women would be readily identified by their unique qualities so, with their permission, I refer to them by their titles and names.

Seventeen of the remaining participants are working as full-time rectors, vicars, or assistant/associate pastors. Four are working as part-time or nonstipendiary vicars or assistant pastors and are bi-vocational, which means that they maintain full-time
employment outside a church. Three are working in alternative ministries which include prison ministry, secular and pastoral counseling, and the canon or assistant to a bishop.

The majority of the women (16) entered the priesthood as a second, third, or even fourth careers. They came to the ministry through various paths which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Seven of the women left high status and high income positions such as finance, banking, higher education, and science to enter the ministry. As one said, it is impossible to ignore God when God calls. Three had military careers before entering the priesthood. One was a nun who converted to the Episcopal Church after more than one Catholic priest said that she should be ordained. All of them said that their secular work provided them with skills and abilities that were essential to their calling.

Their education or training was as varied as the participants. This is a denomination which values education; therefore, it is unusual for someone who has not completed college to be admitted into the priesthood. Twenty-five of the women have bachelor degrees in various areas of study from nursing, pre-med, veterinary medicine, education, business, oceanography, law, and training as therapists, financial advisors, and computer program designers. The Presiding Bishop also is an instrument certified pilot. Only one of the participants had not completed college, but she received special permission from the Bishop and was trained through the Canon IX process because it was impossible to find a priest who could afford to serve in a very rural, isolated community with a small congregation.
Twenty-five of the participants have at least one master’s degree, most but not all those are in divinity or religious studies, and six have doctorates. The participants attended 15 different seminaries or divinity schools from across the country, including:

Berkeley Divinity School at Yale
Bexley Hall
Church Divinity School of the Pacific
Cyril and Methodius Seminary
Duke Divinity School
Dubuque Lutheran Seminary
Episcopal Divinity School
General Theological Seminary (in NYC)
Louisville Presbyterian Seminary
Pacific Lutheran Seminary
Rice University
Seabury-Western Theological Seminary
Theological University of the South (Sewanee)
University of Windsor, School of Theology
Virginia Theological Seminary

As mentioned before, three were trained through the Canon IX (which was reformatted as the ‘Equipping the Saints’) diocesan programs which are similar to continuing education programs, including classes taught by various priests and canons in the diocese and by faculty from several different participating seminaries. Canon IX and
ETS participants are also required to take additional on-line classes which are closely scrutinized by the Bishop and his staff.

The Episcopal and Anglican Churches allow priests to be married. There seems to be an unwritten guideline or rule that priests are encouraged to be married. The marital status of the participants also was diverse: twelve were never married, eleven are in first marriages and four of those are married to priests. Two are in their second marriage. One recently had her second marriage end. Twelve of them are parents.

The women’s ages ranged from early thirties to seventy, with most of the participants in their late forties to mid-fifties. To add to the diversity, the participants were raised all across the country, from 18 different states: as wide spread as Rhode Island to Oregon, Michigan to Florida, North Carolina to Texas, plus one was originally from Germany.
CHAPTER 5: THEIR STORIES

The Christmas Eve service did not seem any different than ones I had previously attended. The church was decorated with candles, swags of greenery hung over the windows, wreaths hung on the door and the wall behind the altar. We sang traditional advent hymns and said the words of the familiar service together. Then it was time for the sermon. Usually the priest expounds on the lessons for this High Holy Day or prompts us to remember Christ during all the commercialism. Father Frederic Bannerot would have stood tall and strong behind the lectern and given a beautifully sincere and touching sermon in his deep, resonant voice. We would have thanked him for a beautiful service as we shared coffee and cookies afterward.

Instead, Rose took off the stole worn over her white alb and pulled a blue shawl over her head. She sat on a stool, pulled a wicker basket close to her, and lifted out a doll wrapped in a blanket. She was Mary, talking to her new born son about what the angels foretold to her, a young innocent girl, of the miracle child she was to carry and to care for. She spoke of her hopes, her fears, and her love. This simple conversation between a mother and her new son moved me to tears. The simplicity had more impact than the sentimentally staged Christmas’ pageants of my past had ever had. This priest brought the Christmas legend to life in a way that no male priest had ever before.

A different viewpoint becomes evident when a woman wears the mantle of a priest. Each of the women I interviewed had a story to tell about their successes and triumphs, the trials and travails that occurred on their path through the priesthood. As

14 The names of the participants have been changed except for Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and retired Bishop of Vermont Mary Adelia McLeod.
Littlejohn (2002) said, “How we communicate about our experience itself forms or makes our experience” (p. 12). The participants had analogous experiences, but each also had unique stories as well, and both the common and distinctive narrative elements framed and formed the perspective of the participant. After I finished coding the stories, I initially found that I had over 30 subdivisions as I sorted them into related concepts. These subdivisions coalesced into five major categories: (a) articulating or recognizing the calling, (b) learning performance skills, (c) developing status, authority, and leadership behaviors, (d) issues of appearance, and (e) dealing with hostility and harassment. Most of the life story narratives began with a need to explain how and when the priests were first drawn to this vocation.

Recognizing the Call to Serve

It all begins with someone recognizing a call to minister; it can be the individual, another priest, or a layperson. After that point though, the process is anything but private and solely meditative. The appraisals begin with the initial inclination or recognition of the calling and continue through the education and training process until the final ordination ceremony. Several hierarchal denominational committees focus on and repeatedly evaluate a priest’s call to serve; judging validity, commitment, integrity, and spirituality. Laypersons, clergy, and psychologists do these evaluations at progressive intervals. As a result of repeatedly verbalizing what was an intuitive experience, the supplicant develops structured personal narratives. This particular emphasis on assessing the legitimacy of the vocation through the use of personal narrative makes the storytelling structure itself an essential component of each priest’s vocational construct. From the
moment a supplicant enters the system, he or she is repeatedly required to justify the call. Yvonne begins her narrative with an episode from her childhood.

Yvonne was very young when her grandmother, who lived with her family, was no longer able to go to church during the last year of her life. Yvonne vividly describes a memory from that time which shaped her future:

I can remember as a young child being intrigued by the church. My earliest, kinda sacramental liturgical memory is really a neat one. My grandmother, who died when I was three years old, was unable to go to church the last year of her life… And the priest, the Catholic priest, came to the house every first Friday. I’ve learned as I told this story to my mother that it was the first Friday, so I didn’t know that as a three year old… every first Friday, to bring my grandmother communion and when he came I was always relegated to the upstairs. And, of course, you know, that kids did not take communion.

He would pretty much spend that time with my grandmother. My mother would be in the kitchen and I was always sent upstairs. But I remember at least one time sitting on the stairs and snooping, watching him have this home communion with my grandmother. And it is such a profound memory because I can remember exactly what his home communion kit looked like. And I can remember him opening it, and setting out the candles, the little candles, and the little cross, and the little chalice and paten. And making this little altar on the coffee table, there with my grandmother, and putting on his stole.
And I can remember that so profoundly and I think that was probably the beginning, it was the mark, because I can remember thinking how cool that was. And that was just something really, really neat. So… I think God started working in my life then. (Yvonne, 2003)

Yvonne used this episode as a landmark on her path to the priesthood. She draws on this anecdote to begin her life story and to illustrate her attraction to the symbol and the ceremony. But she followed it with another story which revealed that she also saw herself as rebellious and determined, characteristics which helped her surmount future challenges. While attending first communion classes, Yvonne was required to wear a hat or lace handkerchief to cover her head during daily mass and she hated it. So she would frequently forget to bring something with her. She also remembered that the nuns had their revenge; they bobby pinned a tissue to her head, making sure that they demonstrated their displeasure with her as they did it. (She said she still carries the scars on her scalp.) Nor did she like it when she was told that she could not serve as an altar boy, that privilege was reserved for boys, but she did not have the support or ability to challenge that rule at that time. Ultimately, Yvonne’s early self concept was that of a curious and rebellious child who was supposed to somehow serve God. I positively responded to the somewhat self-deprecating humor that Yvonne used and realized that she shares that ingenuousness humor and wisdom with everyone.

Yvonne’s experience was not unique. As Katie told her story; she knew that she wanted to be the priest in front of the church as early as six years old. Her family, like Yvonne’s, belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. So, when she shared this aspiration
with her mother, she did not get the response she wanted. Her mother said that it was not possible because only boys could grow up and become priests, to which Katie responded, “That’s not fair.” And her mother agreed with her and said that she did not understand why either. Katie left the Catholic Church when she was 13 years old and did not return until she entered graduate school. At that point in her life, her friends (including a priest or two) told her that she would make a wonderful priest, but, unfortunately, women could still not be ordained. She wrote the Catholic bishop to ask him why, and he replied, “Don’t hold your breath; it will not happen in your lifetime.” This response created a challenge rather than an obstacle. Katie did not let that barrier stop her from answering a very compelling call to vocation, but it did prompt to her take an alternative path:

So I remembered an Episcopal Church within walking distance of where I lived. I knew where it was because I was out walking one day and heard bagpipes one day. And I followed the sound of the bagpipes, and there were these bagpipers practicing in the parking lot of this little church in the middle of this neighborhood. And I remembered it and I called up and made an appointment with the rector, to meet with him.

And went in and said, “What do you need to do to get ordained in this church?” And he said, “Have you ever been here?” And I said, “No.” And he said, “Well, why don’t you come and see if you like it?”

Katie and I shared a laugh over this story because of its audacity and impudence. Obviously Katie did like what she found and decided to make that her life’s vocation. This story illustrated how she saw herself and added to the narrative of being spirited,
exploratory, and self-reliant, qualities Katie also valued in herself as a priest. Though Yvonne and Katie might have been especially precocious as children, five other participants also reported knowing that they wanted to be in the ministry at very young ages. They too faced roadblocks which often required them to diverge from their family or church and find new paths to answer the call either because the denomination in which they were raised did not recognize a woman’s call to ministry or their family was fundamentally diffident to religion. Either of these challenges requires significant fortitude and self-confidence, especially for someone raised in an unchurched home.

Dorothy’s first attraction to the ritual of the Episcopal Church did not occur until she was in her teens. Her family had been basically ambivalent about attending church, essentially because her parents came from two different faith backgrounds. Her father was Baptist, while her mother was Episcopalian. As young children, Dorothy and her siblings attended the Baptist Sunday school because it was close to their home and they could walk, but the family did not attend the regular service. Church and religion were simply secondary and Christmas was a time to bake cookies with mom and have a Christmas Eve party at her grandma’s house. These were her family’s traditions until one Christmas Eve her mother decided that she wanted to go to Midnight Mass at her baptismal church. Dorothy’s sisters, brother, and father protested this change in routine, but her mother was adamant:

[We were] not at all happy about this decision. You know? And we were like, oh shit! Now we’re going to miss Grandma’s party and all this stuff.

And, and so we just, beefed and moaned about this all evening and, and, and it
was one of the few times when dad was kind of on our side. And the only
concession he made was, ‘I’ll go, but I’m not wearing a tie.’ And, and so we and
you know, we fussed at grandma, mom’s making us go to church on Christmas
Eve, and, and grandma said, ‘well, it’ll be good for you. You might even like it.
It’ll be nice. You know?’

And so we leave the party at Grandma’s about 10:30, so that we get to
church at 11, and… I walk in there and it’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever
seen. I mean, candles were in the windows, you, you know, what of the stained
glass you could see was lovely. And they had, they had a huge Ascension window
uh, that, of course, was all lit up.

And candles and wreathes and, of course, the music and I remember just
walking and thinking, oh my goodness, there is something, there is something
special, and there is something spiritual here and there is something wonderful
here. Uh, why haven’t we done this before? (Dorothy, 2006)

Dorothy did not immediately decide to be a priest, but that special memory of ritual and
pageantry remained. She identifies this as a significant moment in her spiritual
development. She did not begin to attend the Episcopal Church regularly until she was 21
years old and her uncle wanted someone to go with him, but she never forgot that gut
reaction to the church. The following stories illustrate that the moment of divine
intervention does not come at a predictable or convenient time for the recipient.

Jane, who had been raised Presbyterian, is at the other end of the age and church
participation spectrum. Her parents had been very involved with the church and she was
familiar with church as a social and community support system, but she had not
considered it a viable career opportunity. She began her college career as an English
major, dabbling in philosophy, and eventually graduating with a degree in religion even
though she did not want to be a Christian education director and being ordained was not
considered a realistic choice. Following college she worked, married, moved to
California, divorced, met her second husband, but she did not join any church. Their
social or community construct did not include church.

Nobody went to church out there. We didn’t know anybody who went to a church
out there. And I worked in a variety of jobs, was divorced, and then couple of
years later met my current husband. We actually worked together a little bit and
then in 1980, we got married and moved to back to Charlotte, and went to work.
(Jane, 2006)

Her second husband’s family had moved frequently because of his father’s
military career and they had not joined any church; therefore, he was apathetic about
religion and uncertain about attending any church. Jane became aware of a need to return
to a spiritual support system following the birth of her daughter and the death of her
father. She and her husband (or her daughter) would go “church shopping” and they
attended 12 to 15 Presbyterian churches, but she did not find a minister or congregation
which resonated with her or her family. She decided to open up her search for a spiritual
home to other denominations until she found an Episcopal Church close to her home
which fulfilled her spiritual and community involvement needs. She volunteered her time
in the church, but Jane did not recognize her calling to the priesthood until she was
nearing 50. She was considering retiring from a major banking institution. She had been working in human resources during several bank mergers: advising where cuts should be made, providing career counseling, and placement assistance for those who were displaced when she recommended her own dismissal. She was shaken when the bank took her advice, but the same bank then hired her as a coordinator for major projects. Following this change in employment she needed to get away from the stress occasionally and took silent retreats including one to a monastery. Where better to find peace and quiet? But she also found something else. She found the time to listen and reflect.

I went to a silent retreat at Holy Cross Monastery in New York. A Benedictine monastery. I decided, okay, I did two different weeks in Black Mountain, that’s sort of a, you know, put together retreat, I’m ready for the big time; I’m going to the monastery. And so they do a silent retreat for a week at Advent every year. And you go and you’re in silence most of the time. You meet for about 45 minutes each day with a spiritual director and kind of explore what’s going on, do whatever you want to do, write, eat, sleep, they don’t structure, go to their services. And it was wonderful. And my spiritual director was an Episcopal nun, Sister Cornelia, … and I spent that week with her giving me suggestions for, you know, scripture I could meditate on and talk about what was going on with me and by the end of that week, I said to her that I thought what I wanted to do was ordained ministry… And one day, this wasn’t a dream, I guess it was a day dream, I pictured a hospital emergency room and in it was…a woman came in
with child and the child had been hurt, and I created this real complicated scene to
where I maximized all the people that would surround this woman in this
situation. Where there would be nurses and doctors, there would be a social
worker, there was some suspicion that the woman had been involved in hurting
the child, there might be somebody from the police, there might be a lawyer, you
know, I’ve surrounding all these and then hopefully there’d be a chaplain. That’s
who I want to be. You know, I created this complex kinda social event and found
that’s who I am. I wanted to be with that woman in that situation and be available
to her regardless of what she had done. That’s what was so apparent to me. I
didn’t want to be the social worker who was there negotiating the system. I didn’t
want to be the doctor or the nurse, or the, you know… I certainly did not want to
be the policeman. The policeman that, that. It gave me this sense of that’s who I
want to be to someone else, the someone who would … you know… not be there
to judge them but to be there to support them and be compassionate for them in
whatever has happened or whatever they may have done. (Jane, 2006)
Jane’s story illustrated how a person can use imaginative reflection to construct a
situation and then reflect on their future actions on the interpretation of the episode. This
philosophical episode was one of the factors which led Jane to the conclusion that the
ordained ministry was the best place for her to find fulfillment and a second career.

This choice was not without significant familial ramifications and was not made
immediately, especially because of the long evaluative process the Episcopal Church
requires before ordination. Jane describes a pivotal moment occurring while watching the
church celebrate another woman leaving for seminary:

So, but what happened was, as I tried to push it back down it kept just being so pronounced. I mean, it was the analogy that I came up with, “It was like a bell that somebody was just clanging in my head or beside my ear.” And I remember as we were watching another woman from our parish being sent off to seminary. And I was just watching her, this was during the service one day, and this bell was just clanging in my head, I was just thinking, “I want that to be me, I want that to be me.” You know, I was just, and then I tried to push it down and it would just keep coming back up. (Jane, 2006)

Jane’s yearning for the ministry was reinforced when she observed another woman following her dream and entering the priesthood. It also reinforced the idea that this could be a real and realistic vocational choice. Other participants also described a similar sensation of nagging or clamoring as part of their stories. Jane was reluctant to respond to the clanging because it was disruptive of her successful career and her family’s way of life. Jane had to make a difficult choice because she had been the primary income for her family. Her daughter was beginning her freshman year of college; her son was in middle school. After deep soul searching (and consulting with their financial planner), she was able to follow a new path with the complete support of her family. Her husband also left his job to follow her to New York City when she eventually entered the seminary. It is interesting to note that this is the only time one of the participants reported her husband as being willing to put her new career first or follow her to the seminary unless he was retiring. I personally related to the commitment Jane and her family had to make because
I had quit my job as an assistant professor, left my husband, children, and community to return to school to continue my education. It takes a great deal of courage to take that leap of faith.

Fay’s earliest church oriented memories were of two specific events. When she was four years old, her family attended a non-denominational Protestant church on a Navy base where her father was stationed. The choir sang in a loft above and behind the congregation. After one service, she noticed the choir leaving the loft and asked her father where the angels were going. When she was told it was a choir of people, she wanted to be up there too. Another important incident came not too long after, at another Navy base. The Catholic and the Protestant congregations shared the base chapel, with the Catholic Mass performed first. The shift between the services led her to a significant revelation.

I remember walking in almost every Sunday and they would flip the cross around from the crucifix to the plain Latin cross. And it was, I really never thought twice about it. I thought that was what we did and I got to chat with the Catholic priest there cause I’m there waiting for my mom. He’s, you know, drying what he’s finishing up and then whoever the protestant dude is, is going to be doing his shtick for us, you know us, during the protestant hour, whatever. He let me hit the button or turn the wheel or whatever it was that made the cross move, I forget exactly the mechanism. And we turned the cross around and so that image stuck with me my entire life about the multi-facetedness of faith. That, you know, from whatever hour to whatever hour, the Catholics are coming and doing their prayer
thing, we pray a little different so we do it at a different time and we don’t want to
interrupt them and they don’t want to interrupt us. So, instead of feeling,
experiencing it as conflict, I was probably in third grade, I experienced it as a real
richness. So they turned the cross around, big deal. So they see it a little
differently than we do. Whatever. And that’s been a very informing principle for
me my whole life. Each person got to want something. (Fay, 2006)

It is not uncommon for people to have more than one career during their lifetime,
but Fay resisted the call because she had a position which was both financially and
professionally prosperous. Fay had a very rewarding career with Freddie Mac which she
found challenging and stimulating; she was not looking for a new vocation and she was
not attending any church. She describes herself as consciously challenging or resisting
this call to the ministry. She returned to the church to join the choir because she loved to
sing, a logical decision because there are not many opportunities for someone to
participate in recreational singing and she was able to aspire to join the singing angels
from her childhood narrative. She thought that she could just walk in, sing sacred music,
and not be affected. The choir director said there was a choir robe that would fit and, if
she could behave herself in the chancel, she was welcome. She now reflects on this and
concedes that the choir director knew that would be just the beginning. This innocuous
decision led her to becoming friends with some of the other women in the choir. They
invited her to join them on a casserole committee which prepared meals for shut-ins.
Next was a secular book club sponsored by the church. She participated in recreational
activities traditionally identified with women, which was in contrast to her secular career
where women represented “maybe ten percent of the management.” The skills she acquired while in management with Freddie Mac became essential to her placement as the rector of a church in a medium-sized city in the Midwest with its bookkeeping a financial morass. And the social cooperative competence she learned from those shared activities, in addition to her experiences following her father’s military career around the world, helped her energize community related actions.

Jane and several of the participants, including Fay, spoke of the need for reflection and contemplation and chose to go to monasteries for retreats to allow them to explore these feelings. Irene decided that to get the time for solitude and reflection she would walk the Appalachian Trail, which took almost five months (and covered 900 miles.) Grace lived in Israel four months. Fay had joined a church to be able to sing, but her inquisitive nature lead her to frequently call the minister at the church with questions about his sermon or theology in general. After an extremely trying day with Freddie Mac, she told the minister:

I just want to go to some place where I don’t have to talk to anybody. I just want to go to somewhere where I don’t have to talk to any human person. And the minister pulled out of his book a flyer from a Trappists monastery and tosses it at me. And knows me well enough and says “I dare you,” with this flash of a smile. “I dare you.” And I thought, “What? We got monks in the 20th century? What are you talking about? Have you lost your mind?”

… So I went for five days on a silent retreat. And that was probably the turning point for me to say “oh dear, There really is God. And these people had structured
their time, their money, their relationships, and their geography, all around, like
God. Oh my Gawd.” (Fay, 2006)

Rebecca’s decision to enter the ministry was a less revelational than Fay’s.
Rebecca had been raised in the Methodist Church; her paternal grandmother was
extremely proud that six generations of her family had been christened in the same
church. Her father was a career officer in the Navy, and even though he was a dentist and
usually stayed on a base, he occasionally had to be deployed on a ship. She was a
member of the Junior ROTC while in school and has a strong sense of national duty. Her
family was usually involved with the local Methodist church and she remembers that
when she was a teen she told her mother that she wanted to be a minister. Her family had
never attended a church with a female leader, and even though the Methodist church had
been ordaining women for a long time, female ministers were still few and far between.
Her religious life became extremely complicated when her father returned from duty and
had been saved by a fundamentalist Baptist minister. He decided that he was saved, his
family would be saved, and his mother would be condemned to hell if she did not leave
her evil institutional church. In the midst of the family crisis, her father had to return to
his ship and when he had finally came home, he had mellowed, somewhat.

When it came time for Rebecca to attend college, her father turned to Charisma
Magazine and decided she should attend a college recommended there, one affiliated
with the Church of God. Rebecca had been living in Newport Beach, VA and was totally
unprepared for this extremely conservative and repressive campus. She could not wear
any of the clothes she brought with her because none of it passed the college’s dress

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code. She was still drawn to the ministry though and managed to enroll in classes which were not generally open to women. She has remained disdainful of the restrictions, but she was able to get a strong theological education. She realized that a major in theology and a minor in Greek would not open many doors in the real world so she decided to explore her alternatives. She wanted to serve her country after graduation and investigated her options. She wanted to fly, but could not become a pilot because she wore glasses, women could not be deployed on ships so a career in the Navy would have been limited, so she decided to join the Army.

Eventually, she went back to college to earn a degree in Russian, joined the Episcopal Church, joined the Army, became an officer and was deployed to Saudi Arabia and moved up the ranks. A career in the Army would have been perfect except she became ill and was diagnosed with leukemia. After four months of treatment, she was considered cured, but she knew that she would not have the physical stamina to serve in the field, the only way she could move up in rank. During her time in the hospital, she renewed her connection with the Episcopal Church. She and the priest from her parish became close and he suggested she explore her old feelings about the ministry and think about the priesthood. She retired from the Army in the spring of 1996 and entered the seminary in the fall of 1996. His invitation to consider a new vocation led her to eventually become an associate priest and to find a new way to use her skills.

Invited into the Club

_Genuine beginnings begin within us, even when they are brought to our attention by external opportunities._ William Bridges

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Feeling that one is called is not enough to become a member of this apostolic society. A supplicant can initiate a discussion with the local priest and vice versa, but just like most social organizations or orders: one must be invited to join. The congregational discernment committee is the first set of gatekeepers formed to help the applicant determine if the calling is true. The parish priest and the discernment committee recommend the applicant to the next level: the bishop. With his or her approval, the diocesan Commission on Ministry monitors the postulancy, imposing criterion or objectives for membership, including recommending the applicant to a seminary. The education requirement is quite extensive, even for those following the *Equipping the Saints* program. There will be colleagues or co-supplicants who welcome diversifying the church ordained membership; and there might be members who do not and strive to create obstacles. Those who entered the seminary during the early days of women’s ordination faced significantly more obstacles than those who entered in the last decade. The first generation to aspire to the priesthood described their experiences as ranging from acceptance (however reluctant) to overt hostility. Those ordained in the last decade reported having significantly better rapport or camaraderie with their cohorts and instructors, but harassment sometimes still happens.

Five of the participants entered into the ordination process within five years after women’s ordination was ratified. Their stories illustrate the differences that exist even among the early aspirants. Naomi grew up in a time period when girls could not be acolytes (and her father was the acolyte trainer), but she did not question it at the time.
She attended a prestigious liberal arts college in the northeast which encouraged its graduates to be pioneers. In Naomi’s words,

It was the beginning of my senior year. I saw, on the bulletin board, a Rockefeller scholarship which is to spend a trial year at seminary. And I thought, I don’t know why, just caught my eye. And that month it was December issue of MS Magazine. And guess who was on the cover: Carter Hayward. Looking ravishing, might I say. Young, dynamic, brilliant. And decided on the spot that was where I was going. (Naomi, 2003)

Naomi’s experience at Episcopal Divinity School, which is considered to be a liberal, progressive seminary, was positive and rewarding. Since she was responding to an invitation to take part in an experimental program, she was not faced with the same hostility as those who attended other schools. Also, she has maintained the most diversified lifestyle by blending her vocation with work as a flight attendant and dancing with the Pittsburgh Ballet. Her experience was not typical for other women entering the seminary at the same time though.

When Tamara decided to be a priest, she enrolled in a different seminary only one year earlier and had a very different experience than Naomi. Tamara became disillusioned with her baptismal church as a teen and began church shopping. She was discussing joining the Catholic Church with a classmate when he asked her ‘Well, why don’t you come to church with me?’ And it was the Episcopal Church and I found something that my soul needed that I had never experienced before, particularly in the Eucharist.”

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As with the accounts provided by Yvonne and Katie, Tamara was a child when she determined her future. Her infant brother had died of SIDS when she was only 5 years old. This tragedy and her family’s response was a transformative event which directed her future. Her account of this event provides insight into how she dealt with obstacles from her adolescent years as well as those that arose while she was an ordinand.

I would go to church with, mostly with my dad and after my brother died, would see my father praying. He’d be kind of leaning forward with his hands on his forehead and leaning against the pew in front and uh, I, I thought there’s something about this he’s searching for something, and I don’t know, I felt close to him and I saw him get close to God. And it sort of, that modeling helped me keep searching so in my own child way trying to find meaning out of… But it was confusing to me. So in that sense, his death bumped me to another level beyond that child-like faith. It was no longer sort of that purity that God is in his heaven and all is right with the world kind of a thing. It was you know, why is there suffering? Why is there evil? What is the meaning of life and death? It was very formative for me. Uhm, fast forward, I was 12; I wanted to join the church, and give my life to Jesus. I talked to the pastor and the pastor said, you’re too young to give your life to Jesus. So, I gave my life to Jesus and I left the church. And I came back when I was 14 so that I could join the church. But I left the church. I was very cynical that they would have me come join the church and would ask me to pledge when they thought I was ready rather than when I felt I was ready...

(Tamara, 2006)
She was attending college during the Viet Nam era a few years later; the women’s movement was in full swing, and social consciousness-raising was the object for many. There was a firebomb in her dormitory the night of the KSU shootings. Finals were suspended and the campus closed. In order to comprehend the violence on campus and abroad, Tamara and a classmate tried to lead community discussions about the war. This was the first time she acted as a counselor or psychologist, all be it an amateur one, but she eventually decided to try anthropology. The summer following her junior year Tamara participated in an anthropology dig which gave her copious amounts of time for reflection and contemplation. While digging through Native American middens, she came to the resolution that she wanted to be a priest. She contacted her former classmate again,

And I said I’m going to be a priest. And he wrote me back and he said you can’t be a priest. There are no women priests. And I like you, didn’t know that. And I thought, well, what’s the problem. I mean, I’m going to be one, so there aren’t any, but I’ll just go ahead anyway. It wasn’t a feminist thing. It was a calling.

(Tamara, 2006)

She is clear on differentiating her internal motive from an external response to an emergent social trend. Several of the applicants who were ordained during the first decade were very clear that they neither entered the ministry as feminists per se nor did they enter the priesthood to make a social statement. Their “calling” was an internal desire to serve. Some of those invited into the society were actually surprised by the invitation.
Cara was traveling a peripatetic path when she was invited into the priesthood. Cara had worked as a journalist, advocate for children, publications coordinator, French teacher, newspaper editor, and in adult education as well as other jobs. She had moved from the Midwest to the eastern seaboard and then to a central state. She married, had two children, divorced, and remarried. She had experienced an eclectic collection of faith institutions: Catholic, Methodist, Congregationalist, Bahá’í, Cistercian monastery, and Episcopalian. These experiences infused her nascent faith and spiritual calling, culminating in her leaving the local Catholic Church, to which she had returned to after her attending services at the monastery.

I hadn’t missed a Sunday. And then one Sunday, I just woke up and I thought, you know, I have never before in my life not wanted to go to church. I don’t wanna go to church. So I, I just stopped going to the Catholic Church. And I didn’t go for…it must have been like in March of 95. And then one morning I woke up in August of 95, and it was like the voice said to me, there’s a little church practically in your own back yard. Why don’t you go there? In 1995, after a long period of attending the Roman Catholic Church, I returned to the Episcopal Church. And, in 1996, three of the priests… who were associated with the cluster at the time… asked me if I had ever considered becoming a priest? And I said no … I kept on praying about it and considering it, but it wasn’t until 2000. …And Equipping the Saints was starting up and I went to [the priest] and I said uh, “You know, I’ve been considering the priesthood at the request of the people who were here before you, and uhm, I’d like to find out more about Equipping the Saints
and so he got some information and he and I had a number of discussions about it.
And he said, “Well, I think that you should go to *Equipping the Saints.*”
And that’s how I came back into the Episcopal Church. And then a year later, the
priest there asked me do you want to consider becoming a priest? (Light laughter)
WOOO…I mean, I just came back! … What’s going on? Who are you really
asking this question? Not me (laughter) (Cara, 2006)

Cara’s work as a priest has been enriched by her eclectic experiences. She had already
developed managerial skills in various offices and organizations; and she was able to
adapt to the interpersonal and relational requirements, such as managing conflict, public
speaking, delegating responsibility, active listening, and teaching into pastoral gifts.
Other applicants mentioned that they were challenged because they had to learn the
performance skills. The seminaries do have courses in counseling and pastoral work as
well as exegetical studies, but just like teaching, a priest does not learn the true gift of
ministering until the classes and study are put into practice. Furthermore, seminaries
usually do not have courses on how to balance ministry and marriage, especially if the
spouse is also a priest.

*Two Priests, One Marriage*

Four of the participants are in dual ministry career marriages. Three were
ordained around 1980, and all of the women entered on this career path after their
husbands had entered the ordination process. The official and unofficial gatekeepers were
slow to let the new female petitioners’ entry even though the change had been ratified at
the national convention. Women’s ordination was still new and a female postulant was
considered an aberration at this time. When (Retired Bishop of Vermont) Mary Adelia McLeod and her four children began dating Henry “Mac” McLeod, a lawyer, her first concern was ensuring that he was a good man and would be accepted by her formidable brood. He had not attended church regularly before meeting Mary Adelia. She had converted to Episcopalian at the behest of her first husband. As McLeod became more involved in the church with her, he began to feel the call to ministry which led him to formally join the Episcopal Church. At the time he entered the seminary they had five children (he had adopted hers) between the ages of 6 and 16. The McLeods sold everything they had to finance the move. Mary Adelia had felt the same calling, even before Mac did, but she could not act on it because a mother with five children during the 1960s was supposed to stay home. When she could no longer suppress the feeling, she decided to take a chance.

So, we got there and, I, I really had the same kinds of feelings for myself, but women could not be ordained. And, I just really did not see any real option about me going to seminary. And, Margaret was not in school yet, and given my upbringing, it was really important to me to be home as a full-time mother until children went to school. So I just kind of X’d that from my mind. But nevertheless, the tuggings just did not stop. And finally, toward the end of that first year when we were at Sewanee I decided, well, what the heck, I’ll just knock on the doors, and God is perfectly capable of closing the doors, if I’m mishearing. So, I’ll just do it. Well, the seminary was absolutely appalled because they said, you know, husband/wife teams, they don’t…other denominations have had bad
experiences with it. And more often than not, it ends up in divorce, and the competition issue, and the stress, and the strain and blah blah blah. It just doesn’t work and you are probably just…and he’s learning so much and doing so much, and bringing home so much that it’s feeding you and making you wanna go in that direction, to be ordained, was a whole different thing. (McLeod, 2006)

The Bishop of Alabama finally agreed to let her enter the seminary, but not as a postulant. The Diocese of Alabama had not sponsored any women into the priesthood at that point. This afforded her two advantages though. Mary Adelia was able to avoid most of the unpleasantness that faced other women entering the seminary during the same time period, (a) because her husband was already a postulant and (b) because she was not considered an active candidate for the priesthood initially.

[The Bishop] said, “I just can’t let you go before the Commission on Ministry. You can go ahead and go to seminary if that’s what you want to do. But it’s not as a postulant; it’s not even as a pastor. It’s just, you will be going.” He said, “You know, you’ve been out of school a long time; don’t know if your mind is still working…You’ve been a mother…” And here I am saying, “What are you talking about?! I was head of the junior league; I helped start the head start program, and day-care centers in Birmingham. I have been active, and thinking. I have not gone to sea, I can do math.” But I can’t…and I could add, subtract, multiple, and divide, but you get past that, I can’t do that. And, anyway, so I went to, started my seminary. And then I was in the process. I was the top student in my class, so that when I went to the Commission of Ministry. They said, well, she’s that smart, she
couldn’t possibly be pastoral. So, we will not approve her. So I was the first woman to go through the process. It was tough going. And the dean of seminary finally got hold of my bishop when he came up for a visit my second year. And said, if you don’t ordain this woman, I’m going to find her a bishop who will because she’s going to make any diocese proud of her, you can count on it. (McLeod, 2006)

After she had completed her studies, she needed to serve as a deacon, but the Bishop of Alabama was not enthusiastic about finding a church for Mary Adelia. He eventually told her that she could accompany her husband when he went for interviews. He did not expect her to find a position, but one church eventually hired both of them. Mary Adelia’s career continued to ascend until she was elected the Bishop of Vermont, the first woman to achieve that level in the EC/USA.

Two participants explained that their ministry and their husbands’ ministry were so intertwined that it would be impossible to tell her story without also including his. Helen’s husband had an undergraduate degree in film and entered the seminary intending to create Christian films. Helen had been a cradle Episcopalian but had joined the Presbyterian Church that her husband belonged to. When he entered the seminary, she also began taking classes to better understand her own internal longing.

And so when we were in seminary I started taking classes and really it was in one of my private devotional times, I heard as close to verbal words from God as I’ve ever heard. And I heard, “I want you back in the Episcopal Church, and I want you to be a priest.” And I, I mean, I about fell off my chair, really. We were pretty
involved in a Presbyterian church there because that was where the best training was. There was a wonderful woman mentor there. And now, my husband had started Presbyterian ordination. I didn’t really think we should be in different parishes, much less different denominations, and I couldn’t figure out how it was going to work. And I remember saying, you know, back to God, okay, well if this is you; you’re going to have to work it out because it’s so beyond my ability to work out the details. And my husband graduated. I got pregnant at the end of our time there and we, he got a job out of seminary in an Episcopal church as a layperson, doing media ministry. Tape, film, multimedia.

And that just how that all happened was just kind of an amazing miracle. So, we went to this church in Connecticut and they were, long and the short of it, they sponsored both of us through the ordination process. Not immediately, but you know…so God did work out all those details. (Helen, 2006)

The concept that God would work out the details and would take overt action is a fascinating element in these stories and a prominent aspect of the priests’ narrative. Helen’s career deviated from her husband’s and she climbed the professional, ecclesiastical ladder. The other two participants in a dual clergy career marriage did not attend classes with their husbands and their experiences were very different than the previous stories and are included in the section on Harassment and Hostility.

Learning Performance Skills

The performance expectations for a priest include more than just leading the service on Sunday mornings. A priest is expected to create and manage budgets, hire
personnel, cooperate with a non-profit board (the vestry), pastoral responsibilities, counseling (physical abuse, grief, substance abuse, and marital), teaching confirmation and enquirer’s classes, scheduling and coordinating multiple committees and volunteer groups, being a liaison between the congregation and the church hierarchy, and sing or chant the liturgy, all while maintaining a connection with the spiritual life and some semblance of a personal life.

Naomi is one of the few cradle Episcopalians that I interviewed. She also entered the seminary the same year that the Philadelphia 11 event occurred, so women still could not be officially ordained when she enrolled. Naomi identifies one of the major impediments to learning facing women entering the priesthood (especially those who were early supplicants.)

We were church goers. Indeed, we were church goers all the way through and I had a sense of calling very early. As I say, 6 or 7. I had a sense of emptiness and searching, and longing very, very early in childhood and then a sense of purpose.

Now, not that I knew what that purpose was, because I had no role models.

( Naomi, 2003)

There was not only the lack of role models, but also a lack of female mentors and male priests comfortable working as mentors for female postulants. The most obvious performance and ritual occurs every Sunday (if not more often) when the priest leads the service, gives an inspiring and enlightening sermon, and confers the Eucharist. A few of the participants filled in for an absent or vacationing priest and lead Morning Prayer,
Evening Prayer, or Compline\textsuperscript{15} services. Opportunities to practice leading services without professional risk are invaluable before completing seminary training. Fay had an opportunity to act as substitute priest even before she had decided to be ordained. She was confident in her abilities as a speaker and her potential vocation was fostered by the priest at the church she had joined. He acted as a mentor and guide. She did not have a female who could fulfill that role during the early stages of her inquiry. He had encouraged her to use his library so that she could do her own research, develop her own hypothesis, and then discuss her conclusions. This type of dialogue encouraged an ability to develop exegetical skills. She had the most expressive description of the function and form of sermonizing.

And then John went on vacation, or a continuing ed. trip or something, and he said, “Hey, why don’t you take the service for me?” And I was like, “Sure, no problem.” I didn’t bat an eyelash. I’d done public speaking for years and I’d been giving seminars for thousands of people at national conferences, whatever. Oh, wrong. Preaching is not public speaking. (Fay, 2006)

Leading her first Sunday Service actually precipitated a spiritual crisis for Fay and a discussion with God. She was not prepared for the strength of her reaction to the experience. Fay is not the only one who spoke about having conversations with God, but she was the only who actually had a shouting match.

\textsuperscript{15} Compline is the last of the seven traditional monastic daily offices. At one time it was merged with the Evening Prayer service but in 1979 it was restored as a separate late evening office which can be performed by anyone to conclude evening activities.
It was that day, in fact, that I had it out with God. And said basically, I’m not
going to give you all the expletives, but, basically, “what in the world do you
want outta me? What are you doing? What is this about?” Ya, know, I was
engaged at the time, had a great job, ya’know, WHAT? (Fay, 2006)

The priest at her church had confidence in her ability and continued to ask her to fill in
for him during absences. Morning Prayer services are frequently lead by a lay person
when a priest or deacon is not available to perform the function.

So we would have those kinda conversations and [the priest] said that, “I’m going
to be away, why don’t you take services for me? Delegation of lay people being
able to do this, you know, we’re not doing communion, so you’re fine” And then I
preached that day.

And then I screamed at God because it was so totally so not about me, it
was so about the congregation and so about God, and so not about me. And as a
teacher or a lecturer, professionally, and I had taught public speaking. I mean, I’m
all about my, at that point, it was either, I don’t want to call it an audience, I’m all
about the people participating in the event. I think humility is not a new concept
for me and I’m not about, let me tell about what I know, it is more of let me create
an environment where you can discover what you need to know.

That’s been my mojo for the very beginning, that’s been my, my, my
context of any time I’m doing a national meeting or anything at all. So, I’m
thinking preaching is just about like talking about God, ha, wrong. It’s all about
getting out of the way and letting God do what God needs to do through you. So
the dynamic of that is really drastically different and very converting. It was so not about me. (Fay, 2006)

Fay’s story explains her interpretation of the relationship among God and a priest and the congregation. She emphasizes a shift in the focus from her role as a priest to acting as a channel for the message.

Katie’s first experience preaching from the pulpit occurred while she was a seminarian at General Theological Seminary. Most seminarians are required to do field study during their middler or second year in school. Katie was assigned to St. Luke’s in the Fields, in Greenwich Village. Most people would have been intimidated by the parishioners, but she saw it as an exciting challenge.

Which was an incredible place, cause half of the faculty from the seminary were parishioners. Half of the, it seemed like half the staff from the National Church center were parishioners. I mean, I’d be preaching and there’d be one bishop, some bishop sitting on one side of the congregation, and another bishop sitting on the other side. You know, half my professors…it’s an incredible place to learn how to preach and to learn liturgy. (Katie, 2006)

Katie rose to the challenge and brought the confidence she gained there to her ministry. Anna’s progression from student to priest was different than most of the other participants. Her family was lapsed Presbyterian, but she had a magnetic rookie high school teacher who was a born again fundamentalist who invited students to join in a Bible study group after school. Anna was also re-baptized by a non-denominational pastor in someone’s backyard pool the summer before she left for college. Unfortunately,
what she considered a moving and inspirational experience created family dissonance, in no small part because she had not disclosed her activities to her parents, who learned of her rebaptism while at a neighborhood party. Besides which her mother felt that her infant baptism at the Presbyterian Church should have been sufficient.

Anna left Illinois to become a student at a small private nondenominational liberal arts college in the hills of Virginia. She was exposed to a full spectrum of Christian denominations while attending chapel there because the director of campus ministry (from the United Church of Christ) invited celebrants from all denominations to lead services. After graduation, she worked in the Dean of Student’s Office for three years. The dean invited her to attend the Episcopal Church with her during the summer when chapel was suspended over the summer. Her association with the dean also led to her first off-campus job as a Christian Education (CE) director at a Methodist Church in a large southern city. Because she had no training in CE, she began taking relevant classes at Duke University where she met the professor/priest who became her mentor. She stayed with that position for three years, but she decided that she needed to move on with her life. She accepted a similar position with a Presbyterian Church, but she found, now that she was really immersed in the denomination, that it did not resonate with her spiritually.

So, she began her search again and, providentially, the church she began attending in college needed a CE director. She was 30 years old and her mentor asked her where she wanted to be in ten years. She surprised herself when she replied, “I want to be a priest.” She had been teaching, coordinating volunteer teachers, and developing
curriculum for three different denominations and congregations. She already had experience communicating with students, parents, volunteers, and the ministry team, but she had not considered herself on track to the ministry. It was at this point where she began the ten year process to ordination. She had developed most of the performance skills informally before she had formal training.

Grace had the opportunity to become an adept communicator before she really seriously considered entering the priesthood. She began her college career intending to be a genetic researcher, but she registered for a children’s theatre class and that was the end of the science/research plans:

And so I switched my major, much to my parents regret. I can remember being kind of tongue-in-cheek. “Well, what are you going to do with a speech degree?” “Well, maybe I’ll become a priest.” But at that point, that was back before women were being ordained, I had not had any role models; we weren’t even allowed to be acolytes in the church. And yet at the same time as I look back on it the group that I hung around with at school were all priest seminary students uhm, and went on to be priests or theologians. Or scholars within academic disciplines that support the church. So anyway, I graduated with a degree in speech and theatre. In order to keep my parents happy, I got a teaching certification along with that. Taught for a year and that was fun, I love to teach. And teaching is a part of everything I do. (Grace, 2006)

She survived only one year in the public schools before deciding to return to graduate school for courses in interpersonal group dynamics which lead to her getting a job in the
retail industry, where she stayed for 16 years. She gained experience in management and moved into human resources. All of the skills she learned up to this point would prove to be applicable and beneficial to someone working in the ministry. She also never forgot that flippant remark that she made to her mother about becoming a priest. That comment echoed through her life, a prescient comment to eventual vocation, and became of landmark moment.

I finally said, “Eh, Enough of this. It’s time to decide what I want to do when I grow up.” So at that time, I took what amounted to a sabbatical, and during that sabbatical went to the Holy Land and spent 4 months in the Holy Land. And it was during that kind of reassessment that I really began to sort out and put the pieces together that I was called to be a priest. (Grace, 2006)

When Grace returned to the states, she went through serious introspection and some therapy and, as she said, opened herself to God’s will. By this time women were being ordained on a regular basis, and as a cradle Episcopalian, she already was part of a congregation which would support her through the process. She was accepted at General Theological Seminary (GTS), which provided her with exceptional opportunities for exegetical study including taking classes at Hebrew University. This type of training allows her to interpret the scriptures from differing perspectives.

Jane, like Katie, also attended GTS, but she entered the seminary in September 2001. Her family had migrated from a southern city in support of her new vocation. Her son was attending classes in a school only a mile from the World Trade Center; her husband had taken a job in the seminary library. They sold everything that would not fit
in the married student dormitories and stored what they wanted to keep. She was in her first semester of classes and self-consciously aware that she was twice as old as some of her classmates. She was in a class discussing the latest book by Rowan Williams, one of the *preferiti* for the upcoming Bishop of Canterbury election, when the attack on the Towers occurred. This dreadful event affected all of us in different ways, including the seminarians studying at GTS at that time and not just because of the proximity of the event. GTS seminarians also assist with services at St. Paul’s Chapel in Trinity Church Wall Street which is adjacent to the World Trade Center grounds. Jane and other seminarians officiated at the first Ash Wednesday Service following the September 11, 2001, tragedy. The service of remembrance provided them with the chance to grant solace and promote forgiveness. She and her classmates were able to enact the tenets that she had been learning in the seminary.

So, as seminarians they would get a group of us to come and just help with that. And so being in St. Paul’s chapel, the back doors of the chapel open up onto the little cemetery that then looks over to where the Trade Center should be. So you can actually stand at… you could stand at the altar and look down the aisle out the door. Well, we stood down in front of the altar aways, kinda of at the pews and did the imposition of ashes and the back doors were open and so as people would come up, and you were looking out to where everything had become ash. And saying to people, “remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.” It was just a remarkable experience that again I feel very blessed to have had, and the church, St Paul’s was still decorated at that time, with all the banners and the
remembrances and all the things that they did for the workers there. So but working at Trinity was really great, I loved the people that I worked with and met in both those places. (Jane, 2006)

All of the participants were aware of the importance of having affirmative role models and mentoring relationships to support their training. It was more difficult for the women who entered into the ministry during the late 1970s and early 1980s because there were few female role models in any denomination and male priests were not prepared for mentoring female priests. Men and women ordained during the last five years can take advantage of mentor training available through the diocese and the national church. There are also sufficient women in the priesthood to allow female lead mentoring and support groups to develop. The understanding of the mentor/protégé relationship does vary among the participants though. Elizabeth was ordained during the last five years and was hired as an assistant priest in a large tall church in Virginia. She is the first woman to serve in this old historic church and the first female priest to work with the senior rector. The senior rector had not taken formal mentor training (which can be accessed through the EC/USA), but he used his past mentoring experience to establish a rewarding and skilled relationship with a younger clergy person.

This rector is very sharing of his leadership. And I think he’s a good mentor in that way because he just says, “Do it. Go and do your own ministry.” And doesn’t give me a lot of boundaries about how I have to do that.

Interviewer: Does he ever give you suggestions?
If I asked for it, but not, not in a paternal kind of way. In more of a collegial kind of way, cause this will be his first time for working with a woman priest too, because this is the first time there’s been one in this parish. (Elizabeth, 2006)

Susan was a divorced mother working in the medical field before she made the transition into the ministry in the late 1990s. She did have the opportunity to have a strong female role model and mentor when she entered the ministry. Susan’s role model was the first woman to be ordained in Texas. Rev. Elizabeth came from a wealthy family and had been a debutante and was used to being popular and influential. She had been a teacher in the poor urban community of Dallas. She had entered the seminary immediately after the ratification of the church constitution, but she was not prepared when protesters actually interrupted her ordination.

And she found it appalling; you can imagine how she felt about it. And people that she thought were friends, you know, all of a sudden because of that one act. The bishop ordained her because he thought she could do it. And he was dead right. He caused her a lot of pain. And it was a choice that was very hard for her.

But she could do it. (Susan, 2002)

Susan and the Rev. Elizabeth became acquainted when Susan married her second husband and the couple began church shopping. Susan had been raised Catholic; he was Presbyterian. They finally joined the Episcopal Church because it satisfied both their needs. It was the first time Susan experienced a service lead by a woman. The two women became friends and the Rev. Elizabeth became her mentor. Susan and her
husband eventually left Texas and moved because he was hired to teach at a university in the West Virginia. Susan was hired as the rector in a church at the other end of the state. The first person Susan attempted to mentor was Rose (of the Christmas narrative.) Unfortunately, the lessons she learned from the Rev. Elizabeth did not transfer when she tried to be a mentor for the first time. Susan had been diagnosed as having Asperger’s syndrome as an adult which impacted her ability to handle interpersonal relationships. Another part of the difficulty arose because the bishop had instructed her to not only mentor but to supervise Rose’s academic work as well. That problem was exacerbated because the two women had different concepts of what the mentor/protégé relationship involves:

I have tried to mentor Rose, but she is like: She wants it but doesn’t want it and on her own terms. I don’t know her well enough to know why this is. It’s just the way she approaches me. She’ll need me to do something right now (slaps hands together). But if I say “Rose let’s get together on a monthly basis and sit and talk about what we’re doing.” “Not interested - don’t have time.” And I don’t know what to do about that. And this not to try and handle her. I honestly do not know what to do with her. And I think that she is afraid that someone is going to come in a try to take control. And I’m not interested in controlling in that situation.

(Susan, 2002)

Susan had only been ordained two years before, was new to the diocese, was new to the region, and did not have the time to build trust and friendship, therefore her efforts to be a mentor were undermined from the start. If the bishop and Susan had been more familiar
with andragogy, and taken a cooperative methodology rather than relying on an authoritative teacher or tutor mode (which was an improvident approach to take with Rose), they might have been able to develop a better mentoring relationship. Susan, as an adult with Asperger’s syndrome, had to work to sustain social interactions which left exhausted after services. And her marriage was devolving because of the strain. Susan needed someone to mentor and sustain her. Unfortunately, the program, Fresh Start, which could have helped both priests, had been discontinued in their diocese. Training women to mentor other women would have benefited both participants. It teaches leadership skills, as well as providing novice priests with a role model. As more women enter the ministry, I think that it eventually will be less important for a woman to be mentored by another woman because the female novice priest will have had the opportunity to see other females perform from the pulpit. Katie is now a team leader with the Fresh Start program in her diocese, and as such mentors two priests, a man and a woman.

Katie not only is a full-time priest, but she is the leader of a support group for female priests as well. Her diocese uses the Fresh Start program which matches trained and experienced mentors with novice priests. Katie believes that the support group is thriving because everyone takes responsibility for its success.

Well, the whole world mentors. Fresh Start is for the people who are newly ordained and the people who are new to the diocese. It’s to help them build relationships with other people. So what we do is we try to match them up with people who are established in the diocese. So I’m now mentoring two people.
And, uhm, so I’m mentoring and I help facilitate the Fresh Start Program. (Katie, 2006)

The Fresh Start approach increases the likelihood of creating a successful relationship between mentor and protégé. She emphasized the importance of maintaining those connections with other priests in her diocese, even once the need for a mentor decreases.

Stories of Status, Authority, and Leadership

When the participants were asked about how they understood or managed leadership, their answers were as varied as they. Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori (head of the EC/USA) has a doctorate in oceanography, “a couple of post docs,” and is an instrument certified pilot. These activities taught her to be analytical, composed, and team oriented. She knows how to function and succeed in critical situations. And she is prepared to take the initiative to create a dialogue. Even the time that she spent as the only female on ocean expeditions would help her deal with the crisis facing the EC/USA currently. She has adopted a consultative orientation communication style to encourage all the members of the organization to participate so the organization can thrive. In Likert’s terms, she would prefer a participative management or the “join” style. She envisions the Episcopal Church organization as “something that people accomplish through a continuing process of communication.” (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 287). The EC/USA is a vital system and change and growth are essential to the survival of the organization and this institution of religion. As a leader, she describes herself as:

Well, I think that I’m pretty collegial, and I also come with a world view that says you make hypothesis and test them rather than coming in with prejudgment about
things. My understanding of openness is… that means that there needs to be openness for everybody, whether you disagree with them or agree with them. Part of our genius as Anglicans is our valuing of comprehensiveness and that the goal is not a church that thinks alike, it is a church that worships together and does Gospel work in the world and that takes the gifts of a broad diversity of people and the body is only going to be healthy if we have that broad diversity. (Jefferts Shori, 2008)

Bishop Jefferts Schori’s primary effort has been empowering people and promoting a paradigm of inclusion and acceptance. She spends a significant amount of time traveling and working toward mending the breaks that have occurred since consecration of Gene Robinson, Bishop of New Hampshire. She said:

There’s great joy in this work. Getting to see the vitality of the Church in different contexts, seeing the engagement with mission and the transforming nature of that work, for individuals and for their communities, help to make connections for people, that’s one of the root meanings of “bishop”, is “Pontifex,” “bridge builder.” Connecting people in one place with some resource or expertise in another, that’s just one example. Watching people reconcile, or once in a while getting to help make that happen or permit that to happen. Celebrating transitions, you know, a piece of my work is to preside at consecrations of new bishops, and that’s an important marker in the life of a diocesan community. It’s not unlike presiding at a wedding or a funeral or a baptism at a parish. It’s simply
a way of sacramentally marking time together, the passage of time and the
invitation of God into a new chapter. (Jefferts Shori, 2008)

Bishop Jefferts Schori is balancing the normal EC/USA functions and objectives against
attack from several fronts. At least seven Bishops are trying to withdraw their dioceses
from the EC/USA and to align themselves with conservative presiding bishops from
Africa or South America. They also want to take their funds and property along with
them even though the constitution of all dioceses in the EC/USA, as well as the Anglican
Church state that all property reverts to the next higher level if a church, a convent, a
deanery, or a diocese should separate from the province. The lawyers are arguing that
issue now, but Bishop Jefferts Schori is trying to provide support for the churches within
those dioceses that do not want to leave the national EC/USA. Bishop Jefferts Schori
describes the ramifications of the problem…

We’re certainly working quietly to support people in those places who want to
stay. We’re encouraging them to organize because we in all think that there is
some likelihood the leadership is those dioceses is going to try to lead the whole
body out. We don’t think that is legal or appropriate. And we want to encourage
people to recognize that and recognize that if we are going to be healthy and
effective in a place we need the diversity of folks who are there. (Jefferts Shori,
2008)

Most of the conflict is occurring because the traditionalist Bishops do not recognize the
ordination of women or are angered because she did not invalidate the Diocese of New
Hampshire’s election of Bishop Gene Robinson. Bishop Jefferts Schori has said the most
important part of her duties is to keep the communication systems open to all members of the church.

Some of the participants had to learn leadership and reconciliation skills while also learning how to be a rector. Lily was the newly hired rector in a large suburban church which had survived a rector with serious personal problems. The congregation had basically been self-reliant for several years while an interim priest had tried to hold the church together. Lily previous position had been as a director of Christian education at a huge church with a large staff before beginning her time at Christ Church. Lily had traveled one of the longest, most repressed paths to the priesthood. She grew up in a large, single parent home; married at 18, a mother at 18, and had reconciled herself to spending the next 18 years tied to the home. The only outside activity her husband approved of was her participation in the Episcopal Church. She belonged to every committee in her parish, served on the vestry, served as an acolyte (even through several pregnancies), and through it all felt the call to the priesthood. Finally, she decided to make the move to get an education and to fulfill her dream after her eldest finished high school. The marriage ended when she went back to school, but that did not stop her from first earning an associate’s degree, then enrolling in Smith College, and finally beginning the ordination process. She was motivated because she needed to serve God and she also wanted to be a positive influence on her daughters’ lives. She describes her leadership and explains how it grows from her life story:

Accepting leadership is, was, is a journey for me. I was a layperson for 40 years. 40, 40 odd years. I did everything in the church. Everything. And yet gradually
through seminary, and into my curacy, I had to learn to be a leader rather than a doer. Leaders empower people. Jesus empowered people by asking them questions, you know? ‘Hey, what do you think?’ And allowed them always to make their own decisions. He put it out there and you accepted it or didn’t accept it. And you worked, you know, did, did what you needed to do. Uhm, shake the dust off your sandals if they don’t listen, if they don’t hear it. If they don’t hear it, not going to listen. I don’t think that that was a cruel thing for him to say. Some people say it’s cruel, and you’re going to Hell because of that. That’s not what I, I think it means. I think it just means Jesus didn’t coerce people so as a as a spiritual guide and a leader of this religious body, I have to learn. I had to learn patience.

I had to learn empowerment. Much more than I ever did as a layperson. And patience with myself. I go through times as a woman as a layperson too, but really as a woman we are taught to serve people. And do. Do. We do the cooking. We set up the fair. We set up the rummage sale. We do, do, do, do, do. Running all the time, doing everything. (Lily, 2006)

I was familiar with the history of Lily’s new church and I had the opportunity to observe Lily’s congregation. She was facing a two-fold problem with her new congregation. They had been self-reliant for a long time, but they were not confident that they were handling things appropriately. Much of what they did, they did because it has always been done that way. Most of the leaders in the church now wanted someone to be an authoritative leader and give them specific recommendations without criticizing their
previous decisions. Lily has had to develop a benevolent authoritarian style of leadership as a consequence of her complex path and the environment at her new church. She admitted that it was difficult to let others have control since she had served on every imaginable church committee.

Bishop McLeod also started as an active layperson and a single mother with four children, but her path took a different fork in the road when she and Father McLeod began their ministry. They shared their first two postings, first in Alabama and then in West Virginia, fortuitous circumstances, considering how difficult it is to find a posting with a church that needs two priests at the same time and especially wants a male and female team. During that time she developed a cooperative-consultative style of leadership. She describes being part of a ministry team with her husband:

So it was just no problem at all. I mean there were some who….which one’s really in charge….so our first sermon, we really did together and said, this is how we operate. What he does well, he does. What I do well, I do. And you know, we don’t second guess and step on each other’s toes and if one of us answers the phone and you want to speak to the other one, say I want to speak to whoever it is and it doesn’t hurt our feelings. It’s just chemistry is better with some than it is with others, and that’s perfectly fine with us. And we probably know it anyway, if you’re talking to the wrong person. So, anyway, we’ve just…we’ve really not been competitive because we are very much alike and yet very much different at the same time. And really complement each other and depend on each other’s
strengths and weaknesses to balance each other out or my unmotivated skills, he’s motivated, and he’ll do that. (McLeod, 2006)

Their cooperative style of management encouraged the congregation to develop controversial initiatives for that time, such as creating a van meal program, developing an AIDS ministry, and welcoming gay and lesbian congregants. By the mid 1980s, diocesan search committees were actively seeking women applicants, both on the congregational and diocesan levels. Bishop McLeod became very involved with committees on the national level while still a priest, which led to her being sought after as a candidate for the episcopate, but it did not result in her being elected the first female bishop until 1993.

Bishop McLeod’s ecclesiastical career eventually eclipsed her husband’s. She maintained that same cooperative style of leadership in her posting in New Hampshire as well as her inclusive and liberal programs.16 A couple sharing a church equally is still rare because the male partner is usually considered the senior or primary pastor and the wife serves in an assistant or part-time position (Nesbitt, 1997). The EC/USA’s own records as well as the study done by Paula Nesbitt substantiate that the wife usually serves in the secondary status post.

Bianca and her husband also are in a shared ministry team serving four small congregations. He is the primary, full time missioner and she is bi-vocational, continuing her associate ministry work while maintaining a full-time veterinarian practice. She originally supervised the four congregations for a year before her husband accepted the

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16 Bishop McLeod was a friend and supporter of Bishop Gene Robinson, whose confirmation as the first openly gay Bishop in a long term committed relationship has caused so much of the current conflict in the EC/USA as well as in the worldwide Anglican Church.
full-time position. She has reduced her ministry work, but still leads two services every Sunday. She had to grant the leadership position to her husband without losing a sense of authority with the congregations.

But when my husband started, was ordained, he started in the cluster as missioner, that’s when we divided up the services like we did and I really began to let go of some of the responsibilities that I had taken on and I needed to. It was affecting me physically, mentally, I was getting, as you probably can tell, I get, you know my temper does flair. (laughs) And I when I get tired, it’s worse, you know, and I just couldn’t do it all so I began to, to relax, soften my hold, and, you know, that’s hard for me because I am, I’ve always been my own boss, never worked for anybody else for any particular amount of time, I’m my own boss at my veterinary clinic. And I had pretty much taken over the authoritative [role] in four churches and then I had to relinquish it to my husband, but that was an ego thing, you know, let him do it, all those things that I had done. (Bianca, 2006)

Bianca and her husband came from two very different religious orientations before finally joining the Episcopal Church. He was Jewish (he had already contemplated converting when he was in college), she was a disenfranchised Methodist, and both were searching for a spiritual home they could share. Their gender and religious differences have created a formidable clergy team. They now share leadership responsibilities and recognize that their styles complement each other.

Our churches now are, are, there’s no consciousness of male and female at all in the priesthood or whatever. Although I have had people say that they feel very
blessed to get two perspectives from things. I mean, I have a very feminine perspective; my husband has a very masculine perspective. And they like that, they like not having the same thing every week. And I thought that was really good. And the women in the congregation often are more comfortable with me on personal things.

The men are more comfortable [talking with her husband] on some personal things. There are still some women though, who look at a priest almost in a romanticized way. And they like the male priest so they’ll go to him. And that’s okay, I can accept that. (Bianca, 2006)

Fourteen participants are currently married (three are in second marriages,) three are divorced, and nine are single. As mentioned earlier, four of the participants are married to priests and some of them have been able to share the congregation(s), at least for a period of time. Most clergy couples were not able to find placements close to each other, let alone with the same congregation. Olivia speculated that it actually was a detriment to both careers.

It was very difficult when we started for people to be able to imagine a clergy person whose wife was also a clergy person. And there were a lot of I think times when Harold was rejected because in the interview process I could just watch people not be able to, “Where are you going to be assigned?” And I was like, well, I’ll be very supportive of Harold in his ministry, and I’ll be involved in the congregation on Sunday morning. I’ll probably be at the altar whenever you get out of the service. (Olivia, 2006)
Naomi and her husband found a creative solution to the dual career marriage. He is an administrator for an American university, but he serves as the Dean of the College in Oman. She spends six months in Oman and assists with the Christian congregation with 400 to 1000 members there and then she returns to the U.S. and serves as the vicar at a rural church with less than fifty members. Her husband spends the summer months in the U.S. with his wife. Not all of the married participants were able to make amenable arrangements. As mentioned earlier, Susan’s marriage did not survive because she and her husband were not able to find a workable compromise. She had to work weekends when her husband was free, and vice versa. Anna’s husband commutes between Tennessee and central Virginia (a four hour drive) to be with his family. The pressures on a priest’s marriage are not significantly different than it is for any dual career couple except they have the added strain of congregational surveillance and judgment. If the congregation feels that the priest’s behavior is inappropriate, they can create enough difficulty to force the priest to leave the church.

Dual career marriages face significant challenges and a career in the ministry is demanding of time and commitment for both men and women. A significant amount of a priest’s work is done on the weekend or in the evenings, time which is usually reserved for family or for developing interpersonal relationships. If the husband and the wife live in different towns and have conflicting schedules, trying to find time to maintain the relationship becomes complex. If the priest is single and wants to socialize, she has to be aware that she will be the object of church gossip. When a congregation has a single male
priest, all the mothers try to match him with their daughters. Female priests do not generate the same type of attention.

Most people meet potential partners through work or through friends. Considering the sensitivity concerning power and sexual harassment, the single priests interested in developing relationships felt that it was inappropriate to become involved with anyone in their parish. Also, congregations should not be given any reason to speculate or to interfere with the limited personal time a priest has. Sophia also found that men became uncomfortable when her career came to light. She knew that she needed to have a more intimate relationship than friendship could provide so she decided to take a chance.

I had been single all along. But I was also at a state; I knew I was not called to be a single. So the question always was, how do you meet people in ministry? I’m not a bar person. When everybody else is mingling with folks, we’re hard at work. So finding the support system was a little challenging. I had terrific colleagues, we befriended each other, uhm, and actually for a while did a couple of things together. The Catholic priest, uhm one block down the street, there was a great relationship between the churches. Several churches. But he and his staff welcomed me so warmly in the area. Soon we uh, started doing things together, opened a teen center together, and many, many many things. So, for a while we did things together, but I also realized, and this is still not the kind of companionship and closeness in a relationship that I’m looking for. It is not enough. So it took me two years to work up the nerve, but I signed up on Eharmony. That was in October, October, early November I believe. Early
November of 2004. After 4 weeks, I was matched up with a gentleman who wanted to get to know me right away. We were matched in December.

(Laughter) In January we decided to get married. And we got married last September. (Sophia, 2006)

Sophia was extremely lucky to find someone who was able to mesh his career objectives with her career. Her husband was a doctoral student at the time I interviewed her, studying spiritual music, specifically from the Lutheran tradition. He also was able to substitute as an organist during a crisis. One of her parishioners commented that when she was a child, the husband was at the altar and his wife was at the organ, and how times have changed.

Being single in this church at this time, creates other issues as well. The congregation in large community in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia was considering Grace for the position of rector, but her unmarried status was a point of concern.

I find that in this day and age my marital status is by far more challenging than my gender. Yeah. And in some, at some level, because of [being single], oversensitivity to sexual orientation issues. If you’re not married, they don’t quite know what to do with you. There’s always that underlying question of, if you’re not married, why? (Grace, 2006)

Fay was engaged when she decided to leave Freddie Mac and begin the ordination process. Her fiancée ended the relationship when he learned of her new career (and her new financial potential.) Several of the single participants dismissed the idea of marriage
because it did not fit into their commitment to the church. Martha had been a nun for all of her adult life and left the order to be ordained in the Episcopal Church. Others preferred to not discuss the issue. The remaining single participants declined to discuss their personal lives and focused their narrative on their ministry and related issues. Grace had an opportunity to focus on the difference between how men and women perceive discourse in an organization. She believes that women use discourse to establish interpersonal connections and tend to develop networks in organizations which exist beyond political or business functions:

Women tend to socialize a whole lot better. I mean, another story I remember when I was in seminary Katherine Roskam had just been consecrated as Suffragen in New York. And she came over and met with seminaries at New York and I remember her talking about a house of Bishops meeting, and when Katherine Roskam was consecrated, I think there might have been four or five women at that point in the house of Bishops. And, a number of them happened to be in the women’s restroom at the same time and she told about how when they came out, these, their brother bishops were all concerned that they had been in plotting some kind of a conspiracy or secret overthrow or something, and it was like, “No we were in there doing what women do in the bathroom.” You know? But, but apparently, so much business can be conducted in the male model and the politicking that goes on in bathrooms, or over a glass of sherry after hours that all of a sudden, here, their insecurities were being tagged, tugged at.

You know, and now the story is the presiding bishop may run into us in the
bathroom. (Grace, 2006)

Grace was surprised by the insecurity that the men expressed just because the women went to the restroom at the same time (something humorists have made fun of for generations). She actually felt sympathy for the male members of the organization though when she realized that they did not have the occasion to reflect on their experiences in social consciousness raising groups.

And it was really an odd experience and I can remember getting together with some women and a couple of the women had decided that the time had come for them to pull together all of the women clergy in the Diocese of Ohio. And we met at one of the women priest’s homes, and there must have been probably 15, or so of us. And we started out just by having tea and before we were done, we were all sitting in a circle in the living room, and we probably took three hours and went around the circle and we all told our stories of pain, and achievement and getting to the place where we were ordained and sitting in that room. And where the struggles had been and continue to be. And where the joys had been. And I can remember going back to the parish the next day and my male rector asked me what we did. And he almost had tears in his eyes when he said, “Oh we would never do that.” You know, there was this sense of longing. To sit down and share story at that kind of vulnerable and intimate level, and yet at the same time, this recognition that among male clergy, you would never get that vulnerable because you were in competition with each other. (Grace, 2006)
Male and female priests can exhibit differences on emotive-expressive level, but on a practical level as well, the financial difference has become a major concern of the diocese and female professional priests.

Paula had the opportunity to participate in an in-depth study of the economical status of women priests in the EC/USA. The increased number of women in the priesthood has not been reflected in their appointment to large, high status churches. There are no formal salary guidelines as far as I have been able to find, but there are established expectations. Salaries are dependent upon the discretion and budget of each church. The national EC/USA administration is aware and trying to ameliorate the salary inequities between male and female priests. The current economic problems have only exacerbated the salary discrepancy. This is one of issues being investigated and disputed by women who are now participating on national church committees, such as Paula who shared:

I was just named a convener, is the official term, of the committee on the status of women, which is a sub-committee of the executive council. And one of the things that we have been studying for some time now is that disproportionate in salary. And you know some of the diocese that like to brag about how open-minded they are about having women serve there, you find that that’s because they have in a lot of small churches that pay relatively badly. Therefore, they’re not going to get male clergy anyway. So, one of the things that we’re concerned about is the ghettoization of female clergy. And I don’t think any of us go into this to become millionaires, but there certainly is a disproportionate number of men in the very
wealthy positions versus women. And that’s really significant. And, when you challenge some folks in some of those congregations about that, the consistent response is, Well, I’m not sure we’re ready for a woman. And, my question to them is always, well, what is it exactly is it that you’re doing to get ready? (Paula, 2006)

The contradictory attitude toward women as congregational leaders cannot be ignored when the current presiding bishop is a woman like Katharine Jefferts Schori. It also contributes to the discord in the organization. A misogynistic or chauvinistic standpoint that would restrict women in the church to subordinate roles is being challenged.

Dressing for Success

Not only has the ordination of women created philosophical change in the organization, it has created a public appearance change as well. It has also added a new perspective in appropriate attire that has never existed before. Meredith Gudger Raines, a newly ordained Methodist minister reported her dilemma on NPR:

I found a blog the other day where a woman pastor started a discussion with her female colleagues. What do you wear to church? Is going sleeveless sinful or saintly? Sandals, yes or no? And the kicker, has your congregation ever commented on your wardrobe? But no one wrote, why are we wasting our time thinking about what to wear? Clothes aren’t important. Let’s talk about something that matters.

These pastors know that what they put on in the morning affects how people see them and the church. What we wear underneath our robes and collars
and stoles matters. Our clothes cover us up, but they also make us vulnerable. We put them against our skin. They touch our body. And the perception of women of the cloth is that they aren’t supposed to have bodies, curvy hips and round breasts and smooth shoulders and shiny hair. These are things of the temptress. Not the person proclaiming the word of God.

Except we proclaim the word of God made flesh. And what better than my bare shoulders to remind people of that? (Raines, 2006).

To be quite honest, male priests did not have to worry about looking fashionable; they simply wore nice suits or tweed sport coats while working and golf-chic when in the community (Nesbitt, 1998; Raines, 2006). And if a male priest happened to prefer old suits and a fedora or a slouched driver’s cap, he might be celebrated as eccentric.

Women in the ministry face the same scrutiny and criticisms about their attire as women in business or politics. Plus they have the additional burden or joy of having impending parenthood on display for all to enjoy (or not).

Anna was in the Chicago area during her first appointment as an assistant priest. She had already had one child while in seminary and was pregnant with her second child. It was her turn to lead the service…

So we were [in Chicago for] 3 years. But my husband and I had one baby there. Several people said it was a profound experience. We had a lot of former Roman Catholics at St. Luke’s. And one woman talked about coming to St. Luke’s for the first time, and she was Roman Catholic, but looking at churches. And saw me walking down the aisle 8 months pregnant, in a chasuble. And she started crying.
She said that she just knew that she had come home. That she never thought in her lifetime that she would see a pregnant priest. That’s pretty powerful. (Anna, 2006) Anna was the only participant to preside while pregnant, though Lily had served as a pregnant acolyte before entering seminary.

The women who participated were very aware of the impact of appearance upon their credibility and authority. Sophia is a Lutheran minister who is the rector at two Episcopal churches in central Ohio. The EC/USA and the Lutheran church of America have agreed to a Full Communion and have signed a Concordant of Agreement, which means that they have complementary ministries. Not only is Sophia a Lutheran pastor, she is also from Germany, and she appears much younger than her true age. When I interviewed her, she was wearing a black pair of slacks, burgundy colored shell, and she was not wearing a clerical collar, a pectoral cross, or any emblem of her position. Her hair is on the shortish side in a nice contemporary cut. She wears glasses, is slender, and tall.

It is interesting in my first call the first year I almost every day I wear collar. For two reasons, to remind the people that I am the pastor, but interestingly, at home with another person.

I met a female woman who had done ministry for I don’t know 10, 15, 20 years. She said, “Yeah, my first year I did that too. And then I let go of that.” And I thought, No, why? But it happened. Along the same year I was kind of, Okay. And this is basically, how I am dressed most of the time. Professional. And, unless I have official functions, to attend to more right now, or if I see people for
the first time.

They won’t know who I am…strange person with an accent. So I put my collar on then and they say, “Ah, it’s the new pastor.”

So those were in the beginning that I thought, once in a while I think like, I presented myself like; pastors don’t need to be starched. They can be hip and fun and so on. (Sophia, 2006)

Katie does not wear the collar or other accoutrements of office either. She has been in the ministry for a long time and she is the rector in a college town. She was very clear from the very beginning of her ministry, and even during the job interview, that she preferred comfortable shirts or sweaters and blue jeans. She does not dress up and she always has at least one dog by her side. The issue of pets actually impacted on her decision to attend General Seminary in NYC. She had been accepted, with full scholarship at Virginia Theological Seminary, but she would have had to give up her cat.

Yes. I mean, this is how I dress. When I came here, I said, if you’re looking for someone who’s going to dress up, it’s not me. Here’s my non-negotiables, I don’t do mornings, except when I have to. I smoke, I may never quit smoking. (I have, 7 ½ years now.) Where I go, my dog goes. And I wear jeans, sneakers and t-shirts and sweatshirts, and if you want somebody who’s going to be in a collar and a skirt, look for someone else. And they are very accepting. (Katie, 2006)

During services and for many church events, priests are expected to dress in a cleric shirt, a clerical collar, an alb or a cassock gathered by a rope cincture, covered by a chasuble, and a stole plus a pectoral cross. The uniform appearance confers status while
diminishing individualism. Sometimes it also disguises the gender of the priest, as Katie learned, unintentionally creating interesting commentary.

But my funny thing, my funny story from Vermont was during this funeral at the Catholic Church. And I had really short hair then, I was a lot thinner, and I had full out alb, chasuble and everything. The church was really, really large. Now, my best friends were the funeral directors right? So somebody came into the funeral late. I was standing behind the altar and somebody said, “Who’s the priest?” And, one director said, “That’s Father Fay.” Cause they couldn’t, you know, I wasn’t speaking at the time. They just thought: short hair, chasuble, (Laughter) I thought, either God’s going to strike me dead over this or I found a point. I never thought I’d be standing behind an altar at a Catholic Church…Being called Father. So it was…but even standing behind an altar at a Catholic Church.

(Katie, 2006)

Fay had left the Roman Catholic Church because of the prohibition of female priests and fifteen years later she is legitimately participating in a service in a catholic church. Most churches do not provide separate rooms for vesting because the priests arrive for services already in street clothes and cleric shirt. Anna still finds it feels somewhat awkward or strange because women are still significantly outnumbered in her diocese.

But it’s when we’re vesting for services, you know, like a big diocesan service… And I’m in there with all these men. And, I’m taking off this jacket and putting on my vestments, but it feels like I’m in the boy’s locker room. And it’s just taken a while to get used to that. And now it’s gotten a few more women there, but it is
the oddest feeling. That, for all of us to be vesting together…. Or un-vesting.

(Anna, 2006)

Another problem exists because of the emblems that sometimes decorate the stole or tippet. 17 Both are long bands of fabric which drape over the neck of the priest and hang down to about the knee. When a school is associated with a church, it is common for one of the priests to lead Morning Prayer service and the tippet is made in the school colors. Fay’s first appointment was as an assistant priest in such a situation. She, like Katie, never goes anywhere without her dog by her side.

And so it’s customary that the clergy, when we would do chapel, would wear a tippet, in that plaid. One of the moms was a wonderful seamstress, she came in the office one day, and she said, “Oh, Fay, it’s lovely to meet you.” I’m still brand new there, and, Jay, who’s the rector, had asked me to fit your tippet. And I said, “Oh that would be lovely. Barbara, thank you so much. What do we need to do? I’m very excited about that and thrilled to meet the kids. And whatever, you know, hm dadada. And the dog can go read stories with them.”

I was very excited about that relationship as well, we had a separate school chaplain, (with 600 students you needed a separate school chaplain), but the parish priest is quite, pretty visible on campus and it was a nice thing. So we’re kinda in the outer office of the church office, not the school office, and she’s taking some measurements and height, and shoulder, and you know, and things.

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17 The stole is a long, narrow band, usually in the liturgical color of the season, and worn during a regular Eucharistic service; a tippet is wider, is usually black or in the school colors and worn during Morning or Evening Prayer services.
And priest breezes on in and very sweetly, says, “oh just grab mine and make them the same.” And Barbara says to him, “I think I’d really like to take some measurements. Thanks that’s really sweet of you.” And he says, “oh no, let me go get it for you. You just need to take mine with you.” And Barbara, the seamstress, Mom, wonderful Mom, and says, “umm, umm,”

And he’s already down the hall, going to get his tippet, and then she and I both know exactly what is about to happen. And he doesn’t yet, because obviously he wouldn’t be saying this. So she says to him, “okay.” And I say to her, “just let it happen.” And she says to him. “Why don’t you put it on her and see, just see how it looks.” And he says, “No, just take it and just make it like mine.” And she say, “no no no. I just want to confirm it, that it’s right. Why don’t you just put it on?”

And she’s really having to push for this because he’s thinking we don’t need to be taking measurements here. (laughing) The seals of parish, the parish seal and the school seal, of course, were strategically located. (laughing) All we needed was tassels. And little sequins maybe. Oh it was just one of the funniest moments of the beginning, and was really, and then... poor Jay, he would never want to embarrass, he’s a great prankster, but would never intentionally embarrass anyone personally anyway. Great guy. And the poor guy just turned, the poor guy was mortified. And then we had a lovely laugh and then he said, “Ahh I see why you need to get the measurements.” And he just flew out.
So, I put mine on the bottom. Plaid all the way down and seals on the bottom, just like I have for my black tippet. (Fay, 2006)

Valerie began her ministry in a small rural town, but the church could not afford to keep a full-time priest in the budget. She is now the chaplain at a women’s federal prison, where she found a new, diverse congregation which really needed her special talents and insight. She usually does not wear the clerical garb while she is working with the prisoners, except when new prisoners go through processing. She found that she also needed to wear her clerical garb when she attends meetings, training sessions, and workshops. There are only three Episcopal priests in the entire Bureau of Chaplaincy of two hundred plus chaplains and she is the first female in the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

But uh, when I go to some of the chaplains meetings and we have to dress up and I wear the collar, the Catholic sisters all go there, and even the Catholic priests, they’re just so excited to see a woman in a collar. And I’m like, hello, this is the 21st century. But it’s still a new and unique thing for many folks still to see a female in a leadership facet. (Valerie, 2006)

Women priests also have to be aware of what they wear when they are not on the job. One participant is athletic and likes to jog. She used to wear a t-shirt over a sports bra and shorts while running, but after she ran into a male parishioner who made a comment about having such an attractive priest, she decided to wear less revealing (and less comfortable) sportswear. A single female priest has even more difficulty trying to maintain a personal life than a single male priest (Lind, 2005) and if she wears something
which can lead to speculation, the congregation’s imagination will flourish. Fay discovered this when she went out during the Christmas season.

So I would hang out with the St. Michael’s singles and just because I didn’t have people asking me all those rude questions. And it was fun, and it was their parishioners not mine, and so you know, I certainly was a priest. They knew I was a priest, but they didn’t really care because I was not their priest. And so they had a great social Christmas Soiree, so I think we had, some holiday Advent thing. So Jay and I had a wedding to do at our parish and then I had come in black slacks and my collar. And, of course, our vestments to do the wedding and then I stepped into the ladies room and put on a cute little festive top, nothing immodest, of course. But definitely festive, and I changed my earrings. And I don’t know, nothing big but a little sparkly probably and fuzzed up my hair, I had longer hair then, kinda fluffed up my hair and I was ready to go to a party. And obviously ready to go to a party.

And so the altar guild is finishing up after the wedding. Oh and I put on heels, too. So how do you convert priest silly suit into Christmas party gear in about 5 minutes flat. Fine. Jewelry, heels, new shirt, you’re all set. So, and nice black pants. They caught a glimpse of me leaving, the church, I think this was on a Friday night. And it was all over the church, Fay had a date, Fay was all dressed up. Did you see that pretty jacket she was wearing? Oh my gawd, her earrings, and she was in heels. So it was all over the altar guild like wild fire which means it was all over the church. So Sunday morning I got people asking me “how was
your date?” Gasp. “You can tell me, really. Now, honestly, what did you do this weekend?” “I went to the St. Michael’s single party with (and I named off like five of my friends that were there.) And then Saturday I was home in bed by eight o’clock because I always am for church on Sunday. Why? What’s this? What makes you think I had a date?” (Fay, 2006)

She now finds the whole incident humorous, but she was not happy that the congregation was spending so much time speculating about her social life. She had been engaged before she entered the ministry and she had hoped to keep some semblance of privacy when she began to socialize again. The altar guild speculated on her private life because she was dressed differently. Appearances are extremely important in many organizations, not only maintaining an appropriate moral image, but also presenting a desirable public image.

A significant portion of Yvonne’s life story combines the issues of appearance and hostility. She was aware of the double standard that exists concerning men’s and women’s appearance, but she had not been prepared when it became a major impediment for the diocesan Commission on Ministry. This committee had the power to reject her calling to the ministry, and they were prepared to do it because she did not present the image that they thought was appropriate. Yvonne’s narrative illustrates their contradictory behavior.

I am a fat woman and I have always been a fat woman, fat kid, fat teenager, I mean I’ve just always have been. But having said that I never experienced any time in my life, not being able to do something because of my weight. Some
physical things, maybe. But not that things that were important to me. I’m never experienced road blocks, I dated, I had lots of friends, I mean I experienced horrendous teasing of course. You know, name-calling and all that stuff. But in terms of what I wanted to do in my life, there was never a road block for me…..that I was conscious of having anything to do with my weight. Okay? Until the ordination process. And I’m never in my life anticipated that it would be an issue. But it was a huge issue and ... It just caused all kinds of ....

It had to do with the diocesan Commission on Ministry… So I was told I could go to seminary, as long as I lost 50 pounds before I went. I accepted that, well actually even then. One of the people on the Commission on Ministry who was the psychologist recommended that I have the stomach stapling surgery and in fact made an appointment for me with a doctor in Charleston. And I thought that the only way I was going to get to go to seminary was to have surgery. I went for the appointment, and the doctor after talking to me for a few minutes said “Do you want to do this?” And I said “No. I don’t want to do this.” He said “Then why are you here?” And I said well I told him why. He said that you’re not an acceptable candidate and just dismissed me.

Well that kinda made that woman mad, cause she thought that was the answer for everything. And you know. I had never been on a diet. Being forced to lose weight or whatever had never been an issue. I’d always felt accepted for who I was, and how lucky for me… until now. So I had a doctor at Trinity Huntington who put me on a diet and I agreed to lose all this weight. It was all so
stupid when I think about it, but I felt like I had to make these agreements, you know, that I would do this. Anyway, it went on and on, it was very painful, it was five years of just always being in conflict with the Commission on Ministry. And what happened, and I have to be very honest about this: weight, my weight was their issue. What became an issue for them, and probably rightfully so, was what they perceived to be an authority issue. Now it wasn’t really, like I was defying them by not losing weight. Saying I would and then not doing it. So that I was being defiant so therefore, you know, you’re under authority and how can...dadda dadda da. Then I’m sure they questioned my emotional stability because I broke down every time I talked with them, you know, and I didn’t handle it well. I did not handle their road block and their questioning of my sense of call to serve God and to serve the church. And that somehow I was inadequate to do that because I was fat. And that’s what I was hearing. In fact, I have papers that basically say that. That are just, you know.

And it was really hard to sit there because sitting around that table, doing some of that questioning were at least four men who were extremely overweight and who sat in that room questioning me, smoking. Because people still did that then. But…and they…and several of them, three of them were priests and one was a physician. And so

Well, I kinda felt like that and actually what happened. So I did go to seminary, and I had loads of fun at seminary, I did well at seminary, I was a leader in seminary, the faculty, including the dean never understood what our
Commission on Ministry’s problem was with me because to them I was an exemplary (I wasn’t the best student in the world), but you know, I was perfect person for ordination and they saw that in me, they recognized those gifts, they honored them, they encouraged them And ah you know, all those kinda things and just would not, and just couldn’t understand it. Well, I talked with one of my professors, a woman who said to me “Have you ever thought this was, that this has anything to do with you being a woman? Because fat really is a woman’s issue.” And I said “NO. Well I can’t change that too.” And that’s what helped me put all this together, part of why, and I understood part of my resistance. I knew why I was resisting, what they were telling me because it was incongruent with the image of who you see in front of you. And then it became abundantly clear. And then one of the folks who went through the process with me and was approved without problems was a man who at the time was very overweight. And he was in seminary with me and I thought “Huh, maybe.”

Because she could not comply with their demand to lose the weight, she was assigned an extended internship following graduation. While working in a poverty-stricken, moribund mining town she learned that she can still find a way to serve God, even if she were not be ordained in the Episcopal Church. Yvonne eventually was able to negate the weight barrier because she went to the next COM session with a renewed confidence in herself and she stopped letting them intimidate her. Her newly resurrected self-composure so impressed some of the influential members of the Commission that they approved her ordination. Yvonne is now the rector with a thriving congregation and also
serves as representative of the current bishop. She no longer has to contend with professional or spiritual rejection because she does not present the correct picture. I could not help but share tears with Yvonne while she told her story. I could feel her frustration and ambivalence about her experiences. I could see that those incidents of personal intimidation and emotional coercion had been turned around to produce an exceptionally sensitive priest.

_Hostility and Harassment_

Just like any organization, some members feel safe or are indifferent to creating unpleasant or hostile work environments. In response to past problems, the church requires its officers to participate in Sexual Misconduct Prevention training programs and offers sessions for both lay and ordained participants. Unfortunately, this has not protected some of the participants from being the victims of mistreatment. The following stories evoked incredulity and anger because I could not believe that members of an organization that purports to be empathetic and sensitive to the needs and vulnerability of others would behave in such reprehensible ways.

The gender concealing garments do not protect female priests from a sexist opportunist. In the early 1980s, one participant was attending a diocesan event and was in a gathering room with other priests, vesting and lining up to enter the cathedral when a male priest reached from behind and grabbed her breasts. She felt humiliated and angered, but she realized that this person could get away with calling it a joke or a prank because he was a close friend of the bishop. She still slapped him though. His actions
were overtly hostility and arrogant. Others use more subtle expressions of hostility, but it was always hurtful.

Olivia entered the seminary three years after her husband, in 1980, and therefore did not have his presence to deflect victimization. She was lucky to have the support of the staff and administration.

I was the only woman in my class. I uh, remember the early…I guess I was in classes for about a week when I started getting hate mail. Just atrocious notes in my box you know. You know, “bitch!” and “You don’t belong here” and dah dah dah… I cried. I don’t let everyone see me cry, but I cry. And I took them to the dean.

And the staff figured out who it was. It was one person. And then I remember sitting in my class one day and looking, and they had told me who it was. And I was just sitting there like, “awesome, he’s dismissed and discharged and sent home.” (Olivia, 2006)

Olivia was fortunate that the seminary’s administration intervened on her behalf. The difficulties do not always come from a disgruntled classmate, sometimes it comes from those who should be providing support.

When she entered the seminary in 1977, Tamara’s choice to become a priest was supported by her parish priest, but she was not prepared for the resistance that she would experience from the Commission on Ministry. The Bishop delayed meeting with her for months. He finally agreed to let her begin the process, but he promised that he would be harder on her than he had ever made it on any man. Eventually, he did present her to the
Commission on Ministry for evaluation. She was accepted by the Commission after a long deliberation, but that was not the end of the opposition.

A few weeks later I got a letter from the Bishop saying uh, you’re going to have to come back. And what had happened was that the Bishop had overridden the committee’s veto, they didn’t want me to apply. And I know that it was Father B., he was my priest. Uhm, I loved that man for his advocacy, for his standing with me through the whole thing. I know that it was Father B. who helped the Bishop override the committee’s veto, but nonetheless, the politics were such that that the committee demanded that I come back. And so my postulancy was rescinded or had to be reconfirmed or…I’m not really sure now what the technical details were. Uhm, but anyway, all I knew was I had to go back and go through it again. And Father B. took me down into the chapel of the diocesan house, and we went to the chapel of the basement. And we knelt and prayed there and when we stood up he put his hands on my shoulders and he said, he looked me straight in the eyes and he said, “God has called you to be a priest. No one can take that away from you except God.” Well, I mean that, that was the greatest gift. (Tamara, 2006)

This was just the beginning of the resistance which Tamara and her female cohorts faced when they entered seminary only four weeks after the Philadelphia 11 had made their stand. Even though the dean of her seminary welcomed women, many of the faculty were not pleased to have them as students. Professors did not offer courses in church administration and Eucharistic procedures while the first women postulants were in attendance because they did not want female students. During a course on church
history, the professor announced that there was only one “A” and he did not look pleased. Tamara went to her mailbox to check her grade, and learned that she was the successful student. A male classmate read over her shoulder and, instead of congratulating her, he asked, “What are you trying to do, make it hard on us guys?” She maintained the highest grades, but three years later that same male classmate received the outstanding scholar award. Discriminations like that are not easily dismissed. The male classmates and faculty were not the only source of rejection. Other women were at the seminary studying for Christian Education degrees; they felt that these impertinent women should not aspire to the priesthood and intentionally avoided or ignored them, creating an even stronger feeling of isolation. Tamara’s bishop never changed his mind about women being ordained and resented when the women ordinands work was superior to the men. He might have felt that he had to comply with the change in the church constitution, but he would not comply graciously.

There were now three women in my diocese who were candidates to be deacon and priests, and two men. The women were all excelled in all 7 categories of ordination. The men failed a couple of categories. We were all ordained deacon on June 4th of ‘77 at the same service. We were all sent to remedial classes… all five of us.

The men had jobs as associate or assistant curates or whatever. The women did not have jobs. My bishop told me that if I wanted to make a living that I should go work at the supermarket in the meat department. (Tamara, 2006) His opposition actually created a career opportunity for Tamara and his abusive behavior
made her sensitive to others who have suffered from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Her undergraduate degree was in psychology and counseling enabled her to get a counseling job with Planned Parenthood while she attended remedial classes. Eventually she and all her classmates were ordained and looking for congregations. She was sent to a tiny church which could not afford a full-time priest so she continued her counseling work. She went on to earn a doctorate in counseling and she now serves as a certified pastoral psychotherapist as well as serving occasionally as substitute rector at her host church.

Martha felt the call to the ministry when she was in eighth grade, but she was Catholic and accepted that women who wanted to serve God became nuns. After graduating from a parochial high school, she entered the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a teaching order. She earned a BA in English, education, and theology; a Masters of Divinity; a Masters in Religious Studies; and, in 1990, a Doctorate in Moral Theology from St Michael’s, Toronto. She attended the Anglican Church during that time, but she had not intended to change denominations. She is also a captain in the Naval Reserve, where she serves as a chaplain. She was asked why she was not ordained by a Catholic chaplain after he heard her preach while she was stationed in Charleston, SC in 1994.

It’s one thing if lay people say, “Why aren’t you a preacher?” But when a Catholic, and Episcopal clergy say to me, why aren’t you pursuing this…but when a Roman Catholic priest says it, it’s like I can no longer, not deal with this. I have to deal with this. (Martha, 2006)
Martha had been teaching theology at a Catholic university and seminary in Pennsylvania when she finally decided to pursue Episcopal ordination. The university tried to fire her after she was ordained, but she was tenured, so she was re-assigned to the graduate center for social and public policy. It would have been logical to send her to the English department since she had a degree in that, but the intent was to remove her from the classroom. Ironically, she is still assigned to the social and public policy department, but the theology department desperately needed someone to teach several classes in her specialization so they decided that she could do that as long as she was not officially part of the department.

Concurrently, her Bishop assigned her to the only black Episcopal Church in western Pennsylvania. Martha retains her post with the university because the Bishop refuses to approve funds that would enable the church to pay for a full-time rector. The current bishop does not support Martha’s ordination and he assigned her to a church that is barely holding on in the poorest neighborhood in the city. They cannot have evening events or programs because of the violence in the area. The church is surrounded by a chain link fence which has to be locked at night to try to deter vandalism. Martha describes the congregation members as “wonderful, committed, dedicated people you could ever want. They are so fearless.” Together, they stand up to the Bishop and the community’s problems to provide services to the families and the elderly. Martha has not lost her faith, nor let down her congregation despite facing hostility at both of her jobs and dealing with a bishop who does not support the continuation of her church.
Paula’s church is not too far from Martha’s church geographically, but culturally, it could be on the opposite side of the planet. Her church is considered a destination church because people commute as much as 50 miles to attend services and participate in activities there. The church is in one of the dioceses seeking alternative primatial oversight, but her congregation does not want to follow their bishop and leave the EC/USA. The best analogy would be comparing the situation to the American Civil War: imagine if Roanoke, VA did not want to secede from the Union with the rest of Virginia. Bishop Jefferts Schori is constrained from intruding directly because she is trying to honor the church’s constitution which limits her intervention…

We’re doing it as effectively as we can from a distance. One of the challenges of the rule book in our church is that Bishops don’t go wandering into other dioceses. (Jefferts Shori, 2006)

Paula still serves on committees on the national level despite the political/religious stand of her bishop. Luckily, her congregation is self-sufficient and does not depend upon the diocese for additional operating funds.

Even though the hiring committee might have chosen to hire a female priest, individual members of the congregation can resist. Most congregational members develop a feeling of ownership for a church. Priests come and go, but their family stays. Yvonne was appointed to be a part of a clergy team which served several congregations. On her first visit to her first church, she was concerned because the Bishop assigned clergy team and they were not hired by the churches.
I knew the little church in Grafton was not too excited about having a woman come. But they were getting me or nobody. I mean, they knew that, the whole cluster knew that. So it was an assignment, they didn’t interview me or hire me or anything like that, I was sent to them. I was happy to be going anywhere frankly. I went to do the service in Grafton, and went back into the little room back there that they have and Virginia McNamar was sitting there, and she was an elderly lady in her seventies or so, and had a cane. And I walked back in and she kinda grabbed on my robe and pulled me down to her a little bit, you know… kinda like a… And she said “well” shaking her finger at me “I just wanta tell ya, I don’t believe in women priests, I don’t believe in women coal miners, I don’t believe in women climbing telephone poles. But this is my church and I’m not leaving just cause you’re here.” And I said “Well, Miss McNamar.” “My names Virginia.” “Virginia, I’m glad you’re not gonna leave.” I didn’t say anything else to her but I thought, oh man.

Well, she was never ugly toward me and in fact we became great friends, you know, when I was leaving I went to see her and I said “So Virginia, think you’d ever…. (What did I say?)…Did you ever think you’d hire a woman priest by choice?” She said “Well I don’t know. But I sure would give them more of chance than I gave you.” And I said “Well, that’s pretty good of you.” And she laughed and hugged me. And you know that kinda thing. So it was somewhat tongue in cheek on her part, but that, you know, I think, that that is been the
experience of lots of women. That’s it’s really women who are more opposed to ordained women than men. (Yvonne, 2003)

At least Ms. McNamara told Yvonne how she felt and she also gave her a chance. Anna knew that there were members of the congregation that did not recognize women clergy but, because it was a large church with a several priests, they had been able to avoid actually having to directly associate with her or the other female priest.

However, there was one Sunday where Joy was the celebrant and I was the assisting priest, and we were dedicating some altar hangings, they were memorial altar hangings from a former member who had died and their family members were there. And, and those family members would not take communion at all because, she, of course, had blessed the bread, and we were both distributing, we divided the altar rail. They couldn’t go to either side without getting tainted. Well, I guess that, in their mind, because Joy had, had been the celebrant, and then we were both distributing it. So there was, other people told us the conversation in the pews among these family and friends, were they gonna take? And some of them got up and left and never took it. (Anna, 2006)

Several of the participants had similar stories. A congregant can express his or her unhappiness with a female priest during the Eucharist and it can actually be more effective than just leaving the church. With the blatant act of refusing to take communion, the person is able to say, in front of the whole congregation, that he or she is rejecting the validity of the priest’s vocation. Elizabeth faced this rejection by two families in her new church; one family eventually accepted her, but it was a different story with the other.
The next family that has some issue with my being a woman: his objection is to my celebrating, he doesn’t think my priesthood is valid, so he doesn’t think the uh, absolution of sins is, can be given by a woman, or the Eucharist can be celebrated by a woman, or the blessing can be given by a woman. None of that. He just doesn’t believe that my ministry is valid. When he attends church with his family, none of them take communion. But when his family comes to church without him (laughing), they take communion. (Elizabeth, 2006)

Elizabeth is able to accept that she will not be able to earn the father’s acceptance and she is reconciled that his family will not openly disagree or defy his decision. Congregants especially those with children, face confusion with another aspect of female priests. Male priests have traditionally used the label “father,” following the Catholic tradition. But it does not seem appropriate or respectful to refer to a female priest as “father.”

*What’s in a Name?*

All of the participants have been asked at one time or another, “What do you want us to call you?” The Episcopal and Anglican Churches have their roots in Catholicism, and therefore, the organization’s members (lay and ordained) were used to following the Catholic tradition of referring to the priest as “father.” The term pastor, which is used by several Protestant denominations, is not a recognized title in the Anglican tradition. As a former Methodist, I was used to calling the preacher “Reverend.” There has been no church wide discussion to determine and formalize a correct or proper title for female priests. More than half of the participants simply want to be called by their first or baptismal names, which is Katie’s choice:
When people insist to call me something, I say, I ask them, what’s more important, my baptism or my ordination? And they say your baptism. And I said, I was baptized Kate. So that’s what people call me. I said, please don’t call me Mother Turzillo, sounds like I should be making pizza somewhere, you know? (Laughter) And when I was ordained, my mother who had a great sense of humor, was not a religious person at all said, honey don’t let them call you “mother”, it’s only half a word. (Laughter) Well, when they were, when I was in seminary, uhm, some of the little kids started calling me Rev Kat. And that stuck. And so when parents really need their kids to call me something, they call me Rev Kat. (Katie, 2006)

Three participants preferred to use the honorific “mother” as a title since male priests are usually addressed by “father.” They felt that it did provide enough respect and authority to support their status and relationship with the congregation. Elizabeth is one of those who use that title:

People ask me “What do you want me to call you?” And I, and I tell them, “Most people call me Elizabeth.” But if you want to say something more formal, you could call me Mother Elizabeth or Mother Smith.

Well, uhm, this was a big conversation amongst my classmates in seminary. In Connecticut, it’s a much more formal, a little bit more high church place to be. And it’s very common for the women to be called Mother. That was just the expectation that when you were ordained, that you would be called
Mother. And uh, another thing we talked about was that many people mistakenly call their rectors or their associate rectors Reverend Elizabeth or Reverend Smith. Not realizing it’s an, it’s an adjective; it’s not a title. So you can address a letter to somebody saying, the Reverend Elizabeth Smith, but it, it describes. (Elizabeth, 2006)

Anna prefers that adults use her first or baptismal name, but, as a parent, she understands why it is important to try to teach children to be respectful so she also asks that the youth call her “mother.”

I don’t know. I think the Episcopal Church doesn’t have a good title. Up in Chicago I was called Mother Anna or Mother Harris. They had a tradition of calling the male priests Father here…So, I am comfortable with Mother Anna. My only thing was that I thought the children needed to call me something formal. So, it either needed to Mother Anna or Mrs. Harris is fine with me. Mostly they call me Mother Anna. The adults, they’re welcome to call me Anna. I don’t feel strongly about that one way or the other.

And some people call me Reverend Anna or Reverend Harris, but typically, it’s “the” Reverend. …If you’re looking at correct grammar. So. And in the Episcopal Church we, we really don’t use pastor like the Lutherans do… And the Presbyterians. And we don’t really have a good name. And I’m not sure Father and Mother are good titles. I think they set up some images and some dependencies that are probably not healthy. (Anna, 2006)

Several participants were cognizant of the connotative associations, both positive
and negative, when the titles of “Father” or “Mother” are used. Most want to avoid creating pretense of false authority that is associated by using parental titles. Fay actually did not like the status connotations that accompany some titles, so she prefers a southern colloquialism:

Fay. No question about it? In Dallas, my Bishop called me Mother Fay which sounds likes bad nursery rhyme. And I’m not old enough. When I’m 90 you can call me Mother Fay, and I’m not. And I have friends who are nuns so that to me is an affront to their senior sister… who is often called in an abbey, Mother, a convent. It’s not my job. I’m not a nun, I’m a priest. And we don’t have, in my opinion, an equivalent to Father, that functions the same way that a non-gendered title.

When we have families who are working with their children on more formal forms of address, Miss is fine for me. Miss Fay. A lot of kids call me Miss Fay, which has a nice ring for them; it is easy to say, even when you lisp, when you’re two, Misthp Fay. I get lots of spit sometimes when they say it, which is fine and I love the kids.

When I was in Carolina, it was Miz Fay for a lot of our kids. So that helps families who are working on more formal forms of address between children and adults. Absolutely fine. But the bishopric doesn’t have, verbally, a form of address. Our school chaplain in Texas went by Chaplain Marcia because it was her job title. So the school kids called her Chaplain Marcia. And they called the rector Father Jay. Well, I ain’t about to be motha. And I’m not anybody’s Father
and it just, it gets very, very dicey. I usually, and I’ve also seen a lot, not in this Diocese so much, but other colleagues have used their title as a distancing mechanism. Or an elevating mechanism, which I think is unhelpful. I serve WITH a congregation or I serve a congregation, I’m not the priest over anybody. I have a particular job within the congregation, but my primary identity is baptized Christian, I also happen to be ordained as a priest and that is my function within the community. But that’s not my internal identity. (Fay, 2006)

Sophia’s previous placement had been with a Lutheran Church so she was familiar with the traditional title of “pastor.” She was not prepared for the church members to address her by her first name when she took the rector’s position at an Episcopal Church which had had a female priest previously.

What to be called? The naming, the power of naming. So in Cleveland, and most people call me Pastor or Pastor Sophia. And the thing, the part was that I needed to bring myself that now I have this office and responsibility with and for the people. I arrived there, I lived in a gorgeous parsonage, uh, and I liked the house very much. But I arrived there, moved in the afternoon, and it was right next to the church. In the afternoon, they had a dinner in the gathering hall for me. So, somebody, it was 2 weeks before my ordination. I’m sitting on a table, being exhausted from the move and I hear somebody saying “Pastor, pastor, pastor!” And I thought, “Oh! It’s me! (laughter) So that was the first experience. I thought, oh yeah, I’m the pastor. Takes some getting used to. I’m used to somebody says Pastor! And somebody else responds. So that was the first thing. That was funny I
think. So I was called Pastor Sophia there.

Then I arrived here, and right away people started referring to me by first name. The beginnings, they started calling me Sophia. “Hi Sophia. Hello Sophia.” But it seems to be a tradition, especially among this congregation. All the pastors, male or female are referred to by first names only.

“Father” is out of the question, I never even knew about this mother thing, but I also believe down the road there will be only very few people who will have the privilege to call me mother, none of them parishioners. Uhm, so I decided Reverend. And I needed to get used to being referred to as Reverend Sophia. It’s very different sound to it, which is not easy for me to pronounce. So a couple of people I said Reverend Sophia is okay and that is how I introduce myself or on the phone I answer “Reverend Sophia.” That’s my e-mail address. I still write a letter to both parishes telling my story. This is who I am. This is possibly what you were curious about. I am Lutheran; this is how I ended up here and so on. But then literally I ran out of room. The question was in my mind, how do I address this naming issue? But the Sophia thing had already started so I decided let it go by. I do believe the people do respect me and my office. So it’s not really a big issue. So I didn’t make any references to the name in the letter. (Sophia, 2006)

Lily recognized the power that is established when the priest requires a title. As mentioned earlier, she came from a large, prominent congregation in the east. And she felt that the use of “mother” or “father” sustained an inappropriate hierarchy.
I use the title Reverend. So, yeah. When I…we all had to decide. What are we going to be called? [It is] something that men don’t have to do. I’m not their mother. And I don’t believe calling men Father. I, it….you know, it’s that one little passage that says you know, “Nobody is your Father, except God.” And that that’s not where we’re supposed to. That….that’s that honorific that expects respect. Expects re, expects power. so mother is out of the question for me. I grew up, like I said, in a pretty prominent church. And we always called the, the, uhm…the priests “mister.” Mr. this, Mr. that. Mr. that. We never called them, we did not call them father, or reverend or anything. Other than Mr. so-and-so. Uhm, and I can’t even remember what we called him, but I was part of that first generation that had the children calling us by first name, as teachers rather than Miss So-and-so, or Mrs. So-and-so. But recognizing that I had to be called something in the newspapers, and you know, addressed by my congregation. I took the black perspective. The black women clergy that I had met early on always were called Reverend so-and-so, by first name. And, for them, it was a matter of you have to instill respect by your title. You have to accept your position by allowing people to use language that uhm, that that helps you assign. Whether it’s Professor, or Doctor, or Reverend. And what we have is the best term we have is reverend so-and-so, even though that, that’s a poor use of the word Reverend. And when I came here, it was immediate; they needed a Reverend in front of it. They couldn’t go from calling him Father whatever his name was, and Father Winter. And still, most people do say, “Father this, Father
that, Father this, Father that.” And so, they needed that honorific so that, so Reverend Lily, or Reverend Johns is what I…I said if you need to do that, that’s fine. Otherwise you can call me by my first name, because I’m a sister on the journey.

The topic of title or suffix might seem like a trivial or mundane matter, but respect and authority are issues which affect any woman functioning in a career which has been patriarchally dominated for centuries. Eschewing a title can diminish the status and authority which a female priest needs to maintain control and respect from individuals who may diminish her validity.

The participants in this study have traveled varied paths from many different origins to finally convene with a shared objective. They tell their stories to help others understand God and their calling better. Like steeplechase racers, they have to jump over hurdles, trudge through water, cover long distances, and still have strength to stand at the end.
CHAPTER 6: THE MORAL OF THEIR STORIES AND THE CREATION OF A NARRATIVE

Women in the priesthood contend with the same challenges all women face in the workplace, except they have a few additional complications because religious organizations are exempt from federally protected rights such as the Equal Opportunity Employment Act and other affirmative action policies. The separation of church and state permits a denomination to determine the criteria, including gender and race, for acceptable candidates for membership, ministry, and administration. The constitution and canons of a denomination can include policies which specifically proscribes discrimination, but that is at the discretion of the membership. In the United States, the Episcopal Church membership, clergy and lay, voted in 1977 to recognize the ministry and ordination of women, a canonical change subsequently adopted by the Anglican Churches of Canada and Great Britain. Because of these decisions, these provinces experienced a cultural evolution within the organization. Progress was forced upon all members, lay and ordained alike. Lay women had only recently been allowed to attend diocesan and national conventions, and now there were women in the chancel.

Organizational members who participated in the early mixed-gender groups in the seminary and, subsequently, at clergy and diocesan gatherings might have felt awkward because they had to create new routines and learn new communication protocol (Buzzanell, 2000) in territory which had been familiar and traditional for hundreds of years. Most organizations usually adapt to those types of problems fairly quickly (Wood, 2001). The benefits of mixed-gender groups interacting in an organization significantly
outweigh the latent detriments (Dougherty, 2001). Women bring a different approach to
team work, problem solving, and decision making. This communication difference
facilitates cooperative behaviors among members and acts as a counterbalance to
authoritarian leadership styles (Mulac & Bradac, 1995). The true benefit of this
combination of masculine and feminine communication styles is an organization which
can respond to the needs of contemporary members. If an organization is to survive, it
needs to adapt and grow, and religious organizations are no different.

Many of the changes in the denomination parallel the societal changes which have
occurred since that time. Secular businesses and organizations which never expected to
have women members now do, and the members have had to adopt strategies to adapt,
such as mentoring (Halcomb, 1980; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kram, 1983), and networking
(Helgesen, 1990; Northcraft & Gutek, 1993; Welch, 1980; Nelson, 1993). Religious
organizations are resistant to change for fear of following a temporary trend (Boyd,
1992; Chang, 1997; Nelson, 1993; Nesbitt, 1994, 1997a). Because of this resistance to
change, the ordination of women is still not recognized by a large portion of the
international provinces, especially in regions such as Africa and South America, which
retain a paternalistic hegemony. The Anglican tradition theoretically embraces this
absence of universal agreement. Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori believes that the
strength of this denomination lies in the idea that its dialogue is not based on absolutes,
but on questions. She also believes that its authority lies in shared communion,
community, and communication.
The doctrinal case for the ordination of women is based on both the reclamation of a historic tradition and the recognition of the contemporary reality. Women were among the early Christian disciples and were gradually marginalized (Dawley, 1963; Norén, 1991; Torjesen, 1993). The first and second feminist wave included the rekindled effort to reclaim a more active and powerful standing in the church hierarchy. The women’s rights movement of the 1960s opened up careers to which women were previously denied access, including the ministry. The stories that comprise their narratives provide inspiration for people entering any profession to which they have denied access because of gender, race, ethnicity, or age. Society and organizations do not come without resistance.

The interviews were participant-driven to allow the contributors to tell the stories which composed their life histories in a manner which would reveal how they understood and shared their experiences in this vocation (Boje, 2001). The results are arranged in a sequence that follows the narrative pattern which was used by most of the participants. They preferred to tell the stories of their “spiritual awakening” to the call first, a natural choice, since it is the beginning of their ministry and because they would wish to address the positive elements first no matter when they experienced the call to minister. They then related stories of their challenges and how those were overcome. The participants then moved onto episodes which illustrated how they achieved their personal and spiritual goals (the pinnacle of their life histories). Most followed their success with a discussion of their current situation. They did not share stories of rejection or harassment until they felt comfortable talking with me.
Most of the participants became gifted storytellers because of the nature of this profession and the methods used to justify their vocation. They also had to be good listeners. The decision to enter this profession is based on “answering a calling.” That specific word choice is indicative of how they perceive and define their relationship with spirituality and with their vocation.

Did You Call?

Wengraf (2001) states that people are culturally indoctrinated by storytelling, particularly when generating the narrative of their life. Boje (2001) prefers to use the concept of antenarrative to describe the nonlinear accounts that comprise a life story. He asserts that people tend to use an associative, fragmented, even incoherent structure when telling their life story. I found that the participants in this study were especially sensitive to the linear narrative structure because it is integral to several stages of the ordination process. They are required to develop a narrative which authenticates and explicates the validity of the call. Through repetition, the call narrative becomes refined and cohesive. As a sage philosopher once said, it is best to start at the beginning, and the majority of the participants identified a specific time and incident which marked the beginning of a call to serve.

A calling can be defined as an inner awareness or urging toward a vocation, occupation, or trade. To be accepted by discernment committees, it is essential that the supplicants are able to articulate and defend this inner awareness and to attribute it to God taking an active interest in their becoming an advocate of faith.
Seven of the participants identified specific incidents that occurred when they were children. Yvonne spied on the priest celebrating communion with her homebound grandmother. She pinpoints this moment as when she first felt a calling to the priesthood. She was fascinated by the ritual and the symbology. It would also be fair to say that a young child could also identify with the miniaturized communion set. It does resemble a child’s tea set.

Fay also identifies a specific childhood memory which, in retrospect, elucidates her interpretation of faith. Her father’s military career required them to move frequently. She usually acclimated quickly to each new location, partially because her mother would become involved with the base church. She tells the story of the rotating cross and crucifix to illustrate how she understands the differences among Christian denominations. Their stories differ in the details, but it is essentially the same: Yvonne watched the priests transform their front room into a sanctuary so her grandmother could have the benefit of communion and Fay saw the cross and the crucifix as opposite sides of the same coin. The transformative element is important in both of these stories.

Fay also vividly recalled an even earlier memory of when she learned the voices on high were provided by a choir of humans in a balcony and not angels. Interestingly, when she decided to return to the church, it was not for the liturgical or spiritual, but to join the choir and to add her voice and to find self-expression. The need to have a voice is as important as the transformative condition.

Katie had been raised Catholic and understood, though she did not accept, that her church would not accept her as a priest. Her organizational entry story fluctuates between
following a traditional path and then diverting from that path. She left the church when she was 13 years old. She returned when she was 21 and in college. She was confirmed and stayed with the Catholic Church even though women still could not be ordained. She left a doctoral program in English and began a Master’s in psychology because she felt the need to provide counsel and healing. While she was doing this, she still felt the pull to the priesthood which was substantiated by both lay and clergy friends. The call or aspiration was still persistent and she could no longer ignore it, so she walked out of her church into one she just “happened across” because she had been following bagpipe music. She joined a new denomination because she could no longer suppress or resist the call to serve. This irresistible or persistent need is the next important condition to all of the ordination stories.

Jane described the persistent feeling as having a clanging gong ringing in her mind. She was volunteering in her church, leading group meetings for those touched by AIDS and HIV. She had lost a brother to that disease in 1990 and the priest of her new, adopted denomination was asking her to help others cope with insensitivity and to increase community awareness and compassion. Combining this with her experiences at retreats, Jane responded to the calling and to fill a personal void. She also developed an open and honest relationship with her congregation. During Lent a few years ago, the church had invited clergy from different denominations to share the story of their faith journey and their struggles to be ministers. She decided to share her family’s story, including the information that she had lost a brother to AIDS, that she had a gay sister (her two other siblings are straight), and, with her son’s permission, that her son was also
gay. She spoke of how it had framed her calling to the ministry and the importance of a church which welcomes all who want to worship Christ; a church which advertises that “all are welcome” and lives by that concept.

Sophia spoke of someone tapping her on the shoulder and saying, “You, you, you.” Paula was between the ages of 10 and 12, and taking her dogs on a long walk when she felt as though someone was calling her. “And it was a nice sunny day and I…that’s all I can tell you. It was just like some time, I knew on that sidewalk, that I was being called by God, and I didn’t know what that meant. But it was just like this connection that I, you know…it’s like almost unexplainable. Although, I just really sort of resonate with Samuel in the book of Samuel when God is trying to get Samuel” (2006). They felt or sensed an external force demanding their attention and commitment.

As a teen, Anna had not consciously considered becoming a priest but, in retrospect, she cannot deny that her life was following that path. Despite her family being ambivalent about religion and unchurched, she became involved in an evangelical Bible study group led by an enthusiastic, (and naïve) born-again teacher while in high school. She also had chosen to attend a private women’s college which had an active religion studies program. Her original intent was to go on for a master’s in social work after graduation, but she missed the application date. As mentioned in chapter 5, she began working in the dean’s office which then led to her accepting a position as a Christian education director, which led to moving to another church and denomination, which led to eventually answering a less mystical or direct calling. Fay discussed creating obstacles such as applying to only one seminary or applying to a Canterbury studies program with
limited enrollment. Cara had a variety of jobs which she felt all led her to the priesthood. Sophia had made a comment to a friend that she would like to improve her English speaking skills which led to a connection to someone who offered her a summer job as an au pair just before she began her seminary training. Most of the participants felt that there was some intervention which moved them onto and along the path to the priesthood.

The call narratives are usually composed of (a) an identifiable episode which is linked with a spiritual awareness, (b) a transformative experience, (c) a need to have a voice, (d) a persistent or a nagging feeling that they should be doing something else, (e) a force demanding their attention and commitment, and (f) a sense of some intervention which moves them along a path. The participants use different examples or incidents to create or assign meaning to the experience, but the structure is consistent among their stories. After they respond to the call, it is necessary to learn more than exegetical skills, it is also necessary to learn the role of the priest and the culture of the church.

Beginning the life histories with renderings of their unique call experiences fulfills the purpose of orientation and provides an opportunity for exposition. The participants used these orienting episodes to provide a foundation for the rest of their personal narrative. These episodes were usually followed by obstacles which they had to overcome before they could achieve their spiritual objective. The variety and degree of difficulty differed among the participants, but it remained a common theme across the narratives. The priests reached the culmination of their narratives with successfully navigating the obstacles and being ordained.
The Role of Priest

Every organization requires that members adapt to the cultural environment and every job within that organization requires adjustment specific to that institution (Heath & Bryant, 2000; Lind, 2005). Having a formal education in the foundations of a field permits a member to make proficient and knowledgeable adaptations to a specific organization. The Episcopal Church is no different from most secular professions because the members must have training or education previous to being considered for appointment within the organization. The applicant comes to the individual congregation with this training and all of their previous experience, and then has to learn how to function within that specific unit of the church. Each congregation and church is unique and the successful priest will have to adapt and encourage the congregation to accommodate the new priest. It is important that the congregation and the priest complement each other. They do not have to be completely simpatico but mutual respect is essential. Serving as a priest requires public performance, counseling, managerial, and community liaison skills. Priests learn the basics while in the seminary, during pastoral education internships and through the diaconate. Previous work or employment that might seem unrelated often provides invaluable background experiences. The participants can be divided almost equally into two groups: (a) those that decided on the priesthood as a vocation early and entered the seminary shortly after completing college, and (b) those that chose to enter the ministry later and entered the seminary after having worked in other professions.
Seven of the participants claim that they knew from the time they were children that they wanted to be priests. Some of them came from denominations which do not recognize women priests or ministers. Tamara entered the seminary in 1974 immediately after the women’s ordination mutiny and was ordained deacon right on the heels of the revision of Canon III.1.1 in 1977. She and her six female cohorts did not have access to some of the training which was considered essential because male, ordained professors refused to teach the classes with women students. An important element of the education process is the experiential work or internships. All priests spend time in clinical pastoral experience during the summers between academic years. Tamara spent hers in hospitals and in psychiatric wards; training which became the foundation for her eventual pastoral niche. Even though Canon III.1.1 had been ratified by the General convention, her bishop declined to assign the female ordinands until their male classmates had completed their diaconate training. Supplicants cannot be ordained to the priesthood until they have served as a deacon and have had an altar from which to celebrate the Eucharist. Eventually, Father Albert Sam (who personally did not support women’s ordination,) spoke on Tamara’s behalf and she was ordained.

Tamara needed to find employment and to a find church. She was hired to work with Planned Parenthood because of her education and CPE training. The experience galvanized her to re-evaluate her opinions and find her calling. She went on to earn a doctorate in psychology. She still managed to serve a small congregation in up-state New York, as well as, begin a career providing counseling for victims of sexual abuse. She continues to integrate both areas by working as a full-time psychologist in
association with a large urban church in North Carolina. Her initial ambition had been to be a parish priest, but she was able to use the obstacles which her bishop created to broaden her vocational goals. Most of the women who entered the ministry during that time had difficulty finding placements, but that could be mitigated by the benefit of a more moderate or progressive seminary and a supportive bishop.

Naomi entered a more progressive seminary in 1975. Her class of 46 supplicants was equally divided between men and women; 22 men and only three of the women had managed to complete their course work and the diaconate to be ordained by graduation. Only one of the women was able to find a parish placement. Naomi got a job as a hospital chaplain. Other women in her class moved to other denominations because of the difficulties they faced. Naomi’s husband is employed by a major university and she wanted to find a congregation which was close to his location. She was only able to find a small congregation which did not have the finances to support a priest so she had to find work to supplement their income. She began working as a flight attendant and, though she was working out of New York City, she was able to return home and to her congregation every week. The experience she gained through her second job actually prepared her for her next congregation. Her husband accepted a dual dean placement in Oman and in Morgantown and she joined the protestant/Christian ministry team in her adopted home. She had become proficient in Middle Eastern languages and in international customs which allowed her to acclimate to her new situation. She continued her work as a flight attendant until September 2001. Even though both Naomi and
Tamara had entered seminaries intending to follow a traditional path to a parish ministry, their diverging experiences enhanced and empowered their ministry.

All of the participants described how their diverse employment experiences empowered their ministerial vocations. Cara was a teacher, reporter, newspaper editor, Department of Labor publications coordinator, a VA computer systems analyst, and an adult education coordinator; each of these jobs provided her with insight on human behavior and the obstacles we all have to overcome. She now is the vicar at a parish in the Eastern panhandle of West Virginia along the Appalachian Trail. Elizabeth completed her degree in English, got married, and suppressed her interest in the ministry because her husband’s work required them to move frequently. She work in retail sales, promotions, and eventually ended up in real estate in Hawaii. At that time she left the Presbyterian Church and her husband. She joined the neighborhood Episcopal Church and shortly thereafter began the ordination process. She is now working in a large southern Episcopal church with a focus on congregational growth and development. Her sales and promotional skills have helped her develop new ways to market her church. Fay’s experience with Freddie Mac and well-traveled up bringing put her in especially good stead in her first position as the sole pastor in an urban church. The church’s finances were in horrible disarray and no one, not even the treasurer, knew the true financial status of the church. It took them two years to fix the problem, but she was an experienced financier.

Susan was in the medical field before entering the ministry and also worked for several years as a hospital and hospice chaplain before being hired as a rector. She
believes that her experience has made her especially sensitive to human suffering. She believes that true ministry is relational based and that she learned true empathy through her experiences and because of the challenges she watched her own mentor overcome. Bishop McLeod entered the seminary at the same time as her second husband. She had been a stay at home mother until that point, but she had not been sheltered or protected. Her first husband had left her with four small children the day after her mother died, forever severing any contacts with his children. She had no money and no family support; it was the members of her church who provided care when she contracted the Asian flu and the pneumonia. People she did not know came in to feed her family, change diapers, care for her children, and help her heal, but she still became a victim of depression. The simple gesture of someone leaving a small bouquet of daffodils reminded her of the true compassion and became the turning point in her faith. She knew at that moment that she would find a way to serve God.

One of the contributors said that God does not waste anything. The participants used their diverse experiences to embellish and enrich their ministry. The variety of previous jobs and experiences all became pertinent to their church work. Even when the participant took a detour from the path, eventually that diversion provided knowledge which augmented their ministry. Rebecca had felt the calling when she was a young teen, but her father’s conversion, the subsequent family turmoil, and then attending a school which she found to contradict everything she had learned and understood as a youth resulted in her disengaging herself from past church experiences. She joined the Army and through that experience she learned what it meant to be a true leader. She
gained experience as a campus minister and as the sole rector at a church which tripled in size while she was there. But she also realized that she was not happy and that she would serve the church best as “a second in command, doing Christian formation work” (Rebecca, 2006). She is now in a position as an associate rector, focusing on Christian formation and congregational development.

Each of the contributors had stories of jobs which were seemingly unrelated to their work as in the priesthood but all of their experiences have enhanced their ability to serve the church. Fay was called to a church she subsequently learned was in a financial miasma. Martha’s experience as a nun, an educator, and a Naval Reserve captain helps her guide a church in an urban wasteland. Tamara’s experience with harassment, counseling abuse and rape victims, and priests who abuse their power has led her to provide spiritual and psychological counseling for those who need more help than a parish priest can provide. Bishop Jefferts Schori’s degrees (BS., MS., PhD., MDiv.) and training as an oceanographer helped her develop a logical, concise pattern of thinking which allows her to objectively analyze the Church’s current challenges. The year she graduated was the first year women were permitted to go to sea overnight on a research vessel. The first time she was chief scientist on a research cruise the captain would not speak to her because she was a woman. She had already experienced and overcome sexism in the work place long before she entered the ministry.

A seminary education attempts to teach a priest public performance, counseling, managerial, and community liaison skills, but a novice learns that he or she does not really acquire those skills until they are required and practiced. Those supplicants who
have previous experience dealing with people and difficult situations before entering the priesthood bring that advantage to their new vocation. It provides a foundation for credibility and leadership.

Authority, Power, and Leadership

Scholars have investigated what makes effective leadership in politics, business, and organizations (Heath & Bryant, 2000). Religious institutions have also tried to comprehend what makes an effective leader, let alone a great one. The characteristics that make someone an effective leader in business and politics, such as empathy, ethics, purpose, dependability, resourcefulness, and excellent communication skills (Bbooher, 2007), are the same ones needed to successfully lead a congregation, diocese, or province. Successful church leaders (a) can converse easily with congregants and staff, (b) actively listen and being willing to incorporate suggestions from church members, (c) uses a coaching rather than directing leadership style, (d) is empathetic with members, and (e) disseminate information rapidly, up-dating members as changes occur (Caputo, Hazel, & McMahon, 1994). Using Hersey & Blanchard’s Cartesian graphic representation of leadership styles (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson), most female priests rely upon behaviors that would appear in the selling/coaching and participating/supporting quadrants. Congregations consist of members who manifest moderate to high degrees of competence, high commitment, and moderate to high levels of motivation and therefore a rector or vicar who is able to focus on immediate and long term goals, identify tasks, and sustain strong relationships with the members will be the most successful.
Unfortunately, double standards still exist for women in leadership positions. Studies have confirmed a long held myth, women are “held to a higher standard for perceived competence” (Stewart, Cooper, Stewart, & Friedley, 2003). When a woman completed the same assignment as a man, and performed equally or even out-performed the male, she was evaluated as being less competent or successful. To alleviate this disparity, women have to adopt new strategies such as demonstrating competency at a task before attempting to coach others, adopt a group oriented style, and if that does not work, use negative behaviors such as disruption or more aggressive communicative behavior (Stewart, Cooper, Stewart, & Friedley, 2003). Female leaders in most professions, but especially the priesthood, must find the right balance between assertiveness and confidence behaviors versus aggression and domination behaviors, which can lead to group resentment.

It is difficult to approach the topic of leadership, authority, and power in an organization which has had problems with members abusing those privileges. Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori is especially cognizant of this topic when church history, both distant and recent, is considered. In the recent past, the church has been rocked by financial and sexual abuse scandals. In response to these problems, the church hierarchy has required that all clergy and education leaders attended sexual harassment prevention programs. The church has also changed the way that its finances are managed and audited so that it negates the opportunity for embezzlement.

The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church also limits the power and influence of Presiding Bishop and Diocesan Bishops which allows dioceses to retain
autonomy while adhering to the tenets of the denomination. In the case of Bishop Jefferts Schori, her past work has done much to shape how she exercises authority and power. She is considered a liberal by most standards, but she has great respect for the opposing point of view. Her experience as a pilot and as an oceanographer has reinforced her calm, deliberate, reflective behavior. Her skill as a thoughtful listener is recognized by both her supporters and her opposition. She might not agree with someone, but she will listen to what is said and tries to find grounds for agreement and compromise. She sees herself as collegial, sharing authority among her colleagues rather than prescribing to an authoritative style. She is not afraid to speak her mind and has clearly expressed her displeasure with the Bishops from Africa and the South American cone from preying on diocese lead by Bishops alienated by Bishop Robinson’s consecration. She has provided assistance to those congregations that do not wish to follow those discontented bishops as well.

Bishop McLeod describes herself as a steel magnolia. She lovingly refers to the members of the Diocese of Vermont as wonderfully crazy because they still elected her after she informed them that she had just been diagnosed with cervical and uterine cancer. Her prognosis was good and they were willing to take a chance with her. Father Gene Robinson had been a priest under her, before he was nominated as an episcopate candidate. The diocese had not been run in an efficient or responsible manner by the previous administration so her first job was to establish financial records. There had been no audits in years and no one was exactly sure of the income or expenditures; a $37 million dollar organization that had no accurate or verified records. She had to consider
that the national church was under fire for financial ineptitude and rectify the matter immediately by first establishing fiscal responsibility. She is proud that she was able to accomplish that with the tact of a “southern lady” (her term) while still establishing her authority. I believe she means that she can maintain composure, a calm demeanor, and an unshakeable will.

Bishop McLeod described her tenure as the Vermont bishop as trying to bring order out of chaos. She had to remove a priest from a church because he was an alcoholic and had passed out during a service. She was also responsible for initiating many of the same programs in Vermont that she had instituted in Charleston, WV: meals on wheels for the homebound, HIV/AIDS ministry, gay-lesbian-bisexual ministry. The bishop is integral to the establishment and implementation of ministry programs. This is not an easy chore because most congregations (and individuals) resist change. Bishop McLeod used, what she called, Southern charm to facilitate change. She commented that the members of the diocese seemed to be enthralled with her soft dialect and gentle mannerisms, and she never failed to use those characteristics to her advantage.

Lily had problems finding a balance between an authoritative style and with the urge to do the work herself. She was selected by the hiring committee because she had experience with congregational development, but she had always been in an associate priest position. She was the first female priest to be hired by this congregation as well. She had ideas on how a church should be run and she wanted to incorporate all of them at once. Her congregation needed time to adapt to having a full-time priest after being self-sufficient for a long time. Lily explained how she has had to learn patience and restraint
if she is going to be accepted and respected by this new congregation. She is aware that her communication style can be interpreted as censure instead of supportive criticism. Unfortunately, once a negative atmosphere has been created, it can be very difficult to regain homeostasis.

Katie had a completely different experience developing her status and relationship with her new congregation. She was able to establish a cooperative relationship with her congregation immediately. Also, she was the first female priest to be hired by this congregation, but she was able to connect with the people. Her charismatic personality empowers the people she works with and she encourages them to develop their own solutions to challenges. She asks for their assistance and input rather than proscribing specific actions. The congregation itself is proactive and takes responsibility for developing congregational and community programs. Katie recognizes that the congregation has a proprietary attitude toward her. They took care of her when her parents died; she knows that they will take care of her when her beloved dog passes. This sense of trust, mutual admiration, and support permeates the organization. She believes that she has created an atmosphere which encourages fellowship and stewardship.

Grace described her leadership style and that of most women as circular, non-competitive, cooperative, intimate, and vulnerable. She felt that women priests were more likely to use personal stories of both success and failure to illustrate a concept. Margaret would agree with Grace’s assessment, but she also found that when she had toe-to-toe disagreement with a male congregant he tried to intimidate by getting loud. She did
not back down, but she told him that they would have to agree to disagree and they would have to find a way to live with it.

Yvonne believes that having women in the field has allowed a general change in the leadership culture to develop. Women have been allowed develop more openness and be nurturing and compassionate people while still being strong leaders. She thinks this shift in perspective has also allowed male priests to do that as well, and the presence of women has enabled men who are more nurturing to be comfortable with themselves. The increased diversity of priests has weakened the traditionally austere or strict image of the correct or proper priest.

*Impression Making*

All of the participants had stories which dealt with two issues which as central to many professional women. What title do they prefer: Mother, Father, Pastor, Reverend, Rector, Ms, Mrs., Dr., or Miss? The second issue (which is not as trivial as it might seem) is, “What should I wear?” Many professions have titles which are bestowed upon members, without regard to gender, when they achieved certain ranks. For example, in education upon completion of a doctorate, an individual might insist upon being addressed as “doctor.” The same rule applies to the medical profession. In the military, a captain is a captain, and a general is a general, and they all are called “sir” without gender differentiation. Most denominations use the gender free title of pastor or reverend, but, in denominations which follow the Catholic tradition, a traditional assumption was that the person in the pulpit was male.
The most common question a female priest is asked has nothing to do with theology. Female priests are asked over and over again, “What do we call you?” The Episcopal Church does not have a gender neutral title for someone who holds the position of priest. Priests have been called “father” in the same tradition has the Catholic Church. The options include: Pastor, the Rev, Doctor (in some cases), Father, Mother, Sister, Ms (or Miz), Miss or Mrs. So-and-so, or simply the priest’s baptismal name, such as Anna or Katie. “Priestess” is automatically dismissed because of its pagan implications. The church has no guidelines for this decision and leaves it up to the priest and the congregation.

The majority of the participants preferred to use their first name when addressed by an adult member of the congregation. Several of the participants used the title “mother” while others felt that it did not have the same authority and respect as “father” so they preferred the children in the congregation to use Miss, Ms, or Mrs. depending on their marital status. Jane would “just as soon get rid of using either ‘mother’ or ‘father’” (2006). She prefers that the children call her “Miss Jane” or “Mrs. Smith” rather than “the Reverend.” Katie had different response and the children call her Rev. Kate though she does not like using ‘mother’ either. The children in Rebecca’s congregation called her Captain because she had been a captain in the Army before her retirement. The participants who have a doctorate are often called ‘doctor’ by the children as well as by some of the adults. The next presentation issue is one that is familiar to working women everywhere. Women have to be more cognizant of the messages sent by clothing and
artifacts, including religious emblems. Crosses are both jewelry and symbols of the office and faith.

For more than 40 years, the importance of clothing, artifacts, and body shape have been analyzed by scholars in fields such as psychology, business, education, and communication (Adler & Rodman, 2009; Richmond, McCroskey, & Hickson, 2008; Wood, 2001). Most relationship experts claim that a person has between seven and seventeen seconds to make a lasting impression. Female priests have to decide what impression they need to make to maintain credibility and authority while remaining an accessible pastoral and spiritual leader (Raines, 2006).

Women have dealt with the issue of appropriate appearance and attire in most professions. Senator Hillary Clinton’s preference for pant suits almost eclipsed her campaign. Katie Couric’s wardrobe, hair style and color, and make-up were more important than how she delivered the news. The question of dress and appearance is not insignificant because once we move past the need to use clothing to provide protection and concealment (though modesty issues are still vitally important), the most important function is how clothing provides social signals (Richmond, McCroskey, & Hickson, 2008). Members of our cultural decide economic, educational, credibility, status, sophistication, success, and morality positions based on clothing and body types (Hickson & Stacks, 1993; Richmond, McCroskey, & Hickson, 2008). It is impossible to not communication social signals through clothing and artifacts. Jewelry can be used to signify organizational memberships (for example, a Masonic ring or the 4-H clover pin),
religious affiliation (a cross, crucifix, pentagram, or a Star of David), ethnic sympathies (Celtic knots, Native American pieces) or school sports affiliations (a bobcat.)

So the second status or authority issue is finding a solution to the “what do I wear?” question. The standard priest attire includes cleric shirt, a clerical collar, an alb or a cassock gathered by a rope cincture, covered by a chasuble, and a stole plus a pectoral cross all of which creates a heavy uniform. The male priest finishes the apparel with slacks and comfortable shoes. When the service is completed, the rite garments are divested and the male priest simply puts on a suit jacket or sport coat. Usually there is little discussion about his clothing unless it is shabby or too eccentric. Female priests seldom have that same luxury (Raines, 2006).

The priests’ chosen attire ranged the whole spectrum from jeans and golf-shirts to the priest’s uniform. Katie preferred comfort and practicality over the restrictive uniform. She is always accompanied by her dog(s) and chooses to dress comfortably in jeans, a sweater or golf shirt, and trainers. The majority of the priests wore apparel that would be appropriate in any office or classroom. They might have worn the uniform when they were first ordained but found that it was not necessary to establish status among their congregation.

Alternatively, Olivia and Anna always wear the cleric’s collar and shirt with a jacket and slacks while in the church. Yvonne prefers to wear the clerical collar and shirt with a denim or corduroy jumper. Yvonne’s experience was that her weight was more of a problem than what she wore. The Commission on Ministry did not want an overweight woman to represent the church, but they did not have the same problem with male priests
who were as much if not more overweight than she. At this time in our culture, the
preferred body shape for women is ectomorphic and mesomorphic for men (Adler &
Rodman; Caputo, Hazel, & McMahon, 1994; Richmond, McCroskey, & Hickson, 2008)
and a female priest who does not have the preferred body type faces even more problems
than just deciding what to wear.

Rose wears the priestly attire during services and diocesan events, but is very
clear that the collar is not comfortable. Most of the participants agree that the stiff collar
is uncomfortable, but that it is especially important to wear it in circumstances where
formality is required or when dealing with situations where the legitimacy of their
ordination might be questioned such as an ecumenical gathering. Valerie wears the flea
and tick collar (as she calls it) during A & O (admission and orientation) sessions with
the prisoners but seldom after that. She always wears it when she attends meetings with
the other prison chaplains though because she has had some problems with the
fundamentalist chaplains questioning her calling.

All of the participants try to dress conservatively when outside of the church as
well. They were aware that they cannot go to the grocery store or the mall without
running into someone from their church. If they are athletic and like to jog or play sports,
they will wear t-shirts rather than a tank or sports bra, mid-thigh or longer shorts rather
than something shorter. Most of the participants wore minimal jewelry, most (but not all)
wore a cross or some other Christian symbol such as a fish, a dove, or a triquetra.

The issue of title is one that the participants have all struggled with at one time or
another. The church does not provide a solution and allows the community and
celebrants to make their own decisions. The church also expects its female priests to use discretion when in situations where they might be dealing with the public while still allowing a significant amount of personal freedom. That discretion is also expected when the priest has personal, intimate relationships.

_Marriage and the Priest_

Most professionals consider their private home life to be separate from their work life. This is not true for a member of the ministry, male or female. Most congregations consider a priest’s actions away from the pulpit to be as important as how they preach and provide counsel. Several of the participants included episodes which discussed how they coped with this intrusion into their private lives. Grace found that her gender was less of an issue in this day and age than her marital status:

And in some, at some level, because of that, oversensitivity to sexual orientation issues. If you’re not married, they don’t quite know what to do with you. And he [the bishop] was only asking under duress. Because the people were very concerned and they wanted to know and weren’t sure how to ask. Then as I told him. You know, I mean, we, I kind of let him stew for a little bit. “And said, so what you really want to know Bishop is what my sexual orientation is.” And he says, “Oh yes.” I said, “For what it’s worth, I am celibate, and have been for the better part of 40 years and choose to be that way.” You know I’m single, I’m not in a significant relationship, don’t intend to be in a real significant relationship. (2006)

Martha made same choice, but she had spent most of her adult life as a nun before she
left the Catholic Church and converted to Episcopalian when she was fifty. Fay is also single, but had been engaged until she decided to enter the ministry. Her ex-fiancée did not want to share her with a congregation, nor was he content to live with her new, diminished income potential.

A female priest is more likely to become the victim of negative rumors if she dates someone from her own congregation (Lind, 2005; Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang 1998). Conversely, mothers usually push their single daughters at a young single male priest (Lind, 2005). Fay was the victim of such speculation simply because she had gotten dressed up to attend a dance sponsored by another church in her city. Sophia specifically addressed the difficulty of a single female priest dating. She solved the problem by joining a dating service. Katie and the other single women acquiesced to their friends’ good intentions to introduce them to someone or they chose to join organizations which appealed to both men and women. Most often though, they simply tried to avoid the matter and focused on their ministry. Being a single, heterosexual woman in the ministry creates another level of difficulty beyond the dating scene, it also makes them vulnerable to negative speculation or worse (Lind, 2005). It is usually easier for both a female priest and for the female congregants if the priest is married, but it does not alleviate all the obstacles, especially concerning issues such as sexual harassment and hostility.

Four of the participants are married to men who were also priests. They found that they had the same problems that confront any dual career couple. Scheduling, assigning home chores, child care, exhaustion, and loss of interpersonal intimacy are tribulations besetting committed partners (Pearson, Turner, & Todd-Mancillas, 1991). It
can also be difficult to find posts which are close enough to maintain a single, shared household. Occasionally, a couple can get lucky and find placements in churches that need two full-time priests, at least for awhile. During their first appointment, Helen and her husband split their work at a church which only could afford one full-time priest and one part-time priest. Bianca, a veterinary, is bi-vocational and is now in the secondary or support position, even though she had served as the solo primary priest for a year before her husband was recruited to be the full-time priest. Olivia and her husband try to find positions that are within commuting distance. As Bishop McLeod’s career ascended, her husband’s took a secondary position and he tried to find positions that were in the same region. All of them agreed that is especially helpful sharing the same vocation because their partner understood the scheduling and personal demands of the job.

Four of the priests are married to college deans or professors. Commuter marriages have long been common in higher education because of the difficulty of finding two positions in the same institution or within reasonable driving distance, with varying degrees of success. Bishop Jefferts Schori’s husband, a college dean, retired when she was elected as Bishop of Nevada so that he was able to relocate. Before that time she was able to work in churches near the university at which he taught. He has remained in Las Vegas since she has been elected Presiding Bishop and she goes there when she has an opening in her schedule. She is able to commute between New York and Las Vegas a little more conveniently than others might since she is a licensed pilot.

Susan’s second husband, also a professor, taught at the other end of the state, the long commute and the conflicting schedules contributed to the dissolution of their
marriage. She reflected on the difficulty they were having finding common time. She was her busiest when he would visit on the weekends and he was not available during the week when she could get away from the church.

Anna got married and entered the priesthood track in her thirties. She has tried to reconcile her vocation with her husband’s teaching career. She postponed entering the seminary until her husband found a position so she could choose a school close to his work. She moved between Chicago and central Virginia twice because of his career. She was able to find associate ministry positions that allowed them to maintain a single residence for many years, but now they also have a commuter marriage. She is now the full-time solo priest in a moderately large church and did not want to relocate herself and their children. So her husband had to make the sacrifice. He now teaches at the University of Tennessee four days a week and returns home every weekend. Their three young children stay with her. Fortuitously, her congregation is very family oriented and she is able to schedule meetings and church events around her family’s needs most of the time. She also has a built-in source of babysitters from the teens in the congregation when needed.

Naomi had dual ministry obligations; she served as the non-stipendiary vicar at a small congregation in rural West Virginia while also working as a hospital chaplain. When she could no longer endure the hospital setting she found work as a flight attendant, a job she enjoyed for a decade. She danced in the corps of the Pittsburgh Ballet for self-expression. Concurrently, she also was part of the Christian ministry team in Oman half the year because her husband, on the behalf of West Virginia University, was
the dean of the pre-med school there. She would then return to the states to her small congregation in the hills of Appalachia for the other half of the year. She discussed this incredible balancing act with humor and aplomb; she actually seemed energized by the challenge of maintaining her eclectic and eccentric schedule.

*Rejection, Hostility, and Harassment*

Women entering the ministry face a double edged sword of rejection because they are entering two territories that have been traditionally dominated by men: the ministry and organizational management. Congregationally based priests and diocesan clergy are the equivalent of mid-level management. Women in leadership and management positions still face negative criticism from subordinates and have to outperform their male counterpart to earn equivalent respect and salary (Stewart, Cooper, Stewart, & Friedley, 2003). It might also be due to unfamiliarity. Women are still a relatively small portion of the ordained ministry despite the fact that they constitute almost 50% of those entering the seminary (Crew, 2002; *Episcopal Seminaries*, 2003). While most of the dioceses in the EC/USA welcome women priests now, there still are congregants which do not accept the ordination of women, usually the older or more traditional members of the church community.

Yvonne explained that they will win the dissenters over one at a time, as the resisters have the increased opportunity to experience women performing the rite and sacrament. During her first appointment, an older female member of the congregation walked up to her and said that she did not approve of women priests, women coal miners, or women linemen, but she would not let a female priest cause her to leave her church.
They were able to negotiate a truce and grew to respect and like each other. Eventually the bishop changed Yvonne’s assignment. Just before her departure the elderly church woman who had resented the imposition of a female priest, came up to say good-bye and she promised, if they were sent another female priest she would at least give her a chance. Yvonne was able to convert her reluctance to grudging respect and appreciation. This often is the best that anyone can achieve.

Congregants who adamantly reject a woman’s ministry are often left with few choices: (a) leave the church, (b) complain loudly and frequently about the problem, (c) refuse to take communion, or (d) grudgingly accept the inevitable. These reactions are identical to those identified with cognitive dissonance. Leaving the church might not provide the dissenter with the most personally rewarding option and therefore option (b) or (c) become much more appealing. Disenfranchised congregants might decide to stay in their seats during communion and refuse to take the sacrament from a woman because they do not believe in the validity of her ministry. One man made his family sit in the pews instead of taking part in communion (but they would take it when he was absent). Another patriarch made his family get up and leave just before the priest started her sermon. Just because a woman had been ordained, she did not automatically receive the status that achievement should confer. This was not the only type of hostility which a priest might encounter.

Sexual harassment is a reality in many organizations, including the church. Because of the abuses that have occurred, many of the mainline denominations have taken active steps to educate members about what constitutes and how to prevent
harassment. One of the major complications is ensuring that all members understand what behaviors and actions define harassment. “Feminist standpoint theories would suggest that men and women experience sexual harassment differently” (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004). Behavior that men might consider jocular and comradely can be experienced as sexually hostile and threatening by women (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004). Discursively constructed guidelines of “what can be said, who can speak with the blessings of authority and who must listen, whose social constructs are valid and whose are erroneous and unimportant” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 310) impact how behaviors are interpreted. Recent tragedies in the Catholic and Episcopal churches illustrate how important it is to clarify what constitutes harassment from its most subtle to the most blatant of behaviors. “Sexual harassment includes any behavior of a sexual nature that adversely affects a person’s job performance. Those behaviors can range from off-color jokes to unwanted touching or even sexual assault.” (Stewart, Cooper, Stewart, & Friedley, 2003, p.190). Feminist standpoint theorists recognize that part of the problem with identifying sexual harassment is based on interpretation of behavior (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004). Men and women often see and define behaviors and language differently. The play *Oleanna* by David Mamet is a perfect illustration of how two people can be in the same moment and have two totally different and valid interpretations of the same event.

The dehumanizing effect of harassment and hostility is even more difficult to reconcile when it happens in an environment which is supposed to provide solace and support for the soul (Lind, 2005). Lind (2005) found that male priests are more
concerned about being in situations where they are susceptible to accusations of harassment while female priests are significantly more apprehensive about being vulnerable harassment or assault. Both genders, to protect themselves, ensure that someone is on the premises while they are meeting with someone, never are alone in a closed room with someone (gender irrelevant), and other similar precautions. Another gender specific issue that parallels sexual harassment is gender based hostility; women who entered the seminary during the mid-70s were confronted with prejudice and rejection because it challenged long held values (Boyd, 1992; Chaves & Cavendish, 1997; Coakley, 2004; Lind, 2005; Nesbitt, 1997a).

As an early supplicant to the priesthood, Tamara had to deal with hostility from the commission on ministry, classmates, faculty, and the bishop. Faculty refused to teach classes on ritual procedures, church management, and leadership, all experiential classes that would be necessary to successfully lead a church. Before a postulant is considered for ordination, they have to show competence is seven subject areas:

(a) The Holy Scriptures; (b) Church history, including the Ecumenical Movement;
(c) Christian Theology, including missionary theology and missiology; (d) Christian Ethics and Moral Theology; (e) Studies in contemporary society, including racial and minority groups; (f) Liturgics and church music, Christian worship and music according to the contents and use of the book of Common Prayer and the Hymnal, and authorized supplemental texts; and (g) Theory and practice of ministry.” (Constitution & Canons, 2003).
If a candidate for the priesthood does not pass in all seven areas of studies, they are required to take remedial courses before they can be approved for the diaconate. Tamara and her female classmates excelled in all seven categories while most of their male classmates failed in at least one area. The dean of the seminary made all of the students take remedial courses, including those who had already passed the comprehensive exams. The bishop ensured that all of the men find placements as deacons before he would help the women. He told Tamara to get a job in a butcher’s shop if she wanted to get a job. She finally accepted a position with a church on the verge of closing. They were only able to offer a part-time so she had to get a second job as a counselor to supplement her income and to pay off her education debt. These circumstances eventually led her to follow an alternative path in ministry and to a doctorate in psychology, but it was exceptionally disheartening at the time.

Rebecca had dealt with chauvinistic behavior while in the Army so she was not overly distressed during her residency as a deacon, but she did find the senior rector’s behavior unusual. For example, he always made sure to refer to her as Deacon Smith in the church bulletin. She asked him what he was going to do when she was ordained because there was no gender-free title. He did not use the title ‘pastor,’ so she could not use it as a junior or associate priest. He told her if they were in the diocese of Texas, the title ‘mother’ would be used. To which she replied, but “we’re not in that diocese, and ‘mother’ is not appropriate” (2006). He snapped back, if she would go get her doctorate then her title would be ‘doctor.’ She could not resist reminding him that she was retired from the Army with the rank of captain, so she could be called the Reverend Captain. The
conversation was overheard and repeated by the church secretary and some members of
the congregation started calling her ‘captain.’ A sense of humor helped her negotiate a
difficult residency.

Also, two participants discussed how they had to contend with physical
harassment, others might have had similar experiences but did not feel comfortable
enough to broach the topic. The participants who did bring it up were exceptionally
uncomfortable discussing an issue which distressed them. They asked that I be very
careful to conceal their identities while referencing this issue because they were afraid of
retaliation. During the early 1980s, one female priest’s breasts were groped from behind
by another priest, a male. He made it into a joke and he was not worried about
disciplinary action because he was secure in his station and association with the bishop,
who did not believe women should be priests anyway. The second priest had travelled to
a meeting with her mentor and during the ride back, while confined to a moving car, he
tried to take advantage of the situation and accost her. She was able to defend herself,
but she was so disillusioned by his actions. Considering that she was already having
difficulties with the Commission on Ministry, she did not feel that she could successfully
file a complaint against him. She was relieved when he left the diocese soon after the
incident.

The incidences of overt hostility and physical harassment were rare, and the
majority of women reported that they were able to travel the path without significant
problems.
As a profession, the call to ministry is unique in that supplicants are not called by money, prestige, or security. The process from initially deciding to pursue this vocation to actually being ordained and finding a pastoral position can be as long as ten years. At one time, the cost of seminary training was covered by the sponsoring diocese; that is no longer true. For women, the process can be especially discouraging and daunting because there are few who successfully negotiate the path and are able to fine a financially secure position.

This profession impinges upon the private lives of its members as well, and women are particularly vulnerable to having their personal lives become the fodder for gossip. Priests are just as likely to have their marriages fail as the general public. But the failure of a marriage for a priest is seen as a personality and spiritual deficit. If the female priest is single and wants to have a social life, they soon find that they can be held up as an example for the church’s youth. Congregations develop of proprietary standpoint and the priest is usually held to a different standard than other members of the church community.

Finally, analyzing the life stories of the participants has allowed for a more in depth understanding of the barriers and obstacles with which women still have to contend when joining organizations which are male or paternalistically dominated. Whether consciously or not, the participants created life stories which generally followed a narrative structure including exposition, challenges or conflicts, climax, and resolution. Each of those stages was composed of individually unique episodes which served a universal function. The expository stories highlighted the point at which they identified
the need or call to minister. The stories themselves were diverse and occurred at different points in the individual participants’ lives, but the acknowledgement of an awareness point existed for all of the participants.

The challenges which followed the beginning of their quest for ordination varied in complexity and severity. Several of the women dealt with overt hostility and intentional challenges to the validity of their ministry. Some had financial or familial difficulties. Some had to deal with sexual harassment and emotional intimidation. Only one, Naomi, did not feel that she had to deal with explicit opposition, but that was because of the unique situations which she experienced.

Their life stories closed with discussions about their current situations and again most of them had achieved a degree of satisfaction, respect, and recognition within their chosen field. They shared stories about their congregations and families which illustrated a personal satisfaction or appreciation for their current situation. This does not mean that several do not have goals or interest in moving up in the organization, but that they acknowledge what they have achieved so far.
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APPENDIX A: AN ABBREVIATED CHRONOLOGY OF WOMEN’S ORDINATION

1853  Antoinette Brown was ordained by the Congregationalist Church

1862  Anglican Church acknowledged unordained female deaconesses

1863  Olympia Brown was ordained by the Universalist denomination

1865  Salvation Army ordains both men and women

1876  Christian Science ordains women ministers

1880  Methodist Church ordains women preachers

1889  Deaconesses canon adopted by EC General Convention

1918  Northern Baptist Convention USA recognizes women’s ordination

1919  General Convention recommends including deaconesses in Clergy Pension Fund,
       but Board says they are not ‘clergy’

1920  19th Amendment gives women the right to vote

       Methodist church ordains women ministers; and women priests in 1956

1920  A deaconess is ordained at Lambeth Conference

1930  Ordination of deaconess is reversed at Lambeth Conference

1935  Regina Jonas, first woman rabbi ordained

1935  Church of England commission finds no reason for or against ordination of
       women, but affirms all-male priesthood “for the church today”

1939  United Methodist Church ordains women

1944  Florence Li Tim-Oi ordained in Hong Kong by English Bishop R.O. Hall; he was
       censured and she surrendered her license to the priesthood, but not her holy orders
1946  The first proposal that women should be eligible to serve as lay delegates is rejected at General Convention

1958  Episcopal Theological School admits women to BD degree program

1964  General Convention changes deaconess canon to read “ordered” rather than “appointed”

1965  Deaconess Phyllis Edwards recognized as deacon by Bishop James Pike, San Francisco

1967  Episcopal General Convention meets; commission appointed to review women’s ordination, determines that there is no canonical foundation to not ordain women

1968  Lambeth agrees that deaconesses are within the deaconate but refers the ordination of women back for further study by a special commission

1969  Special General Convention: women admitted as lay readers & chalice bearers; appoints joint commission to study ordination of women

1970  April; 70 Episcopal Women gather at Graymoor for a conference and to share agápé on Orthodox Easter; the conference grew from the secular civil rights and peace movement; Review commission formed at the 1967 General Convention finally convenes at request of women at Graymoor Conference. Women’s ordination resolution debated and voted on; loses by narrow margin

1971  New Anglican Consultative Council (lay and clergy representatives from member communions) declares it is “acceptable” for a bishop to ordain a woman if his (sic) national church or province approves

Episcopal Women Caucus is organized at Alexandria, VA on Halloween
American House of Bishops refers women’s ordination for further study

Episcopal women begin to be ordained deacon alongside men

1972 Women deacons speak to House of Bishops, at invitation of bishops’ wives;
      Bishops vote 72-61 in favor of ordaining women

1973 October: General Convention rejects ordination of women to priesthood again;
      56 bishops issue statement of distress
      December: Women deacons presented alongside men for ordination in New York,
      but bishop refuses

1974 June: Sermons preached in Cambridge, Philadelphia, and Syracuse call for
      ordination of women to priesthood
      July 10: Bishops, priests, women deacons, and lay people meet to plan an
      ordination
      July 29: More militant and impatient aspirants decide to no longer ask for
      approval but to assume alb of priest; Eleven women deacons ordained by two
      retired and one resigned bishop at the Church of the Advocate, a predominantly
      black church in North Philadelphia, home parish of one of the ordinands

The Philadelphia 11:
Merrill Bittner
Alla Bozarth (Campbell)
Alison Cheek
Emily C. Hewitt
Carter Heyward
Suzanne R. Hiatt
Marie Moorefield
Jeannette Piccard
Betty Bone Schiess
Katrina Welles Swanson
July 30: Some women are inhibited by their bishop from priestly functions, including deacon’s service;

July 31 Presiding Bishop John Allin calls emergency meeting of House of Bishops

August 15: Bishops meet in O’Hara Airport in Chicago; decry “violation of collegiality,” refuse to talk with women, and assert ordinations not valid

President of the House of Deputies resigns in protest

August: Ecclesiastical charges are filed against the Philadelphia bishops

October: House of Bishops reaffirms endorsement of ordaining women but votes almost unanimously not to act until next General Convention approves

October 27: Revs. Cheek, Heyward, and Piccard celebrate an Episcopal Eucharist at New York City’s Riverside Church,

October – December: Women priests are invited to preach at a limited number of churches, but priests who invite them are later charged, tried, and disciplined for violating canons

1975 Carter Heyward and Suzanne Hiatt join faculty of Episcopal Divinity School

June: Anglican Church of Canada approves ordaining women

July: Church of England Synod approves women’s ordination “in principle”
September 7: The Washington Four are ordained

   Eleanor Lee McGee
   Alison Palmer
   Betty Powell (Rosenberg)
   Diane Tickell

Ordaining Bishop:
George W. Barrett

September 19: House of Bishops censures all bishops who ordained women

1976 September: General Convention approves the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate;

November 30: Anglican Church of Canada begins ordaining women

1977 January: Women ordained in Philadelphia begin to be “regularized” and regular ordinations of women to the priesthood begins with 100 ordained by year’s end.

September: Opponents to women’s ordination form a break-away church.

October: Presiding Bishop Allin tells House of Bishops he “is unable to accept women in roles of priests” and offers to resign but the Bishops affirm leadership, adopt statement of conscience: asserts that no one should be penalized for opposing or supporting women’s ordination

Anglican Church of New Zealand begins ordaining women to priesthood

1985 American Bishops vote to no longer withhold consent for woman bishop

Brazil begins ordaining women

1987 Church of England begins ordaining women

1988 The Rev. Barbara C. Harris of Philadelphia is elected Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts
1989  Rev. B. C. Harris is consecrated as Bishop

Church of Scotland allows women priests ordained elsewhere to celebrate the Eucharist

1994  The Church of England and the Church of Ireland approve the ordination of women to priesthood but deny them the right to enter episcopate (the ranks of bishops)

1996  Three women consecrated Bishops

1998  Eleven women bishops join 700+ male bishops at Lambeth Conference

2002  Carol Joy Gallagher ordained as suffragan bishop of Southern Virginia, the first indigenous woman consecrated as bishop

2004  Church of England continues to debate issue of women entering episcopate

2006  Katharine Jefferts Schori elected as the first woman Primate in the worldwide Anglican Communion and the 26th Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church

Compiled from the following sources:


### APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position &amp; Rank</th>
<th>Year of Birth</th>
<th>Birth Place</th>
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<th>Seminary and/or Master's</th>
<th>Doctorate</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Spouse in Ministry</th>
<th>Year ordained deacon/priest</th>
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<td>Anna</td>
<td>Rector</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>Mary Hollins College</td>
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<td>Bianca</td>
<td>P/T vicar</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Athens, Oh</td>
<td>DVM</td>
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<td>Cara</td>
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<td>Harper Valley, WV</td>
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<td>yes, 1 div., 2nd marriage</td>
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<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Rector</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Hannibal, MO</td>
<td>University of Kirksville</td>
<td>Louisville Presbyterian Seminary and Church Divinity School of the Pacific</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Assistant Rector</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Syracuse, NY</td>
<td>University of Oklahoma</td>
<td>Berkeley Divinity School at Yale</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Fay</td>
<td>Rector</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Mountain View, CA</td>
<td>Old Dominion University</td>
<td>Duke Divinity School</td>
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<td>Portland, OR</td>
<td>Portland St Univ and Pac Univ</td>
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<td>Canon Missioner</td>
<td>1951</td>
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<td>Fuller Seminary</td>
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<td>Sophia</td>
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<td>1970's</td>
<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Lutheran music historian</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Irene</td>
<td>Ass't priest</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Columbus, OH</td>
<td>Ohio University</td>
<td>Sewanee</td>
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<td>1950</td>
<td>Charlotte, NC</td>
<td>University of North Carolina</td>
<td>CSU and General Seminary</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Rector</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Perth Amboy, NJ</td>
<td>State University of New York</td>
<td>Oregon State University; General Seminary</td>
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<td>1953</td>
<td>Greenville, SC</td>
<td>University of South Carolina</td>
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<td>Rector</td>
<td>1953</td>
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<td>Northern Michigan University</td>
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<td>Priest</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Plainfield, NJ</td>
<td>Cornell University</td>
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<td>1953</td>
<td>Marietta, OH</td>
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<td>Lee College</td>
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<td>1948</td>
<td>Victoria, TX</td>
<td>Baylor University</td>
<td>Rice University</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Pastoral Counselor</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Buffalo, NY</td>
<td>University of New York</td>
<td>Bexley Hall</td>
<td>Bexley Hall</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1977/1978</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>Chaplain</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Clifton Forge, VA</td>
<td>Concord</td>
<td>Virginia Theological Seminary</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1987/1988</td>
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<td>Rose</td>
<td>Priest</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>yes, 1div. 2nd marriage</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1999/2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yvonne</td>
<td>Priest &amp; Assistant DDO</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Providence, RI</td>
<td>Marshall University</td>
<td>Virginia Theological Seminary</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1988/1989</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position &amp; Rank</td>
<td>Year of Birth</td>
<td>Place of Birth</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Seminary and/or Master's</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Spouse in Ministry</td>
<td>Year ordained deacon/ Priest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Adelia McLeod</td>
<td>Retired Bishop</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL</td>
<td>Theological University of the South</td>
<td>Smith College, Episcopal Divinity School</td>
<td>University of Charleston</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, retired</td>
<td>1980/1980</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katharine Jefferts Schori</td>
<td>Presiding Bishop the EC/USA</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Pensacola, FL</td>
<td>Stanford Univ., CA</td>
<td>Oregon State University; Church Divinity School of the Pacific</td>
<td>Oregon State University</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Retired professor</td>
<td>1994/1994</td>
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