TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING:
INSIGHTS INTO WOMEN SEMINARIANS'
DECISIONS TO PURSUE ORDINATION

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were (1) to discover and investigate the factors that influence women seminarians to alter their programs in order to pursue ordination, (2) to explore the connections between the emerging factors and Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation, (3) to critique the theory on the basis of the emergent factors, and (4) to explore the connections between the emergent factors and other strands of thought regarding transformative learning: consciousness-raising, development, and extra-rational/spiritual. As the data-gathering phase of the study progressed it became clear that each of the women participating in the study had been profoundly impacted by her gender and the traditional roles assigned to her gender. Thus, a further purpose of the study became the exploration this impact.

Twenty-four women participated in the study. All were either current students or graduates of the Methodist Theological School of Ohio.

Qualitative research strategies of interview, participant observation, and field notes were used to illuminate the topic. Data analysis was accomplished by coding the data into definable elements. These elements were assembled into a realist tale to tell the story of why women, who enter seminary with no intention of becoming ordained, decide to pursue ordination.
The data are presented through the stories of three composite women—Ella, Lily, and Sadie (pseudonyms). Telling the stories through composites made it possible to view the data through the lens of the four strands of thought regarding transformative learning and the impact of gender. The women of the study had experiences related to the four strands of transformative learning to various degrees. All were impacted by gender.

Ella's story relates the experiences of nine women who most typified the phases of Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation. Lily's story tells of transformational experiences of the remaining fifteen women. This story is representative of the other strands of transformative learning. Sadie's story presents the impact of gender and traditional female roles and expectations upon all twenty-four women.

The study suggests four conclusions: (1) a new model of understanding the women's decisions, (2) the importance of gender to the women's decisions, (3) the importance of context and (4) power to the women's decisions.
To
Jilaine Marie

with "all my good intentions" (Tan, 1989, p.4)
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

"I had never seen a woman pastor; the idea that I might be ordained never occurred to me." "When I realized that women could become parish pastors, I began to rethink what it might mean." "I knew I was called into some form of ministry, but was I called to be ordained?" "I made the decision for ordination during my seminary education." These are highlights of a conversation with a woman who is now a bishop in the United Methodist Church. Her statements posed some interesting questions. Why did it not occur to this woman that she might be called to be ordained? Was gender a part of her construct of the term pastor? How did this construct change when she realized women were pastors? Did her way of making meaning about being ordained in the United Methodist Church change? Could Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation offer some insight into her experiences? Do other models of transformative learning offer insight? Did she undergo a perspective transformation? Do other women decide to opt for ordination during their seminary experience? Do they go through a perspective transformation? Questions such as these overlap into several areas
of study: religion and gender, Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation, and adult education theory and practice.

Much has been written about gender issues in religion and liturgical practices (Aquino, 1998; Chopp, 1989a; Cone, 1975; Daly, 1985; Fiorenza, 1993; Grant, 1989; Loades, 1990; Moody, 1996; Ramshaw, 1995; Reilly, 1995; Ruether, 1998). These writers say the full image of God has not been attributed to women. Loades cites four reasons why this is so and articulates the concerns of feminist theologians: 1. There is a failure to find femininity in God. 2. There is the insistence that woman is derivative from and thus secondary to man. 3. There is the assumption that woman is passive. 4. Woman is identified with bodiliness as opposed to the transcendental mind. Concerns of feminist theologians revolve around how religious traditions work, the symbolism used by religious traditions, the characteristics of the roles within religious traditions, how traditions reflect social assumptions and shape and reshape these assumptions, and the gender-related way we talk about God.

Much has been written about one of these gender issues, the struggle of women to become ordained ministers (Chaves, 1997; Hale, King, and Jones, 1980; House, 1990; Parrish, 1983; Schmidt, 1996; and Schneider and Schneider, 1997). Attitudes toward the ordination of women are on a continuum from enthusiastic support (a “This is as it should be.” attitude) to a total rejection of female clergy (a “This absolutely must not be.” attitude). Most mainstream Protestant Christian groups and Reformed and Conservative Jewish groups support the ordination of women. Conservative Protestant Christian groups, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox Jewish groups do not (Chaves, 1997). In spite of the fact that most of the literature offers support for women clergy, traditional roles and
ideas, such as House’s assertion that the Bible prohibits women’s ordination, die hard. Chaves argues that the formal rules about women’s ordination are mostly generated by external pressure on denominations and are often only loosely connected to congregational practice. These rules are best understood in terms of two kinds of external pressure: The first comes from the state and the women’s movement and is aimed at issues of gender equity. The second is the result of denominational alliances and subcultures. The result of the origination of these pressures is that women pastors are often not welcome in a local congregation in spite of the denomination’s policy.

Although the formal ordination of women began in some Christian denominations in the mid-1800s, the Methodist Church did not grant full clergy rights to women until 1956. Other mainline Protestant groups followed, the Presbyterian Church in 1958, the Lutheran Church in 1970, and the Episcopal Church in 1976. The Jewish faith began ordaining women in the early 1970s. The first were the Reformed in 1972, followed by the Reconstructionist in 1974, and finally the Conservatives in 1985. Women are not ordained in the Orthodox Jewish tradition.

There is a body of literature regarding Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning (Clark and Wilson, 1991; Collard and Law, 1989; Connelly, 1996; Hart, 1990; Loughlin, 1993; Mezirow, 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1998a, 1998b; and Vogelsang, 1993). There is also a body of literature connecting religious issues to adult education paradigms (Bailey, 1996; Coffman, 1989; Cranton, 1994; Elias, 1993; Felton, 1996; Foltz, 1986; McKenzie, 1986; Mezirow, 1991a; Vogel, 1991; Wickett, 1991). However, a literature review revealed scarcity of literature on the focus of this study, the decisions of women seminarians to opt pursue ordination after enrolling in a non-ordination track. The
sources cited in chapter two and twenty-eight journals manually searched revealed no information on this issue. While this is not a definitive indication that no research has been done in this area, it is certainly an indication that such research is scarce.

Women are enrolling in and graduating from seminaries in record numbers; figures from the Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO) demonstrate this fact. Information supplied by Susan Lamphere, MTSO Registrar, shows that, in the school’s first graduating class in 1963, none of the 54 graduates were women. The first woman graduated in 1964; her classmates were 44 men. In 1974, 13 of the 81 graduates were women. In 1984, 28 of 62 were women. In the years 1994 through 1999, the seminary graduated 384 persons, and 190 of these were women. Degrees conferred by the seminary include Master of Divinity, Master of Christian Education, Master of Theological Studies, Master of Arts in Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Ministry, and Master of Liturgical Arts. The Master of Divinity is the degree needed for ordination. Thus, not all MTSO graduates are on an ordination track. The question arises; do some of the women enrolling in a non-ordination track decide to pursue ordination at some point during their seminary experience?

A pilot study conducted by this researcher revealed that, during the course of their seminary experience, some female MTSO students, who originally enrolled in a non-ordination program, decided to pursue ordination. These women were entering a master’s level program, some pursuing a second career; why did they not know that they wanted to be ordained ministers? What about the seminary experience influenced the women to pursue ordination?
Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1978, 1981, 1991a) claims to explain the ways in which adult frames of reference for viewing and interpreting experience are transformed through learning. It is an important theory to the field of adult education (Taylor, 1998), but it is not without its critics. Questions about transformative learning arise from five points of view. These points are discussed in detail in chapter two; this is a brief overview. Reflection is essential for making meaning of experience, according to the theory. One question asked is whether the valorization of reflection over experience is biased against gender, race, and class (Michelson, 1996). Second, some critics are concerned that Mezirow does not give enough stress to the relationship between context and the meaning of experience (Clark and Wilson, 1991). A third area of concern revolves around ideological issues such as limitations of the theory due to the fact that so much of it is based on the work of Jurgen Habermas (Cunningham, 1992). Mezirow's treatment of power is a fourth criticism (Hart, 1990). Finally, the theory is criticized for not including a comprehensive, coherent theory of social change (Tennant, 1993, 1994). The study explored if any of these issues occur in women seminarians' decisions to change career paths?

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover and investigate the factors that influence women seminarians to alter their programs in order to pursue ordination in the United Methodist Church or some other denomination. It was not the purpose to investigate the reasons why women choose to enter some form of ministry; the purpose was to learn why some women change their course of study from non-ordained ministry to ordained ministry. The purpose of this study was also to explore the connections
between the factors emerging from it and Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation and to critique the theory on the basis of the emergent factors. The theory is especially significant to women's development because, unlike the many learning theories, it considers women's life experiences. Does the theory offer insight into the decisions of these women? What are the factors involved in this decision? Do the factors that influenced the women’s decisions support Mezirow’s theory? Were their frames of reference transformed? Does feminist criticism of Habermas’s work offer a new lens through which to view Mezirow’s theory? Will the data collected offer a different point of view from which to examine Mezirow’s work? Exploring these questions will add to the knowledge base regarding female clergy, the theory of perspective transformation, and how studies in adult education and adult development provide insight into gender issues in religion.

Mezirow’s work is arguably some of the most important in the field of adult education, and it represents the conceptual basis for this study. However, it is important that the research acknowledge the existence of other models of transformative learning and the possibility that they may offer assistance in understanding the women’s experiences. Dirkx (1998) suggests three additional stands of transformative learning: Freire’s learning as consciousness-raising, Daloz’s approach to learning as a matter of development, and Dirkx’s link between spirituality and learning where the focus is on the extra-rational.

Research Questions

Potential questions to be used to guide the study of women seminarians of the Methodist Theological School in Ohio are the following:
1. What about the culture of women seminarians at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio supported a decision to change career paths?

2. What experiences/factors shape/affect the career paths of women seminarians who commit to careers as parish pastors after initially enrolling in non-ordination tracks?

3. What occurred during the seminary experience to prompt the women to change their program of study?

4. How did these women perceive the construct, "ordained minister," before and after their seminary experience?

5. What did the women believe to be the role of gender in their decisions?

The research questions are best addressed through an exploratory approach in the natural setting—a qualitative approach. Chapter three presents a detailed discussion of and rationale for the research design.

Significance

As demonstrated in chapter two, the literature concerning women seeking careers in religion appears not to address the purpose of this study. Awareness emerging here may offer insight as to why some women defer decisions for ordination into parish ministry. Understanding the culture of women seminarians at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio can be significant in building knowledge of the convergence of the gender issues in religion and liturgical practices and how adult education and adult development theory and practices provide insight into these issues.

A commitment to ordained ministry in the United Methodist Church involves a commitment to itinerancy. For the pastor, this means that she does not choose her place of employment. The bishop decides which congregation the pastor will serve. An
ordained minister in the United Methodist Church agrees to go wherever she is sent (Olson, et. al, 1996). The impact of itinerancy on a clergy woman’s spouse and children can be very important, because it can mean uprooting the family to a new neighborhood, a new city, a new culture. The spouse may need to change jobs, and the children will probably need to change schools. If a seminarian understands her call when she enters the seminary, an adjustment to the notion of itinerancy can be made before the educational process begins.

Viewing Mezirow’s theory through the lens of the data emerging from the study and in the light of feminist criticism of Habermas may provide further clues to the importance of the theory to women. It considers the life experiences of women, but are these considerations clouded because of flaws in Habermas’ work or because of flaws in Mezirow’s interpretation of Habermas? The study is significant to the theory of perspective transformation because the data arising from the women’s experiences will offer affirmation of and/or further critique the theory.

Did this study reveal that the women’s experiences resulted in a perspective transformation? I suspected that it would. However, I also suspected that the transformative learning might not fit precisely into Mezirow’s model. Cranton (1994) suggests Mezirow’s theory “. . .could change the direction of adult education practice” (p. xxi). If we accept Cranton’s contention, then a study of Mezirow’s theory as it relates to adults in a particular setting is generally significant to the field of adult education. This study is also particularly significant to educators of women and to women learners because it may offer insight into how some women transform their ways of making meaning during a seminary experience.
Mezirow (2000) suggests that the goal of adult education is to foster autonomous thinking and to help people think more effectively. From this standpoint, the study is significant to the field of adult education because it explores the circumstances under which the women came to interpret their experiences from a new perspective. Understanding more about how adults transform their ways of making meaning of their experience will enable adult educators to develop teaching techniques and styles that will foster transformative learning.

The research proposed by this study could offer assistance to women considering careers in religion and to those offering guidance to them. The research could also provide the women involved in the study with a new understanding of their own experiences.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

This study makes certain assumptions that will not be independently verified. One assumption concerns the reason women and men choose careers in religion. Generally, those who enter a career in ministry do so because they believe they have received a call from God to do God's work here on earth. This communication can take many forms; it can be as sudden as a flash of lightning or evolve over a period of time. It is a unique and individual experience. It was not the purpose of this study to question or validate the call of any study participant. Therefore, any such call related by the women participating in the study was assumed to be genuine. Additionally, the researcher relied upon the women's statements as representations of their experience. The data for the study was their interpretations of their experiences.
The delimitations of the study indicate its scope. The subjects for the study were selected from women seminarians and graduates from the Methodist Theological School in Ohio. Further narrowing of the scope was due to the women self-selecting into the group of those who did not enter seminary intending to follow a path to ordination. Finally, women clergy participating in the study were selected from those who are graduates of MTSO.

Creswell (1994) suggests that a purposive sample, such as the one described herein, limits the generalizability of the study. The design of the study is qualitative; as such, it is an in-depth investigation of a culture/phenomenon. A lack of generalizability is inherent in such a study. Therefore, these results will not necessarily be applicable to all women seminarians. The fact that the researcher is also the research tool also contributes to the study’s limitations. This is discussed further in “Subjectivity” in Chapter Three.

The demographics of the women of the study (see Chapter 4, Table 4.1) and the characteristics of the institution of the seminary offer other areas of limitation. All the women were white, Protestant, and middle-class. In addition the seminary is located in Central Ohio, and the majority of its students call Ohio or one of its contiguous states home. Also, 16 of the 24 women were United Methodists. These facts may mean that the results of the study are less applicable to women of other races, denominations, classes, geographic regions, or seminaries. Finally, since MTSO offers only master level degrees, a study of women in baccalaureate programs may suggest different findings.
Definitions

Call: A call is a divine commission. God calls an individual to a special vocation in God's plan for human salvation (Achtemeir, 1985). A call is not limited to ordained ministry. It may be to a religious vocation such as Christian education or liturgical arts or to lay ministry such as working with prisoners or the homeless. A divine summons is always initiated by God (Gentz, 1986). God issues a call to those who are chosen to be in meaningful fellowship with God and to participate in salvation. Once these chosen ones realize they are chosen, they experience an understanding of a specific historical destiny.

Elder: An ordained elder in the United Methodist Church is a woman or man who has met the following qualifications: (1) under episcopal appointment, serve full-time for three years after completing the educational requirements; (2) possess a bachelor's degree and a Master of Divinity degree; (3) satisfy physical, mental, and emotional health requirements; (4) prepare and preach at least one sermon on a specified topic; (5) present a curriculum for teaching a book of the Bible; (6) successfully pass a doctrinal examination administered by the board of ordained ministry (Olson, Marshall, Alexander, Riddle, Hendrix, Bartle, and Evans, 1996).

Itinerancy: An ordained elder in the United Methodist Church agrees to be itinerant. This means that she agrees to serve, at any time, any congregation within the conference as assigned by the bishop of the conference.

Ordained Minister: An ordained elder in the United Methodist Church.

Seminary: A seminary is an institution offering the degree, Master of Divinity, and other post baccalaureate degrees.
Ordination Track: A Master of Divinity is required for ordination in the United Methodist Church. Degrees such as the Master of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Ministry and Master of Theological Studies do not lead to ordination.

Summary

The culture of women seminarians who decided to pursue ordination at some time during their seminary experience and possible connections to Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation was the focus of the proposed study. The study brought together the areas of gender issues in religion and adult education and possible insights that adult education may provide for addressing gender issues in religion. While it promises new knowledge of value to both areas of study, the literature suggests that no such research has been undertaken to date.

The details of the study are presented in the following chapters. Chapter Two is a review of the theoretical and empirical literature of pertinent subjects. The subjects include (1) Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation, including feminist criticism of Habermas, (2) other strands of transformative learning, (3) women's career development, (4) women's career development in religious careers, (5) the seminary training of women, and (6) women seminarians deciding to pursue ordination after enrolling in a non-ordination track. Chapter Three presents the rationale for using a qualitative approach and the specific methodology of the study. The findings of the study are in Chapter Four, and Chapter Five contains summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

An exploration of the literature concerning such areas as women's career development, women's career development in religious careers, and women seminarians deciding to pursue ordination after enrolling in a non-ordination track was conducted. It revealed a scarcity of literature on women who opt to pursue ordination at some point during their seminary studies. The research proposed by this study could offer assistance to women considering careers in religion and to those offering guidance to them.

A review of the literature is essential to any research project. It provides information on what has been thought and studied in the past, and it provides direction and clarification for the current study (Ary, Jacobs, and Razsvieh, 1996; Fraenkel and Wallen, 1996; and Merriam and Simpson, 1995). Areas of study that are particularly relevant to this study concern the literature regarding (1) Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation, including feminist criticism of Habermas, (2) other strands of transformative learning, (3) women's career development, (4) women's career development in religious careers, (5) the seminary training of women, and (6) women seminarians opting for ordination after enrolling in a non-ordination track. The literature review proceeds as follows: First is a description of the origins of Mezirow's theory of
perspective transformation; this is followed by a review of the literature challenging Mezirow's theory, including feminist criticism of Habermas. Next is a review of the literature concerning other strands of transformative learning. Finally, there is a third literature review section. This one relates to women's career development, women's career development in religious careers, the seminary training of women, and women seminarians opting for ordination after enrolling in a non-ordination track.

Design of Literature Review

Two sources provided the bulk of the literature regarding Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation. First an ERIC search, using key words such as transformative learning, perspective transformation, and transformation theory, yielded a pool of articles. The second source was Taylor's (1998) monograph. The reference list from this monograph and from the articles found in ERIC revealed a pattern of critiques of Mezirow's theory. The pattern is a series of dialogues conducted in the pages of Adult Education Quarterly between 1989 and 1994 and a second series in 1997 and 1998. While the dialogues provided the key documents used in this review, five other sources added insight. These were (1) an article by Hart (1990) to which Mezirow did not directly respond, (2) Taylor's monograph, (3) a 1996 article by Michelson in which she suggests the possibility of bias in the notion of reflection, (4) an article by Connelly (1996) discussing interpretations of Habermas by various adult education theorists, and (5) feminist criticism of Habermas which was found by a search of the Philosopher's Index.

Searches through ERIC and OSCAR (The Ohio State University's on-line catalog) produced several sources regarding the career development of women. The
ATLA Religion Data Base provided additional sources for the literature about women's career development in religious careers, the seminary training of women, and women seminarians opting for ordination after enrolling in a non-ordination track. Key words used in the search were women, career, development, clergy careers, seminary training, theological education, and ordination track. These sources offered further references. In addition to the 18 articles and 17 books resulting from the search, copies of the journals listed in Table 2.2 (see page 34) and published between 1985 and the latest in 2001 were manually searched for relevant research and commentary.

Mezirow's Theory of Perspective Transformation

Before reviewing the literature concerning Mezirow's theory, it is appropriate to describe the origins of perspective transformation and to discuss and critique how Mezirow links perspective transformation to the process of adult development.

Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation has been the subject of debate since its derivation in the late 1970s (Taylor, 1998). This section is concerned with two questions, about the theory: What are its roots? How does Mezirow link perspective transformation to the process of adult development? The first part of the section describes Mezirow's explanation of the origin of the theory. It is followed by a discussion of how he links perspective transformation to adult development. A brief summary provides the conclusion.

Origins of Perspective Transformation

Perspective transformation suggests an explanation of the structure of adult learning and how the frames of reference used to view and interpret adult experiences are transformed (Mezirow, 1978, 1981, 1991a). The theory grows from a context of
Habermas's social theory of communicative action, critical theory, and constructivism (Mezirow, 1981). A constructivist paradigm asserts that what is assumed to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective (Schwandt, 1994). Mezirow's (1978, 1981, 1991a) theory also grows from psychological and psychotherapeutic studies showing that what adults think, feel, say, and do are determined less by their experiences and more by how they interpret these experiences. There are two specific constructivist assumptions, according to Mezirow, at the foundation of perspective transformation. The first is that meaning exists within individual human beings, not within external forms of knowledge.

As there are no fixed truths or totally definitive knowledge, and because circumstances change, the human condition may be best understood as a continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings (Mezirow, 2000b, p. 3).

The second says that the personal meanings humans give their experiences are acquired and made valid through interaction and communication with other humans.

Habermas's theory of communicative competence provides the social and language context for perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1981, 1991a). According to Mezirow (1991a), communicative competence refers to one's ability to apply rationality to dialogue; this is being able to rationally assess the evidence and arguments, which support the validity of a linguistic communication act. Communicative competence plus problem solving constitutes the central dynamic in intentional learning. The explication or reinterpretation of an experience or its application in thoughtful action is the core of intentional learning (1991a).

Perspective transformation emphasizes the distinction between Habermas's two major domains of intentional learning (Mezirow, 1991a): instrumental and
communicative. Instrumental learning is concerned with technical control and manipulation of environment. Communicative learning is concerned with understanding and being understood by others. Mezirow says that, while instrumental learning focuses on establishing cause and effect relationships, communicative learning focuses on increasing insight and establishing common ground through symbolic interaction. Habermas (1970) defines symbolic interaction as a communicative action, "governed by binding consensual norms, which define reciprocal expectations about behavior and which must be understood and recognized by at least two acting subjects" (p. 92). The distinction between instrumental learning (focused on environmental control and manipulation) and communicative learning (focused on understanding and being understood) is the basis for transformative theory. More particularly the theory is concerned with the roles played by critical reflection and discourse in human communication and in the potential within adult interpretive frames of reference for transformation (Mezirow, 1996).

According to Mezirow (1981, 1991a) Habermas suggests that emancipatory learning is a third area through which humans generate knowledge. Emancipatory learning is gained through critical self-reflection. Emancipatory learning can often be transformative. The emancipation occurring is from internal, linguistic, learning, institutional, or environmental forces "that limit our options and our rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted or seen as beyond human control" (1991a, p. 87).

Research data for perspective transformation theory was gathered in a national study of 83 women returning to college after a long hiatus. From this study Mezirow
identified a central process occurring in the personal development of these women: ten phases of perspective transformation (Mezirow and Marsick, 1978). "The process of perspective transformation begins when a woman becomes aware of the ways cultural assumptions and their psychological consequences have placed their stamp upon her" (p. 11). The process concludes with reintegration into the individual's life based on the conditions of one's new perspective. Mezirow asserts that although the phases of transformative learning are not invariant and forward movement is seldom consistent, once the process is completed, it is irreversible. This means that once understanding is clarified and a commitment is made to action based on such understanding, one doesn't regress to a lower level of understanding (Mezirow, 1991a, 2000a).

Mezirow inductively identified the ten phases of perspective transformation based upon the data of the above study (1978). In spite of the fact that the study was conducted upon women and primarily upon middle-class women, he generalizes that perspective transformation is not limited to this group.

While the literature does not reveal any concern for Mezirow's apparent leap from a study done primarily on middle-class women to generalizing a theory to the entire adult population, concern is voiced about his treatment of categories developed by Habermas. Hart (1990) contends "Mezirow's use of the prime categories of communicative and instrumental action severs the systematic and intrinsic relationship of Habermas's theory with a critique of power" (p. 126). Inherent in Habermas's writing is a fundamental concern for dominance-free communication. By not placing the issue of power at the center of perspective transformation, Mezirow offers a somewhat truncated version of Habermas's theory of communicative proficiency. I believe that Hart refers to
Habermas’s (1991) call for discourse ethics to be present in all communicative action. Such action must be “governed by binding consensual norms” (Habermas, 1970, p. 92). For these consensual norms to be valid, all persons affected must be able to freely accept the consequences of the observance of each norm (1991). If a power structure is present in a discourse situation, it may distort the ability of all to “freely” accept or reject a norm.

**Linking Perspective Transformation to the Process of Adult Development**

Adult development has been described from a variety of perspectives. Developmental psychologists see adults as advancing through stages from dependency, to individualism and autonomy, to integration. . . Some writers tie each developmental period to a specific age. . . Gilligan argues that women’s development follows a different path from men’s, one leading to an increased capacity for empathy and attachment rather than autonomy or individuation (Cranton, 1994, p. 139).

Adulthood, asserts Loughlin (1993), is a period characterized by change. She identifies three perspectives of developmental contexts of adult change. (1) Age/stage theorists claim chronological age as the primary context. (2) Others hold that the experience of life events is the primary context, and (3) still others contend that the primary context is the way the individual’s personality interacts with the environment.

Mezirow’s link of perspective transformation to adult development is direct and unequivocal; it is the central process in adult development (1981, 1991a). Perspective transformation, he asserts, is one generic process unique to adult development; it is a salient dimension (Mezirow, 1978, 1981).

Mezirow (1991a) declares that the research findings of many developmental psychologists, such as Perry, Arlin, Kitchner and King, and Basseches, are highly compatible with transformative theory, and their findings have contributed to the understanding of the importance of perspective transformation in development. Mezirow
claims the two developmental phases suggested by Labouvie-Vief identify the centrality of perspective transformation in adult development. The first phase occurs between birth and adolescence and establishes the structures of preliminary stability and a sense of autonomy. The second phase, occurring after adolescence, compels the reexamination of these structures and the confrontation of the assumptions behind them.

Mezirow defines maturity and adult development in terms of the theory of perspective transformation. The process of maturity, he claims, is constituted by the movement toward more inclusive and discriminatory perspectives (1978). Adult developmental stages are best understood as meaning becoming clarified in sequential moments. Progressing through these moments means moving toward more inclusive, differentiated, open, and integrated perspectives. The process of adult development, says Mezirow, is paralleled by perspective transformation (1981, 1991a).

Tennant (1993) expresses concern that Mezirow's conceptualization of adult development and its relationship to perspective transformation place primary emphasis on the individual. Mezirow, therefore, overlooks the social dimension of adult development. This highlights a tension that Tennant perceives in Mezirow's work and in the field of adult education. The tension between the individual and the social is the tension between the individual's psychological development and her or his development in a social context. Mezirow (1994) responds to Tennant's concern by expressing doubt that it is possible or useful to distinguish between learning that is concerned with social development and learning that is concerned with psychological development. Mezirow seems to have missed Tennant's point; he was not suggesting a separation of the
psychological and the social. Instead, Tennant (1994) was making the point that it is necessary to blur the boundaries between the two.

It seems to me that in our society many of the problems encountered by individuals are represented as individual psychological problems to be dealt with through reflection on the self. Through reflection one adapts to the social expectations of the life cycle rather than confronts the way in which society limits our options and prescribes our frame of reference for understanding the life cycle. In my view, educational... interventions, which are solely aimed as assisting people to "psychologically" adapt to social expectations, are very different in character from those which construct the "problem" from both a psychological and a social point of view, and which challenge rather than accept socially prescribed assumptions (p. 234).

Mezirow (1991b) acknowledges that social conditions can color the ways in which adults learn and develop. In a response to Clark and Wilson (1991), who criticize perspective transformation for ignoring the social context of rational discourse, Mezirow explains that cultural frames of references and how individuals learn to change them are precisely what transformation theory addresses. In spite of this, Tennant (1993) claims that Mezirow underestimates the power of the social. It can shape not only the lives of individuals, but also it can shape the theoretical accounts of those lives. This is illustrated in the way Mezirow links perspective transformation and adult development. He does so primarily through psychological theories of development. These theories concern themselves primarily with identifying stages, phases, and processes of adult development. Yet, Tennant continues, development implies more than mere change; it implies growth and progress. The mature and healthy personality, the end point of development, determines how developmental progress is defined, and it is firmly wed to issues of social value.
Mezirow's position that perspective transformation is parallel with adult development assumes that development moves "through a series of steps and phases by an individual away from a concrete, egocentric, context free, and nonreflective view of the world toward a more progressive developmental meaning perspective" (Taylor, 1998, p. 31). Mezirow's position that a developmentally progressive perspective is more inclusive, discriminating, integrative of experience, and open to alternative perspectives does not present a complete picture (Tennant, 1993). It "needs to acknowledge that what is, and what is not, more integrative of experience depends on the social and historical context in which experience occurs" (p. 37). Tennant's point is that the definition of psychological development is subject to contention and that social and historical circumstance and processes construct it.

Gilligan (1982), Loughlin (1993), and Michelson (1996) would concur with Tennant. These women write from the perspective of gender. Gilligan points out that developmental theories, which stress qualities such as autonomy and individuation, undervalue qualities that integrate the experiences of women, such as increasing capacity for empathy and attachment. Loughlin identified reflective understanding in women as including both analysis and empathetic knowing. "A person's experience of change in diverse contexts becomes meaningful through her actions of knowing" (p. 46). Modes of knowing through which women make meaning of experience include analytical reasoning, intuition, and maternal thinking. Michelson is concerned with reflection, which is basic to the theory of perspective transformation. She locates reflection in Western philosophy and the historical understanding of the relationship between experience and thought. Her contention is that the valorization of reflection over
experience is biased against gender, race, and class. Michelson’s concerns echo the feminist criticism of Habermas that says his work suffers from a gender blindness that fails to recognize the difference between the social status of men and women (Cohen, 1995; Fleming, 1995; Fraser 1995b; Landes, 1995). Tennant (1993) makes the argument (1) that adult development is both a psychological and a social phenomenon and (2) that adult educators need to distinguish between learning experiences that are fundamentally transformative and emancipatory (involving some level of social critique) and those that are normative (merely related to social expectations occurring in different phases of the life cycle). While it is true that perspective transformation implies development, it is not always true that development implies transformation. Adult educators, Tennant continues, need to understand the difference between transformative and emancipatory development and normative development. "Also adult educators who work in areas where there is a link between personal and social change. . .and who wish to realise [sic] the radical intent of perspective transformation, need to be mindful of the ways in which the life course is socially constructed" (p. 41). A question emerging from Tennant’s critique and relevant to the proposed study concerns the nature of the women’s seminary experience. Is the change of career path the result of a transformative learning experience, or is change the result of a normative learning experience?

In spite of Mezirow’s continued claim that he has adequately addressed the issue of the social context of learning, I believe Tennant’s critique is well grounded. His point that development can occur in the absence of transformation has the ring of commonsense to it. However, it is important that Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1991a) defines
development in terms of transformation. Perhaps some of the Mezirow/Tennant debate is a matter of semantics.

Summary of Origin and Link to Adult Development

Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation presents a distinctly adult, abstract, idealized theory of learning grounded in the nature of human communication (Taylor, 1998). As presented above, it is based upon the epistemology of Habermas and a study of women returning to college after a long hiatus. Mezirow links perspective transformation to the process of adult development through the work of developmental psychologists stating that it is parallel to adult development. This linkage has been criticized from several points of view: it underestimates the aspect of the social construction of development, it undervalues "other" ways of knowing, and it does not sufficiently account for the difference between transformative and normative development.

Since its emergence over twenty years ago, Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation has been continually investigated within the field of adult education (Taylor, 1998). This fact attests to the power and importance of the theory. Critiques of the theory have, for the most part, focused on theoretical issues of power, social action, critical pedagogy, context and rationality, reflection, and adult development (Taylor). Following is a brief review of this literature.

Two sources provided the bulk of the literature. First an ERIC search, using key words such as transformative learning, perspective transformation, and transformation theory, yielded a pool of articles. The second source was Taylor's (1998) monograph. The reference list from this monograph and from the articles found in ERIC revealed a
pattern of critiques of Mezirow's theory. The pattern is a series of dialogues conducted in the pages of *Adult Education Quarterly* between 1989 and 1994 and a second series in 1997 and 1998. While the dialogues provided the key documents used in this review, five other sources added insight. These were (1) an article by Hart (1990) to which Mezirow did not directly respond, (2) Taylor's monograph, (3) a 1996 article by Michelson in which she suggests the possibility of bias in the notion of reflection, (4) an article by Connelly discussing interpretations of Habermas by various adult education theorists, and (5) a group of essays representing feminist criticisms of Habermas.

**Theoretical Critiques**

The literature reviewed revealed critiques of Mezirow's theory from five different points of view: bias (regarding gender, race, and class), context, ideology, power, and social action. Although each author acknowledges the significance of perspective transformation, each has her or his own area of concern. The following grid is a graphic representation of the various authors' critiques. The areas of theoretical criticism are across the top row. The columns list authors who wrote in each area.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BIAS</th>
<th>CONTEXT</th>
<th>IDEOLOGY</th>
<th>POWER</th>
<th>SOCIAL ACTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michelson</td>
<td>Collard &amp; Law</td>
<td>Collard &amp; Law</td>
<td>Hart</td>
<td>Collard &amp; Law</td>
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<td>Fraser (89 &amp; 95a)</td>
<td>Clark &amp; Wilson</td>
<td>Clark &amp; Wilson</td>
<td>Pietrykowski (96 &amp; 98)</td>
<td>Hart</td>
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<td>Warnke</td>
<td>Tennant (93 &amp; 94)</td>
<td>Hart</td>
<td>Inglis (97 &amp; 98)</td>
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<td>Marshall</td>
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<td>Meehan (2000)</td>
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Table 2.1: Theoretical critiques of Mezirow’s theory

Bias

The first area of theoretical critique appears in Michelson's (1996) article that is not a direct criticism of Mezirow's theory. Michelson's article is included in this review for two reasons. First, transformation theory holds reflection at the core of meaning making and adult perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991a). Second, the possibility of bias in the concept of reflection is not considered in any of the direct criticisms of Mezirow reviewed. Michelson locates reflection in Western philosophy and the historical understanding of the relationship between experience and thought. She is saying that thought is held to be superior to experience because thought is rational and critical while experience is intuitive and emotional. Her contention is that the valorization of reflection over experience is biased against gender, race, and class. However, since reflection is basic to the theory of perspective transformation, a
theoretical critique is therefore implicit in her article. Western epistemology sees reason as masculine and the uninformed nature of the body as feminine. Since reason must control the body, the masculine must have power over the feminine. If reflection is that which allows us to orient ourselves as agents in history, the poor and the non-white also find themselves outside the epistemological bounds of reflection. Michelson's views are very much in tune with those of Hart (1990), Pietrykowski (1996, 1998), and Inglis (1997, 1998) who express concern for Mezirow's theoretical neglect of power structures. None of these, however, address issues of gender, race and class as directly as does Michelson. Her article was in neither of the dialogue series, and Mezirow does not respond to it.

In spite of Mezirow's lack of response or perhaps knowledge of Michelson's argument, her suggestion of the possibility of bias seems to be potentially very important. The theory of perspective transformation appears somewhat paradoxical in this light. The theory arose from studied experiences of women. At the same time, it has at its core a concept that is, in Western epistemology, regarded as masculine in nature and superior to the feminine. Because transformative learning occurs after reflecting upon experience and upon the frames of reference through which we interpret experience (Mezirow, 1991a), reflection is superior to experience that is to intuition and feeling. The masculine is superior to the feminine. This is not to say that women do not engage in rational reflection. Of course, they do. The point is that Mezirow's theory has at its core a concept that may be biased against gender, race, and class. Further study and discourse on this issue could only strengthen the theory.
Michelson's concerns parallel the feminist views of Habermas's theory. His lack of consideration of gender presents a serious deficiency for Habermas's theory of communicative action according to Fraser (1989). Warnke (2000) suggests that Habermas's response to the struggles of women for recognition is limited and insufficient. Fraser (1995a) asserts that the theory draws the basic line of struggle between system and lifeworld institutions. Feminists, she says, believe there is a more basic struggle between the forms of male dominance which link system to lifeworld and women. Putting this argument on a more individual level, Fleming (1995) claims that Habermas does not challenge the inequities of gender that constitute patriarchal family. Marshall (1994) contends that feminists question the Habermasian notion that reason is without a body and thus cannot suffer or arouse passion. Bodies are essential to any conceptualization of humans as agents, actors, or individuals. While Meehan (2000) states that with cautions regarding its flaws Habermas's views can be useful to feminist theorists, Allen (2000) says that a radical deconstruction of his critical theory may be required. These criticisms of Habermas must be transferred to Mezirow. If the very foundation of his work suffers from a bias of gender blindness, the work is tainted by this blindness.

**Context**

A second theoretical area of concern is the role of context in transformational learning. According to Clark and Wilson (1991), "In the process of attempting to construe meaning from experience through critical reflection and rational discourse, Mezirow systematically seeks to remove the very element which brings meaning to experience: context" (p. 76). Considering meaning without context is a major anomaly in
his theory, according to Clark and Wilson. They argue that Mezirow fails to maintain the crucial link between the meaning of experience and the context in which it arises and is interpreted. An individual cannot make meaning from a context-free perspective; it is just not possible. Context, Clark and Wilson contend, is basic to the theory, and it is unfortunate that Mezirow does not develop its implications and proceeds to limit the role it plays in the process of transformative learning. Similar concerns are voiced by Collard and Law (1989) who believe Mezirow is unclear about the context in which people come together, Newman (1994) who says learner’s actions are pragmatically grounded in context, Tennant (1993, 1994) who asserts that we can not separate the individual from the social, and Cunningham (1992) who says, in certain social contexts, it may be possible for children to demonstrate critical awareness. Hayes (2001) affirms that theorists are beginning to investigate the social dimensions of learning; she argues that learning cannot be separated from the context in which it occurs. Clark and Wilson conclude that Mezirow's theory should be concerned more with the exploration and understanding of the relationship between context and meaning instead of trying to minimize context's effects.

Although Mezirow (1991b) responds directly to Clark and Wilson, his article could also be directed to all the studies that concluded that his theory neglects the role of context in meaning making. He believes his critics have misrepresented him. We learn through rational discourse, which is a social construction, and, he says, always in context. Although he has tried to differentiate between social theory and learning and although the two can never be separated, the two are not the same.
I have tried to show how the internal dynamics of adult learning operate within the cultural context, how critical reflection, discourse, and action can change culturally assimilated assumptions and premises which limit and distort understanding and give learners greater control over their lives (p. 190).

I share Clark and Wilson's concern. Mezirow does not go far enough with his discussion of context. We are constantly in context. That is every human interaction is a negotiation for meaning and understanding between/among the participants. The implications of context for rational discourse also have implications for the proposed study. The question here is whether the context of the seminary was supportive of the women changing culturally assimilated meaning making patterns about the construct "minister." The role of context is critical to the study. It recognizes that any transformative learning occurs in the context of the seminary. It asks questions regarding the culture of the seminary and how their being contextualized within the Methodist Theological School in Ohio shapes the experiences of the women involved. Recent writing is beginning to recognize the significant role played by context in shaping transformative learning (Taylor, 2000).

**Ideology**

A third area of concern emerges from Mezirow's critics' claim that his theory falls short for various ideological reasons. Collard and Law (1989) are concerned about the way he uses Habermas' concept of knowledge and human interests to develop his learning domains. They find untenable his proposition that educators need not be concerned about whether or not Habermas has succeeded in establishing the validity of his work on learning domains. Connelly (1996) contends that Mezirow’s uncritical
adoption of Habermas's ideas evidences itself in the "refusal to consider the detail of Habermas's theory" (p. 243).

Collard and Law (1989) are also concerned with Mezirow's proposed ideal conditions for participating in critical reflection and, thus, learning. These conditions imply a symmetrical relationship between the participants; but the fact that these conditions need to be supported through perspective transformation implies that the relationship is indeed asymmetrical. Hart (1990) would agree with this and add that the relationship is asymmetrical because of the power differential that is inherent in most human exchanges. Feminists express related concerns regarding Habermas. Chambers (1995) asserts that while Habermas describes the conditions necessary for consensual discourse, he fails to explore how these conditions can be made possible. Meehan (1997) states Habermas holds that the criteria for ideal discourse are universally valid when in actuality discourse is always contextual.

Dirkx's (1997) concern lies in the extra-rational. Transformative theory, he says, looks at learning as a problem of critical reflection. Thus, it understates the affective, emotional, spiritual, and transpersonal elements. Emotions are necessary for rationality, because they guide the process of reasoning; Mezirow’s process is too dependent on rationality (Taylor, 2001).

Clark and Wilson (1991) criticize Mezirow for incorporating uncritically into his theory three hegemonic American values of individualism--learner-centeredness, critical discourse, and self-directedness. Additionally, the theory assumes a unified rational self. This assumption becomes problematic when one considers the fact that the way a person
develops a self-image is shaped by the language and culture. These are both social constructions and serve the interests of the dominant class.

Mezirow's use of Habermas' prime categories of communicative and instrumental action disconnects the systematic and intrinsic relationship of Habermas' theory with a critique of power, according to Hart (1990). By basing so much of his theory on Habermas, Cunningham (1992) believes that Mezirow limits his idea of adult learning to communicative action, as defined by Habermas.

Mezirow (1992) responds that Cunningham grossly misrepresents his point of view; he insists that he emphasizes critical reflection's application to both instrumental and communicative learning domains. He responds somewhat more mildly to Clark and Wilson (Mezirow, 1991b) and to Collard and Law (Mezirow, 1989). In both of these responses, Mezirow suggests that his critics' concerns are due for the most part to his own failure to communicate clearly his ideas and concepts. Mezirow does not deny that there are serious constraints to the ideal of critical reflection--political or economic institutionalized ideologies, oppressive practices and systems, injustice, alienation, to name a few. However, the ideal is a standard, a benchmark, against which to measure educational and social practice. It was never his intention to suggest that the ideal exists or that it is fully attainable. If Mezirow (1991b) means to imply that his ideal conditions for critical reflection are not fully attainable, I agree with him when he suggests that such a conviction is not clear in his writing. Mezirow's (1978, 1981, 1989, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998a, 1998b, and Mezirow and Marsick, 1978) writing does not acknowledge possible significant flaws in Habermas' work.
Feminist Criticism of Habermas

Mezirow (1991a) states that Habermas’s work makes a “major contribution to contemporary social theory” (p. 65), and Cohen (1995) characterizes him as the “most important living practitioner of critical social theory” (p. 57). While it is beyond the scope and purpose of this study to present a detailed criticism of his work, it seems appropriate to briefly address his work and to review some of the feminists’ thoughts regarding it. This is especially fitting given Mezirow’s reliance upon Habermas.

In his Knowledge and Human Interests, Habermas (1971) proposed two domains of learning. These domains were based upon the human interests to control the physical environment (instrumental learning) and to interact meaningfully with other human beings (communicative learning). A third domain, emancipatory learning, results in applying rationality to the first two. Rationality is the process of establishing validity through reasoning (Habermas, 1984). Through the process of reflecting with rationality upon language communication, culture, habits, and tradition we are able to apply validity tests to the ways we decide upon the “truthfulness” of these kinds of authority. Thus it is possible for human beings to free ourselves from the propositions that we determine lack truth and validity (1971). In his later works Habermas (1984, 1987) proposes his theory of communicative action. Here Habermas argues (Meehan, 1995) that an individual’s personal identity is socially constructed and is coincidental with establishing relationships. Language is the medium through which we constitute our identity, define and understand ourselves, and coordinate social activity. One’s adopting the role of the generalized other is especially important in forming identity. This happens only when one is able to attain the perspective that all roles are socially constructed; one is thus able
to apply rationality to the process of identity formulation. He further argues that the possibility of social action is determined by the intersubjectively constructed norms originating in communication. Claims for or against these norms must be validated through rationality.

Using Marx’s “definition of critical theory as the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age,” Fraser (1995, p.21) suggests that Habermas’ theory of communicative action may not meet the test. She argues this because his work places women in spheres subordinate to men. And he does not account for the work of women toward equality or for the gender inequities present in all female/male relationships. Habermas ignores the issues of gender all together. His lack of consideration of gender presents a serious deficiency for Habermas’s theory of communicative action according to Fraser (1989). Warnke (2000) suggests that Habermas’s response to the struggles of women for recognition is limited and insufficient. Fraser (1995a) asserts that the theory draws the basic line of struggle between system and lifeworld institutions. Feminists, she says, believe the struggle between the forms of male dominance which link system to lifeworld and women is more basic. Putting this argument on a more individual level, Fleming (1995) claims that Habermas does not challenge the inequities of gender that constitute patriarchal family. Marshall (1994) contends that feminists question the Habermasian notion that reason is without a body and thus cannot suffer or arouse passion. Bodies are essential to any conceptualization of humans as agents, actors, or individuals. While Meehan (2000) states that with cautions regarding its flaws Habermas’s views can be useful to feminist theorists, Allen (2000) says that a radical deconstruction of his critical theory may be required. Cohen (1995) suggests a revision
of his theory in the hope of beginning a dialogue between Habermas and his feminist critics.

Mezirow (1991a) states that Habermas’s theory of communicative action is the theoretical context of the theory of transformative learning. Habermas’s work “suggests a new foundation for understanding adult learning and the function and goals of adult learning” (p. 62). Mezirow relies upon Habermas’s two major learning domains of instrumental and communicative learning. The third domain, emancipatory learning, is redefined by transformative theory as the process of transformation present in both the first two domains (Mezirow, 2000). The purpose of communication is to work toward consensus. In order for this to happen participatory discourse must be engaged, and it must welcome a wide range of views and allow dissension. Conditions of trust, solidarity, security, empathy, willingness, and readiness to reach agreement are essential to participatory discourse.

Mezirow (1991a and 2000) is concerned with Habermas’s theory of communicative action as it relates to providing a basis for understanding adult learning. Meehan (1995), Fraser (1995), and others view Habermas’s work from the perspective of its usefulness as critical social theory. While these are two seemingly distinct points of view, there is a connection relevant to the present study. Two questions come to mind. First, does the feminist criticism of Habermas add support to the concerns that reflection/rationality may be biased against gender? In my view it does. Mezirow bases his work on Habermas’s claims that human beings communicate to make sense of our own identities, and reflection is basic to both the theory of perspective transformation and to Habermas’s work. If Mezirow’s and Habermas’s basic process of understanding
human communication and action is biased against gender, so is their work. The feminist 
criticism of Habermas illuminates the depth of his inattention to gender issues and his 
limited and insufficient response to women’s struggles, and these difficulties flow to 
Mezirow. This illumination is not present in the research and dialogue directly relating to 
Mezirow’s theory. Thus, we are able to gain insight into an important flaw in 
transformative learning theory that has been all but ignored.

If the first question regarding the bias of the process of reflection is answered in 
the affirmative, a second question arises. What does the bias present in Habermas’s 
work, and therefore also in Mezirow’s work, have to say about understanding the 
phenomenon explored by the study? I believe the message is clear. The usefulness of 
transformative learning to understand the decisions of the women to seek ordination is in 
question. The theory may not provide the complete foundation needed to illuminate the 
reasons for the women’s decisions. We need to look further, to consider the usefulness of 
the other strands of transformative learning and the role played by gender.

While a critique of Habermas’s work as critical social theory is beyond the scope 
of this study, feminist criticism of Habermas is particularly informative. This criticism 
raises the question of whether or not Mezirow’s work and its relevance to women’s 
learning is in jeopardy due to Habermas’s omission of any consideration of gender and 
due to the implications of gender for understanding and promoting women’s 
transformative learning.

Power

The fourth area of theoretical concern is Mezirow’s treatment of power. 
According to Hart (1990), Mezirow's dependence on Habermas' distinctions of
instrumental and communicative learning, commits him to their meanings and gets him "tangled up" with power issues. Power can distort at all levels of human interaction—social-cultural and interpersonal. Mezirow needs to pay more attention to power. Hart's concept of power and its distortions are at the heart of Michelson's (1996) argument about bias and gender, race, and class. Belenky and Stanton (2000) seem to support the arguments of Hart and Michelson when they suggest that perspective transformation ignores the problem of asymmetrical relationships present in most human interactions.

Mezirow does not formally respond to Hart; however, he does pick up the gauntlet to respond to Peitrykowski (1996) and Inglis (1997). Pietrykowski attempts to extend the debate to include dialogue regarding the role of power in education. He suggests "we turn our gaze away from some ultimate goal of creating ideal speech conditions and toward the undeniably political task of understanding the deep structures of power that govern our lives" (p. 94). Inglis (1997) supports the debate about power and suggests that, in order for adult education to contribute to emancipation, it must develop a theory of power that is accessible to the oppressed. Mezirow (1998 a) answers that the concern is unwarranted because the tasks of creating ideal speech conditions and understanding the power structures of our lives are quite compatible. His response (1998 b) to Inglis is less professional. Mezirow characterizes Inglis' writing as "off the wall" and "nonsense."

It seems to me that Mezirow's (1998b) dismissal of Inglis (1997) is cavalier and unwarranted. Inglis suggests some distinctions between empowerment and emancipation the consideration of which would add to the development of transformation theory. Peitrykowski's (1996) and Inglis' suggestions to expand the conversation around
Mezirow's theory to include the role of power need to be taken seriously. Brookfield (2000) draws a very direct tie between power and adult educators. He says adult educators should acknowledge their position of power in the classroom so students can deconstruct it and reorder how it is named and understood. "Power relationships exist in all human interactions..." (Cervero and Wilson, 1994, p. 29). Issues of power are especially important during discourse, an important aspect of transformative learning. We cannot assume, as Mezirow seems to do, that power structures will not be present in such situations.

**Social Action**

The final area of concern for several authors regards the theory's lack of interest in a theory of social action. Collard and Law (1989) suggest that the basic problem with Mezirow's theory is his failure to develop a comprehensive, coherent theory of social change. Arguments in a similar vein are presented by Hart (1990) who believes Mezirow fails to address the social implications contained in Habermas' project, Tennant (1993, 1994) who contends that Mezirow neglects the social side of the life course, and by Newman (1994) who says, "[Mezirow] depicts social action as the process of effecting change in the more personalized contexts of the family or personal relations, as well as in the larger contexts of organizations, communities, and nations. By broadening the definition of social action in this way, we rob it of the smell of the streets, and the clash and clatter of radical protest" (p. 240). Mezirow (1994) counters Newman by reminding him that social action is not necessarily collective political action and that Newman's image is limited and limiting.
Mezirow (1989) responds that he is disappointed that Collard and Law failed to examine specific ideas and have chosen instead to limit themselves to their conviction that he has under emphasized the importance of social action. He said they seem to believe it is the only legitimate goal of transformative learning and emancipatory education. He does not deny its importance, but their comments make it clear to him that they read what he had written from a different paradigm or meaning perspective.

Connelly (1996) supports Mezirow's argument. "Thus, Mezirow's counter-argument . . . that adult education can have goals other than collective social action, has validity in Habermasian terms" (p. 249). Taylor (1998) suggests a similar thought when he writes that the differences between the interpretations of transformative learning theory by Mezirow and his critics are due in a large measure to the way the authors view the self and its sphere of control in the universe. Dirkx (1998) expresses a similar view. Whether or not social change is a necessary outcome of transformative learning depends to a large extent upon whether one is informed more by Mezirow's individual development point of view or by Paolo Freire's perspective of consciousness-raising. Daloz (2000) suggests four conditions under which transformation for social action may occur: Engagement with otherness, "reflective discourse, mentoring communities, and opportunities for committed action" (p. 112).

I believe Collard and Law's (1989) argument has merit. Mezirow (1991b) states that perspective transformation results in the individual having greater control over her or his life and that individual learning and social theory can't be separated. This infers that more attention needs to be given to how the two relate.
Wiessner and Mezirow (2000) state that transformation theory began with an initial research project, but it has further developed through 20 years of increasing understanding and collaborative inquiry through conferences, critiques, research, and writing a book together. Among the changes in the theory resulting from studies and collaborative inquiry, they list the following:

- Phases of transformative learning may vary in contexts different from those of the original study.
- A meaning perspective is now referred to as a frame of reference, and it refers to habits of mind and resulting points of view.
- A meaning scheme is now referred to as the elements constituting a point of view.

Kegan (2000) is concerned that any kind of change or process is being referred to as transformation. The language of transformation is becoming assimilated, and it risks the loss of its potential to be genuinely transformative. In order to prevent this, Kegan suggests that some of its features must be more explicit. (1) There needs to be better distinction between informational and transformational kinds of learning. (2) The frame of reference being transformed needs to be better understood. (3) Since a frame of reference is at the heart of what is being transformed, the process is not only behavioral or additional knowledge but it is also epistemological. (5) Adult educators may need a better understanding of how their students learn. (6) Adult educators may need a better understanding of the learning challenges present in their student’s daily lives.

Belenky and Stanton (2000) suggest that communities of discourse can and should include the immature thinker and the marginalized. Participation and reflective dialogue
would enhance their individual development and support the development of a society that is more inclusive, just, and democratic.

**Empirical Studies**

Beyond the theoretical critiques reviewed here, more than forty empirical studies have been conducted which focus on Mezirow's model and the components of perspective transformation (Taylor, 1998). These studies are in the form of unpublished doctoral dissertations or conference proceedings. According to Taylor, the results are supportive but critical of Mezirow's theory. Empirical results suggest that the theory of perspective transformation needs to give greater significance to: (1) the influence of context, (2) how the process' catalyst (a disorienting dilemma) varies, (3) the roles of relationships and other ways of knowing, and (4) a broadening of the definition of perspective transformation. No empirical study to date was found that linked Mezirow's work to women seminarians deciding to pursue ordination after enrolling in the seminary in a non-ordination course of study.

Following is a review of the literature regarding the three remaining strands of transformative learning, women's career development, women's career development in religious careers, the seminary training of women, and factors involved in women seminarians opting for ordination track after enrolling in a non-ordination track.

**Strands of Transformative Learning**

In 1993, Clark identified three strands to the study of transformational learning: Mezirow's perspective transformation, Freire's learning as consciousness-raising, and Daloz's approach to learning as a matter of development. Dirkx (1998) suggests a fourth stand: the link between spirituality and learning where the focus is on the extra-rational.
Cranton (1997) would concur with this addition. It doesn’t matter, she says, if transformation is a rational, practical, intuitive, or emotional process, because the personality preference of the individual determines the way in which one will transform.

The first strand of transformative learning, Mezirow’s work, was addressed in the previous section. Following is a discussion of the remaining three strands.

**Consciousness-Raising**

In 1970, Paulo Freire published his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a philosophy of teaching that involves human beings in the fight for their own liberation. Consciousness-raising should be the goal of education. Dirix (1998) says consciousness-raising means that individuals learn to analyze, question, and take action on those political, social, cultural, and economic contexts that impact and shape their lives. Freire contends that education through praxis allows learners to reflect on their world and then to change it. Praxis involves reflecting and acting upon the world so the world will be transformed.

The oppressed have the historical and humanistic task of liberating themselves and their oppressors as well (Freire, 1970). Only the oppressed can free the oppressors—by first freeing themselves. Freedom is “the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion” (p. 31). The fact that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thus submerges the human consciousness is one of the greatest obstacles to achieving. Subordination to the consciousness of the master is what characterizes the oppressed. The oppressed fear freedom, because they internalize the image of the oppressor and the oppressors’ guidelines are adapted. The oppressed internalizes the mindset of the oppressor (1996). Freedom requires that this image and those guidelines be rejected and be replaced with those of autonomy and responsibility.
Postmodernity has succeeded in proclaiming a new history without social classes or class struggle. Thus, a pedagogy of the oppressed is no longer necessary (Freire, 1996). Not so, Freire says. Talking of social and political liberation, he says that the process of liberation involves all the dimensions that “mark the human being: class, gender, race, and culture” (p. 160). His philosophy and the way it has expanded are indicative of his deep spirituality and how he has been influenced by liberation theology (Tisdell, 1999). His early writings were characterized by exclusive masculine images and pronouns for human beings. This is not so in his most recent writing.

It is necessary to insist on unveiling or uncovering the power of those who discriminate while calling themselves Christians, or those who call themselves progressive and discriminate. It is absolutely necessary that they perceive themselves as contradictory and incoherent so that they can work on their lack of synchrony. We must not give those who discriminate any rest... (Freire, p.147).

He goes on to say that racist can speak about democracy only if blackness is seen to diminish democracy. A sexist can speak of democracy only if democracy is indifferent to the presence of women.

Freire’s work has had significant impact on adult educators. However, I see it as a philosophy of the desired outcome of education and not as a description of how adults learn. It is pedagogy, not theory. Consciousness-raising presents a goal to be reached and a direction to be followed. However, having said all this, it seems to me that Freire’s work may suffer from the same gender blindness as Mezirow and Habermas. In his later work he mentions sexism, but I do not believe that he gives sufficient consideration to the fact that sexism oppresses women.
Development

Daloz (1986, 1999) posits that adults continue to change and develop throughout their lives. Education can help make meaning of these changes and/or have some role in bringing the changes about. Education, he says, is a journey of transformation. Mentors are important to this journey, but they are guides not tour directors.

Daloz (1999) gives high praise to Mezirow’s work; it is the benchmark for transformative learning theory. He says that Mezirow’s description of developmental direction is precise and on target. Dirkx (1998) says that Daloz sees learning as more dependent on holistic and intuitive processes than on rationality and the mentor as that which fosters transformative learning. Mentors (Daloz) must both challenge and support; when both are strong and balanced, the result is growth.

In spite of Dirkx’s assertion of Daloz’s holistic approach, his affirmation of Mezirow puts his work in the same jeopardy for bias and ideological weakness as found in Mezirow. Additionally, I found his references to feminism in his 1999 work patriarchal and somewhat pejorative. In one vignette he describes a female student’s ambivalence toward the feminist views of some of her colleagues as indicative of an internal struggle with her old self and her new self. The vignette seems to characterize the woman’s struggle as having a potentially negative impact on her instead of acknowledging that her struggle was one that I believe is very descriptive of feminist thought.

Extra-rational/Spiritual

The final strand of transformative learning is Dirkx’s (1997, 1998) work regarding the extra-rational/emotional/spiritual aspect of learning. Grasping the holistic
nature of adult learning requires keeping learning embedded in everyday life's concreteness. There are two critical aspects of learning—"coming to know ourselves in the world and how we make sense of the other within this world" (1997, p. 83).

According to Dirkx, (1998), Boyd's work involves learners becoming aware of the aspects of themselves that are unconscious and integrating the emotional/spiritual dimensions of learning into their daily experiences. Understanding the world and ourselves involves recognizing, naming, and elaborating the powerful images or symbols that represent significant issues and concerns evoked through the study of a particular subject or content matter. Dirkx says that as we approach learning, rather than relying exclusively on images from without, we need to encourage learners to pay attention to images from within their own fantasies and imagination. Vogel (2000) goes further and says that educators who are "whole" in body, mind, will, and spirit have an openness and vulnerability that fosters transformative learning. I would add that the recognition and valorization of the extra-rational is also a step toward inclusiveness which Mezirow (1991a) says is a goal of transformative learning and which, for me, is at the very heart of feminism.

Brookfield (1987) would add that the ability to think critically is necessary if one is to understand personal relationships, envision alternatives in the workplace, or become politically literate. It is central to adult development in a democratic society. However, Brookfield does not view critical thinking as a totally rational, mechanical activity. He sees aspects such as feelings, emotions, and intuitions as vital to adult critical thinking "...the ability to imagine alternatives to one's current ways of thinking and living is one that often entails a deliberate break with rational modes of thought in order to prompt
forward leaps in creativity” (p. 12). Brookfield’s words make the suggestion that it may indeed be possible to experience a perspective transformation through a process other than critical reflection as described by Mezirow.

Dirkx (1997) talks about two different ways of viewing the language of learning. The way of logos includes objectivity, logic, reason, and the like. The way of mythos includes intuition and an emotional sense of experience. Images can give voice to underlying myths that can illuminate aspects of the world, which can’t be seen through the language of logos. Thus, we can be brought closer to what Dirkx calls learning through soul. Learning through soul means looking at the quality of experiencing life and humanity and looking at the connection between heart and mind. It asks such questions as “Who was that person, and where did she come from? What does she represent to me? What does she have to say about this situation?” (p. 82).

Vella (2000) suggests a “spiritual epistemology”—a learning-centered approach that clears the way for the learner to know herself, an epistemology where learners are the subjects of their own learning. The basis for a spiritual epistemology is the belief that all education should be directed toward a transformation, the transformation of the spirit from alienation to a deeper awareness of oneself. According to Vogel (2000) as students engage the spiritual, they must identify false images and beliefs that destroy rather than build. They have the potential to transform their ways of being and relating. They can be more open and accepting of others. It seems to me that engaging the spiritual may provide an extra-rational way of accomplishing Mezirow’s task of weeding out perspectives that no longer work.
This section concludes with thoughts about the meaning of spirituality and possible implications for adult learning. English and Gillen (2000) define spirituality as an awareness of something greater than myself, a sense that I am connected to every human being and to all creation. They assert that a holistic approach to education must include the spiritual dimension of adult development. Tisdell (1999) posits that a healthy spirituality affirms both one’s life and identity. It is about trying to live and act according to one’s spiritual path. The “essence of spirituality—discovering the extraordinary in the ordinary business of life” (p. 88). She goes on to say there are three ways that spirituality may manifest itself in human lives: (1) dwelling, a connection to a sense of place or religious tradition; (2) seeking, moves beyond the spirituality of dwelling to truth seeking while continuing on life’s journey; and (3) acting in the name of justice, connected to a sense of responsibility to carry on the work for justice began by our ancestors. Some such as James Fowler, says Tisdell, use the term “faith” as others use “spirituality.” Fowler (1981) expands this thought. The content and context of faith is not always religious. It is an individual’s “...way of finding coherence in and giving meaning to the multiple forces and relations that make up our lives” (p. 4).

Tisdell (1999) proposes the following implications of spirituality for adult education:

- The search for adult spirituality is connected to the search for meaning.
- We must recognize that attending to spiritual development takes many forms all of which are brought to the learning environment.
- Spirituality concerns the ways to construct knowledge through images and symbols.
• Spirituality cannot be separated from the sociocultural context of the learner.

• We cannot overlook spirituality as the grounding place of many emancipatory educators.

The suggestion that a holistic approach, including the extra-rational/spiritual, to transformative learning is important seems particularly appropriate for this study. The women who participated are members of a faith community where the spiritual is not only considered important, it is essential to their lives and careers.

Women's Career Development

Searches through ERIC and OSCAR produced several sources regarding the career development of women. The ATLA Religion Data Base provided additional sources for the literature about women's career development in religious careers, the seminary training of women, and women seminarians opting for ordination after enrolling in a non-ordination track. Key words used in the search were women, career, development, clergy careers, seminary training, theological education, and ordination track. These sources offered further references. In addition to the sixteen articles and seventeen books resulting from the search, copies of the journals listed in Table 2.2 and published between 1985 and the latest in 2001 were manually searched for relevant research and commentary.
A brief history and critique of the theoretical work and research done on women's career development follows.

The vast majority of material prior to the 1990s approached women's career development from the perspective of making the choice between family and career. The work of Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) reviewed the literature written and research done prior to 1987. Their work indicates that between 1960 and 1970 career aspirations of most young women switched from not planning to work outside the home to planning to combine marriage and career. It was no longer a question of whether to do both, but how to do both. The bulk of the research investigated the reasons why women choose to have or not to have a career.
In the early 1970s, career development theories were developed from different yet overlapping and intertwined perspectives (Osipow, 1973). The first model was based on trait-factor connections, according to Osipow. Those connections meant that selecting a career was simply a matter of matching an individual's interests and abilities with possible career opportunities. The sociological model affirmed there are circumstances in one's environment that are beyond one's control. The principal task in one's career choice is to learn to cope with these circumstances. A third perspective is the developmental/self-concept model. As an individual ages, the self-concept is more clearly defined. Career exploration is a process of comparing occupational images with one's self-concept. Career choice is based on a comparison between one's self-image and the vocational image of a particular career. Finally, the personality model states that individuals select careers because they view a particular career as having the potential to satisfy their personal needs (Osipow). The major critique of these approaches regarding their applicability to women's career development is they were based on models concerning male interests, aspirations, and accomplishments (Astin, 1971; Cole and Hanson, 1975; Gustafson and Magnusson, 1991; Osipow, 1973). Because traditional theories did not include the realities of women's experience (Osiow and Fitzgerald, 1996), models developed from a male perspective have only limited relevance for women.

According to Mishler (1975), Osipow established the paradigm for evaluating theories of career development. A theory should perform four roles, and the value of a particular theory or classification of theories can be determined based upon whether they fulfill these roles (Osipow, 1973). The roles are prediction, generalizability, integration
and explanation, and operational. The theory must fill the role of prediction. The question to ask here is do the data support predictions based on the theory. The second role is concerned with generalizability. What range of phenomena does the theory integrate and explain? Role three, how well does the theory explain the phenomena with which it is concerned? Finally, the theory must be operational. Can constructs be applied to experimental work? This paradigm continues to be appropriate today.

Based on this paradigm, the theories of the 1970s do not appear to be of particular value in understanding the career development of women. Each falls short in at least one aspect of Osipow’s (1975) paradigm. Data based upon men would not support predictions for nor include women in the range of integration and explanation. The theories do not deal with women’s special problems of career development. These problems include gender stereotyping of occupations, unequal pay, and unequal promotion (Osipow, 1973). In addition, the fact that women were offered a limited range of career information (Cole and Hanson, 1975 and Mishler, 1975), demonstrates the inadequacies of early career development theories with regard to their ability to provide in depth explanations of the phenomena of women’s career development or provide constructs for experimental work. Women’s career development is diverse and different from men’s (Bierema, 1998). More than twenty-five years ago, Osipow concluded that, due to social change regarding women and their career potential, any theory might be premature. Since our society continues to change and women continue to struggle for equality, it may not yet be possible to establish a comprehensive theory of women’s career development.
Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) published a work designed to review and integrate what twenty years of study on women's career development had produced. Their work indicates that between 1960 and 1970 career aspirations of most young women switched from not planning to work outside the home to planning to combine marriage and career. It was no longer a question of whether to do both, but how to do both. The bulk of the research investigated the reasons why women choose to have or not to have a career. There was some focus on medicine, law, math, science. Research on religious careers for women was nonexistent. A longitudinal study of 557 Swedish women (Gustafsson and Magnusson, 1991) found that, in general, when parents were educationally oriented and valued achievement, their daughters internalized these values. While this may help us understand why women decide to pursue a career and higher education, it offers no assistance to understanding why women seminarians change career paths.

Women experience barriers to career development unique to them; they can be classified as individual and social. The most debilitating and deepest ingrained individual barrier is the gender stereotyping of roles through the socialization process. Children are socialized to understand that there are certain roles appropriate to women (wife, mother, homemaker, caregiver) and certain roles appropriate to men (breadwinner, decision maker, fortune seeker). Another important barrier is that since many careers are perceived as inappropriate for women, career knowledge of these professions is not always available for girls. The most significant social barrier is the attitude men have regarding women and their roles (Mishler, 1975). Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) predicted that the factors that influence the career development of women would change as a result
of more women entering the work force and as a result of changing societal attitudes and norms.

The gender-typing or occupational stereotyping is defined as "normative views of the appropriateness of various occupations for males and females" (Betz and Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 31). Gender stereotyping of occupations is a major contributor to the way individuals see these occupations (Osipow, 1983). This stereotyping affects the vocational development of women in a multitude of ways. Children learn occupational stereotypes at a very early age, and the learning is very resistant to change. This provides a barrier to girls considering occupations that are typed as "masculine." Betz and Fitzgerald also suggest career counseling may have the effect of limiting women's career choices due at least in part to the fact that counselors may hold occupational gender stereotypes. Brown (1970) learned that girls often make vocational choices that are of lower status due at least in part to the gender typing of occupations. Writing about gender development and gendered adult development, Ross-Gordon (1999) suggests that women may need assistance in redefining their goals apart from cultural notions of gender. In an article about women's learning (Hayes, 2001), declares that behaviors and characteristics of each gender are products of socially and culturally determined belief systems; thus, we may have different expectations and norms for each sex. This would imply that the attributes of women's learning are connected to situational, social, and historical circumstances that can change as the circumstances. I wonder if this would not also be true of women's career decisions.

In a study of occupational gender segregation, Gatton, DuBois, and Faley (1999) concluded that the foundation of such segregation is gender stereotyping. Aros, Henly,
and Nicholas (1998) analyzed responses to the Strong Interest Inventory of 16,484 men and women, ages 18 to 22. They found that gender differences followed gender stereotyping. Schlossberg and Goodman (1972) asked children in kindergarten through 6th grade to respond to twelve drawings representing work settings. All responded in gender stereotypical modes. A study of rural women's career decisions (Vermeulen and Minor, 1998) revealed gender role beliefs to be the greatest influence. A phenomenon of such stereotyping is manifested when women seek to secure and remain in an occupation gender stereotyped as male. In order to accomplish this, they must demonstrate higher performance levels than men (Bozarth-Campbell, 1978; Osipow, 1975; and Parker, 1993). The fact of occupational gender stereotyping can be significant to this study. If the women in the study understood the construct of "minister" to be masculine, did their seminary experience change this understanding? Did the women undergo a perspective transformation of how they make meaning of "minister?"

At least through the early 1980s, theories of adult career development failed to address the importance of gender issues (Okun, 1984). The major variables, uniquely influential on women's career choices, are marital/familial status, gender role attitudes, role conflict, and the gender-typing of occupations (Betz and Fitzgerald, 1987). An additional variable involved in the career choice of women is the availability of role models (Hackett, Exposito, and O'Halloran, 1989; Hansman, 1998; and Klaw and Rhodes, 1995). Research shows that the lack of role models, and specifically, same-gender role models deters women from selecting non-traditional occupations (Betz and Fitzgerald, 1987). There is no comprehensive theory of women's career development,
affirmed Betz and Fitzgerald in 1987. This continues into the 1990s (Osipow and Fitzgerald, 1996).

Although few argue that there must be separate theories of male and female career development, no one says the development is identical (Osipow and Fitzgerald, 1996). Women's career development may not be fundamentally different from men's, but because of gender role constructs, it is more complicated and needs separate examination. Theorists say, "that the gendered social context of women's lives is sufficiently strong and sufficiently different from men's experience to justify a specific explanatory focus on women" (Osipow and Fitzgerald, p. 261). Gender may illustrate most clearly the importance of cultural context as an influence on career development. Bierema (1998) presents the social context of women's career development as characterized by patriarchal segregation and discrimination, diversity, and technology.

Recent theories of women's career development emphasize gender as a powerful variable. They fall within the perspectives of sociopsychological, individual differences, and social learning. The sociopsychological perspective has been of little impact because of its operational constructs: structures of opportunity are too broad and general. However, it is important because of its insistence on the significance of "real-life" circumstances. The perspective of individual differences identifies experience with work, academic success, role model influence, encouragement, ability, need for personal agency, and maternal relationship as influencing career choice. The social learning perspective is a self-efficacy model. It has some promise for facilitating women's vocational behavior in spite of the fact that there is debate as to the reality of the role of self-efficacy (Osipow and Fitzgerald, 1996).
According to Bierema (1998), women's career development is changing. The change is due to three factors: (1) The information age has altered the competition between women and men from one of brawn to competition on a brain-to-brain basis; (2) the increased fluidity of the life cycle of careers indicates that women experience more career interruptions than do men; and (3), and the fact that the concept of "equal opportunity" is experiencing a slight improvement.

Many theories are founded on the idea that the individual goes through a process of matching interests and abilities with an occupation that requires one's abilities and satisfies one's interests. This doesn't work for women because of the context in which women make career choices, a context in which gender role stereotyping views a woman's primary role as homemaker separate and not necessarily compatible with involvement in a career (Schreiber, 1998).

Studying women's career choices is made more complex than studying men's career choices because career choices because women's career choices involve the expectation that included in most women's lives are the roles of homemaker and mother (Fitzgerald and Betz, 1983). This seems especially relevant to women considering a career as an ordained minister. Not only is the traditional role of pastor a male role, but tradition often dictates that the geographic location of the family home be determined by the career of the male spouse. Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang (1998) found that generally women seek ordination at a later age then men. They are also more likely to be divorced, single, or married to an ordained person. Itinerancy could present special difficulties under these circumstances. An older divorced woman may be more likely to have teenage children with long-established educational and social contexts. Changing these
may cause stress within the family. An older single woman may have established social
and support systems that she is reluctant to change. Clergy couples present their own
problems. They may be placed in congregations that are significant distances apart. If
two parsonages are provided, which will be the residence of choice? If both pastors work
in the same congregation, how will a congregation react to a female possibly being
assigned as senior and her husband being assigned as associate? Younger male pastors
may not face these challenges.

Research indicates that traditional female roles of homemaker and mother
influence every aspect of a woman's career choice and adjustment. While selecting a
career, a woman experiences issues of gender role stereotyping, issues of sex
discrimination, and issues of multiple role expectation. These issues plus the fact that
women are offered some career experiences and discouraged from others shape a
woman's career interests. The social context of women defines certain of their roles and
expectations, which makes the career choice and development process different from that
of men. Women's patterns are diverse, contends Schrieber (1998), and represent the
complex process necessary to manage multiple roles experienced during a woman's life
span. A question relevant to this study arises; does the seminary experience provide
support to women trying to manage multiple roles?

No comprehensive theory of this process has emerged. Osipow and Fitzgerald
(1996) agree. While research has moved beyond merely identifying, describing, and
classifying relevant variables, it is still a long way from an integrated theory of women's
career development.
Women's Career Development in Religious Careers

Studies investigating factors involved in women selecting a career in religion were not found. The research reviewed by Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) concerned religion only to the extent that a woman's religious background affected her choice of a traditional gender role over a career. Parker (1993) wrote to offer guidance to women considering a clergy career. It was an exploration of the personal and professional aspects of a clergywoman's life offered to assist in a woman's decision regarding their appropriateness for her. Conway, Ahern, and Steuernagel (1995) investigated the impact of religion on gender consciousness, but they did not link their findings to women choosing careers in religion. (Author's note: The spell check function of Microsoft Word does not recognize "clergywoman." "Clergyman" is offered as the correct spelling.)

Two works of Nelson (1963 and 1988) are of interest. Both were written to describe the extent of career opportunities in religion available in the United States. In his 1963 work Nelson indicates the gender usually considered appropriate for each position. Ordained ministers, he wrote, are usually men. Every reference he made to this position used masculine pronouns. Other typically male positions were missionary and seminary instructor. Female positions were missionary dietitian, secretary, director of Christian education, and assistants to various male positions. In 1988, he made a real effort to be inclusive of gender. He points out the struggles of female clergy and how hard women are working to achieve equity. He no longer refers to ordained clergy as "he." They are clergypersons instead. However, what is truly interesting is the content of the photos included in the book. There are 11 pictures obviously depicting "clergypersons." They are all men. Gender stereotypes of religious careers as either
male or female continue. It may be subtler today, but it continues. The fact of the gender stereotyping of religious careers can be significant to this study. If the women in the study understood the construct of "minister" to be masculine, did their seminary experience change this understanding? Did the women undergo a perspective transformation of how they make meaning of "minister?" Did the seminary experience support such a transformation?

Seminary Training of Women

Literature on the seminary training of women was primarily done by feminist theologians or those with a feminist perspective. The material is limited, and most is in the form of commentary rather than research.

"No tradition in Western civilization is older than the tradition of excluding women from the clergy" (Smith, 1978). In spite of this, the fastest growing constituency in American theological schools is women, especially those in programs leading to ordination. The numbers of women enrolled in such programs increased 269.6% between 1972 and 1978 (Cornwall Collective, 1980).

Chopp (1995) looks at theological education from the point of view of "women engaged in feminist perspectives in theological education" (p. x). She makes the point that even though women are "invited" to theological study, they are not always welcome in theological discussions, especially if they approach theology from a feminist perspective. Women are outsiders to the theological education process (1) because we do not often hold faculty appointment or top administrative positions and (2) because our history and experience are not given serious attention. Theological education assumes the white male perspective following the university model (Cornwall Collective, 1980).
Fiorenza (1989) and Chopp (1989b) agree that, in spite of attempts to make theological education inclusive of women, what it does is force women to be "like men." According to Chopp, the center can't contain the margins, but the goal is containment not change. Fiorenza adds that an inclusive paradigm would require the deconstruction of the present paradigm, not merely a widening of the circle to include women.

As pointed out by the Cornwall Collective (1980), women did not often hold faculty appointment or top administrative positions in seminaries. Wheeler (1996) investigated recent changes in this situation. Women faculty in Protestant theological schools increased from 3% in 1970 to 15.5% in 1991. The 1991 figure was somewhat more impressive for mainline Protestant denominational seminaries, 21%. These numbers are encouraging, but they still fall short of any kind of equitable distribution. If as Gross and Peters (1989) suggest women role models are important to women seminarians because they help women build a sense of confidence toward their own professional future that is empowering, the facts beg that the question of the availability of role models be asked.

Nancy R. Howell, (1998) Dean of the Saint Paul School of Theology, is a woman who can act as a role model for young women considering ordained ministry. She was raised in the Southern Baptist tradition (which still does not ordain women), and her only female ministry role models were two non-clergy Baptist missionaries. She could not imagine a woman as a pastor. She eventually came to realize that women could have a ministerial role. Was this a perspective transformation?
Women Seminarians Opting for Ordination After Enrolling in a Non-Ordination Track

The sources cited above and the twenty-eight journals manually searched revealed no information on this topic. While this is not a definitive indication that no research has ever been done in this area, it is certainly an indication that any such research is scarce.

Summary

This literature review has explored the research and thought regarding six areas particularly pertinent to the subject and purpose of this study. The six areas are (1) Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation, including feminist criticism of Habermas, (2) other strands of transformative learning (3) women's career development, (4) women's career development in religious careers, (5) the seminary training of women, and (6) women seminarians opting for ordination after enrolling in a non-ordination track.

The origin of Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation and how he links it to adult education and adult development was followed by a review of the literature critiquing the theory from various points of view. While the theory is challenged around the issues of bias, context, ideology, power, and social action, the questions for this study remain. Can Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation assist in our understanding of the factors involved in a woman seminarian's decision to pursue ordination during the process of her theological education? Are such decisions in the nature of a perspective transformation?

The literature reviewed here presents a variety of pictures of Mezirow's theory. The fact that transformative learning theory involves so many in discussion and research
attests to its importance. However, it is a theory and, as such, requires continued inquiry and investigation. Taylor (1998) agrees and presents a strong argument for further research and provides suggested avenues for this research. Some of his suggestions that I find particularly interesting include: continuing the debate around the relations between personal transformation and social change, learning how educators can shape the context of their classroom so they may foster transformative learning, asking how cultural differences shape the possibility of transformative learning, investigating how the social construction of developmental events shapes a person’s readiness for transformative learning, understanding how educators can shape learning environments supportive of discussions involving the emotions which underlie thoughts, exploring how "other ways of knowing" relate to transformative learning, and defining a perspective transformation.

Unanswered questions remain. The literature revealed no discussion of the ethical issues of perspective transformation. I am thinking particularly about the issues involved when transformation significantly alters a person's life. What happens when the change involved so alters an individual’s perception that she or he can no longer function in situations that were once comfortable and familiar? Where does the person go for support when faced with a situation in which she or he can no longer be comfortable and which she or he is essentially powerless to effect change? What assistance does Mezirow's theory offer?

Whether or not one is uncomfortable (as I am) with labels such "feminine" or "masculine" ways of knowing, it is true that our culture values the rational over the experiential or the intuitive. In this way we isolate and devalue other ways of making meaning. Michelson's (1996) critique of reflection begs that we address the questions: Is
reflection another form of hegemony? Can perspective transformation be reached through means other than reflection and rational discourse? Can intuitive models of "reflection" reach the same goal? What might such models look like?

Feminist criticism of Habermas suggests that his work is gender blind in such a way as to limit its usefulness to feminist theorists. Such flaws may be passed on to Mezirow's work due to his uncritical acceptance of Habermas's work.

Mezirow does not go far enough with his discussion of context. We are constantly in context. Every human interaction is a negotiation for meaning and understanding between/among the participants. The implications of context for rational discourse offer fertile ground for future research.

The works of Hart (1990), Pietrykowski, (1996), and Inglis (1997) are provocative, especially relating to the issues of power in educational relationships. Questions that arise here include how do power structures within the classrooms between teacher and student, between student and student, between teacher and administration, between student and administration limit the opportunities for transformative learning to occur? How do the power structures of gender, race, class impact upon the predispositions of individuals toward transformative learning?

Mezirow (1989) responds to Collard and Law's (1989) critique that the basic problem with his theory is that he has not felt the need to incorporate a theory of social action into his broader theory. Mezirow claims that a theory of social action is not necessary. Social action is strictly the domain of the student, and the teacher has no part in the decision to act or not. A question which appears even more basic and which neither Collard and Law nor Mezirow address in the literature reviewed is to what extent
social change (the goal of social action) can occur in the absence of perspective transformation. It would be interesting to engage in arguments on this issue.

Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning is a powerful theory that has much to say to the field of adult education. The literature addresses several questions, but unanswered questions remain. This study investigated two of these questions. Can Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation assist in our understanding of a woman seminarian’s decision to opt for ordination during the process of her theological education? Do other transformative learning models offer insight?

The literature regarding the other strands of transformative learning suggested three other ways of approaching the subject. Freire’s philosophy of education as emancipatory presents a strong argument for educating toward social action. Daloz’s concept of transformation as a matter of development added the presence of mentors to the mix. Both of these may suffer from the same gender blindness as Mezirow and Habermas. Dirkx’s work in the extra-rational/spiritual realm offers a more holistic approach to understand meaning making and is particularly appropriate for this study.

An exploration of the literature regarding women’s career development revealed no current comprehensive theory on the subject. Most of the work in the past looks at why women choose a career or a more traditional female role. New research looked at barriers women face in the world of work and how they balance family and career. Some hints regarding women’s career choice are offered in the study of the importance of the availability of role models and mentors, but a theory unique to women continues to elude us. This is also true when considering why women enter religious careers. Gender stereotyping continues to present barriers to women considering a career in God’s service.
and particularly to those considering ordained ministry. No literature was found regarding the factors involved in women seminarians deciding to opt for ordination after enrolling in a non-ordination track.

The literature on the seminary education of women presents the reality of the deep, imbedded barriers to women engaged in theological study. When one considers this literature along with the fact that women are entering seminaries in record numbers, one cannot help but ask some questions: Why do women engage in theological study? Why do women pursue ordination? What happens during the seminary education of some women to cause them to change from a non-ordination track to one leading to ordination?

The literature review regarding women’s career development or women’s seminary education does not illuminate the decision to change career paths during their seminary experience. Exploring such decisions and viewing them through the lens of Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation and other models of transformative learning may provide such illumination. Figure 2.1 illustrates this possibility.
Strands of Transformative Learning

Perspective transformation
Consciousness-raising
Development
Spirituality

Bias
Context
Ideology
Power
Social Action

DECISIONS → ORDINATION

Figure 2.1: Model based upon the literature

Chapter Three presents the methodology of the study.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Design Framework

Understanding the culture of women seminarians who are graduates of or currently enrolled in the Methodist Theological School in Ohio can be significant in building knowledge of the convergence of the gender issues in religion and liturgical practices and how adult education and adult development theory and practices provide insight into these issues. The study addressed an area of this convergence. This section demonstrates why the research questions of the study were best addressed through a qualitative approach. Marshall and Rossman (1989) point out several types of research for which the qualitative approach is valuable. These include research (1) that for practical or ethical reasons cannot be done experimentally, (2) that explores complexities and processes in depth, (3) with as yet undefined variables, and (4) on unexplored societies. Table 3.1 demonstrates the connections between some types of research described by Marshall and Rossman and the proposed study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Type</th>
<th>Connection to Proposed Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research that for practical or ethical reasons cannot be done experimentally</td>
<td>An experimental study that artificially controlled the career paths of seminarians would most certainly be impractical and totally unethical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research that explores complexities and processes in depth</td>
<td>The complexities and processes of the influences that shape career paths will not be self-evident and will require in depth study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research with as yet unidentified variables</td>
<td>The literature does not reveal the experiences/factors that shape the career paths of women seminarians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research on unexplored societies</td>
<td>The literature does not reveal research done on the culture of women seminarians.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Connection: Research type to proposed study

As the table illustrates, the qualitative approach to research was well suited and appropriate for the study.

Subjectivity

According to Morse (1994), it is important for a researcher to realize that the particular area of study was selected because of the researcher's personal experiences and passions. Such topics hold the researcher's interest and, she continues, it is not wrong to use personal experiences as impetus for a research study, but the researcher needs to be aware of the possible motives for conducting the study, "as such experiences may give the study a particular bias" (p. 224).
Subjectivity, asserts Peshkin (1988), "is an amalgam of the persuasions that stem from the circumstances of one's class, statuses and values interacting with the particulars of one's object of investigation" (p. 17). He contends that it is important for the researcher to disclose to the reader the place at which self and subject are joined.

As I consider how my own experiences and passions have shaped my research interest, two points present themselves. First, my professional life, prior to returning to school, was spent in professions populated predominately by women but controlled predominately by white, middle class men. As a secondary school teacher of math and chemistry and as a school guidance counselor, my colleagues were mostly women, while my superiors were always men. Later as an administrator of nursing, rehabilitation, and retirement centers, the center staffs who reported to me were nearly all women; other administrators were mostly women; and my superiors were nearly all men. Like millions of other women, I experienced, first hand, the power disparities within my culture.

The second point concerns communities of faith. I have a strong belief that the church, the house of God, should be a sanctuary for women, a place where women experience God's unconditional love as being equal in value, status, and power to men. One does not need to spend much time in the pews of Christianity to understand that many traditions and practices of organized religion continue to reproduce the structures of the Western, white, middle class male culture (Aquino, 1998; Chopp, 1989; Cone, 1975; Daly, 1985; Fiorenza, 1993; Grant, 1989; Loades, 1990; Moody, 1996; Ramshaw, 1995; Reilly, 1995; Ruether, 1998). These two points form the foundation for my personal interest, which I include here because of Peshkin's (1988) suggestion that researchers need to search for their own subjectivity.
Indeed, it was incumbent upon me as I conducted and wrote about my research that I sought to uncover and understand the various aspects of myself that might intervene in the research process. Peshkin (1988) states that untamed subjectivity can mute the emic voice [the voice of discovery]. Knowing that I tend to see in certain ways made me more able to attend to the orientations that shaped what I saw and how I understood what I saw.

This illustrates the importance of reflexivity: "the need to think about the ways a researcher's actions may structure the responses encountered and about how those reactions alter the researcher's own perceptions" (Murdock, 1997, p. 186). Reflexivity helps one understand that all ethnographic accounts contain an amount of partiality (Thomas, 1997). Through reflexivity and informant feedback (Huberman and Miles, 1994), I continued to monitor my own subjectivity as I conducted this research.

Closely related to the issue of subjectivity are concerns regarding objectivity, replicability, validity, and reliability. These are evaluative criteria applied to quantitative research. As discussed above and noted by Punch (1994), a central point in qualitative research is that the researcher is the research instrument, and objectivity is neither possible nor desirable. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) characterize the researcher as a sort of "Jack-of-all-trades," someone who is able to use multiple research methods in the process of discovering the culture being studied. Nor is replicability a goal of qualitative research. The qualitative researcher avoids controlling research conditions, and the goal is to record the complexity of the context and the subject interaction at the time they occur (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). According to Marshall and Rossman, we can respond to the concern for replicability in three ways: (1) Since the real world changes
from moment to moment, qualitative studies cannot be replicated. (2) However, the qualitative researcher can keep notes, journals, and so forth so other researchers may inspect her procedures, protocols, and decisions. (3) The qualitative researcher can also maintain retrievable data so they are available to support challenges to findings or for reanalysis.

Regarding concerns for reliability, the degree to which an instrument consistently measures whatever it was intended to measure, and validity, the degree to which all the inferences resulting from an instrument’s use are correct (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1996), qualitative research replaces these terms with terms such as credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Tactics for addressing these issues include triangulation (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, and Huberman and Miles, 1994), checking for representativeness, checking for researcher effects, and informant feedback (Huberman and Miles). Additionally, Altheide and Johnson (1994) suggest the researcher clearly delineate interactions occurring among herself, her methodologies, and the settings and people studied.

In addition to the precautions noted in my discussion of subjectivity, the literature will further inform my research regarding the issues of objectivity, replicability, reliability, and validity or, more appropriately put, the issues of credibility, dependability, and confirmability. I affirm that reality is fluid and as such not replicable. However, I kept appropriate notes and journals and kept data in such a way that they may be retrieved and reanalyzed. Finally, triangulation, using multiple methods to view the same phenomenon (Huberman and Miles, 1994), was used to promote credibility, dependability, and confirmability.
Research Questions

The first stage in a research study is the design period (Janesick, 1994). The design begins with questions that will guide the study. According to Huberman and Miles (1994), research questions are a set of questions that represent the empirical domain the researcher wishes to study. The research questions should be broad in scope; narrow questions prematurely delimit the study (Morse, 1994). Questions that are fairly broad in scope allow hypothesis and other questions to arise from the study owing to the emergent nature of qualitative research (Spindler, 1982).

The following questions were used to guide the study of women seminarians at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio:

1. What about the culture of women seminarians at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio supported a decision to change career paths?

2. What experiences/factors shape/affect the career paths of women seminarians who commit to careers as parish pastors after initially enrolling in non-ordination tracks?

3. What occurred during the seminary experience to prompt the women to change their program of study?

4. How did these women perceive the construct, "ordained minister," before and after their seminary experience?

5. What did the women believe to be the role of gender in their decisions?

These questions represented the empirical domain under study and were sufficiently broad so as not to prematurely delimit the study.
Research Strategy

The research strategy is determined by the type of questions to be answered (Morse, 1994) as illustrated in Table 3.2 below (extracted from Morse Table 13.1, p. 224).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Research Questions</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive questions of values, beliefs, practices of cultural group</td>
<td>Ethnography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific Research question:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What about the culture of women seminarians at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio supported a decision to change career paths?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How did these women perceive the construct, “ordained minister,” before and after their seminary experience?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process questions about experience over time or change, may have stages and phases</td>
<td>Grounded Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific Research questions:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What experiences/factors shape/affect the career paths of women seminarians who commit to careers as parish pastors after initially enrolling in non-ordination tracks?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What occurred during the seminary experience to prompt the women to change their program of study?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Comparison: Type of research question to research strategy

The questions for the study required description and the study of processes in specific contexts. They asked about the values, beliefs, and practices of a cultural group,
and they asked about experiences over time and change. Such questions suggested the use of two qualitative strategies: ethnography and grounded theory.

Spradley (1979) defines culture as "the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior" (p. 5). And describing culture is the work of ethnography. It has as its essence the desire to learn from people. A concern with the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand, continues Spradley, is the essential core of ethnography. The research questions have the character of wanting to describe the values, beliefs, and practices of the culture of women graduates and seminarians from the Methodist Theological School in Ohio. Thus, ethnography was an appropriate strategy for use in the study.

A general methodology for developing theory grounded in systematic gathering and analyzing of data is grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). It evolves during research through the continuous interplay between analysis and data collection. Grounded theory methodology is sometimes referred to as the constant comparative method because constant comparative analysis (continuous interplay between analysis and data collection) is a central feature of the strategy. Merriam and Simpson (1995) believe that grounded theory is particularly useful in investigating problems for which a definitive theory has not been established, such as the education and training of adults. One reason this strategy is so well suited to educational practices, they continue, is because the field does not yet have sufficient theoretical bases to structure all future research. For example, data emerging from the lives and experiences of women seminarians explaining their commitment to careers as parish pastors will contribute to a
theoretical understanding regarding what shapes/affects career paths of women in this particular helping profession.

Research Methods

Three data gathering methods or techniques dominate qualitative research (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). These are the techniques of participant observation, interviewing, and collection of material artifacts, including documents. They recommend the use of a combination of methods, rather than one technique. This methodological triangulation, says Morse (1994), gives the researcher a more holistic view of the setting. It is also the method most used to verify findings.

Appropriate research methods or techniques are also linked to the research strategies outlined above (Morse, 1994). Extending Table 3.2 reveals the emerging methodological suggestions (extensions are extracted form Table 13.1. p. 224).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Descriptive questions of values, beliefs, practices of cultural group | Ethnography  
**Specific Research question:**  
1. What about the culture of women seminarians at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio supported a decision to change career paths?  
4. How did these women perceive the construct, "ordained minister," before and after their seminary experience? | Unstructured and structured interviews; participant observation; document |
| Process questions about experience over time or change, may have stages and phases | Grounded Theory  
**Specific Research questions:**  
2. What experiences/factors shape/affect the career paths of women seminarians who commit to careers as parish pastors after initially enrolling in non-ordination tracks?  
3. What occurred during the seminary experience to prompt the women to change their program of study? | Interviews (tape-recorded) |

Table 3.3: Comparison: Research questions/research strategy/research method

The questions and strategies proposed for the study suggested the use of participant observation, interviews, and the analysis of relevant documents as the appropriate qualitative research techniques. I used these methods and maintained field notes.

**Participant Observation**

Merriam and Simpson (1995) call participant observation the cornerstone technique of ethnography. It is time-consuming and demanding and generally thought to have four variations: (1) As a "complete participant," the researcher conceals the fact that she or he is observing as well as becoming a member of the group being studied. (2) As
"participant as observer," the researcher does not conceal the observing activities, but the activities of participation are primary. (3) As "observer as participant," the researcher makes public the role of observer and observation takes priority over participation. (4) As a "complete observer," the researcher tries to become unnoticed or even invisible to the activity.

By using participant observation in the role of observer as participant, the researcher observes the activities of people, the social situation, and its physical characteristics, and how it feels to be part of the scene (Spradley, 1980). "One must establish rapport and trust with a group and become familiar enough to gain insights into the meaning of their lives. At the same time, one must be an observer, remaining as objective as possible while collecting information" (Merriam and Simpson, 1995, p. 105). Spradley suggests three levels of observation: (1) The researcher begins by making broad "descriptive" observations. These observations present an overview of the social situation and the activities that take place there. (2) After the initial data are recorded and analyzed, the researcher begins to narrow the scope and make "focused" observations. (3) After this data are analyzed, the researcher can narrow the investigation still further and make "selective" observations.

Wolcott (1995) cautions researchers not to confuse the fact of physical presence with the hope of making meaningful observations.

Two questions to ask in that regard are, "Can whatever I want to study be 'seen' by a participant observer at all?" and, if so, "Am I well positioned to observe those phenomena?" These questions need to be followed by a third one: "What are my own capabilities for participating and observing in this situation?" (p. 86)

Wolcott offers some suggestions for doing participant observation better:
• The researcher must couple analysis with observations and be continually attentive to personal processes as a human observer—reflexivity.

• The researcher must constantly review what she or he is looking for and whether or not it is being seen or is likely to be seen.

• Researchers cannot sustain attention for extended periods of time. It is probably more useful to view observations as occurring in short bursts, like a pause, followed by inattentive periods.

• Researchers participate in observations by assessing what they are doing, observing, and recording in terms of the kind of information needed to be reported, not the kind that ought to be reported.

• Note taking and the subsequent practice of writing-up is a critical part of the research.

When using participant observation as a fieldwork strategy, asserts Wolcott, it is important to seriously consider the challenge it poses to participate more and to play less the role of aloof observer.

Two settings offered the opportunities to meet the challenges Wolcott describes above and will allowed me to observe the culture of women seminarians. The Methodist Theological School of Ohio is located just north of Columbus in Delaware, Ohio; it provided the site of the two settings for the study. The first setting was the seminary itself and its common areas where students gather. Classrooms provided the backdrop of the second setting. I was enrolled as a student at MTSO and have spent considerable time at the seminary, in its common areas, and in its classrooms. Using my recollections and notes from this time, I took the role of complete participant as defined by Merriam
and Simpson (1995). The complete participant is a member of the studied group.

Spradley’s (1980) three levels of observation informed by Wolcott’s (1995) suggestions guided my observations and recollections:

Step 1: Initial observations were recalled.

Step 2: Analysis of the initial observation permitted the next step to be more narrow and focused. The information gathered was assessed and recorded.

Step 3: Further analysis lead to selective observations.

Observation was accomplished over a period of approximately two years; it was followed by periods of reflection and analysis.

Field Notes

Written field notes are the major part of any ethnographic record (Spradley, 1980). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) suggest carrying a note book at all times and allowing ample time for working on and expanding the field notes. The notes should be both descriptive and analytic and should be a careful recording of all the researcher's attention has allowed her or him to see. The institution of field notes (Clifford, 1990) is understood to be a discrete written work somehow produced by fieldwork. It constitutes a raw descriptive database subject to later generalization, synthesis, and theoretical elaboration. Clifford goes on to say that within this discipline there is great diversity of opinion and experience about the type and amount of note taking that is appropriate.

Despite this diversity researchers (Clifford; Wolcott, 1995; Spradley; Glesne and Peshkin; Merriam and Simpson, 1995) agree that fields notes are an extremely important aspect of excellent qualitative research.
Documents

Written texts and artifacts provide mute evidence of the culture being studied (Hodder, 1994). Unlike the spoken word, this kind of evidence physically endures and can be separated from its author, producer, or user over time and space. Some general reasons for the importance of these texts and artifacts are (1) access can be easy and cost low; (2) they may provide information that differs from or is not available in spoken form; and (3) because of their endurance, they give historical insight. According to Hodder, qualitative researchers exploring multiple and conflicting voices and interpretations which differ and interact will benefit from the study of material culture. The documents studied included:

- Materials sent to individuals seeking admission to the Methodist Theological School in Ohio,
- Policies regarding women students,
- Policies regarding the use of gender inclusive language, and
- Historical documents listing the graduates in each of the offered academic areas.

Interviewing

Douglas (1985) says that a researcher should not explore human beings until one first knows oneself. "The creative interviewer recognizes his own humanity as the beginning of the understanding of all human beings" (p. 42). Although I am uncomfortable with Douglas' reference to all interviewers as masculine, I believe his point is that each of us must understand our own individual strengths, weaknesses, and passions before it is possible to begin to inquire about the passions and experiences of
others. Steinar (1996) points out that there are emotional aspects to an interview and that a researcher is likely to encounter them.

After a level of self-understanding is achieved, the researcher needs to understand what is involved in successful interviewing. According to Douglas (1985), successful creative interviewing involves excellent listening skills, sensitivity, intimacy, and sincerity about the value of the other person; it involves, to a certain degree, surrendering to the experience.

Spradley (1979) describes ethnographic interviews as "a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants" (p. 58). Three elements are most important: (1) explicit purpose, (2) ethnographic explanations, and (3) ethnographic questions. (1) Spradley says it is the researcher's responsibility to determine the direction of the conversation and to make the informant aware of the direction. When an ethnographer and an informant meet for an interview, it is understood that the conversation is supposed to proceed toward a specific goal. (2) Ethnographic explanations are explanations that help the informant understand the purpose and procedures of the interview; they help facilitate the process. (3) Spradley identifies the three main types of ethnographic questions as descriptive, which enable the interviewer to collect samples of the informant's language; structural, which enable the interviewer to learn about the informant's domains; and contrast, which help the interviewer understand the various terms of the informant's language.

According to Douglas (1985), the first approach to someone you desire to interview is very basic to social research. He suggests that researchers consider the world
a serious place in which only those directly involved in can truly know what it is like. His approach is to say, "You are that expert and I meekly beseech your help in gaining a more complete--never complete--understanding of it" (p. 60). "Meekly beseech" seems a little corny, but his point is that the researcher must understand that she or he is the learner and that she or he is asking the chosen interviewee to be the teacher. Humility and respect from the researcher are very important.

Establishing trust and providing the subject a feeling of control is important to a positive beginning. Allowing the subject to choose the site of the interview gives that person a sense of control and ensures a level of comfort. The interviewer can establish trust by allowing the informant to get to know her or him at the start of the interview. Creative interviewing involves mutual disclosure and a search for mutual understanding. An interview is an evolutionary process (Douglas, 1985).

Fontana and Frey (1994) point out that it is not possible to gather "value-free" data in a face-to-face, in-depth interview. Not only the context of the interview but also the mutual construction of the interview as it proceeds make such a goal unreachable. Richardson (1997) reinforces this point when she says interviews are lived experiences created in particular contexts. Richardson and Fontana and Frey echo Mischler's (1986) argument that a researcher's understanding of an interview is dependent upon her recognizing how she reformulates questions and how the respondent frames answers vis-à-vis their reciprocal construction of meaning as the interview proceeds. The discourse of the interview is constructed as it moves along. The researcher needs to look beyond the transcribed account of a particular interview and see the context in which it took place and the social "give and take" of constructing the discourse.
Missler (1996) suggests some pros and cons of interview. The advantages are that both parties negotiate the meaning of the questions and answers and that inquiries receive an immediate response. The disadvantages are first that, because they are face-to-face, there is a chance for bias to occur. The informant responds the way she believes the interviewer desires. It seems she is saying that the advantage of mutual construction is also a disadvantage. This is reason enough to take the mutual construction of the event so seriously. Second, an interview is susceptible to interpretive error. She suggests using field notes, triangulation, and member checks to control for this error.

Informed by the literature, I used the following interview protocol:

- The subject chose the site and time for the interview.
- The subject's choice of site dictate my choice of clothing. For example, conducting an interview in a clergy woman's church required different attire than that worn to an interview in her home.
- I asked permission to tape the interview.
- I expressed awareness that her time is valuable.
- I expressed thanks for her sharing her time with me and for her helping me gain understanding of the nature of her seminary experience and her decision to seek ordination as a parish pastor.
- I reaffirmed that the interview would last approximately one and one half hours and explain there may be a need to return for follow-up. I asked if this was satisfactory.
- I asked if she has any questions to this point.
- First interview question, “Please tell me about your call.”
• The following questions were rarely needed:
  
  a. What is/was it like to be a woman seminarian at MTSO?
  
  b. Who were your role models?
  
  c. Please tell me about your first experience with gender inclusive language.

• Questions designed to learn if Mezirow’s ten phases of perspective transformation were part of the subject’s experience were also needed infrequently:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Possible Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A disorienting dilemma</td>
<td>1. How did you feel when you first realized that women could be pastors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt</td>
<td>2. What were your feelings about not already knowing this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions</td>
<td>3. How did you assess your past assumptions about women as clergy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change</td>
<td>4. How have other women managed this change in understanding?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions</td>
<td>5. How did you go about exploring new opportunities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Planning a course of action</td>
<td>6. What kind of new plans were needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Acquisition of knowledge and and skills for implementing one’s plan</td>
<td>7. What kind of curricular changes were needed?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Provisional trying of new roles

9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

- The interviews were designed to end after approximately one and one half hours.
- I asked permission to return if it proved to be necessary.

Pilot Interviews

Pilot interviews serve a valuable purpose (Sudarsky-Gleiser, 1995). They allow the researcher to evaluate the clarity and relevancy of questions; they help the researcher gain familiarity and confidence; and they provide opportunities to reformulate the interview questions. She suggested a two-step interview process. The first step involves open-ended questions. The second step is for more specific follow-up questions. Observational, methodological, and theoretical notes are helpful to shape and reshape the interview and refine the data collection. She also advocates the use of two tape recorders to eliminate the possibility of "technological" difficulties.

Pilot interviews were conducted with three women graduates of the Methodist Theological School in Ohio. All three were ordained elders and currently serving churches in Central Ohio. One pastor was ordained in the 1970s, one in the 1980s, and one in the 1990s. During the course of the interviews, the women were asked to talk
about their calls to ministry. Each revealed that she entered the seminary with no intention of becoming ordained and that, during the seminary experience, she decided to change career paths and pursue ordination. The interviews demonstrated that the phenomenon of women deciding to follow an ordination track after entering seminary does exist. An in-depth exploration was not initiated, because I hoped to include these women in the population to be studied.

Population

The individual women to be interviewed were chosen from women seminarians enrolled at the Methodist Theological School of Ohio (MTSO or Methesco) and from women graduates of MTSO who earned a Master of Divinity degree and are ordained. The Methodist Theological School of Ohio is located in Delaware, Ohio, just north of Columbus. I chose this seminary for four reasons: (1) the seminary graduates a significant number of women; (2) MTSO has a reputation of being supportive of women; (3) its geographic location is accessible, and (4) my attendance and familiarity with the seminary.

The women were recruited in two ways. Every current female seminarian at MTSO received a letter containing a brief description of the study, the criteria for participation (a change from a non-ordination to an ordination track), a request that she participate, and a protocol to inform me of her interest. A similar letter was sent to all women graduates of MTSO who had earned a Master of Divinity degree.

Qualitative research samples need to be considered purposively and conceptually (Huberman and Miles, 1994). I wanted to investigate the factors involved in the decision of women seminarians to pursue ordination after initially enrolling in a non-ordination
track. It was, therefore, appropriate to select my population by choosing women who had made such a decision. Morse (1994) would call these women experiential experts, experts about a particular experience. They were experts regarding the experience of changing from a non-ordination track to one leading to ordination.

Morse (1994) describes the needed qualities of a person who will act as guide/informant for the researcher. "A good informant is one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has the time to be interviewed, and is willing to participate in the study" (p. 228). Women selected for the study met the criteria outlined by Morse as necessary for a good informant. In addition, each woman belonged to one of two groups. She was either a seminarian attending Methesco who opted for or was considering opting for an ordination track after initially enrolling in a non-ordination track; or she was an ordained graduate of Methesco who opted for an ordination track after initially enrolling in a non-ordination. MTSO and central Ohio women clergy provided me with women who meet these criteria. Morse (1994) refers to this kind of sample as intensive (also purposive/opportunistic) sampling. It was the perspectives of these women that provide the data for one part of the research study. These women were experts and authorities regarding their own experiences relating to the research questions.

Regarding the number of women interviewed, Morse (1994) offers some guidelines. For ethnography or a grounded theory study, she recommends thirty to fifty subjects as a general guide. Having said that, she goes on to say that the adequacy of data collected refers to the amount collected rather than the number of subjects. Saturation is the key concept here. Saturation refers to the point at which a researcher discovers
repetition in the collected and confirmation of already collected data. Following Morse's guidelines I planned to assemble a population of approximately thirty women, but I also planned to let the notion of saturation dictate the point at which I stop collecting data. In actuality, 24 women responded their willingness to participate. I interviewed all 24 of them.

Data Analysis

After the culture was observed and recollected, documents reviewed, field notes assembled, and interviews transcribed, it was necessary to bring order, structure, and meaning to collected the data. This was the purpose of data analysis. Additionally, in qualitative research data analysis seeks to make general statements about data categories and build grounded theory (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). The data were reviewed carefully and coded for content. Coding is the progressive process of sorting and defining data (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). So that I was aware of my own subjectivity, I asked another person to review significant portions of the data and verify my coding. Information that would identify particular individuals was removed from the data in order to insure confidentiality.

It is appropriate to give a brief description of the second coder. He is a male with academic and theological training. He is a graduate of the Methodist Theological School of Ohio, earned a Ph.D. from The Ohio State University, and is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church. He is currently serving a congregation in central Ohio.

During the coding process as the other person was reviewing my coding, I became aware of my own subjectivity at work. I am skeptical about some programs that are currently quite popular in many Christian churches. In particular I am skeptical of the
Emmaus program (a spiritual retreat focusing on the basics of Christianity). This
skepticism became apparent in my coding. It was pointed out to me that I had not given
the Emmaus experiences related by the women as much attention as I had given other
experiences. Because of the other person’s observations, I was able to correct this error
in my analysis.

The coding guide contained codes relevant to the study. Codes included, call,
experiences related to gender, childhood experience, mentors, role models, Mezirow’s
theory of perspective transformation, career information, career knowledge, and original
career choice. The complete coding guide can be found in the appendices.

Telling the story of culture and experiences of these women was accomplished
through two techniques. First, the coded data were assembled into a realist tale. The
purpose of the realist tale is to demonstrate the overwhelming presence of domesticated
patterns of thought and action discovered in the people studied (Van Maanen, 1988). The
presence of the author is limited, and the focus is on what those studied say, do, and
think. Simply put, the realist tale is a realistic account of the culture being studied
(Marshall and Rossman, 1995). From this story, the factors that influenced these women
to opt for ordination after enrolling in a non-ordination track emerged.

The second technique used was that of viewing the data through the lens of
Dirkx’s (1998) four strands of thought regarding transformative learning. These strands
are: (1) Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation, (2) Freire’s emphasis on
consciousness-raising, (3) Daloz’s contention that transformation is the result of
development, and (4) Dirkx’s concept of integrating the emotional/spiritual dimensions
into daily experiences. This technique provided insight into the connection between the data and the various strands of thought regarding transformative learning.

The realist tales were told using a technique of combining the women’s stories into those of three composite women (Lather and Smithies, 1997). Telling the stories through composites made it possible to view the data through the lens of transformative learning theory and limited the distortion of focus on individual differences and personality.

Summary

I was interested in discovering the factors, conditions, circumstances, and influences working to cause a woman seminarian to pursue ordination after initially enrolling in a non-ordination track. This chapter presented a set of strategies used to illuminate the topic. To review, the proposed research questions that emerge from my scholarly interest were:

1. What about the culture of women seminarians at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio supported a decision to change career paths?

2. What experiences/factors shape/affect the career paths of women seminarians who commit to careers as parish pastors after initially enrolling in non-ordination tracks?

3. What occurred during the seminary experience to prompt the women to change their program of study?

4. How did these women perceive the construct, "ordained minister," before and after their seminary experience?

5. What did the women believe to be the role of gender in their decisions?
I suggested that these questions were well suited to investigation using the research strategies of ethnography and grounded theory. The research methods suggested by these strategies are participant observation, interviewing, and field notes. These methods did illuminate the experiences of women seminarians at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio. Data analysis was accomplished by coding the data into definable elements. These elements were assembled into a realist tale to tell the story of why women, who enter seminary with no intention of becoming ordained, decide to pursue ordination. The data were also viewed through the lens of transformative learning models and Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation to determine if it supports or critiques the theory and to determine if the models and/or the theory can assist in understanding the phenomenon studied.

Chapter four reports the findings of the study.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

About the Women

Following Morse’s (1994) guidelines, I planned to perform approximately thirty interviews. Twenty-four women responded and agreed to participate in the study. Each was either a graduate or a student of the Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO). The seminary is located just north of Columbus in Delaware, Ohio. The setting is park-like with Georgian style buildings, lots of green spaces and trees, and a small pond around which students study and meditate. Information supplied by Susan Lamphere, Registrar, shows that, in the school’s first graduating class in 1963, none of the 54 graduates were women. The first woman graduated in 1964; her classmates were 44 men. In 1974, 13 of the 81 graduates were women. In 1984, 28 of 62 were women. In the years 1994 through 1999, the seminary graduated 384 persons, and 190 of these were women.

The women of this study gave several reasons for selecting MTSO. Included in the reasons were the seminary’s geographic location, its reputation for being supportive of women, the presence of a particular professor, the suggestions of friends or other influential people, the variety of curricula, the hospitality of the campus, and a family
history with the seminary. Although each woman selected to attend MTSO, not all were United Methodists. Eight of the 24 women were members of other Christian denominations; among these were United Church of Christ, American Baptist, and Presbyterian.

Each woman selected a pseudonym by which the study would know her; they are, in alphabetical order, Amanda, Anna, Anne, Beth, Bev, Boo, Elizabeth, Emma, Evangeline, Frankie, Grace, Jo, Julie, Karen, Kathy, Lee, Linda, Louise, Margaret, Marie, Mary, Sarah, Sue, and Tonya. I did not ask each for her age, but during the interviews I came to understand that the participants ranged in age from the early twenties to over sixty. I judged six to be 20-40 years of age, 11 to be 40-60 years of age, and seven to be 60+ years of age. Eight were students and, therefore, not ordained. Sixteen were graduates. The women were beginning pastors, experienced but active pastors, or retired. Fifteen of the 24 women had career experience prior to entering the seminary. All the women were white.

Ten of the interviews occurred in the woman’s home, eight in her office, and five in other locations—on campus, at a hotel, in a church, in a restaurant. The shortest interview lasted 45 minutes, the longest about two and one half hours. The average interview lasted about one hour.

Sixteen of the women were married, several for the second time. Two were widows. Six were single, five never married and one divorced. The five who had never been married were also childless; each of the others was a mother. Table 4.1 graphically represents these demographics.
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<th>Age</th>
<th>Education Status</th>
<th>Clergy Status</th>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Interview Location</th>
<th>Marital/Family Status</th>
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Table 4.1: Selected demographics of women interviewed
Two long-time friends participated in the study, and two others were slight acquaintances. I met the remaining 20 women for the first time at the interview.

Telling the Stories

The data are presented in this chapter through the stories of three composite women, Ella, Lily, and Sadie (pseudonyms). These pseudonyms were selected by me and are not among those selected by the women. The women are represented as composites as a matter of efficiency. The composites were selective. That is the women’s experiences located them in groups representative of themes pertinent to the study. Twenty-four individual stories would be cumbersome and would not serve the purpose of the study as effectively. Telling the stories through composites made it possible to view the data through the lens of transformative learning theory. Dirkx (1998) suggests four strands of thought regarding transformative learning theory: Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation, Freire’s emphasis on consciousness-raising, Daloz’s contention that transformation is the result of development, and Dirkx’s concept of integrating the emotional/spiritual dimensions into daily experiences. The women of the study had experiences related to the four strands of transformative learning to various degrees. Table 4.2 graphically represents these experiences.
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<th>Self-Examination</th>
<th>Self-Assessment</th>
<th>Sharing</th>
<th>Exploring</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Trail</th>
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Table 4.2: Strands of Transformative Learning experienced by individual women
Tables 4.3 and 4.4 illustrate the total number of women who had experiences related to Mezirow’s Theory of Perspective Transformation and to Dirkx’s remaining three strands of transformative learning respectively.
<table>
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Table 4.3: Number of women having experiences related to the individual phases of Mezirow’s Theory of Perspective Transformation
Strand

Consciousness-Raising
Development
Spiritual

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

Table 4.4: Number of women having experiences related to Dirks’ remaining three strands of transformative learning

Mezirow’s work may be the most studied and debated in the field of adult education, and it is a main focus of this study. Therefore, one of the stories is devoted to the theory of perspective transformation.

Ella’s story relates the experiences of nine women who most typified the phases of Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation. Lily’s story tells of transformational experiences of the remaining fifteen women. This story is representative of the other strands of transformative learning. The women included in Ella experienced more of the phases of Mezirow’s Theory of Perspective Transformation than did those included in Lily. Tables 4.5 and 4.6 graphically illustrate this comparison.
Table 4.5: Number of phases of Mezirow's Theory of Perspective Transformation experienced by the women represented by Ella
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Table 4.6: Number of phases of Mezirow's Theory of Perspective Transformation experienced by the women represented by Lily
An aspect of the women’s experiences with significance to how each woman learned to find meaning in her experiences is the role of culture and tradition in her life, especially regarding the roles of wife and mother. Sadie’s story presents the impact of gender and traditional female roles and expectations upon all 24 women.

It is important to revisit the significance of my own subjectivity in pursuing this study. Morse (1994) reminds me that I selected this particular area of study because of my personal experiences and passions. This was in my awareness as I conducted the interviews. I found that I felt a sense of camaraderie and identification with some women more than with others. However, I believe that I was able to listen openly and empathetically to all the stories. It was never my intention to be completely objective in my research; that would not have been possible. It was, however, my intention to realize my own subjectivity and understand its impact on the study. The sense of camaraderie and identification arose from my sharing the feminist ideals of many of the women. However, several women were uncomfortable with or would deny any connection with feminism or what they understood feminism to represent. The focus of the study was to explore transformation in the women’s lives. It was not to measure their feminist beliefs. Therefore, though my sense of identification with each woman may have resulted in a sense of kinship with some more than others, it did not impact the purpose of the study.

Ella’s Story: Perspective Transformation

Ella is a composite of nine of the 24 women interviewed. She represents Anna, Mary, Jo, Lee, Margaret, Kathy, Beth, Boo, or Sarah (pseudonyms). These nine women are represented in Ella’s story because each has reflected upon her traditional ways of
viewing her role in God’s world, embraced what she believes to be her call from God, and changed not only her view of the world but also her place as a woman and a servant of God in the world. As a composite, Ella does not represent all the women equally; the demographics below are true of most of the women of Ella’s story, but not all. As is true for all women she represents, Ella experienced perspective transformation. I tell Ella’s story, as I understand it. As Mezirow states (1991, 2000), not everyone experiences transformation in neat, linear phases, phase two following phase one, three following two, and so on. However, I tell the story in a linear fashion in order to most efficiently depict the phenomenon.

Ella is her early middle years. She has life experience beyond the church, is an experienced pastor, is married, and is a mother. Socioeconomically, Ella is middle-class; she is intelligent, as evidenced by the fact that she possesses a master’s degree. She is a graduate of the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, and she is an ordained elder of the United Methodist Church.

This is the story of how Ella came to understand and embrace a new perspective of her life and her role in the world. I drove to meet Ella on a lovely summer day in the year 2000. I met her in her office; this was our first meeting. She was gracious and open. We talked briefly about the purpose of the study, and she gave me permission to record our conversation. This began with the request that Ella tell me about her call to ministry and her decision to become ordained.

There came a time in Ella’s life when an event occurred that caused her to pause and reflect on her established view of the world and her role in it.
So, I had this dream last summer...[I dreamed] we were looking at houses. We came to this house, and it was an old, old fashioned, big brick, big stone, real heavy looking. We opened the door to go in, and inside it was all white and airy, and there were rooms—room after room after room— and I just could not find the end of it. And it was beautiful inside. And here I had been so afraid to walk in the door. When I woke up, I got out of bed and I walked into the kitchen and I heard the words, “in my father’s house there are many mansions.” And it just opened a whole door for me.

[My husband enrolled in MTSO.] When we moved there, I discovered women in ministry...I didn’t even know that was an option. I had no models, no inkling that that was a possibility...I just had never, ever thought that a woman could be an ordained pastor...I mean it was just kind of a freeing, kind of an ah-ha, a peace; this is right, and this is where I’m supposed to be.

But actually there was a point in my own life when I was leading a woman’s Bible study, and I was saying things that tradition had given to me and even interpretation of the Bible, and I...said this doesn’t set right. Why, when I follow God and understand God, why does it feel right and this feels so wrong? So I went to my kitchen and got every commentary, every Bible interpretation, everything I could find and for weeks I had it stacked up and every reference to who women were, and I found misinterpretations. And went back to the original and I ended up with kind of like Fredrick Douglas when he read the Bible and found out black people were not meant and created to serve whites. He said, “I am not who you say I am.” And there was this moment of kind of “I’m not who you say I am”...In my kitchen, by myself, it was in that indirect encounter where I said, “I am not who you say, but who does that mean that I am?”

Ella became confused; she began to reflect, to think that perhaps her traditional way of looking at herself and who and what she was might no longer be working for her. She couldn’t find the end of the beautiful dream house, but she began to think that perhaps the rooms were opening for her. It never occurred to her that women could be ordained as pastors; what did this mean for her? She realized that she was not who others said she was, but what did that mean? It was time for Ella to take a critical look at her life, at her visions of herself to see where her awakening would take her.

Mezirow (1991a) suggests that ten phases are involved in the process of personal transformation. He describes the first of these phases as a disorienting dilemma; the
dilemma is the result of any major challenge to established perspectives. Ella’s perspective of who can be an ordained and what she is to do with her life was challenged. The old ways of thinking and interpreting experience do not work anymore. What does it all mean? Who is she, after all? Should she remain the supportive housewife; or does she have some more direct role to play in doing God’s work? She began a new story; her journey to a new future began to unfold.

Ella’s perspective was challenged, and she undertook a period of self-examination. She looked at her life as it was to date and wondered.

I went through a period of a very long year... I do look at that as almost like a wilderness kind of thing... One of the funnier parts about this whole struggle I remember I felt probably one of the reasons why I never thought that would be something I would ever be found doing the ministry part is that I always assumed ministers sang. I could never sing and I couldn’t sing a note and I love music. I love the church music. How could you be a minister you can’t sing; you can’t carry a tune?

And another perception I had, and this is a real important one that I’m learning this summer. For years, I used to put ministers on pedestals, that they were special, they were perfect, and you should follow your life after them and things like that. I am learning that ministers are human... I did still didn’t wanna be a minister. Being a minister did not fit my image of myself, and I did not wanna be too restricted either and that whole idea of the United Methodist ministers and they had to, you know, go where they were sent, I didn’t like that idea. I just didn’t; I didn’t like the whole idea of, you know, being in the ministry and what that would mean to me, like would I have to become some sort of person that I was not, and I wasn’t even sure what that meant... it was very difficult for me to allow for the ego deflation, which was not caring if you give up your identity. You can be who you are, but you have to give up your identity and allow God to form a new one in you and trust... that it’s not gonna necessarily be the thing that you don’t want it to be like in terms of being stiff. I kept thinking I’d have to be all stiff, and I don’t know how else to say it but... trust that you know God wants you to have an open heart... I really needed to trust a lot more in terms of who I was going to become.

So, when I grew up, you know, I was supposed to be a teacher or a nurse or a homemaker, or whatever, and here I am again going into this whole thing
going to be a teacher or a homemaker or a nurse. You know literally, that is what it is... Yea, yea, right, right. You're the teacher, the homemaker, the nurse. So I don't know, it just didn't feel right. But I kept denying it. I kept pushing it down. I kept saying, no I can't be a pastor; I cannot be a pastor. And I went around for two years with this knot in my stomach. Absolutely two years, it was a knot and I would see things that I knew were signs that I needed to be doing something else about it...

Ella’s period of self-examination may have been long or involved or somewhat painful, but feelings of guilt or shame did not enter in to the picture. Her self-examination appears to be more in the form of coming to a realization that she is moving toward something (God’s will for her) than in the form of moving away from old notions of what she and her culture anticipated for her future.

According to Mezirow (1991a), the second phase involved in a perspective transformation is that of self-examination. This period is accompanied by feelings of guilt or shame. These guilty and ashamed feelings were noticeably absent from the data emerging from the current study. Some women, he says, may seek solace from the guilt or shame in religion. Perhaps the fact that Ella was deeply immersed in exploring faith issues provided solace before it was needed. Thus, she saw herself going toward God and God’s will for her life more than she saw herself leaving a cherished past.

Ella began to question the very foundations of the guiding factors she used to make previous career decisions. Religious beliefs, cultural standards and traditions, and former perceptions of herself and the clergy no longer inspired the sense of awe and solidity they once had inspired.

Yea, it definitely happened over a period of time, and I had to overcome the Catholic piece or barriers, and I guess everybody has their thing to overcome and recognizing that is going to distance me, and make a difference from...it is distancing me from my family, and my family is not very supportive overall of...
this. So, I had to really be clear in my own mind that this is me and this is what I want to do whether or not people approve.

...that was a very leveling experience for me. For me, the leveling is that it takes you back to the beginning of your understanding of yourself at your baseline and you have to rebuild your self-image to include the role... I don't think it is like changing professions even. It is about your identity as a human being, as a woman... It is getting over what society has said. Now, I don't think this is true sometimes for some of the younger women, because maybe they haven't gotten that message from society, but as a woman who is 53, you know, these are things you do not do. When I was in college, I wanted to be in pre-med, and I never had a door open for me on that, including my counselors in college and everyone else who said this is not a good thing for a woman to do. So I became a teacher. I love teaching, and I really am a teacher and that is probably what I was supposed to do first before I moved into the ministry... So there are things that were appropriate and things that were not appropriate. So I had to sort of go to that baseline and begin to rebuild my self-understanding; so it leveled me back to this child and all this stuff that you kind of have to work through. And that was probably God's piece in it... Because my identity did not include that. So it had to be sort of gradual... because I had never seen that. I had not been allowed to see it; I had not allowed myself to see it... it was not part of my identity, and these [ministers] were basically all men...[The experience was] scary, very scary, frightening, because I had...to deal with the people in my life. When your identity changes, you don't change your identity. I think it is that you are becoming who you are born to be. Up until that time, and this happens with everybody, some more than others to some extent, I had no idea who I was.

I just feel like [my image of a pastor] was like a grain of sand of the picture of God. And now I have seen and experienced, and God has shown me so many more grains of sand, and there are still so many to go. But indeed that picture was nothing compared to what it is now. Nothing.

...at age 8 I would have pictured the minister as that kindly, very personal contact, parental figure, a friend, probably a man. My change I think is to see the role of clergy more now as empowering.

And another perception I had and this is a real important one that I'm learning this summer. For years, I used to put ministers on pedestals, that they were special, they were perfect, and you should follow your life after them and things like that. I am learning that ministers are human... and also the kind of people who... I should not have been afraid of that. I was listening to the wrong voices... Now I realize in my call that there is a very strong ecumenical piece to it, about accepting people.
Ella was beginning to see herself as a new individual. No longer did the old ways of making meaning of her life and experience hold true. Traditional views of what it meant to be a parish pastor, to do God's work as and ordained person, and traditional views of where she, as a woman, fit into the picture were no longer appropriate for her. She began to question religious teaching and doctrine and the cultural stereotypes of her youth. Profound changes of her view of the world occurred.

Such a critical assessment of the very premises upon which Ella had based her problem solving is coincidental with Mezirow's (1991a) third phase of transformation. The assessments are not always neat and tidy, and they sometimes happen over an extended period of time. However, once an individual begins this type of critical reflection and realizes that not only the old meaning schemes, but also meaning perspectives do not provide the bases for meaningful decisions, there is no going back. Transformation is well underway. Ella said that she had had no idea of who she really was; she said she had to make decisions based upon her new understanding of what she was to do regardless of how others felt. She was truly becoming a new person.

Sometime during her transformation, Ella became aware that she was not alone. She found others who had experienced similar doubts and fears and somehow survived. Ella also found support from clergy and lay persons with whom she shared her experiences.

In the course I think my first quarter, I really felt like yes this was clearly what God had been calling me to do. I went to my home church and to the pastor parish committee and I met with them and I talked about my call and they said, "Of course, that is what you should do, why didn't we ever think to tell you?" Well, they had no models either. So that is really how it happened. . . [There was a small population of women.] We met together from time to time and shared some of those kinds of concerns [feminist]. It is a little vague at this point. And
my entering class was more diverse in their background and emotions and energies. I think we came with a more positive perspective, so many of the people that I perceive as carrying that baggage were in the couple years ahead of me and they had their network and we built a network of the new folks. So yes we shared together, we worked, we had meetings.

When you get in seminary and you are around other people who have calls, you share your call stories. You talk about what they are doing and a lot of them are pastoring churches and they tell me their experiences. I think about myself in that type of a role and how would I manage, so that is affirming socially—you know, hearing about that.

There was a woman pastor there and it was just a really neat congregation some folks from the United Theological Seminary there including one professor there who had real interest in conflict and community development and administration and spirituality administration and those are all things that passed my hands. I had dealt with for a long time. There was a real common universe of discourse so to speak and I could really hear the faith expressed in such a way that it linked with where I was in a congregation that really gave me a lot of room to breathe. . . . [At the seminary] there were several faculty persons who were women who traveled the same road well maybe not the same road but similar.

Although, Ella’s struggles were new to her, she began to realize that she was not alone. She met friends, colleagues, mentors who had negotiated or were negotiating similar paths. She met laypersons who were empathetic to her struggles. These encounters and friendships were a source of hope, support, and inspiration to her.

Mezirow (1991a) claims that a fourth phase of a perspective transformation is characterized by a woman’s recognition that her discontent and her process of transforming herself are not unique to her. She learned that others experienced a similar transformation. Ella’s experiences are echoed in Mezirow’s description of phase four.

Ella entered the fifth phase; she began to take responsibility for what may be her new career. She investigated ways in which she might explore new roles mandated by a career as a parish pastor. Taking specific courses offered insight for her. Church activity provided another avenue for exploration, as did a student assignment while a seminarian.
Ella used her experiences to test herself in what she was beginning to believe was the purpose of her call from God.

So I spent [my husband’s] first year in seminary really exploring in my own mind and heart whether that was what I was called to do, and I started classes the next year, once again to continue to explore. In the course, I think my first quarter, I really felt like, yes, this was clearly what God had been calling me to do.

... I started really getting into it. I decided to teach Sunday school, became very, very involved with the music program, and started using some of the leadership skills that I had developed through the years in the church setting. And lo and behold, I noticed that by empowering other people and getting other people involved, it brought me a lot of joy... And right now I am doing an internship as a chaplain at the Cleveland Clinic, because I wanted to explore the chaplaincy as a possibility... and I am not getting a strong indication between that versus an Elder, but what I am getting is a strong affirmation that I have pastoral care skills - and that it is helping people. So either way, I know that that is helping me. And I am also learning, too. I am learning skills that I am going to apply later on... When I was accepted at Methesco, I decided to take an internship in a church, you know a job.

... then I slowly over that year started kind of claiming it. I talked to my district superintendent in January and I said... “I think I need to be appointed to a church to try this out.”

It was just a very difficult thing for me to imagine myself doing [ministry]. Then I was given an internship at the church; the church in which I was functioning for a three-year-period while I was in seminary. I was an intern there and began to gradually pick up the roles of ministry. And it was very important for me, and I don't know if this is true for all women, but it was for me that I receive feedback along the way. It was almost like a test. Well, if I can do well in this, then I'll continue in this quest. If I can't, then that is going to be telling me that this is not what I'm supposed to do.

Ella used her time to explore the various roles and relationships involved in being a parish pastor. She knew it was her responsibility to determine if she would be able to fulfill the requirements of a minister. Would the course work be informative and inspiring? Was chaplaincy a way to go? Could she preach a sermon? Would anyone listen? Could she empower? Mezirow (1991a) designates exploration of this sort
(Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions..." p. 168) as the fifth phase of a perspective transformation.

Beyond exploration it was necessary for Ella to plot a course of action that would take her in the direction she was being called. She needed to decide which courses to take and which degree track to follow. She needed to find suitable employment, employment that would allow her to continue her explanation while developing her skills.

And finally my advisor said we will figure this out if you don't come back until you change your master to Master of Divinity. And the thing was that you can do everything you want to do with a Master of Divinity but not vice versa. So I took that step...

I thought I would be more focused on feminist theology, but I really took to the practical courses and pastoral care and preaching. And so that interest sort of infused in everything else but didn't really become a sort of thing that I really took off with, but I did a lot of work in that area...and at some point I had to declare [Master of Divinity] versus [Master of Theological Studies] and make the decision to go do the practical courses.

Then I took another course, and then it was that summer, and I had a talk with my pastor. And I said, "Well, I just can't fight with this thing anymore; it's driving me nuts." So I knew that I could work part time in the church; so I called Washington the first part of August and said, "I'm leaving."

Ella continued to struggle with the exact direction in which her journey would take her, but she knew and understood that she must make plans in order to begin. She continued to learn more about herself and about the call she believed she was trying to answer. A Master of Divinity was the degree that would provide her with the most options; so, she decided to pursue it. Mezirow (1991a) calls this the sixth phase in the transformation.

If Ella is to implement her new plan, she must acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. She set out to do this.
The miracles of God working in my life... the first huge call in my life toward full time ministry happened in that class... That certainly was a turning point in turning my faith back to God as a full time servant. I enrolled in seminary full time after that one course and I loved it...

And in the inquiry process, they exposed us to Deacons and Elders, and I really didn't know much about that. When I grew up in the Methodist church, all I knew about was ministers and I had never seen a Deacon until the last couple of years. So, I guess I felt that I was being drawn to Elder's orders. But as I have gone through, I have looked at the Deacon's and looked at what I am capable of doing and what they are capable of doing, and I think that God put me through an awful lot of leadership experiences through the military, managing a business, all of my careers working with people. And I just see that if [God] wants to use all those skills, the best place to use [them] is as a pastor.

It was almost like a test. Well, if I can do well in this, then I'll continue in this quest. If I can't, then that is going to be telling me that this is not what I'm supposed to do. All along the way I kept thinking well I'm going to fail at this, I won't do well in the coursework so that will tell me you don't do it. I won't do this, I won't do this, and none of these things happened. Instead I received affirmation even when I probably hadn't done well. The first few times I lead in liturgy I had no idea what I was doing and years later one of the people said to me, you know you were terrible, but there was something about you which said you had promise and we could see it in you, but you just didn't know what you were doing – you know? People were encouraging...

Ella did not yet have the confidence she needed to carry out her plan, but she was willing to take steps to seek the knowledge and skills she needed. She analyzed the abilities she possessed and sought new ones. She tested herself through the eyes of others from whom she received both criticism and encouragement. Mezirow (1991a) names this step in Ella's development phase seven. It is the phase of "acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan" (p. 169).

Ella began to take chances, to try out some of her new roles. Sometimes opportunities just seem to present themselves; at other times she had to seek opportunities. These opportunities were both exciting and frightening, but she continued. She knew she must continue to learn, grow, and test herself.
so I went to this pot luck and began to get to know these people, and suddenly, I don't know how it happened, soon thereafter I was teaching Sunday school for second grade Sunday school class and I was just you know... I was just there.

I had a preaching class last spring that was kind of disturbing. The woman who came and taught it missed 9 classes out of 20 and she gave almost everybody in the class a B. Now you just don't get B's unless you are goofing off in grad school. You know you just don't. And I was real discouraged by that. Then this summer, I took a summer school intensive class, and it went really well. And I learned a ton, and I was trying out some new things. I have not even tried out old things yet, but I was trying out new things. You know, things I was not imagining I could do. You know. I did a single-person narrative as a sermon, which was really fun.

...had never preached a sermon in my life, really. I had taught and talked and done devotionals, but I'd never gotten up there and preached a sermon. All the years of teaching, all the years of working with people and feeling so comfortable, I don't know where it went, but the first sermon I...got up there and almost passed out. I just almost passed out.

I knew you had to have an internship as a deacon, had to have an internship, so I checked and I knew that there was an opening in my church... And I applied for that along with another woman; [we were] both accepted. So we were doing one position half time. And we had a brand new pastor at that time who had just come in—not new for pastoring, but new for us—and he was pretty much—well, whatever you want to do, go for it. So, I started small groups and I taught Disciple, and every once in a while we would get to preach, or we would get to help with leading worship, you know. And he always treated us like deacons, you know. If we had a baptism we would get to go up and sprinkle water on the people or something... We had an...intern there who was going to be a pastor, and he was the one who always got to help serve communion. So finally one day I said, “You know, we are deacons, but we can help serve communion,” and he said, “Oh yea, I guess you're right.” So I always kind of felt [being a deacon] was like a second-class place to be. Not that being a deacon is anything wrong at all with that, but people don't give you as much credit for anything. I don't know how to say it any differently. It is just like a deacon... Well, if you can't be a pastor, you can be a deacon. That is kind of the sense I've gotten.

Ella tried out some of her new roles. She went forward sometimes with trepidation, but she went forward. Sometimes trying out her new roles helped her to
realize that the path she had chosen was not the one she needed to follow. This stage is Mezirow’s (1991a) phase eight, the provisional testing of new roles.

Ella began to build her confidence. She did so by continuing to study, to try, to test herself. She found encouragement from her peers and gradually grew to a sense of self and fulfillment in her new career.

I was terrified but felt compelled through that experience by the support of community to follow through with [ordained ministry] and find out about what that would mean and what that would take and... I began to believe, although it took it still takes time every once in awhile I still wonder, but I began to believe that... for some reason I was called, as I was with all my own experiences. And who I am and my own personality even could be used. It was just that I had to become willing to allow myself to be changed when it was a purpose, a service to God, but I didn't have to go about like “Okay now, I'm gonna have to change this, this, and this about myself so that I can be like some image of a minister that is created.” And so I became more comfortable with the idea that the only changes that would take place in me were the ones that God intended to have, and maybe some of those would be major, and that that would be okay.

I had lunch with the two... and we were all three women pastors, and we had lunch at [the] restaurant over there, and it was the same thing... we were struggling with... trying to find clothes to wear to worship that you could hook the lavaliere mikes on, and some of the stuff that men don't have the issues [with] and how to stand in the pulpit when you are pregnant... And you know, high heels or flat shoes, you know the kinds of things that you just talk about with [colleagues] doing the same thing... work and it was just a glimpse of what is possible.

Mezirow (1991a) calls the ninth phase of a perspective transformation that of the “building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships” (p. 169).

This is what was occurring here. Ella learned that she could do what was needed and that God would show her how and where she needed to change in order to make it all happen.

Ella also realized the importance of support from community and colleagues. Her confidence and competence grew with her realization that she was not alone on her journey.
Finally, Ella reintegrated herself into her own life. She was a new person with a new perspective on what God was calling her to do. She could never go back to what she was before; she could never return to her old way of viewing the world, her role in it, or her image of a pastor as a kindly, stoic, man. She continued to learn and to grow, but she was a new person.

I learned the Bible as a kid. I learned the Bible in seminary. I learned worship, but I'm not sure I learned deep prayer. Seminary was significant and transforming in many ways, but that first appointment was every bit as powerful as my education. [It was] where I had to sift through what I knew and what I was seeing, and put it all together in a whole.

I seem to be getting along better with people as opposed to get along worse with people which I thought was gonna happen. I actually seem to be getting along better with people now that I'm allowing like God to sift through me and get rid of some of those, you know, behaviors and attitudes and that got in the way I think of, you know, being with closer with people. I still see [social justice] as a primary calling of mine, and I think that's an area of gifts and graces that I've been given, and within the ministry that's a huge piece. And I think I think it meshes very well, because I don't think the gospel means much without social justice and personal salvation as a united front. I mean I think that's where it's at. Those two united [are] what offers us really a transformed world, a transformed heart like, and that's what I believe [we] are called to be a part of is that transforming and to be transformed. So, I think that part [has] been stronger at different periods of my ministry, different places in terms of its being in terms of my actually acting that out on a whole. I don't think that'll ever go away. I believe that's a really strong part of, it's a strong part of how I read the scriptures, how I perceive my role as a minister. you know, what we do with [a strike at OSU] I mean like there are justice issues there. And how do we engage that with faith, and, you know, how do we as a campus ministry association become more active in the policies of an institution that effects every aspect of the lives of the people we serve.

So the ordination piece for me is a very mysterious, sacred, scary piece. And I don't know if that is true, I don't see that being true for everybody, but I see it being true for many women, probably because we were told for so long you didn't do this stuff. And we are waiting for or maybe half waiting for God to say, "Well, you really aren't supposed to do this," but it doesn't happen; it hasn't happened; and I don't think it will happen. I believe it won't happen, because I believe we are called. But to realize then, that it was who I was made to be. And that has been the fun—though it was extremely frightening, scary, but
it has turned into, as I have worked it through, to be more and more exciting every day. And I appreciate so much who I am, even though I know the work is not all done and never will be, at least in this world. I mean it is just a wonderful thing; so I have become sort of a liberator, a liberating model for other people, not just women but men, too. And it is very freeing. It is very exciting.

I mean I still feel that I'm in the process, and we will all be in the process. All the women are. I don't know about my children and their children, but we will be in the process for a long time.

Ella is transformed; she is no longer the person she once was. She faces the new world with excitement, strength, and a little fear. Her understanding of who she is and what she is to do is firmly implanted within her, but she realizes that she is still a work in progress. Even though she is nearing the end of one journey, she knows she is beginning another, one that may never be complete. Along with her new perspective on herself, she also realizes that she has responsibilities to share with others, men and women, her liberation and the liberating power of her transformation.

Mezirow (1991a) asserts that the final phase of a perspective is “a reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective;” it is becoming a new person. One can never return to the former perspective, because the old perspective was a different person. Ella has taken this step.

Ella experienced perspective transformation. She has a new worldview. She understands and is prepared to go forward with her new role in God’s world. She sees herself in a role where, prior to her seminary experience, she could envision only men. Ella’s progress toward a new way of interpreting what her experiences mean for her life is demonstrative of Mezirow’ theory of perspective transformation.
Lily’s Story: Other Aspects of Transformative Learning

Ella’s story was one of a linear progression through the phases of perspective transformation. Lily’s is different. It is told in chunks, a section related to each of Dirks’s (1998) remaining strands of thought about transformative learning. The first section is related to Freire’s transformation through consciousness-raising; the second section is a view through the lens of Daloz’s contention that transformation is a function of development; and the third section illustrates Dirks’s thoughts regarding the extra-rational/spiritual aspects of transformative learning.

Lily is a composite of 15 of the 24 women interviewed. She represents Emma, Julie, Louise, Linda, Evangeline, Amanda, Tonya, Karen, Sue, Frankie, Marie, Elizabeth, Grace, Anne, and Bev (pseudonyms). These fifteen are represented in Lily’s story because each life has been transformed through education. The transformations did not occur the way Mezirow’s theory describes, but transformations were indeed evident. Consciousness-raising, development, and spirituality are the ingredients of Lily’s story. The evidence is seen in feelings of emancipation and a desire to strive for social justice, in on-going development often with a mentor as catalyst, and in extra-rational spiritual experiences where God is the mover.

Lily is older than Ella; she is approaching the final years of middle age. Like Ella she is a graduate of MTSO and is an elder in a Christian denomination. She is married, perhaps for the second time; some of her children are grown and on their own. Lily has some career experience outside the church, but her experience is not as extensive as Ella’s. Like Ella, Lily is socioeconomically middle class and intelligent.
This is the story of how Lily came to understand that God was calling her life and talents and how her life was transformed in the process. In the summer of 2000, I drove to meet Lily at her home. In spite of the fact that this was our first meeting, she seemed comfortable, and she was gracious and open. We enjoyed light refreshments as we talked. We spoke briefly about the purpose of the study, and she gave me permission to record our conversation. This began with the request that she tell me about her call to ministry and her decision to become ordained.

Freire (1970) proposes that, through the emancipation of consciousness-raising, individuals are transformed, and they can, therefore, transform the world. Emancipation was part of Lily’s experience. One way Lily experienced emancipation was through the realization of her own talent.

So, anyway, I decided, I mean I kept on going to Methesco and then just...it was a very troublesome time for me, but at the same time I was realizing my talent and my intellectual abilities more than I ever had before...

Lily realized that she was interested in social justice issues but was not sure how this passion fit into her call to some kind of ministry.

Okay, my call has come over probably my whole life. I had a really chaotic childhood and the real comfort I got was from God, not from church, but from my own relationship with God. And then as I got older, I became more interested in justice issues and kind of left the church in college. After the birth of my first child, my husband and I knew that we wanted to find a church. He was raised Catholic and I was raised Presbyterian, so we chose the Methodist Church. I started seminary and...have been all over the place because I’ve been in seminary—all over the place as to what my call really is, where I should be, knowing that my feeling is for strong social justice...What it is, is that I had to decide where I wanted my role to be, [where] do I want to spend my energy (because it is very true that the Elder has the most power within the church)...I realized that I was not called to change the church, because it is not going to happen any time soon...it would be a much more call to change the world...I have voice and vote as Deaconess at annual conference just like any Elder has voice and vote. So, in a sense my vote is equal. Deaconesses have always kind of
been on the outside, on the fringes doing justice work, cutting edge ministries, and those types of things, and that is where I want to be, where I can spend my energy with the people that I feel that I am serving instead of serving the church bureaucracy which I frankly feel spends most of its energy on self perpetuation.

I started working here last summer, the end of last summer. Because I knew the kind of work that was taking place here, and I knew that I wanted to be a part of it... I wanted to be part of the staff here. I had basically said to God, I can't work in the church; I cannot work in a church setting unless you find me a church and I will try one, because I had been so disgusted by the whole conference process—nitpicking, the energy spent on what to me is not important. So this is the church I came to, and [the senior pastor] is really good at developing, helping people develop their dreams...

Lily understood that her particular call by God was to social justice issues, and she wrestled with how she might best champion such issues. Her dilemma teetered upon whether to function within the church structure as an elder or outside the church structure as a deaconess. In this conversation Lily is opting for the deaconess role. (Note: A deaconess in the UMC tradition is a non-ordained position in which the person may choose a particular area of concentration. It is not an itinerate position.) It seems, upon closer examination, that she has gone only part of the way toward being outside the structure of the United Methodist church. She says that she wants to be on the outside fighting for social justice, but as a deaconess, she remains a part of the church structure and even asserts that she has equal voting power with an elder. Whether she goes all the way, part of the way, or none of the way, her seminary education and awareness of the option to become a deaconess has empowered her to pursue social justice issues.

At another time, Lily considered the possibility of pursuing ordination in a Christian denomination other than the United Methodist Church. This consideration arises from the fact that the UMC does not ordain openly gay or lesbian individuals.
[T]he national synod [of the United Church of Christ (UCC)] accepts lesbians and gays in the UCC for ordination. . .the UCC is constructed in such a way that the local churches have autonomy and local associations have autonomy; so, not all the associations in Ohio are accepting. . .it's all kind of confusing, but this is the way the UCC works. It's sort of like a Goldberg cartoon; things kind of happen in parallel lines. But in any case the association minister in Cleveland was particularly interested because he had a couple of gay children. He and his wife were very supportive, and they still have been, though he's now retired. So, Cleveland has actually several churches, UCC churches, which are staffed by gay ministers, openly gay ministers or almost openly gay ministers. But anyway this church was getting started, so I was interested in that.

Lily understands that if one is to work on the social justice issue of gay and lesbian rights, one must first understand the rules of the field. She can see that gay and lesbian rights can be embraced and promoted in the UCC tradition. She sees in the UMC an ongoing tradition oppressive to homosexuals. Lily is deciding to pursue these particular social justice issues in a more amenable venue.

Lily has doors opened to her through her seminary experience and a beginning of her understanding of her call.

I never felt I could ask the questions and be received, but at the seminary once I began to take classes I realized I never felt discounted. Some of these professors are brilliant and I could ask those questions and I could pursue and just obtain the information that I so much desired my whole life when I look back at it. I was always that way always searching for answers. . .My first thoughts were that I would just go until I was able to get a few classes. I didn't think about ordination. . .[Not] at the beginning. I guess I was just carried along. It was like once I got into the class and saw the value it was like I felt I was at the right place at the right time and that's where God wanted me to be. It was just kind of a feeling inside of you that you just knew it more and more.

So many doors were open and, I could see that helping me understanding and giving me the courage to be more assertive.

I continued at the seminary and, at the same time this was going on, my daughter my one daughter had married a hemophiliac, and he had acquired aids or was HIV positive. The serum they were giving them to live a fairly normal life had the virus in it, and the drug company knew it and did not test it. They put the serum out, and so he was HIV positive. My guess is he had been for several
years, but that was before they even had the testing. That's where the call came in that was an answer that I would work with aids.

Lily’s experience in the seminary gave her the courage and insight into her own passions so that she could begin to see the direction in which she was being led. Her emancipation in understanding her call was instrumental in her transformation.

Daloz (1986, 1999) holds that adults continue to change and develop throughout their lives and that mentors can be important to the transformation resulting from such development. Education can help make meaning of these changes and/or have some role in bringing the changes about. Lily experienced such changes.

It just feels right to me, and it fit in a lot of being back in the classroom. I had always been a capable student and had done well, and it just felt good. And then in the spring of that year, I was taking a class that was called Professional Ministry; it was...a thing that all the first year students had to take, at that time, that included Christian Administration and Christian Education and Pastoral Care. It was called Professional Ministry. And the Pastoral Care component of that was at Riverside Hospital at least for me it was. Students were in various settings, and we had a chance to taste a little bit about of what hospital ministry would be like. So that just felt right. It was just so tied into the kind of things I had been interested in all my life...I thought it was going to be in a hospital setting but it was definitely a sacramental ministry, because I had grown to see that all of life is to be lived sacramentally, that there are ways of observing prayerfully and with sacrament, the passages of our lives.

Actually my interest in going to seminary stemmed from Elton Trueblood's book, and I believe it was his biography. Somewhere in that book [he] said something like the most wasted source of energy in the world is women who raise a family, are a homemaker and have all this experience of raising children, making a home, interacting in the community and the whole gamut of experiences, and then when their children leave the nest they sit down and vegetate. That got my attention.

Through Lily's reading and education, she was beginning to look at her life and her experiences in a new light. She was beginning to consider what her new
understanding might mean for her life's goal and her role in God's world. She was beginning to be transformed.

Lily's journey of transformation often had a guide in the form of a mentor. The mentor could take the form of instructors or be as casual as being in class with other women.

Well, there were faculty members who talked to us as if we were going to become church pastors and be ordained and do those things. They assumed it; so, I'm sure that helped.

Well, I think just having lots of other women in these programs really help. At [my undergraduate school] there were women, but not very many. And they were kind of buying into the whole [concept that] women shouldn't be in the highest leading roles. So here, I guess just the presence of women on campus helps.

Lily reflects on the role that casual contact with instructors and other women had on her continued development. She is able to understand the impact that such relationships can have and how they begin to be transformational.

Mentors can also take the form of a favorite instructor or adviser, a pastor, a family member, a friend. Such mentors can take the role of planting a seed, of giving a boost, of offering encouragement at a particularly vulnerable time.

When I go into to talk about my schedule...for the next quarter, if I have questions, I talk with him about that. He has just always been very encouraging. He's liked my work; I liked him as a teacher. I think he is a very exciting discussion leader-really about the best one I've ever known. He's just wonderful.

My position at [work] was phased out, and I went to talk to a friend of mine in a church. He said, "Well, Lily you are finally feeling the boot on the backside." -- because I would always say, well you know if God wants me in seminary, God will have to open the doors for me. And then I would say well, if God wants me in seminary, God will have to open doors and push me through.

So, I'm looking for a pity party, called my oldest daughter and said, "I just don't know how to say this; I'm losing my job." I said, "Tom is selling the
company." She said, "Thank God, Mother, now you can do what God has always wanted you to do. You can be a missionary."

He said... "Let me take you over to Methesco and show you around." So he did, and I think I'll blame him a little bit for my really going into ministry. That day when we came back home he said, when I got out of the car, "Okay, Lily, I'll see you at your ordination." I enrolled at Methesco just as self-improvement to help me understand the Bible more... From there on it just kind of bloomed.

Around the three or four year mark I thought, "Oh this is stupid; I'm just gonna drop out"... you know, people ask me if [my husband] encouraged me. No, he didn't encourage me, but he blessed me in that "You do what you need to do with your life." Well, when I said I think I'll drop out he said, (laughter) "That's the stupidest damn thing I ever heard."

I was talking with one of them and I said, "You know, I'm not sure that I'm called to preach. I just don't think that I want to be an elder, because I'm just not called to preach." She says, "Now, Lily, that is not the issue. The issue is are you called to the sacrament." And I thought, "Oh, shoot. I have a passion for [the] Eucharist." I thought uh-oh; "I'm in deep trouble right now at this point." She goes, "But that's what you have to decide. You have to decide if you are called to sacrament."

My mentor feels that being an elder, particularly in a foreign country is better for me in the sense that number one... you're going in with several strikes [against you] in the sense that you are a woman and it is a society that is very male oriented, male dominated. And to go and say well I can't perform the sacraments for you or I can't marry you would cheapen my ministry in the sense that I could not do what they conceive of a pastor being able to do. And I see his point on that; I think he's got a good point...

Here a mentor was instrumental in giving Lily a nudge or a bit of advice, which caused her to pause and rethink. Where was she going? Whose voice was guiding her? Was she following God's direction or her own? In the cases above Lily was able to understand her experiences and allow her life to be transformed.

At times a mentor can provide a negative influence.

My colleague was going on a sabbatical that summer, and [my call] was working on me. Except for preaching all the time, I was doing all the things my pastor was doing, and so I just kind of kept that to myself. That summer he was gone all summer. I attempted to preach maybe once or twice, but I found other
people...for all the other Sundays. The other thing is I would say, I made contact with the other seminaries; so, I saw some of the professor's come and preach...I saw just a lot of interesting people. When he came back from his leave, I said I'd like to be ordained. He had a fit.

He had a fit and told me I wasn't ready. I said, "Oh okay. What would it take to get ready?" He said, "Well don't you want to be best of the lay people rather than the least of the ordained?" I said, "Well, what makes someone the best of the lay people or the least of the ordained?" "Well, you saw; you're educated." "Saw what?" "Well, you're a woman. Where do you think you'll ever get being ordained?" I said, "Well, I'm here, and the church seems to be satisfied with my work, and you seem to be satisfied." Well, I got mad. I was part of the support group of the clergy that were all second staff people. I called up one of my friends. He said he just finished reading this book that I really ought to read. I don't remember the name, but it tried to differentiate between lay ministry and ordained clergy ministry. I got it and read it and was so mad. I remember sitting in bed and reading it and I just pitched it across the room, because it just verified everything that I was experiencing and trying to say. I just decided even when I was a little girl you just bide your time. I didn't say anything else. Every once in a while he'd mention something and I'd say, "Well, you said I wasn't ready; so, I'm getting ready." One day the next spring [he called me into his office and said,] "Lily, I want to see you. Do you want to be ordained?" "Well, yes..." "You are prepared"... it looks like my ordination is on track.

Lily understood that not all mentor advice is appropriate or helpful. Sometimes it is necessary to filter the words of others and follow one's own path. Lily's mentor, in this instance, was sexist and patronizing. She realized this and made her own decision.

Dirkx (1997) contends that, if transformative learning theory is to grasp the holistic nature of adult learning, it must not understate the extra-rational—the spiritual element. It seems particularly appropriate to consider such an element when studying transformative learning in women who are attempting to answer a call from God.

An aspect of Lily's transformative learning experience was extra-rational; it lay in her realization of the link between her education and her own spirituality. She began to realize that her call to ministry was the manifestation of her spirituality, of God working within her. There were times when this took form of a particular event.
When the invitation to [my] response to the preacher's sermon came it just seemed to me that I experienced this emotional event, which was I was to do something special...

And then this year... I've been thinking about the M. Div., and I did have... I'm hesitant to say it's a call, but I did have a sense one day, in my church, that I should be the minister of that church. So, I got a call to be the minister of a certain church. But that is a little difficult, because I can't go to them as they're searching (I don't even have an M. Div.) and say to them, "OK, I've had a call to be the minister here; so, here I am." So, I'm a little bit in a quandary as to whether I should see that as a call or not. But, at any rate, after that happened it seemed clear that I had at least a call to go on and get at least a Master of Divinity...

I am sitting out in the congregation and I sat there and I thought, "Oh, I want my hands in that water." And I said, "Well, here it comes. Here comes the passion for baptism." So I sat there and said, "Oh I wanted that to be me with my hands in that water up there."

At other times Lily's acceptance of her extra-rational experiences seemed to occur over an extended period of time—perhaps her entire life.

For me my calling feels very much like a whole life process, and they're certainly key periods in that where I say yes rather than no. And certainly deciding to be ordained was one of those, but it wasn't like one night I, you know, had a vision in my sleep and woke up the next morning—um—any of that. It just continued to be an urging on my heart; it feels like more; it feels like this is the correct path, kind of how I discerned what I feel when talking about [it] in that language. The Lord's will for my life is where I have energy. I feel God usually has a hand in that. You know, if God wants us to be a place we usually get the energy to [cope] with it... So, it's more been a pulling, a pushing, walking beside me that I experienced... through my whole life.

When my call really came, actually I would say it was more of when I finally said yes to that call. I actually happened to be at [an Emmaus] team meeting... Somebody gave a talk... and I couldn't say "no," and there was just something within me that said, "Okay, here we go," and made a commitment, but again it was a long time to get into. It was probably from the time I said yes [until] right now... five years, and that included going through candidacy to make sure this was a really good realization and then going through seminary for four years. A lot of prayer went into that. I had an agenda, and I know God had an agenda. So, when I came to Him (sic), my promise was, "Okay, look, I have all these things that are blocking me, and you know where I'm at with all these things." And I watched Him (sic) knock them all down, and that was a realization for me, "Okay then I need to do this for Him (sic)."

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I always tell people I didn't have a “burning bush” kind of a call. I have some friends that God just stopped them in their tracks and said, “This is the way you are going”. For me it's been a gradual thing. Many times in my life God has tried to divert me into a different path, because it's kind of like "I'm happy here; I don't need to move on." Then suddenly something, you know, I'm turned. And that’s kind of the way it's gone, very gradual but with God confirming along the way that I could accept that I need to go along a path. . .I think the things that have happened have been God driven.

So when you say a change of direction, it never was a change in direction for me to be ordained; it was a continuing in the same direction and claiming all that I felt God was asking me to claim. And at that point it really became a sacramental act that I could do the things that I was doing, but it was about the sacraments. I became hungry to offer the sacraments to others. I became hungry for the fulness of that blessing in the church. . .Someone said to me once, “You know you should never get ordained [easily; you should] put it off, put it off, put it off till you can't stand it anymore, and then go for it full force.” “And that was how I experienced it for me, in that I kind of put it off, put it off [mode], and then I was about half way through and said, “Okay, I need to finish up my degree, be ordained, and I'm not sure where that's going to lead, but I know that that's where I need to go.” “And all of seminary is very much like that for me.

Whether Lily’s realization of her call came in a single event or over an extended period of time, her journey to transformation included experiences that were other than rational. There was a realization that her experiences, emotions, and imaginings may be God at work. She made connections between her heart, her soul, her spirit and her mind. Further, Lily saw the difference between a human call and God’s call.

Here is what I discovered. And this is the truth, Jill. There are two calls. Always when God is involved, there are two calls. You have a call. If you answer your call, you're never going to be happy. If you answer God's call, you will know peace. But I don't know a single person in ministry that answered with grace. We all go screaming and fighting and up against the wall saying, “No, no I don't want to do it.” And then we do it... When you answer God's call, life falls into place, and it can be beautiful. When you answer your call, it's really a tough place to be. And so that's why I am going to be ordained—because it is God's plan; it is not my plan. My plan was different.

Lily’s story includes experiences that were emancipatory, developmental, and extra-rational. She came to understand more about her own talents and made decisions
about how she might best further certain social justice issues. She grew in her
understanding of her own transformational development and recognized that mentors can
offer both important and disruptive guidance along the way. Lily was transformed
through her own spirituality and her recognition of God at work in her.

Sadie’s Story: Gender

During my time with these remarkable women, it became clear to me that
regardless of the extent of the personal transformation taking place, regardless of whether
she experienced perspective transformation, regardless of whether she experienced
transformation through emancipation, development, or spirituality—regardless—another
very powerful force was at work in each woman’s life. This was the force of culture and
tradition. From the youngest to the oldest, from the least to the most experienced, from
the one with a bachelor’s degree to the one with a Ph.D., each and every woman was
confronted by the reality of her gender. Ella’s and Lily’s stories could not be told alone.
They would be incomplete without Sadie’s story.

Sadie’s story tells of the impact of gender and traditional female/male roles upon
her. She is a composite of every woman in the study, because each of them to a greater
or lesser extent was influenced by the traditional roles women and men play as adults.
Sadie’s call from God, her decision to enter seminary and pursue ordination or not, was
impacted by traditional cultural norms. Sadie met with me on one of those summer days
that are full of warmth and promise. Mostly the sun was shining. I do not want to limit a
description of Sadie to the demographics found in a majority of the women. So let me
describe her in this way. She was at the beginning or the end of her career in ministry;
she was mature or quite young; she was straight or lesbian, married or single, a mother or
not. I knew her well, only slightly, or it was our first meeting. But always Sadie was open and gracious. She was proud and strong in her feminism, or she was unaware of or hesitant to acknowledge feminist thoughts and feelings. She was politically liberal or quite conservative. She was 24 unique and wonderfully different women; but each understood that she had been called by God to do something special. I enjoyed my time with her.

Conversations with Sadie revealed six different aspects of tradition at work in her life—family considerations, the clergy as a male profession, expected feminine characteristics, the gender of God-talk, aspects of power, and Christian denominational traditions.

Sadie expressed deep concern for and responsibility to the care and nurture of her family. She usually believed that her first responsibility was to her husband and children and that their needs must come first.

The reason I went to seminary, I was getting phased out as a mother, which gave me the opportunity.

Then I dropped out of the work force formally, because I started having kids and continued doing [work] out of my home. . .So while I was having kids I was doing that, and I also knew I wanted to go back and get a Masters. . .I always thought I’d love to have a degree in world religions. I thought if I’m going to claim Christianity I need to know all religions. I have to know what I’m talking about, because there are gifts in all of them, and [I] thought I’d like to go out to Berkley. . .they have a wonderful school of world religions, however, that didn’t quite work with a family and kids.

My family has been a very important part of who I am. I taught school before I was married; I taught five years. I taught music. That I think prepared me to be a good mother, because I would cover almost 500 children in a week. Whenever there was a problem child I would sort of pursue it, and there was always something or most of the time something in the home, a divorce or whatever. I worked at that; I really worked at being I thought a good mother, a good parent and that was part of this evolution. I think my youngest son was still
at home when I went to seminary. The other three were in college or out on their own. That's a big part of me also. [My husband] was with the attitude then that you work and bring home the salary, but I kept up by teaching at home. I was able to be an “at home mom” but teach [at home].

...you know women are traditionally supposed to be the caretakers of the family and the ones who are spending a lot of time nurturing the children, that kind of thing, and I think, whether it is a good thing or not, they tend to think more about that kind of thing whereas men are traditionally supposed to go with their careers and do whatever is necessary to make more money and, you know, get a higher role and that kind of thing. ["How do I feel about that tradition?"] Umm, well, somebody needs to be looking after the kids, you know. It doesn't necessarily have to be a woman, but I don't know. I think it can really limit what women can do.

Actually, [I] really felt called to international mission work, but because I got married and had kids that didn't seem like a possibility. So I kind of put it on a back burner.

I was always interested in any kind of readings that dealt with theology and questions about belief and practice of that. Then I got married, we went to church and took our children to church but it was like you didn't have time for a personal religion when you're doing all those things and having all those kids. So you try to be the best example you can and bring forward whatever is in you, what you have. For a long time I felt, “My ministry now is my family. My ministry is my children and my family.” Indeed, it was for a long time although I was a church member and I served, I taught a Sunday school or I did a thing or two, I just felt like I wasn't connected like I ought to be, and I really think that was God calling me. I think that all these things I'm telling you it's not just a story, these feelings of uneasiness about not being closely personal with God and not being really totally dedicated or not having the time. It wasn't exactly guilt, but it was a pulling and a tugging and always thinking about it—a feeling of a great responsibility to share God with other people. And so I tried to do that, but I just felt guilty because I didn't have time to do it in the way that I thought I should or that I felt a call to do.

I can remember walking across campus and saying, “You know, I think it would be okay; I would like to be a minister.” And this male person kind of looked at me...and he said, “Now, how would it look to have a pregnant woman in the pulpit?” And at that point in time, I was very naïve. I guess I thought, “Gee, I don't know, but I want more children. So if I had to make a choice, I think I'm going to choose for those children.” Which I did eventually do. I got married again and had children.
[About the issue of itinerancy:] I haven't decided yet how to deal with that. I know that my personal feeling is that I'm going to go where God calls me. The issue of moving is difficult. I guess one way that I'm dealing with it is I'm taking my time going through seminary. Instead of rushing through in three years... I am just taking it nice and easy, so that I don't make too many changes on the family. With our kids in college, I want to keep it kind of low-key for right now. I am also looking for when God will tell me what God wants me to do. If itinerancy turns out to be an issue in a couple of years, then I may have to go to another denomination.

Sadie made no judgment about the justice of traditional female roles. She did not suggest that change was needed; she merely accepted her traditional role as a fact of life.

Hayes' (2000a) assertion that women may deliberately avoid careers requiring commitments that may be seen as having the potential to interfere with marriage and family offers support for this finding.

The traditional view of a clergyperson as a male also had a significant impact on Sadie's career making process. Often she had no female role models, and she was even actively discouraged from considering the ministry as a career.

Back then I think I was living in the fact that pastors were males, and if I had been growing up 10-20 years later, there may have been somebody that recognized the gifts that I had and might have encouraged me and say, "You know, you can go into ministry." But back then there wasn't. We're talking back in the 50's, so there [weren't any women.] There were but they were so few and far between that it was not a common thing. It was more male dominant.

...besides the personal issues of what it meant in our relationship for both of us to be [in ministry] and for that not to be competing. That was probably the biggest struggle and also reorienting my family's expectations. My mother said, "Well, that will be alright for you to be in ministry as long as he does all the preaching.

Though my parents were very open and accepting of going to graduate school and women doing things, but there was always kind of this understanding that you're gonna get married in there somewhere. So, it kind of shifted for me from being a minister to being a minister's wife. That was just because that was kind of the assumption in the culture.
I was very intent on they're not gonna get me. They're not gonna turn me into one of those pastors, because I see who they are. They're the old men; that's what I grew up with was that pastors were old men, old white men. I can't be one of them; anyway, I don't wanna be one of them.

[When I think of whether my picture of a minister has changed since I was ten, it has,] oh, yes, definitely. I grew up with a male pastor, an older pastor, and my associate pastor now is a female.

I never really entertained that notion. I don't even think with any conscious consideration or evaluation or whatever. I don't know to what degree that was influenced perhaps by the fact that I did not identify the role of clergy with women. I have an uncle who was a Baptist minister; so, the whole thing of clergy wasn't unfamiliar to me. . .[But] growing up, it was not a time when I ever saw women in the ministry.

But anyway she came down and had lunch with us. First time I had ever met a woman who was actually serving as a pastor. So that's kind of nice to think about now after the years.

As with traditional female roles, Sadie did not appear to challenge the validity of seeing the clergy as male. She often accepted it as a matter of course. For the most part, it took actually experiencing another woman in a clergy role for her to be free to make such a career choice herself. These findings are supported by Gross and Peters (1989) who suggest that women role models are important to women seminarians and by the experiences of Nancy R. Howell (1998) who stated that the absence of female role models made it difficult for her to see herself as a pastor.

Traditionally, women have been expected to have certain characteristics. Women were seen as in need of protection, as being not aggressive and certainly not “pushy;” they were often taught to use manipulation and deceit to get their way. Sadie was not exempt from these teachings.

One of my best-loved pastors said to me once at general conference when I asked him how was his wife he said, “She's home where all good wives ought to be.” He never heard what he said. Later on I saw him again and I was with another woman pastor, and he said, “You know if more women pastors were like
you and your friend they'd be more readily accepted in the ministry.” I just think [he meant] because we were not too pushy. She wasn't, and I wasn't too pushy. I don't know if you'd “say stayed in our place” or if we just didn't fight the things; we just understood better that it is a man's world, and that women were making progress, and it hadn't run its course.

I remember my daughter saying, “If dad calls what do I say?” “Just tell him I'm not home right now,” and she'd say, “I'll just tell him you're at school,” and I said, “You don't have to do that.” She said, “You mean he doesn't know you're going to school?” I said, “I don't think it would matter.” She was just a truthful little gal; she thought I was deceiving him. He didn't care. I don't think he cared how I spent my time as long as it didn't interfere with the family.

Itinerancy is one of the reasons I decided not to be a Methodist. It would make my relationship with my husband very difficult. He is very traditional and would not even consider the idea of moving where I might go as a pastor.

I was a very obedient child, a good child – not a stepped on child or anything like that, but I had very much fit the mold of what people thought I was supposed to be, including how I look, which was more societal, fragile, not very strong, extremely sensitive. So, I was somewhat protected and pointed in directions you know, where I would be safe. So then, for all of those people who loved me dearly and thought that they had helped me become who I was, to see me be the opposite of what they thought I was and for me, myself, to see myself to be the opposite of what I was was a pretty threatening thing, to my parents, my siblings, my friends – my world, my own little world. It was a complete transformation.

I had been living this kind of life for my whole life where women are always the second-class, right? So, when I grew up, you know, I was supposed to be a teacher or a nurse or a homemaker, or whatever, and here I am again going into this whole thing going to be a teacher or a homemaker or a nurse. You know literally, that is what it is. I mean a Deacon, that is exactly what you are doing. You are doing specialized things for some people, but you are not ever leading it.

[Gender played a role in my early career choice.] sure, absolutely. I mean I grew up – in 7th grade; I had a teacher say, "Oh, you're having trouble with math. Don't worry, you won't need that." That has been my whole life, you know? People telling you, you don't need to do certain things because you won't ever have to use it. [Because] I'm a girl—yea. Oh, yea. So, you know, my image - I grew up in the South. My family was Methodist, and I became a Baptist for a while. I mean Southern Baptist women are not leaders in the church. They may cook the Sunday brunch; they may do the potluck, but they are not so much leaders in the church. So my image of a pastor is a male standing up in the pulpit with authority, you know, and I didn't see myself that way.
But then you have the other one that when you have an event at church, the women are expected to be in the kitchen, to help clean off the tables, to do dishes, and do all those womanly things. And if you are a pastor, too bad, you do them anyway. That's funny; it isn't funny, but it is funny.

...my parents are not supportive of this because I should be there with my children, I should be making the money I was making as a teacher, and bringing money into that, and these classes are taking me away.

Sadie sometimes accepted, perhaps even embraced, a particular characteristic, “not too pushy” or “he won’t care as long as it doesn’t interfere with the family.” Other times she saw herself as having been transformed or at least as defying traditional female characteristics. The point is that it was necessary for Sadie to deal with such issues on her journey to ministry.

The traditional language of God-talk (the exclusive use of masculine pronouns and metaphors to refer to God) and the constant references to men as those intended to do the real ministry of God had a profound impact on Sadie.

When I was 6th grade, oh I don't know, 6th grade, maybe 7th, maybe 5th. I don't know, I didn't think I was included at church. I said, “Well, they don't mean me. I can't be a son of God in any way, shape, or form—no way. “That doesn't mean girls.” And they tried to convince me, and they said, “Oh, yes it does.” I didn't think so.

I'm a PK [preacher’s kid], my father is an ordained minister. My parents were missionaries. I grew up with three boys and three girls, and I was the middle girl. And I remember hearing my father say that he just wished that he had a son who wanted to follow in his footsteps and would share his heart. . .I thought I was the wrong gender.

Gail Ramshaw’s (1995) work echoes some of Sadie’s thoughts. Sadie understood that her gender prohibited her from being a child of God. She thought God had only sons. Sons of God were not girls. She was unfit. The literature offers support for
Sadie’s experiences through the work of Reilly (1995) who writes that the traditional patriarchal images of God wound women and act as a barrier to a self-defined spirituality.

She thought that her gender meant that she could not share her father’s heart, his dreams and hopes; only a son could do this. Although she felt a call and wanted very much to follow in her father’s footsteps, she believed she was unworthy—she was a girl.

Sadie talked about the power relationship in the church hierarchy. She understood church politics as a vehicle for men to assert and retain power at the expense of women.

It’s fine for a woman to go to China or Timbuktu or Central America or some place just not over these jealous men in the United States. This is a real gender issue. It has nothing to do with the biblical tasks; it has to do with power and control, and it has to do with a lack of understanding of authority and power.

Sadie recognized the dynamics of power. Men had it, and women did not. She understood that some men want to maintain the status quo.

Sadie experienced a glitch on her journey to ministry. She offended a local Roman Catholic priest by participating in a “believer’s baptism” after being originally baptized as a Catholic. She was amazed by the priest’s reaction.

And that [a believer’s baptism] is when I really feel like I made a transition from being Catholic to being a Protestant. And I didn't really understand what a political act that was. It was a spiritual experience at the time. But I really pissed off the priest in town when he got wind of it, and there was a big brouhaha. He sent out letters to all the people in the [local ministerial association.]

Sadie was experiencing her own transformation and was oblivious to the pain she might cause the priest of her former Christian denomination.
Summary

Ella, Lily, and Sadie, three women being transformed through the educational process, were all changed. Not one was the same woman. Ella experienced a perspective transformation. She came to see herself as being called by God to ministry in a way she once saw as impossible. Lily’s transformation, while in part one of perspective, also contained elements of emancipation and/or development and/or spirituality. Sadie managed traditional cultural expectations while she recognized and prepared to answer the call she believed came from God.

Chapter five provides summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is presented in three sections. The first section is a summary of the study. The second section, the conclusions section, presents a model of how women seminarians who originally enrolled in a non-ordination track made the decisions to pursue ordination as it emerges from the data. The section then compares and contrasts the emerging model for understanding how the women made their decisions to pursue ordination as suggested by the literature. This is followed by a discussion of the implications for adult education arising out of the second model. The final section presents recommendations and suggestions for further study.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand and explore the dimensions arising from the study as experienced and told by the women. The study had three additional purposes: (1) to explore the connections between the emergent factors and dimensions and Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1978, 1981, 1991a, 2000), (2) to critique the theory on the basis of the emergent factors, and (3) to explore the connections between the emergent factors and Dirkx’s (1998) three remaining strands of thought regarding transformative learning. These strands are: (1) Freire’s emphasis on
consciousness-raising, (2) Daloz’s contention that transformation is the result of development, and (3) Dirks’s concept of integrating the emotional/spiritual dimensions into daily experiences. These strands were of particular interest because they offer ways of viewing different aspects of transformative learning. Viewing the data through these strands offers some suggestions pertinent to the study: (1) Issues of power are conditions of learning, and by learning to reflect upon such conditions it is possible to change how we are impacted by them. (2) Mentors and persons of power and authority can be important to the development of adults. (3) The spiritual/extra-rational aspect of learning was a very important part of the women’s educational experience. Recognition of the spiritual aspects of learning needs to be integrated into the learning experience if we are to view the learners as whole persons. The strands provide ways of seeing the learner as a more complete person than does perspective transformation alone.

As the data-gathering phase of the study progressed, it became evident that each of the women involved had been significantly impacted by the traditional female/male roles that the culture imprinted upon her and which were manifested in her career decisions. Thus, a further purpose of the study became the exploration of how the impact of gender roles became evident. While the study promises new knowledge of value to the areas of gender issues in religion and adult education and possible insights that adult education may provide for addressing gender issues in religion, the literature search revealed a scarcity of research on the focus of the study.

Qualitative research strategies were used to illuminate the topic. The research questions that guided the study were:
1. What about the culture of women seminarians at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio supported a decision to change career paths?
2. What experiences/factors shaped/affected the career paths of women seminarians who committed to careers as parish pastors after initially enrolling in non-ordination tracks?
3. What occurred during the seminary experience to prompt the women to change their program of study?
4. How did these women perceive the construct, "ordained minister," before and after their seminary experience?
5. What did the women believe to be the role of gender in their decisions?

These questions were well suited to investigation using the research strategies of ethnography and grounded theory. The research methods suggested by these strategies are participant observation, interviewing, and field notes.

Twenty-four women, MTSO graduates and current students, participated in the study. Each agreed to an interview in a venue of her choice—her home, her office, or some other convenient location. Most of the interviews were in central Ohio; a few were in northern Ohio, and one was in Pennsylvania. The women were gracious and hospitable to one who, in 20 of the 24 cases, was a stranger. As I came to know the women through the interview process, the culture of the seminary and the dimensions of their learning experiences began to emerge, and I began to make sense of the data as I began to analyze the transcribed interviews.

Data analysis was accomplished by coding the data into definable elements. This was accomplished through the use of a coding guide based upon the research questions. These elements were assembled into a realist tale to tell the story of why women, who
enter seminary with no intention of becoming ordained, decide to pursue ordination. The
data were also viewed through the lens of transformative learning models, Mezirow’s
theory of perspective transformation, and traditional female roles.

The data were presented through the stories of three composite women—Ella, Lily, and Sadie (pseudonyms). Telling the stories through composites made it possible to view the data through the lens of transformative learning theory and limited the distortion of focus on individual differences and personality. Dirkx (1998) describes four strands of thought regarding transformative learning theory: Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation, Freire’s emphasis on consciousness-raising, Daloz’s contention that transformation is the result of development, and Dirkx’s concept of integrating the emotional/spiritual dimensions into daily experiences. As the women related their experiences, their stories confirmed the ideas that comprise the four strands. However, there was a two-way connection because ideas of the strands provide frameworks for understanding the decisions made by the women.

The composites (Ella, Lily, and Sadie) were selective. That is the women’s experiences located them in groups representative of themes pertinent to the study. Ella’s story related the experiences of nine women who most typified the phases of Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation. Ella transformed her worldview essentially via the process described by the theory of perspective transformation. Lily’s story told of transformational experiences of the remaining 15 women. This story was representative of the other strands of transformative learning. Lily experienced consciousness-raising, learning as development, and the realization and validation of her own spirituality.
Sadie’s story presented the impact of gender and traditional female roles and expectations upon all 24 women.

The data support the following findings with regard to the research questions. The first question asked how the culture of women seminarians at MTSO supported a decision to change career paths. The women found the seminary a place of acceptance and encouragement. The published “Declaration of Inclusiveness” and a student body of approximately as many women as men (see Appendices F and G) are indicative. They were able to meet and form meaningful relationships with other women struggling with like issues of call, family, and ministry. Additionally, the women reported an atmosphere that encouraged them to explore and test the various opportunities for ministry available through a seminary degree. They were encouraged to examine their spirituality and to test the boundaries of their calls. The seminary was accepting of the results of their individual development and did not punish them for changing degree direction. The second question centered on the experiences or factors that impacted their career paths. Through their educational experiences, the women came to understand and accept their own strengths and how they might best utilize them for ministry. Faculty, mentors, friends, or others advised them that ordained ministry was the path that offered the most flexibility and received the most respect. They learned that administering the sacraments required ordination. It can be said that many feminist theologians, especially white women, can be located in three categories with regard to their position on the institution of the church. The positions can be loosely described as (1) those who believe women can never be truly part of organized, mainstream religion (Women can more effectively bring about change by operating from the fringes of the institutional church.), (2) those
who desire to remain part of organized mainstream religion and work for change from within the system, and (3) those who propose at least occasional breaks from traditional mainstream liturgical practices and participation in liturgies designed by and for women. The seminarians who were interested in changing the church from within came to believe that ordination provides the best vehicle for advocating change.

Question three asked what occurred during the seminary experience to prompt the women to change their program of study. In addition to the experiences mentioned above, there were some direct incidents. Some of the women received financial assistance; some of the women were directly encouraged by mentors or family to pursue ordination; each of the women grew to believe God was calling her in a particular direction.

The fourth question asked how the seminary experience impacted the women’s perception of the construct “ordained minister.” For some the change was significant; where the image of an ordained minister had always been masculine, the women came to see themselves and other women as appropriate in this role. For some it was a matter of making the image more inclusive not only of women but also of such characteristics as sensitivity, understanding, and vulnerability.

Question five concerned the role of gender in the decision. Gender played a powerful role. Throughout the interview process, I was aware of the impact of gender upon the women’s lives; it appeared in the choices they made ranging from where they lived to the career decisions to the timing of entering the seminary. Whether or not it was directly articulated, each interview revealed that gender impacted all the career decisions the women made. Decisions regarding whether or not to enroll in classes, how many
classes to take, whether or not ordination was appropriate, the acceptability of itinerancy, and others considerations were filtered through gender consciousness.

Conclusions

The data suggest the following conclusions:

- The model for understanding the women’s decisions to pursue ordination arising from the literature consisted of the four strands of transformative learning: the theory of transformative learning, learning as consciousness-raising, learning as development, and the spiritual dimension of learning. The data imply that the four strands do indeed offer insight into the women’s decisions, but they may not present a complete picture. The data suggest that gender played a significant role in the women’s decision-making and that the positions of power and context in the model should be reconsidered. The data also suggest that certain of the criticisms of perspective transformation may be applicable to the concepts of learning as consciousness-raising and learning as development. Finally, the data imply that, given the presence of learning as consciousness-raising, perspective transformation’s apparent lack of a statement regarding social action may not be significant. Thus, a new model arises from the data.

- The role of gender in the women’s decision-making seemed to be powerful and should be considered as we try to understand their actions.

- The context of the seminary apparently played a role in the women-decision-making.
• Situations of power appear to have existed in all aspects of the educational experiences related by the women, and power should be included in attempts to understand their actions.

The study conclusions are discussed below through the method of presenting the model suggested by the data (Figure 5.1) and comparing and contrasting it to the model suggested by the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 (Figure 5.2).

A New Model

The data-based model claims that, in addition to the four strands of transformative learning, the factors of context, power, and perhaps most importantly gender need to be considered. It also suggests that the transformative learning strands of perspective transformation, consciousness-raising, and development may contain certain flaws that might weaken their usefulness in helping us understand the phenomenon being investigated. Figure 5.1 illustrates the data-based model.
The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 implies the model illustrated below in Figure 5.2. This model suggests an understanding of the women's decisions based upon the four strands of transformative learning: the theory of perspective transformation, education toward consciousness-raising, transformation as development, and transformation as extra-rational/spiritual. The literature-based model suggests that by viewing the women's decisions through the lens of the four strands of transformative learning, it would be possible to understand the factors that influenced these decisions. The literature further suggests that one of these strands, the theory of perspective transformation, may be
flawed in one or more of several considerations, conditions that undermine the power of the theory. Figure 5.2 illustrates the literature-based model.

Strands of Transformative Learning

Figure 5.2: Model based upon the literature

The data reveal that, while the literature-based model provides some insight into the ways in which the women were able to transform their worldviews, it may fall short of providing a complete picture. The literature-based model failed to account for the impact of gender. The literature-based model also suggests that power and context may not be as important to the women's decision as the data appear to imply. Finally, the literature-based model does not recognize potential flaws of bias and ideology in learning as consciousness-raising and in learning as development. Let us compare the two models.
Gender: The Role of Traditional Female Roles

Central to the data-based model, but absent from the literature-based model, is the importance of gender in the women’s decisions. Regardless of age, previous experience, or marital status each of the women involved in the study was dramatically impacted by two traditional roles assigned to females—wife and mother. Sadie’s story offers compelling evidence of this. Sadie put her family first. She entered the seminary only at a time in her life when those who depended upon her would not be inconvenienced. Every aspect of ministry was viewed through the lens of how it might affect those she loved. Her transformative learning was intertwined with traditional role expectations. As Sadie experienced transformation during her seminary experience, she came to see herself and her role in God’s ministry through new eyes. She began to understand various aspects of her life-experiences that had influenced her decision-making, and she established new ways of understanding how she made decisions. However, she was not able to fully grasp the fact that her culturally constructed roles of wife and mother were part of the foundation upon which she made all her decisions. Sadie questioned neither the validity of gender roles as a proposition of decision-making nor the right of the culture to imprint these roles upon her. This finding is supported by Hayes’ (2000a) claim that women may deliberately avoid careers requiring commitments that may be seen as having the potential to interfere with marriage and family.

One of the research questions asked how the women believed gender was involved in their decisions. Whether Sadie directly articulated it or not, gender was very much involved in her career decisions. The literature on women’s career development said that research indicated that the traditional female roles of homemaker and mother
influence every aspect of a woman’s career choice and adjustment. I thought I was prepared for this fact of life. However, I was not prepared for the apparent extent of this influence. It was stunning. Sadie seems to have accepted her gender-imprinted roles almost as she would accept her shoe size. She would no more have challenged her roles as wife and mother than she would have purchased a two-sizes-too-small pair of shoes. The influence was present prior to entering MTSO; it was present during Sadie’s transformational learning experiences; and it continued to be present after graduation and ordination. None of the strands of transformative learning illuminate this phenomenon. None provide guidance for assisting women to understand and cope with this important issue, and the literature-based model does not include gender as a factor. Are we to assume that gender impacts only a woman’s career choice and adjustment? Is it not possible, even probable, that gender impacts every aspect of a woman’s life? And, if this is so, it seems that gender should be included in the theoretical foundations of transformative learning theory. So, why is it left out?

Perspective transformation claims to explain adult development. By ignoring the impact of gender on the development of women, Mezirow introduces what I believe is a serious deficiency to the strands of transformative learning. It represents a gender blindness that seems pervasive and deceiving. The question of why gender was omitted arises again along with the question of why its omission is pervasive and deceiving. The gender blindness of perspective transformation may be pervasive because gender impacts a woman’s life in so many ways; it may be deceiving because the theory of perspective transformation arose from a study of women returning to college. One might properly assume that a study conducted on women would naturally include the all-important role
of gender. But consider two points: First the study was conducted in the late 1970’s. At this time in history, most educational studies and theories arising from such studies were based on the experiences of men, and men’s issues of gender are probably quite different from women’s. There was a scarcity of research done on women and women’s decision-making regarding careers. It was assumed that white, middle-class men presented the appropriate basis upon which to structure all research. Secondly, Jack Mezirow is a man. It probably did not occur to him to consider the impact of culturally imprinted gender roles on the participants of his study. A more surprising puzzle is the question of why the issue of gender does not appear in the most recent literature on transformative learning theory. It is mentioned only incidentally in a discussion of power issues in discourse (Belenky and Stanton, 2000). Perhaps researchers still need to be convinced that the old standard of white, middle-class men as norm is but one of many norms.

The study’s conclusion that the importance of gender and its impact on women’s decisions is not recognized in the literature based-model is affirmed by recent literature on women’s learning. Flannery and Hayes (2000) affirm that “the significance of gender has been given little attention in adult learning theory...” (p. 3). This inattention to gender has led to the assumption that dominant learning theories are universally relevant and applicable. Brooks (2000) asserts that the relatively few studies focusing on women’s transformative learning suggest that women do not necessarily experience transformative learning in the way suggested by the theories. According to Hayes (2000b), a major limitation of many studies on women’s learning is the scarcity of an investigation into the influence of gender.
Mezirow (1991a) discusses Habermas’s three areas of learning. Instrumental learning involves humans in understanding and manipulating the environment; communicative learning concerns the ways in which we learn to understand human relationships; and emancipatory learning is that which sets us free from the forces that limit our options and control of our lives. Emancipation is what transformative learning is all about. Not only the theory of perspective transformation but also the other strands of transformative learning are concerned with emancipation. But how emancipatory can learning be if its very foundations are blind to the fact of gender and the impact that all the implications of gender have upon individual human beings, especially upon women. The women of the study were dramatically influenced by the traditional roles assigned to women. These roles, the legitimacy of these roles, and the appropriateness of these roles for each of the women’s lives were never considered. What does all this suggest about transformative learning in general and perspective transformation in particular?

Feminist thinking about Habermas says that the gender blindness in his work limits it usefulness (Fraser, 1989) and that he does not challenge the inequities of gender (Fleming, 1995). How can his work be applied to all humanity when it ignores the social, political, and power ramifications inherent in gender? If indeed Habermas’s work is, as it certainly appears to be, tainted by his lack of attention to gender, Mezirow’s work is, also tainted. The same gender blindness must flow from Habermas to Mezirow and perhaps to other strands of transformative learning. Consider the other possibilities of gender bias raised in the literature review. The theory relies heavily upon reflection, which validates thought over experience (Michelson, 1996). The whole concept of relying so much on reflection is perhaps more than gender blind; it may be said to be discriminatory.
Thought, which is rational and critical, is seen as masculine and superior, and experience, which is emotional and intuitive, is seen as feminine and subordinate. This is not to say that the women did not engage in reflection; they did. But they also used intuitive and spiritual processes to understand the meaning of their experiences. The point is that validation of thought as a way of knowing over experience as a way of knowing seems to discriminate on the basis of gender. The very foundation of transformative learning theory is a process that may well be biased against gender. The experiences of the women of the study seem to validate this criticism. Each of them was held captive to some degree by her gender-imposed mindset, the mindset that said, whatever else, a woman is first a wife and a mother.

The data represented by Sadie’s story suggest that we look at transformative learning theory through newly informed eyes. In whatever way we rely upon the theory to help us teach toward transformation, it should be understood that the impact of gender will be evident in the lives of women. Perspective transformation theory may not offer the tools to understand and cope with this phenomenon because it ignores it. For example, perspective transformation suggests that a first phase is the occurrence of a disorienting dilemma. Next, an individual begins the process of critically reflecting on the assumptions one has used to make meaning of experience. The notion of reflection needs to be reconsidered in the light of possible gender differences. Are there certain assumptions that women never question or question only after specific prompting? Could these sacred assumptions include the traditional cultural roles of wife and mother? If and when these assumptions are challenged, what of the context in which the challenge occurs? Does the institution of the church or the seminary facilitate reflection or
encourage the status quo? What of the others involved in the discussion as co-reflectors or as mentors? Are there power issues involved?

Prior to this study, I viewed the criticisms of Mezirow's theory as interesting and having merit but not as threats to the basic integrity of theory. The data presented by the study present, in my view, a serious error in Mezirow's work and cause me to rethink my heretofore-uncritical acceptance of the theory of perspective transformation. Even in his latest work (Mezirow and Associates, 2000), he does not address the issue of gender. He talks about how the theory is experiencing a metamorphosis through the process of collaborative inquiry. Such inquiry is healthy and productive, but the inattention to gender issues remains.

What do the lessons arising from the study have to say about the institution of the church, gender, and learning? The data seem to support many of the preconceived notions held by the women prior to entering the seminary. In terms of transformative learning, the church suffers from the same gender blindness as that of transformative learning theory. The church is rarely inclusive of gender, and those in positions of power in the church often value masculine ways of knowing over feminine to the point of rejecting female clergy.

Both the data-based model and the literature-based model include the strands of transformative learning in our attempt to understand the women's decisions for ordination. Following is a discussion of these strands and how each relates to the models and the study's conclusions.
Perspective Transformation

Mezirow (1981, 1991a) claims that perspective transformation is the central process, the salient dimension of adult development. He asserts that through the phases of perspective transformation adults come to reflect upon their traditional ways of making meaning, and thus, meaning schemes and perspectives are transformed. The question for this study was whether or not the theory helps to illuminate the experiences of the women involved. Does it assist us in understanding how the women came to alter their worldview especially with regard to their interpretation of God’s call and their place in God’s ministry? In Ella’s case she became a different person, a person who could no longer accept the traditional ways of viewing a woman’s role in ministry. Ella appears to have changed her way of making meaning of her experiences in essentially the way suggested by Mezirow’s ten phases. Ella’s story seems to affirm that perspective transformation makes a significant contribution to understanding her decision and that it should be included in the data-based model.

In general, the literature challenges Mezirow’s theory from five points of view:

(1) The importance placed upon critical reflection may introduce bias against gender;

(2) Mezirow may not give enough attention to the relationship between context and the meaning of experience;

(3) the theory is limited due to basic flaws in Habermas’s work;

(4) Mezirow’s treatment of power is problematic; and

(5) the theory does not contain a comprehensive, coherent theory of social change. The data suggest that all of these issues were in play in women seminarians’ decisions to change career paths. The following discussions address each of the areas individually.
The first challenge regards the possibility of a gender bias. Mezirow’s theory has critical reflection upon tradition at its core; it places the emphasis upon reflection (the masculine) and not upon experience, intuition, spirituality (the feminine). However, experiences related by Ella and Lily and my own observations indicate that MTSO students are encouraged to reflect critically upon a variety of issues, but they are also encouraged to explore how these same issues relate to them on an emotional basis. Questions are asked such as: How does the lesson presented relate to your call to ministry? What does what we just discussed say to you about yourself and your ministry? The experiences related by the women seem to indicate that the lack of valorization of critical reflection over experience may have contributed to transformative learning. If the lack of valorization of critical reflection over experience does indeed promote transformative learning, two interesting questions arise. Does valuing experience to the same degree as critical reflection serve to diminish the bias of the theory? Do the women’s experiences support Dirks’ contention that the extrarational/spiritual components of learning need to be included in a holistic picture of transformative learning? The theory of perspective transformation is constructive in nature (Mezirow, 1991a); this point of view says there is no one truth to be found; truth is constructed. It would seem to follow that the truth of how human beings experience transformative learning may vary from person to person and from context to context.

Mezirow’s (1978) theory emerged from a study of women returning to college, but, with critical reflection at its core, it may be a theory conceptualized upon what is viewed as a masculine characteristic and with little consideration of feminine thinking. Further evidence of this is Mezirow’s reliance upon Habermasian thought, which fails to
recognize the differential social status of men and women (Fraser et al, 1995). With Habermas’ gender blindness at the root of Mezirow’s thinking, the theory of perspective transformation may be tainted. As discussed in the section on gender, it seems inconceivable to consider the theory complete without considering the ramifications of its potential bias against gender. Ella’s experiences affirm this challenge to the theory. Even though Ella transformed her traditional view of the ministry as being a male profession, she was unable to transform an even more deeply imbedded culturally imposed gender role. She was unable to reflect upon the traditional role of woman as first and foremost a wife and mother in such a way that this meaning perspective could be transformed. This view of herself as a wife and mother whose primary responsibility was to her family permeated every aspect of her seminary experience. It dictated when she enrolled in seminary, how many courses she would take, and in what direction her ministry should proceed. Consideration of such a situation is absent from Mezirow’s writing, and it is, I believe, a serious flaw in his theory. It presents an area of gender (Howell, 1998) bias that does not appear in the literature. Thus, bias appears in both models as an area that may diminish the power of perspective transformation.

The potential gender and ideological biases of the theory tend to diminish its explanatory power because they neglect ways of knowing that are other than reflective. Therefore, the theory may not help us understand the meaning making of women and of men who are not white and middle-class.

In the literature the second area of challenge arises from Mezirow’s insufficient attention to the context in which learning takes place. In his most recent thinking, Mezirow (Weissner and Mezirow, 2000) appears to agree that the importance of context
has been neglected and that more consideration needs to be given to the issue. The theory of perspective transformation is, as he agrees, a theory in process.

The data reveal that the context of the seminary seems to have had significant impact on the women’s transformative learning. While gender and power issues may have been present to hamper learning, the institutional setting of the seminary seems to have provided the women with a learning-enhancing context. The women’s learning occurred within a faith community, a community in which the women were encouraged to connect their feelings and emotions to their learning. Ella and Lily, both, believed that the context of the seminary and its faculty and staff were instrumental in their transformation. The women seemed to realize that the context of the institution offered the support and conditions needed for their transformative learning to occur.

Considering meaning without context is a major anomaly to Mezirow’s theory (Clark and Wilson, 1991). The experiences related by the women of the study appear to support this contention. Taylor’s (2000) suggestion that contextual factors may be significant to transformative learning offers further support. As discussed in the last section, the seminary encouraged not only critical thinking but also consideration of the non-rational, the spiritual and experiential. One wonders if the context of the women’s learning had been different, a context where only critical reflection was encouraged, would their experiences have been different. Would they have experienced transformational learning to the same degree?

The data of the study revealed a context in which the women were encouraged to listen to and act upon their calls from God. The call was not just the result of a rational and critical reflection; it was essentially an intuitive, emotional, spiritual event nurtured
in the context of the seminary. Transformative learning involves a process of coming to know oneself. While the process includes critical reflection on the basic assumptions upon which we rely to make meaning, I believe there is more involved. Coming to know myself and the ways in which I make meaning also includes coming to understand the unconscious/images that impact my meaning making—the spiritual, emotional, and intuitive forces within me. Dirikkx (1997) and Vella (2000) would agree.

While the women reflected upon their culturally assimilated assumptions and premises regarding a woman’s place and more specifically a woman’s place in ministry, they did not critically reflect upon their calls. They did not question whether a call from God would assist them in making meaning of experience. Each accepted the call as being real and meant for her—an emotional, spiritual, and intuitive decision. In addition, because of the context of a faith-based community, any feelings of guilt appear to have been eliminated from the phases of making new meaning perspectives. The context of the seminary as accepting and encouraging the concept of call and its exploration appears to have significant impact on Ella and Lily’s transformative learning.

The data suggest an affirmation of Clark and Wilson’s (1991) criticism of the theory of perspective transformation, but I believe the data also suggest that context has a more direct impact on the women’s decisions than merely a theoretical flaw in Mezirow’s theory. Therefore, I suggest that in the data-based model it is more appropriate to remove “context” from its place as a possible weakness of perspective transformation in the literature-based model to a position of having direct influence on decision making in the data-based model. This repositioning does not mean to imply that Mezirow’s theory is
not weakened by his inattention to context. Instead it indicates what appears to be the importance of context to the present study.

The third challenge centers around the ideological basis of Mezirow's work. Two areas of concern are especially relevant to this study; the conditions necessary for discourse and Mezirow's uncritical acceptance of Habermasian thinking. The women's experiences and my own observations revealed that the ideal conditions needed for true discourse are seldom if ever present. Discussion participants rarely enjoy symmetrical relationships. Conditions of power, shyness, ego, awkwardness, and basic knowledge were almost always present. This finding is supported by Belenky and Stanton's (2000) assertion that most human relationships are asymmetrical. Ignoring this fact can have serious consequences. This was illustrated in Sadie's story when she was discouraged from ordained ministry by persons in an authoritative or mentoring position. It gave Sadie pause, but fortunately she continued to listen to herself and others who offered positive reinforcement. The theory of perspective transformation does not offer guidance regarding the impact on transformative learning resulting from asymmetrical power relations in discourse.

Add to this the fact of Mezirow's apparent lack of concern for the gender blindness of Habermas' work (see the section on gender for further discussion), and one sees the potential for difficulty in applying the theory to the transformative learning of the women of the study. Thus, ideology appears in both models as an area that may diminish the power of perspective transformation.

A fourth area of critique is Mezirow's lack of attention to the power struggles inherent in all human interaction. As discussed above, power issues were present during
discourse. In addition, both Ella and Lily had relationships with people they considered role models or mentors. These teachers, advisors, pastors, friends, and family members were often very influential in the women’s transformative learning. At one point one of Ella’s mentors suggested she pursue ordination and backed up the suggestion with an offer to pay her seminary tuition. Did this suggestion and offer influence her reflection on her future career, on the traditional assumptions that said she should not pursue ordination, on her view of the world and her role in God’s world in it? I am inclined to believe that it did. While it probably would not cause her to pursue a career for which she believed she was unsuited, it was a powerful offer that removed a possible barrier and provided encouragement. The women of the study certainly experienced issues of power during their seminary study. As noted above power struggles were present in some form while participating in discourse. They may have occurred during classroom discussions, within their family, in the churches they served while students, and/or during mentor situations. The point is that issues of power were very much a part of their lives. Revisiting previous discussions we are reminded that the theory of perspective transformation ignores the asymmetrical character of human relationships (Belenky and Stanton, 2000) and that Habermas’s work offers no challenge to the inequities of gender (Fleming, 1995). The flaw in Habermasian thought is compounded in Mezirow’s work, and it is problematic. Power is a condition of life basic to the relationships between human beings, a condition for which transformative learning offers no illumination.

The data suggest an affirmation of Hart’s (1990) criticism of the theory of perspective transformation, but I believe the data also suggest that power relationships have a more direct impact on the women’s decisions than merely a theoretical flaw in
Mezirow’s theory. Therefore, I suggest that in the data-based model it is more appropriate to remove “power” from its place as a possible weakness of perspective transformation in the literature-based model to a position of having direct influence on decision making in the data-based model. This repositioning does not mean to imply that Mezirow’s theory is not weakened by his inattention to power. Instead it indicates what appears to be the importance of power to the present study.

The final area of critique is that the theory does not include a theory of social action. The data from the study do not appear to support a conclusion to affirm or deny this criticism. It could be argued that the pursuit of a career in ordained ministry is itself a decision to work for social change. Many of the leaders of groups working toward improving race relations, advocating gay and lesbian rights, ministering in community with the poor and homeless, working to relieve the oppression of women are clergy persons. In addition, it could be said that choosing to make bringing God’s word to humankind one’s life work may be the epitome of social action. Ella and Lily experienced the desire to change the world. It was not clear whether this involvement was due to the draw of a helping profession or the seminary experience or some other factor. Add to this the inclusion of Freire’s work in both models, and the data seem to support removing issues of “social action” as a possible weakness in perspective transformation in the data-based model.

The critiques of the theory of perspective transformation and the feminist criticism of Habermas when viewed through the experiences of Ella and Lily have altered my view of Mezirow’s work. I believe that it remains the most important theoretical work in adult education today, but it is flawed. If it is to be useful for the education of all
adults regardless of gender, race, or social status, the theory should, in my view, address the implications raised by the difficulties discussed.

Consciousness-raising

The second strand of transformative learning included in the literature-based model (Figure 5.2) is Freire’s (1970) philosophy of adult education as consciousness-raising. In brief, education enables the student to understand the traditional, cultural, and societal forces that impact an individual’s life, and the person is thus empowered to work to change the world. Education should liberate and emancipate personally and socially.

Freire does not concern himself with issues of gender. The influence of liberation theology is obvious in his work (1970), but he seems more interested in the liberation of mankind in the third world than in the liberation of humankind in the entire world. His work suffers from the same gender blindness as the work of Habermas and Mezirow. Perhaps we should not be too surprised at the inattention to gender shown by these men. They do view the world through a male perspective. Freire says the obligation to free both the oppressed and the oppressor falls to the oppressed themselves. Women must continue to challenge the predominant learning theories so that we may bring liberation to all of humankind.

The data as viewed through Lily’s experiences are illuminating. Part of Lily’s life included a desire to work to change specific areas of her world that she felt were unjust and/or oppressive to human beings. Her tenure at the seminary gave her tools to work for social justice issues. She learned to look at the social, political, economic, and cultural contexts that shaped and influenced her life and gained confidence and skills in approaches to change these contexts. The data seem to affirm Freire’s philosophy, and

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his work provides insight into Lily’s experiences regarding social action, insight that is not provided by Mezirow’s work. Thus, the conclusion to include Freire’s philosophy in the data-based model seems appropriate. However, as was true for Ella and Mezirow’s theory, Lily was unable to transform the most pervasive aspect of gender role imposition. She was unable to challenge the notion that her first responsibility, perhaps even before her responsibility to answer God’s call, is the obligation to care for and nurture her family. This potential bias against gender is represented in the data-based model as a potential weakness in Freire’s philosophy.

**Development**

A third strand of transformational learning is represented by Daloz’s (1986, 1999) discussion of transformation as development. Development is included in both the data-based model and the literature-based model. Daloz declares that adults learn to make new meaning of their experiences through a process of development, a process that is most completely and aptly described in Mezirow’s work. What Daloz adds to the formula is the importance of education and mentors to this process. Again, viewing the data through Lily’s experiences provides illumination. Lily continued to grow and develop as an adult. She came to understand how educational experiences were aiding her in her personal development and how significant individuals in her life contributed to her growth. She was able to reconsider traditional beliefs and reinvent herself regarding her role in ministry. However, like Mezirow and Freire, Daloz does not appear to provide any insight as to why Lily was unable to challenge the traditional roles of wife and mother. Instead, she kept this concept apart from her development. Daloz fails to address the issue of gender and how it might impact a woman’s development.
Just as Mezirow's uncritical acceptance of Habermas's work taints the theory of perspective transformation, I believe that what appears to be Daloz's uncritical acceptance of Mezirow's model puts his concepts in the same jeopardy. Daloz work suffers from a gender bias, a gender blindness that limits its value to educators of adult women. The data suggest that the concept of transformation as development be included in the data-based model, and it also suggests that the potential weaknesses of gender bias and ideology be indicated.

**Spirituality**

The final strand presented in both models is Dirkx's (1998) suggestion that in order to understand the holistic nature of transformative learning, we must take the extra-rational/spiritual contexts and aspects of an adult's life into consideration. Viewing this suggestion through the women's experiences seems to affirm the need for a holistic approach to understanding transformative learning at least when considering the experiences of these women seminarians. Significant aspects of Ella's and Lily's experiences were extra-rational or spiritual. The whole concept of "call" is extra-rational. The women would not have been in the seminary at all if they had not believed they were called to be there. Dirkx's work does not claim to be a theory of adult development; it does, however, offer indirect critique of Mezirow's work, because it identifies one more area neglected by the theory of perspective transformation. The data seem to affirm the claim that the spiritual is an aspect of adult life that should be included in any attempt to understand the complete development of an adult, and, therefore, it is included in the data-based model.
The literature review presented a criticism of transformative learning that was indirect because it did was not aimed directly at Mezirow’s work, and it did not appear in the series of dialogues conducted in the pages of Adult Education Quarterly between 1989 and 1998. This criticism (Michelson, 1996) addresses the possibility of bias in the concept of reflection. Michelson locates reflection in Western philosophy and the historical understanding of the relationship between experience and thought. She is saying that thought is held to be superior to experience because thought is rational and critical while experience is intuitive and emotional. Her contention is that the valorization of reflection over experience is biased against gender, race, and class. However, since reflection is basic to the theory of perspective transformation, a theoretical critique is therefore implicit in her article. Western epistemology sees reason as masculine and the uninformed nature of the body as feminine. Since reason must control the body, the masculine must have power over the feminine. If reflection is that which allows us to orient ourselves as agents in history, the poor and the non-white also find themselves outside the epistemological bounds of reflection. Dirkx’s work validates the extra-rational/spiritual, the experiential, the intuitive and emotional, and places such ways of knowing on the same epistemological level with the rational. Thus, that which is seen as masculine and that which is seen as feminine are of equal value. Dirkx claims that this is a more holistic view of transformative learning in that it seeks to help adults establish a relationship and continual dialogue with the unconscious and hidden aspects of themselves (1998). The extra-rational/spiritual aspect of learning is an appropriate and important addition to the data-based model.
Concluding Remarks

Figure 5.1, re-presented below, is a model arising from the data. It suggests that looking at the data through the lenses of gender, context, power, and the four strands of transformative learning provides insight into the women’s decisions to pursue ordination. The conclusions of the study are significant because they help us gain a better understanding of factors involved in the women’s decisions.

Figure 5.1: Model based upon and arising from the data
The model presented in Figure 5.1 continues to recognize the impact of the four strands of transformative learning suggested by the literature: perspective transformation, education as consciousness-raising, transformation as development, and the extra-rational component of transformation. It adds an awareness of the indication that bias and ideology flaws may weaken the theory of perspective transformation and education as development and that bias may weaken transformation as consciousness-raising. The model also adds the recognition of context and power as important factors in the transformative learning of the study participants. Finally, this model presents the very significant impact of gender upon the transformation of and thus the decisions of the women to pursue ordination.

The data and conclusions arising from the study provide new insight into transformative learning. Revisiting the theory of perspective transformation through the lens of the study affirms that the theory is a powerful and useful tool, but it is flawed due to its inattention to gender, power, and context. Such a view also affirms the theory's limitation inherent in Mezirow's uncritical acceptance of Habermasian thought. A general conceptual implication for the field of adult education is that the theory offers one vehicle through which to study and understand adult learning and development. It may not provide guidance for understanding the development of all adults, especially women and other marginalized groups. Some specific implications for adult education follow.

**Implications for Adult Education**

The conclusions arising from the study present several challenges to adult education and educators, especially in the context of the seminary. Adult educators need to have a better understanding of the impact of gender upon adult decision-making. More
research about this important subject is needed. If we follow Freire’s (1970) suggestion that only the oppressed can free themselves and their oppressors, than the task of liberating both women and men falls to women.

Faculty members need to be educated regarding adult education methods with special attention to the role played by gender in decision-making and techniques to assist women in coping with this phenomenon. Support groups could be established around issues of gender. Adult educators need to have a better understanding of power and how it may be at play in the classroom. They must develop techniques to reduce the impact of power.

The composition of the faculty and administration of the seminary should reflect that of the student body with regard to gender and race. Since women are the traditional caretakers of the children, seminaries should provide on site childcare. Since the words and images used to talk about God are indicative of women’s inclusion in or exclusion from the liturgical practices of the church, more emphasis needs to be put on promoting and understanding gender inclusive language. Gordon’s (2001) words offer support. “...theological education is about justice. Thus to do theological education is to read gender studies, ethics, post-colonial and liberation studies” (p. 22).

The importance of the context of the seminary was illuminated in the study. Adult educators need to be aware of the context not only within which they function but also within which their students live and work.

The theory of perspective transformation needs to be revisited so the importance of context, power, and the extra-rational aspects of transformation can be explored. A
likewise reconsideration of transformation as development needs to occur, and the gender bias of consciousness-raising needs to be addressed.

Lily's story demonstrated the desire of the women of the study to work for issues of social justice. Adult educators need to be aware of this desire and to understand how the educational process can provide the foundations for work on social justice issues. Mentors were also important to Lily's adult development. It can be implied that mentors need to be trained regarding the importance of their roles and the importance of gender in women's development. The third aspect of Lily's story was the extra-rational/spiritual component of her development. She received a divine call to do God's work in the world. This call was central to her entering the seminary, as it was for Ella and Sadie. Adult educators should understand the implications of the extra-rational/spiritual to the development of women. Such understanding could be accomplished by reading the literature and by providing time for women to express and reflect upon this important aspect of their lives.

Itinerancy is a fact of life for an elder in the United Methodist Church. It was at least a source of concern and at times a significant barrier to some of the women of the study. United Methodist seminaries need to pay more attention to the impact the need to be itinerant may have on their students.

Perhaps the most important finding of the study is the profound impact that gender had on the timing and acceptance of the realized call to ministry. If we, adult educators, are truly to assist women in their developmental journey, we must understand the significance of gender to women's learning and decision-making.
Recommendations for Further Study

Four areas seem particularly rich for further study: Transformational learning, women clergy, impact of traditional roles, and call. The study suggests a new model for understanding the factors that impact the decisions of women seminarians to pursue ordination. More study is needed to confirm and/or adjust this model. The model suggests the importance of gender to the women’s decision-making. A question for further study might be, “Does gender impact every decision of a woman’s life?” Although beyond the scope of this study, the impact of race, class, and ethnicity upon development and decision-making provides fertile ground for further study.

Little has been written, and there is a scarcity of study on women clergy. Since so many women are entering seminaries and considering ordained ministry, further study is needed to help us understand the culture of these women. It would be especially interesting to investigate the impact of traditional female roles not only on the decision to enter the ministry but also on the day-to-day functioning of women clergy.

The concept of a call from God may be unique to faith-based careers. Study is needed to understand this concept. What are the various forms it takes? How is it answered? What are the consequences to the individual of answering or choosing not to answer a call? How do different religious communities view the idea of call?

In conclusion, the study found that the decisions of these women seminarians to change their course of study and pursue ordination might best be understood through the lens of transformative learning and including emphases on power, context, and, perhaps most importantly, on gender. The study has significant implications for adult education, because it seems to imply that gender issues impact women’s lives to a greater extent.
than is currently reflected in the literature. It is presented with the hope that it might stimulate further discussion on the issues of gender, religion, and adult education and on how the three converge.
APPENDIX A

SAMPLE LETTER
SENT TO MTSO SEMINARIANS AND GRADUATES

July 21, 2000

Dear Methesco Graduate,

If you enrolled in the Methodist Theological School in Ohio not necessarily expecting to pursue ordination as an elder and made the decision to pursue ordination at some time during your seminary experience, I would like to talk with you.

My name is Jill Fewell, I am a doctoral candidate at Ohio State, and I am doing my dissertation about women clergy from Methesco. The study will focus on the decisions of women seminarians to opt for ordination as an elder and particularly on the factors involved when those decisions were made after enrolling in the seminary. If you volunteer to become involved, your participation will consist of one or two interviews with me. An interview will last approximately one and one half hours. Interviews will take place at a site of your choosing, and all data appearing in the dissertation will be described in such a way as to keep your identity confidential.

I hope you will choose to participate in the study and allow me to learn from you. I have enclosed a post card that you may use to respond to me. If you would like to know more before you decide, please contact me at my home (614) 236-5683, at work (614) 292-5621, or via e-mail at fewell.3@osu.edu.

Thank you very much for your consideration. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Jill Fewell
43 S. Remington Road
Columbus, OH 43209
Jill, I will volunteer to participate in the study about women clergy.

My name is _______________________________________

(Please Print)

To set up the interview, please contact me by (please check all appropriate Responses):

___ Home phone ( ) __________________________
    Best time to reach me is ______________________

___ Work phone ( ) ____________________________
    Best time to reach me is ______________________

___ E-mail, my address is __________________________

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APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

• The subject will choose the site and time for the interview.

• The subject’s choice of site will dictate my choice of clothing. For example, conducting an interview in a clergy woman’s church will require different attire than that worn to an interview in her home.

• I will ask permission to tape the interview.

• I will reaffirm the confidentially of the interview.

• I will express awareness that her time is valuable.

• I will express thanks for her sharing her time with me and for her helping me gain understanding of the nature of her seminary experience and the factors that influenced her to seek ordination as a parish pastor.

• I will reaffirm that the interview will last approximately one and one half hours and explain there may be a need to return for follow-up. I will ask if this is satisfactory.

• I will ask if she has any questions to this point.

• First interview question, “Please tell me about your call.”

• Other questions that may or may not be necessary to ask directly,
  a. What is/was it like to be a woman seminarian at MTSO?
  b. Who were your role models?
c. Please tell me about your first experience with gender inclusive language.

- Questions designed to learn if Mezirow’s ten phases of perspective transformation were part of the subject’s experience; I will decide to use any or all of these questions as the interview proceeds:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Possible Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A disorienting dilemma</td>
<td>1. How did you feel when you first realized that women could be pastors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt</td>
<td>2. What were your feelings about not already knowing this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions</td>
<td>3. How did you assess your past assumptions about women as clergy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change</td>
<td>4. How have other women managed this change in understanding?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions</td>
<td>5. How did you go about exploring new opportunities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Planning a course of action</td>
<td>6. What kind of new plans were needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plan</td>
<td>7. What kind of curricular changes were needed?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

- The interview will end after approximately one and one half hours.

- I will ask permission to return if it proves to be necessary.
APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO TAPE SCRIPT

Thank you again for agreeing to talk with me. I want to reaffirm that this is a voluntary interview from which you may withdraw at any time. You may also refuse to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. I would like to tape the interview; so, I am sure that I record your words accurately. However, if you do not wish me to use the tape recorder, I will not. Do I have your permission to tape our conversation?
APPENDIX E
CODING GUIDE

1. **Reflection:** The intent is to test the validity of one’s beliefs. It involves “A review of the way we have consciously, coherently, and purposefully applied ideas in strategizing and implementing each phase of solving a problem (Mezirow, 19—, p. 15).” It involves critique. It is not equated to introspection when introspection refers to the awareness that a woman is perceiving, thinking, or acting in a specific way. It is indicated when a woman:
   - Questions her life goals,
   - Considers past decisions regarding her vocational goals,
   - Asks herself if God may be calling her to follow a new career path.

2. **Triggering** event/disorienting dilemma: This is an event that causes a woman to pause in the course of her routine approach to life. Something happens—a life shattering occurrence, personal upheaval, external events, or an accumulation of internal changes. It may occur in an instant or be a gradual realization, but there is a point at which even a gradual realization is “realized.” It is indicated when a woman:
   - Suddenly becomes aware that women can be ordained;
   - Interprets an event, a series of events, or a gradual awareness as being a call to ministry;
   - Becomes aware that she has a hunger for participation in the sacraments.

3. **Self-examination:** This refers to an act of reflection upon one’s life goals, vocation, or selected career path. It may include feelings of guilt or shame. It does not refer to thinking of such things as which seminary to attend. It does include thinking about how one’s life will change. It is indicated when a woman:
   - Discerns that she is being called by God and reflects on what this call means,
   - Considers how her life must change in order to answer this call,
   - Reflects upon what the call really means.

4. **Assessment** of assumptions: This refers to critical reflection upon the epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions that have formed one’s career track to date. It involves an examination of the forces that heretofore have driven one’s life choices. It is indicated when a woman:
• Realizes that a quest for power and material gain is not (for her) the appropriate basis for a career decision,
• Reflects upon the self-set road blocks to acceptance of her call,
• Comes to the understanding that the assumptions previously used to make life decisions are no longer appropriate for her.

5. **Share** change: This refers to the recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change. It refers to women understanding that other women have shared their doubts and fears survived as whole persons. It is indicated when a woman:
   • Realizes that she is not alone,
   • Shares experiences with others (men or women),
   • Seeks the counsel of others.

6. **Exploration**: This refers to looking at new roles, relationships, and actions. It involves taking responsibility for one’s actions and exploring what new roles, relations, or actions will result from answering God’s call. It is indicated when a woman:
   • Considers what it means to be itinerate,
   • Considers how accepting her call will alter the relationship between her and her spouse and/or family,
   • Considers what it will mean to leave her present career—financially, socially.

7. **Planning**: This refers to planning a course of action. It involves plotting a course that will take a woman where her call is directing her to go. It is indicated when a woman:
   • Investigates the church’s requirements for ordination as an elder,
   • Investigates the course work leading to the Master of Divinity degree,
   • Discusses with her family how they need to proceed.

8. **Implementation**: This refers to acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the plan. It involves making the commitment to and beginning the ordination process in the church’s governance. It involves taking the necessary seminary courses. It may involve planning to move from one geographic location to another. It is indicated when a woman:
   • Changes her major area of study to the M.Div. program,
   • Officially enters the ordination process at the conference level
   • Obtains family commitment to itinerancy.

9. **Trial**: This refers to provisional trying of new roles. It is indicated when a woman:

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• Preaches a sermon,
• Participates in assisting with the sacraments,
• Takes a student pastorate.

10. **Building**: This refers to gaining competence and self-confidence in the new role. It involves the realization that “I can do this.” It often involves affirmation from others. It is indicated when a woman:
   • Begins to realize that she is competent and comfortable in her new role,
   • Receives affirmation of her ability and/or accomplishment—affirmation may be internal (a sense of peace and contentment) or external (compliments or help when needed).

11. **Reintegration**: This refers to a reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective. It involves a woman becoming the new person that has resulted from her accepting and answering her call. It is indicated when a woman:
   • Completes the ordination process,
   • Knows that she will complete the ordination process.

12. **Traditional** versus non-traditional female roles: This refers to decisions making based on traditional female roles. It involves a woman’s weighing career decisions on the basis of what she perceives to be a woman’s role. It is indicated when a woman:
   • Forgoes answering her call until children are raised;
   • Understands that women are clergy spouses as opposed to clergy;
   • Decides that her call/career must be subordinated to her husband’s.

13. **Contra**-traditional: This refers to decision making in opposition to traditional female roles. It involves a woman’s recognition of tradition roles and deciding to move contrary to them. It is indicated when a woman:
   • Decides to respond to her call in spite of traditional roles;
   • Begins to work with family toward their acceptance of her decision.

14. **Anti**-traditional: This refers to decision making as defiance of perceived roles and systems. It involves a woman deciding on a career path, at least in part, as an act of rejection of the ordination process, system, or perceived out-comes. It is indicated when a woman:
   • Rejects ordination because she sees the process as manipulative;
   • Rejects ordination because it is restrictive.

15. **Support**: This refers to the felt affirmation of family, friends, seminary, or instructors. It involves a woman believing that individuals or institutions significant in her life support her call to ministry. It is indicated when a woman:
   • Is counseled by a clergy person, friend, instructor, or other significant person to seek ordination;
• Perceives the seminary as welcoming and supportive.

16. **Non-support**: This refers the felt discouragement of family, friends, seminary, or instructors. It involves a woman believing that individuals or institutions significant in her life do not support her call to ministry and do not want her to be ordained. It is indicated when a woman:
  • Is told that her ordination would be difficult for her family to accept;
  • Is told that women should not preach or be involved in delivering the sacraments;
  • Is told that she should follow traditional female roles;
  • Understands that lesbians are not welcome as pastors in some denominations.

17. **Background**: This refers to a woman’s religious background. It involves her church activity prior to entering the seminary. It does not refer to any other kind of background. It is indicated when a woman:
  • States that she attend church as a child;
  • Relates her experiences in church youth groups;
  • Talks about church activity as an adult.

18. **Call**: This refers to a woman’s description of her call, however she perceives it to be. It involves whatever she believes to be some communication from God pointing her in the direction God wishes her to follow. It does not refer to any other impetus toward ordination that is not believed to be God inspired. It is indicated when a woman:
  • Feels she is being given signs by God;
  • Interprets events or occurrences as divinely inspired to indicate a message;
  • Believes that the call has been with her from the beginning but has gone unrecognized by her.

19. **Life Situation**: This refers to a woman’s current situation in life. It involves her marital state, whether she has children, her employment, and so on. It is indicated when a woman:
  • Reveals her current life situation.

20. **MTSO draw**: This refers to a woman’s reason(s) for attending the Methodist Theological School in Ohio and for continuing her attendance. It involves the aspects of the seminary that initially appealed to her and what it is about it that causes(ed) her to continue there. It is indicated when a woman:
  • Indicates that a particular aspect of the seminary was particularly important to her selection;
  • Indicates that a particular student, faculty, or staff person was influential in her decision;
  • Indicates that the seminary’s location was essential to her decision.
21. **Itinerancy**: This refers to issues regarding the obligation of a United Methodist Ordained Elder to be itinerant. It involves a woman’s attitudes and concerns regarding the necessity of moving herself and her family to an area not of their choosing. It is indicated when a woman:

- Indicates concern about her husband’s career
- Indicates concern about her children changing schools
APPENDIX F

EXCERPTS

from
Methodist Theological School in Ohio
Student Handbook
1998-1999

DECLARATION OF INCLUSIVENESS

Language

Exclusive language, traditionally dominated in our culture by white male symbolism, has cause alienation of women, men, racial and ethnic minorities, the elderly, the very young, persons with handicapping conditions, and persons from various socio-economic classes. The alienation caused by this often results in relationships broken and burdened by barriers of words. This is directly contrary to our Christian affirmation of the goodness and rightness of the development and nurture of relationships between persons and God, and between persons and persons.

Inclusive language is language carefully and deliberately chosen to break barriers of exclusivity. It is “for” everyone and “Against” no one. It focuses on the message given by guarding against inaccuracy in the vocabulary of the sender. Inclusive language is an intentional attempt to communicate in a universal way (p. 2).
APPENDIX G

EXCERPT

from
METHODIST THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL IN OHIO

FACT SHEET: 2001-2002

Student Body: 270 enrolled students: our most recent survey indicates equal percentage of women and men; 15% ethnic and international; 71% United Methodist; 15 other denominations represented
APPENDIX H

EXCERPTS FROM PERSONAL NOTES

June 7, 2000: Day before my first interview

- Have retyped directions
- Have prepared question list to check & card for preliminary remarks
- Have new batteries for tape recorder
- Need to go to library to get a new “book” to listen to on the road

I am excited, perhaps a little nervous—but mostly positive anticipation. I have been pleased with the response, 13 volunteers so far and 8 interviews scheduled. I am a little apprehensive about the amount of traveling I’ll be doing—Michigan, Pennsylvania, couple of trips to northern Ohio. I will invest substantial time for a 60-90 minute interview—but the cost of travel is my largest concern. Gas is nearly $1.70/gal. RATS! I am actually starting my dissertation research—what fun!!!

July 10, 2000: Decision

I am having real difficulty making myself work on the interview transcriptions. The interview in the Olive Garden was particularly difficult to hear. Is this really an efficient use of my time? I have no time to read, think, or prepare my coding guide. It this keeps up, it will take me a year for the transcriptions alone. I will not be able to keep on schedule.

It occurs to me that it is reasonable to have a professional do my transcriptions—called Jeannie—she will do it!!!!!! Thank you God for sending me such a friend.

Have one more seminarian interview scheduled for next Monday. That will bring the total to 8—would like to get a couple more.

January 16, 2000

This past month has been very frustrating. It has been so hard to make myself code the interviews. I took two steps today, which will help. (1) I made a schedule of daily coding that will get me finished by the end of the month. The schedule is steady but
quite "doable." (2) I made a "quick reference" for my coding guide. The original is 4 pages long and cumbersome to work with.

February 7, 2001

Coding is all done. The schedule and the quick reference really helped. Have noticed some themes: (1) Transformations often took place. (2) Guilt usually not part of the equation—maybe because God is involved—maybe because they are going to something rather than away (Dr. Stein's thought). (3) Traditional female roles involved in every case. (4) Itinerancy often seen as a barrier. (5) Most received family support—some did not. (6) MTSO seen as supportive and welcoming—some individuals played key roles.

One more interview to put in Nud*ist format. Tomorrow I begin to try to enter interviews into a Nud*ist project—little nervous—this is one of those plateaus I have been experiencing—need to start climbing again.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


