PERSISTENCE IN HONORING SELF

AS EXPRESSED IN THE LIVES

OF ORDAINED SOUTHERN

BAPTIST WOMEN

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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BY

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DENTON, TEXAS

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4-5-95
_____
Date

To the Associate Vice President for Research
and Dean of Graduate Studies

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by
Karen Lyn Morrison entitled "Persistence in Honoring Self
as seen in the Lives of Ordained Southern Baptist Women."
I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form
and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, with a major in Family Studies.

_____
Jo Ann Engelbrecht, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

_____
_____
_____
_____
Department Chair
_____
Dean, College of Education
and Human Ecology

Accepted.
_____
Associate Vice President for
Research and Dean of Graduate
Studies

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Jack and Carolyn, who have not lived to see the outcome but whose guidance made education valuable and whose sacrifices made education possible. And to my aunt and uncle, Sue and Walter, whose assistance helped make graduate study a reality.

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Though by slow and faltering pace,
    At last this journey is no more,
        And only by amazing grace
            Have I reached the exit door.
For me, the quintessential gift
    Has been the growing cast of friends,
        Whose presences always gave a lift,
            Let's hope that kinship never ends!

When the journey takes nearly 8 years, the list of contributors along the way is lengthy. In fact, I see this work as the synergistic output of many people and consequently, I hesitate to put just one name on the title page. The women who agreed to participate in this study are not only the inspiration for but also the co-authors of this work. The depth of their self-understanding and their ability to verbalize their experience facilitated the research process immensely and provided "rich and thick" data for analysis. Hopefully, the product honors both their lives and their stories.

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ABSTRACT

PERSISTENCE IN HONORING SELF AS

SEEN IN THE LIVES OF ORDAINED

SOUTHERN BAPTIST WOMEN

Karen Lyn Morrison, doctoral dissertation

May 1995

The purpose of this study was to examine the lives of
selected women in search of clues as to what enabled some of
them to persist in pursuit of their self-defined life
purposes despite opposition and resistance to that pursuit.
The research process combined information from previously-
gathered oral histories with data from newly-conducted in-
depth interviews of 20 women whose "call," seminary training,
and ordination equipped them for pastoral ministry within the
Southern Baptist denomination. The research questions
focused on these women's perceptions of their calls, their
expectations regarding opportunities to fulfill those calls,
and their experiences in attempting to do so. Emergent
themes from the analysis related to common developmental
experiences and influences as well as similar individual
characteristics.

A life course perspective was utilized to assess the interaction of individual characteristics with family, community, and societal influences during a particular historical period. The women's perceptions and experiences of family, church, seminary, and career were traced from childhood to the present. The accounts revealed the discrepancy between these women's anticipated response to call (opportunities to serve in Southern Baptist pastoral ministry) and their actual experiences (opposition to their seeking certain pastoral roles or positions).

The overarching theme was one of struggle to reconcile the women's understanding of their purpose with the realities of their circumstances. The major contextual themes which emerged included multiple family connections and loyalties; contradictory messages of affirmation and discrimination; struggles between conservative patriarchal tradition and evolving feminist understanding; and a struggle between response to either an internal or an external locus of control.

In an effort to analyze which individual characteristics or experiences contribute to persistence, the findings are interpreted through the following developmental perspectives: ecological, focusing on mesosystemic linkages; moral,

focusing on the ethic of care, self-in-relation, and contextual interpretations; and Erikson's issues of trust, generativity, and integrity. Issues of ego strength, hardiness and resilience are also discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

An issue of <u>Time</u> (Ostling, 1992) provided a brief
summary of the "women's movement" within the Christian
community over the last 50 years.

> The debate over the status of women, with all
> its theological and personal dramas, represents a
> larger clash between venerable religious beliefs
> and social movements that have affected much of the
> world over the past generation. Last week it was
> the Anglicans; this week the Roman Catholic Church
> faces its own gender battles as the U.S. bishops
> meet in Washington to wrestle with the church's
> controversial policies on women. Activists believe
> they are caught up in one of Christendom's great
> and historic transformations.
> Among Christians inspired by feminism,
> especially in English-speaking countries, a
> threshold was crossed last week; but the broader
> cultural shift has been occurring for decades and
> is fast gaining momentum. (Ostling, 1992, p. 53)

While some might describe the transition as progress,
skeptics would more likely focus on the near imperceptibility
of change in the overall status, treatment and role of women
in the churches. The group most impacted by resistance to
change in a traditionally patriarchal structure are those
women who experience a "call" to some form of full-time
ministry or service within their respective denominations.
The most frequent targets of attention are those women who

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seek visible leadership positions as well as the authority and recognition that go with these traditionally male positions.

Since the 1960s, each new decade has produced two or three "victories" for these women of the cloth but not without cost. When they dare, women representing both conservative and liberal Christian denominations relate tales of mental, verbal and even physical abuse as a result of their attempts to transgress the "holy roles" of their churches (Diehl, 1985; Hearn, 1979; Proctor & Proctor, 1975;). These women are the embodiment of the adage, "between a rock and a hard place." Despite the fact that significant numbers of women are being trained in seminaries, and more women than ever before are being ordained to the gospel ministry, most fail to parlay their training into a career or to any employment directly related to their training (Ammerman, 1991a; Anders, 1975; Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, 1981; Kimberling, 1988). For some, this reflects their own personal choice to forego a career, but "many of these women who have full pastoral powers on paper are finding they cannot get satisfactory preaching jobs" (Proctor & Proctor, 1975, p. 21).

What compels some women to challenge the "givens," to reinterpret "things sacred," to reconceptualize and reframe the male-defined "divine order?"

>The institutional church, our families, and our
>society have restricted our potential. We have
>become slaves to and venerators of our church
>traditions. Instead of rejoicing in the freedom of
>the gospel, we are locked into the strictures
>imposed by centuries of encrusted traditions and
>beliefs that do not necessarily jibe with Scripture
>or our own personal experiences as women.
>. . . Throughout the centuries theological
>scholarship has been very selective. The Bible is
>our basis for truth, our guide for living. But it
>was written by men, in a culture dominated by men,
>which had laws that favored men. (Diehl, 1985, p.
>29)

As more and more women are finding that their understanding
and experience contradict their church's truths and
traditions, many of these women have chosen to oppose the
institutional practices while upholding the religious
principles. They have chosen to remain within their
denominations attempting to engender support for a
theological interpretation which honors their gifts and
respects their calls to utilize those gifts. Nevertheless,
remaining within the formal religious system in an effort to
reform it has exacted a toll from these women who were
"called."

In view of the cost, what compels some women to
"persist" in their pursuit of a legitimate place in an
institution which frequently both openly and unabashedly
proclaims their inferior status? Why press for inclusiveness
and inclusion in a domain which overtly seeks to silence the
female voice? Given the opposition, what characteristics or

conditions distinguish these women who persevere in pursuit of their personal prerogatives?

The resurgent women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s with its emphasis on consciousness-raising provided an impetus for change for many women. Heightened self-awareness and an increased sense of personal power encouraged many women to organize and pursue personal goals. The institutional church's level of resistance to women by its adherence to selected traditions which exclude women from authority and recognition but not from responsibility has surprised and disappointed many people. In spite of this resistance, some women have chosen to remain within their present denominations believing that change and acceptance will come or that they themselves are to be the change agents. Regardless of their reason for opting to "fight rather than switch," women in the ministry continue to encounter opposition and oppression. These women who are dedicated to reforming the institution in order to establish their "rightful place" in the ministry, regularly face seemingly immovable obstacles in their quest to gain parity in the profession.

These women religious reformers are not necessarily unique in their dedication to cause. Recently, this researcher either met and interviewed, or heard lectures given by a variety of extremely committed women who appeared to be living and telling very similar life stories. The

facts of their lives varied considerably. They were lawyers, professors, writers, nuns, chaplains, and community educators from locations as widespread as Missouri, California, New York, Kentucky, Michigan, Florida, and Tennessee. Their ages ranged from mid 30s to 70s. However, what was striking about these encounters was the sense that despite the diversity of voices, one kept hearing a strangely familiar story line. This group reflected the capacity to either incur personal cost or set aside personal gain and/or well-being in their sundry efforts to alter and improve conditions for their chosen communities. Their causes/commitments differed as did their personal styles, but their intensity and persistence in pursuing their individually chosen causes was remarkably uniform. This group inspired and stimulated the researcher to formulate some questions surrounding the nature of persistence in general, but more specifically to address persistence in women, since the opposition women have faced and the relative powerlessness they have experienced magnifies the courage of their endeavors.

The types of questions which surfaced after meeting and talking with individuals of remarkable strength and courage concerned the origins of both the value systems and the capacity of some people to translate those values into a lifestyle. What makes some individuals capable of living out their convictions regardless of cost? How and what were they taught? Who were their models, mentors and influences? How

are they able to persist in pursuit of visions and goals that apparently are not shared by those around them? How can they persist in the face of opposition to their causes and, at times, to their very existence? These were the questions underlying this investigation.

Statement of the Problem

For the purposes of this study, persistence must be witnessed in context. To be deemed "persisters," individuals must demonstrate an ongoing history of encountering and dealing with obstacles in their pursuit of cause or career. Over time, they must choose to remain faithful to their convictions despite opposition. While such individuals can be found randomly scattered throughout the population, an investigation into the life histories of such individuals required the establishment of a target group with the likelihood of containing multiple individuals reflecting the characteristic of persistence. Hence, this study focused on ordained Southern Baptist women whose lives frequently depict dual discrimination, first from a patriarchal society and then from a patriarchal religious denomination.

While the women's movement, beginning in the late 1960s, refocused national attention on the social inequities encountered by women, this movement was not the first effort by women to claim just treatment and their civil rights.

Women in the 1800s organized to secure educational access, employment equity, political opportunity and legal rights. Vocal religious women were frequently leaders of these efforts which have waxed and waned for nearly 150 years now. While some advances in all of these areas have been achieved, the modern movement signaled the overall insufficiency of previous gains on a broad scale (Sapiro, 1990).

Feminist reaction to the various social movements of the 1960s reflected their sense that even as participants in humanitarian struggles for equal rights for all, women ended up being exploited by their coworkers in the cause (MacKinnon, 1987). Women responded by creating their own alliances in pursuit of their own purposes. This movement spawned not only activists, but also academicians. The academic arm of the movement, women's studies, has served as the impetus for the inspection and rejection of androcentric history, theory, and practice. Seeking a new view which honors the contributions and perspectives of women, proponents have set about revising the sociohistorical context and are questioning the assumptions of a male-dominated society. Many feminists consider present institutions beyond reform and are pressing for either a new order or a separate order while others still cling to the hope that heightened awareness in all people will result in increased opportunity and access for all people (Tong, 1989).

The Southern Baptist women in this study for the most part will represent this latter group. On the one hand, they are deeply rooted in the theology and polity of their denomination, while, on the other hand, they have become more aware of the bias in interpretation which interferes with their effectively utilizing what they perceive to be their God-given gifts. While their sisters have been busy revising secular history and generating feminist theory, these Baptists have been occupied with the task of revising Biblical interpretation and recasting theological images and language as well as attempting to reform denominational practice and polity. Their efforts have been met with both overt and covert resistance.

The 15.2 million-member Southern Baptist Convention is composed of 33.5 thousand churches. Of the 32,709 full-time pastoral positions, 55 were held by women in 1992 (Southern Baptist Handbook, 1992). This predominantly white (93.9%), Protestant denomination is typically classified as conservative or fundamentalist Christian. Despite the fact that women constitute the majority of the denomination's membership and a substantial number of its employees, Baptist women are noticeably absent from the leadership ranks at all levels. Anders' (1975) comparative study of Protestant denominations demonstrated the presence of sexism in practice; the absence of women in decision-making positions; the weakness of female conventional voting power; the

existence of differential treatment of women in Southern Baptist educational institutions; the underrepresentation of women as pastors and church staff members; the restriction of women from denominational positions; and the absence of a strong endorsement for an equal place for women within the Southern Baptist denomination. Despite professed support of autonomy of the local church and a non-hierarchical, non-creedal self-image, the Southern Baptist Convention has moved from the position described by Anders in 1975 to an even more rigid, authoritarian, male-dominated entity in the 1980s and 1990s resulting in not only greater dissatisfaction among women but also a potential official split of the denomination (Ammerman, 1991a; Bellinger, 1993).

During the 1980s and early 1990s, women have continued to be accepted in seminaries--representing as many as 20% of the enrolled students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the largest Southern Baptist seminary in this country as well as the largest Protestant seminary in the world (Enrollment Statistics of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993). Regardless of the fact that thousands of women were being trained, as of 1988 only 500-600 clergywomen (ordained and not ordained) were employed by the denomination (Bellinger, 1993). The latest statistics reflect a considerable increase to over 900 ordained women (Survey results reveal education levels, barriers, support, 1993), but this still represents a miniscule percentage of

the denominational leadership and only 5% of this very select group are pastors. What characterizes women who face the challenge and opposition and yet cling tenaciously to their sense of purpose?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the lives of ordained Southern Baptist women in search of clues as to what constitutes this quality of persistence. The investigative process combined previously gathered oral histories with newly conducted in-depth interviews of a sample of Southern Baptist women whose "call," seminary training, and ordination have equipped them for pastoral ministry within the denomination. The group included some who have apparently overcome the in-house obstacles and are presently serving as either ordained pastors, associate pastors, or chaplains within the denomination as well as some who encountered insurmountable obstacles within the denomination and, consequently, sought to carry out their "calls" in other denominations or in other ways.

In a variety of ways, these women have persisted in "putting feet to their faith" or in carrying out their moral imperatives in spite of the barriers they have encountered in attempting to do so. They were chosen because on the surface their circumstances provided them with multiple opportunities to demonstrate persistence in pursuing their understanding of

their "life purpose" or "call." At the outset, there was no data to ensure that all of these women would legitimately demonstrate persistence over time, but the researcher's personal experience and information already available on some of the women made them likely candidates for study. Of necessity, these subjects needed to be nearing middle age or older in order to have shown their prolonged pursuit of their visions.

In reviewing and analyzing the stories of these women, the objective was to ascertain whether they perceived and portrayed themselves in similar ways. Areas to be examined included personal characteristics or traits, family and educational experiences, role models, value systems or moral and ethical training, but the research was not limited to these areas. Themes emerging from the data are potential areas of investigation for future research projects.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How did these women express and interpret their calls to ministry?

2. How did they expect to carry out their calls?

3. How did their expectations compare with the reality which they encountered in pursuing their call to service?

4. What themes and variations emerge from these women's personal histories and ministerial careers?

Definitions

Several terms are used in the text which may be either unfamiliar to some readers or have a slight variation in meaning relative to the Southern Baptist denomination and/or this particular research study.

Call to ministry: The sense of being divinely chosen and led to some specific service or life-task, a definite field in which to work (Weber, 1958).

Minister: One who is trained to serve and perform specific, usually circumscribed, functions within the context of a church or some denominationally sponsored organization.

Ordained Minister (Southern Baptist): One who is ceremonially designated and recognized by members of a locally autonomous church as gifted and suited to perform certain religious functions. This person is authorized to preach, provide pastoral care, celebrate the Lord's Supper, baptize, perform marriage ceremonies and funerals.

Persistence: Perseverance in pursuing some goal in spite of repeated obstructions, diversions, delays or obstacles encountered in the pursuit of that goal.

Southern Baptist: A member of the largest Protestant denomination in the United States composed of locally autonomous, covenant churches which are bound together by

agreement rather than a legitimized organizational hierarchy to form the Southern Baptist Convention (Baker, 1974).

<u>Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary</u>: The largest of six Southern Baptist seminaries located in Ft. Worth, Texas offering Masters and Doctoral degrees from its three schools in the areas of theology, religious education and music.

Delimitations

The women included in this study are not representative of women in general, religious women or even women ministers in the Southern Baptist denomination. They comprise a purposive and convenience sample of Southern Baptist women whose options are demonstrably limited by their choice of ordination and pastoral ministry in a context which does not support such options. Their visible persistence in light of these conditions makes them a reasonable starting point for an investigation into the qualities of women who confront and overcome obstacles in pursuit of their causes.

Summary

This chapter has presented a brief overview of the concept of persistence in certain individuals and has proposed that this attribute can be effectively investigated in the context of the lives of ordained Southern Baptist women. Present and past conditions of women in general, and

Southern Baptist women in particular, were discussed to establish the appropriateness of utilizing their lives as testing grounds for an investigation about what constitutes persistence. Chapter II provides a more in-depth analysis of the context as well as some potential theoretical frameworks within which to explore and explain the development of persistence.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents a survey of the literature pertinent to this study. The focus is on defining the concept and construct of persistence and its similarities to and distinctions from some other concepts such as cognitive development and hardiness. Once the concept of persistence is clarified, then the context in which this concept seemed to have potential of being observed is explained and relevant literature reviewed. The present and historical situation of women in ministry, particularly women in Southern Baptist ministry, provided the milieu for the research. The theoretical orientation reflects both a life course perspective which was useful in tracking development and transition over time and a feminist perspective which was employed to assess a possible relationship between persistence and gender.

Persistence

What is It?

For the women in this study the best definition of persistence comes from the Bible:

> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have
> already been made perfect, but I press on to take
> hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of
> me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have
> taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting
> what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,
> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for
> which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
> (Phil: 3:12-14, NIV)

While not all people would acknowledge the same motivating force nor same goal, the essence of persistence is captured in this passage; that is, the internalized sense of a task or tasks which are one's own to accomplish and, in all likelihood, are not achievable without exceptional effort and sacrifice. Endurance is a component of this view. For the purposes of this study, persisters needed to demonstrate tenacious adherence to their understanding of their individual missions over an extended period of time.

Although some existing research touches on this view of persistence, the concept remains sufficiently ill-defined and poorly understood to merit investigation. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) present a new paradigm of women's cognitive process which discusses the importance of spiritual development and moral commitments in women with the capacity for "constructed knowledge." These constructivist women are characterized by "their ability to view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 15). This element of subjectivity inclines women not only to put themselves in the

middle of the cognitive analytical, interpretive process but also explains these women's need to translate commitment into action. Belenky et al. (1986) also found that, typically, this commitment was not focused on one specific goal or issue, but was more likely to reflect a generalized concern for the well-being of others. The distinction between this quality and persistence is best described as the difference between someone committed to "doing good" or "not hurting others" and someone specifically committed to feeding the hungry in their community, or actively pursuing gun-control legislation, or as in the case of the women in this study, preaching the Word. Even though constructed knowledge and persistence are not equivalent, Belenky et al.'s (1986) perspective on female cognitive development supplies one framework for viewing the existence, nature and evolution of persistence.

Another theoretical perspective which incorporates the idea of "stable modes of behaving that endure over decades of changing life circumstances" as an aspect of moral commitment is presented in Colby and Damon's Some Do Care: Contemporary Lives of Moral Commitment (1992, p. 167). Their subjects were described as reliable, stable and dependable, not only in the way that they viewed and valued life but also in the way they carried out life. These researchers proposed a tentative theoretical framework which they call "goal theory," a contextual model of moral development that

accounts for interaction between cognitive growth, values clarification and social influence on the individual's evolution toward moral excellence (Colby & Damon, 1992, p. 170). Although this research informs the investigation of persistence, Colby and Damon's (1992) focus was on constructing a bigger picture--the grand scheme of moral development which they saw as an orderly sequential, stagewise progression from a lower level to a higher plane. The present study seeks to do more than present examples of persistent behavior; it seeks to analyze what constitutes such behavior. Previous research peripherally informs the present study, but directs its attention toward a broader target.

Some researchers have investigated a concept they call "hardiness" both in individuals and in families (McCubbin, Thompson, Pirner, & McCubbin, 1988). This quality relates to the capacity to positively cope with and overcome the stresses, strains and obstacles of life. Individuals or groups possessing this characteristic demonstrate superior mental and physical health despite adversity as well as a greater capacity to face challenge and endure hardship than those who do not possess such a characteristic. Hardiness appears to have some connection with persistence, but, for present research purposes, persistence implies two aspects not contained in hardiness; (a) a specific focus relative to performance of a task, service or mission over time, and (b)

no inherent requirement that the persister be resilient in the pursuit of that goal.

Beardslee's (1989) approach to the study of resiliency does represent a parallel guideline for this research. He recognized the importance of context, self-report, and time as necessary in formulating both a conceptual and experimental framework. While earlier research, even his own, had focused on particular observable instances of resilient behavior, his investigation into self-understanding (1989) attempted to place resiliency under an overarching conceptual umbrella. He emphasized the importance of the subjects' thought and self-reflection and he also pointed out the necessity of seeing congruency between behavior and these reflections.

His findings demonstrated that "resilient individuals have a total organizing conceptualization of who they are and how they came to be" and that resiliency varies by context (Beardslee, 1989, p. 275). He did qualitatively distinguish among the resilience displayed by Civil Rights workers, by survivors of childhood cancer, and by adolescent children whose parents had serious affective disorders. Civil Rights workers demonstrated the centrality of cause and a life long dedication to it which most parallels the subjects in this research.

Scheier and Carver (1982) assessed the relationship of self-consciousness and outcome expectancy to persistence in

performing a task. They found that positive feedback does operate to prolong involvement with a task; however, the effect of external reinforcement was mediated and limited by the individual's level of private self-consciousness. Even in assessing short-term task persistence as this study did, the findings supported the significance of self-reflection in fostering persistent behavior just as seen in Beardslee's (1989) long-term analysis.

Generally, the concept of persistence has been framed differently than is appropriate for the current study. Langan-Fox (1991) studied what she called persistent goals in young males and females and found that females evidenced more persistence, but her test-retest time frame was 5 months, her subjects were 18 to 20 years of age, and her instrument was an attitudinal survey. This approach, which succeeded in demonstrating that the females maintained their attachment to certain goals and had more affinity for character development than the males, fails to contextualize the findings. Talking about what one believes and values is much different from acting out those beliefs and values, and five months is a relatively short time period over which to claim persistence.

Other studies of persistence have dealt with individual task/career goal accomplishment or with engendering fruitful work and study habits in individuals or cultivating the capacity to perform specific tasks in the emotionally and physically challenged individual. The focus has favored

short term projects rather than life course analysis. This study examines generalized behavior patterns over time.

Relationship of Persistence to Call

In order to assess the nature of persistence over the life course, one must locate people who define themselves in such terms. The Protestant ministry affords such a context. According to Weber (1958), Protestantism, since its inception, has possessed the notion of a divine call from God to some life-task. Call is a term that is as vague as it is explicit. It defies concrete definition and yet has a consensually validated, agreed upon meaning for the believing community. Chambers (1990) describes it as "this incalculable, supernatural, surprising call" which overtakes one's life and, if heeded, directs one's life and choices. It is not a career or a profession or an education or a position. Instead, it is a summons to a vocation or lifestyle which may include all of the aforementioned elements but does not require any of them (Patterson, 1990). Unfortunately, since the "voice" is inaudible to all except the person called, its nature, indeed, its very existence, can only be confirmed by the perception and reporting of the "called."

Some interpret the Bible to say that all Christians are called to serve; however, others distinguish between such a generalized call to serve and a specific vocational

imperative to perform certain tasks or exercise certain gifts in accordance with "who we are" (Jinkins, 1990; Patterson, 1990). For Foster (1989), a "true calling" is not reducible to words, logic and decision-making strategies and, because of this fact, call often impacts lives and influences choices in inexplicable ways. Most would agree with Griffis-Woodberry (1983) when she alleges that "the primary validation of anyone's, female or male, being a minister is a sense of genuine calling from God" (p. 5).

Regardless of the particular interpretation, sufficient agreement exists to recognize a "call" as a motivating force guiding "the called" through life. People who claim to have been called present a group quite likely to demonstrate persistence in responding to their call; however, translation of that call into comprehensible language and action remains uniquely individual. Griffis-Woodberry (1983) describes a call as elusive for some, at times taking years to fully comprehend, and distinctly and immediately understandable for others, enabling these to proceed forthwith to their task. Regardless of the entry and path, the decision to respond is inherently a serious one.

General Reaction to Women in Ministry

<u>Ordination and Resistance</u>

Closely allied with the concept of calling is the
practice of ordination. Jewett (1980) describes the manner
in which individuals are set apart and inducted into the
office of Christian ministry through the process of
ordination. While the process varies from denomination to
denomination, the act represents the church's confirmation of
the individual's call as well as its agreement to invest this
individual with the authority to function as a minister of
Jesus Christ. Traditionally, only men were considered
capable of receiving a "call" and, consequently, women's
current desire to have their calls acknowledged tends to be
negatively perceived and attributed to the pressure of
feminists.

Despite numerous Biblical references to the priestly and
prophetic ways in which women ministered both in the Old and
New Testaments, some claim women's exercise of these gifts is
unbiblical. Throughout history women have assumed
authoritative leadership roles both officially and
unofficially in all Christendom. From ordained abbesses in
Medieval Europe to home and foreign missionaries who to this
day hear confessions, preside over religious ceremonies,
preach and teach groups that include men as well as women and
children, women have been and are performing the

priestly/pastoral role (Jewett, 1980). Nonetheless, Louisa Woosley, one of the first ordained women in the Presbyterian denomination, contended that the primary objection to a woman's occupying the pulpit was the notion that she had stepped out of her "proper place" in society--an objection which persists even today (Jones, 1989).

Addie Davis, the first Southern Baptist woman to be ordained in 1963, served in exile (the North) for 17 years before being able to gain a multi-denominational pastorate in the South. Her experience represents the seeming acceptance and subsequent marginalization of Southern Baptist women called to ministry and especially to preach. Yet, her journey is a model of persistence and an embodiment of the Chinese adage, "If we stay on the road that we are on, we are almost certain to get where we are going" ("Profile: Addie Davis," 1989).

Marginalization

Wallace (1975) broke down the concept of female minister's marginalization into three categories: (a) marginals in preparation--want ordination, train for it, but cannot get institutional support; (b) marginals in transition--decide for ordination, train for it, receive ordination and cannot find a position; and (c) marginals in the profession--ordained women who have positions but are not a part of the "mainstream" of the institution. In

sociological terms, these women are potential change agents as a response to their exclusion from their "rightful" places in ministry and they are models of the interaction between change agency and persistence (Wallace, 1975).

More than a decade after Wallace, Hargrove's (1987) review of research on the current movement to include women echoed the continuation of exclusionary and marginal themes for women. Women are discounted, demeaned, and denied access and, yet there is an accompanying refusal to recognize the bias and discrimination without "objective facts." Hargrove (1987) cautions skeptical, critical analysis of religious research as potentially misrepresentative depending upon such things as motivation, researcher's status, interest or training, and funding source. The question remains then as to the validity and reliability of research on women in ministry.

While women are concerned with the fact of discrimination, men are concerning themselves with the justification for it. Some individuals are opposed to the ordination of women because in certain sacraments or rituals the minister is the visible presence of Christ and as such "requires" a male figure (Untener, 1991). Others contend that women are unfit for preaching or the pulpit because they lack authority and forcefulness, have voices unfit for public speaking, cannot endure the physical strain of standing or lack the strength to perform baptism by immersion--

particularly when they are pregnant (Jones, 1989; Proctor & Proctor, 1975). While these are frequently voiced reasons for not permitting women to become pastors or priests, Carlson (1988) claims that the resistance is to women being in charge rather than to women performing sacerdotal duties.

Resistance and Organizational Maintenance

Stackhouse (1988) proposes five models of levels of resistance to women in ministry. These models range from total exclusion of women from authoritative ministerial roles to equal participation in these roles. The basis for the total exclusion model stems from the Biblical injunction that women keep silent in church and not teach men. Although this exclusion model represents the dominant mode practiced in evangelical churches, its application is replete with contradictions, because women are rarely silent in these contexts. They sing, in choirs and as soloists; they give their "testimonies"; they are authors and speakers. In most churches, they even now have the right to vote and serve on committees. The three mid-continuum models simply present the "exceptional" situations in which men deem it acceptable for women to preach and teach--as missionaries, in parachurch situations and when the women are operating "under the authority" of male leadership (Stackhouse, 1988). The four restrictive models represent the unchanging nature of the closed-minded approach to women in ministry as well as the

organizational resistance to them. The one model which allows for equal participation of women in the process is the least practiced of the five.

Lehman (1980) has done extensive investigation into placement in ministry and resistance. He found that differential placement and acceptance of men and women in ministry had less to do with the individual's attributes or gender than with their utilization of networks and placement structures. The fact that the networks were the province of "good old boys," and the placement services and institutional structures were designed by men to accommodate men is not overlooked in any of Lehman's (1980, 1981a, 1986) analyses. He also underscores the protection from anti-discrimination legislation enjoyed by the church due to its separate status. In terms of placement, Lehman (1980) found that even though women had higher educational attainment and performance, higher social status, or were more qualified, they were still placed less often than men. Success in placement is realized only when women fully involve themselves in the male hierarchy and even then there is no guarantee (Lehman, 1980).

Lehman found other organizational and perceptual factors which impeded the acceptance of women in ministry. The voluntary nature of the church causes many members to avoid risk and hiring women is perceived as a risk which could undermine the growth and stability of the organization (Lehman, 1981b). Even when individuals themselves are not

opposed to women ministers, they tend to perceive others as being opposed to them. Therefore, for the sake of organizational maintenance, women are rejected just because of gender unless the church is in decline and can only afford to pay for a woman. The prevailing ethic at this point becomes that it is better to get a good woman than the caliber of man that they could attract for the dollars they are able to spend (Lehman, 1981a).

Lehman's (1981b) analysis extends beyond the local church to the seminaries where increasing numbers of women are being admitted, even in traditionally all-male degree programs. Again the rationale relates to the preferability of accepting qualified women in light of the decline in the academic caliber of male applicants since the end of military conscription. Given the choice of either suffering reduced enrollment, lowering academic standards or accepting women, the organizational maintenance philosophy prevails and women are enrolled so that seminaries will survive. Unfortunately, unless there are some declining churches on the horizon, these female seminarians' experiences will not be accompanied by employment opportunities once the degrees are conferred (Lehman, 1981b).

Kimberling's (1988) analysis of female Southwestern Seminary graduates confirmed Lehman's (1980) marketability findings and the most recent survey of Southern Baptist women ministers ("Survey results reveal educational levels,

barriers, supports," 1993) continues to substantiate the difficulty women, particularly ordained women, have in accessing ministerial positions. Despite the fact that of the 356 respondents, nearly 100% held bachelor's degrees and over 80% held advanced degrees (most from seminaries), these women still experienced employment barriers. Non-ordained women continued to advance within the denominational structure in terms of remuneration and position; however, ordained women were subject to the "glass ceiling" preventing them from moving up to larger churches even if they had been fortunate enough to initially find a position . The most frequently cited barriers for Southern Baptist women were fellow clergymen, the Southern Baptist Convention, negative seminary experiences, absence of female ministry models and local associations. In view of these barriers, over 60% of the respondents discouraged younger women from entering the pastorate since they personally had already had pause to consider leaving the denomination. Nevertheless, in spite of the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention resolution opposing the ordination of women, increasing numbers of women have sought ordination. Nonetheless, the denominational climate continues to grow colder and colder towards them ("Survey results reveal educational levels, barriers, supports," 1993).

Generally, the situation looks remarkably similar to that described by Scanzoni and Hardesty (1974) in which less that 5% of the clergy in the more than 80 denominations

willing to ordain women actually were women. These conditions exist despite the fact that then as now over 50% of the membership in these denominations is female. Scanzoni and Hardesty (1974) point out that resistance to women in ministry stems not so much from the validity of any claim against their service, but more from the male-dominated leadership which controls access to the vocation. "Overall, it is clear that while many people feel they are arguing on the basis of scriptural prohibitions; they are simply standing on theological tradition based on cultural prejudices" (Scanzoni & Hardesty, 1974, p. 171).

Specific Situation of Southern Baptist Women

Current Historical View of Southern Baptists

A group which has clung most tenaciously to the idea of the subordination of women is the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the national alliance formed by local Southern Baptist churches. As recently as a decade ago, Carroll, Hargrove and Lummis (1981) did not incorporate information regarding Southern Baptist ordained women in their work because there were too few of them to consider. In a comprehensive work designed to reflect the current status of women in ministry, the largest Protestant denomination in the country with, at that time, no stated policy against the ordination of women had too few women ordained as pastors to warrant

investigation (Carroll, Hargrove & Lummis, 1981). The
denominational contradictions continue until this day.
Officially, ordination is a local church decision; yet the
fundamentalist male Convention leadership published a
resolution or "unofficial stance" against the practice of
ordaining women in 1984. In this officially non-hierarchical
denomination, the autonomy of the local church, in theory and
policy, protects it from being subject to the dictates of any
higher earthly authority. Currently however, the Convention
leadership has declared issues such as the ordination or
overall position of women in ministry to be acid tests of
what it means to be Southern Baptist, that is, churches which
support ordination of women are being disfellowshiped or
ousted from allegiance to the Southern Baptist Convention.

As Ammerman (1991b) presents it, Southern Baptists have
in all probability created a polity which will be their
undoing. Whereas, at one time, there was genuine homogeneity
within the denomination, economic and societal changes have
shifted the denominational population balance away from its
agrarian, rural, white, Southern roots. Some conservative
views and traditions no longer reflect the values and belief
systems of a considerable portion of the members;
nevertheless, the nature of the denominational connection--
people agreeing to agree without official structural
mechanisms--creates a system vulnerable to intentional
political takeover and control by a few. The dilemma is that

those who have been taken over have convictions which restrict their ability, but more importantly their desire, to pursue manipulative and controlling political strategies in order to regain power in policy and practice (Ammerman, 1991b). The result has been the formation over the last decade of a variety of Southern Baptist splinter groups which have essentially clustered in two new cooperative coalitions (the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship [CBF] and the Southern Baptist Alliance [SBA]) and progressively, split off from the Southern Baptist Convention. The moderate-liberal vs. fundamentalist split is not yet complete and churches have either remained fully-allied with the SBC or dually allied with the SBC and CBF or SBA.

This brief historical overview of current denominational politics provides the backdrop for the placement of Southern Baptist women in this historical moment. As members of a larger society in which women are pressing for a more egalitarian and inclusive voice on economic, political and social fronts, Southern Baptist women are influenced by certain feminist principles and, yet for the most part, their primary allegiance is to their religious belief system which they contend supports their "rights" to exercise their gifts (Marshall-Green, 1986). Political, social or religious institutions are not "supposed" to be the determiners of "giftedness" or "call," and so these women face the dilemma of continuing to operate within a paradigm which ideally is

"supposed to recognize and honor their vocational calls," but in fact does not, versus relinquishing that paradigm of "how things ought to be." The discouragement of this position is reflected by Hastings (Sehested), an ordained Southern Baptist pastor, "Women usually come slowly to the awakening that there are powers and principalities at work to block and hinder God's call on our lives" (Hastings, 1987, p. 15). At the time of that writing, there were 12 female Southern Baptist pastors perpetually engaged in a fight or flight dilemma and constantly confronted with the futility, frustration and fatigue associated with their struggle to experience the liberty to serve in a denomination whose political leadership was dedicated to restricting such freedom (Dempsey, 1987; Hastings, 1987; Hess, 1987).

Southern Baptist Response to Women in Ministry

Blevins (1986) discusses the "inescapably recurring theme in the history of Baptist women . . . the persistent opposition they faced from within Baptist circles . . . from husbands, fathers, fellow Baptists, pastors, and editors" (p. 52). She recounts the fact that Baptist women were not permitted to vote in the Convention until 1920. Even the all-female auxiliary, Women's Missionary Union, established in 1888, was not permitted to present its own report at the Convention until 1929. She attributes the restraint of women to three powerful traditions at play in the denomination:

androcentric theology, Biblical interpretations and traditional church practices. Despite the fact that she relates the ways in which women have done the work of missionaries, preachers, pastors, and deaconesses, she and others bemoan the ongoing exclusive practices within the denomination (Blevins, 1986; Lester, 1986; Sehested, 1986).

As an ordained pastor herself, Sehested (1986) decries the lack of female presence on church staffs as ministry models for girls and young women and the waste of seminary-trained female talent which is overlooked in hiring processes. She recalls a comment attributed to Carlyle Marney, a well-known and respected Baptist minister, that "the greatest contribution that Southern Baptists make to the wide Christian community is the people we run off" (Sehested, 1986, p. 75). Most importantly, she describes the specific manner in which the denomination continues to oppose ordained women by their withdrawal of funds from "autonomous" churches that hire or ordain women or by the practice of "disfellowshiping" such churches from local associations. The public proclamation of SBC opposition to the ordination of women in 1984 was sufficient to instill fear in most of the clergy, enabling them to realize the potential career threat involved in helping ordained women (Sehested, 1986). The practices have not eliminated support for women in ministry, but they continue to increase the obstacles and barriers in the paths of these ordained women.

The paradox that is reflected in the literature concerning Southern Baptist women in ministry is that they are encouraged toward service and ministry and to be whomever God called them to be from the time they first attend church up until their seminary entry (Bellinger, 1993; Blevins, 1986; Sehested, 1986). Once they reach seminary they begin to experience the prejudice and discrimination which is to be their future condition (Tidball, 1990). The context in which these women daily live is fraught with opposition from seminary on.

Life Course Perspective

In order to account for the interactive effects of individual experience with family experience within historical moments, Hareven's (1982) interdisciplinary life course perspective serves as the theoretical framework underlying this study. While the Southern Baptist women in this study are not specifically age cohorts, in many respects they are experiential cohorts (i.e., regardless of their individual ages), they share some significant educational and vocational circumstances during an extremely turbulent historical moment in Southern Baptist life. A unique dimension which this study introduces is the "religious family"--a sense of community connection which is both defined and fostered in Southern Baptist life. The impact of the religious family's timing and transitions on these

subjects' lives could conceivably be as important to them as events and transitions in their families of origin or procreation. Therefore, this framework accounts for the interaction and intersection of individual time and developmental transition with family (and conceivably multiple families) and historical time and transition.

Potential Linkages to Developmental Theories

Ecology of Human Development

The developmental perspective which most closely parallels the life course framework is Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development. It describes social interaction using a model of concentric circles of reciprocal influence. The center of the circles is the individual who subsequently connects with family, school, church, and neighborhood which, in turn, connect with community agents and agencies like school systems and workplaces which then connect with the outermost level of influence, societal beliefs, norms, ideology, and practices. This developmental perspective is most likely to provide a means for explaining the reciprocal influence between child and environment which contributes to the evolution of persistence in some individuals. Of particular interest will be the mesosystemic connections between child, family, and church emphasizing the importance of context in development as well as content.

Trust, Generativity, and Integrity in Development

Erik Erikson (1963) proposed an eight stage
developmental life process. Each stage is successfully
negotiated when an oppositional conflict is resolved. The
final two stages--generativity vs. stagnation and ego
integrity vs. despair--offer an analytical lens through which
to view the behavior and self-examination of this study's
subjects. Although Erikson attaches these stages to mid-life
and old age, for present purposes, the concepts of
generativity and ego integrity will be disengaged from the
developmental sequence and considered as independent
constructs which may or may not in some way be related to
persistence. Additionally, the issue of trust will be
considered as a lifelong problem which is not necessarily
permanently resolved by positive reinforcement in the early
years.

Moral Development

Another area of developmental theory which presents a
potential arena in which to locate persistence is moral
development. Colby and Damon (1992) found persistence to be
an attribute of their "moral exemplars,' but did not
elaborate on either the source or the characteristics of this
persistence. The distinctive aspect to their research

stemmed from their contextual approach to evaluating moral development. They did not examine what people said they believed in, instead they sought people who acted upon what they believed in; thus, the correspondence to this work.

Gilligan's and her associates have been working in two areas which might prove relevant to this research. In In a Different Voice (1982), she presents her revision of moral development theory to include the feminine perspective and experience. Her concept of the interconnected, relational web that women weave with their very lives may be reflected in the stories of women looking to exercise gifts, not power. Gilligan and a group of colleagues have been involved in some longitudinal research with prepubescent females whose development has been monitored into adolescence. Their findings both isolate and illuminate the female experience of socialization. Rather than a different voice, they found either an absence or loss of voice in their subjects (Brown, 1991; Gilligan, 1991; Robinson & Ward, 1991; Rogers, 1991; Stern, 1991; Tolman, 1991).

Influence of Feminist Theory, Psychology and Biography

Feminist theory focuses on reconceptualizing and reinterpreting life and history, placing women at the center. For example, Belenky et al. (1986) deal with cognitive development, but their emphasis is on a feminist interpretation. Other women have attempted to view and

review such concepts as maternal thinking (Ruddick, 1989),
mothering (Chodorow, 1978), feminine roles and reality (Baber
& Allen, 1992; Rich, 1986; Schaef, 1985), feminine biography
(Alpern, Antler, Perry, & Scobie, 1992; Bateson, 1989;
Heilbrun, 1988) and female psychology (Miller, 1986; Sanford
& Donovan, 1984) in an effort to establish a "new place" for
women, complete with "voice." Collectively, these women
press for a new and dramatically different analysis of
women's experience which honors women's cognitions and
contributions, past and present. Feminism, feminist theory
and the feminist perspective will help to interpret the lives
of the women in this study and may serve to explain the
significance of gender as it is related to persistence.

Summary

This chapter has presented selected literature relevant
to the concept of persistence and the context in which this
concept is to be evaluated. The topics included the variety
of ways in which persistence has been defined and researched,
the presentation of the situation of women in ministry--
focusing particularly on ordained Southern Baptist women and
their understanding of their call to vocational ministry, the
life course framework and the potential connection of this
study to existing feminist, family developmental and
psychological theories and research findings.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to examine the lives
and perceptions of a group of women who have persisted in
pursuing their career goals in the face of obstacles and
opposition. Southern Baptist, seminary-trained, ordained
women comprised the purposive sample. The research objective
was to determine whether these women expressed similar
perceptions regarding their calls or commitments to serve.
In addition, the researcher sought to discover any common
themes from their life stories or similar personal
characteristics which might be related to their persistence.
The methodological approach was qualitative and utilized a
combination of techniques. This chapter discusses the
qualitative research approach and the hybrid adaptation
employed, the research questions, the sample involved, and
the data collection and analysis procedures.

Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach was selected in order to permit
these women to describe their own lives in their own terms.
The process incorporated a feminist research perspective

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which sought to give voice to those who have traditionally been relegated to a place of silence. In many respects these subjects' lives spoke for themselves; however, this methodology attempted to ascertain how much congruence existed between these women's perceptions of their "rightful places" and the lived-out reality of their herstories. The search was for emergent themes and conceptual commonalties gleaned from the transcriptions of in-depth interviews, the edited and unedited texts of oral histories, and the reflections and debriefings resulting from the interview and analytical process. This approach reflects the grounded theory described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and represents an attempt to develop insights and potential relationships between personalities, experiences, and the quality of persistence.

In accordance with Mills' (1959) counsel to "avoid a rigid set of procedures," this study blended several qualitative strategies. The combined techniques included: (a) analysis of seven transcripts of pre-existing oral histories of ordained Southern Baptist women supplemented by follow-up interviews with these same women; (b) utilization of "Profiles" (mini-biographies) published in the Southern Baptist Women in Ministry's newsletter, Folio, to provide background material and aid with subject selection; (c) use

of articles, sermons, and books written by the women interviewed which amplified their narratives; plus (d) analysis of 13 first-time, in-depth interviews with other ordained Southern Baptist women pastors, associate pastors, chaplains, professors and campus ministers. Accessing multiple sources of information written about or by the respondents addressed two issues related to this investigation. On the one hand, it was an attempt to moderate the researcher's potential bias due to her closeness both to the situation and to some of the individuals. On the other hand, it served to provide more depth for understanding the contexts in which they have lived, the personal characteristics which they possess, and the commitments which they have pursued. Of the 21 women interviewed (only 20 of whose interviews were used), the researcher had not had any contact with 15 of them prior to setting up the interviews. Having additional background material not only aided in establishing rapport during the interviews but also helped to verify and clarify perspectives discussed in the interviews and themes that emerged during data analysis.

The pre-existing oral histories were gathered by or under the supervision of Dr. Rosalie Beck, Department of Religion at Baylor University, and the "Profiles" were written by a variety of women throughout the Southern Baptist

Convention. Both the follow-up and the new in-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher utilizing interview guides (Appendixes B and C). Each interviewee filled out the demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) prior to proceeding with the interview.

Presently, seven oral histories of ordained Southern Baptist women have been collected and transcribed at Baylor University. Four are complete, bound and available for use as data sources. Three more have not been fully edited nor received the respondent's final approval and, therefore, these can be read for general impressions but cannot serve as a source for direct quotations. As a result of this research investigation, an additional oral history resurfaced. It was reproduced and sent to the subject for review, but, by that time, that subject had already been treated as a first-time, in-depth interview. These oral histories are simply verbatim transcriptions of the stories the women told during the course of multiple interviews and are unaccompanied by any content analysis. These in-depth accounts cover the developmental history and major events in the women's lives through 1985 or 1986.

In view of the turbulence and ever-changing dynamics of the Southern Baptist Convention over the past 15 years, further information on the directions these women's lives

have taken in the past few years was considered essential to understanding the role of persistence in their lives. All of these women agreed to participate in follow-up interviews in order to capture recent life changes and also to ensure that the research questions of this study would be addressed in their presentations. These follow-up interviews lasted anywhere from 1 1/2 to 3 hours with the average interview taking 2 hours.

Search for Themes

Grounded theory relies on the actors' presentations of their own lives. The oral data supplied by the subjects provides the hunting ground for theoretical treasure. Utilizing the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) with the collected data, the researcher searched and re-searched the data for repetitive phraseology and references or themes which could be coded and categorized for further comparison to subsequent accounts. As each new transcription was processed, categories were either added, expanded, refined or eliminated until no new categories were arising from the data (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

During the categorical development and refinement phase of this project, a second researcher who was familiar with the methodology employed became involved in the analytic

process. Functionally, this individual, known as a
debriefer, operated as a peer, a co-processor, an ally, a
devil's advocate, a listener, and a guide through the
methodological and analytical pathways (Lincoln & Guba,
1985). Her primary task was to review a sampling of six
interviews to assess whether or not she concurred with the
coding categories and themes being developed by the
researcher. Secondarily, she inspected the entire
implementation of the design. She read interviews to
determine if the researcher had adhered to the interview
guides and had conducted the interviews in such a way as to
avoid influencing the subjects' responses. Throughout the
analysis and writing phases, the debriefer listened to,
challenged, and supported the researcher's efforts to
accurately synthesize and describe the major themes presented
by the data.

The categorical cultivation continued throughout the
analytic process in search of a saturation point. According
to Glaser and Strauss' theoretical sampling strategy (1967),
once new cases fail to introduce new information or concepts,
then the data-gathering process should be finished. The data
for this study was so rich and thick that it continued to
produce new dimensions and categories throughout the process.
Nevertheless, major thematic turns seemed to cease appearing

around the fifteenth case. At this point, the researcher integrated the categorical concepts into newly developed, coherent theory grounded in the data, not in a priori assumptions or another theoretical framework (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The remaining few cases were then analyzed using the fully-refined categories to determine if they supported the researcher's understanding.

This approach assumed that a portion of the review of literature would precede the data collection and analysis, but the research results themselves would inform further literature investigation. The initial literature review focused on the nature of the research process and the theoretical possibilities which might have been related to the development of these women's lives while the subsequent review represented the connection of emergent theory with existing domains of inquiry. Based upon literature describing the personal and political struggles of women seeking ordination, a case was made for the plausibility of choosing this group of women as representing people who had persisted in pursuit of vocational/career goals in spite of adversity.

Once the data were analyzed, the task was to relate the findings to other theories such as social learning, female human development and psychology, moral development, or

feminism. Additionally, recounting some of the current
reports concerning the Southern Baptist denomination served
to locate these lives within the sociohistorical context.
These women's experiences in the throes of a potential and
even likely denominational "split" over issues such as "a
woman's place," or inclusivity of language and races and
sexual orientations simply reinforced the validity of their
representativeness as "persisters."

Of necessity, some attention was directed toward
accounting for the influence of the researcher's personal
experience and relationship to the subjects and the
situation. As a graduate of Southwestern Seminary and former
Southern Baptist minister (not ordained), the researcher
operated from an "insider's" perspective at many points. In
addition, six of the subjects are personal friends or
acquaintances of the researcher. Most of the women
interviewed are well-known personalities either by virtue of
their work and leadership roles or their relatively unique
positions within the denomination. Others have gained
notoriety due to some controversial incidents in their
careers. As an on-going participant in this milieu, the
researcher began with some assumptions and presuppositions.
However, these preconceptions were more closely related to
(a) the concepts of call and ministry, (b) the issues of

sexism and discrimination, and (c) the beliefs and practices of the denomination than they were to the descriptions of factors related to and explanations for persistence which are the central concerns of this study. As a safeguard in the experiential analysis approach, the research process was accompanied by the researcher's personal written reactions to interviews, situations, and individuals designed to promote a conscious awareness of potential bias in both data gathering and interpretation (Reinharz, 1983).

According to Reinharz,

Some feminist researchers start with their own experience, analyze it, and do not collect other data. Others start with their experience, are troubled by it, and then collect other data to compare with their experience. Yet others intend to study other people's experience, but in the process recognize that they are part of the group studied and use this identification to deepen the study. (1992, p. 235)

This project had elements from both the second and third types of research approaches. The researcher and the subjects have all experienced sexism and discrimination through their religious involvements although not necessarily in the same places and, as it turned out, not resulting in the same responses. The use of written personal reactions, plus interaction with the debriefer and others, helped to differentiate between the researcher's experience and that of the respondents.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How did these women express and interpret their calls to ministry?

2. How did they expect to carry out their calls?

3. How did their expectations compare with the reality which they encountered in pursuing their call to service?

4. What themes and variations emerge from these women's personal histories and ministerial careers?

Sample

The initial eight ordained women were selected based upon their previous participation in an oral history project sponsored by Baylor University. Seven of these women already had histories available through Baylor's Institute of Oral History. At the outset of the study, it was assumed that all of these women still resided and worked in Texas and therefore, would serve as both a purposive and convenience sample. Additional subjects were recruited with the assistance of the Center for Women in Ministry in Louisville, Kentucky. Based upon research in <u>Folio</u> and other publications, the researcher selected a group of ordained

women who were deemed either geographically proximate or historically appropriate for this project. An attempt was made to recruit women whose profiles and other published personal accounts demonstrated their perseverance despite difficult circumstances, and early in the process, geographical considerations were paramount. Since this research was personally funded and the researcher resides in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area, women located in Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana were the first choices; however, one is more likely to find ordained women or female Southern Baptist pastors in Virginia, Maryland, Kentucky, Tennessee, Illinois, or North Carolina and so the possibility of having to extend the geographic limits of the study always existed.

The preferable candidates were ordained women with at least a master's degree from a Southern Baptist seminary who had been or wanted to be pastors or associate pastors. Of the 21 women actually interviewed: 20 were already ordained (one who was licensed, but not yet ordained was eliminated from data analysis); 16 had one or more degrees from Southern Baptist seminaries (3 others had or were pursuing degrees from other- or non-denominational seminaries); 16 degrees were in theology with one more in progress. Of the women, 14 had held positions of pastor or associate pastor in local churches; five others had chaplaincy positions which either

simulated the local church or provided the base from which they occasionally served as substitute preachers in local churches; and the remaining woman did not hold any full-time pastoral position in the church or other institution at the time of the interview.

In general, these women were most likely to have experienced opposition to their calls because they were pursuing degrees, positions, and certification (ordination) heretofore available almost exclusively to men. Traditionally in the Baptist denomination, women have pursued degrees in religious/Christian education or music and then served in some capacity under the leadership and authority of males. The women in chaplaincy positions experienced somewhat less resistance to their calls and desire for ordination than did those seeking to serve in a local church. Opposition was most evident against women seeking to be "in charge," especially in pastoral positions in local churches. While the majority of the women who have oral histories are presently serving in chaplaincy or related ministerial positions, 6 out of 8 have at one time served in a pastoral role in a local church, although not always Southern Baptist.

Marital status was not a consideration in the selection process. The sample consisted of 6 single, never-married women, 2 divorced singles, 1 divorced and remarried, and 11

married. Twelve have children ranging in ages from 32 to 2 years. All but 2 of those with children have 2 or fewer children and most of these women did not have their first child until they were over 30 years of age. The women's ages ranged from 34 to 57 at the time of the interviews with an average of 41.5 years. Seminary graduation dates ranged from 1961 to 1993 and ordination dates ranged from 1975 to 1991 although neither graduation date nor ordination date marked the beginning of active involvement in religious work for these women. Many had already served "unofficially" as volunteers or as their husbands' unpaid assistants in churches for years. Others served in paid positions which did not require ordination for extended periods prior to moving in their current directions. Since a critical aspect of this research involved a demonstration of commitment, not simply a verbalization of conviction, women nearing and into middle-age were selected because they had a greater likelihood of long-term involvement with the church or denomination.

While the original intent was to confine this study geographically, difficulties in accessing subjects resulted in a decision to extend the research area and include women from east of the Mississippi as well as Texas. Thus, the respondents presently live throughout Texas and in Tennessee,

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Kentucky, North Carolina, Alabama, and Florida. They were born and raised in locales as diverse as California, Mississippi, Alabama, Ohio, Texas, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Florida. They are all Caucasian. All but one grew up in a Southern Baptist home, and half of them were the daughters of pastors or other religiously affiliated fathers/parents.

Increasing pressure on specific individuals as well as decreasing employment opportunities for women in general have driven some of these women out of Southern Baptist positions. Nevertheless, the respondents either received their training at Southern Baptist seminaries in preparation for work in Southern Baptist life or chose to bring their training into Southern Baptist work and it is that intention to serve as ordained Southern Baptists which qualified them for inclusion in this study. Some are no longer working in Southern Baptist ministry and some have left the denomination altogether. All of them have had to make major career and life adjustments in order to fulfill their calls.

Instrumentation

The two versions of the interview guide (Appendixes B & C) were developed by the researcher based on her interaction and interviews with those who sparked the

original ideas for this project. These guides were reviewed and modified during the pilot phase of the project. The first guide (Appendix B) is an abbreviated version of the in-depth interview guide. It was used with those women whose early lives had already been captured in Baylor's oral histories. It focuses on perception of call and recent developments in these women's careers, but is adaptable in order to solicit pertinent information not covered in the original interviews. The second version is the guide for the first-time interviews and is designed to capture significant persons and events in the respondents' lives, their family and church life, their concept of call, seminary and ministerial experience, and any major career impediments which they may have encountered.

Particular attention was paid to confidentiality throughout the process. Names of people, places, and events have been eliminated or disguised in an effort to maintain the anonymity of the women. Respondents were sent copies of their transcripts and given the opportunity to review them in order to edit out or to clarify information which they considered harmful, erroneous, or in some way misrepresentative of their cases. Transcription was done by either the researcher herself or others not affiliated with the Southern Baptist denomination. The interview process

itself elicited some painful memories and so care was taken to ensure provision of counseling support should that prove beneficial or necessary for any of the respondents.

Pilot Study

Two interviews, one using each of the guides, were done to assess the appropriateness of the questions and process. The subject for the follow-up interview was someone well-known to the interviewer while the subject for the first-time interview was a complete stranger. After each interview, the subjects were asked to comment on the interview process and to offer suggestions for improving the process, particularly any changes in the wording of questions or prompts which might improve their ability to respond knowledgeably and freely. In both situations, the technical aspects of the taping such as plugs, tapes, placement of recorder so that voices could be captured, and the pre-interview paperwork (consent forms and demographic questionnaire) presented the most problems and needed to be handled more efficiently.

As a consequence, the researcher did such things as label tapes prior to arrival at the interview, forewarned the subjects that access to a wall plug would be preferable, learned where and how to set the recorder for best reception

and pared down the time required for the paperwork as much as possible. One post-interview question was, "What were you looking for?" which prompted the addition of the specific question, "What keeps you 'keeping on' in this denomination?" in subsequent interviews if the respondents failed to address this issue in the interview. For the most part, recommendations were minimal and the researcher's own evaluation prompted any revisions in the interviews and in the interview process.

The major discovery during this phase of the research was that these women, for the most part, needed very little guidance in telling their stories. The content of the interview guides was not changed, but the expectations regarding the interviewer's role were modified. The researcher frequently had to utter only a periodic word or phrase in order to keep the respondents talking. Researchers have found that women interviewers of women subjects seem to have little difficulty in obtaining information and that was the experience of this researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 96).

Based on feedback received after the pilot interviews, an additional refinement was made to the researcher's solicitation letter and response process. The wording of the letters was changed to place some limits on anticipated

response time and also to indicate that if the researcher had not received a reply within a certain time frame, then she would do some follow-up calling to ascertain the subject's willingness to participate. These were minor changes that enabled the researcher to continue to pursue individuals who were willing to be interviewed but had not been able to respond to the request.

Procedure

While waiting for approval for human subjects research, the researcher began investigating the oral histories at Baylor University and also began to search for other Texas women who fit the research criteria based on the "Profiles" in Folio or other articles or through personal contacts. Addresses of these women were sought through the Center for Women in Ministry in Louisville, Kentucky (a resource center which produces Folio quarterly and serves as a hub in the support network of Southern Baptist Women in Ministry). Once Human Subjects Review Committee approval was received, the initial strategy was to send potential participants recruitment letters with a return postcard enclosed. The postcard indicated a willingness to discuss the possibility of being included as a subject and a phone number for reaching the recipient. The return rate was relatively high

for a research request at approximately 50% before any change to procedure. Responses were often not timely and therefore the request letter modification which indicated that follow-up calls would be made even if cards had not been received facilitated the actual scheduling of interviews.

Some women did return the cards immediately and were contacted by phone at which time (a) the study was described more fully, (b) the manner in which the researcher came to get their names and addresses was reiterated, and (c) a specific time and place for the interview process was set. These early respondents ended up being the focal points of scheduling, and other interviews were set up around them. Besides "local" trips to Dallas and Waco, the interviews required trips to south Texas and then an extended tour through west Tennessee, Kentucky, east Tennessee, North Carolina, Alabama, and back again to Kentucky.

Two factors influenced the decision to broaden the scope of the research. First, two of the oral history subjects were no longer conveniently located in Texas. Secondly, Texas appeared to lack a sufficient number of accessible potential respondents. Originally the researcher and her committee had agreed that seven follow-up interviews and a minimum of five first-time interviews would serve as a sufficient sample. Since the researcher had no way of

knowing for sure that the last two oral history subjects could ever be located, a joint decision was made to increase the number of first-time interviews and to pursue a few specific high-profile individuals residing out of state. This change in strategy meant that the original purposive sampling process was modified to include snowballing and what is termed "each one reach one" sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 201-202).

In view of the distance the researcher was traveling, the first contacts in an area often suggested others in the same region or state who seemed to qualify and might be available for interviews. One gracious respondent not only suggested three others, but she also made all the arrangements for the interviews with these women prior to the researcher's arrival. In another instance, the researcher got access to an ordained woman on staff at a Baptist college through a mutual friend on faculty there. This respondent in turn suggested a couple more possibilities in that region. Had time and money permitted, the total number of interviews possible might have even doubled; however, many of these additions took place en route and attempting to schedule interviews from pay phones along the side of the road became impossible. When a total of 12 first-time interviews had been gathered, the researcher ceased to seek out new cases

and retired to a retreat center to do the transcribing. While there, the researcher encountered an acquaintance from the area, an ordained Southern Baptist woman who readily agreed to be included in the study.

Subsequently, both of the remaining oral history subjects were located and agreed to being interviewed over the phone. In addition, one other local interview had been arranged prior to departure and this was conducted upon the researcher's return to Texas. The interview total reached 21, 7 with oral histories, 14 without. It was decided to eliminate the transcription of the woman who was only licensed and not yet ordained as a data source and just use that information as background material. Technical problems resulted in the loss of segments of two interviews, but neither loss was so significant as to render the data captured unusable.

All of the interviews were preceded by at least one phone conversation which helped to establish some rapport prior to the actual interview. All but two of the interviews took place in the offices of the respondents where they felt most comfortable and were best able to minimize interruptions. The initial few minutes were spent in casual conversation typically providing the subjects with more information about the researcher and sometimes involving some

discussion about the setting or memorabilia in the offices. Then the seating was arranged to facilitate taping and the interviews were conducted after any preliminary questions were asked and answered and consent forms signed. Consent included the authorization to audio-tape the interview in its entirety. Assurances of confidentiality and support were reiterated at this time and the offer of counseling in case of harm done by the interview was a frequent topic for discussion and humor and served as a wonderful "ice-breaker."

Most interviews began with a short introduction asking the respondents to talk about their perception of their call and how it had worked itself out across their life course. They were asked to start with their early religious experiences and to work their way forward. Most of the respondents just launched into their stories and required limited probing throughout the process. Since the group consisted of well-educated preachers, teachers, and public speakers, these individuals were quite verbal and readily took up the task of sharing their experiences and feelings. The researcher attempted to confine her role to taking some notes on her interview guide and to attentively listening to ensure that all areas of research interest were covered. She sought amplification where points or meanings were unclear or when important content areas were being skipped, but, for the

most part, the respondents moved ahead with the non-verbal encouragement of nods, gestures, laughter or facial expressions.

In most cases, the researcher felt rapport with the subjects and was more than mildly surprised and pleased by their forthrightness. Their openness and vulnerability at points created some awkwardness in the sessions, but typically this was easily handled by offering them the option to turn off the recorder or to discontinue the process at any point. Many have been through very painful experiences related to ministry and family and, as a result, tears, sarcastic comments, and near hysterical laughter were not uncommon elements in the exchanges. It was often difficult to continue with the task at hand in the face of the discomfort, but these experiences served to underscore the hardships encountered by these women and also heightened the researcher's desire to honor the stories and the lives that produced them. Personalized letters of appreciation for their participation in the project were sent to all the respondents shortly after their interviews.

As each set of interview tapes was created, a second set of back up tapes was generated. The back-ups were stored and the originals were used for transcription purposes. Transcription was a project nemesis. The cost and the length

of time to get tapes transcribed were both underestimated in the original plan and the researcher ended up transcribing a third of the data herself which resulted in even greater delays. The outputs from the transcription process were on a variety of floppy disks produced by a variety of operating systems and word processing programs which meant that all files then had to be converted to a single system, single word processing format. Once this was achieved, the analysis began.

Analysis of Data

The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) began with the reading and rereading of the oral histories in search of initial key words and phrases and coding categories. This sifting process helped to refine both the short and long interviews as well as to provide a basis for the ultimate analysis. The original intent was to attempt to gather data and analyze simultaneously, but a variety of factors interfered with that approach which may be the rationale behind Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) suggestion that novice researchers do all of their data collection before beginning their analysis phase. Copyright considerations and the lack of completed transcripts limited the amount of access that the researcher had to the oral histories and so

analysis of these documents was folded in with the analysis of this study's interview transcripts. The oral histories were used to suggest potential coding categories and themes, and they also served as an invaluable resource in describing some denominational as well as personal history. For a denomination of 15 million people, there is a remarkable overlap in the lives of the SBC members and this interconnectedness was quite evident in the lives of these women.

As transcripts were produced, two copies were made--one to be kept in a locked metal file and the other to be sent to the interviewee for review. A letter accompanied the transcript indicating that if the researcher had not heard from the respondent by a specified date, then she would proceed with the data as it appeared in the transcription. Ten actually responded and most of these had only minor changes in the wording of the documents. After reconsideration, two respondents did request that certain information contained in the interviews not be disclosed. The original or edited copies were then filed in separate file folders labeled with the research identification numbers for use in the analysis process. In addition, the computer files were updated to reflect the changes requested.

All transcripts were read for dominant themes and coding categories and the passages supporting those categorizations were highlighted. The initial readings were accompanied by color coding of potential themes based not only on the content presented but also moderated by the overall impressions garnered during the fieldwork. At this juncture, HyperResearch, a qualitative analysis research tool, was incorporated as an aid in the coding process. Interviews which had already been transcribed into machine readable format were subsequently reformatted and input into HyperResearch for line by line assignment of data to coding categories. The initial coding category entries in the Master Code List were those derived from the first few readings and thematic color coding.

As each new transcription was processed, categories were either included, expanded, or refined in HyperResearch's Master Code List (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The program enables the researcher to rename, delete or collapse categories as the analysis evolves and it automatically reassigns previously coded data according to the new definitions. It keeps track of the specific location in the text of each passage selected to reflect each code in each interview. In addition, HyperResearch provides some sorting, frequency distribution and reporting capabilities both by

case and by code which help to clarify the presence or absence of suspected themes and perceptions.

At this point in the process, the debriefer became actively involved. She was given six interview transcripts-- three from subjects with previous oral histories and three in-depth first-time interviews. The debriefer read the six interviews and developed her own lists of potential categories. These lists were then compared to the HyperResearch Master Code List generated by the researcher for these same cases and there was over 90% correspondence between the codes generated on the two lists. At this point, the debriefer suggested three additional themes which she thought might become more overt as the process continued, but beyond that she supported the direction in which the analysis was proceeding.

As she read to determine if the categories accurately and validly represented the data collected, the debriefer also challenged areas in the researcher's interview process which could have been interpreted as either "leading the respondent" or representing the researcher's rather than the respondent's perspective. If it was not possible to demonstrate that the respondent was the original source of words, ideas or perspectives expressed in the interviews, then any questionable passages were eliminated from

consideration in the analysis. The researcher followed this same procedure in the remaining 14 interviews whenever there was the slightest question that she might have contaminated the findings by failing to use open-ended probes or by supplying her own words or phrases to describe what she was hearing the subject say.

Emergent Themes from Common Streams

These data were incredibly dense in that they contained a wealth of information and potential areas for theme development. The result was that at one point the number of coding categories exceeded 100. The exceptional fertility of the data is attributable to the characteristics of the respondents. They were all intelligent, verbal, highly educated, and thoughtful individuals who had spent much time reflecting on their own lives as well as other issues. They have written about their lives, given testimonies and interviews incorporating incidents and aspects of their personal histories, and occasionally used their own experiences as illustrations in sermons. In this process, they have honed and refined their renderings to succinctly reflect the heart, soul and depth of their lives and understanding. The present analysis, however, is limited to

focusing on major themes presented as they related to call and career.

The table entitled Redefined Codes (Appendix F) shows all of the categories which were seen in the 20 interviews. The frequency of occurrence of each category is included. Categories are not completely discrete; that is, if an excerpt contained more than one idea or keyword reference, then the passage was placed in more than one category. The clustering of categories represents the manner in which the researcher interpreted and combined categories to flesh out major themes. While each new transcript afforded at least one or two new insights, the dominant themes stopped emerging after about the first 15 interviews. The expansive coding strategy was employed through the first 17 transcripts, and then a frequency analysis was done on all categories. Six dominant thematic areas were developed and all of the other categories were subsumed under these higher level constructs. The last three interviews were processed using the redefined coding scheme to assure the researcher that these divisions continued to reflect the intent of the respondents.

Once all of the data were inspected, coded and sorted into separate computer files, the process of theoretical development, coupled with a second look at the literature based on the research findings, took place. The essence of

the reporting revolved around the extent to which this group of persisters had their roots in common ground, particularly their experiences of family and support systems as well as their encounters with opposition to their goals and choices. Each major theme from the data was inspected to assess its meaning and its contribution to the development of these resilient and resourceful individuals.

Summary

This chapter presented the qualitative methodology employed in this study. Included and delineated are: the research techniques employed, the questions asked, the sample utilized, the data collection process, and the analytic and reporting procedures. The outcome of this process is presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

PERSISTENCE IN HONORING SELF

This chapter discusses the themes that emerged from the interviews with 20 ordained Southern Baptist women regarding their understanding of their calls and the respondents' attempts to pursue those calls in various ministerial roles. Their stories reflect their common expectation that they would be heartily affirmed and supported for choosing a ministerial career. The stories also demonstrate the women's disillusionment when they discovered that there were limits on what they were permitted to do in the institutional setting and penalties for attempting to overstep these boundaries. Their persistence in pursuing call has cost them relationally; they have lost friends, family, and spouses. It has cost them economically; they have been denied access to positions or have been summarily dismissed from long-term positions. It has cost them emotionally; they all recounted frequent instances of pain and suffering which have accompanied their journeys. Yet, despite the costs and the resistance, the respondents have continued to pursue their own understandings of their calls.

The respondents have had similar life experiences and they also evidenced similar personal characteristics which might account for the correspondence in their developmental histories. The data were primarily clustered by experiential themes (see Appendix F), but the clusters included some subthemes reflecting individual traits such as serious, hard-working, loyal, and flexible. Only one major category, Ego Strength vs. Codependency, focused more on the self-described personal characteristics of the women than on their actual experiences. Findings for this study are presented emphasizing the common contextual experiences across the life course, but interwoven in the presentation are some references to and consideration of the shared individual characteristics. The major contextual themes which emerged included multiple family connections and loyalties; contradictory messages of affirmation and discrimination; struggles between conservative patriarchal tradition and evolving feminist understanding; and a struggle between response to either an internal or an external locus of control.

Struggle over the Life Course

In recalling their developmental journeys, the respondents repeatedly focused on struggles they had endured in pursuit of their calls. Therefore, the issue of struggle

became the overarching theme of the analysis. Special interest was paid to factors which seemed to precipitate the struggles and whether or not there were alternatives to living in the midst of conflict and tension. Although the particulars of each individual's struggles varied, the underlying pattern of an evolution of double messages in these women's environments remained constant. The mixed messages came from their families, from their communities and from their society. In early childhood, the respondents received lots of affirmation and support, but as they aged and overtly responded to their senses of call, they began to experience more condemnation than affirmation.

With one exception, these women had been raised by two families--the Baptist church family and their families of orientation or origin. As children, they had been loved, affirmed, encouraged, supported and provided with numerous opportunities for self-expression and leadership in both families. In addition, they had been exposed to some very potent moral and behavioral messages which they had embraced whole-heartedly. When they reached adolescence, however, some of them began to become aware of the double messages that accompanied their attempts to live out their understanding of values they had learned earlier. Where once they had been affirmed and supported, they now began to experience discounting and discrimination. Where once they

had been visible, vocal leaders, they now became the invisible, silent support system that often did the work but rarely received the credit or positive attention for doing it. What some were encountering in adolescence was but the foreshadowing of the sexist responses that all would eventually experience on their journeys. The closer these women have come to responding to their interpretations of their calls and to utilizing their gifts, the further away most have moved from the patriarchal tradition of their denominational heritage toward a more egalitarian, feminist environment.

Events and perceptions are related through the life course perspective to demonstrate the similarity of developmental influences on the respondents' lives and the seemingly parallel trajectories of their lives over time. As their accounts reveal, these women are at two different stages in their understanding of how they are to carry out their calls. Although all respondent's initially intended to pursue their calling and also to maintain their loyalty and connection to both family and denominational systems, they have become increasingly disillusioned over time regarding the possibility of reconciling their calls and their contexts. As a result, one-fourth of the women have chosen to pursue their sense of call outside of the Southern Baptist

framework while three-fourths still struggle for some level of acceptance within the denomination.

Technically speaking, the respondents were not age cohorts since their ages ranged from 34 to 57 years. Neither had they experienced maturational transitions at the same chronological ages in their lives. Their accounts reflect a similar experiential pattern over the life course which is marked by ongoing struggles between external pressures and internal perceptions. The dominant theme which characterized these women's accounts was one of struggle between conforming to others' expectations and living in accordance with their own, between what they experienced and how they were taught to live, between the person they were permitted to be and the person they felt they were created to be.

On 98 occasions during the course of the interviews, the respondents referred to their struggles with personal, professional, familial, and spiritual issues and situations. Not only were their major decision-making junctures characterized by struggle but also their daily encounters were often filled with conflict and struggle. Their journeys were also marked by choices to remain in conflictual arenas, to persist in their efforts to be heard, and to make a place for themselves and other women in contexts which were unwelcoming. The data analysis uncovered some common experiences, perceptions and influences in these women's

lives which suggest some potential connections between early experiences of family (families), sense of self and call, feminism and moral development over the life course. These women's lives have often been painful and liberally strewn with instances of personal discouragement, disillusionment, and suffering. Yet, they have persisted in their attempts to fulfill their understanding of their giftedness and their calls.

Developmental Similarities over the Life Course

In order to demonstrate the common themes as well as the contradictory messages in the respondents' lives, it is easiest to trace the similarities of their developmental histories. While these women were not carbon copies of one another, they consistently told of parallel influences, feelings and experiences which shaped their growth. Consequently, the themes that emerged will be woven through the developmental stages over the life course based on the findings of this study.

Childhood--Raised in two families

Family of orientation-Church family connection

All except one of the respondents were raised in Southern Baptist or other Baptist homes. Half of them had parents who were on church, associational, or denominational

staffs. Participation in church was extensive throughout childhood and adolescence. For the majority, participation was not optional, but neither was it objectionable as reflected in these excerpts:

> We were always at church . . . [it was]the social gathering place in town. It was one of the few places to go. (Int 002)

> I grew up in a Southern Baptist church that my family attended very regularly. My parents were both very active in the church. We were there all the time. And it was just a way of life. (Int 005)

> So, my involvement in church was constant. (Int 009)

> My mother said I was in church the first Sunday I was alive. We just always were at church, when the doors were open we were there. So from that time till this time, there has never been a time when I have not been in church. I may have missed a Sunday because I had the flu, but there was never a period of not being involved in the church. (Int 013)

Church as Second Home

Church was a second home to most of these women. It was considered their second or extended family. At church, they were nurtured, affirmed, supported, challenged, and given opportunities to lead.

> There was something about the relationships at church that was always appealing to me. I always felt at home when I was at church. It never bothered me to be in empty buildings, nothing. It was always my place where I fit. (Int 016)

> I remember crawling up in Mrs. G's lap and her holding me and that being associated with church. So that was real significant. (Int 017)

Their uniqueness and specialness were consistently reinforced both at home and at church.

> I had always known God and I'd always known that Jesus loved me. I'd always known the love, I mean, my family always made me feel loved. There's never been a day in my life when I had to wonder, does anyone love me.
> (....)there was more of a very warm, casual loving feeling. And then, on into high school. You know, the whole church loved me, and I felt that. (Int 011)

> And so all I remember about growing up is that I felt like I was a part of the family of God. And that was affirmed by my church family and by my blood family and I was warmly received when I made my profession of faith and continued to grow through the church. (Int 015)

This sense of church as family or home began early in their lives and continued as a significant factor, both conscious and unconscious, in their personal and professional choices throughout life.

Affirmation and Support at Church

Not only was church a consistent source of affirmation but it was also the primary source of instruction on "how to be in the world." Moral values were both taught and caught at church as a result of direct instruction and, more importantly, as a result of witnessing the love and service of others. As children, the respondents were encouraged and instructed to discover and utilize their God-given gifts and talents, to serve God and others sacrificially, and to value

all of God's creation and creatures. Consistently, they were
reminded that the highest good was to live out their faith by
seeking out and following God's leadership and call in their
lives.

> I think really the emotional message that I now
> feel was incorrect was that one had to literally
> sacrifice one's self to the point of martyrdom
> almost, whether it was lifestyle or--that you had
> to be uncomfortable or you weren't really going to
> be in the kind of servant position that you should
> be in. That was somehow a message that I had
> gotten. (Int 003)

> I think that the language that was used was all
> about Call, and what I heard was that God calls
> everybody. . . . We all have to listen very
> carefully to God's voice because each of us is
> unique so each of us will have a unique Call. So I
> got that message very clearly, very early of the
> language of Call. And it is a language that is
> life purpose. What is your purpose? What is the
> uniqueness that you have to offer to humanity and
> the language of the church was around the language
> of Call. . . . I also got a sense that to follow
> God and to listen to God's voice involved
> sacrifice. But that was part of the sense that the
> missionaries would come back with. You know, that
> God's call is not always easy and to look out.
> (Int 008)

> Our family began in the context of making tough
> choices that come out of the heart, that may be
> very difficult in the culture and in the family and
> the religious context. So as, I think I grew up in
> an environment that modeled for me and demonstrated
> for me religious rebellion, spiritual rebellion, a
> sense of "you have to follow your heart" and there
> may be consequences, but you have to do that. (Int
> 020)

Affirmation and Support at Home

The same messages and practices were reinforced at home.
The parents and siblings in all but one of these families

were actively involved in church either vocationally or voluntarily. While both parents demonstrated leadership skills, mothers consistently presented models of hard-working servants endowed with the gifts of hospitality and compassion.

> We always saw mother interested in things, like I said, beyond our community. Any missionary who came through town, she wanted them to be at our church, be in our home; and so I guess I was exposed at a real early age to some kind of global awareness. (Int 002)

> My mom grew up as a Methodist and she had originally thought that she was going to Africa to the mission field. Then she met my dad and married and she never got there. So that is where her keen interest in missions was. Any time we had a missionary speak at the church, any time one was passing through town[laughter], you never knew who was going to be at the supper table. You never knew who was going to be spending the night. (Int 016)

> She would take on the unwanted people in the community and in the church--that were kind of odd and be a friend to them. I guess I got it from both of them. (Int 018)

> The home I grew up in was so genuinely Christian in the sense of taking people in and caring about people that to me that would be the most fun thing to do--is to be a minister. So it really was a very natural--although missions was my understanding of what that would be and particularly foreign missions because that seemed like a real call. So I think 14 was the age that I said to the church that God is calling me to be a missionary. Never ever feeling like that was some sacrifice. (Int 020)

In addition, family devotional and prayer times were common.

> All my life, my father was reading his Bible or some kind of book, or some encyclopedia, every

night. That's just been the way we were all
brought up. So even though he was not in church at
that time, we were still brought up with Christian
values and with Bible teaching, and a lot of that
not necessarily cozy family devotionals, it never
was like that, but it was always important to him
that we were learning, and so they did see that we
were in church. (Int 012)

I really need to go back to a lot of the influence
in my home--the religious influence. We read the
Bible together every day. Every morning we had
devotions and read scripture and passed around the
scripture so that we all read that. That was
something real familiar to us and then we read a
devotion and then we read the missionary list and
we prayed for the missionaries and thanked God for
our food and all that. Piety was a big part of my
life. I had those Sunday school envelopes and
wanted every week to be able to check off that I
read my Bible daily. I would get, if I was in bed,
I would get up and turn the light back on if I
forgot to read my Bible. Sunday school lessons had
to be studied. (Int 017)

For these women, life was deeply rooted in the Baptist

institution and its biblical teaching.

Models and Mentors at Church and Home

Parental mentors were supplemented by surrogates and

mentors at church or visiting missionaries enchanting young

minds with tales of foreign adventures and good deeds.

And then my minister of music and education at my
church when I was in high school, . . . was her
name. But she was the first woman I ever saw who,
and she wasn't ordained and had not been to
seminary, but she was called a Minister of Music,
which I think is--I mean, I didn't know any
difference back then. But I think that's
interesting that that's the way the pastor
approached it. It was more of a professional
position. But . . . probably, was in terms,
because I knew I couldn't do music, because I
couldn't read music. But I could do youth work or

religious education, so that was part of that.
(Int 001)

So I grew up with a lot of different types of
people. At that time also the WMU (Woman's
Missionary Union) national headquarters was
downtown. So we had a lot of people from WMU who
were there. So it was not uncommon after a
convention or something like that that a female
might stand in the pulpit to report about their
part of the convention or what their perceptions
were of resolutions that were taken. (Int 016)

Yes, foreign missionaries we you know, we met, we
read about, we were enmeshed--you know, GAs (Girls
in Action) all the stuff. Church training still
had a lot of that kind of stuff. Definitely
enmeshed with all of it, but I had not been on
other mission fields, but I really grew up on
mission fields. Every, every congregation that Dad
pastored had started as a mission at some point
(Int 020)

The process of affirmation, encouragement, instruction

and opportunity continued on into adolescence for most and

beyond for some of these women. Their leadership roles often

reflected the exceptional nature of their gifts and the

acknowledgment of same.

And I became the children's choir pianist, as a
youngster, and then continued through my junior
high years, and then in the tenth grade, I became
church pianist. In a rather large church with a
big music program, and I was really intimidated to
think about doing that at that point, but the
minister of music, the pastor and the pianist at
that church came to me and talked with me and
offered their encouragement and their support, so
at age 15, 16,-- 16, I believe it was, I became
church pianist and have served on the church staff
since that time. (Int 012)

Instead that summer [I] served as sort of the youth
minister at my home church back in Ohio and worked

with the youth who were there. . . . most of my
freshman year and my sophomore year, I worked in a
church in F, Kentucky which is about 18 miles from
here. . . . he asked me to come help in the church
and to recommend someone to come as the youth
minister, or as the music minister. So two
students, two of us for a couple of years went to
F. I taught a junior girls Sunday School class,
and that was pretty significant. My junior and
senior years, I came back and worked just in local
church here in town. (Int 013)

I taught in the beginner choir when I was a
teenager. Joined the adult choir actually when I
was a 7th grader because I enjoyed singing so much
and they needed help so I established that
relationship. (Int 014)

And it was really as a young girl in GAs that I
developed a sense that I am a minister. I remember
visiting the nursing homes and doing the worship
services in the nursing homes and I played the
piano too. I started playing the piano at my home
church when I wore bobby socks. I was in the 7th
grade. And I remember being extremely nervous too.
As I look back at that, I realize, I became a
worship leader when I was in 7th grade. And I
really feel like that was a very
important part of my development of a sense of who
I am,
who I was, that it started then. (Int 016)

What their experiences had not prepared them for was the

shift to exclude them from some avenues of ministry as they

aged.

You are told everyone is called to go out and
spread the word of Jesus. You weren't told only if
you were a man were you called to go out and spread
the word of Jesus. You were told that everybody was
called to do this.
(Int 001)

My family did some devotional stuff at breakfast
time at home, too, so I think I learned some of the
same things at home that I did at church, and those

things were that was that God loved me like these
people loved me, and that I was supposed to listen
to what God would say to me and I was supposed to
be willing to do whatever God asked of me, and at
that time nobody said "And it will be different for
boys and girls."
(Int 005)

I would hear those invitations and think, you know,
that meant me. I didn't hear any question of --
boys you can do this, girls you can do this. It
was just an open invitation for all to come and
serve, however you felt that God was leading you to
do that. (Int 014)

Shifts in Adolescence

Mixed Messages of Affirmation and Discrimination

By adolescence, these young women had internalized the
moral precepts which had surrounded them all their lives. In
accordance with Beardslee's "resilient" individuals (1989),
this group's self-reflections demanded that there be a
congruency between their behavior and their value systems.
As intuitive people, they frequently describe the progression
of their calls in terms of "feeling a fit" with a situation,
or "feeling at peace" with a choice. When they first began
acknowledging a sense of call to ministry, most of them
confined their visions to the traditionally acceptable female
roles of missionary, children's worker or minister's wife.

I believe that I followed some maybe originally
because of limitation, cultural limitations,
limitations of my socialization. I think that's
the reason I went into elementary and then
secondary education, and then when I felt the Call
to ministry later, I think I still thought of it as

a more specific vocational thing than I do now. I believed that my Call was probably chaplaincy because of limitations. I hadn't seen women in a preaching ministry. I hadn't seen women in the pastorate. (Int 007)

I made a commitment to vocational ministry and, given the stereotypical understanding of what women could do, the options were foreign missions, where you could do what you want but nobody would know about it; WMU work, not for me. I had not seen one, but I heard that there might be women who could be ministers, so that was the sense of my commitment. (Int 009)

I had a very strong GA leader in I guess I was 5th or 6th grade--the pastor's wife. She and her husband had been foreign missionaries and they, because of health reasons, came back to the United States and she really made missions come alive for me. We just did all kinds of wonderful things, cooking meals, was to her, sensed her enthusiasm and her love for that and I remember at that point thinking, "Wouldn't it be wonderful to grow up and become a minister's wife?" because I saw her as a role model in her relationship with her husband and I thought at the time that was about all that women did. And I thought, "Oh, this would be great to be involved in the church like she is, to support her husband in his ministry and they went visiting together and hearing from people together--I just thought that was great. But I do remember having a real strong sense of it would be great to grow up to be a minister's wife. (Int 014)

At GA camp I really felt God calling. That was one place where I really felt God calling me into some kind of ministry or special service, I guess it was being called then. Maybe to be a missionary was my thought at that time. At that time the only thing that I knew that I could do would be missionary-- either married missionary, single missionary or pastor's wife.
(Int 017)

These perceptions regarding the institutional limits on women's roles demonstrate the pervasiveness of the three restrictive models presented by Stackhouse (1988).

For some respondents, the realization that these choices were not God's leading but rather the direction dictated by the institutional hierarchy came early.

> I said two or three things about, "Well, she has gone to seminary, so that means she is prepared. She has a sense of calling, so that means she probably likes to do this." I responded in several other ways, but it was a sense that I realized pretty early that women were going to have to scrap to get a fair shake in the church. (Int 009, at age 12 in a church business meeting)

> [I have] some hurt over that. And I've never really thought of it in those terms, but you know, it was like, the guys would come back, and they would be asked to preach, and asked to lead music, and asked to do this and that, and the girls could sing in the choir. Even though I read my Bible more, I witnessed more, you know all those things that make you think you're doing the right things as a Christian. I was doing that, yet they were the ones asked. (Int 011, during college years)

> In high school, I was beginning to see some inequities in terms of how the guys were treated and the girls were treated, and I was a little frustrated, not real frustrated. (Int 011)

> But B (Baptist Student Union [BSU] Director in college) instilled in us that if you went to seminary, it was Southern. But he encouraged the guys to do that. He never talked to E or I--who was my first roommate--about going to Southern or seminary or considering a Christian vocation. And I think that is pretty significant. There were three women in BSU and all three of us were very good friends, who did go to Southern and all three got MDiv degrees. Not because B encouraged us. (Int 017)

For most, the sense of being excluded or overlooked did not occur until later when they reached seminary or sought employment.

Clarification of Call

For the majority of the respondents, church participation was so extensive that the issue of call, just as the issue of professing their faith and "becoming a Christian," was simply part of a natural progression. Their training had led them to believe that all Christians are called to use their gifts in God's service and at times, that might mean vocational involvement, but it was less about professional decision-making than about responding to intuitive feelings of where they might best be able to use their talents.

> And that night, they questioned about my Call. I told them I didn't know if I felt called to do that. That I had never thought about that, that I had always just tried to go through the doors that were open before me and to make use of the talents that I had. (Int 012)

> "Why can't I get any peace about this. God what I really want to do is what you want me to do." And I threw in the line about, "even if that means going into the ministry, I'll do that." And for the first time it was like, "You're called." I kept thinking about it and wondering about it. To have said that was the only time I could get any relief from those questions. (Int 016)

They had not seen their paths as obstructed, because their world views were restricted by their enmeshment in Baptist culture.

> We were there. So we were a Southern Baptist ghetto—a religious ghetto. (Int 007)

> They (siblings) probably had a better balance of both worlds than I did. But we were all very enmeshed with the church. (Int 020)

Opportunities had been defined in Baptist terms. In most cases, they had not seen female models in ministry other than missionaries, minister's wives, and volunteers. With increased exposure to larger cultural contexts and other ideas, the respondents gradually broadened their views of what was possible and what was just. In response to the national civil rights unrest one respondent remembers:

> I decided to write President Kennedy and tell him that I was very concerned about what was happening in this country. So I did. I wrote a 13-page, handwritten letter and poured out my heart. I said we are all U.S. citizens and I couldn't understand why we had to fight each other, that God created all of us and that it didn't matter what color we were, that we were all precious in God's eyes, and we were all equal and we just needed to love each other. Everyone needed to hear about the love of God that was given to them. I think I told President Kennedy about all the black people that I knew. They were just wonderful. It didn't make any sense to me. So I told President Kennedy that if he needed some help with getting this message out that I was available and he could call 555-5555 and I would be glad to do what I could. If I could speak in schools across the country, if I could be one of his ambassadors to get the message out about peace, I would be glad to do that. (Int 008, in 7th grade)

They were exposed to the bigger picture at varying times in their lives and those individual encounters seemed to

heighten their awareness of their need to be involved in the solution to some of these problems.

> I was in, I think, 11th grade, and it was in an English class, and the teacher, [teacher's name], read this thing on poverty. And it just blew me away. It was a very graphic description of this is what it is like to be poor, to save your pennies for days, your hands are so chapped they're bleeding, because you're doing your baby's diapers in cold water because you can't afford hot water. You save your pennies for weeks, and you get to the grocery store and the Vaseline has gone up and you can't buy it. And just very graphic. Just about two pages. And when she finished that, she said there are people a mile from here who live like this. And it just... I remember it just blew me away. It was as if... I keep thinking of when, I guess it was Jeremiah, that the Lord laid a burden on his heart. It was just like there was a physical burden in my soul. Just bloomph! (Int 011)

Based on their unique journeys, they came to understand the ramifications of being called at different ages and stages of their lives. All seemed to recognize a call to serve but they did not necessarily think that service came in the form of full-time vocational ministry or required a seminary education.

> I began to see that that commitment that I had made toward teaching as a vocation maybe when I was sixteen or seventeen and I said that, that was the part to guide me through those next few years to get me to the next place . . . I became more and more assured of my sense of going to Seminary was the next step in a journey that God was leading me on. I really did sense that as a real leading of God to that place. I fought the Seminary for a long time, but then I began to, right before I went, feel more and more sure that that was the right thing to do, and not just the right thing, but the way that God was directing me; but still

with lots of questions about what I was going to
do, because I didn't know. (Int 002)

Their internal clocks ticked at different rates, but gradually all the respondents accepted their need for full-time vocational commitment and for a seminary degree. One or two embarked on this course in a straight line, however, most had to meander through some side paths before either becoming aware of or being willing to acknowledge their calls.

Young Adult Experiences

College and seminary years

In accordance with their upbringing, most of the respondents pursued conventionally accepted courses in college such as education, home economics, music, languages and social work which would prepare them for the mission field or as support workers in the churches. Very few knew before they arrived at seminary that their degree choice would be in the theology program (Master of Divinity [MDiv]) rather than the religious education program (Master of Religious Education [MRE], Master of Christian Education [MCE]) or the music program (Master of Church Music [MCM]) and only one or two went into seminary with a sense of being called to the pastorate. In either case, however, their experience depicts Wallace's (1975) marginals in preparation,

that is, people beginning to prepare for a career path which is not supported by others in that field.

Affirmation vs. discrimination at seminary. At the Southern Baptist seminaries, the respondents again faced the struggle between internal pressure moving them towards pastoral careers and education and external pressure to keep them in their "places." They also faced the puzzling incongruity of messages ranging from supportive affirmation to rude condemnation from administrators, faculty members, and peers at these institutions. The 3 women who chose not to attend Baptist seminaries encountered negative responses to their calls in the field, not in the schools.

A few of the women felt excluded at the doors of the seminary.

> [I went to] Southwestern and interviewed with people down there, they said to me, "as a woman, you will need to get an RE degree." And while I decided I might make that decision, I didn't want them to make it for me. (Int 005)

> I went down there and I had an interview and I can't remember the little old man's name, but he pretty much patted me on the head and, "Well, surely you could, like, be minister of education or something." "No, that's not what I'm here for." I had some intuitive sense that this wasn't the place for me. (Int 010)

> . . . an interview with the Dean of the School of Theology and we got one. . . . he said, "What do you want an MDiv for?" And I said, "I want to have a well-rounded theological education." And he said, "Well, we can't place women with MDivs." And so, his theory was that if they can't place them, then you shouldn't let women get them or shouldn't

be encouraging women to get this degree. And so, I just said, "Phooey on you" and went back to Southeastern and found such a receptive atmosphere at Southeastern. (Int 015)

Still, others were encouraged to pursue seminary degrees.

I had a man come to me, an influential man in the church, a seasoned veteran, a church leader who came to me and said, "Have you ever considered going to Seminary and getting formal training?" And I said, "No, I really hadn't," but C was considering going on to Seminary and I said, "Well, I'll just give that some thought" and he said, "I really would encourage you strongly to do that." He said, "I really can sense that you really have love for this work and you are doing very well at it. I would encourage you to do that." (Int 014)

Once they arrived at seminary, women were typically channeled into the religious education or music schools and, on occasion, met with some resistance if they attempted to move into theology. Some circumvented the resistance if they suspected it would keep them from accomplishing their goal.

Again I was a chicken, There was a man in charge of--if you wanted to change from one degree to another, you had to go talk to him and he really kind of was the hatchet man. If there was any ambivalence in your call, then he was supposed to cut you out of the seminary. My understanding was that he was exceptionally hard on women who wanted to change out of Religious Ed into the Divinity program. I wasn't changing. I just knew I would have to be re-accepted and so I waited until he went on Sabbatical[laughter] and then I went to talk with somebody and it was fine. But he would have required me to have written an additional paper and I wasn't willing to do that. I felt like I had enough being a full-time student and I wasn't going to do that. (Int 016)

In this instance, the respondent's perception was that she had to finagle her way into the MDiv program when she had

previously received encouragement and affirmation to pursue
an MDiv degree in order to fulfill her sense of being called
to preach instead of teach.

> He [a professor] said, "What is it that you think
> it [your call] is changing to?" And I said, "I
> really think I want to preach." And he said,
> "Well, so what about that?" And I said, "Well, do
> women do that?" And he said, "Yes, they do." And
> I said, "But there are not many and that's pretty
> scary to start off on something that is brand new."
> And his response was, "Isn't it more exciting to be
> a part of something that's new than to always
> continue what has always been in place?" And I
> said, "Yes." (Int 016)

Another example of the inconsistency of the treatment
that some received is presented by one individual who was
directed toward religious education as the appropriate and
only preparatory path for a woman. Then after she switched
to the theology program, she was routinely affirmed for her
abilities and performance.

> Got to Southwestern. Enrolled in the Religious
> Education and during the middle of that semester I
> just started saying, "I want more theology. I
> don't want this degree. They are saying it's the
> best for me." So I contacted the Home Mission
> Board and Foreign Mission Board and asked them not
> to contact me anymore until I was ready to talk. I
> had a lot of things I needed to sort through. By
> that time, I decided they were highly chauvinistic,
> that my understanding of ministry was broader than
> simply going to another field, that it might
> include campus ministry or something else and so I
> switched to the MDiv program. (Int 020)

While she was in school, she felt the support of many faculty
members but over the years that support did not seem to

continue, especially after her decision to get ordained and seek a pastoral position in the church.

> So there was a handful of them that no matter what I would have done, I realize, the evidence is through the years, that they would have continued to be that affirming. There were many others that it was sort of the "in thing" to do to be affirming of women students. I think there were five of us in my age group. First, we all transferred to the MDiv program about the same time--a couple may have come in with MDiv, but we all pretty much felt in the same boat. There are just a handful of us in the theology program. (Int 020)

In general, seminary was a mixture of affirmation and discrimination. Some of the respondents insulated themselves from the confrontations by living away from campus and being heavily involved in their ministry positions and other places of employment or in some instances, with their significant others. They were not indifferent to the sexism, and anger began festering even for those who had arrived at seminary with very conservative tendencies and understanding.

> Well, I had a few experiences, one over a fellow in my first class. "Well, little lady, what are you doing in here?" "I am here to get your church, buddy" is what I said to him, just because I have a smart mouth and grew up between two brothers. I had no intention of being pastor. I had no intention of being a professor. I really thought I would do junior high lock-ins until Jesus comes. . . . I was pretty feisty because I didn't like being singled out because I was a woman. Well, look who hit the top of the scale! What would you think? A woman amidst all these brothers! I didn't like that much and there just weren't many women in the classes, and when I came here I thought those women who wanted to be ordained must be of all the devil. Who called them? God sure didn't ask me that, hence I was not ordained until I was 33. (Int 009)

And didn't feel the full brunt of what was going on in the convention until after I got here. After I got here is when I met people who weren't as affirming of women in ministry, and they were mostly other students, not faculty. . . . There are consequences in claiming that. I faced one of those consequences a couple of weeks ago when I confronted a male professor that I felt uncomfortable when he looked at me in class and said that material from Ladies' Home Journal and Mademoiselle wasn't acceptable as source material. I was the only woman in the class. He didn't say anything about GQ. [Gentlemen's Quarterly]. (Int 010)

These guys would wander up and you know, we'd have this "get to know you" conversation and then they'd say. " Well, what do you want to be when you grow up?" And I'd say, "A pastor" and they'd just leave immediately. They would just get up and depart. (Int 015)

Frequently, affirmation at the seminary came in private or in one-to-one, mentor-student relationships despite the fact that two of these women earned recognition for their preaching abilities while at seminary. One even received the highest honor bestowed in that area. Almost all of these women were consistently at or near the top of their classes regardless of subject.

I got a lot of encouragement from my major professor to turn my dissertation into a book, and that could and would still be an option but at this point I can't see where I would have the hours in the day to do that. (Int 006)

I recall an incident where a male professor affirmed me in my ministerial role and for ordination. But of course I can't say that publicly. This was said as an aside. And I wondered, if he couldn't say that publicly, why was

> he saying it privately? And wondered, was he
> fearful of what was going on in the denomination.
> (Int 010)

> No, I just felt real accepted for who I was and it
> was never questioned or brought up that I was out
> of place there. Just never. (Int 017)

Even when they were accepted into the divinity programs and

affirmed by faculty and peers, these women soon discovered

that it was assumed that they would channel their careers

outside of the local church pastorates.

> There are a number of seminary faculty who are
> there now who back in those days were very
> affirming. They liked me, but in retrospect, I
> realize that had I been saying, "God has called me
> to pastor," it would have been a very different
> story, because these same people have not been
> affirming to women who have said that. They quit
> being affirming to me when I began to talk about
> ordination and pastoring. (Int 020)

Consistent with Lehman's (1981a) organizational

maintenance theory, these women were being accepted into the

educational institution for training in areas for which there

was little hope of subsequent job placement. Their admission

to seminary was primarily based on the need to maintain

enrollment in the academic institutions, not on the desire to

open up the pastoral fields to women as evidenced by the

difficulties so many of them had when they sought work after

training (Kimberling, 1988).

Discrimination in Placement. Once trained, the

respondents had varying degrees of difficulty obtaining jobs.

Placement experiences ranged from one extreme to the other--

no offers, to offers of secretarial or other positions for
which they were extremely over-qualified, to offers for
"conditional" placements in which they had to "prove"
themselves, to offers from people who were pursuing the
respondents before they even applied for positions. One
individual has never worked in a Southern Baptist position
despite holding numerous prominent leadership positions in
national Southern Baptist and local ecumenical organizations.
Two others have served in churches of other denominations.
One fourth of the remaining women have consistently worked in
ecumenical settings where their degrees and choices to get
ordained have not been issues. In fact, ordination is
usually a prerequisite for these chaplaincy positions. While
some women took minutes to find their first ministerial
placements, others needed months or years to break into the
system. At one end of the continuum were those who just
showed up and were offered positions.

> He was a good friend of some folks at the church
> where I had gotten a scholarship... a loan.. That
> was a loan. And so, I said, hi, from them and all,
> and he says, oh yeah, etc., and he asked me if I
> would be interested in interviewing with their
> committee. Oh sure! It sounds easy, and it gets
> worse. And I go, "Well, yeah," so I did, and I was
> interim youth minister for the junior high youth
> and they hired another seminary student for the
> other. So we worked together there until February
> of the next year, I got a call from [Church A]
> Baptist for minister of music and youth. And that
> was about the time that [another church] was
> getting ready to hire a full-time, they were
> looking for a full-time youth and recreation, which

I wasn't interested in, anyway. But the music and
youth position came open at [Church A], and so, I
took that one. I was also talking with another
church at that same time. (Int 012)

I had applied for a chaplaincy internship in the
meantime. There were only three chaplaincy
internships in the whole city and millions of
pastoral care people and I got it. Well, there was
actually only two, one of them that whole year and
I got it which was really a neat thing for me.
(Int 017)

At the other end of the continuum were those who seemingly

could never do enough to satisfy the job requirements.

That got me real down that I was there working, had
the degree, had experience in the church, but
hadn't had ten or fifteen years like I guess
somebody else would. A few people said, "Would you
consider this position at [Church C]?" Of course,
I thought I would consider it, but no offer to even
talk about it even came my way. That was a hurtful
thing then. (Int 002)

I had always been taught that if you are called,
the door is going to open. And I didn't even use
the critical analysis that I had learned in
seminary which was that you look at the social
constructs that hinder people from exercising
rights and freedoms in getting a job and all those
things that I learned in seminary I wasn't applying
to myself. (Int 008)

They wanted me, get this job description, they
wanted me to live in the freshman dorm, to do
freshman orientation, to be assistant to the Dean
of Women, and work with the BSU. That was the job
description. I was interviewed by the President.
He started the interview by saying, "You are not
one of those women who wants to preach, are you?"
And I said, "I don't know if I am or not, but this
sure wouldn't be the place to find out. . . . And
so I thought okay, I could double my salary if I
went to the church, but the most important thing
was I had the gift of being able to choose. All my
buddies, the fellows coming through, could choose
do I want to preach, do I want to be a pastor? I

didn't have the option, really, to choose. (Int 009)

Okay, I moved back to . . . where I grew up and began to look and consider other ministry possibilities. I had left Texas because there weren't any available and I had some resumes out, but I didn't hear anything back and I really needed to live somewhere. (Int 019)

Adulthood

Discrimination vs. Affirmation of Ordination

After receiving training for pastoral ministry, individuals usually go through an ordination ceremony in a local church indicating a recognition and affirmation of the individual's gifts and calling and bestowing the requisite authority on them to perform full gospel service in the church (baptize, marry, preach, and bury). Every one of these women struggled at some point in the ordination process. It was understood that the choice to become ordained would limit career placement options within the denomination and alienate people within the church family.

I had gotten to the point of thinking about ordination, I had in many ways left behind me the questions of how is this going to affect me in terms of Southern Baptist life, because I already saw our church so much on the edge there, and I also knew once being in [name] Baptist Church, I would move from here probably to another more moderate church, or as moderate a church, if not more so, than [present church]. (Int 002)

They just don't understand that out there in Southern Baptist life, most churches don't want to even think about women being ministers. (INT 013)

This professional pain was compounded by the personal pain
which some experienced when their choice to get ordained
meant rifts and ruptures with their families of origin and
families of choice. Parents and siblings rejected them;
husbands divorced them, in part because of their response to
their calls and ramifications associated with pursuing
pastoral careers.

> I think it would have been much easier on my dad if
> his son had been an ordained minister and his
> daughter had been a writer. (Int 005)

> The Friday before I was ordained on Sunday, I got a
> letter from my sister listing all these passages in
> 1st Timothy and so forth about had I really thought
> this through. I feel like that was much of her
> husband's nudging her to do that. She did not come
> to ordination, nor did my brother. (Int 002)

> Some of my family are very conservative and I have
> a couple of in-laws that don't believe that women
> should be ministers. So it makes for interesting
> conversations at the house when we gather at my
> parents'. I generally find myself going to the
> kitchen when those discussions begin or go look on
> the kids. I remove myself from there because it
> doesn't do any good to remain. Some folks don't
> hear other viewpoints besides their own and I have
> learned that when a person is that intent on their
> agenda, I just don't waste my breath. I am not
> going to change them. They probably won't change
> me. They might, but I don't think they will. I
> can be more accepting of them if I leave the room
> than if I stay and get my blood pressure boiling.
> (Int 019)

> While they said to us, "Follow your heart. Live by
> what you hear God saying to you," when in fact I
> did that to the point of ordination and everything
> later on, they did not even come to my ordination
> and have never approved of my being ordained, do

not approve of women in ministry. So there was really a double bind there. . . . So we have this relationship that is somewhat superficial. In other ways it is based on knowing that we really do love each other and we're connected. We can't agree about so much other stuff so we don't talk about it. We don't talk politics. We don't talk religion, you know. So we have defined our relationship carefully. (Int 020)

Often when the decision was made to get ordained, getting church support was problematic. The very same people who had encouraged and supported these women's ministries in earlier years were much less inclined to ordain them in defiance of the denominational powers who were openly opposing the practice. Consequently, some of the respondents sought the path of least resistance to gain the credentials they needed for work.

That [ordination] would have been really, really neat, but I didn't want, I wasn't willing to fight. I didn't want to fight about it and so I didn't spend a lot of time agonizing about that. Very quickly. It was presented to me that ordination was a part of being a resident. I contacted my college church. They also had a new pastor that I did not know, but who was married to a woman who was the daughter of [woman's name], who was the woman at Southeastern and so that pretty much said to me that he would be supportive. (Int 017)

The first church I went to, they said, "Yes, we believe you have a calling, but we don't feel our church is ready." I said, "Fine," and I went to another church where they had already ordained deacons and got my ordination there and went on about my business. (Int 018)

Some chose to meet the resistance head on:

The pastor said "I don't have any problem with your being ordained, but I don't think you ought to be,"

did he say a pastor or preaching, he must have said
preaching. . . . the pastor's comment to me was
"I don't have a problem with your being ordained
since you don't want to be a preacher, but you know
we just", I guess maybe he said "we've just done
your father's ordination, and you know that's such
a plain certificate [certificate to full gospel
ministry], why don't we make up one for you that
would be much more beautiful and more like a scroll
and we could have some pretty things placed on it
with, so it wouldn't just be a plain bookstore
ordination certificate [and also would restrict her
ordination authority to chaplaincy and she would
not be eligible to pastor a church]." So I can be
manipulative, too. So I said "It would mean so
much to me if mine was just like my daddy's." (Int
005)

Others simply delayed making a choice to avoid the inevitable

pain, but eventually succumbed to the internal pressure of

call rather than the external pressures of families. Still,

they had to suffer the consequences of their choices.

"Are you sorry you did it?" he asked. I said,
"No." He was talking about ordination. I wasn't
sorry; I wasn't sorry a bit, but this was one of
those consequences that I had not thought about
much recently, when I'd made the decision to be
ordained. I knew that I'd be cut off from some
things, but WMU [Women's Missionary Union] was an
organization that I'd spent much time with, and
especially during my days in Seminary and since, so
it was a real slap in the face [when WMU withdrew
an invitation for her to present at a conference];
and it wasn't based on what I could or could not
do, but the fact that I had ordination as part of
my life and image now. (Int 002)

On numerous occasions throughout their stories, the

respondents relate instances where the doors which were once

open had been shut in their faces, instances in which people

in both of their families who had once embraced them, now

shunned them. Their situations rarely improved with age as
evidenced by their ongoing career struggles.

<u>Discrimination in Workplace</u>

While eight of the respondents are presently serving in
chaplaincy positions, only half of those purposefully sought
such positions. The other half have redirected their careers
into chaplaincy because they were unable to find work in
local churches as they had hoped. Two others have moved from
churches to ministerial roles in colleges, six are still or
are once again located in church positions but their churches
have either been disfellowshiped or are considered on the
fringe of Southern Baptist life. The remaining four are
employed outside of the denomination, but one is continuing
to seek a church position. Over the years, the respondents
have been moved to the periphery of the denomination in spite
of both their gifts and training becoming what Wallace (1975)
described as "marginals in the profession."

Although their stories reveal many successes,
accomplishments, and occasions for joy and satisfaction,
every one of these women also presented a litany of overt and
covert abusive and sexist incidents which they had
encountered. They have been discounted, defamed and
defrocked.

> Never heard a thing from those churches [that she
> had sent applications complete with glowing

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recommendations to], not even that they had
received this, nothing. (Int 007)

The other Southern Baptist churches in that area
treated us as if we were bound for hell, doomed and
I guess, rather than them making a big deal about
my presence, they made nothing out of it at all.
They didn't even acknowledge that I was alive. You
know, it was like, you're a non-entity, if they
treat you as a non-entity. (Int 014)

Six have been forced to resign from positions that they held

anywhere from 2 to 18 years. One had her church removed from

under her. Another has held onto her church, but she had to

endure 2 years of turmoil and stress plus the loss of church

members before the struggle was resolved in her favor.

The women's undying sense of loyalty to their families

and to their heritage compelled them to continue to seek ways

of reconciling problems within the context. Reflecting on

her 4-year struggle with the local association which was

trying to prevent her from becoming a pastor, one respondent

expresses the sense of loyalty which typifies the attitudes

of all of the respondents.

And I said, "You don't leave your family." And
that's how I feel about my church. (Int 011)

In this instance, she took her church family with her but

left her denomination behind.

Other respondents have also grown weary in the struggle

to follow the rules, work hard, be "good girls" and still

find that they are not "good enough" to "measure up." One

respondent's summary of her hard road to disillusionment represents the "road most traveled" by these women.

> When five years had come and gone and *I had done what I was supposed to do in the system* to be able to move to the next place--it didn't happen. That was when some of my major disillusionment began to occur, because I was doing what you were supposed to do. <u>I was being faithful to the denomination. I was being faithful to the people in this church.</u> I even did CPE [Clinical Pastoral Education] training while I was there, but I just learned an awful lot and I knew that I was ready for the next challenge, the next call. I was also ready for some secretarial help. I was tired of typing the bulletins. I was also ready for somebody else to do the choir. <u>I was ready just to be a pastor and have a chance to do that and not have to do everything.</u> I did the newsletter from start to finish, mailed it out. I was ready for someone else to help me with those things. <u>I saw all these guys that had graduated from seminary after me who were getting churches and phenomenal salaries and gorgeous houses</u> and I knew that that wasn't what makes one happy, but it sure was tough seeing all of that going on and seeing what I was offered (....) I became disillusioned with the church itself while being there and then <u>began to realize the "glass ceiling" that exists for women</u>, that these attractive places to serve as ministers are there, the places with the prestige, the places with power, you know, that would be considered a nice place, a Main Street church. They looked like they were there, but you couldn't really get to them because of the glass ceiling there. [Emphasis added]. (Int 015)

The idea of continuing to pay dues in a system which was apparently never going to reward them for doing so has become less and less attractive over time.

The respondents' persistence is evidenced not only in their willingness to work and struggle for a place within

their traditional context but also their recognition that the validity and integrity of their internal messages exceeded that of the external ones. Getting out of the local church or the denomination was not about taking the easy route. For these women, leaving is not without pain, not without cost, but at some point, leaving is about overcoming one more obstacle in their path toward fulfillment of their personal ministerial call.

> But I have a few people that really do experience a similar vision. And it only takes a few to give you some courage. I am not one of those that says I will be here forever no matter what. I don't think that is ever a healthy thing to say about anything and I will not let any situation take my spirit. If I find that it does take too much of my spirit, then I will leave. It's not for sale. They can have my time, they can have all kinds of things, but not my spirit. So I go on as long as it's still with me. (Int 008)

The double bind for these women comes when they consider that leaving the denomination means severing ties with the very family which taught them to be faithful. In order to maintain their own personal integrity and adherence to the values which these institutions taught them, the respondents had to seek another venue where there was more consistency between values and practice.

Emerging Feminism--Claimed and Unclaimed

Speaking Their Experience

As they have matured into middle age, the respondents have begun to give voice to their realities. Most have reframed their understanding of "doing the right thing" to mean following their own belief systems rather than obeying the commands of others. Their experience taught them that adherence to the rules neither promoted their careers nor protected their welfare.

> But everyone [church staff] agreed that it would be good to do that [pray using inclusive language], that it was an appropriate thing to do, and they were comfortable with it and would stand by it [But, in fact, the aftermath was hers alone to endure.]
> I remember that he [a deacon] began his conversation by saying, "What did you mean by calling God 'mother and father'?" And I said to him, "Well, you're a father and I'm a mother, and we are both made in the image of God, and I used that as an image." And he put his finger in my face and said, "Don't you ever do that again, do you understand?" (Int 004)

Even attempts to seek change through the appropriate channels without confrontation were met with resistance. Some of the women were even discovering that their experiences within the denomination were more oppressive than their experiences in the larger society.

> I would say things like what the person at Southwestern told me was a way of putting me in my place. I think, I really have to say that I have, well I should definitely tell you that I have not

experienced nearly the sexism among the federal
government that I have in Southern Baptist
churches, and what I mean by that really is that
while I think that the church should be moving into
the future toward the kingdom of God, that this is
particularly an example of where the government is
ahead of the church pulling it into the future
while it kicks and screams. (Int 005)

[It is a] pretty oppressive atmosphere. I have
been in other Baptist institutions and I think an
academic institution that is conservative or
fundamentalist is harder than a healthcare
institution because that's where the witch hunts
take place. (Int 007)

I know so many many gifted women who have felt that
call, who have been educated far beyond what the
average, I am going to say Southern Baptist because
that's the ones I know the most about, Southern
Baptist ministers are, in order to appear qualified
to have the best background possible, and yet many
of them are denied an opportunity to serve just
because they are female. (Int 014)

Try as they might to equip themselves for service in the

Southern Baptist context and to adapt to the demands of their

individual situations, these women have lost or are gradually

losing their ability to deny the mistreatment and abuse.

The respondents varied considerably in their willingness

to ally themselves with the word "feminist." Some easily

embrace the label Christian feminist while others prefer the

term "humanist" and still others recoil upon hearing the term

at all. Nevertheless, their attitudes, objectives, and

behaviors (see Redefined Codes, Appendix F) evidence

characteristics often associated with feminism. Whether they

were giving themselves voice by preaching or assisting others

in gaining voice by counseling and teaching, the respondents frequently referred to the significance of telling and being heard (Bateson, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Heilbrun, 1988). The importance of voice is indicated by one respondent's tentative attempts to be heard in the seminary classroom and another respondent's realization that personal integrity and even life itself depended upon being able to express one's "true self."

> I was vocal. I asked questions. And I didn't ask questions just to prove a point, but I had a sense of gaining my voice a little bit . . . but I still was dismissive of myself in certain ways. But if people like me and others with whom you speak, . . . offer our voices, we help create a larger space in which to exercise our ecclesial life. (Int 009)

> I can't live like this. I will either totally degenerate, which I wasn't close to that then, but I knew enough, I'd worked with enough psych patients, I knew I could degenerate into someone who can't function, who lives so much in depression as a result of not honoring the kind of voice that she has before God and everybody else. I was close to that. (Int 003)

The quest for voice was not simply about proclamation from the pulpit. It was about sharing the values that had been so deeply ingrained in them in early childhood by their two families.

Creating Community--Inclusive and Ecumenical

A recurrent theme throughout all of the stories was inclusivity. Individual focuses varied, but all of these

women, in some way, presented views that spoke of bringing people together in community. For some that meant advocating the use of inclusive language in the church as well as the classroom.

> I don't know if I could teach literature anymore without teaching my feminist beliefs. They are part of my theology, they are part of my conviction. I would certainly have to grade off for exclusive language. I was doing that even toward the end when I was at [Church D]. (Int 007)

For others, it is the idea of bringing all people together in an attempt to build global community.

> It's just the inclusivity, I mean inclusive regardless of blank, but all the systems have problems [with this concept]. (Int 015)

All of the women interviewed are actively involved in organized efforts to promote peace and justice, to improve multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-national relations, to assist the disenfranchised, to feed the hungry, to advance efforts in medical ethics. They are living out the value systems which they internalized as young children and have continued to broaden through the years.

For the respondents, the concept of church itself has broadened from local church family to the wider spiritual community both ecumenically and geographically. As their denomination rejected them or relegated their churches to the fringe, these women looked to one another and other ecumenical support groups to fill the void.

> . . . but since ordination, you find yourself
> part of churches that have such commonalty in what
> they believe about women in ministry, what they
> believe about social issues and justice issues,
> that it feels so much better to be proactive in
> that way, instead of trying to be in both places,
> not giving up the tradition to risk your place.
> (Int 002)

Many respondents concur with the following sentiments about

finally connecting with like-minded and like-spirited people

who actually respect your personhood by listening to you.

> But after going to the very first meeting it was
> like finding a group of people that you've always
> felt comfortable with, and also people who took
> seriously what you said, which having been on
> church committees and been on ministerial
> committees and been on seminary committees, et
> cetera, et cetera, my experience had been, like
> you'd say something and everyone would look at you
> and then move on, or you'd say something and then
> one of the men would say the same thing you said,
> and everybody would go, "Oh yes! Oh, that's what
> we should have done!" And you're going, 'didn't I
> just say that?' You know, you're always sort of
> shaking your head at some of these committee
> meetings. But instead, at the Women in Ministry
> retreat that we had, there was a lot of
> interaction, there was <u>a lot of affirmation, and so
> I got excited</u> about the possibility of working with
> the group. [emphasis added] (Int 001)

Connecting with small support groups and a larger ecumenical

network revitalized these women. They were once again

experiencing the affirmation and excitement of sharing

visions and utilizing gifts as they had in childhood.

Sharing Leadership

The element of cooperation pervaded the relationships and the work of this group. A few have tried to introduce entirely new leadership styles in their ministerial positions.

> My style of leadership is very different from a male style. It's more collegial; there's more team work; there's more of an empowerment model trying to encourage people to claim responsibility for their own lives instead of here is my 5-year plan, and let's do it. (Int 008)

This shift in style is often met with resistance, but the pastoral pioneers persist in pursuing this perspective.

The respondents attempt to practice what they preach, not only in their ministries but also in their families. Eight of the married respondents have negotiated the career family conflicts with spouses who have shared the parenting and household responsibilities. Balancing two careers (often two in the ministry) and family has been difficult but necessary for these women who want families but experience malaise and depression when they are not also functioning in response to their call in some capacity. Their identities and self-esteem are connected with their ministerial as well as their mothering roles.

> And that was a real affirmation in [that particular] society, being a mother is the best thing you can be and do, but that was a far cry from where I had gotten my esteem and sense of value before. (Int 006)

Although one or two of the women specifically chose partners who agreed beforehand to place equal emphasis on both careers, the rest have negotiated the balance with mates who have been some of their most ardent supporters. The respondents credit their spouses with playing a significant part in helping the women to endure the rejections and career disappointments.

> God kept me going through [husband], but [husband] wouldn't have been it, just if [husband] were saying, "Yeah, yeah, do it, do it, do it." But the church was saying, "This is right, this is what we believe in, this is what we want, this is our call." Not just the church's call to me, but our call as a body in... just a strong sense of family that we have. (Int 011)

In addition to being morale boosters, three or four of these men have either been "househusbands" or assumed the bulk of the parenting responsibilities while the women went to work and school.

Despite their reluctance to claim their feminism, the group for the most part practiced a feminist lifestyle as best defined by one of the respondents.

> A feminist is a person who advocates equal dignity, personhood, opportunity for women. Feminism is a remedial enterprise. It would be nice if we could just talk about humanity as being inclusive of men and women. Feminist, to me, does not mean man-hating, home-wrecking, simply political, although political concerns are part of the feminist tradition. So feminism, as I express it, means I critique the misogynistic tradition of the Christian church. (Int 009)

Not everyone who participated in the study has moved to embrace this more inclusive and egalitarian perspective. Responding to the sociohistorical influences of the civil rights struggles and feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s, most of the women have transitioned from the somewhat ambivalent place expressed in the following:

> I think nature, the relationships between men and women, our sexuality, all those things come into play there. It's just, it works better and it has nothing to do with equality issues. It just happens to work better. And that is the way that God set it up. I will stand up to anybody that challenges anybody's calling. I don't think somebody's called to be a pastor. I think they are called to ministry and what shape that ministry takes is up to that person. (Int 018)

They have evolved to a clearer understanding of the contradictions with which they can no longer cope.

> But that seemed to me to be a bit contradictory about everything that I had learned about the New Creation that happened with the New Testament, and how we had already been forgiven for our sins in Jesus Christ. I mean, it just didn't seem to quite go together! But they were using scripture basically to keep women out of the ordained ministry. And those of us who were already ordained, to keep us out of pastoral positions, or to keep us in whatever place it was they thought we ought to be - probably in the kitchen. (Int 001)

In order to "get some peace" in their lives, the respondents have had to move away from the contradictions and double messages to situations where they can respond to their internal sense of who they are called to be rather than the external pressure of who others need them to be.

The persistence displayed by the respondents had less to do with position and power than with place, their call to claim personhood for others as well as for themselves. The evolution away from patriarchy is seen in this excerpt describing interaction between one of the respondents and her mother.

> She said, "You know, if I call God anything but He, if I call She, it just doesn't feel like it is giving God as much respect." It pains me that women of her generation or that women still think that calling God She is not giving God as much respect, what is that saying about us? Not saying anything about God but about us. That she is not worthy of this much respect. (Int 007)

It is not about wresting power, it is about requiring respect.

> Well, first of all, I didn't feel like I had to be ordained to fulfill my role as a minister in the church. Although, I would have to say, I wanted it to be an equitable response from a church or a denomination. If they do it for males in this position, I felt like, it should also be done for females. (Int 014)

When it has become clear to the individuals that the institutions they are in cannot or will not accommodate this need for equal respect, then the predominant choice for the respondents has been to move on. They find a new setting or create one in which they can persist in being who they believe they were created to be.

Summary

This chapter has traced the developmental pattern which emerged from the stories of 20 ordained Southern Baptist women. The dominant theme is one of struggle in dealing with the contradictory messages of affirmation and discrimination in their personal and professional lives. The complementary influences of their two families--church and biological--are highlighted throughout the life transitions as well as their move away from these families in order to survive. In order to pursue their calls and embrace a more inclusive, feminist lifestyle and career, five of the respondents have moved out of Southern Baptist work altogether and another eight of them presently hold positions in what they call "fringe" churches or institutions. Chapter V will discuss some possible explanations for strong internal locus of control, the ability to persist and endure, and the moral developmental implications of these findings.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter discusses the patterns and themes that emerged from the stories of 20 white, middle-class, seminary-educated, ordained Southern Baptist women and the relationship of these themes to existing theoretical perspectives. The purpose of the research was to investigate the potential origins of and influences on the quality of persistence. Persistence was viewed as the continued pursuit of goals, tasks, or careers in spite of discouraging or oppressive circumstances. In response to their sense of call, this group of women chose to pursue both ordination and pastoral positions in a denomination which does not support those choices. This study was an attempt to hear the respondents' individual interpretations of their calls, to trace their individual journeys in fulfillment of those calls, and to discover if their stories revealed any common themes which might help explain their capacity to persist. The stories revealed that this group of women shared not only extraordinarily similar upbringings but also highly comparable personal characteristics as well.

By tracing the respondents' sense of call over their life course, the researcher was able to see the interaction between the internal evolution of call or life purpose and the external influences of family, church, mentors, denomination and society. The data analysis revealed that all the women have struggled both personally and professionally in pursuit of their calls and, moreover, that their lives show remarkable similarity despite the differences in the location and circumstances of their families of orientation. They came from Texas, Louisiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Alabama, North Carolina, Kentucky, California, Ohio, Florida, and Tennessee, from urban metropolitan areas to rural farm communities, from upper-middle to working class families. Nevertheless, their stories portray them as more than spiritual sisters. They expressed common experiences of family, church, mixed messages of affirmation and discrimination, a movement toward feminism from a conservative, patriarchal tradition, and a movement away from an external locus of control to an internal one. This chapter discusses these themes in relationship to ecological development theory, moral development theory, a feminist perspective and some individual psychological characteristics. Some potential

areas for research exploration will be suggested following each discussion.

Themes and Developmental Theories

Ecological Perspective of Family

From an ecological perspective, the family functions in two primary ways. It operates as the training ground for how to do relationship by modeling sharing, loving, intimacy and responsibility, and it serves as the transmitter of societal norms and attitudes (Garbarino, 1992, Elkin & Handel, 1989). Families are evaluated on their ability to provide opportunities for growth and development to children versus their inability or failure to do so. Developmental opportunities, in this view, consist of material, emotional and social support and encouragement compatible with the needs of the individual child while developmental risk is deemed to be situations in which the child lacks essential experiences and relationships to adequately foster positive growth.

According to this perspective, family is a foundational, microsystemic unit for all children and family can offer either developmental opportunities or risks for a child. The family is one of numerous microsystems (school, church,

neighborhood) in which a child participates. The interconnection of these microsystems is the mesosystem and the strength of a mesosystem is evaluated in terms of the amount of overlap and consistency among the microsystemic units. The mesosystem is nested within the exosystem (agencies and institutions which influence the child's life but with which the child has no direct contact [e.g., school boards, local government, parents' work]) which in turn resides within the macrosystem (society, culture, ideology). The interaction and interconnection of all of these levels influences a child's development in varying degrees (Garbarino, 1992).

This analysis of respondents' stories demonstrates a strong mesosystemic interconnection between family of orientation and church "family." The connections are so strong that the functions normally ascribed to family of orientation were often performed by the church family. As young girls, the respondents had been loved, affirmed, and given numerous opportunities to assume responsibility for themselves and others in their churches. The close and complementary relationship between family of orientation and church family increased the likelihood that someone within the child's family network would meet the child's needs for growth opportunities.

As long as the two systems promote essentially the same values and behaviors, the child is unlikely to be at developmental risk. Based on their stories, the respondents' families and church families were nearly analogous. The affirmation that the respondents received regarding who they were and what they were able to do was so consistently positive from both families that they all seemed to develop very strong egos. This ego strength afforded them sufficient resiliency to withstand the withdrawal of support that they would encounter in adolescence and beyond.

What this early experience did not prepare them for was the incongruity between some of the messages they were hearing and the future reality which they would experience. As children, they were assured that the highest good was to follow God's leadership by living out God's unique plan for each of their lives. They, and only they, were the ones who would be able to discern the direction in which God's call or life purpose would take them. No overt mention was ever made of gender limitations in pursuit of call although some women clearly sensed the "acceptable" alternatives which were open to them when they were quite young.

> [When I was] a very young child maybe 5 or 6 years;
> we were living in Kentucky so I couldn't have been
> seven at that point, thinking about what I was
> going to do when I got big, and I clearly remember
> saying to myself "if I were a boy, I'd be a

> preacher." My parents never said "you have to be a
> boy to be a preacher." (Int 013)

As each woman came closer to recognizing and accepting her own interpretation of God's call on her life and as that call drew her closer to pastoral ministry and ordination, she encountered resistance from the very institutions which had once so enthusiastically affirmed her.

A testament to the potency of the early interaction and influence can be seen in the respondents' adherence to their foundational training, their persistence in pursuing call despite resistance. This respondent demonstrates the evolving sense of call.

> Now I see Call as coming very much from who I've
> been created to be with my talents and my gifts,
> and Call is becoming what I've been created to be,
> and I don't see my Call any different from
> someone's Call who is a layperson. I think we all
> have Call in our lives because we are all created
> by God and it is becoming that person you are
> created to be. More and more, I feel that my Call
> is related to being in touch with the spirit of God
> within me whether that takes the form of creating
> through writing, whether it takes the form through
> healing ministry, preaching, whatever opportunities
> that there are. Now I do believe that there are
> certain vocational directions. I believe that I
> followed some maybe originally because of
> limitation, cultural limitations, limitations of my
> socialization.
> (Int 007)

She also reflects the commonly expressed sentiment that although the shape of call changed for the respondents, the certainty of call remained constant or deepened over the

years. The primordial message which was transmitted, affirmed and internalized by this group was that responding to God's call or one's perception of one's sense of purpose took precedence over other pathways. The message was conveyed to include the likelihood of cost, potentially sacrificial cost. Many of the respondents have endured mistreatment and abuse simply because they understood it to be part of the price of service. Most have begun to separate the challenges and obstacles of daily living from some systematized abuses which they have experienced.

The Unintended Consequences of Family

Just as the parental message of commitment had produced the unintended consequence of young women pursuing their pastoral calling, parental modeling of conviction produced a tenacity of purpose in pursuit of the pastoral call that even disapproving parents were unable to derail. Respondents whose fathers were either pastors or deeply involved in the church life experienced opposition at home when they opted for ordination or disagreed with their parents' biblical interpretations of the faith.

> At the same time, he does have a very specific
> interpretation about what is appropriate and not
> and has a difficult time believing that other
> people are as serious and sincere as he is in
> interpretation. So he believes that I don't take

the Bible seriously when I disagree with him. (Int 020)

When the child's understanding was at variance with the adults' interpretation, then the child was deemed to be in error. So what seemed to have occurred in the majority of these cases was that the families successfully transmitted an ethic of conviction. They were equally as successful in transmitting the message that conviction was associated with strongly held personal beliefs and that such beliefs were a result of personal understanding and choice.

The adults in both church and biological families had preached the message, "wherever He leads, I'll go," had presented living and literary models to support this message, and had affirmed adherence to the message for the first 15 to 20 years of their daughters' lives. What they did not seem to anticipate was the possibility that the daughters might be led outside of what was traditionally understood to be "a woman's place."

The question remains, why did these women internalize these messages differently from so many other women who participated in the same two microsystems? In accordance with the ecological perspective, developmental outcomes are the product of an interaction between the individual and her environments. Consequently, persistence is not merely the result of having been raised in two complementary families.

It also involves the individual characteristics that these women brought to the interactions and the historical events which took place both inside and outside of the denomination over the past half century.

As was the case with the dominant themes in their lives, the individual characteristics of these women were remarkably similar. For the most part, they were passionate, multi-talented, intelligent, verbal, hard-working, intuitive, self-reflective, highly organized, creative, curious, energetic, and well-educated individuals with well-developed senses of humor to sustain them through the difficult times.

> For me I live it with as much courage and as much humor as I can possibly muster. If one of them has to go I pray it's not humor.
>
> K: Some days you're not sure.
>
> I: Some days I'm not sure about that. My humor goes. It is hard. Very, very hard. But I have a few people that really do experience a similar vision. And it only takes a few to give you some courage. (Int 008)

The women's compassion and concern for others was apparent not only by their career choices but also by the respectful manner in which they described their interactions with others regardless of the circumstances.

> But the honor and privilege of being with a person as they come to terms with the end of their physical life is something that I have missed. (Int 019)

What happened for me in my ministry was I had
always wondered why I had gravitated to the
hospital setting. I wondered why I had ended up
working with people that other people couldn't seem
to stand to be with, whether it was cancer patients
or re-hab patients that cried all the time because
they couldn't control themselves, or psyche
patients, I would end up able to work with these
people. They weren't people that threatened me. I
didn't always know what to do and I had to learn
when I was a student that I could tolerate the kind
of pain that they were experiencing. I didn't
always like it. It took a real toll on me, but I
could be in that kind of experience with them and
found that I did a fairly good job of ministry
there, and that it continued to improve. (Int 003)

Every woman in this group would be considered

"constructivists" according to Belenky et al.'s (1986)

categories of women's ways of knowing, that is, they

integrate their thoughts, experiences and feelings to

construct paradigms in which they too are participants. They

are not separate from what they know. Their understandings

are not just intellectual exercises; they require practical

application to everyday life. In accordance with this level

of cognitive development is the concomitant moral development

which compels them to act upon what they think. Their

holistic perspective does not permit them to disconnect from

the "body" and they operate out of a sense of responsibility

to the whole or larger community.

[named individuals] offer our voices, we help
create a larger space in which to exercise our
ecclesial life. I'm an ecclesial Christian, I'm
not a mystic who did it all up in the Oak tree by
herself. I'm an ecclesial Christian. (Int 009)

From time to time, they may retreat and reflect, but they are merely recharging in preparation for future interaction with community.

These were some of the individual strengths and characteristics that the respondents brought to their respective microsystems as children. These are the characteristics which were affirmed and exercised and reinforced by the families. Most of the respondents gave indications that they were aware of the pattern of "people pleasing" behaviors which this environment fostered, but they were also aware of the positive impact the support had on their self-confidence.

> I guess if I didn't feel very confident in myself
> as a person, in my calling as a minister, it
> [continuing in ministry] would almost seem
> insurmountable. Because of the other women that I
> have networked with through the last eight or nine
> years who are basically still struggling to find
> their place but yet confident of who they are and
> what they are called to be, still trying to work
> within the system of Southern Baptists, (Int 014)

This self-assuredness appeared to be a dominant characteristic among the respondents and they acknowledged it as a source of sustenance during their struggles to maintain their sense of responding to call.

The focus of this study was to investigate the underlying influences which contributed to persistent behavior in the face of opposition. The most significant

contributor to persistence in the respondents' lives and stories was their personal strength and self-assuredness. Given that other children, male and female, grew up in similar environments, what was different for these women? Almost all had siblings, very few of whom entered the ministry. Only one had a sister who went into the ministry, but that sister followed a very conventional, traditional career path. Were they treated differently because of their gifts and talents? Were they treated differently because they were more compliant as youngsters than they have become as adults? What was it their cognitive development or cognitive mapping that enabled them to reflect on their input and construct a corporate vision?

<div align="center">Moral Development</div>

Influence of Narrative

One consistent element in the respondents early environments which might help explain their evolved moral concern and sense of responsibility for others was their exposure to narratives. Their extensive involvement in church and church activities meant that they were constantly reading or hearing stories, sermons, songs, and testimonies which illustrated or fleshed out the values and principles that their elders wished to instill in them.

Vitz (1990) presents a case for the efficacy of narrative in communicating values because it affords the reader or listener the opportunity to empathize or identify with the individual(s) involved and more importantly, narratives contextualize or give meaning to the precepts involved. His position opposes Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) attempt to create an objective, abstract, hierarchy of moral principles and supports Gilligan's (1982) and Gilligan and Attanucci's (1988) perspective regarding the importance of interpersonal connection in moral decision making, especially for females. Vitz (1990) contends that narratives are more powerful moral educational tools than presentation of non-contextual, abstractions from which the reader is supposed to logically and rationally deduce a principle.

Like Colby and Damon (1992), Vitz (1990) emphasizes the importance of context and affect in moral development. It is the connection with character and context which captures both heart and mind of the hearer that heightens the influence of the narrative message. Their frequent exposure to narratives in their early years might well contribute to explaining the significance of care for others and of personal responsibility in the respondent's lives.

> They [foreign missionaries] would come and give these incredible testimonies. I was captivated by those stories. See, women also told their stories. It wasn't just men, and so I heard very powerful

women speaking about their sense of Call to the
mission field. Also, they would have adventurous
stories of what it was like in a foreign land. For
a young girl that was captivating to hear of
adventure in foreign places, and people who ate
differently, and dressed differently. I loved
hearing that. And the women were really my
favorite to listen to because they had such great
passion. (Int 008)

The animated recollection of these incidents which occurred
20-30 years earlier reflects the affective power of the
experiences. The intensity of both the actual events and the
relating of these events suggests the need for further
investigation of the influence of passion or affect in
attracting adherents to moral messages and also, the
possibility of investigating the relationship between
emotional depth and sensitivity to ego strength.

Both Hearing and Telling Stories

The importance of narrative story telling goes beyond
its moral educational value. As witnessed in the
respondents' stories, "speaking one's experiences" or "giving
voice to one's life" is about the transmission of heritage,
the establishment of transgenerational and transcendent
connection and, perhaps most importantly, about becoming a
"real" or recognized part of the life process. Gilligan
(1982) introduced the idea of feminine voice, an alternative
perspective on moral development. Her initiative has led
others such as Alpern et al. (1992), Bateson (1989), Frye

(1992), and Heilbrun (1988), to elaborate on the variety of ways women have been kept silent historically and yet have managed to keep journals, write letters, tell stories and even preach to establish and retain a communal connection. The respondents in this study demonstrated this same bent toward claiming their separate and unique identities and becoming more than just incidental and interchangeable connectors between male generations. As evidenced in the following excerpt, they began to discover the insufficiency of merely being their husband's or their church's support system.

> And I really dealt with the struggle of "it's not
> enough for me personally to be a minister's wife,
> it's not enough for me to be a secretary at a
> seminary working in a church related area." And I
> kept trying to convince myself, that all those,
> that that was enough, that I was as involved in the
> church about as much as I could be and that I
> didn't need to do anything else. But always in the
> back of my mind, "it's not enough for you."
> (Int 014)

They recognized that they were called to do more than follow someone else's direction, that they had a direction of their own and had both a right and responsibility to claim their own place and speak their own piece.

For many, speaking their piece came at the cost of personal peace.

> Suffered! It's been unending pain, psychic pain
> and spiritual pain, and there was absolutely, for
> me, no way to get through to where I am now without

> just an enormous amount of emotional and spiritual
> pain.
> (Int 004)

Regardless of the consequences, however, the respondents

agreed that being "true" to themselves and their calling was

the only acceptable choice for them.

> And you choose your pain. And I am thankful for
> the pain I chose, and I am thankful that I chose
> what I do.
> (Int 004)

Their genuine peace seemed to stem from a kind of holistic

integrity which they sensed intuitively. Throughout their

stories, they recount instances of "having a sense of

belonging," "feeling at peace with a decision or situation,"

or experiencing actual physical sensations, such as having "a

burden in my heart." While these expressions are not

uniquely feminine, especially in fundamental or charismatic

religious circles, they do reflect the moral orientation of

care associated more often with women than men (Gilligan &

Attanucci, 1988)

From the care perspective, justice is less about

adherence to a logically and rationally abstracted rule

(Kohlberg, 1984) than about concern for what is fair and

equitable based upon the needs of the individuals involved

(Gilligan, 1984; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988; Lyons, 1988). A

paramount concern in the care perspective is avoidance of

harm to others and a sense of personal responsibility and

connection in that process (Lyons, 1988). Even when they were convicted of the value of their own positions, the respondents were often hesitant to impose the consequences of their choices on others.

> I sometimes am reluctant to urge women toward this particular journey, because I wonder if it's fair to them to invite them into pain in this kind of struggle.
> (Int 004)

> Yeah, it was like whenever women would come to me and see me about their sense of calling, I just told them if it is not so much a part of you that you can't get rid of it, then I wouldn't do it. If you could do anything else, do something else unless it is in your craw and you can't get it out.
> (Int 015)

It was their personal attempt to keep others from harm that drew these women into traditional ministerial roles in the first place, and it is, likewise, their attempt to keep others from harm which compels them to advise women to stay out of ministry now.

Morality and Moment--Sociohistorical Impact

The consistency of the respondents' operating from a care perspective throughout their life courses supports Lyons' (1988) contention that this sensitivity to others is not confined to a developmental stage in life. Their sense of feminine justice began early.

> I remember as a child pushing my parents to be inclusive in life. I remember when we used to have

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> Black workers on the farm and my mother would set
> their plates in the kitchen and the rest of us
> would eat in the porch or if we ate in the kitchen,
> then they ate on the porch and I said, "Mama, I'm
> not going to do that" and I ate with the Black
> workers. That's been something that has been part
> of my life for a long time. (Int 015)

The same sense of justice continued as they matured as
evidenced by their extensive involvements in peace, justice,
hunger, and other ecumenical movements. They seemed to have
been impacted either directly or vicariously by the Civil
Rights and Feminist Movements of the 1960's and 1970's.

> He was one of the kindest men I've ever met, and
> wonderful sense of humor. He is one that when he
> moved from our church to Southern Arkansas, began
> to make some real statements at the state of
> Arkansas about the issue of race; and for the rest
> of his life he did. I don't know what there was
> about the climate of A, but yet his influence began
> to trickle down back to our church. (Int 002)

> I have just recently figured out that the church
> really changes because of the prophetic words of
> people outside of it. The culture and the society
> changes and the church catches up. People outside
> the church forced integration and civil concerns on
> us and the church caught up. The Feminist
> Movement, the Women's Movement started the stuff.
> The church is finally catching up. It's not
> because of prophets inside. It is the prophets
> outside. (Int 020)

While these movements were drawing them toward a broader,
more inclusive perspective, the denomination was shifting in
the opposite direction toward a more narrow, exclusive
definition of what it meant to be a Southern Baptist. The
women interviewed attempted to resolve the cognitive

dissonance which they experienced by reflecting on and seeking answers to what they called the "hard questions."

> I was disconnected from peers because I did have a longing to ask questions, questions of meaning, questions about our life. What does this mean for us? Where do we go? What do we do? What does it mean to follow God? What does this bible story mean? What does it have to do with our lives? . . . So I found a kindred spirit [future husband] in asking these hard questions in life. (Int 008)

Most of the respondents seemed to understand that they were taking the "road less traveled," but it was the direction which made <u>sense</u> for them even given the pain and cost.

Significantly, the lives of this group of women appear to demonstrate the longitudinal course of Gilligan's (1982) three stages of moral development. In their childhoods, all of these women moved beyond the initial stage of self-care for survival to the second stage of caring for dependent others. Presently, three-quarters of them have either moved on to or are transitioning toward the third stage of interconnection between other and self. Such a move signifies that they have changed or are in the process of changing their view of responsible care to include care for themselves as well as others. This evolution becomes readily apparent when those who have moved out of the denomination describe the long, drawn out struggle to honor themselves and the difference leaving the oppression and depression behind has made in their lives.

In psychological terms, I think I had been so
oriented to getting that need met to be cared for
by doing what folks saw as the good thing to do,
the pleasing thing to do, that over the years, as a
child when you learn that early, it takes you a
long time to unlearn it and realize that basically
you're not really paying attention to what it is
that is good for you, that God would bless and say,
"That's okay. That's a part of you to be
fulfilled, that's a part of you to experience,
that's a part of you that's acceptable; and I
didn't even know what those parts were because I
was so oriented to being a good Baptist and being a
good wife, yet I was constantly in tension with the
fact that I was always on the edge. There was
always that problem, and finally just saying that
I've got to decide which way to go with this and
I've got to make some stance because life is going
on. It came down to the fact that it began to take
such an emotional toll on me, and that took a
personal toll, and I literally physically and
emotionally got sick. . . . I think those are the
decisions that women have to make now. We have to
decide. That was the previous decision I made
about the Convention. I either find a way to live
with it or I get out. It's not always two;
sometimes there are other options where you can
work on things for awhile, but after you work for
awhile, or after you do this or after you do that
or after you say, well I'll go for every other
battle, you know, there comes a point where you
have to say, look is this the place or is it not?,
if it's a work setting or if it's where you have
ongoing relationships in either an administrative
or personal setting. (Int 003)

This woman exemplifies the concept of becoming "response-
able" for herself as well as others (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller,
Stiver, & Surrey, 1991).

Not only are these women models of Gilligan and
Attanucci's (1988) moral orientation but their lives also
speak to a variety of feminist theories and research efforts

focusing on the empathic "self-in-relation" as opposed to the rational "self-in-isolation." The overview of self (see Appendix G) contrasts theorists in four important domains according to their general view of self and the significance of context in each theoretical perspective. The life histories gathered in this study tend to lend support to the self-in-relation theorists. These women's accounts demonstrated the importance of individual's interaction with their environment and the manner in which these women had influenced and been influenced by their contexts.

Contextual theorists seek a revision of perspectives so that they are more inclusive of female experience. In the case of the women in this study, broadening theory in this manner might help eliminate some of the double binds to which these women often fell "victim." Rather than establishing goals of separation and individuation, these theorists press for systems which honor interdependence and responsible care (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988; Jordan et al., 1991; Lyons, 1988). They value the capacity to take others into consideration both cognitively (Belenky et al., 1986) and morally (Gilligan et al., 1988). As the respondents in this study move toward what they describe as a more balanced, healthier lifestyle, they seem to represent responsible, selves-in-relation. For these women, becoming more response-

able has meant moving out of patriarchal contexts into more cooperative, egalitarian ones. Such moves have empowered them to persist. The correspondence between these theories and this study's findings suggests the possibility for more life history or systematic, in-depth retrospective interviews to further substantiate the views presented by practitioners and clinicians.

Erikson Revisited

The respondents' self-reflective choices to remain true to their internal messages rather than submit to external pressures raise some questions about the progression and continuity of Erikson's developmental stages, particularly the issues of generativity, integrity, and trust (Erikson, 1963). In Erikson's (1963) view, generativity and integrity are issues resolved in mid-life and beyond after an individual has dealt with their intimate personal and interpersonal issues. Generativity represents a choice to serve and connect with community while ego integrity is the result of feeling as though one has contributed and connected in some way with the world around them. From the time they were children, the respondents in this study demonstrated both an awareness of and a concern for others. Coupled with this empathetic awareness was a moral imperative to act on

behalf of those others, the sense that compassion without personal commitment was insufficient.

Caring for others was not a separate task to be negotiated after caring for self was successfully resolved. For this group, their lifelong task was attempting to achieve a healthy balance between caring for others, which more often took precedence, and caring for self.

> I loved being in ministry, but I chafed under the pressures--living in a glass house, no boundaries, always being on call, you know, those kinds of things. . . . At that time, I also then started to set boundaries. I refused to work the hours I had worked. I refused to be as available as I had been, but you really can't set those kinds of boundaries after you have been in a place for a while because those boundaries are then perceived as laziness or lack of concern or withdrawal. And over and over what I would be told was, "You don't care about us as much as you used to. Or you are losing interest in ministry, aren't you?" And I would say, "No, I am starting to be burned out and I am trying to take better care of myself and some of what I have done I realized is not appropriate anyway." (Int 020)

In fact, it seems more appropriate to view middle age as the time when these women spent some time focusing on self-care rather than other-care. In view of these findings, potential questions arise regarding gender differences in the ordering of the developmental stages and whether developmental stages reinforce a patriarchal order which ennobles self-fulfillment before other-fulfillment.

A second research concern involved the issue of trust. The early resolution of Erikson's (1963) trust vs. mistrust dichotomy in favor of trust is deemed to produce secure, confident individuals capable of growing, learning and interacting in meaningful ways with others. The women in this study experienced affirming, supportive early childhoods in both home and church and internalized the message of their own personal worth. They also learned to trust the leaders at home and at church. They developed a loyalty to both institutions which subsequently has come close to being the undoing of some of them. They have suffered, they have felt shame; they have felt abandoned. All of which raises questions about the nature of trust relationships. Is the unquestioned development of trust always good? Is there any responsibility on the part of caregivers to moderate messages of affirmation with appropriate cautions regarding the limits of the "real world environment?" Is there a difference between individuals, both female and male, who have been raised in an environment of affirmation and encouragement accompanied by a realistic appraisal of their future acceptability in society versus those who were affirmed without being informed of future limits?

This study has demonstrated the mal effects of creating loyalty in these women and, subsequently, causing them pain when they attempt to remain loyal.

> And I left really angry that some of us have to revise our dreams. That for some of us our dreams don't come true and that we really have to change them and change them for the dream to fit the world as it is and the church as it exists. (Int 015)

It is this researcher's contention that the indiscriminate development of trust in young children without considering the "trustworthiness" of those who are cultivating young children's loyalty is ethically questionable and a potential arena for future investigation.

Limitations of this Research

The participants in this study were ordained Southern Baptist women who live and work in the South. They are neither representative of women, nor women in ministry, nor women in Southern Baptist ministry. Rather, they more closely represent any group of individuals with an avowed purpose whose surroundings have not supported that purpose. Although the findings are not generalizable to a larger female population, the information increases our understanding of some women of conviction who persist in pursuit of that conviction. Further research would be necessary to determine if the profile presented by these

women's lives would parallel the lives of other women committed to a cause or call, other women in ministry in and out of the Southern Baptist denomination, other people in ministry, or other people who live outside of the Southern states. These limitations do not, however, prevent reflection on the possible implications of these findings for research in other or larger populations.

Implications for Future Research

This study provided some confirmation regarding previously investigated topics and at the same time, it stimulated many more questions concerning growth and development, especially of females, in this society. These women's experiences were consistent with Kimberling's (1988) findings on three counts: (a) a major source of opposition to their career choices and desire for ordination was the male clergy and male leadership at the local, state, and national levels; (b) their exposure to female models in ministry had been limited; and (c) their seminary experiences often related incidents of sexism from administrators, faculty members and other students. Even though both Kimberling's (1988) study and this study focused on Southern Baptists, the experiences seem to resonate with women's experiences from other denominations as well. It would be

worthwhile to do some comparisons of life histories across denominations and religions to explore the prevalence of the "stained glass ceiling" or other barriers for women in ministry.

Two other areas which were mentioned earlier, McCubbin et al.'s (1989) concept of "hardiness" and Beardslee's discussion of "resiliency" must be noted here. "Hardiness" does not describe either the process or current outcomes of the lives studied. These women coped with tremendous adversity and pain in their pursuit of call, but they frequently experienced severe depression (in some cases even diagnosed as clinical or near clinical) or "burnout" which are conditions that do not seem to mesh with the hardy image. In addition, these women were not inclined to adapt to circumstances in order to make the circumstances livable. They were more likely to challenge injustice and inequity, thereby creating some of their own discomfort.

The concept of resiliency, particularly as it relates to ego strength, appears to be an element of the persistence demonstrated by the respondents in this study. Although the discussion of psychological characteristics has been limited in this paper, one of the dominant themes found in the interview data reflected the struggle between ego strength and codependency or "learned helpfulness" in these women's

lives. They have spent lifetimes battling between obedience to the internal leadership of God's call versus obedience to the external leadership of men's church. More longitudinal investigation needs to be done to continue Beardslee's (1989) and Damon's (1992) work on the relationship of ego strength to moral development and commitment to cause and whether or not ego strength is an element which combined with the Meiers Briggs "feeling" dimension might cluster to predict social consciousness and commitment. And if so, are there ways to foster the development of these characteristics in the young or are there genetic limitations on their development?

Other potential avenues for further investigation were suggested throughout the discussion. The impact of mesosystemic connections and the potency of the messages reinforced in this context can be investigated in other religious/family contexts, in other school/family contexts and in other neighborhood or community organizational/family contexts. In addition to finding out the impact of these influences on the child, it is important to investigate the potential risk to as well as opportunity for growth provided by these environments. Is feeling good about oneself as a child an appropriate exchange for feeling pain and shame later on in life? What are some of the differences in the perceptions and experiences of males who pursue calls to

ministry in this denomination? Are there differences between denominations, between secular and religious commitments, between males and females in all situations? Is there a difference between ego strength, self-esteem, and self-concept, and are there situations which will enhance all three of these characteristics simultaneously, especially in young females? The transcripts from these stories were so rich and thick with data that they could offer other directions for study of families and individuals beyond those considered in this study.

Summary

This research analyzed the data from the in-depth, interviews of 20 ordained Southern Baptist women. These accounts described these women's perceptions of call or life purpose and their expectations surrounding their sense of call. The stories traced the women's perceptions and experiences from childhood to the present, particularly their experience of family, church, seminary, and career. The accounts revealed the discrepancy between what these women had anticipated in response to call, opportunities to serve in a Southern Baptist pastoral ministry, and what they experienced, opposition to their efforts to access certain positions.

As a result, the dominant theme across the respondents' life courses was one of struggle between what they intuited as their life purpose and the restrictions that were placed on them by their environment. Their struggles to remain true to their sense of call were reflected in their relationships to family and church, their experiences of affirmation and discrimination in all developmental contexts, their move away from tradition and toward feminist reinterpretation, and their personal battles between responding to an internal locus of control or an external one.

These struggles are viewed over the life course to capture the interaction of individual, family, and historical context. The influence of family and church are interpreted through the ecological perspective to both demonstrate and question the power of mesosystemic linkages. A second developmental consideration is moral development viewed from the care perspective and as influenced by exposure to narrative. This moral perspective is broadened to include other domains in which theorists are emphasizing the importance of context relative to all developmental issues. Notably, the respondents' stories demonstrate the evolution of the "self-in-relation" perspective common to all of these theories. The findings also suggested a possible reevaluation of Erikson's concepts of generativity, ego

integrity and trust. Additionally, some consideration is given to the psychological contributors to the persistence of these women. Issues of ego strength, hardiness, resiliency, and codependency are discussed. Finally, some potential avenues for further research are suggested.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

Research Identification Number_____

Age_____   Marital Status _____   Number of children _____
             Race/Ethnicity _____   Children's ages _____
                                        Children's sexes_____
Seminary attended_____   Degree received _____
      Year graduated_____
Present church affiliation _____
Church of Origin _____
        Location_____
Church of Ordination _____
        Location_____
        Year ordained_____
Present Occupation/Vocation _____
Two previous positions _____

                       _____

                       _____

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide(Short Form)

Interview Guide(Short Form)

This form is designed to amplify the information gathered in the oral histories at Baylor University. The follow-up was conducted after reading and doing a preliminary analysis on the oral history transcription.

1. Tell me about what has gone on for you since _____
                              (whenever oral history ended).
    -Are you still involved in _____(ministry position)?
    -Have there been or do you plan any career shifts?
    -Any major family events?
2. Tell me more about your understanding of your calling?
    -Has it evolved as you had understood it?
3. Are you involved in any support groups?
    -Nature of group
    -Who belongs?

At this point, selected questions from the Long Interview Guide(below) will be asked, depending on the content of the interviewees oral history.

1. Can you describe your religious experience growing up?
    -Did you participate in many organizations?
    -Did you attend church regularly? what church? with family?
    -Tell me about what you did there and who was important to you?
2. How would you describe your call to seminary?
    -What is a call?
    -When did the idea of ordination become part of your thinking?

-What precipitated your decision to attend seminary?

3   What did you expect to be doing when you graduated?

-Did that change during the course of your training?

4.   Do you recall any significant events, individuals or incidents during your seminary training?

-How did you feel in your classes? in your program?

-Were there turning points over the years?

-Who or what supported you during this time?

5.   Tell me about your job search(es) in the ministry-both during and after seminary.

-Describe the application/interview process.

-How did you feel during these times?

6.   Tell me about your experience in the ministry.

-Your relationships with co-workers.

-Your relationships with church members.

-Your experience of peer support.

-The work you have done.

-How do you envision your future work?

7.   Tell me about your families--present and origin

-Supportive?

-Religious?

-If married, how does family relate to ministry?

8.   Who do you feel most influenced your vocational choice?

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide(Long Form)

Interview Guide(Long Form)

This form was utilized with subjects who have not been previously interviewed in another context.

1. Can you describe your religious experience growing up?

    -Did you participate in many organizations?

    -Did you attend church regularly? what church? with family?

    -Tell me about what you did there and who was important to you?

2. How would you describe your call to seminary?

    -What is a call?

    -When did the idea of ordination become part of your thinking?

    -What precipitated your decision to attend seminary?

3   What did you expect to be doing when you graduated?

    -Did that change during the course of your training?

4. Do you recall any significant events, individuals or incidents during your seminary training?

    -How did you feel in your classes? in your program?

    -Were there turning points over the years?

    -Who or what supported you during this time?

5. Tell me about your job search(es) in the ministry-both during and after seminary.

    -Describe the application/interview process.

    -How did you feel during these times?

6. Tell me about your experience in the ministry.

    -Your relationships with co-workers.

    -Your relationships with church members.

    -Your experience of peer support.

    -The work you have done.

    -How do you envision your future work?

7. Tell me about your families--present and origin

    -Supportive?

    -Religious?

    -If married, how does family relate to ministry?

8. Who do you feel most influenced your vocational choice?

APPENDIX D

Participation Request Letter--With Oral History

Participation Request Letter--With Oral History

Date

Dear _____,

I am a doctoral candidate in Family Studies at Texas Woman's University and presently working on my dissertation. The research for my dissertation involves interviewing ordained Southern Baptist women who feel they have pursued their call to ministry. As a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Seminary and someone familiar with at least some of the events in the Convention, I feel that your history may afford some beneficial insights into committed women. I have reviewed your oral history at Baylor and would like your permission to analyze it in my research. If that is agreeable, I would also like to conduct a follow-up interview with you personally to update the oral history and to ensure that the transcript has adequately addressed the research questions in my study.

At present, I plan to conduct interviews during the latter part of May and early June of this year. I am hopeful that you will consider participating in this project. Be assured that this research is confidential and that neither your name nor any other identifying information will be disclosed in the process. In addition, support personnel involved with transcription, editing or validating the research technique will not be affiliated with the Southern Baptist denomination.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please return the enclosed card with a phone number and times when it might be convenient for me to call and arrange an interview date. I look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your assistance in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Karen Morrison

APPENDIX E

Participation Request Letter--No Oral History

Participation Request Letter--No Oral History

Dear _____,

     I am a doctoral candidate in Family Studies at Texas Woman's University and presently working on my dissertation. The research for my dissertation involves interviewing ordained Southern Baptist women who feel they have pursued their call to ministry. As a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Seminary and someone familiar with at least some of the events in the Convention, I feel that your history may afford some beneficial insights into committed women. I am looking for ordained women who would be willing to participate in a two hour in-depth interview focusing on call and vocation and also including some life history. Having either read your Profile in Folio or been referred to you by Dr. Libby Bellinger, Dr. Sara Frances Anders or through the Center for Women in Ministry, I would consider your story to be a beneficial addition to my work.

     At present, I plan to conduct interviews during the latter part of May and early June of this year. I am hopeful that you will consider participating in this project. Be assured that this research is confidential and that neither your name nor any other identifying information will be disclosed in the process. In addition, support personnel involved with transcription, editing or validating the research technique will not be affiliated with the Southern Baptist denomination.

     If you are willing to be interviewed, please return the enclosed card with a phone number and times when it might be convenient for me to call and arrange an interview date. I look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your consideration of this endeavor.

                     Sincerely,

                     Karen Morrison

APPENDIX F

Redefined Codes

REDEFINED CODES--->THEMATIC CLUSTERS

	FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE							
	Under 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-79	80-99	Over 100
STRUGGLE							98	
change acceptance		23						
conflict tension		20						
cost consequences		20						
curious deep thk hard qstns		28						
recovering balance		24						
SENSE OF CALL/LIFE PURPOSE								293
sense of God	13							
hard working committed				41				
idealism					51			
authenticity*	19							
integrity*					52			
intuitive people	9							
ministerial midwife	6							
represent women in ministry			30					
serious intense	9							
studious	5							
vision goal orientation			36					
vocational influences	11							
FAMILY								117
church as family							91	
church denom parent family	15							
church participation					54			
family work conflict		21						
father role				44				
loyalty*	18							
mentors models						77		
mother role						65		
support family					58			

* Categories associated with more than one theme
Underlined code appears in more than one cluster

	FREQUENCY	OF	OCCURRENCE				
	Under 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-79	80-99	Over 100

	Under 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-79	80-99	Over 100
DOUBLE BIND/DOUBLE MSG	19		38					
AFFIRMATION								152
leadership roles		24						
prof minist life					51			
support peer					50			
support profess					50			
abuse emot phys		21						
dissociation	14							
a part of apart from crowd		29						
isolation lack of self care*	8							
sense of belonging		25						
conservative	5							
radical rebel	19							
anger frustration*			32					
depression grief				48				
discouragement	18							
DOUBLE MESSAGE OF CALL	19							
seminary experience*				44				
ordination						65		
pain		28						
emotional extremes						68		
empathy identification	1							
exclusion	11							
loyalty	18							
people pursued her	6							
DISCRIM DISCOUNT SEXISM								226
disillusionment					48			
doing rght thng perfectn		23						
fundament takeover agenda	9							
impact on family	14							
lack of support from peers	19							
lack of support from women	18							
maintain status quo	3							
men have chng power	8							
resistance	17							
roles hierarchy patriarchy						56		
seminary experience*				44				
threat to status quo	1							
WOMAN'S PLACE							97	
women must work harder		20						

* Categories associated with more than one theme
  Underlined code appears in more than one cluster

	FREQUENCY	OF	OCCURRENCE				
Under 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-79	80-99	Over 100

FEMINIST

	Under 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-79	80-99	Over 100
flexible multi dimensional				45				
community	4							
ecumenical					50			
equality in marit relat				40				
equality justice iss inv		24						
holistic				44				
image of God	5							
inclusivity	9							
interconnection stories						65		
need to broaden horizon	2							
network of women			32					
new leadership style		29						
reconciliation peacemaking		24						
shared ministry	8							
voice				45				
		25						

EGO STRENGTH V CODEDENDENCY

	Under 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-79	80-99	Over 100
<u>anger frustration</u>*			32					
authority		29						
being doing minist quandry	13							
ASSERTIVE								
challenge the power			34					
<u>integrity</u>*					52			
strong women		29						
self care		24						
humor	9							
self confidence esteem					50			
self determ free choice	18							
risk taking		27						
ownership of ideas	2							
identity independence		26						
radical rebel	19							
survivor's resources	6							
COMPLIANT, CODEPENDENT								
burnout		21						
overresponsible		22						
self blame for mistreat		22						
taken advantage of	8							

OUTLYERS

	Under 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-79	80-99	Over 100
death of SBC family	12							
separation from church	6							
shifting sands	2							
sociohistorical context	13							

* Categories associated with more than one theme
Underlined code appears in more than one cluster

APPENDIX G

Self-in-Relation Overhead

SELF

ETHIC OF CARE

ETHIC OF JUSTICE

Gilligan	Damon	MORAL	Colby	Kohlberg
Attanucci				
Lyons				
Taylor				
Ward				

I N   R E L A T I O N (left side, vertical)

I N   I S O L A T I O N (right side, vertical)

Miller	PSYCHOLOGICAL		Freud
Jordan			
Kaplan			
Stiver			
Surrey			

Belenky	COGNITIVE		Piaget
Clinchy			
Goldberger			
Tarule			

Bronfenbrenner	DEVELOPMENTAL		Erikson
Garbarino			
Kagan			

CONTEXTUAL

ACONTEXTUAL