WE MAKE THIS ROAD BY WALKING:
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (ELCA)
DIACONAL MINISTERS AS EMANCIPATORY EDUCATORS OF ADULTS

A Dissertation in
Adult Education

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

May 2014
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed method study was to discover how diaconal ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) practice their ministry and describe and understand their role as educators of adults. The theoretical framework of the study was informed by the intersection of critical theory, feminist theory, and liberation theology. Ten diaconal ministers, who serve in a variety of roles, participated in in-depth qualitative interviews exploring how they view their work in ministry and as educators. Several also completed Pratt and Collins’ Teaching Perspectives Inventory, a validated quantitative instrument exploring teachers’ educational philosophy and perspectives on teaching.

There are three major qualitative findings of the study. The first focuses on their role in dealing with the whole person in community, and was manifested by: meeting people where they are at; being present to emotions; attending to spirituality in community, and capacity building. The second focuses on building relationships and partnerships, by following the bishop’s charge to “empower and equip”, and by developing partnerships with institutions. The third focuses on educating and working toward social transformation by: nurturing a faith based consciousness; educating for a faith that does justice; developing a sense of emancipatory education; and working for a better world. Findings in the quantitative area illustrate how these diaconal ministers understand their practice of the education of adults using the lens of the TPI.

The study ends with a consideration of findings in light of the theory, particularly around the limitations of critical theory and the important development of critical spirituality, and offers implications for theory, practice and suggestions for further research.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Penn State Adult Education faculty and staff for believing in my research and giving me an exceptional education in the process. First and foremost, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to my advisor and the Chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Elizabeth Tisdell, who has been a source of knowledge, guidance, and personal support. Her wisdom, dedication, and commitment to adult education are just some of the reasons that she has been an inspiration to me throughout this process. This dissertation would have not been written without her help and I could have not wished for a better guide and mentor. As my first advisor in this program prior to her retirement, Dr. Danielle Flannery helped me to see different ways to learn and also different ways to teach. Dr. Ed Taylor not only challenged me academically, but he also encouraged me to think critically about the world.

Thank you to the members of my committee, Dr. Tisdell, Dr. Taylor and Dr. Brelsford. Thank you, Dr. Kupfer, for stepping into my committee at the last moment.

On a personal level, the mental and emotional support that I have received from my family members has been a true blessing to me. First, I give thanks that my parents nurtured me in the Christian faith community as a response to the promises they made for me in my Baptism in 1956. Family members near and far taught me determination and never to give up on anything, but more importantly, they taught me that I am capable of doing anything that I set my mind to, even when it comes with sacrifices. The unconditional love and support that I have also received from my mother, father, stepmother, and siblings, William and Lynn, and their families have also helped me to
continue this long journey. Katie, Becky, Andy, Byron, Aubrey, and Addyson – I hope that you know that our many conversations about the intersections of faith and life offered me new insights on this very long academic journey, as well as my unconditional love for each of you.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for my mother, Janet, for keeping me grounded and for continuing to hold our household together in recent years while I took the time I needed to finish this degree. And to our adorable Miniature Schnauzer, Greta, I give hugs and thanks for your unconditional love and energy.

To my maternal grandmother, Evelyn Dorothy Shiffer Zimmerman, I owe a debt of gratitude. As one of seven daughters of a tinsmith in rural northeastern Lancaster County (PA) she took the trolley to Millersville Normal School in the early 1920’s to study teaching. After her graduation she taught for many years in one and two room school houses in rural northeastern Lancaster County (PA), teaching throughout my grandfather’s struggle with cancer and after his death in 1947. She retired from teaching in 1966; clearly, this educator mindset (not to mention persistence) lives deep within my gene pool.

Thank you to all of the participants of the study who devoted their time and energy into talking with me for our interviews. Without your experiences as diaconal ministers this dissertation would have no meaning.

Finally, I give thanks to the many diaconal servants on whose shoulders I stand; I pray that my efforts to move forward understandings of our historic service in ministry light the pathway of service for those who are to follow.
CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW

This chapter provides the overview of a research study where the purpose was to discover how diaconal ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) practice their ministry as educators of adults and how they understand and describe that role. Given the beginnings of this opportunity for ministry service in the 1990s, there is a paucity of research on the practice of ELCA diaconal ministers from the fields of adult education, religious education, or within the ELCA. This chapter provides a background context to the study, including a purpose statement, describes its theoretical frameworks, research methodology and the significance, assumptions, and limitations.

Introduction

Diaconal ministry was born into the life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) as a result of a five-year study of ministry and the positive action of voting members at the 1993 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. Since that time very little has been written about either the people serving on the roster nor has empirical research that examines the practice of diaconal ministers who serve as adult educators been undertaken. However, the history of persons embodying diaconal service has deep roots both within the Christian tradition and, more particularly, within the Lutheran church. This chapter provides an overview of a research study focused on how ELCA diaconal ministers practice their ministry as emancipatory educators of adults.

The project investigates the history of diaconal service in the larger Christian tradition, how this form of ministry emerged in the ELCA, how the practice of diaconal ministers as adult educators is impacted by the structures of the ELCA and religious education literature, and how
the field of adult education can be utilized to inform both the education and practice of diaconal ministers in the ELCA. In particular, Chapter One includes a brief overview of the development of diaconal ministry within the Christian tradition which demonstrates an historic emphasis that those in diaconal service strive to both connect church and world and to embody lives that exemplify efforts toward social justice. This chapter also articulates the connection between the seemingly disparate fields of religion, religious education, and adult education, outlines the purpose of the study, states research questions, identifies the overarching theoretical framework which supports the study, discusses the significance of the study, and provides definitions, assumptions and limitations of the study.

One portion of the title of this dissertation comes from a book by Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*. That title is based on a poem by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado, *Se hace camino al andar*, or “You make the way as you go.” Machado’s words reflect Horton’s life and educational philosophy that the way to do something was to start doing it and to learn from that doing, to which Freire adds, “The question for me is how is it possible for us, in the process of making the road, to be clear and to clarify our own making of the road,” (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 6). The phenomenon of these words is the central focus of this research project which is centered in the lived experience of ELCA diaconal ministers – beginning the walk into diaconal ministry and attempting to clarify the making of this road in ministry service.

**Setting the Stage for this Study**

“Tell me what you can do that I can’t do?” The question from a White male pastor came as a surprise to me – well, perhaps that is an overstatement given my history of service as a diaconal minister in the ELCA. I am asked this question, or a very similar question, almost weekly and my response is almost second nature within my identity. As with many who ask this
question, I suggested to this pastor that as an individual serving outside of the widely recognized and well-positioned professional group of Lutheran pastors, it is a difficult task for someone serving in the newly established ELCA diaconal ministry to identify the one or two things that I can “do” that makes my service in ministry different from that of a pastor. Pastors, I continued, have historically had the luxury of “doing” anything and serving anywhere within Lutheran ministry, given their long identified and widely recognized position within the Lutheran tradition. It is also important that we consider that it may not only be “what we do” that defines us; it may also be “how we do” that plays a significant role in both self-definition and the understanding of others. Finally, I noted that persons in diaconal ministry are beginning to make pathways into Lutheran professional church service and striving to establish a position within already existent and recognized church structure.

**Brief Overview of the Historic Development of Diaconal Ministry**

As previously noted, diaconal ministry has deep roots within the Christian Church, from the early church through today’s Christian church. This section of Chapter One provides a brief overview of the history and purposes of diaconal ministry in the Christian church. Following this brief overview, the Chapter will situate the practice of diaconal ministers as adult educators within the spheres of religion, religious education, and adult education.

**The Early Christian Roots**

Biblical scholars agree that expressions of diaconal ministry emerge as early as the Old Testament writing; however, it is in the first century church that the term deacon or deaconess is first used (Bornemann, 1994; Taussig, 1994; Hughes, 1994; McArver, 1999; and Olson, 2005). During the first century there appears to be little organization to the early Christian church’s structure. It is during this time that deacons and deaconesses are most often consistently described as go-betweens or agents. Taussig (1994) suggests that this early Christian
understanding of the go-between as a “vital avenue for new formation” (p. 22) could be a potent challenge to clergy in today’s world who are accustomed to functioning in a highly egalitarian understanding of church.

McArver (1999) and Olson (2005) discuss the role of deacons/deaconesses in the early Christian church as evolving in a manner parallel to the development of the emerging Christian church. Most members of this early Christian community did not acknowledge the need for a highly structured church; particularly, these members believed in the imminent return of Jesus Christ and the resultant end of life on earth. As the early Christian community realized that Jesus’ return was not forthcoming the community began to structure itself. By the fourth century, the offices of church ministry had stabilized with bishops and pastors being senior to deacons, as they were recognized as the leaders of the gathered worshipping community. In turn, the deacon served as the go-between, or a door keeper, linking the pastor and bishop to the people; they also were known as the church’s charity workers.

It is from the work of these deacons that Christians over the millennia have shaped their understanding of diaconal ministry. Both historical documents and current literature that describes diaconal ministers’ service in various denominations and cultures charge these church leaders to pay particular attention to those living on the margins of the dominant culture, with specific concern for the economically poor, persons with disabilities, the aged, and the homeless. Throughout history people serving in this diaconal capacity are referred to using a variety of names: deacon(s), permanent deacon(s), deaconess(es), and diaconal minister(s) (Weiser, 1962; McArver, 1999; Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2000; Hartley, 2000; Olson, 2004).
The Protestant Reformation and the Industrial Revolution

By the early 1500’s the role of deacons in the culturally, governmental, and religiously dominant Roman Catholic Church had changed from that of servant to the marginalized to what is identified today as the transitional diaconate where the deacon’s service was seen as transitional or preparatory for service as an ordained priest. With the advent of the Protestant Reformation in the early 1500’s the power structures of society, government, and religious organizations shifted dramatically. Martin Luther, the best known early reformer to survive the act of questioning of the existent power structures of the Church and society as well as the founder of Lutheranism, recognized the need not only for the restructuring of the Roman Catholic Church but also for a total reorganization of education and social work institutions in Western Europe. As a result of Luther’s skepticism of the existent monastic role in gathering wealth for the church and ignoring the needy neighbor, he and other reformers dissolved the monastic structures, thereby ending the recognition of persons serving as deacons. These reformers also determined that the “dukes and the city councils were responsible for caring for the poor and the ill” (Nordstokke, 2000, p. 27). Instead of the care for persons living on the margins of society being the responsibility of the church, Luther urged the establishment of a “common chest” from the endowments of any discontinued monasteries to be used to “support orphans, make low-interest loans to artisans, to provide dowries for poor women, and educate poor boys so that they would be able to preach the gospel” (Olson, 2004, p. 25). While this approach to care for the disenfranchised within a society had many positive aspects, the impact it had on the diaconal responsibility of the reformed church destroyed the role those serving as deacons and diaconal ministers.

The Industrial Revolution (1730-1850) transformed populations from rural, agrarian, town-centered societies to urban-based, factory manufacture-centered societies. This radical societal transformation challenged the government’s ability to maintain the services that cared for
the poor and the ill and quickly emptied Luther’s “community chests”. As a result, there was a
rebirth of the role of deacons and diaconal ministers first in the Lutheran churches in Germany
and later throughout many Protestant churches in Europe and the United States. Weiser (1962),
McArver (1999), and Olson (2005) write that the church served a major role in the attempt to
meet the problems society faced at this time (poverty, mental illness, children on living on the
streets, and epidemics), noting that in response to the urban blights of this time German Lutheran
pastor Theodor Fliedner opened a deaconess training center in Kaiserswerth, Germany, in 1836.
The training center provided opportunities for single women, usually women with no marriage
prospects, to attain skills required for nursing and the teaching of children. Many believed
Fliedner’s effort foolish and expected its early demise; however, this renewed commitment of the
Lutheran Church to serve those whose lives were shattered as a result of major social change,
particularly persons marginalized by the dominant culture of the time, provided the foundation for
service in ministry that continues today as diaconal ministry. In 1849 three deaconesses trained in
Kaiserswerth arrived in Pittsburgh, PA, and the history of persons serving in the role of the
historic deacons came to the North American continent where they served in orphanages,
hospitals, schools, and other social welfare related institutions that were related to the Lutheran
church.

Between 1849 and 1988 the Lutheran churches in Europe and the United States trained
many women as deaconesses and recognized their service in public ministry across the North
American continent. Weiser (1962), McArver (1999), and Olson (2005) note that while several
attempts were made in Europe and the US to train and organize men as deacons, none proved
successful. Instead, men were encouraged to carry out more publicly recognized power roles in
society, e.g., doctors, soldiers, pastors, and lawyers.
Birth of the ELCA and the Emergence of ELCA Diaconal Ministry

In 1988 three Lutheran church bodies in the US (the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches) merged to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). While to the merging bodies it appeared that persons serving on the roster of pastor in these bodies were the same in both preparation patterns and recognized calls to service, it was clear to those creating this merged church that persons serving on other rosters of the predecessor church bodies were quite different in both preparation patterns and recognized calls to service (Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2000, p. vi). As a result, a constitutional mandate required the previously mentioned Study of Ministry, a five-year examination of ministry structures for the ELCA. Five years later, through action at its Churchwide Assembly in 1993 that established the current patterns of public ministry, the ELCA continued identification of a deaconess community in the lineage of Fliedner’s tradition and also recognized a new pattern of diaconal ministry as public ministry rosters in the denomination. In its recommendations to the 1993 Churchwide Assembly, the Task Force for the Study of Ministry also suggested that diaconal ministers will have the special responsibility of “exemplifying the life of Christ-like service to persons in need and leading and equipping the baptized for their life of service within and beyond the congregation” (Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2000, p. 10). Task Force recommendations also stressed the need for diaconal ministers whose specific calling is leadership of the Christian community’s service in the world citing, in particular, the prevalence of suffering, helplessness, discrimination, greed, intolerance, loneliness, confusion, and issues of depersonalization and injustice. The articulation of a life of servanthood for the diaconal minister and the call to equip the baptized for the life of servanthood places diaconal ministers at the frontiers of church-societal interface and challenges the diaconal
minister to serve as an adult educator in the areas of social justice and “moral decision making” (Elias, 1993a, p. 57).

**ELCA Diaconal Ministers as Adult Educators**

Diaconal ministers serve in a variety of locations throughout the United States of America (USA), including congregations, hospitals, nursing homes, colleges and universities, seminaries, churchwide expressions, and prisons. While in a few cases they serve solely with populations of children and youth, most diaconal ministers spend significant amounts of time working with adults in these various ministry settings. Many diaconal ministers relate exclusively to adults, offering religious education to this population outside of a traditional classroom setting and, many times, outside of a traditional religious education setting. It is expected that diaconal ministers will build bridges that connect the church and the world and to educate and equip those in the baptized community of faith for service to the disenfranchised in the world. Yet several barriers exist which challenge this effort, and the view that they are adult educators.

One barrier to the diaconal minister’s practice as an adult educator is building the connection between the Lutheran church’s historic theology and its practice of religious education, both of which are deeply rooted in Western European, White, male, clergy dominated structures, and the world, which is quickly becoming a multicultural global community no longer dominated by Western European, White, male thinking or structures. Adult religious educators must constantly consider the tension that exists within this field, the expectation to transmit tradition and yet simultaneously encourage learners to challenge existent power relations and dominant ideologies within the adult learner’s faith community. In particular, very little mention of the issues of age, sex, race, or class and how this relates to the lives of adults in the faith communities is made in general religious education literature, yet this literature is used to train
adult religious educators in seminaries as well as to train adult volunteers for their practice of religious education in any variety of faith-based settings.

A second impediment is the virtually nonexistent connection between religious education literature and the tenets of adult education philosophies and practice. Adult education theorists who are versed in both the fields of adult education and religious education describe religious education theory as having a more practical approach than adult education theory. In particular, Elias (1993b) recognizes religious education theory and its writings as not highly utilizing the tools of philosophical inquiry found in adult education. Adult education philosophies utilize “…description, analysis (both descriptive and interpretive), logic, establishment of principles and laws, evaluation through norms of validation, correspondence, coherence, and constructive synthesis” (p. 152) while religious education theory is less thorough and methodical in its use of the previously mentioned professional tools.

Yet another obstacle for the practice of diaconal ministers as adult educators is the position, or lack of position, they have within the structure of the ELCA. Many societal institutions, including religious institutions, reflect a hegemony where the dominant power arrangement situates White, heterosexual males as the dominant and dominating class. Within the ELCA, with its history rooted in the Protestant Reformation of the Roman Catholic Church, the dominant class of church leaders is primarily composed of highly educated, White, male, pastors.

For example, seven of the eight ELCA seminary presidents are White male pastors while one of the ELCA seminaries is led by a White female pastor. A review of the ELCA WEB page provides information that further illustrates this point. In 2007 16 of the 65 judicatory bodies in the ELCA (synods) elected new bishops; of that group 13 are White men, two are White women, and one is a Latino male (this bishop is also the only bishop whose primary language is not
English). Additionally, in August 2007 the denomination re-elected its White male presiding bishop and elected a White male lay person as the denomination’s secretary. A further review of the ELCA WEB page (12/2007) reveals that in the 65 ELCA synods, seven have White female bishops (11%), one has a Black male bishop (1.5%), and one has a Latino male bishop whose primary language is other than English (1.5%). Despite over 37 years of women being ordained as pastors, just over 82% of the pastors are White males, and, in a world that is rapidly becoming both multicultural and global, less than 1% of the clergy are people of color.

Like many other institutions with deeply held ideologies the ELCA’s structure not only reflects the ideas of the dominant culture but also readily accepts and maintains these ideas, seemingly motivated more by a desire to fit into the dominant culture than by the desire to question the roots of these beliefs. Of particular significance is the lack of a stated intention for the diaconal minister to identify and discuss with the baptized the role the church itself plays in the perpetuation of the ideology of the dominant US culture, particularly in the areas of race and sexual orientation. Finally, as the denomination moves into the 21st Century, the newness of the education and practice of ELCA diaconal ministry is often cited by both the denomination’s officials and the leaders of the denomination’s seminary faculties and administrations as the reason for the lack of literature on diaconal ministry in its current manifestation. Sadly, these same officials note a hesitancy to encourage persons to consider service as diaconal ministers because little has been written to explain and illustrate the impact of diaconal ministry within the church and the world.

The last barrier that challenges these adult religious educators is their charge to support and encourage Lutheran adults to strive for justice and peace throughout the world. Particularly, the diaconal minister is called not only to live a life of servanthood beyond the Church wherever pain and hope present an occasion for justice and healing, but, also to lead other members of the
faith community in following this example. In the ecumenical literature on diaconal ministry, one empirical research study focuses on the education and practice of diaconal ministry. Hartley (2000), in his quantitative (and to a lesser extent qualitative) study on five denominations’ diaconal ministries (Episcopal Church in the USA, the United Methodist Church, the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, the Roman Catholic Church, and the ELCA), in part focused on the juncture of the preparation of diaconal ministers and their self-perception of skill at the practice of the ministry. Of importance to my research study is Hartley’s examination and concern regarding the acceptance of the prophetic role of the deacon.

The prophet, defined by Hartley as a capable or leading spokesperson for a cause, is embodied by the diaconal minister who capably speaks on behalf of those marginalized by the dominant culture and challenges and equips the baptized members of the ELCA to strive for justice and peace throughout the world. For ELCA diaconal minister respondents in Hartley’s (2000) study one of the greatest areas of disparity between educational preparation and current benefit for service is the area of ethics and social action (pp. 32-35). This disparity is noteworthy given the church-world interface that is essential not only to service of a diaconal minister but also in the expectation that the diaconal minister will equip adult Lutherans for service at this interface. In his conclusion Hartley points out “the disparity between the deacons’ [diaconal ministers’] overwhelming feelings of ‘least effectiveness’ in the area of social action/social justice work and denominational teaching which tends to emphasize this dimension of diaconal identity a great deal,” (p. 71). He also notes that this prophetic role of the deacon [diaconal minister] is the least likely to be accepted and welcomed by those within the church structure.

These obstacles illustrate numerous tensions the diaconal minister experiences between the call to serve at the church-world interface and the call to serve those within the denomination, a denomination in which members often perceive that the primary role of the diaconal minister as
providing personal support and care. They also illustrate numerous tensions that diaconal ministers serving as adult educators experience within the structure of the church itself, a structure that tends toward self-perpetuation and not towards social action that might question deeply held values and beliefs which allow the denomination’s ruling class (highly educated, White male pastors) to continue in a dominant and publicly recognized position. This tension between the official recognition of diaconal ministry and the lived experiences of diaconal ministers is indicative of the repressive tolerance that Marcuse describes as a tolerance that “is in many of its most effective manifestations serving the cause of oppression,” (1968, p.95). This tolerance serves to make certain that what appears as an embrace of a different perspective only neutralizes and represses that perspective (Brookfield 2005a, 2005b).

To illustrate this, it can be noted that the denomination projects its tolerance of this historic yet emerging ministry and its importance and partnership with the ministry of pastors through practices such as the denomination’s yearbook which includes an official listing of these ministers immediately following in the official listing of pastors, by granting diaconal ministers (like pastors) automatic voting privilege at judicatory gatherings, and the creation of the rite by which a person becomes a diaconal minister. However, simultaneous to this apparent openness and tolerance there are some notable areas of repression. As examples, (a) the denomination has refused to provide a structure by which a title (such as pastor or bishop) can be created for diaconal ministers, (b) while a representative number of pastors can vote at the denomination’s churchwide assembly and be elected to serve on national boards, the denomination’s constitution does not allow a representative number of diaconal ministers to vote at that same churchwide assembly nor can they be elected to serve on national boards, and, (c) at the recent installation services of newly elected bishops these bishops were charged with oversight of pastors and congregations with no mention of the constitutionally stated oversight of diaconal ministers.
Emancipatory Education, Liberation Theologies and Diaconal Ministry

Emancipatory educational philosophy and liberation theologies offer connection points between adult education philosophy and the practice of diaconal ministry. These bodies of literature also provide pathways into both understanding the dilemma of the diaconal minister and the challenge of the diaconal minister to practice adult education within a structure that is strongly grounded in what Moe-Lobeda (2002) calls a North Atlantic church.

Emancipatory Education

Emancipatory educators Horton and Freire (1990), hooks (1994, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003), Dawson (2005), and English (1998, 2000) discuss the influences that shaped their lives and work as teachers in the field of adult education. These influences include learning, community, poverty, family, and faith. Freire (1967, 1974, 1984, 1994, 1998, 2000) particularly mentions the importance of his involvement with the Catholic Action movement during his college years because of its concern with justice issues in society, promoting social change on behalf the hungry and those in poverty. Horton (Horton & Freire, 1990) recalls the impact of his socio-economic, lower class position while growing up in the southern US as pivotal to his perspective on education for liberation, particularly noting the impact of his religious upbringing and Biblical understandings. hooks (2003) discusses the journey of her faith and liberation from Christianity through Buddhism, writing of her recognition that the faith taught in her childhood, one of total compliance to and acceptance of domineering male-dominated hierarchies, simply did not provide the liberation she needed to practice as an emancipatory educator.

The focus of these philosophies to advocate for profound changes in society’s structure and understandings is innately connected to the ELCA’s documents that describe the role of a diaconal minister as one who is asked to address issues of suffering, helplessness, discrimination, greed, intolerance, loneliness, confusion, and issues of depersonalization and injustice. These
philosophies question the proclivity of adult education to focus on technical knowledge at the expense of the call to social action. Additionally, these philosophies challenge adult educators to recognize the importance of utilizing the adult education learning environment as a force to bring about radical social change through deliberate connection of the social, political, and economic understandings of culture to this learning environment. The primary goal of learning, then, is to encourage people to a conscientious social action in culture and society which is an emphasis of the practice of diaconal ministers as adult educators.

Paulo Freire, Myles Horton, bell hooks, Jane Dawson, and Leona English provide an important link between emancipatory education for adults and liberation theologies. Within the Latin American context, Freire is recognized as a vital participant in the liberation theology movement; within the rural, southeastern US context Horton is frequently described as an early contributor to the social action efforts of faith-based community organizers, one dimension of liberation theology in the North American context. While known primarily as an adult educator in the public sector, hooks provides insight regarding the struggles of a Black woman with the dominant and hierarchical Christian tradition. White female adult educators Dawson and English provoke consideration of the intersection of religion and spirituality, often examining existent vocabulary and infusing terms with fresher meanings than that which is generally understood within the dominant White male western Christian traditions.

**Liberation Theologies**

Donella (2005), a Black male ELCA pastor, stated in a sermon that “liberation is always both spiritual and political”. Essential to liberation theology is the understanding that what matters in God’s eyes is the way in which people live their faith. In the broadest sense theology is discourse about God and throughout Christian history the understandings of theology have
been numerous. The dominant theological system in use today emerged from the thinking and writing of well-educated, White males from Northern and Western Europe who built these systems on the writings of Greek philosophers. This approach is the one primarily studied within the ELCA; however, it is by no means the only or even primary method in use today throughout the world.

The term liberation theology was first used in 1973 by Peruvian Roman Catholic priest Gustavo Gutierrez (1973) to describe a study of theology which concentrated its effort on liberating the people of Latin America from oppression and poverty. In the broadest sense this term calls Christians to work for economic and social justice for all people through an effort to connect theology and various sociopolitical concerns. The prophetic dimension of liberation theology is described by Lee (2003) as a critical function of this theology.

It is important to recognize what K. C. Abraham, an Asian Black liberation theologian, notes in Cone (1990b), that liberation theology is not a “…monolithic system of thought…” (p. 185). Rather, numerous liberation theologies have emerged from a variety of oppressed groups, such as Black, Native American, Hispanic America, Asian, and feminists. Taking what Fiorenza (1998b) describes as an advocacy stance, these liberation theologians believe that White male Northern/ Western European theology tends to manipulate God in favor of the White capitalistic social structure and that a more accurate interpretation of Jesus lies in his continual struggle to support those whom the dominant culture of his time viewed as outcasts, the infirm, women, and the poor.

All liberation theologies are concerned with challenging the dominant values of the hegemonic culture and all are aware that the White church itself is many times an impediment to the liberation of society and persons who are not a part of the dominant culture. The interlocking
systems of society are identified as concerns of liberation theologies, especially as concerns for charity and justice are expressed.

The struggle to move away from the dominance of the intertwining spheres of gender, race, and class that is central to the work of liberation theologians and their focus on issues of justice and liberation that connect church structures, private faith values, and lives that search for a holistic justice agenda corresponds to the call of ELCA diaconal ministers to confront discrimination, injustice, and oppression, and lead the community’s service into a world marked by suffering, discrimination, injustice, intolerance, and depersonalization.

Given the recent beginnings of this opportunity for ministry service, there is a paucity of research on the practice of ELCA diaconal ministers from the fields of adult education, religious education, or within the ELCA. No research about diaconal ministers and their practice as adult educators has been undertaken either in the field of adult education or religious education.

To date only two research studies involving ELCA diaconal ministers have occurred within the ELCA, or the larger ecumenical framework. One qualitative research study has been undertaken in this specific field, a short open-ended questionnaire voluntary sample study completed by masters’ degree students in 2001 at an ELCA seminary. Eleven ELCA diaconal minister respondents, of 65 queried, contributed insights to this study which focused on the preaching and proclamation of diaconal ministers. Additionally, one mixed methods ecumenical study of diaconal ministers in North America was completed in 2000 as part of a doctoral thesis for a student at Boston University’s School of Religion. This ecumenical study (Hartley, 2000) included 15 ELCA respondents and examined the relationship between preparation and ministry practice of diaconal ministers. It is important to note that at the time of the Hartley study approximately 40 persons served as diaconal ministers; at the time of the masters’ study 50 persons served as diaconal ministers.
To that end this research study is foundational to the practice of ELCA diaconal ministry as it emerges within the denomination. This mixed methods study addresses a gap in the literature in both fields and connects the church and the world, and connects the fields of religious education and adult education, specifically in the practice of ELCA diaconal ministers. Eighteen years after the first person was consecrated as a diaconal minister, the study makes a contribution to that end.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to discover how diaconal ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) practice their ministry and describe and understand their role as educators of adults.

There were three primary research questions utilized in this study:

1. How do diaconal ministers describe their work, both philosophically and in the practice of what they actually do, and,
2. How do diaconal ministers connect this philosophy not only to their practice of ministry, but, also, to their specific call to lead and equip others to a similar ministry in daily life?
3. How do diaconal ministers describe their perspective as teachers in relationship to their learners?

**Theoretical Framework**

This study employed critical theory highly informed by feminist theory as theoretical framework(s), and to some extent it also made use of aspects of liberation theology discussed above. Emancipatory education is informed by critical theory and examines and critiques society rather than striving to explain or understand that society, recognizing that dominant power structures are self-legitimizing. In particular, critical theorists examine power structures and dominant systems within a social system, almost exclusively from a rational perspective.
Feminist theories strive to understand inequality in all social structures, focusing on power relations, sexuality, critiquing social relations, analyzing gender inequality, and pushing for women’s rights. Additionally, feminist theories seek the equality of all, and consider the role of affect and relationship, and not just rationality in the process.

Critical theory focuses on understanding and critiquing hegemony in culture and supposes that the majority of participants in any group or culture do not recognize the profound impact that deeply held ideals have on a culture. This is illustrated by the presumption of many in middle class White America that their experience is normative for all, not only the US but throughout the world. In turn, this dominant culture reproduces a “whole way of thinking about a sphere of human activity” (Brookfield, 2005a, p. 67). Thus, critical theory strives to create an environment that in which those outside of the dominant ideology and power structure challenge power structures and relationships existent within culture.

Historically, while critical theory examines the important issue of positionality in the learning environment as well as the larger culture, it has not been inclusive of the feminist philosophy or feminist pedagogical perspectives. Rather, the field is deeply embedded in literature written by White, Northern European/North American males from the educated class. For that reason this study includes the lens of feminism, both feminist theory and feminist pedagogy.

Feminist theory and feminist pedagogy consider the intersections of gender, class, and race within a culture or social structure. Building on this foundation, feminist perspectives challenge the dominant structure of society and strive for the empowerment of learners in an educational setting. Of particular interest for these philosophies is the recovery of women’s voices, experiences, and viewpoints in order to expose systems of power, oppression, and privilege of the dominant, hegemonic culture in the US.
It is these important concepts of power and positionality, described by proponents of both critical and feminist theories, which guide this research project. But these theoretical frames alone cannot completely explain the adult education work of ELCA diaconal ministers as they are working in a religious context and come at their work from an explicitly Christian perspective. In addition, to some extent liberation theology as discussed above served as a third theoretical lens. This will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

**Overview of Research Design and Methodology**

The development of any field of study is rooted in research within the particular field. Merriam and Simpson (2000) note that research is the “means by which a discipline expands it knowledge base; and in applied fields, it informs and enhances practice” (p. 1). Three approaches to or frameworks of research are identified by Creswell (2003) and Merriam and Simpson (2000): the quantitative framework which is considered as experimental and non-experimental designs that attempt to show cause and effect relationship, b) the qualitative framework which is attempts to discover the meaning of a phenomena or phenomenon for those involved, and, c) the mixed methods approach which mixes the quantitative and qualitative frameworks in an effort to negate the inherent biases of either framework when used independently.

As previously stated, a paucity of research on ELCA diaconal ministry exists; therefore, in this research study I utilized a mixed methods approach. While this will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three, a mixed methods approach allows the researcher to obtain data from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. Creswell and Clark (2007) define mixed methods research as a design “…with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry…that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data…” (p. 5).

Creswell and Clark (2007) further note that one form of data (qualitative or quantitative) tends to be more dominant in the study; the dominant form is capitalized, where the secondary
data is in lower case letters. So a mixed method study where the qualitative data was primary and the quantitative data was secondary would be deemed a QUAL-quant study. This study of ELCA diaconal ministers was predominantly a qualitative study, because I was interested in ELCA diaconal ministers’ perceptions and experiences of how they conduct their work as adult educators. As Merriam (2009) notes, qualitative research examines how participants make meaning by studying the particular subject in depth. Toward that end, I interviewed 10 ELCA diaconal ministers according to purposeful criteria (described in detail in Chapter Three) in depth about their work. This interview featured reflective conversation that used as its beginning point the ELCA Bishop’s address to the diaconal ministry candidate during the Rite of Consecration (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1997 p. 2). The Bishop’s address to the candidate and the semi-structured interview questions can be found in Appendix B and Appendix D. The interview was audio taped with the permission of the participants.

In addition, seven of the participants completed Pratt and Collins (2001) “Teaching Perspectives Inventory” (TPI) online (available at http://teachingperspectives.com) which is a validated quantitative instrument that analyzes responses and provides interpretive frameworks within minutes of completing the questionnaire, about the respondent’s beliefs on five different scales regarding teaching as: (a) transmission; b) apprenticeship; c) as developmental; d) nurturing; and (e) social reform

While the study was predominantly qualitative, the use of the data from the Teaching Perspectives Inventory added an additional depth of understanding of these participants as adult educators. As noted above, a more complete discussion of the methodology of the study appears in Chapter Three.
Significance of the Study

Specifically, this research project that describes how ELCA diaconal ministers practice ministry as educators of adults is significant on several levels. It listens to the voices of those who practice diaconal ministry, it describes how a group of people seeks to address major social issues of this time, it contributes to a segment of the adult education research and practice, it fills a gap in literature about the practice of diaconal ministry, it is of personal significance to the researcher, and it serves as a springboard for future research.

As previously noted, research in this area is scarce in the disciplines of adult education, ecumenical ministry communities, and the archives of the ELCA. All too often researchers in faith-based settings use a researcher outside of the targeted study focus group to undertake a research project. In this study, however, the researcher is a practitioner of this new manifestation of an historic Christian ministry and one called by the ELCA to work with theological educators and church leaders who prepare diaconal ministers and nurture them through lifelong learning opportunities. Through the sharing of ministry experience in the qualitative phase of the project, and the information provided by the TPI, it made use of the voices of those who practice this ministry, early in the life of the ministry.

In today’s world many people are victims of “suffering, confusion, helplessness, discrimination, intolerance, ignorance, alienation, self-gratification, greed, loneliness, injustice” (Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2000, p. 42). As persons called to address these local and global concerns ELCA diaconal ministers attempt to serve at the cusp of efforts for social change and attempts for just societies. This project provides a foundation for understanding how these church professionals might lead in making inroads for social change and justice.
Adult education can provide a vital role in conceptualization of a variety of different approaches that respond to difficult issues of twenty-first century cultures, approaches that arise from an honest appraisal of dominant cultural values. The study is significant to the field of adult education in that it brings to the forefront the awareness of the sphere of religious workers with adults as both learners and practitioners of adult education. This bridge building between adult education and theological education connects areas of emancipatory education and adults in a particular field of adult education, providing avenues for discourse between educators in these seemingly disparate fields.

The study fills a gap in the literature which informs the adult graduate theological education as well as the ongoing education of both diaconal ministers and those who offer service in ministry as colleagues to diaconal ministers. Given the long standing power structures and practices which favor White, male pastors as leaders, the inherent nature of the practice of diaconal ministers is as team members within the Church’s structures and systems. To date, graduate theological education in the classroom and in field education experiences is focused on preparing pastors for congregational service with the education of diaconal ministers considered an add-on to that primary curriculum. Ongoing education for pastors and diaconal ministers is also built from this perspective. Through the findings that are discussed thoroughly in Chapters 4, this research project offers insights for curricular design which prepares diaconal ministers and others who serve in team ministry with them as well as the ongoing learning opportunities for the same groups.

As is evidenced by the vignette which opened this Chapter, the study is significant to me because it provides a focused opportunity to look closely at a phenomenon which is central to my life’s work. Not only will the results of the study inform my service as a diaconal minister, it will also shape my work with those preparing for service as ELCA diaconal ministers as well as those
who are discerning whether a call to this ministry is one they might respond to. Lastly, this project will inform the nurturing of ecclesial leaders in the ELCA and in ecumenical communities with whom I work.

Finally, the study lays a foundation for future research of the practice of diaconal ministry in the ELCA. The ELCA Office of Research and Evaluation provided assistance in the design of the quantitative instrument, as well as in the analysis of the results, because it recognized prospects to use this information as well as create future research about diaconal ministry from its findings. The findings of the study, fully discussed in Chapter Four, will be shared with the ELCA diaconal ministry community, as well as with the ELCA Office of Research and Evaluation. Both are discussing how this study will guide future investigation and research of the practice of this ministry.

**Assumptions and Limitations of the Research Project**

It is understood from the outset of this research project that all research carries with it inherent assumptions and limitations. The following assumptions are embedded in this research project:

First, many ELCA diaconal ministers are in their practice educators of adults. This assumption is grounded in two types of observations by the researcher; one, written accounts of diaconal ministers, two, conversations with many diaconal ministers. Additionally, many diaconal ministers whose ministry practice includes persons under the age of 21 are also responsible for the training and ongoing support of adults who work directly with this younger population.

Second, at least some ELCA diaconal ministers practice this education of adults as emancipatory educators. This assumption grows out of three experiences of the researcher. The Bishop’s address to the candidate for diaconal ministry during the Rite of Consecration uses
emancipatory language, “serve the needy”, “comfort the distressed”, and, “cross every barrier”.

Diocesan ministers have written accounts of equipping others for ministry in chaplaincy in the midst of terrorist actions, hospital emergency rooms, and disaster areas. Finally, these practitioners have spoken the language of those who recognize injustice not only in others’ lives, but also within the church’s structure where they are called to serve.

Third, some sense of emancipatory education philosophy can be taught in graduate theological education and in the ongoing education of diocesan ministers.

Fourth, many diocesan ministers have experienced the practice of ministry within the structure of the ELCA, a structure that is dominated by well-educated, White male pastors from Northern and Western Europe.

The following limitations are identified in this study. First, this research project utilizes a mixed methods approach, where the qualitative data is predominant. Mixed methods research is a still growing field of research. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) describe this approach as in its adolescence, noting that neither the “authors working in the quantitative or qualitative traditions” nor “writings on the philosophical underpinnings” (p. x) mention the mixed method approach with any regularity.

Second, because the study was interested in the perceptions and experiences of ELCA diocesan ministers to study the particular in depth a relatively small, purposeful sample was used. The rich descriptions needed in order to undertake the heuristic inquiry limit the number of co-researchers may not be practicable through another form of research. Therefore, like qualitative research in general, the findings from this research project cannot be generalized; however, the reader might determine findings that can be applied in comparable situations.

Third, the term emancipatory education is not well-known within the field of religious education or theology. This means that the respondents’ responses are rooted in both my own
understanding of this term as the researcher and my ability to articulate this in a meaningful way to the respondents.

Finally, a limitation of this study is the deep connection to diaconal ministry that I have. While this is a requirement of effective heuristic inquiry, it also might be evident to the respondents and contribute to both the quantitative questionnaire and the responses to both aspects of this method study. As Merriam and Simpson (2000) note, it is therefore incumbent on me to be highly self-aware throughout the research project.

**Dissertation Overview**

Chapter I outlined the background for the research project, beginning with a brief history of diaconal ministry throughout the Christian tradition. Also, the chapter stated both the purpose of the project and its primary and secondary theoretical perspectives. Finally, this chapter posed the research questions, stated numerous assumptions and limitations for this project, and defined key terms for the study. Chapter II examined literature that assists in framing this research project from the areas of critical theory, feminism, adult education, liberation theologies, and religious education. Chapter III is a detailed explanation of, and rationale for, the research method and procedure. Overall, the intent here is to provide some clear information regarding what I am proposing for a dissertation. Chapter Four discusses the findings of the study, while Chapter Five, attempts to make sense of the findings in light of the literature and to offer suggestions for theory and practice.

**Definition of Terms**

1. **Critical theory**  Founded in the Frankfurt School, this social theory is dedicated to the transformation and change of society.

2. **Diaconal ministry**  In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) this is a form of rostered (recognized) leadership ministry designed to facilitate the ELCA,
and its members, to more effectively fulfill its mission.

3. Diaconal minister(s) In the ELCA diaconal minister are persons called by God, authorized by the church, and consecrated by a bishop to the ministry of Word and Service to both the congregation and the community in a ministry that connects the two. Diaconal ministers embody Christian discipleship, create opportunities for others to live out discipleship, and connect the needs and hurts of the people and the world with the church:

4. Emancipatory education By naming and speaking to the structures of oppression that exist, emancipatory education, described by Freire (1990), is the practice of freedom from oppression by dominant culture. Freire’s approach to emancipatory learning situates the learner in opposition to the oppressive systems of society, the oppressed can attain freedom through radical education.

5. Feminism While there are many different schools of thought across the spectrum of feminism, in the project feminism is a movement that seeks to end domination and elitism throughout society.

6. Liberation theologies Throughout human history there have been many forms of liberation theology; however, in this research project the term liberation theologies describes Jesus Christ as the Liberator of the oppressed, striving to bring justice for the poor and oppressed.

7. Mixed methods This approach to empirical research utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods to generalize findings to a larger population and to particularize meanings for a group if individuals within the larger population.

8. Radical From the Latin, radux, for root, foundation, basis, origin. Diaconal ministers challenge the status quo of US culture and the ELCA by serving the marginalized
in society as Jesus served them in the Christian Gospels and through the
equipping of others for that same service. This understanding of Jesus in the
Christian Gospels is foundational to the Christian faith.

8. **Transformative-emancipatory perspective** This perspective is aware that knowledge is
influenced by human interests and that all knowledge reflects societal power and
social relationships, and that one key purpose of knowledge is to assist in societal
improvement.

9. **Transformative-emancipatory research** A research method that is dedicated to
promoting change at all levels: personal, political, and structural.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to discover how diaconal ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) practice their ministry and describe and understand their role as educators of adults. There were three primary research questions utilized in this study: a) how do diaconal ministers describe their work, both philosophically and in the practice of what they actually do; b) how do diaconal ministers connect this philosophy not only to their practice of ministry, but, also, to their specific call to lead and equip others to a similar ministry in daily life; and, c) how do diaconal ministers describe their perspective as teachers in relationship to their learners?

This chapter focuses on the literature review that informs the study. It will begin with a brief discussion, in the first section, of the context of the work that diaconal ministers in the ELCA do in light of the very limited research that has specifically included diaconal ministers. This will set the stage for the theoretical framework for the study which is grounded primarily in the intersections of critical and feminist emancipatory education theories, and in liberation theologies which also focus on working for social change. Thus, the second section will discuss emancipatory education theories, whereas the third will focus on liberation theologies. Finally, the last section will discuss related studies of ministers and educators for social justice that can cast further light on understanding diaconal ministers.

Diaconal Ministers in Context

Diaconal ministers in the ELCA do pastoral work, but there is an educational element to much pastoral work. As such and whether they are aware of it or not, they have an educational philosophy that is based both on beliefs about teaching and education, and what they actually do in practice. This study is mostly concerned with how ELCA ministers attempt to engage
members of congregations, agencies, and educational institutions in social justice concerns and the ways in which diaconal ministers describe their experience in practice. It also examines the impact that political structures have on these practitioners, particularly the power realities of the Church’s historic political structure that place pastors and bishops in a higher stratum of the denomination’s class structure. To that extent, the theoretical framework of the study is grounded largely in critical, feminist, and emancipatory adult education philosophies, as well as liberation theologies.

Of course, diaconal ministers are also concerned with general pastoral issues that are of interest to all congregations and agencies in which these ministry leaders are asked to relate to members or staff who deal with human circumstances across the life cycle, such as welcoming babies, educating children, youth, and adults, celebrating marriage and love commitments, and taking care of the sick and dying. Many diaconal ministers and pastoral workers of all types also attempt to engage members of congregations, agencies, and educational institutions in social justice concerns. Thus they have an educational role both about social issues, and in managing the day to day needs of members of congregations and agencies. As Cervero and Wilson (1994) note, just as with workers in any organization, this often involves negotiating power and interest among various constituents both within and outside the institution in order to get things done.

As noted in Chapter One, the research on diaconal ministers in the ELCA is extremely limited. To date only one empirical study has been completed which involved persons serving as ELCA diaconal ministers though there is another small study that was conducted as a classroom project. Hartley (2000), conducted an ecumenical mixed methods study that examined responses from 516 persons in diaconal service from five different Christian denominations: (a) the United Methodist Church (UM), (b) the Roman Catholic Church (RC), (3) The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), (d) The Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECUSA),
and (e) the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The purpose of this study was a comparative analysis “to identify the vocational similarities and differences among members of the diaconate” (p. 2) of the five denominations. At the time of this study approximately 40 persons served as diaconal ministers. In addition, another study of sorts, though not really a detailed research project, Schoewe and Rade (2004) collected data from 11 of 65 diaconal ministers reflecting on how their practice of ministry embodies aspects of the Bishop’s charge during the Rite of Consecration, related to preaching. They found that both the focus and style of diaconal preaching are different from that of pastors; no other studies were found that deal with diaconal ministers, but the Hartley (2000) study does give some insight on how they spend their time, and how they perceive their work.

The Hartley mixed methods study (2000) consisted of 74 survey questions that included a combination of closed answer, short answer, and Likert scale questions. Intended to focus on the vocational similarities and difference among these five ecumenical diaconal communities, the study examined the perceptions of individual members of these diaconal communities. In particular, the quantitative questions examined areas of place or work, education/formation experiences, the role of educational resources in continuing education, how time is spent in the practice of ministry in relationship to the value placed on these numerous ministerial tasks, how respondents assess the areas of ministry where they are most/least effective, a description of job satisfaction, expressions of how respondents perceive they are valued by others, and the degree of hopefulness they hold for the diaconate. The interview component of the project consisted of 10 interviews of informal, semi-structured nature. Also, a focus group discussion of approximately 12 UM deacons centered on the “challenges for the order of deacon” (p. 24). The manuscript of the presentation and report did not include discussion of the analysis of the qualitative interview data, but the qualitative data shaped the researcher’s comprehension of the situation of the
diaconate in these denominations. Of this study’s participants, 69 respondents were from the ELCA diaconal ministry and deaconess communities. Thus, while the responses of ELCA participants in this project are discreet, it is important to note that these responses are from a mixed population of diaconal ministers and deaconesses and therefore cannot be considered representative of either group.

Of particular interest for this research project are Hartley’s analyses of responses in the areas of (a) the evaluation of the diaconal minister’s educational emphasis in preparation for ministry, (b) how diaconal ministers perceive this education benefits them in their practice of ministry, and, (c) respondents’ indications of their effectiveness in ministry. While over 95% of the combined ELCA diaconal respondents indicated that they are qualified for their current position there are notable discrepancies in two areas of responses. First, diaconal ministers/deaconesses perceive a negative relationship between their educational emphasis during preparation and the benefit of that education for current service. Second, Hartley points to their noted inconsistency between the perceived importance of an area of service in their practice of diaconal ministry (such as liturgy, pastoral care, or social justice work) and the time they spend in that area of ministry. Of interest, as well, are the areas of ministry service where ELCA diaconal ministers feel least prepared for service in ministry, the areas of (a) church polity, (b) preaching/proclamation, and (c) evangelism, which in this study was defined as the telling and living of the story of faith through service and not an emphasis on drawing new members into the lives of congregations.

For ELCA diaconal ministers the greatest areas of disparity between their educational preparation and current benefit for service are the areas of ethics, preaching/proclamation and evangelism. In each case the perceived emphasis and time placed in these areas during the education and preparation process was of less consequence than the perceived significance of
these areas to their ministry practice. For instance, the perceived small amount of time spent during the preparation process learning the art of sharing the faith story through both actions/service and words within and outside the walls of congregations and agencies stands in contrast to the amount of time the diaconal leader spends in these same activities while in service in ministry. These areas of disparity are noteworthy given the church-world interface that is expected for diaconal ministers, and the emphasis of this ministry’s call to not only work for social change but also to equip others to work for social change through word and deed.

In his conclusion Hartley points out “the disparity between the deacons’ [diaconal ministers’] overwhelming feelings of ‘least effectiveness’ in the area of social action/social justice work and denominational teaching which tends to emphasize this dimension of diaconal identity a great deal,” (p. 71). He also notes that this prophetic role of the deacon [diaconal minister] is the least likely to be accepted and welcomed by those in the church. This illustrates the tension the diaconal minister experiences between the call to serve at the church-world interface, the poor and the disenfranchised, and the call to serve those within the church who perceive their support and care as of primary importance for any church professional.

In contrast to the Hartley study which focused on vocational similarities and difference among five ecumenical diaconal communities, this study focuses not only on how diaconal ministers perceive their role in the ELCA in general, it also focuses in particular on how they deal with their call as social justice advocates, and as emancipatory adult educators. Based on the Hartley study, it appears that they perceive that their role is often misunderstood, particularly in regard to social justice issues. In this sense, just as famous social justice advocate and adult educator Myles Horton discusses (Horton and Freire, 1990) in the book of the same title, they “make their road by walking.” Drawing on some of the insights of Horton and Freire (1990), the theoretical frameworks of emancipatory education and liberation theology will now be discussed.
in light of the diaconal minister’s call to work as a group of people whose specific vocation is to respond through service to the deep human need in the world and their call to lead all of the baptized in this same service.

**Emancipatory Education and Diaconal Ministry**

There are many different philosophies of adult education; however, this research project connects the announced and constitutional mandate for diaconal ministers to what Elias and Merriam (2005) describe as radical and critical adult education, what Brookfield (2005a) describes as critical education, what Zinn (1998) and Merriam and Brockett (1997) discuss as radical education, what Pratt (2005) calls the social reform perspective of adult education, and what Tisdell and Taylor (2000) refer to collectively as emancipatory education philosophies. The focus of these particular philosophies to advocate for profound changes in society’s structure and understandings is innately connected to the ELCA’s documents that describe the role of a diaconal minister as one who is asked to address issues of suffering, helplessness, discrimination, greed, intolerance, loneliness, confusion, and issues of depersonalization and injustice. These emancipatory or social reform adult education philosophies question the penchant of adult education writing and adult educators to focus on technical knowledge at the expense of the call to social action. Additionally, these philosophies challenge adult educators to recognize the importance of utilizing the adult education learning environment as a force to bring about radical social change through deliberate connection of the social, political, and economic understandings of culture to this learning environment. The primary goal of learning, then, is to encourage people to a deliberate social action in culture and society by unmasking power and hegemony (Brookfield, 2005a). In the following sections of this review I will discuss several educational discourses that challenge power relations, in particular critical theory, critical emancipatory adult
education, feminist adult education, and feminist pedagogy; this will be followed by a discussion of how these discourses inform the practice of diaconal ministers.

There are several discourses in the field of adult education that deal with the call to this conscientious social action in culture and society, in particular how to challenge power relations based on gender, race, class, and other forms of oppression. In the following sections of this chapter I will examine several of these discourses, critical theory, critical emancipatory adult education, and feminist adult education and feminist pedagogy, noting similarities and differences in them. The section concludes with a discussion of the intersections of adult education literature and the practice of diaconal ministers.

**Critical theory**

A central belief of critical theory is that people believe and accept without question an ideology “as the broadly accepted set of values, beliefs, myths, explanations, and justifications that appears self-evidently true, empirically accurate, personally relevant, and morally desirable to a majority of the populace” (Brookfield, 2005a, p. 41). The majority of White middle class US citizens accepts a particular ideology where one can “pull yourself up by your boot straps”, where you earn recognition of your employer by self-sacrifice and the sweat of the brow, where the individual is more important than the community. This ideology has seeped into, and been continuously embodied by, the political, educational, government, and religious systems that impact workplace, home, and religion.

Ideologies in United States culture go largely unchallenged because the dominant White upper middle class accepts as normative for all what is that class’s life experience. In turn, this dominant culture reproduces a “whole way of thinking about a sphere of human activity” (Brookfield, 2005a, p. 67). These ideologies are often unconsciously, or subconsciously, accepted by class members who do not question their socialization, educational framework and
background, or embedded family values. Brookfield (2001) states that tension is created when the
dominant group intends to continue the dominant value system and other people desire to move
for change, for emancipation.

The vast majority of organizations with which White US citizens affiliate are infused
with deep seated cultural ideologies. Brookfield (2001) and Nesbit (2004) speak to the need for
ideology critique to inform learners about the influence the dominant culture systems and
practices have on clubs, families, friendships, voluntary organizations, and school. Blumenfeld-
Jones (2004) adds the religious category to this list. Haraway (1997), writing from the field of
biotechnology, describes the interrelationships of these systems as including

The increasing capital concentration and the monopolization of the means of life,
reproduction, and labor; appropriation of the commons of biological inheritance as the
private preserve of corporations; the global deepening of inequality by region, nation,
race, gender, and class; erosion of indigenous peoples’ self-determination and
sovereignty…and the undermining of established practices of human and nonhuman life,
culture, and production without engaging those most affected in democratic decision-
making. (pp. 60-61)

Representing a variety of educational disciplines Brookfield (2001), Nesbitt (2004),
Blumenfeld-Jones (2004), Haraway (1997), and Lyotard (1988) agree that education is a seed
bed for treasured ideologies, most times immersing learners in practices and behaviors that reflect
the dominant culture with the intention to educate learners to perpetuate that culture. They agree
with Giroux’s (cited in Freire, 1985) discussion of Freire’s philosophy in which he states that

Domination is not simply something imposed by the state through agencies such as the
police, the army and the courts. Domination is also expressed by the way in which power,
technology, and ideology come together to produce forms of knowledge, social relations,
and other concrete cultural forms that function to actively silence people. (p. xix)

In critical theory the understanding of hegemony broadens this concept of ideology to
include a set of practices and beliefs that people live out on a daily basis. Describing the
insidious nature of hegemony, Brookfield (2005a) notes that “hegemony saturates all aspects of
life and is constantly learned and relearned throughout life” (p. 97). These practices and beliefs
reflect the ideas of the dominant culture and are readily accepted and maintained by the average
citizen who lives more by the desire to fit into the dominant culture than by the desire to question
the roots of these beliefs.

Brookfield (2001) stresses the need for critical theory to critically study itself. This builds
on Gramsci’s (1988) belief that critical theory constantly stands against unchallenged dogma.
Both authors note the traditional understanding of critical theory of the Frankfurt School’s which
lacked consideration of several areas of entrenched ideologies, feminism, critical race theory, and
gender studies. hooks (1994, 2003) frames this same concept through the lenses of gender, race,
and class, intertwining each of these with the need for the individual informed of critical theory to
take personal action instead of passive acceptance in the name of change.

Critical theorists with an understanding which is broader than that from the traditional
Frankfurt School are concerned with learning that assists adult learners to cross racial, gender,
and class barriers. Brookfield (2001), Nesbit (2004), Blumenfeld-Jones (2004), and hooks (1994,
2003) ask questions and offer responses about how dominant ideologies of race, gender, and class
are internalized and negotiated, as well as how marginalized people can reclaim their voices.
Blumenfeld-Jones encourages the bourgeois class and the oppressed class to work together to
combat the social dilemmas in today’s world.
Without the benefit of critical theory, adult education must be seen as having certain agendas pursued at the expense of others (Brookfield 2001, 2005b; hooks, 1994, 2003). Blumenfeld-Jones (2004) suggests that the knowledge of how we are blocked from social power can lead to freedom and action at the risk of challenging understandings of social order.

Various authors, such as Blumenfeld-Jones (2004), hooks (2003), and West (1999), connect the voice of religion to critical theory. Blumenfeld-Jones makes this connection by contending that treating others who differ from oneself with respect is an essential Christian tenant. West speaks of a prophetic dimension of critical theory, relating this to the Jewish and Christian understanding of the prophet who brings critique on a culture that is rife with the evils of the day, challenging the culture to action for social change. hooks contends that spirituality is a requisite part of the learner’s being, adding that spirituality can be a central tool to the learner’s journey toward a willingness to challenge the status quo. Each author holds to the importance of a spiritual principle that does not see the other person as an extension of self.

While critical theory both examines and challenges existent understandings of polarities in thought and structure, the theory also includes examination of class structures, with their inherent power structures, that are used to describe life in the US. Critical theory notes the presence of hegemony in the dominant larger societal culture which most often represents the interests of White, heterosexual males as central to its systems of power and underlying class structure. Many societal institutions, including religious institutions, reflect a corresponding hegemony where the dominant power structure situates White, heterosexual males as the dominant and dominating class. The discourse of critical theory provides an occasion for people to form “avenues of solidarity” that cut across culture and class (Nesbit, 2004, p. 23).

Historically, while critical theory also examines the important issue of positionality as it relates to class in the learning environment as well as the larger culture, as noted above it has not
been inclusive of the feminist philosophy or feminist pedagogical perspectives, especially as these perspectives examine cultural and structural worldviews using a relational approach. Rather, the field is deeply embedded in literature written by White, Northern European/North American males from the educated class. The following section of this review focuses on literature from the field of adult education in the area of critical emancipatory adult education; a later section of this review examines the feminist emancipatory perspectives.

**Critical emancipatory adult education**

Every adult educator has a philosophy of practice in which it is grounded, consciously or unconsciously, and many adult education theorists and practitioners describe these philosophies, or preferences. For example, Tisdell and Taylor (2000) discuss various philosophies of adult education to “help readers explore their own educational philosophy in light of their adult education practice” (p. 7). They note that two strains of emancipatory education are found in adult education philosophy, critical emancipatory education and feminist emancipatory education. The intention of the feminist emancipatory educator is relational in foundation, engaging learners through dialog and critical reflection to work for social change, through an approach from that is focused on the positionality of the learner with a different purpose than the educational purpose of the dominant culture. In comparison to the feminist emancipatory educator, the critical emancipatory educator promotes education for the purpose of social change, using a far more autonomous process that is focused on class issues, and strives to help “the oppressed recognize the sociopolitical and economic contradictions of their world and how to take action against them” (Tisdell & Taylor, 2000, p. 8). In the following section of this review I will discuss the critical emancipatory education philosophy.

Paulo Freire looms as a foremost proponent of the critical emancipatory education philosophy. Merriam & Caffarella (1999) cite the key role radical social change holds in Freire’s
adult education philosophy, noting that “for education to be liberating, one’s consciousness must be transformed” (p. 325). Central to Freire’s educational philosophy is the role of social action for the emancipation of oppressed persons utilizing an ongoing cycle of discussion, critical reflection, and emancipation. A primary goal of Freire’s education philosophy is what Moore (1988), Prevost (1998), and Betz (2003) consider a raised consciousness, exemplified by Elias (1994) as “the people to a comprehension of the oppressive reality of their lives” (p. 6).

Central to the philosophy of critical or radical emancipatory adult education is the involvement of a group of learners in the learning process, not an individual learner (Betz, 2003; Deshler, 1993; Schipani, 1988; Welton, 1993). The radical nature of this philosophy challenges the dominant educational emphasis in Western education on personal fulfillment and individualized learning programs. Deshler states that “this emphasis on privatistic individualism obscured the need to focus on or to criticize the structural weaknesses and injustices of society” (p. 301). To further illustrate this emphasis, Deshler as well as Horton and Freire (1990) note the connection between radical emancipatory education with social movements and efforts to promote social justice. Horton and Freire also discuss the role of radical emancipatory education in the Citizenship Schools in the south, noting the vital connection between participation in this program and human rights; Deshler notes the relationship of radical emancipatory philosophy with various worker’s movements, peace and world order movements, numerous liberation movements, and visionary adult education organizations such as the UNESCO, the International League for Social Commitment in Adult Education, and the International Council of Adult Education.

Critical emancipatory education environment is characterized by its horizontal orientation, as noted by Prevost (1998), Schipani (1988), and Welton (1993). Horton describes the interrelationship between the teacher and the learners, noting that “…the students have to learn with the teacher that teachers also fight in order to free themselves” (Horton & Freire, 1990, p.
Illustrating this principle Horton (Horton & Freire, 1990) describes the delicate balance between the teacher’s listening and speaking stating that educators “try to stretch people’s minds and their understanding, but if you move too fast you break the connection” (p. 161).

Essential to the critical emancipatory philosophy of adult education is the conscious commitment to what Harris (2001) calls the dignity of all learners. Entwined with this dignity is the ethic of humility, the effort toward consistency in the approach to all learners, and imbuing a sense of tolerance for differences between learners in the learning environment and with persons outside of the particular learning environment (Horton & Freire, 1990). For Horton (Horton & Freire, 1990) work in the Citizenship Schools in the South guided his thoughts about the crucial role that respect for the learner plays in critical emancipatory education.

Describing what Freire implies in his use of the term conscientization Schipani (1988) notes that “the very conscientizing pedagogical approach contains a message of liberation from restrictive patterns of moral reasoning and for higher and better forms of understanding and solving moral dilemmas in the quest for justice” (p. 21) This conscientization, what Brookfield (2005a) calls development of consciousness, “…requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is a radical posture…means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality” (Freire, 1994, p. 31).

Kennedy (1984a, 1984b) and Schipani (1988) assert that in critical emancipatory education oppression is something concrete, noting that this oppression is known by the person being oppressed and that the emancipatory nature of this philosophy of adult education has as its goal the liberation of the learners from this oppression. Freire, (1984), Schipani (1988), and Welton (1993) agree that the transformation in the learners’ consciousness occurs within the praxis of critical emancipatory education, making the approach to liberation and conscientization more than an abstract concept. Weiler (1991) considers this the practice of reading both the word
and the world. Freire places this concept within the question of classroom pedagogy stating that “education for liberation does not merely free students from blackboards just to offer them projectors…it is concerned, as a social praxis, with helping to free human beings from the oppression which strangles them in their objective reality” (p. 528).

The final essential aspect of the critical emancipatory philosophy that I highlight underpins each of the previously stated concepts. While stating the idea in various ways, Cavalier (1997), hooks, (1994, 2003), Kennedy (1984a), and Schipani (1988) agree that for Freire and the critical emancipatory philosophy “truth can never be understood as a static thing. Truth is a process…that which is in the process of becoming…” (Moore, 1988, p. 462). To hooks this idea is also an essential principle for the teacher/practitioner of the critical emancipatory philosophy of adult education. Freire’s evolution of thought includes three eras which spring from the restlessness of his mind and his “…constant willingness to amend his theories when necessary” (Cavalier, 1997, p. 269) in order that his critical emancipatory philosophy could be adapted from the Latin American context to other contexts. Freire himself described this in an interview with Kennedy noting the first time that he realized his ideology of the use of the word man to include both men and women was as he read women’s letters penned to him in response to the English translation of his work. He recognized that this was “…an explosion of light for me” (p. 515).

From this literature we learn of the essential role of the critical emancipatory education philosophy in liberating both the teacher and the learner from the often times unrecognized but delicately intertwined societal structures, relationships, and histories of learning environments. Adult educators must recognize the evolutionary aspect of both the praxis of teaching and the thinking of the learner as they strive to create an environment where the horizontal relationship between teacher and learner is created. It is the task of the critical emancipatory educator to facilitate a learning environment that moves away from the highly individualized and self-
directed style of White Western culture and promote a learning environment that encourages the learners and teachers to an awareness, or conscientization of, various oppressive realities of hegemonic culture. The following section of this literature review examines literature from a second radical philosophy of adult education, feminist adult education.

**Feminist adult education and feminist pedagogy**

Feminist philosophy is also located within the radical philosophy of education (Elias and Merriam, 2005; hooks, 1994, 2003; Tisdell, 1995a, 1995b, 2000a; and Tisdell & Taylor, 2000). Within the radical philosophy of adult education, feminist theories are grounded in the importance of relationships and often focus on the pivotal role of gender, race, and class in the learning environment and throughout learners’ life experiences. While there is not one model of feminist theory or pedagogy, all feminist theories are grounded in theories that explain women’s oppression in many aspects of culture. Hence, all feminist theory is liberatory in nature focusing on the recognized the varieties of feminist theories, noting the focus on experiences of women, particularly oppressed women in the education structure (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997; Merriam and Caffarella, 1999; Flannery and Hayes, 2000; Flannery, 2000; Tisdell, 1995a, 1995b, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; and Grace and Guthro, 2000). Particularly concerned with the interlocking systems of gender, race, and class many forms of feminism stress the role of feminist theories in the recovery of women’s voices, experiences, and viewpoints in order to expose systems of power, oppression, and privilege of the dominant, hegemonic culture in the US. In their 2000 article on feminist philosophies and graduate women, Grace and Guthro discuss the feminist theories as a “parallel, discursive arena beyond the dominant or mainstream culture, where women participants communicate their desires, needs, objectives and strategies in expressive, productive venues” (p. 13). Through the use of dialog in the learning environment,
the classroom becomes a place where teachers and learners connect through a transformative
dialog which includes discussion of relationships, cultures, experiences, character, and history.

Through her discussion of post-structural feminist pedagogy, Tisdell (1998, 2000a) connects what Elias and Merriam (2005) identify as Maher’s analysis of feminist pedagogy which divides feminist pedagogy into two categories, liberatory and gender. The framework challenges the traditional binary pairings, either/or, black/white, and this/that, in a learning environment and recognizes the constantly shifting roles of learners and instructor. Key to post-structural feminist pedagogy is the instructors’ recognition of the inherent limitations of their ability to assist social change.

hooks (1994, 2003), Belenky et al. (1997), and Tisdell (1995a, 2000a) locate their thoughts on feminist philosophy in the arena of a process of learning, not a linear progression to knowledge. hooks (1994) encourages the interrogation of curricula which tends to recreate and support existing systems of domination, such as racism and sexism and provides insights for creative ways to teach diverse groups of students. This approach to teaching and learning is successful when it invites readers to engage in critical reflection and the practice of feminism. Additionally, she expresses concern for the co-optation of the feminist tradition by the hegemonic culture when feminist tradition is not rooted within a larger political commitment to the mass-based feminist movement. hooks (1994) regards the classroom as a place of possibility and considers education as a “…practice of freedom” (p. 207). The sense of urgency she expresses for the importance of the classroom environment results from her tendency to have the classroom be a place where all students come to voice “…in an atmosphere where they may be afraid or see themselves at risk” (p. 203).

Tisdell (1995a, 2000a), Belenky et al. (1997), and Luttrell (1988) suggest the necessity of creating inclusive learning settings for adults through the utilization of several strands of feminist
pedagogy that deal with teaching women and other marginalized persons in a manner that makes possible their analysis of the social systems of oppression and privilege that shape their lives. It is important that each of these approaches in the learning environment includes both the emotional and intellectual aspects of learning and stresses efforts toward social change.

Feminist pedagogy is concerned with how knowledge is constructed, the role of the learner’s voice in the learning environment, the role and structure of authority, and how the learning environment deals with the numerous differences learners bring to the classroom. Because power relationships are inherent in the education process, deliberate attention must be given to the various power relations which are innate in both the teaching and learning process, and which are many times embedded within the particular field of study. Tisdell (1995a, 2000a) also raises the relevance of positionality in the classroom, particularly expressing concern for the teacher’s awareness that each learner is positioned differently in the learning environment. Luttrell (1988) offers insights to the complex interweaving of feminist philosophy, political empowerment, and advocacy for social change that are hallmarks of the feminist philosophy. She cites the non-linear process which developed the women’s consciousness and skill to advocate for the societal change the building process entailed, noting that it was a complex mixture of education, life experience, family values, life situations, and religious background which “…brought them face-to-face with constraining motions of womanhood” (p. 147). Primary in her findings is the awareness that gender, class, and race relations continuously changed how the women made sense out of their lives.

Throughout the many illustrations of feminist educational practice the role of the voice of women in education is of central importance. Hayes (1988) discusses the various ways that women learn across numerous socially constructed contexts, noting in particular the role these various contexts play both inside formal educational structures and in less formal educational
opportunities. The conversation of the important ways women learn in these less formal educational locations is also discussed in work by Butterwork and Selman (2003), Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1996), Prins (2006), and English (2006); perhaps this is best summarized by what Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997) describe as the location of connected teaching or the place where “no one apologizes for uncertainty” and where “evolving thought will be tentative” and not exact (p. 221).

Feminist educational practice also examines the learning perspectives of women in the workplace and in learning organizations. Mojab, Gorman, and Alfred (2003) describe through a Marxist-feminist analysis noting that a learning organization may itself be a maintainer of the status quo. In their discussion of the locus of control within the workplace, Howell, Carter, and Schied (2002) point out the serious flaws in assuming that there is one way, or even a primary way, that women work in either a blue collar situation or an office. In their description of research perspectives that would be considered empowering, or leading to social change, Joyappa and Martin (1996) emphasize the importance of utilizing a research approach that emerges from the lives of oppressed persons and not one pre-determined or defined by the dominant, White male culture.

There are several emerging themes in this literature that focuses on educational discourses that discuss power relations. First, from this literature we learn of the critical role of feminist education philosophies in challenging dominant cultural structures and values. Gender, race, and class are surreptitiously intertwined in all societal structures, relationships, and learning environments. Second, adult educators must first recognize personal bias in their design and implementation of curricula and foster the coming to voice of each learner in the classroom. This process is seldom linear in nature; rather, it is a continuous cycle of conversation and evaluation leading to the possibility of social change on behalf of others outside the dominant, hegemonic
culture in the US. This work must occur on an ongoing basis, nurturing the learner’s ability to come to voice through a variety of learning approaches. In the following section of this chapter I will discuss various spheres in which these areas of adult education literature and philosophy meet the practice of diaconal ministers.

**Intersections of Adult Education Literature and the Practice of Diaconal Ministers**

Several points of connection among critical theory, feminist education philosophies, critical emancipatory education philosophies, and the practice of diaconal ministry can be noted. First, from this literature we learn of the significant role of critical theorists, critical emancipatory philosophies, and feminist education philosophies in challenging dominant cultural structures and values. Gender, race, and class are surreptitiously intertwined in all societal structures, relationships, and learning environments. As previously noted the diaconal minister is expected to lead the denomination and its members to recognize and eliminate prejudice, greed, and intolerance. Second, adult educators must first recognize personal bias in their design and implementation of curricula and foster the coming to voice of each learner in the classroom or educational activity. This process is seldom linear in nature; rather, it is a continuous cycle of conversation and evaluation leading to the possibility of both individual and social change on behalf of others outside the dominant, hegemonic culture in the US. Essential to the work of the diaconal minister is the task of equipping and motivating members of the denomination for service that addresses societal issues of loneliness, confusion, and depersonalization. This work must occur on an ongoing basis, nurturing the learner’s ability to come to voice through a variety of learning approaches, and, encouraging the learner to engage in social action and justice activities.

In contrast, several areas of difference between the themes contained in this literature and the announced purposes of diaconal ministry within the denomination can be identified. Of
particular significance is the lack of a stated intention for the diaconal minister to identify and discuss with the baptized the role the church itself plays in the perpetuation of the ideology of the dominant US culture, particularly in the areas of race and sexual orientation. As a newly merged denomination in 1988 the ELCA made a commitment to attain within 10 years a minimum 10% membership of persons of color and language other than English, an increase of approximately 5% from the ELCA’s membership in 1988 (Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2005a). Frederick Rajan, executive director of the denomination’s Commission for Multicultural Ministries, announced in February, 2005, that persons of color and language other than English comprise “…only 3% of the ELCA population” (Hunter, 2005, p. 13). In the matter of sexual orientation the ELCA acted in its 2005 Churchwide Assembly to welcome gay and lesbian persons who are in into its life and activities but subsequently defeated a recommendation that would allow gay and lesbian persons who are in “life-long, committed and faithful same-sex relationships” (Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2005b) the opportunity to serve as recognized mission leaders within the denomination’s structure.

Connections with the practice of diaconal ministry and the critical emancipatory philosophy of adult education are evident. First, the diaconal minister is expected to be facile in the movement between the church and the world, connecting with Weiler’s (1991) discussion of the need for the critical emancipatory educator to read both word and world. Second, the critical emancipatory educator’s commitment to focus on the injustices society and the structural weaknesses in society is embedded in the diaconal minister’s call to identify and discuss the issues of injustice. Third, the diaconal minister is asked to address the issues that create a sense of depersonalization; this is directly related to the critical emancipatory educator’s focus on challenging the dominant culture’s focus on personal fulfillment and individualization. Finally,
essential to the critical emancipatory educator’s approach is the involvement of a group of learners in the conscientization process; in a similar manner, the diaconal minister is called not only to live a life of Christ-like servanthood but also to lead other members of the faith community in living lives of Christ-like service. Doing so is addressed in religious education literature which is addressed in the next section of this review.

**Liberation Theologies and Diaconal Ministers**

Joseph Donella, chaplain at Gettysburg College, began his 2005 Ash Wednesday sermon by situating his prepared sermon and the listeners in a particular frame of reference. He noted the role that various cultural and ethnic positionalities that shaped his childhood years played in his interpretation of the day’s Gospel text. He described his childhood as one of: (a) the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, (b) lower class living, (c) Black America, and (d) spent on the south side of racially segregated Chicago. Several times in his sermon he emphasized that “liberation is always both spiritual and political” (Donella, 2005). In the effort to consider the spiritual aspect of liberation, this section of my literature review examines religious education literature on teaching and learning, as well as a variety of liberation theologies, and considers the extent to which the literature explicitly deals with the role of positionality in the learning environment or takes an emancipatory approach to teaching. The next section of this review focuses on religious education literature that informs the practice of diaconal ministers and then moves to a discussion of literature of numerous liberation theologies that inform the understanding and practice of these ministers.

**Religious Education Literature**

Recognizing the difference between the philosophical and theoretical writings of adult education and the philosophical and theoretical writings in the field of religious education, Elias (1993a) notes a built-in bias towards a more practical approach to these writings in the field of
religious education. Noting two meanings of the word theory, he comments that in a professional sense theoretical writings “utilizes strictly the tools of philosophical inquiry: description, analysis (both descriptive and interpretive), logic, establishment of principles and laws, evaluation through norms of validation, correspondence, coherence, and constructive synthesis” (p. 152) while the public sense is less thorough and methodical in its use of the previously mentioned professional tools. Finally, he indicates that in the field of theoretical and philosophical writing in religious education there are numerous writings in the area of public theory and few writings that exist in the area of professional theory.

Perhaps the best known of the religious education theorists Fowler (1981) outlines a six stage faith development that has been widely utilized by other theorists and practitioners since its publication. It is interesting to note that his writing frequently mentions the importance of how the developing person constructs experiences, conditions, and shapes understandings of life’s purposes. While this is some mention of the position of the individual this text makes little mention of gender, racial, or sexual orientation and how these cultural and societal positions affect faith development. This is particularly interesting because prior to the publication of this text Fowler reflects the insights he gained during his first paid employment in a religious setting when he served in the position of garbage collector at a church camp. He noticed that people treated him differently when they reacted to him as the institution’s trash collector than when he was recognized as the son of the director of the institution. “He learned other lessons about the public and private dimensions of people’s spirituality as he compared their public behavior with kinds of things they threw away,” (Straughn, 1981, para. 2).

Fowler also identifies faith as a process of both personal transformation and communal transformations and stresses that the individual who is in the upper stages of faith development is aware of call to live for the good of the world and for the sake of the neighbor. As he moved into
his years of teaching in theological education institutions he determined not to repeat two things that he considered mistakes in his own experience of theological education. First, he needed to challenge learners to consider the powerful place the images of God that are learned as a child have in adult faith understandings. Second, he recognized the importance of teaching theology as both an intellectual and emotional venture, not simply the intellectual venture that he experienced during his theological education.


Parachin (2000) discussed Dorothy Day’s awareness of positionality in her life with the Catholic Worker Movement. She notes that Day recognized that her decision to live with the poor was a “voluntary poverty and destitution” (p. 255) and only approximated the agony of the
truly impoverished. Day also recognizes the tension that exists in faith–based social justice activity stating that while people not institutions are change agents, the Christian knows that “change is ultimately in the hands of God, although faithful persons are called to catch the vision of the kingdom of God and to work to make the kingdom visible on earth” (p. 254).

As an adult religious educator an ELCA diaconal minister is called to recognize the reality of discrimination and intolerance in the church and in the world. Recent conversations within the denomination indicate that the majority of the denomination’s members believe that to become a multicultural church means noncritical approval of the practices of non-White culture, that “culture, not Christ, becomes God” (Hunter, 2005, p. 12), and that White males most frequently express feelings of disenfranchisement due to multiculturalism. In the effort to thoroughly discuss the numerous ways that writers from cultures other than the dominant White culture that is well represented in religious educational and theological writings, in the following section of this literature review I will examine literature from the field of liberation theology. This literature challenges the historically dominant White male Northern European theological perspective that has influenced the practice of ministry for hundreds of years with the intention to liberate thought patterns and behaviors.

**Liberation Theology: Influence on Diaconal Ministers**

Liberation theology is a particular form of theology that is of influence in the lives of most diaconal ministers, in that most have studied some liberation theology as part of their training. In the broadest sense theology is discourse about God and throughout Christian history the understandings of theology have been numerous. The historic and dominant hegemonic theological system emerged from the thinking and writing of White males from Northern and Western Europe that was built on the writings of Greek philosophers. However, this approach is
by no means the only or even primary approach in use today. Liberation theology is an approach (or series of approaches) that explicitly deals with the social justice mission of Christianity.

The term liberation theology was first used in 1973 by Peruvian Roman Catholic priest Gustavo Guiterrez to describe a study of theology which concentrated its effort on liberating the people of Latin America from oppression and poverty. In the most expansive sense this term calls Christians to work for economic and social justice for all people through an effort to connect theology and various sociopolitical concerns. While Guiterrez introduced this term and thought process and is a strong influence on its continued importance in the larger field of systematic theology, it is important to recognize what Indian liberation theologian K.C. Abraham (as cited in Cone 1990b) notes, it is not a “…monolithic system of thought…” (p. 185). Rather, numerous liberation theologies have emerged from the initial liberation theology of Latin America. A variety of oppressed groups, such as Black, Native American, Hispanic American, Latin American, Asian, and feminist thinkers are embraced in the ranks of liberation theologians. These liberation theologians believe that White male Eurocentric theology tends to manipulate God in favor of the White capitalistic social structure and that a more correct interpretation of Jesus lies in his continual struggle to support those whom the dominant culture of his time viewed as outcasts - women, the infirm, and the poor.

There are a number of themes that are central to all forms of liberation theology. All threads highlight the fact that there are unequal power relations between the wealthy and poor, and other dominant and oppressed groups, and want to work to challenge those forms of oppression, and the larger social order, just as emancipatory adult educators do. The difference is that liberation theologies see this as the mission of Jesus. All liberation theologies want to serve as an antidote to hegemony, and to some extent all want to challenge systems of hierarchy within the church itself. These aspects are highlighted by some liberation theologies more than others,
but they are common to all versions of liberation theology. In this section of this literature review I will review several liberation theologies, Black, Womanist, Latin American, and Feminist. At various places in this discussion, I will draw some similarities in the emancipatory adult education literature. I will then consider implications of these liberation theologies in the North American context and conclude with discussion on how these liberation theologies can contribute to a clearer educational philosophy and practice of diaconal ministry.

**Black Liberation Theology**

Beginning in 1966 black theology evolved and was tolerated by the White church and increasingly accepted by the Black church. This theology was intended to theologize from within the Black church instead of taking the White male dominated Northern/Western European perspective and making it work within the Black church “…seeking to interpret the meaning of God’s liberating presence in a society where blacks were being economically exploited and politically marginalized because of the color of their skin” (Cone, 1984, p. 5). Because of the parallel interest in oppression and liberation between Black liberation theologians and Latin American liberation theologians Freire writing in a preface to Cone’s (1990b) work linked the two through their prophetic nature which featured a “side by side struggle with the silenced” (p. viii) to find voice within the dominant culture. James Cone is considered the father of Black liberation theologies, although he locates the earliest expressions of Black liberation theology within the writings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Freire also noted that the essential political nature of both Latin American and Black liberation theologies that challenged White theology which defended dominant White class issues.

In the review of Black liberation theology literature five primary themes emerged, (a) counterhegemonic to North American culture, (b) transformation of the social order, (c) examination of the very structures of the Christian church, (d) awareness of various interlocking
societal systems, and (e) concern for the survival of the race. While these five themes are
described as particular to Black liberation theology, as noted earlier, the first four of these themes
are present throughout each of the liberation theologies that are examined in this literature review.
I will examine these five themes in the following paragraphs.

**Counterhegemony.** Although it is expressed in a variety of ways the theme of Black
liberation theology being counterhegemonic to North American White theology and life is readily
identifiable in this literature. Cone (1984, 1986, 1990b, 1996) discusses this from numerous
perspectives which include consideration of the interrelationship of theology and place in society,
the tradition of White theology to consistently oppress all that isn’t White, the Christian church’s
long history of not realizing its essential nature in the call to liberate the poor, and the lack of
dealing with racism by White theologians. Carter (2004) describes this in particular as assisting
White males to recognize the numerous ways they secure privilege and power in today’s culture.
Cornell West (2004) notes that the religious rhetoric of White North American culture was used
to justify imperialism and to provide that “the veneer of diversity is required for the legitimacy of
imperial rule today” (p. 166). Martin Luther King, Jr. (1975a) and Cone (1984) agree that the
biggest challenge to the Black church was the moderate White church member who was more
devoted to the hegemonic culture’s sense of order than to justice for Blacks. Discussing a
challenge of Black liberation theology Lischer (1995) comments that traditional White religious
culture was often times brought into the Black Christian church to bring meaning to members of
the Black church and notes that a significant role of liberation theology was to recognize the
hegemony of the White church within the Black church. In a similar thought process Cone
(1984) describes as necessary to have a truly Black liberation theology and not merely a White
theology that is colored Black.
Clearly, those in adult education have made some similar arguments though not so much from a theological perspective. Ross (2003) cites the number of Black women involved in the Civil Rights movement who made significant contributions to establishing new structures, practices, and organizations that countered the dominant White culture. In discussing the need for changes in the dominant White educational structure of the US, Juanita Johnson-Bailey (2001) discusses the need for educational systems, including church-related colleges, to be changed so that institutional barriers do not block the educational opportunities of Black women returning to school. She is particularly critical of “inconvenient class schedules, remote campus location, limited registration times, daytime office hours, unsympathetic and misinformed staff and faculty” (p. 94). In a similar vein, hooks (2003) describes the spiritual weariness of constantly battling the structure of education as the locale in which White men are the center.

**Social order.** Black liberation theologies are intimately connected to the larger social order in the US. Carter (2004) and Cone (1984, 1986, 1990b, 1999) recognize that the public profile of Black liberation theology as it proclaims cultural resistance will overturn the social order and King (1975a) likens the challenge of the social order to that of the European feudal system. Lischer (1995) notes that while pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Selma, King required congregation members to complete voter registration because he believed that Christian faith was worked out in the community. In writing of the call to justice, West (2004) notes that fundamentalism is a threat to democracy and tolerance and that profound social justice movements in the US have been lead by prophetic Christians. While not theologians, Ross (2003) hooks (2003), and Lorde (1998) indicate that the African American religious worldview includes social responsibility; hooks relates this to Buddhism because it embodies a “spirituality based on the premise that ‘all life is suffering’” (hooks, 2003, p. 176) and that this shapes the possibility for emancipatory education. Finally, Lorde (1998) fears the invisibility of Black
women in the social order because racial difference “creates a constant, if unspoken, distortion of vision, Black women have on one hand always been highly visible, and so, on the other hand, have been rendered invisible through the depersonalization of racism” (p. 196).

Liberation theologians express the conviction that Black womanist liberation theologians have been largely silenced by the Black church. This is due to the compounding impacts of race, White patriarchy and misogyny, and the role of social class for many Black woman theologians. In this case neither Black male liberation theology nor White feminist liberation theology can be linked with the unique life realities of Black womanist theologians. However, the voices of several Black womanist theologians are finally emerging because they are interrupting previous Black liberation theology frameworks by asking new questions which critically examines the oppression of Black feminist theology. These voices will be considered in a latter portion of this section of my literature review, Black womanist liberation theologians.

**Structure of the church itself.** Several authors noted the need for Black liberation theology to challenge the structure of the church, including the historic Black church with Ross (2003), Cone (1984, 1999), and Ruether (1990a) discussing in particular the pivotal role Black women played in the activities of the Civil Rights Movement. Ross (2003) laments that male leaders of the Movement, especially those who were pastors, claimed the credit for the success of every aspect of the movement. She recognizes that this was typical in every aspect of Black religious life but notes the need for Black religion to challenge this dynamic. Carter (2004) recognizes the primary role of Baptism in this liberatory activity. Baptism plunges a person back into the life of Christ and is a primary vehicle through which a White American might recognize equality with the Black American who as an oppressed person is also fully welcomed in Christ’s body. Discussing several of the issues that King faced at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Selma, Lischer (1995) notes the struggle King had with the educated leadership of the
congregation that embraced many its historic White Methodist church roots. West (2004) considers the approach to social justice that dominates many White churches as a state of sleep walking and expressed concern that Christian fundamentalists and liberals currently strive to eliminate any prophetic voice that speaks of a morality and ethic of integrity. Agreeing with West, Bell-Scott (1998) voices concern that the prophetic voice is being lost and that as a result lives are being devalued and voices are being silenced. Cone (1986) expresses this as a concern that Black theology needs to change the image of Jesus from White man to a Black man in order for the Black liberation theology struggle to gain strength.

**Interlocking systems.** Black feminist adult educators Juanita Johnson-Bailey (2001) and Catherine Ross (2003) approach the crucial role of interlocking societal systems and the need for Black liberation theologies to challenge these systems; Black male adult educator Cone (1984, 1986, 1990a, & 1999) agrees with this assessment. Writing as an emancipatory educator within the Christian faith community and aware of his positionality within the culture, King (1975b) expresses his desire for liberatory action on the part of White Christian church leaders in Birmingham, AL, at the height of the 1964 civil rights demonstrations in that city. He questions the inaction of the White area clergy, stating that “freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed” (p. 17) and informing the White church in Birmingham that they “stand on the sideline and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities” (p. 28). King (1975c) describes these interlocking systems as a combination of pride, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear which oppresses both Whites and Blacks. Lischer (1995) considers ministry an essential strategy for the survival of Black liberation theologies to be the correlation of political muscle and religion. Ross (2003) notes that the networks of “human mutuality, the necessity of responding to the most marginalized, and the multidimensional requirement of responsibility” (p. 227) were three shared values in religion that
helped the women of the Civil Rights Movement to face the interlocking issues of race, gender, class, and educational background both in the larger culture and within the Black community. Although primarily speaking of the education system, Johnson-Bailey (2001) identifies three common features of Black women as fear, doubt and timidity in the face of the larger culture. Only Cone (1984, 1999) considers the impact of Black liberation theologies within the structure of the Roman Catholic Church. He notes that the challenges of Black Roman Catholics were distinctly different from those of other Black Protestant church members because Blacks were tremendously outnumbered in the Roman Catholic Church. Additionally, he suggests that the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church presumed that Black priests would return to the Church’s fold because they were Catholic first and Black second.

**Survival of the race.** Recognizing that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, King (1975a) expresses concern for the survival of the Black race. Throughout this piece he communicates the challenge to continued struggle for freedom to the emerging Black liberation movement. Cone (1984) outlines the way in which the Blacks struggle for liberation began in the slave era with all of its interlocking systems and then continued throughout US history through the 20th century’s Civil Rights Era. Using a similar line of thinking, Ross (2003) believes that liberation themes are rooted in the history of slavery in the US and that the determination to survive slavery continues in the development of Black liberation theology.

These five themes from Black liberation theology literature are not distinct. Rather, each theme connects and is intertwined as expressions of a theology that is articulated from within the Black church. However, the voices of Black women are for all intents and purposes missing from Black liberation theology due to the historic cultural and religious belief in the essential position of the Black male in leadership positions. The following section of this literature review utilizes liberation theology literature from Black women liberation theologians.
**Womanist Liberation Theology**

The term womanist is often used to describe the particular perspective of the Black or African American woman’s struggle away from dominance toward autonomy and community. Perhaps the first womanist was Sojourner Truth (1851) who questioned the subjugation of Black women in a speech at a Women’s Convention, asking

Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him. If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them. (¶4-5)

Womanist theologians believe that Christ is the liberator of both black women and black men from social oppression; this theology articulates a liberation that is not tied to Christ’s biological characteristics as a man but is focused on Christ’s liberating and sustaining actions on behalf of all of the oppressed.

In a variety of ways womanist theologians articulate the connecting circles of social justice, prophecy, and the practice of liberation. Grant (1990) speaks of this as a response to Jesus Christ’s question to followers in Mark 8:29 (NRSV), “But who do you say that I am?” (Meeks, 1993, p. 1933), noting that the context in which Jesus Christ encounters people shapes their response to this question. Concurring that Jesus Christ’s ongoing connection with people who were not members of any power group offers, Gilkes (2001), Williams (1993), and Grant (1990) find particular insights for Black women who struggle with the interlocking oppressions of race, sex, and class. To describe the interlocking systems that affect Blackwomen, Cannon (1993) creates and uses this one word in order to signify that for Blackwomen sex and blackness cannot be separated, as political, social, and cultural realms which require new modes of inquiry and
distinctive methodologies in order to challenge “a value system of pigmentocracy” (p.32) that exists in literature, movies, and television.

Womanist theologians express the need for changes in the understanding of church, particularly the tension that exists both within historically Black denominations and the tension between Black congregations that are formed within historically White denominations. Agreeing that Black women have taken on substantial leadership positions within historically Black denominations, Gilkes (1986, 2001), Williams (1993), and Grant (1990) note however that women’s leadership was either unseen or carried out only to preserve the traditional male leadership role in larger Black culture. Baker-Fletcher (1993) describes the need for Black men in the historically Black denominations to open opportunities for Black women to serve in both culture and church, suggesting the importance of freeing Black women from an overly romanticized historical memory of women’s roles in Black culture and the church. Grant notes that Black women were blocked from participation in many historic women’s movements and that churches, Black and White, resisted the effects if various women’s movements throughout history. Consequently, Black women experience the racist attitudes that Black men face, live the subjugated role of women that White women and women from Third World countries face, and experience poverty with poor Blacks, Whites, and Third World people.

Williams (1993) speaks of the many ways that early feminists and womanists blazed trails through the minds of Black and White church leaders in order to raise a general consciousness to the myriad of issues facing women in any denomination. Noting the rampant oppression that exists within seminaries, she challenges feminist theologians in Protestant seminaries to critically examine the inclination to use theoretical language that perpetuates traditional White male oppression. In her understanding Williams considers womanist theology as a call to action and feminist theology as a call to theory that uses the tools and structures of
White male oppression. Only through ongoing dialog between womanists and feminists can a relationship of trust exist, a relationship that encourages the development of language that stands outside the historic language of theological discourse that perpetuates a White, male, northern European thought process.

Womanist theologians believe in the central role of justice and the practice of liberation that connect church structures, personal faith values, and lives that search for what Cannon (1993) calls a “…wholistic justice agenda” (p. 33). Williams (1993) considers the outcome of this connection as a world in which oppression vanishes and reciprocal, peaceful, and respectful relationships thrive. The challenge to follow Jesus Christ in a life that stands in solidarity with the poor, the oppressed, and the outcast is central to Gilkes’s (2001) understanding of the pathway of effective ministry for the larger Black community and an essential component of Grant’s (1990) vision of a life of justice for Black women. Gilkes (1993) describes the practice of liberation as a call for Black women to move beyond the walls of church buildings, away from lives of victimization towards lives as prophets.

The struggle to move away from the dominance of the intertwining spheres of gender, race, and class is central to the work of womanist theologians. The focus of womanist theologians on issues of justice and liberation that connects church structures, private faith values, and lives that search for a wholistic justice agenda corresponds to the call of ELCA diaconal ministers to confront discrimination, injustice, and oppression, and lead the community’s service into a world marked by suffering, discrimination, injustice, intolerance, and depersonalization. In the following section of this literature review I consider the writings of Latin American liberation theologians whose early foray into the concept of liberation theology have informed theologians from many cultures and times.
Latin American Liberation Theology

There is a strong linkage between literature in the fields of social sciences and liberation theology. This is evident in the work of Paulo Freire who worked in Latin America in the area of emancipatory education as well as in Geneva for the World Council of Churches as a distinguished teaching liberation theologian. Phan (2000) notes that for this process to move out of the social sciences and firmly into liberation theology there must be a strong root in spirituality while Bedford (1999) sees these two fields as mutually essential.


Central to the work of Latin American liberation theology is the effort to expose the causes of the marginalization of the poor, a poverty which ultimately destroys people. Gutierrez (1973, 1988) describes the three types of poverty that operate throughout societal structures as: (a) economic poverty that God does not want, (b) spiritual poverty when one does not live in accordance with God’s will, and (c) life in solidarity with the poor in order to mount protest to the myriad ways that the poor suffer. Bedford (1999), cautioning against a romanticizing of poverty, notes that when someone constantly fights for survival within the reality of poverty it is difficult
to create, sustain, and mobilize any organizational effort that might promote society’s transformation.

There are numerous causes of this poverty and marginalization: (a) industrialization, (b) politics, and (c) the Church. While “Vatican Council II has strongly reaffirmed the idea of a Church of service and not of power” (Gutierrez, 1988, p. 7) it is important to recognize the ways that the Church’s structure perpetuates oppression in Latin America. Gutierrez (1988) describes an “ecclesial narcissism” (p. 36) that leads its clergy to adopt lifestyles that perpetuate oppression, also suggesting that liberation theology’s recognition of and commitment to the marginalized can revise the pastoral activity of the Church. Bedford (1999) suggests the importance of the Church’s consideration of both structural and individual evil as it structures itself in different contexts, especially noting the importance that Church leaders confront structural and personal oppressors. Stating the necessity of the Church to reject its official and dominant theology, Phan (2000) recognizes that the Church and its members live in a particular political, economic, and social context. Isasi-Diaz (2004) expresses concern that this institutional tension within the Church can spoil the goals of a liberating project.

As a consequence of this institutional tension, Reel (2005) writes that Latin American liberation theology was branded as a “fundamental threat” in the mid-1980s by then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI. As a result of this ecclesial branding, Boff and Boff (1987) recognize the courage required for Latin American liberation theologians to think for themselves and not rely solely or even primarily on the Northern European theologians, noting that within the first generation of Latin American liberation theologians many became priests in order to serve as militant agents of inspiration for the life of the Church. Through their efforts liberation theology is a driving force as Latin America moves into the future.
Essential to liberation theology is the understanding that what matters in God’s eyes is
the way in which people live their faith. Ellacuria (1976) considers this discipleship or living a
theology of the Kingdom of God, while Lee (2003) describes this as recognition that there are not
two histories operative in the Christian Church but one history, an intertwining of human history
and sacred history. The prophetic dimension of liberation theology is described by Lee (2003) as
a critical function of this theology. Boff and Boff (1987) note the central role of bishops in the
Latin American church as prophets crying out against oppression of the marginalized.

The practice of liberation theology also involves a life of solidarity with the poor in the
struggle against poverty. Bedford (1999) writes that

A critical theology today has a responsibility to bring up again and again in the public
sphere the fact that it is in the public interest (and that includes the interest of the non-
poor) to work against poverty and social injustice and for a state capable of limiting the
ravages of unleashed market forces. (¶14)

Gutierrez (1988) describes this as the establishment of justice and peace that promotes
human dignity and Lee (2003) considers this as true involvement with the world. Isasi
Diaz (2004) personalizes this, noting that it is important to recognize the “life-long
process of freeing myself of the internalized oppressors” (p. 344).

The ongoing presence of poverty, suffering, and injustice in Latin America requires the
ongoing development of liberation theologies for the Latin American context. Phan (2000), Lee
(2003), and Isasi-Diaz (2004) note that liberation theology in Latin America is not static but
rather continually evolving. This dynamic process is responsive to the changing political,
religious, and cultural realities. Gutierrez (1988) states that we are constantly uncovering new
sources of oppression in industrialized societies while Bedford (1999) describes the excluded as
denied access to education, jobs, and health services. Reel (2005), hoping that this evolution in
liberation theology means that it will not become extinct, mentions current areas of attention in Latin American liberation theology: (a) environmental conservation, (b) women’s rights, (c) helping the homeless and those with AIDS, (d) activity that includes Catholic women’s rights, (e) racial justice, and (f) land conflicts.

In any case, throughout its history and continuing evolution the role of liberation theology in Latin America is to nudge and equip church members to find creative ways to embody joy and generosity even when that joy materializes out of extreme poverty. Lee (2003) considers this an encounter and confrontation with reality; Phan (2000) describe a reciprocal reliance between content and method; Isasi-Diaz (2004) expresses hope for an opportunity for the oppressed to not only survive the exploitation of the hegemonic culture but also a way to influence and control that culture. Though this change in dominant culture will take time it is important that Latin American liberation theologians continue to “liberate ourselves from social situations of oppression – exploitation, marginalization, cultural prejudices, powerlessness, and institutionalized violence” (Isasi-Diaz, 2004, p. 360) and continue to build a future that embodies justice and reconciliation. Historically, as there are discernable differences between Black male liberation theologians, many Latin American liberation theologians are men; therefore, in order to more thoroughly examine liberation theologies it is therefore important to study literature from feminist liberation theologians.

**Feminist Liberation Theology**

Generally speaking, feminist liberation theology (many time referred to simply as feminist theology) is a movement in the Western religious traditions, predominantly Christianity and Judaism, to reconsider the traditions, practices, scriptures, and theologies of those religions from a feminist perspective. Although some consider the work of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony as an early part of feminist theology the movement did not truly flourish until
the mid-1960s during the Civil Rights Movement. As a result, the task of feminist liberation theology is described in numerous ways. Ruether’s (1995) efforts in feminist theology attempt to establish patterns of relationship which are based on equality and not on dualistic thinking. Ringe (1990) describes feminist theology, as called to broaden the hegemonic theological perspective away from the oppression of andocentrism to the recognition that the oppressive relationship of men and women which acknowledges that men, also, are oppressed. Johnson (1993) describes the purpose of feminist theology as the flourishing of women as a priori, noting that this is not only about women but also about taking White men away from the center of all thinking and theologizing in the Church. Heywood (1990) describes the role of feminist theology as a challenge to theological narcissism, the preoccupation with oneself and one’s image as central and foundational component of Christian faith, stating that “the Christological task of Christian feminism may be to move the foundations of Christology from the ontology of dualistic opposition toward the ethics of justice-making, which can happen only in a praxis of relational particularity and cooperation” (p. 198).

Numerous images are used to describe the relationship between orthodox theology and feminist theology. In particular, Largen (2005), a feminist liberation theologian who is an ELCA pastor, and feminist theologians Engel and Thistlethwaite (2000) comment on how the mainline Christian church thinks of theologians as dead White men. Largen uses the image of how children are treated on Thanksgiving at a family celebration. They are welcomed, greeted, sent off to play with other children until time to eat, and then eat at a separate table. Through this metaphor she clearly articulates the positionality of the liberation theologians within the practice of the North American Christian context. Thistlethwaite and Engel use a construction metaphor noting that “liberation theologies are not about rearranging the furniture in the house of theology, or even about redecorating or remodeling the house. Rather, they are about rebuilding the foundation
(method) and redesigning the floor plan (categories)” (p. 4). From another perspective, Heywood (1990) likens the task of feminist theology as an attempt to develop new ways to describe Jesus, moving away from the use of accepted terms of White theology noting that attempts to use these recognized terms is like trying to get fresh milk from a sick, old, very tired, dry, sacred, male goat. Using the image of listening, Ringe (1990) describes the central role of feminist theologians as that of listening to the various voices of liberation theology and hearing a multi voiced conversation.

A central theme in feminist theology is justice, the importance of speaking in new ways about the worth of what was trivialized and devalued. Ruether (1995) considers this theme by describing attempts to establish patterns of relationship which are based on equality and not on dualistic thinking of orthodox White/male/Eurocentric theology. Through a discussion of intercultural and intercommunal justice, Ruether (1990b) strives to assimilate traditional faith understandings and the feminist theologians promise to live justice. This effort puts self in the circumstance of the subjugated, attempting to learn from them, establishing a web of relationships that fosters movement away from a life focused on individualism into a life within community and, according to Ringe (1990) requires an engagement of the feminist theologian on the side of justice and advocacy for the poor and oppressed. However, Johnson (1993) expresses the concern that most liberation theologies have not moved beyond justice into areas of ecology and nuclear exigency, encouraging feminist theologians to lead this movement.

Johnson (1993) describes three interrelated tasks of feminist theology: (a) critical analysis of inherited oppressions, (b) seeking to express alternate thinking about wisdom and locating suppressed history and (c) new interpretations of the Church’s traditions, especially as it communicates with women’s lives, noting that this interpretation is not a reverse sexism nor is it a sense sameness among all of creation. From another perspective Ruether (1990b) identifies
women’s concern historically as about birth and birth images while men’s concern historically as about killing and fantasy about fleeing death, stressing that Western society is filled with death-denying products, conversation, and ideology. In turn, for her a central task of feminist theology is a more balanced and dialectic thought pattern which allows for numerous equally valued expressions of interest for each sex. The central task of listening in silence is described by Ringe (1990) as the need to learn the art of silence in which we learn to hear the voices of those marginalized. She goes on to note the importance of feminist theologians to understand both the context and the content of Biblical texts, noting that feminist theologians recognize their particular bias, in turn valuing the particular insights that emerge from that bias.

Essential to the work of many feminist theologians is the effort to challenge the traditional understandings of the male dominated Christian faith. A second foundational understanding of feminist theology is the understanding that people live in community and that, in turn, expressions of faith must move away from a focus on individualism and into the sphere of justice activity and concern for the good of all in society. Also, this understanding of theology discusses the inter-relatedness of all of creation. Finally, feminist theologians stress the importance of understanding theology from a fresh and integrated perspective, and not simply as a slightly changed version of the orthodox Eurocentric theological understandings of Christianity.

In the final section of this review, I examine how liberation theology is understood within the North American context, a context that is dominantly White and Eurocentric and the location where ELCA diaconal ministers practice ministry.

**Liberation Theologies in North America**

As previously mentioned, liberation theologies began when theologians in Third World countries and oppressed situations sought ways to liberate people from the oppression of the dominant culture. When liberation theologies are considered in the North American culture
several similar themes emerge. The foundational question for the Christian church, particularly the Lutheran church, lies in its understanding of liberation theologies. At this juncture feminist liberation theologians agree that more than simple acknowledgement of the presence of liberation theologies is necessary. Largen (2005) uses the metaphor of Thanksgiving dinner and the traditional approach to a children’s table while Engel and Thistlethwaite (2000) use a construction metaphor which requires a restructuring of the building’s foundation and not a simple furniture rearrangement. The essential theme is the need for theologians of what Moe-Lobeda (2002, 2004) calls the North Atlantic Christian church to recognize the important place of liberation theologies in the mainstream of Christian theology and not simply recent appendages to theological thinking.

A second theme which emerges is the need to challenge the interests of the dominant White Christian church culture (Elias, 1993b, 1994; Freire, 1994; Herzog 1972, 1980; Horton, 2003a, 2003d, 2003e, 2003h; Moe-Lobeda, 2002). Describing authority in the dominant White Christian church Horton (2003a) recognizes “…that you don’t honor people, you don’t have any respect for people, you don’t respect their experiences” (p. 273) and Moe Lobeda portrays this as a winning side in theology and as “white supremacy, male supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism’s ascendance” (p. 152). Herzog (1972) describes this is the need for a new metanoia in the White Christian church that allows for new ways of thinking and new ways of structuring the Church. There is a recognition that in the North American context there is a constant tension with the understanding of culture as melting pot or recognition of culture as various essential parts of a whole (Horton 2003f, Freire, Moe-Lobeda). Finally, as he considers the role of liberation theologies on North America Horton (2003i) expresses thanks that these theologies have challenged White theologians/academicians to read material based on the study of people. Herzog (1972, 1980) agrees that an essential challenge of liberation theology to the White church
is the call to move away from a primary system of reasoning to a system that engages people in God walk and not principally God talk.

The essential nature of liberation theologies in North America to empower persons to speak their own words to the world emerges as a third theme. Elias (1994) criticizes Freire for not stating clearly the need to root liberation theologies in the particular culture and contexts of the people as a primary way for people to come to voice. However, Freire (1994) and Horton (Horton 2003c, 2003g, 2003i, 2003j) agree that people cannot lose their particular expressions and culture in the process of coming to voice. Horton and Freire also mention that liberation theology trusts the abilities of the people, not only the abilities of the experts. Herzog (1972, 1980) stresses that this is not the White Church discovering the voiceless poor but the voiceless poor forcing themselves on the White Church; he uses the phrase “theology as at least bifocal” to describe the change in the White Church’s perspective of theology.

Recognition of the central role of context in the practice of liberation theology is the fourth theme in this literature. Herzog (1972), an early proponent of the practice of liberation theology in the dominant White North American church, expresses a concern that White American theology places humans as playing God while liberation theology recognizes that humans cannot generate liberation, only God’s grace can. Additionally, Herzog (1980) notes that for the White North American Church the story of God as told through the Exodus narrative is not particularly helpful to grasping the importance of liberation theology in this context. Instead he roots the practice of liberation theology in the White North American church in the message of Jesus Christ as the one who reached out to the poor. Schipani (1988) cites the interplay between the Christian church’s historical positions, today’s context, and church traditions as reflective of the ever changing understanding of the church’s context and religious education. Jacobs (2003) describes the continuous thread of context in Horton’s work in liberation theology and
emancipatory education. Horton (2003b, 2003f, 2003k) is quite specific about the importance of beginning education experiences where people are and allowing them to address the problems they face, thus providing opportunities for learner to stretch their thinking. Moe-Lobeda (2002, 2004) considers both the historical context that most writings in White theology come from and challenges the dominant culture to recognize its singular approach to private/public thinking as an impediment to those who live on the margins of North Atlantic society.

The final theme which emerges in this literature is a discussion of the concepts of charity and justice. For Moe-Lobeda (2004), Schipani (1988), and Hilfiker (2005) the importance of this discussion centers in two areas. One is the confusion of charity and justice as identical terms and the need to recognize the tendency for charity to perpetuate a top/down life structure between the hegemonic culture and those on the margin. The second is the important role of the practice of justice in liberation theologies that are modeled in a life of Christian discipleship. Herzog (1972, 1980) calls this a justice love which recognizes the God does not favor the White political or church system. This justice love calls us to no longer view the neighbor through a lens that anticipates that the neighbor’s ideology will mirror that of the dominant White church in North America but recognizes, rather, that the neighbor’s ideology is equally valuable in the justice venture.

One liberation theology text that is written for use within the North American context is focused on the connections between liberation theologies and religious education (Schipani, 1988). This text provides careful instructions to religious educators about the manner in which Freire’s conscientization concept can be translated to the practice of religious education and discusses the necessary role of conversion in this process. However, while this text makes many references to the role of the church and the goal of religious education as social, as well as
recognizes the position of the religious educator within the church culture and the larger culture, there is no mention of the positionality of the learner in this educational venture.

**Intersections of Liberation Theology Literature and the Practice of Diaconal Ministers**

Several common themes are apparent within the five liberation theologies that were reviewed. All are concerned with challenging the dominant values of the hegemonic culture. The concept of the connection of these liberation theologies to the larger social order is expressed slightly differently within these particular liberation theologies, but the concern is apparent in each. Again, although the five examined liberation theologies use different terms to articulate particulars of the dominant White church’s theological positions and expressions, all are aware that the White church itself is many times an impediment to the liberation of society and persons who are not a part of the dominant culture. The interlocking systems of society are identified as concerns of these liberation theologies, especially as concerns for charity and justice are expressed. Finally, there is a similar expressed concern for the survival of the marginalized populations, the poor in Latin America, the Black race in Black liberation theology, and the concern for woman’s autonomy in both feminist and womanist liberation theology.

The struggle to move away from the dominance of the intertwining spheres of gender, race, and class that is central to the work of these various liberation theologians is uniquely expressed by womanist theologians. Their focus on issues of justice and liberation that connect church structures, private faith values, and lives that search for a holistic justice agenda are also articulated in the call of ELCA diaconal ministers to confront discrimination, injustice, and oppression, and lead the community’s service into a world marked by suffering, discrimination, injustice, intolerance, and depersonalization.
Social Justice Workers Relevant Research

As noted above, aside from the Hartley (2000) study of those in diaconal service in many Christian denominations that includes ELCA diaconal ministers, there are no research studies specifically on diaconal ministers. There are, however studies that can cast insight onto the world of diaconal ministers. Thus this section will include discussion of relevant research on social justice workers, particularly in regard to how they negotiate power and interest in institutions to make change. First will be a discussion of those studies that relate specifically to people working in religious settings or that look at the spiritual roots of social justice workers. Second will be a consideration of studies related to the larger world of nonprofit organizations, since in their practice diaconal ministers often partner with other non-profit organizations besides their own churches to do social justice work. Finally, will be a discussion of the integration of insights from these studies to understanding the social justice work of diaconal ministers.

Spiritual and Religious Workers as Change Agents in Church and Society

Diaconal ministers are obviously religiously affiliated workers. Throughout history, one aspect of the diaconal minister’s service in ministry is the ongoing need to negotiate power issues within the institutional church; this is especially challenging in light of their call to encourage change of society through social activity and social action. While no research currently exists that focuses on this point of tension in ministry practice for diaconal ministers, there are research studies that focus on the spiritual roots of social justice among those in ministry service and among emancipatory educators, or how those in religiously affiliated settings negotiate power and interest for social justice. In particular, the studies of Adriance (1991), Wood (1999), Chaves (1996, 1997), Parrish and Taylor (2007), Tisdell (2000a, 2000b, 2003), English (1999, 2005a, 2005b, and 2006), Williams, Jerome, White and Fisher (2006), and Weiner-Levy (2006), cast insight here.
These studies of ministers and emancipatory educators or social activists related to the area of religion/spirituality focus on study participants’ perceptions or experiences related to a particular incident in their ministry or their lives, or related to a community activity that precipitated change; in addition aspects of the studies related to the role of church leadership in affecting participants’ views and actions related to social justice. In working for change, participants in these studies had to deal with power relations, and with those who have more and less power in the organization and/or in society. In what follows, first, I’ll describe the study purposes and main points, and then highlight the common threads that emerge in these studies, particularly related to diaconal ministers.

**Study purposes and main points.** Three of the studies focused on leadership in churches (Wood, 1999; English 2005a; Weiner-Levy, 2006), five focused on issues related to women and religion or spirituality and social justice – one women’s ordination (Chaves, 1996, 1997) or leadership (English, 1999) or learning and educating for social justice within a religiously affiliated setting (Parrish & Taylor, 2007), or how spirituality informs the work of emancipatory educators (Tisdell, 2000a). Two (Adriance, 1991; English, 2005b) focused on the role of workers affiliated with religious institutions in non-profit Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the global south.

For example, Wood (1999) studied three particular religious institutions in a case study approach to examine inner-city faith-based community organizing and its relationship to political activism and social change. He notes a parallel function in the inner-city faith-based community organizations that he researched. At St. Elizabeth, a large primarily Hispanic Roman Catholic congregation which participates in a local inner-city faith-based organization, he notes “The pastor at the time of the study was strongly influenced by Catholic social teaching, with its emphasis on social justice, support of labor, and the Christian responsibility of political
participation; he brought this formation to bear prominently in his teaching and preaching” (p. 316). With widespread lay participation, the members of St. Elizabeth “connected Jesus (the central symbolic figure of the service) to those issues, and legitimated believer’s engagement in seeking solutions” (p. 318). However, at Full Gospel, another member congregation of the inner-city faith-based community organization, he noted “its relatively rigid church/world boundary” (p. 319) and that “Full Gospel’s religious culture offered its members remarkably thin resources for matching the complexities and ambiguities ‘out there’” (p. 319). At the final congregation Wood studied in this inner-city faith-based community organization, St. Columba, he noted that “government and other extra-ecclesial institutions were neither assumed to be illegitimate nor embraced unquestioningly” (p. 322). Thus, the congregation viewed itself as a part of political engagement. From this study we learn that there is an important connection between both the church’s key leader’s active involvement in activity for social change and that the sharper the church’s distinction between church and world the more difficult it is for leaders and members to encourage activity for social change. Hence, an important connection is drawn for diaconal ministers who work as partners in religious work at the church-societal interface, but typically are not the key leader in that partnership in congregations or agencies. As typically the most visible leader is the pastor, the one who leads the congregation in worship or serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the agency, this is especially noteworthy because the diaconal minister and not the pastor is the one charged to work for social change.

English (2005a) investigated how 13 women involved in justice activities in the global south practiced their emancipatory education position within the shifting sands of culture, and, how these practitioners used that situation to survive. This group of justice workers was comprised of several people specifically hired by religious organizations and those hired by other non-governmental agencies but functioning within the structure of local religious communities.
Regardless of their hiring body, each of these workers developed life strategies that fostered learning from critical reflection based on patience; each learned by experience and doing, and, developed a strong sense of self as a result of service as a justice worker and change agent. In turn, these skills served as a foundation for their ongoing work for literacy instruction, health education, human rights activism, and community development in the global south.

In her study of the first Druze (a sect of Islam) women to attend college, Weiner-Levy (2006) assessed the vital role of these women as agents of social change. This group of Druze women was a part of the historic Druze community in Israel, a distinct, well-connected and recognized religious and political community. This Druze community emerged in the 10th century by “blending Islamic monotheism with Greek philosophy and Hindu influences,” (Aridi, 2008, para 4). It is interesting to note that while none of the women studied recognized their key role as change agents, an important aspect of navigating entrenched political institutions and power structures, each realized the responsibility they carried for Druze women who followed the same path. One participant described their role as “those who walk before the cart” (p. 223). Additionally, addressing the entrenched political institutions and power structures of their community, each recalled the years after college as a time of competition with men with less training for the same job.

Chaves (1996, 1997) discussed the impact of women’s ordination on the political structure and congregational life of denominations. As newcomers to a recognized leadership role in these organizations, ordained women were often times forced to navigate well-established political structures and oft times unrecognized power issues. Chaves (1996) searched for common themes and understandings about how the women’s ordination (and the associated change in a denomination’s structure) occurred and how this altered the denominations’ identity. He cites the relationship between society’s “normative pressure for gender equality” (p. 845) and
the tendency of some denominations to “need to follow suit” while other denominations “must resist” (p. 845). Interestingly, there is the note that the position of advocates of women’s ordination shifts over time:

In the earliest period …1850-1920, the conflicts emerged in response to small numbers of individual women who wanted to speak and preach in congregations…from about 1920 to about 1970 conflicts…shifted to become more ‘top-down’…after 1970…conflicts looked more like ‘bottom-up’ social movements. (p. 866)

Relating the ordination of women to larger social issues Chaves notes, “formal rules granting full equity matter, but they matter more because they present opportunities for new sorts of legitimate social action inside the organization than because they directly govern internal practice” (p. 868).

Chaves (1997) connects the earliest movement for women’s ordination with the women’s suffrage movement noting that while the “broader social change goals of the movement became overshadowed by efforts to win the vote…opening the clergy to women was an early movement goal” (p. 99). This is illustrated by the 1919 formation of the American Association of Women Preachers, an alliance of women preachers, a previously unrecognized formal group in religious culture. In his conclusion of this article Chaves further postulates that the relationship between a denomination’s formal rules and practice about women’s ordination “mainly serve as a symbolic display to the outside world” (p. 113).

Through her examination of the emerging and vital place of women in 20 rural Roman Catholic parishes in a particular judicatory area, English (1999), described the evolving understandings of theology and liturgical practice and their relationship to incidental learning for adult members of these parishes. Key to this study is the awareness of the dialectic tension (the tensions that result when participants experience conflicting emotional needs) for
members of these parishes between the Roman Catholic tradition of weekly Eucharistic celebration and the shortage of male priests to preside at these celebrations. In each case the parish utilized women religious, authorized by the male Church’s hierarchy, to preside at these weekly Eucharistic celebrations and to provide parish leadership on an ongoing basis. As with Chavez (1996, 1997) English notes that while within the membership there was a developing appreciation of the gifts of these women “pastors” each struggled with how to navigate well-entrenched political and power structures of the denomination. Additionally, the role of a supervising priest was typically complicating for members of the parishes, as the priests’ presence on an intermittent basis interrupted the emergent contextual understandings of ministry and practice.

In a landmark study that listened to the voices of “everywoman” in the Catholic Worker Movement (CWM) in the 1930s and 1940s, Parrish and Taylor (2007) discuss the complex interaction of learning environments, works of compassion and social justice, significant relationships, developing sense of social consciousness, and search for authenticity for study participants. Through the use of oral history interviews the authors recorded for history the expressions of women involved in the CWM during a time of several important church-societal interfaces, the US Depression and World War II. By examining how these women navigated the dissonance of lived experience and established social and religious norms issues of gender, spirituality, and political and power structures are discussed.

Tisdell’s (2000b) study, while from the perspective of spirituality and not religion, picks up rich, descriptive threads of the challenge of doing emancipatory and social justice education, while being strongly influenced to do so by an underlying spirituality. The challenge of living this spirituality in the public arena, what a diaconal minister might describe as living at the church-world interface, includes descriptions of how women emancipatory adult educators attempting to
live out their spirituality for social justice need to negotiate deeply embedded patriarchal religious political institutions and power structures. Introducing the importance of this study she notes that “teaching across these borders for social change is difficult, requiring a willingness to deal with conflict, resistance, and strong emotions as groups engage in critical dialog and, hopefully, move to social action” (p. 308).

Both Adriance (1991) and English (2005a) examined the role of workers affiliated with religious institutions in non-profit Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the global south. Adriance addresses the difference that she found between the Base Ecclesial Communities (CEBs) in Brazil. In the classic sense, CEBs are a church of the poor where at the grass roots communities of believers live in solidarity with one another and actively participate in what Christian’s see as Christ’s mission as a prophetic, priestly, and servant people. Some of these Brazilian CEBs, however, were merely formal structures, which she defines as meeting only for “Sunday worship and with no organized involvement in the social milieu” while others chose to “meet to study the Bible and to discuss its relevance to people’s everyday lives” (p. 302). The latter group is most often located in parts of the country with severe land quarrels and it is here that the members the CEBs are leaders involved most vigorously in activities that result in social change.

Now that I’ve explained the purposes and main points of these studies, in the remainder of this section, I’ll highlight three common threads emerged in these articles. The first centers in recognition of the complexity of living faith in the public arena at the time of the change. The second addresses the vital role of a local leader in the change activity of the organization. The final emergent thread relates to the role of church hierarchy, either the local congregation’s administrative hierarchy or the larger denomination’s hierarchy.
The complexity of living faith in the public arena. Diaconal ministers find themselves facing the complexity of living faith in the public arena. From the preceding studies we learn that, like diaconal ministers, these women throughout history and across cultures and religious traditions often find themselves in similar situations. First, there is the complexity of challenging the status quo within the dominant social culture and the organization. For the participants in the Parrish and Taylor (2007) study this is described as the attempt to seek authenticity in life, a closer connection between religious tradition and living of faith. In Tisdell’s (2000b) study this is described as a need for adult educators to attempt to negotiate deeply embedded patriarchal religious political institutions and power structures in the educational setting. In CEBs (Adriance, 1991; English, 2005a) faith-based justice workers navigated the sponsoring body’s religious beliefs and expectations within the local religious culture and community structure. In the years surrounding the ordination of women, Chaves (1996, 1997), as well as in today’s situation where the Roman Catholic Church experiences a shortage of priests, (English, 1999), there is an ongoing tension between lived faith and the complex relationship that exists with the “symbolic display to the outside world” (Chaves, 1997, p. 113). In a similar way, Druze women (Weiner-Levy, 2006) conveyed a recognized need to walk a fine line between their experience of the outside world and the perspective of community members who struggled to enforce the dominant male culture.

The vital role of a local religious leader in the change process. As noted previously in this chapter, the most quickly recognized local church leader is most often the parish pastor, priest, imam, or rabbi. Noting the vital role of a local church leader in the success of CEBs, Adriance (1991) comments that “progressive clergy can set the tone for a parish and can encourage women religious and lay people to organize base communities, even if the bishop is not supportive of them” (p. 301). By examining the experiences of the 13 women in her study,
English (2005a) revealed the existent tension between the women and the various sponsoring denominational bodies and the manner in which these women were able to problematize this tense relationship and live a newly shaped spirituality that was distinctly different from any organized religion. In this study, however, the local church leader might be either (or both) the detached local religious leader from the hiring organization or the geographic local church leader where these women served. Regardless, the workers recognized the pivotal role of these leaders in the ongoing nature of their work.

Wood (1999) remarks on the function of a local church leader in the three congregations who are members of a large inner-city faith-based community organization that he researched noting that at St. Elizabeth, a large primarily Hispanic Roman Catholic congregation “The pastor at the time of the study was strongly influenced by Catholic social teaching, with its emphasis on social justice, support of labor, and the Christian responsibility of political participation; he brought this formation to bear prominently in his teaching and preaching” (p. 316). Within the same organization, but at the predominantly African American Full Gospel Church, Wood observed the pastor as “known as a ‘powerful preacher’; he emphasized individual moral renewal and ‘salvation in Christ’” (pp. 318-319) but that this pastor did not place this concept within the larger world context. Finally, he observes at St. Columba, a Roman Catholic congregation that combines its Catholic roots with elements of African American Christianity’s that “stronger, more energetic preaching than is often the case in Catholic churches” (p. 321) but adds that despite this dynamic preaching style members experience ambiguity in understanding that people are “immersed in God’s love, yet never beyond the attractions of evil” (p. 322). In each case, the ongoing work of the congregation at the church-societal interface was centered on the priest or pastor, and not on the individual congregational members or governing bodies.
Addressing the role of local church leaders in change, Chaves (1996) explains that “decentralized denominations… congregations have the authority to ordain whomever they like and otherwise rule their own affairs” while “…in more centralized denominations…higher-level judicatories stood in the way” (p. 854) of women’s ordination. Chaves (1997) also notes the important role that female preachers played in the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the 1840s noting, however, that they did not ordain female church leaders until well into the 20th century.

Within the traditional Druze community, Weiner-Levy (2006) discovered that these first women to attend college provided huge challenges to the religious leaders of the community. While each participant discussed the real tension of embodying the Druze traditions while fitting in with other students, one particular area of concern was the use of the traditional head scarf. One participant spoke of the local religious leader’s response to her adventure was to ostracize her mother from the community; as time progressed, however, this leader changed his perspective, taking pride in her faultless behavior and, eventually, paying her taxi fare to the university.

Tisdell (2000b), discovered an interesting perspective on what leads women to be adult educators for social change, illustrates what is identified as the key role of a local leader in the change activity, stating, “Perhaps because of their experiences of marginalization, these participants have a greater interest in teaching across the borders of race, gender, and culture” (p. 317). Participants in this study had moved away from the religious tradition of their childhoods because of negative experiences with the patriarchal political institutions and power structures of those traditions. At the time of the study, however, participants had navigated through these issues and “re-membered” spirituality, or restructured and reevaluated spirituality. Noting that it cannot be assumed “based on the findings of this study, that spiritual commitment necessarily
leads to working for social action or that involvement in social action necessarily presumes a spiritual commitment” this study does “suggest that there may be a relationship in many cases”(p. 328). An important finding of this study is almost the reverse of Wood’s (1999) findings: in this case, key local religious leaders were foundational in driving women away from the established religious community, but, through the process of “re-membering” these women utilized a more mature spirituality as an important aspect of their social justice work.

The role of the religious hierarchy in the change process. Speaking again from the perspective of researchers who examined the activities of base communities and their workers in the global south, English (2005a) and Adriance (1991) examined the seemingly important role of the church hierarchy in the ongoing life of these communities. Addressing the role of the church hierarchy Adriance (1991) comments that at times “the bishops, whom they [local church leaders] defined as conservative, actually interfered with the work of the base communities” (p. 296). She notes that the CEBs have prospered whether or not there is support from the church’s hierarchy. As noted above, English recognizes the internal conflict for the 13 women she studied. While half of these women came from the global north and half of these women came from the global south, an interesting internal struggle between “their orientation to justice” that “caused conflict with their church sponsors” (p. 90). However, the workers were able to problematize the troublesome relationship between their religion/religious structure and their practice of spirituality.

Citing the role of the church hierarchy in the change process, Wood (1999) remarks that as one of the congregations he studied, St. Columba, ventured into a particular area of political action that questioned the mayor’s role in several situations the “pastor intervened unilaterally to say he would ‘not tolerate’ any disrespectful behavior toward the mayor…the pastor’s discrediting of contestation took the wind out of the leaders’ preparations and actively
undermined the organizing effort” (p. 323). On yet another level, he also comments on the tension with authority within a particular congregation that Full Gospel church “promoted an unquestioning stance toward authority within the congregation that did not translate easily into a critical stance vis-à-vis political authorities outside of the church,” (p. 320).

Interestingly, there is no direct mention of the church hierarchy in the Weiner-Levy’s (2006) description of the first Druze women to attend higher education. There is, however, significant recollection of the key role that religious attire, particularly the wearing of the traditional head scarf, played in the trailblazing role. While maintaining the delicate balance of tradition and change and without the direct intervention of the religious hierarchy, the women recognized the importance of wearing the headdress as they were within sight of the local community. Weiner-Levy describes this balance using these words: “‘Paving the way’ and contravening gender norms while scrupulously observing all traditional requirements have resulted in a complicated matrix comprising a desire for renewal and change alongside preservation of traditions and social roles” (p. 226).

Chaves (1996), finds in his work that “In decentralized denominations, congregations have the authority to ordain whomever they like and otherwise rule their own affairs” while “…in more centralized denominations…higher-level judicatories stood in the way” (p. 854) of women’s ordination. In an interesting note about the involvement of organizational structure in the change to ordain women, he cites that “in more highly centralized denominations, opponents to women’s ordination had at their disposal organizational structure that could be used to block the adoption of women’s ordination” (p. 855).

Moving into another arena of the understanding of the hierarchy of the larger church, Chaves (1997) notes that also important in the decision to ordain, or to not ordain, women is “ecumenical pressure” (p. 102). The influence of other religious organizations can either
encourage or discourage change in ordination practice. Of particular note is his comparison of what occurred in the Christian Reformed Church where the decision to ordain women was reversed because another denomination wrote that the decision to ordain women would affect an ecumenical relationship with the action of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., an intra-Lutheran organization, which recorded that “when Swedish Lutherans decided to go ahead with the ordination of women, there were fears it would hurt their relations with the Church of England, but it hasn’t” (p. 105).

In other situations Chaves (1997) describes an almost reverse logic utilized by the hierarchal structure of some denominations deciding whether, and when, to change their practice of ordaining women. He addresses the practice of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States as functioning one way and governing in another:

Historical examples of women doing the functional work of clergy although they are denied the formal status…the vast majority of approximately 300 priestless Roman Catholic parishes in the United States where…women function as priests…are often called ‘pastor’ by their parishioners, by male pastors, by diocesan administrators, and even by their bishops, despite the fact that that title is formally prohibited them. (pp. 94-95)

Again, this circumstance in the Roman Catholic Church is representative of what critical theory calls ‘repressive tolerance’.

Tisdell (2003) illustrates the impact of both the role of hierarchy of a faith group and the recognition of the complexity of living faith in the public arena when she notes that participants moved into early adulthood questioning childhood religious perceptions “as a result of what they perceived as their institutionalized religion’s hypocrisy, sexism, heterosexism, lack of personal or cultural support, or general irrelevance in relation to liberation politics” (p. 317).
Summary. In summary, while these research projects are not specifically about the work of diaconal ministers, from this research diaconal ministers discover peers in adult education who work to promote social change. Also, by considering these finding diaconal ministers can develop richer understandings of their tenuous position within the ELCA, particularly as they work with local religious leaders. This tenuous position requires that they strive for justice, peace, and social change while simultaneously challenging the institution’s structures and practices that oft times embody a repressive tolerance that appears to welcome diversity and embrace partnership in ministry while concurrently neutralizing and repressing that perspective (Gramsci, 1988, Brookfield 2005a, 2005b).

Negotiating Change in Non-Profit Institutions

While there is limited literature specifically about the practice of diaconal ministry and the relationship between religion/spirituality and change in existent religious institutions, an additional body of literature that relates to diaconal ministers and their practice of ministry within a non-profit institution, the Church, is research literature from the areas of other non-profit institutions, particularly three relevant studies in higher education and two in feminist non-profit agencies. This body of literature can be highly informative not primarily because of the shared non-profit institutional status, but because of the cultural context and leadership realities that are most often experienced in similar ways by these types of organizations. Just as change is difficult to accomplish within the power and political structures of a religious organization, the experience of change is challenging in other non-profit institutions.

Five relevant studies are discussed here that potentially related to understanding how diaconal ministers negotiate their role in practice as change agents within the power and political structures of the ELCA; these particular studies were selected because they specifically address how change was negotiated on the practical level. Gioia and Thomas (1996), Haas and Gregory
Simsek and Louis (1994), describe the experience of change and the navigation of existent power structures in higher education while English (2005c, 2006) discusses the experience of women in leadership positions in feminist non-profit agencies. Each of these articles uses a qualitative research method and Gioia and Thomas (1996) also utilize quantitative research in their study. Four themes emerged in reviewing literature in this area, the importance of involving others in the process of planning for and facilitating change, the ability to successfully maintain a healthy balance between stability and interruption, the importance of maintaining the change effort over a long period of time, and the role of an earlier identity in the change process.

**Involving others in the process of change.** This theme is articulated in different, yet complementary manners in each of the studies. Simsek and Louis (1994) define the experience of change in an institution of higher education as a “decentralized yet community-based activity” (p. 691). The authors note that a top-down approach to change is not highly effective because others involved in the institution, and impacted by the change, view this approach as change coming from an elite group. Also, they recognize that this approach does not take into account existent patterns in different parts of the institution. Gioia and Thomas (1996) suggest that senior administrators formulate a compelling future image of the institution that people can associate with and commit to believing. This, in their perspective, eases the launching and eventual institutionalizing of change. From this research diaconal ministers, who often work within both the church community and the larger community, learn the importance of hearing the variety of voices within the institution of the church and from the larger society as they strive for social justice.

Haas and Gregory (2000) discuss how they implemented into the medical school curriculum the course which incorporated practical experiences leading to the awareness of the
importance of physician skills to encourage behavior change in patients. They note that practicum competitiveness was reduced when medical students helped each other to attain personal change goal(s). With a unique perspective on the need to involve others in the change process they also note that emergency room and surgical medical students didn’t see the need for this skill while primary care medical students did. From this they hypothesize that these particular medical students see themselves as working in areas of medicine that don’t include long-term patient relationships and, in turn, that learning skills to encourage changed behaviors in patients is less important to the practice of medicine. This research informs diaconal ministers that their practice of ministry, which many times endeavors to instill changed behaviors in members of the church and the larger community, requires attention to the integration of knowledge from their courses in theological education with knowledge from their practical ministry courses.

English (2005c, 2006) describes a different approach to this involvement in the feminist non-profit organizations when she notes that these groups realize the vital importance of the need to listen to the numerous voices involved in decision making and to utilize a consensus model of decision making and not the customary “Roberts Rules of Order” approach. Insights from these studies suggest that diaconal ministers learn to employ the voices and experiences of others throughout all aspects of their work as change agents within both the church and at the church-world interface.

Maintain a healthy balance between stability and interruption. Using the words “…strategic change requires navigating between the maintenance of continuity and the management of disruption” Gioia (1996, p 395) describes the process of the change experience within the institution as a journey, something dynamic that affects a dynamic institution. Simsek and Louis (1994) relate this process to Kuhn’s (1970) analysis of scientific progress and speak of
inserting the new gradually and gradually eliminating the old. The institution that may eventually emerge as a result of change could embody a meshing of the different systems and structures. Haas and Gregory (2000) note that medical students arrive with embedded values. These values relate to a reticence not only for change in personal style but also a willingness to adopt personal change goals. They note, however, that the majority of medical students achieved success when the focus was limited to one change goal and not multiple change goals. English (2005c, 2006) finds that feminist non-profit organizations find creative ways to maintain stability by reproducing both board and staff, thus ensuring that people with similar thought patterns and perspectives continue in leadership positions. In a similar way, then, this body of literature identifies a theme also seen in the discussion of religious education literature, the reality that church workers (and particularly religious educators) live in the tension point of the call to pass on tradition while concurrently encouraging learners to challenge dominant ideologies in the religious community.

**Sustain this change effort over a long period of time.** Gioia and Thomas (1996) speak of this change effort as a frequent movement between substance to image to substance as “organization members seek congruence between the two” (p. 399). Additionally, they recognize that to make intentional and substantive change basic institutional characteristics must change and that this change requires “a shift in lenses used not only to reflect but also to guide” (p. 398). As stated previously, in the study of medical school students Haas and Gregory (2000) notes that surgical and emergency room medical students didn’t identify with need to learn a change skill. They uphold that to instill this skill in these particular medical students the medical school curriculum will need to find a way into this area over a longer period of time and not anticipate accomplishing the change in one course. Simsek and Louis (1994) suggest that the best approach is anticipatory adaptation and not radical, sudden change. Unlike many strategic models, which in
their estimation tend to be one shot deals to solve problems in an organization, their suggestion is to anticipate “a long lasting and unbroken effort lasting many years” (p. 692) in working through institutional change. Finally, English (2005c, 2006) considers what Foucault calls “pastoral power” in her analysis of feminist non-profit organizations and the need to sustain efforts towards change over a long period of time. This pastoral power is power which cares for and supports the individual or society in an effort to put into action an emancipatory role in their situations. The long-term impact of such pastoral power is the creation of an attitude of resistance and non-conformity in both the women involved in the organization and those who are served by the organization. As found in the literature on change agents in society, from this particular theme diaconal ministers can again recognize the importance of maintaining and sustaining efforts toward change in their service in ministry; any expectation that changing either the political institution and power structures of either within the church or at the church-societal interface is something that happens in 13 years, the time since the first consecrations to diaconal ministry.

**Role of an earlier institutional identity in the change process.** This is addressed from opposite perspectives in two of the articles. Gioia and Thomas (1996) believe that a strong institutional identity can provide confidence for institutional members to be proactive in the change effort and not limit the institutional members’ focus to merely surviving the storm of potential change. Coming from an opposite perspective Simsek and Louis (1994) consider the role of myth in the organization and express the perception that a long-lasting belief about the institution, or an aspect of the institution, often builds up to a “mythical phenomenon” (p. 672) that becomes averse to change. In a parallel consideration Haas and Gregory (2000) stresses the need for continued effort with medical students who display a reluctance to change due to embedded values of self-sufficiency and “the physician as expert authority” (Introduction section, paragraph 1) that they perceive as an earlier model of physicians’ traditional self-understanding.
Unlike the previous researchers, English (2005c, 2006) describes her findings as continuously shifting identities in the feminist non-profit organizations; these changes, however, are based on the need to locate funding options within the powerful political structures which offer this essential financial support. This thread of the findings in the literature from non-profit institutions reminds practitioners of diaconal ministers that oft times the political institutions and power structures have become not only entrenched over the millennia but also almost mythic, with particular periods of religious history having almost epic proportion.

**Intersections and Connections to Diaconal Ministry**

Throughout the literature in both the areas of change agents for society and non-profits, the role of local leadership emerges as key to the change experience. For faith groups this key leader might be the local pastor, or pastoral leadership team, who set a tone for activity while recognizing that officials in the larger religious judicatory might not support, may actually block, the change activity with this activity. In a higher education institution this local leadership may well embody the notion that Simsek and Louis (1994) call a “decentralized yet community-based activity” (p. 691). From another perspective, this involvement recognizes the various ‘publics’ that comprise the larger institution’s life. All of this suggests that change cannot happen because of one person’s activity or effort and that movement to change can best occur with the involvement of, or at least the awareness of, local participants. An implication about resistance to change is that efforts for change that come from the top down, or the efforts of a single individual with an agenda for change, might cause resistance to change. For diaconal ministers, then, it is vital to realize the importance of working with local religious leaders and other diaconal ministers, at any aspect of ministry service which is directed toward change in the dominant political institution and the power structure of the church, as well as these efforts at the church-society interface.
From a somewhat different viewpoint, but from the same general direction, is the impact of the wider organization’s structure in the change process. No change activity takes place in a vacuum but requires consideration from a variety of perspectives. While a church hierarchy or a board of trustees may not be in the thick of the change activity there is ample acknowledgement in the literature of the importance of the involvement of the wider organization. As ministers called to work for social change both within the church’s political institution and its power structure, and at the church-societal interface, diaconal ministers must be certain to consistently involve numerous aspects of the religious hierarchy as they work towards bettering both the church and the larger society.

A third premise regarding the encouraging of change situates itself in a consciousness of the multifarious, and somewhat contradictory, dynamics of the change situation. The complexity of living faith in the public arena is no small task but clearly involves intentional discussion of how faith connects with life situations. For higher education institutions the movement to change is best accomplished by gradually introducing new systems or structures, and by recognizing the need to strike a balance between familiarity and disruption. It is striking to note that the process of democracy might actually get in the way of these change activities as leaders are discouraged by the various constituencies that work to resist innovation. In other words, as they strive to understand and describe an understanding of ministry as emancipatory educators of adults, for diaconal ministers there are no easy answers for how to navigate a path through any particular change activity, something which serves as a hallmark activity for emancipatory educators. The best approach in a change activity could be described as thinking of the change process as an exploration through completely unknown territory – a journey requiring a good map, attentive ears, sharp eyes, proper equipment, and never ending vigilance. Interestingly, over the course of
the past 13 years diaconal ministers have often been called explorers venturing into new territories of both ministry practice and church life.

The final theme that runs through the literature relates to the function of the length of time involved in the process of change. This theme is woven throughout each area of the literature, appearing at times as a bright thread, for instance as the need in education to commit the large amount of time that is needed to alter the perceptions of medical students or faculty at a college. The thread may be a more muted tone, for example the evolving sense of time involved in ‘chipping away’ at a political system. Or, the thread could be the background color, the eons of time, woven throughout the activities of a faith group striving to coordinate activities that nurture community change and social justice. The service of diaconal ministers within a very historic and entrenched institution is then challenged by the need to maintain efforts for change over a long period of time; the challenge lies both within the political institution and power structure of the church and within the dominant culture this group of ministers meets at the church-societal interface.

Conclusion

Literature from the fields of adult education, religious education, and liberation theology lays the groundwork for this study of how diaconal ministers in the ELCA practice their ministry as emancipatory educators of adults and how they understand and describe that role. Adult education literature provides a framework for consideration of the ways in which adult educators might challenge existent political institutions and power structures; in turn, the practice of diaconal ministers as adult educators is informed by this literature. Portions of this adult education literature share historic roots with more general religious education literature, particularly through the work of adult educators Paulo Freire and Myles Horton, each informed by liberation theology. While the general religious education literature provides insight into the
struggle of religious educators to both transmit the tradition and challenge learners to promote social change, literature from the numerous perspectives of liberation theology demonstrates the evolving current understandings of how faith is lived and expressed in faith communities outside of the dominant White, western culture. Literature from the field of social justice work provides a solid research foundation for the examination of the important considerations diaconal ministers might create when working for social justice and social change.

As noted earlier in both Chapters One and Two, while the practice of diaconal service has deep and historic roots within the Christian tradition, there is a paucity of research and research literature by and about diaconal service in any faith tradition. This is particularly true for ELCA diaconal ministers and their various diaconal ministries. Therefore, this study contributes to the minimal body of knowledge of this emerging form of ministry in the ELCA.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to discover how diaconal ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) practice their ministry and describe and understand their role as educators of adults. There were three primary research questions utilized in this study: a) how do diaconal ministers describe their work, both philosophically and in the practice of what they actually do; b) how do diaconal ministers connect this philosophy not only to their practice of ministry, but, also, to their specific call to lead and equip others to a similar ministry in daily life; and c) how do diaconal ministers describe their perspective as teachers in relationship to their learners?

This is a mixed methods research study, though the primary means of data collection were qualitative interviews. In addition several participants took Pratt and Collins (2001) Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI), which is a validated quantitative instrument to determine more about their adult education teaching perspective and philosophy. At the time of the dissertation proposal defense, it was intended to encourage all ELCA diaconal ministers to take an additional quantitative survey. While this attempt was made, only 14 of the 150 available respondents actually took the quantitative survey. Hence the data from the survey was deemed unusable due to its low numbers. Nevertheless, given the use of both qualitative interviews and the data from the Teaching Perspectives Inventory, which is a quantitative instrument, this is a mixed method research study.

With this as a background, this chapter will first provide an overview of the research design which includes a description and will include a rationale for the use of a mixed methods research design. Next, there will be a description of the researcher’s background, followed by a discussion of the data collection and analysis methods. The chapter then considers the approach
used to ensure the trustworthiness and verification of the findings and concludes with a brief summary.

An Overview of Mixed Methods Research

The choice of the research design for this project intimately links a particular method with the subject being studied. The development of any field of study is rooted in research in the particular field. Merriam and Simpson (2000) note that research is the “means by which a discipline expands its knowledge base; and in applied fields, it informs and enhances practice” (p. 1). Three approaches to or frameworks of research are identified by Creswell (2003), Patton (2002), and Merriam & Simpson (2000): a) the quantitative framework which is considered as experimental and non-experimental designs that attempt to show cause and effect relationship, b) the qualitative framework which attempts to discover the meaning of a phenomena or phenomenon for those involved, and, c) the mixed methods approach which mixes the quantitative and qualitative frameworks in an effort to get a fuller understanding of the subject being investigated and to negate the inherent biases of either framework used independently.

What is Mixed Methods Research

Quite simply, mixed methods research combines the elements of both quantitative and qualitative data collection in the study of a particular phenomenon. In its simplest form the mixed method might be a series of open-ended questions at the end of a closed-ended questionnaire; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie,( 2004) describe it as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study” (p. 17). However, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) provide the most comprehensive definition of mixed method research:

Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical
assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of the research problems than either approach alone. (p. 5)

A basic question, then, for a mixed method study is what each analysis contributes to an understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

**Implementing a Mixed Method Design**

The choice to use a mixed methods design for this study came after identifying and clarifying four criteria. These criteria were set into a matrix by Creswell et al., (2003, p. 211) and are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

The implementation strategy for the mixed method design indicates the manner in which the quantitative and qualitative data are collected. If data are collected simultaneously, there is no particular sequence, or order, to the data gathering phase of the project. When data are collected in phases, either the quantitative or qualitative data may be collected first; the choice depends on the primary goal of the researcher.
The priority strategy for the mixed method design indicates where greater weight is given to the collected data. Priority might be equal, or, it might be biased towards one of the data types. Typical nomenclature in figures is that UPPER CASE LETTERS INDICATE THE DOMINANT METHOD FOR ANALYSIS.

The integration strategy of the method’s design describes the point at which the collected data are integrated: during the data collection phase, during the data analysis phase, during data interpretation phase, or in some combination of these places. In this project the integration of data will occur in a combination of these places; however, the deeper data integration will occur during the data interpretation phase.
From the “Transformative Sequential” to “Transformative Concurrent” Perspective

The final strategy as noted in the Creswell, et al (2003) figure inserted above is the choice of a theoretical guiding research perspective for the project’s design. In mixed methods research designs most often there is a particular research theoretical perspective that guides the design of the overall project. Creswell (2003) identifies six primary perspectives or approaches to mixed method research: a) sequential explanatory, (b) sequential exploratory, (c) concurrent triangulation, (d) concurrent nested, and (f) transformative concurrent and (f) transformative sequential. The research theoretical guiding perspective for this study as it was originally conceptualize is what Creswell, et al (2007) refer to as a “transformative sequential” perspective, though in reality the study conforms mostly to what he terms “the transformative concurrent” perspective. Hence, I’ll only briefly explain the others.

Creswell (2003) notes that the first, sequential explanatory, is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data, with priority typically given to the quantitative data that is collected and analyzed. In the second, the sequential exploratory approach, the initial phase of qualitative data collection and analysis is followed by the collection and analysis of quantitative data. The findings of these phases are integrated during the interpretation portion of the research in an attempt to understand a particular phenomenon. It may also be used to generalize findings to different research samples. The third approach, the concurrent triangulation approach, is the most typical of the six major approaches and is used when the researcher intends to cross-validate, confirm, triangulate, or corroborate findings in a single study where data are collected simultaneously. In contrast, in the fourth perspective the concurrent nested approach, although there is one simultaneous qualitative and quantitative data collection process, unlike the previous strategy, there is a predominant method that guides the research study. The less dominant method is then nested
within the dominant method; the less dominant may seek different information or offer a different question than the dominant one asks. It is during the analysis phase of the project that the collected data are mixed.

It is the fourth and fifth approaches “the transformative concurrent perspective” and the “transformative sequential” perspective that is most relevant to this study. According to Creswell (2003) and Hanson et al (2005) the distinctive aspect of these approaches is the choice of a specific ideology, or conceptual framework, which guides the entire research project. By utilizing a conceptual or theoretical framework that asks questions about transformation or social change, the researcher is able to better understand a phenomenon that changes as a result of being studied, is able to better advocate for those being studied, and may give voice to diverse perspectives within a particular phenomenon. The primary weakness of this strategy is the dearth of literature written that guides how to use this vision during the research process. The primary strength of this strategy situates a mixed methods research project within a transformative or emancipatory theoretical framework for the research project.

As discussed in Chapter Two, this research project is grounded primarily in the intersections of critical and feminist emancipatory education theories, and in liberation theologies, which also focus on working for social change; hence the transformative concurrent and transformative sequential approaches are the most relevant to this study. The primary difference between the two is that in the sequential approach one form of data is collected before the other, and in the concurrent approach the qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously. Sometimes in these approaches one form of data is more prominent than the other, so the dominant form of data is capitalized, whereas the less dominant is in lower case letters, as in “QUANT Qual”
As noted in the introduction to this Chapter, the study as originally conceptualized was going to include a quantitative survey component whereby all 150 diaconal ministers in the ELCA would be invited to fill it out. Participants were also going to be invited to take Pratt and Collins (2001) Teaching Perspectives Inventory, and then those most relevant to the study were going to be invited to participate in an in-depth qualitative interview. The study was conceptualized as what Creswell (2003) refers to as a transformative sequential study.

However, given that only 14 filled out the quantitative survey instrument, this component was dropped from the study. As will be discussed further later 10 ELCA diaconal ministers were chosen according to purposeful criteria to participate in in-depth qualitative interviews. Several also did take the TPI, though the data were collected simultaneously. The qualitative data was most prominent in the study; hence this most resembles a transformative concurrent mixed methods study where the qualitative component was dominant. The details are explained in the participant selection and data collection discussion later in this chapter. For now, I turn to a discussion of the stance that I took as the researcher.

**Background of the Researcher and Potential Ethical Issues**

An underlying question to a mixed methods researcher is whether, or not, the planned approach is realistic. This question has three foci; first, is the research question truly related to a mixed methods approach; second, does the researcher have the requisite skills to carry out the project; and, third, are sufficient resources available for the research project. These three foci will be examined in the following paragraphs. Newman, Ridenhour, Newman, & DeMarco (2003) discuss the process of determining the research design, “by considering the question and purpose iteratively, one can eventually get to a design or a set of designs that more clearly reflect the intent of the question” (p. 168-169). This illustrates an understanding that the development of a research project tends to twist and turn and lead in different directions than initially intended. It
also states the awareness that a mixed methods strategy allows this unfolding process during research to occur fairly naturally.

Initially, in developing this research project, it appeared that a qualitative method approach to my dissertation was most likely a heuristic inquiry because in heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990), the researcher fits all the criteria for being a participant in the study. As a diaconal minister in the ELCA since the 1990s, I fit all the criteria of the study. Thereafter, an internal process of heuristic inquiry allowed my recognition of more foundational questions that were essential to my research process: (a) what is the adult education philosophical preference of an ELCA diaconal minister, (b) within the ELCA diaconal ministry community are there people who identify this adult education philosophical preference as emancipatory in nature, (c) are there relationships between the identified adult education philosophical preference and other basic demographic information about ELCA diaconal ministers, (d) are there relationships between the identified adult education philosophical preference and location of call, and, (e) are there relationships between the identified adult education philosophical preference, location of call, and the expression of an emancipatory practice of ministry. However, the most foundational question that came to my consciousness was the question of integrity that I had perhaps assumed that ELCA diaconal ministers practice their ministry as emancipatory educators of adults, and, does this research presumption undercut the efficacy of the research project.

In order to determine a response to this most foundational question, I set out to increase my understandings of mixed methods research in the hope of determining if a mixed methods approach might best suit my research questions. Through reading numerous articles and coursework the possibility of pursuing a mixed methods approach emerged. I read numerous texts on mixed methods research and research studies that used a mixed methods approach, discovering the challenge to find articles generated from mixed methods research, an indicator of
the growing acceptance of this research method. Through reading texts, handbooks, and journal articles on mixed methods research I learned about an emerging interest in this research method and identified my theoretical framework for the research process.

The final question asked of a mixed methods researcher is that of the sufficiency of resources and time for the research project. The relationship that I have with the ELCA Office of Research and Evaluation is essential to an affirmative response to this question. That relationship and involvement is described in the following section of this chapter.

The very things that make the mixed methods approach appropriate for this study also provide possible ethical concerns. Given that I am an ELCA diaconal minister and that I am an active member of the ELCA diaconal ministry community it is essential that I make clear to participants why I am interested in the topic and how it pertains to our practice of ministry. Therefore, when undertaking the in-depth interviews for this project, and in order to maintain an ethical rapport with participants I approached the interviews as a shared conversation in order to avoid “othering” participants as qualitative researcher Michele Fine (1998) suggests. An additional ethical concern is that I serve the denomination in a churchwide call and am accountable for the practice of my ministry to the same officials who determine the educational and denominational standards for the preparation of candidates and the evaluation of the service of ELCA diaconal ministers. While my voice is a part of determining these standards, I stand outside of the power structures that make final determination of the standards. An additional safeguard that was essential for this research project is that the research participants needed to be practitioners in service for more than three years. This eliminated the inherent power issues and conflicts that could have been present due to my active role in the denomination’s preparation process for diaconal ministry candidates and my oversight of the newly called diaconal minister’s First Call Theological Education program.
Participant Selection

Given that only 14 ELCA ministers filled out the quantitative survey and the low “N”, this data was deemed unusable. Originally I was going to choose participants based on their responses to the survey instrument, and their TPI scores and to attempt to choose those who most reflected an emancipatory education perspective. Given this dilemma the qualitative data was going to be the primary means of data collection. Participants in qualitative studies are usually chosen according to purposeful criteria (Patton, 2002). Hence the specific criteria that I used to select participants was: 1) willingness to be interviewed; 2) having been a practicing ELCA diaconal minister for five years or more. Participants were strongly encouraged to take the TPI.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Given that this is a mixed methods study, there were two primary parts to the data collection portion of this study. Data were collected through the Teaching Perspectives Inventory and through the use of ancillary documents related to theological education and the practice of ministry. The qualitative portion of the study took place after the survey data are collected and some beginning analysis occurred. The components of data collection are discussed below.

Qualitative In-Depth Interviews

As noted above, the sample size for the qualitative in depth interview portion of the study included 10 diaconal ministers. This follows Patton’s (2002) belief that “the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size” (p. 245). These semi-structured in-depth interviews began with an initial question asking the respondent to describe how they perceive that their practice of ministry embodies the Bishop’s address to the candidate during the Rite of Consecration (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1997, p. 2), found as Appendix A. They were also
asked questions such as: a) when you hear the term social justice what do you think about; b) let’s look together at the Bishop’s Address to the Candidate during the Rite of Consecration. Do you remember the worship service that included your consecration to diaconal ministry? What were you feeling that day as you heard the Bishop’s Address? Did you think differently about the office of diaconal ministry after that day? As you practice your ministry, can you see ways that what you do lives out this Address? Share a few of those ways with me, please; and c) can you describe a particular time when the ELCA’s structure assisted you in your practice of ministry?

A complete interview guide is included in Appendix E.

**Use of Ancillary Documents**

Several ancillary documents were utilized in this study; in particular, I examined course syllabi from ELCA seminaries to determine what educational ministry texts were utilized in courses. Also examined were journal articles and texts written by interviewees to see their relationship to the understanding and practice of ministry. Finally, I requested interviewees to submit to me copies of church newsletter articles and lesson plans used in learning environments.

**The Teaching Perspectives Inventory**

The TPI is a 45 question instrument that examines the way that personal and contextual factors interact in the practitioner’s adult education philosophy preference. While there may be a great variation in personal style, there “seem to be relatively few substantively different ways to conceptualize the teaching of adults,” (Pratt, Collins, & Selinger, 2001, p. 1). There are five teaching perspectives that are identified by Pratt (2005) and utilized in evaluating a response using the TPI: (a) transmission, (b) apprenticeship, (c) development, (d) nurturing, and (e) social reform. The transmission perspective indicates that effective teaching requires a significant responsibility to the content or subject matter being taught. Unlike the transmission perspective, the apprenticeship perspective means that students are enculturated to a set of social values and
ways of working instead of learning a particular body of knowledge. The development perspective focuses on the learner’s viewpoint in both the planning for and actual teaching moment. Instructors working from the nurturing perspective assume an integrated approach to teaching, an approach that balances equally the head and the heart in the learning process, one that demonstrates to students that efforts at learning will be supported by peers and teacher alike. Finally, the social reform perspective, the one in which the teacher endeavors to change society in substantive ways, awakens students to ideologies and values that are deeply embedded in culture and texts; in discussion instructors focus on the question of for whom knowledge has been created.

These perspectives initially were discovered using wide-ranging and intensive interviews and observations. From that, Pratt and Collins (2001) developed the online approach and encouraged the public to complete the closed answer questions and create a personal teaching perspectives profile. To date over 75,000 respondents from over 120 countries have benefitted from this instrument’s availability for educators. While this number can be “screened” the authors of the TPI “selected just over 11,000 teachers who (1) self-identified as ‘instructor’, (2) had five or more years of experience as an instructor, and (3) reported that more than 50% of their professional duties were ‘instruction’ in nature,” (Collins, 2008, para 2 - 3).

The TPI has also been used by other persons involved in research process. For example, Brown (2003) and Misieng (2013) used the instrument as a part of their doctoral research in the area of education. Brown, Lake and Matters (2009) utilized the inventory in their research to evaluate the impact of teaching effects and policies in New Zealand and Queensland, assessing how this impacted teachers’ conceptions of teaching. Finally, the TPI has also been used as a tool in faculty development (Bergquist, 2013) and in the field of medical education to assess the teaching philosophies of those who practice pediatric medicine (Taylor, Tisdell, & Gusic, 2007).
Data Analysis Method

Following each interview, in the effort to maintain what Fine (1998) considers the shared conversation dynamic of this process, I reflected on what was said by both the interviewee and me in order that applicable insights might emerge while the data is fresh in my mind. Shortly thereafter I visually examined any notes taken during the interview and organized these notes along with my critical reflection of the interview. Following this I transcribed the audiotaped interview so that I was immersed in the data throughout the collection and analysis stages as Patton (2002) recommends. This approach allowed me to revise the questions for subsequent semi-structured interviews early in the data collection phase.

Analysis of these data was based on qualitative methods, primarily using the constant-comparative method in order to determine patterns or themes in the representations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam (1998), the “constant comparative method involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data are grouped together on a similar dimension,” (p. 18) and are given a name so that they become a category. The objective of this process was to locate patterns in the data and arrange that data in relationship to each other. Each data source was analyzed using this method so that categories were developed. These categories then became the evidence for the findings described in this research.

To accomplish this I read and re-read the transcribed interviews, at time listening again to the interview recordings as I was reading. During this time I coded data in the margins of each transcript and began recognizing and developing themes. As I moved more deeply into this process new themes emerged whereupon I returned to previously coded transcripts to examine for similar phrases or terms in that data, working to approach the data as a novice in the field of diaconal ministry.
Following this coding I sorted data into ‘data piles’ and labeled the data with an overarching themes and developed a data schema. The data within these themes was compared and data themes were revised several times. Eventually three data themes emerged, each with several sub categories; these themes are illustrated on Table 4.2 and developed in Chapter 4, Findings.

**Verification Strategies**

The verification strategies in a mixed methods design must be related to the chosen specific design of the project and were addressed throughout this study. In mixed methods research several dimensions of verification must be considered, but, all draw on the capacity of the researcher to draw meaning and precise conclusions from all of the data that is collected in the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). First, there must be internal verification of the quantitative instrument itself, and there must be a clear relationship between the quantitative instrument and the qualitative data collection methods, in this case, the interview guide used in the study. The Pratt and Collins Teaching Perspectives Instrument instrument has been validated by Collins and Pratt (2011). This is important so that the study can “answer different questions that do not easily come together to provide a single, well-integrated picture of the situation” (Patton, 2002, p. 557). The results of the participants on the TPI added further dimension to how these diaconal ministers see themselves as educators.

Mixed methods researchers have developed different terms than internal validity and credibility to describe this particular aspect of research. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) introduced the terms inference and inference quality, or the extent to which the interpretations and conclusions made on the basis of the results meet the principles of rigor, trustworthiness, and acceptability as well as the degree to which different credible explanations for the results can be ruled out. Additionally, inference transferability is an umbrella term that refers to generalizability
or applicability of inferences obtained in a study to other individuals or entities. Other mixed methods researchers, particularly Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) use the term legitimization to describe this same aspect of the research process.

The qualitative aspect of this research project employed several strategies to address what is more often called dependability in qualitative research, which Merriam (2002) suggests is analogous to internal validity. During the interview process itself I utilized clarifying questions as a continual data check to ensure that data was not misinterpreted because of the researcher’s bias (Merriam, 2009). Thick, rich descriptions of the phenomena as described by the respondents were prepared and sent back to them for member checks. These strategies enhanced the dependability of the study.

**Research Ethics and IRB Compliance**

Working in collaboration with the ELCA Office of Research and Evaluation in addition to The Pennsylvania State University office of Research Protections was vital to this research project. Through conversation with Dr. Inskeep I learned that the initial approval for this research project involving ELCA diaconal ministers rested with The Pennsylvania State University Office of Research Protections. Following that approval, I addressed a formal request for access to the official list (roster) of ELCA diaconal ministers to the ELCA Office of the Secretary; this request will include the University’s IRB forms and letter of approval. A copy of this letter is included in Appendix C and Appendix E. Attention to both of these approvals illustrated that the protection of the participants will be accomplished in several ways.

First, all procedures were carried out in compliance with the University’s institutional review process. Second, for the qualitative instrument, an informed consent from was administered, clarified, and signed prior to engaging in the qualitative portion of this study. Appendix (D) includes this consent form. One copy of this form is retained as a part of the
project’s records and the participant retained the second copy. Since the content of this qualitative interview began with an open ended question and is intended to be unstructured in order to follow the participant’s line of thinking, a detailed and specific informed consent document was not prepared. Participant privacy was assured when reporting the findings; in the course of the study participants were assigned names that are purely alphabetical descriptors. Additionally, while results cannot be completely anonymous, all results will be kept confidential. Finally, participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from participation in this study at any time, for any reason, without penalty. All procedures were carried out in compliance with both the University’s and the ELCA’s intuitional review process.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of the mixed methodology I used in this research project. For the quantitative aspect of this project I used a traditional instrument, the TPI, to identify the adult educational philosophy of seven ELCA diaconal ministers. However, the principal design of this research project was the qualitative aspect of the project. The qualitative data was gathered through 10 in-depth semi-structured interviews with diaconal ministers who identified as social reform on the TPI, with a score higher than 25. These interviews began by discussing particular responses from the interviewees short answer questions of the quantitative instrument.

A constant comparative method of analysis was used for the qualitative data as this approach allowed for the emergence of possible patterns, themes, categories, and relationships in the data. Finally, the analysis of the two data basis were be compared and contrasted.

Where this chapter provides an overview of the methodology for this research project, the following chapter provides the findings from the subsequent research.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to discover how diaconal ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) practice their ministry and describe and understand their role as educators of adults. The research questions guiding the study are: a) how do diaconal ministers describe their work, both philosophically and in the practice of what they actually do; b) how do diaconal ministers connect this philosophy not only to their practice of ministry, but, also, to their specific call to lead and equip others to a similar ministry in daily life; and, c) how do diaconal ministers describe their perspective as teachers in relationship to their learners?

This chapter presents the findings of the study, by first presenting the 10 ELCA who participated in the qualitative interviews. As discussed in Chapter Three, participants were also asked to take Pratt and Collins (2001) Teaching Perspectives Inventory, and the individual results of their TPI are presented as they are introduced. The second section presents the qualitative findings of the study, whereas the third presents the collective results of the TPI, which adds greater meaning to the results.

Making the Road through the Interview Process: Participants

As previously stated, the official recognition of the work of diaconal ministers in the ELCA began in mid-1996 with the first consecrations to service. While the history of the call to diaconal service is quite historic, each of the participants in this research project reflects the pioneering nature of this new venture in ministry service. Throughout the 18 year history of this opportunity for the ministry in the ELCA this pioneering nature of those in service called these leaders to create new avenues for service to those in need across the United States (US) and around the world. Those who agreed to be interviewed for this study have served for more than three years and were thus able to share thoughtful reflection on the challenges faced both inside
the walls of the church and at the place where “the gospel of Jesus Christ meets human need,” (ELCA, 1997). Throughout the interviews participants described the way in which they made the road of diaconal ministry as they began the journey in service in a particular context; in other words, the way to do something is to start doing it and learn from it. Some of the participants had completed the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (Pratt and Collins, 2001) prior to the interview process, and others did not. Thus where relevant in addition to providing a description of the participant, in some cases I also discuss their TPI inventory. Also, several participants offered a symbol of their ministry, or, a metaphor that describes their ministry practice. A list of participants is also provided in Table 1 on the following page.

**Addyson**

Addyson is a 45 year old, white female who was consecrated in 2004. A specialist in the area of disaster response, her prior careers included service in the United States Department of Agriculture US Forest Service in the area of Fire and Aviation Management where she was a member of hotshot crews serving in the southwestern US. Shortly after consecration she was deployed to the US Gulf Coast for service as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s (ELCA) local disaster response coordinator in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Her interview was held immediately prior to her deployment to the Augustinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala where her assignment was to prepare locals for numerous disasters such as hurricane preparedness/response and response to volcanic eruption. Addyson took the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI) prior to her interview and she scored 40 in apprenticeship and 36 in the social reform, which were her two highest categories, although Addyson’s nurturing perspective score was also 36.
Table 4.1

*Interview Participant Information*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Specialization Description</th>
<th>TPI Score</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Year of Consecration</th>
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<td></td>
<td>NUR 36</td>
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<td>NA</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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<td>SR 31</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<td>NUR 39</td>
<td>Midwestern tree</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2008</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Fredericka</td>
<td>Pediatrician/serve those on fringe</td>
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<td>The caduccus</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>2006</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>Symbol of money and cross</td>
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<td>2010</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Becky

Becky is a specialist in environmental education with a particular focus in earthkeeping and stewardship education ministry. Consecrated in 2005, this 57 year old white female’s call in service is on her territory’s judicatory level where she serves as the resource person for judicatory and congregational leaders for all things related to the stewardship of the earth; creation as well as the coordinator of the state’s Interfaith Climate and Energy Campaign. Becky has published a number of faith-based articles dealing with care for the earth as a matter of living justice and peace. On the TPI prior she scored 35 in social reform, her highest adult education preference.

Carol

Carol is a 36 year-old White female who serves her congregation as an education specialist. While her work includes oversight of the congregation’s early childhood education center, as a result of Carol’s passion for education across the ages (especially as it connects to faith formation and development) the congregations recently opened (September 7, 2013) a faith formation center in the community. Consecrated in 2008, her interest in this research project stems from her overarching commitment to solid training for the adults who work with young children through adults and the recognition that the congregation’s early childhood education center was developed to serve a distinctly different from others in the area because it serves those children whom other centers have turned away because of language, potty-training, or Asperger’s Syndrome – during our interview she described these children as the ‘throw-aways’. Carol took the TPI prior to her interview and scored 42 in the nurturing category and 31 in the social reform category; the social reform score was her fourth highest preference, following apprenticeship and developmental which were 38.
Dorothy

Dorothy is a 68 year-old, white female who was consecrated in 1996. Throughout her career in church work, a career that began 15 years before her consecration, she specialized in educational service both in congregations and church-related colleges with curricular programs for educational ministry with focus on non-traditional North American students (international and older adults). Prior to her service in ministry, Dorothy was a public school teacher; in addition to her Master’s degree in theology she holds a Master’s degree in Education. Her self-described focus is towards helping children, youth, and adults reach out beyond the walls of the church building and structures to serve those in need and her educational approach utilizes action/reflection model. On the TPI Dorothy scored a 39 in the apprenticeship category and 33 in social reform, which tied with transmission for her lowest perspective scores.

Evelyn

Evelyn serves as a chaplain in a public hospital in the mid-western part of the ELCA. Her self-described passion for ministry is to foster the understanding of any patient in the hospital as a whole person and not reduce any patient to, as she described, ‘the gall bladder in 312’. A 52 year old white female, Evelyn’s secondary passion for ministry is to educate members of congregations with skills of pastoral care so that they can reach out to people in the community in service in Christ’s name. Consecrated in 2008, Evelyn took the TPI prior to her interview; her high score of 39 was in the nurturing perspective with her fourth (31) in the social reform perspective. The symbol of ministry that she shared with me is a “Midwest tree, has to be Midwest… it has to be in an area where there are seasons. A tree going through the seasons, reaching up reaching down rooted into the earth but going through seasons, times of growth, times of bareness, times of fertility, bearing fruit. Times of taking in, of gathering what's needed.
I think that would be a good image connected to the church and connected to God, connected to the church and connected to the world, going through seasons of change."

**Fredericka**

Fredericka is a 52 year-old, white female who serves as a pediatrician in her community. As a young woman she experienced deep brokenness and she recognizes that her church-related call is primarily to serve those who ‘have lost the vision of themselves as being an integral part of a bigger community and having something always to give back to the community’. Through a health care clinic for families with limited means and a pay-as-you-are-able dental clinic, Fredericka’s hope for ministry grew out of her life-story as a near homeless mother of two children who experienced depression episodes that landed her in a psych unit; While her original diaconal ministry focus was to develop a volunteer network in her home congregation which equips the baptized to mentor at-risk youth, her current primary diaconal service, which is mostly volunteer, outreaches to the immigrant population in Cumberland County. Fredericka, who was consecrated in 2010, took the TPI prior to our interview and her highest score is in 39 in the apprenticeship perspective; however, she scored 31 in the social reform perspective, her fourth highest score. The symbol that she shared with me is the caduceus in which she sees the connection of the cross of Jesus with the two intertwined snakes and Mercury’s wings.
Gabe

Gabe is a white male, approximately 55 years old; he previously worked for a faith-based medical and retirement benefits program; background in accounting and financial counseling. Consecrated in early 2010; he currently serves with Bread for the World, “…an ecumenical Christian organization working to end hunger by changing the politics of hunger by engaging people of faith through their church, their seminary, through their college, through their civic organization.”. A self-described social justice worker whose understanding of social justice has evolved over the last 20 years, he currently understands social justice as “justice in God’s terms and social justice is then how we act in true Christian love to one another as we live together in society”. He did not participate in the TPI screening opportunity; however, he provided me the symbol of his ministry which is the symbol of money and the cross which is on his “email and his business card…. I kind of blend my two backgrounds and I identify myself both as a diaconal minister and a financial analyst, which are somewhat quite different things in this world”.

Henry

Henry, a 45 year-old white male, specializes in a ministry of higher education with a particular focus in business ethics. Currently he is a teacher and administrator (dean) in a church-related college in the southern US and he works most closely with the traditional college-age student (18-22). However, he considers his diaconal ministry to include his numerous volunteer responsibilities with adults in his congregation. Consecrated in early 1999, Henry describes the practice of diaconal ministry as being the ministry of a translator, not being the ministry of the bi-lingual. In his words, “…one who is bi-lingual does not mean that…you are able to translate or take the environment into account;” in your service. He did not participate in the TPI screening
opportunity; however, he did provide me the symbol of his ministry: the fountain pen. “I was given a pen… and the quotation was, ‘May every word that you write be a blow that strikes the devil,…’ so there has been something about that has always struck with me and that is the one thing that does carry over is that, that I spend a lot of time with a written word, now it may be a keyboard as much as the pen... But the pen as a symbol of the written word as the one thing that holds it altogether for me whether it is as a scholar whether it is as a teacher whether it is an administrator... God’s work is done through writing and hopefully thinking about writing…”

Irene

Irene also did not participate in the TPI screening opportunity. A white, female who is approximately 55 years old, she was consecrated in early 2010 and currently serves as the director of a faith-based ministry to returning veterans and their families. Unlike the earlier citation, Irene expressed the desire to remain anonymous about particulars of the publications. She is one of the authors of a text for congregations to use as they welcome home veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; during the interview she used the term ‘consensus tranced’, understanding that term to mean the unconscious choice as part of a the ordinary consciousness, based on the principle that persons believe what they are told to be true as opposed to what they have themselves realized to be true. This theory is based on the work of Charles Tart who states that “…together, human groups agree on which of their perceptions should be admitted to awareness (hence, consensus), then they train each other to see the world in that way and only in that way (hence trance)...,” (Tart, 1986). The symbol of Irene’s ministry is “…we have an image of four arms
grasping each other at the elbow making a box, you know that image I’m talking about and the arms represent different ages and skin colors and that is what that would be.”

Janet

Janet was consecrated in 1997 and came to ministry service as a diaconal minister after many years of public school teaching. A 51 year-old white female, she served in various sized congregations in the Northeast, the Mid-west, and southeastern US. She described an accompaniment model of ministry with the foundation of her understanding for education is a sense of mutuality, “…you meet us in the eye and you listen”. Janet participated in the TPI inventory, scoring 39 in the nurturing perspective, her highest score, and 26 in the social reform perspective, her lowest score. The symbol of her work is a stone, particularly a stone that has moved across the country with her family. The stone “…is to hold doors open and so for me that would be one image…helps keep systems open I think that’s where I phrased it before it keeps the door open. You know when we close the door we shut out an element of who God is.”

Qualitative Findings: The Making the of the Road

The qualitative findings of the study can be captured in the metaphor of making and walking the road, since ELCA Diaconal Ministers were first consecrated in 1996. Thus, to a large degree these Diaconal Ministers have forged new territory for the ELCA and have also
forged new territory in their own lives. Before explaining the three primary findings of the study, it is helpful here to remind the reader of two aspects of contextual information, related to the notions of “making the road” and “vocation.”

First, as stated in the introduction to this dissertation, Freire’s and Horton’s approach to learning involves simply doing what seems to be needed to be done (i.e., “making the road”) all the while knowing that one learns from that act of doing (Horton & Freire, 1990). Early practitioners of diaconal ministry made their way into unknown territory in the ELCA, embodying the Antonio Machado poem on which this approach is based, *Se hace camino al andar*, “You make the way as you go.” Guided by the charge of the Bishop in the Rite of Consecration which states: “Empower, equip, and support all the baptized in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Lead us all in proclaiming the gospel in witness and service,” (ELCA, 1997) these ministers of Gospel pioneered ways to accompany and support people to live their baptismal vocation. Lutherans understand the baptismal call as the call to hear the Gospel message and respond with one’s whole life, to proclaim unconditional love to the whole world in his or her own setting. Like other Christian traditions, Lutherans tend to blend the understanding of baptismal call with the call to rostered leadership in the Church instead of speaking of this baptismal call as faithful parenting, honest accounting, responsible housekeeping, or being a barber. In essence, for Lutherans, whatever one does faithfully and wholeheartedly that hastens the Kingdom of God is one’s baptismal vocation. Hence, one can only understand these ministers in light of their faith commitment and in their belief of living out the Christian Social Gospel, defined almost 100 years ago as, “…the application of the teaching of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions…as well as to individuals,” (Matthews, 1921, p. 416). Table 2 illustrates this as an outline of findings for this project.
Second, it is helpful to contextualize the notion of vocation. Given today’s culture wherein the use of the word vocation can mean any number of things, Dawson (2005) captures the challenge to understand what it means to live one’s vocation, in light of its multiple definitions by stating:

Beyond simply definitional ambiguity, however, what is reflected in these various usages is a family of diverse conceptions and assumptions regarding the purpose of adult education and other social practices, the question of what constitutes a meaningful life, and the significance of work as a source of personal and social meaning. (p. 221)

Because of the numerous understandings of what “vocation” means, an examination of what this term means for members of the ELCA is helpful.

For Lutherans the concept of living one’s baptismal vocation carries a particular understanding. Thus, Lutherans understand that the Christian life (one’s vocation) is lived out in our daily work and in various jobs or careers; the living of vocation is not simply one’s job or career. Hence, for those who served in the early years of the ELCA’s diaconal ministry the making of the road involved a partnership with others on the road, others oft times struggling to find genuine ways to live a baptismal vocation, a Christian life.

With this as background there were three primary qualitative findings to this study. The first set of findings centers more on the importance of dealing with the whole person. The second focuses more on building relationship and partnerships. A third set centers on education and working toward social transformation, while the last set focuses on nurturing a sense of believing and becoming. A data display of categories and subcategories appears on Table 2 on the following page.
TABLE 4.2: Data Display of Qualitative Findings

Findings: The Making of the Road

Dealing with the Whole Person in Community

Meeting people where they are at
Engaging and being present to emotions
Attending to spirituality in community
Merging being and doing: Capacity building

Building Relations and Partnerships

“Empowering and equipping”
Developing partnerships with institutions

Educating and Working Toward Social Transformation

Nurturing a faith based consciousness
Educating for a faith that does justice
Developing a sense of emancipatory adult education
Working for a better world
Dealing with the Whole Person

These participants emphasized the importance of dealing with the whole person in community by meeting people where they are at, by being with people in the present moment, by attending to spirituality in community and by merging being and doing in the effort to build capacity.

Meeting people where they are at. First, the participants emphasized the importance of being able to meet people where they are at. As Becky says, in reflecting on her work with earthkeeping and stewardship education, “My desire is to meet them where they are already in their spectrum” of awareness of the call to care for the earth. She adds this thought to the impact of taking the time to do this important work and notes, “a lot of it is about meeting people where they are, you know engaging them, helping them to move forward in terms of how they care for the earth.”

For Addyson this sense of meeting people where they are at meant knowing, prior to her arrival in Guatemala, the important aspect of being present with folks in their native context, describing it this way. “…they live in the context, they are local wise. And my thing was supporting them.” She also reflects that this sensitivity and skill are developed over time and through her numerous experiences in working with disaster response as she described her work in Mississippi immediately after Hurricane Katrina, a situation that was quite chaotic upon her arrival:

So that's the time I did say let's do this program and I actually did that but it's not going to....I mean if I don't go in there and just sit with the people, let them have participation and make them trust me, then that's what needs to happen before this can happen.

Similarly, Evelyn’s experiences as a chaplain in a public hospital lead her to connect with folks on a medical journey that is fraught with stress and fear. In particular, she describes the
challenge of meeting with patients and their families in the midst of their stress and fear using these words:

I’d find myself often with people both within the hospital and professional setting, and in a personal setting, which they have kind of lost their respect for religious institutions altogether. And when I come in to a setting where I find myself interacting with people whose minds have closed and the doors have closed and that they have had situations that have been hurtful in their lives and they have just turned their backs on that, when I come into those settings, if they let me in, in the first place their interaction with me helps break down some misconceptions and helps revisit things. Sometimes it helps us specifically to address areas of woundedness and misunderstandings that they have had in the past with institutions of faith and sometimes it's more general. Even without going there specifically, even if it’s not specifically Lutheran, my representation of someone in the community who is also a clergy person in their eyes from the Lutheran church and they have a positive experience with that it helps mend some of those issues from the past.

In her call Evelyn also has extensive experience working with hospital staff who oft times tend to use shorthand, or code language, to describe their walk with patients. She describes the challenge to reflect to the staff the need to meet the patient where she/he is at, particularly as this intersects with how the patients and their families experience this treatment by the staff:

Yes it is the ‘gall bladder in 12’ and so it is a part of my call to keep that ‘gall bladder in 12’ both aware themselves that they are still a whole person and to keep their family and the staff around them aware that this is a whole person and to not just minister to the gall bladder but to the person. That’s my sense of call and that's what I hear in this.
Recognizing that any work she does is constantly evolving to meet participants’ needs, Carol describes her work with adults in this way, stressing the importance of recognizing the central dimension of an ever evolving experience as a part of their shared walk:

That means the needs change every month and we've been able to meet those needs and that's why the people keep growing because it's not just education, it's that whole journey, the whole transformation journey of where are they right now. What do they need? How can we walk with them? Maybe dealing with the whole person?

As with Evelyn, Carol relates to multiple audiences in her work and she describes the importance of utilizing this skill with her other audience, young children, “I just see the need to discuss issues with parents and teachers, and do we need additional support at home for this child and it's, just, we offer a variety of resources of meeting the kids where they are at.”

Speaking of her efforts to meet returning veterans and their families where they are at in the process of returning stateside after lengthy (and sometimes numerous) deployments, Irene expresses the experience of equipping members of congregations to join in her in this ‘meeting’ as challenging because of societal thinking about war, noting, “We are very much impacted by our context and essentially we are a society right now that doesn’t want to hear about war and we operating in consensus trance where people can’t really see what is going on.” In this preparation for the challenging effort of volunteering to work with returning veterans and their families she stresses that, for both the veterans/families and the volunteers, “each person’s experiences should be assumed to be different,” and finally reflects on her efforts to equip members of congregations to meet returning veterans where they are, she describes her thought process to “…promote healing activities within congregations that are addressed to the particular circumstance of the veterans themselves because one of the big messages you convey is that, the healing recovery process for veterans happens on its own timing.” In all of these remarks, in essence, she is
emphasizing the importance of meeting people where they are at, with the greatest challenge being the consensus trance of the general public about the wars in which the USA is involved. For members of congregations with whom Irene serves the consensus trance means that people believe what they are told about the importance of the war to be true as opposed to what they have themselves realized to be true through their direct connections with returning veterans. Bridging that gap with her volunteers requires insights in areas of psychology and theology.

The ministry practice of diaconal ministers is centered on active involvement with quite a variety of partners on the road of mission and service. In fact, at any given time each diaconal minister is simultaneously involved with partners with quite differing perspectives. The first step in that process, while described in any number of ways, is grounded in meeting others wherever they are in life’s journey. As discussed in the introduction to this research project, what matters in these early years of the roster of ELCA diaconal ministers is not primarily what they can do that others cannot do; rather, it is how they live these actions, particularly as they meet others with differing life experiences and perspectives.

Engaging and being present to emotions. Another sense of their emphasis on being with the whole person in the present moment was manifested in their emphasis on being present to people’s emotions, such as fear, frustration, concern, and trauma, both in their teaching and in their ministry in general. Throughout their interviews participants referred to an assortment of ways that they walked the road by engaging various emotions with people involved in the groups whom they serve. For instance, Henry described the manner in which his teaching style changed in order to engage the emotions of his students:

I began gravitating to case studies very quickly, too, in my teaching for similar reasons, again, because they were a way to engage students emotionally in what they were doing and to have them…assume roles and reflect on them, then, personally…
Describing how she is present to the emotions of returning veterans and their families, Irene experienced how group activities that she planned evoked emotions in participants:

We had programs for children and of course we had a meal afterwards, and, we had a kind of traumatic meeting that started to evoke some of the complicated emotions people have. It was basically just an effort to accompany; I use the word accompany because they are with their families as they’re in this reintegration process.

Reflecting on the challenge of educational efforts in the area of environmental justice and environmental stewardship, Becky stated:

I'm not trying to fill their head with a lot of qualitative [sic] statistics and change the way they think. That it has to come out of their heart, and sometimes we have to talk about what is the greatest joy in creation, what is your deepest sorrow in creation. But, a lot more of what I'm trying to do with people is to think about, and then feel with their lives, and then give them what they need, to do what they think that is in them to do.

Carol described the process of developing her congregation’s preschool as the engagement of the emotions of adults in the congregation and community, “They were talking about the way that this pre-school made them feel about their child and I just let them have some discussion. What might that look like? What is unconditional love?” She also talks about the role of emotional engagement that is a part of her work in the adult education settings in her congregation:

I think one of the things that I really live by is, how do we be part of the solution? You know if there is something that moves us, if there is something that we are bothered by, and it does come up in small group ministry and education settings, because that’s for people who have sacred space to share. And when they hear the story in the scripture,
then they are given permission to feel the same way or maybe doubt like the disciples did. But then help them figure out, “…okay like what might the solution look like?” You are empowering them to okay you have now named your fear, but how can we change that and have a voice in that, just giving the space for that is often all that they need and then they can take it and run.

Evelyn talked about how she tends to the emotional vulnerability of those she serves as a hospital chaplain in this way:

They [the emotions] come to the surface more in a hospital setting, more perhaps than anywhere else in our society, where people are faced with their mortality, or, those they love, where their losses came back and parade around them. Or, where their identity is stripped, too. Even their clothes are stripped from them. That's a very strong sense of connection for me, people are stripped of what they have and aren't sure if they are left with anything, and referred to often at the base level.

Lastly, Janet spoke about the importance of engaging emotions in her work, framing this as having emotional attendance with the learner:

So having that emotional attendance to whoever comes into the context of the teaching environment would be emotionally sensitive to seeing where that’s apt to help open doors for their achievement, as well as the challenge to …engage and get out of the way for people to discern where God is calling them.

By engaging the emotions of those whom they serve, by being present to emotions within their various communities, diaconal ministers fulfill another aspect of the Bishop’s charge during the Rite of Consecration, to “…witness to God’s love for all people,” (ELCA, 1997).

**Attending to spirituality in community.** Given that the educators in this study are doing their work in the context of a faith community, several participants referred to aspects of their
work and its connection to spirituality, including trying to develop, and help others develop, openness about spiritual practices. During her interview Carol related the foundational role of spirituality in the preschool classroom, especially noting how this begins with her training of the preschool teachers:

So everything comes from that...that is the very language of God is the language that is in the classroom. So, that means all of the teachers I have to provide theological training for them and we have to provide at the level that is appropriate within the classroom. That means even in the three year old classroom.

She also discussed her approach to attending to the sense of spirituality in the adult education community that she serves in this way:

And so we will meet on two Tuesdays a month and we are just talking spirituality. I need to be invested to them, as well, because that's another way I can hear the voices of the congregation and make sure that it's not just my voice that they are listening to.

Using an illustration from his faith community, Gabe outlined a specific way through which Bread for the World engages spirituality within Christian congregations:

Back to our congregation and sometime later this spring we’ll probably have a Sunday where we will hold an offering of letters [about justice and poverty], and, we may have written our letters before that. But, whether we do that [letter writing] or not in worship, we will encourage the writing of letters, and, either that Sunday or the following Sunday we will bless the letters that are written by members of the congregation before they get sent to Washington.

Evelyn spoke to a sense of spirituality as she described a time when she participated as a learner in an adult education class in her congregation. Commenting that she experienced the leader as demeaning a spiritual practice that is a component of her faith journey, she reflected on
that morning’s experience, and the realization that she plays a role in challenging individuals to be open to building relationship when ‘the other’ demonstrates (faith) practices that are different from the majority of those gathered:

I speak when it feels appropriate in group settings, when the church gathers in meetings that I’m in. I do try and share enough to make people aware of the whole person. And a whole person has parts that are less appealing and more needy. There is the importance of keeping that awareness that we are ‘them’. In a Sunday School meeting not too long ago, one of the folks on the committee…was joking about people who have had, you know this charismatic experience. I spoke into that and said you need to know before I accept this position [teaching the class] that I have had that experience. And he, by the way, very nicely handled that in the class with good humor and respect, and came up to me a couple of weeks later personally and apologized for his words and said he didn't even know what came over him. But, that was the moment for me of pushing a boundary and standing up. That's a big part of what I consider my call. “Hey there are other people here!”

Through Evelyn’s attendance to encouraging the instructor’s openness to accept her (Evelyn’s) unique spiritual experiences in the classroom she hoped to lay the foundation for times when this leader would be more accepting of other people’s unique expressions of spirituality within the congregational community.

Some participants highlighted the notion of the Gospel call in developing a prophetic voice, which also connects to spirituality. In her work with a faith-based community food pantry, Janet considers the outcomes of these partnerships that are developed through walking together, especially the role of a ‘prophetic’ voice in the community:
Finding the way the systems work, and doing the analytical side of it, so that we can engage more people. And then using the challenging prophetic voice internally in those systems to say ‘why not’ when that question is necessary…then pushing when one has to push to create some tension to open doors…

Becky described the way that she opens her sermons, hoping that she adequately connects spirituality to care for creation:

Yeah, it is about reunion of the world. When I preach there is this short prayer I use, and maybe the kind of faith in there, I say, “The peace of the Lord, bless the speaking and bless the hearing that Your word, may plant seeds in our hearts and bear fruits in our life, for the healing of the world,” sometimes I say, “for the healing of Your world and the glory of your Holy name.” So, for me it's about the healing of the world, that people of the church are equipped and empowered and sent forth to help heal the world and bring God's love to the world, justice to the world and by world. To me it is the physical, biological world as well as people that live in that world.

Finally, Irene, who works with veterans, described the manner in which she attends to spirituality in community when she talked about how her sermon for November 11, 2011, initially focused on the traumas facing returning veterans, changed in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. This sermon was prepared for an ELCA congregation in southern New Jersey:

Well, I also try to be pastoral in preaching and so I was asked to preach at a New Jersey church on November 11th this year. And so they had just experienced Hurricane Sandy and had been without power for two weeks. I prepared a message and took more into account to the theme of re-building within the trauma, but, I did it from the military perspective and included information about my work.

Through their attendance to the spirituality of various groups whom they serve, and
whom they equip for service in the world, these diaconal ministers emphasized the important role of spirituality in response to the Bishop’s charge during the Rite of Consecration, to “…witness to God’s love for all people,” (ELCA, 1997).

**Merging being and doing: Capacity building.** Several of the participants discussed the notion of capacity building in the community but did so by first emphasizing the importance of being with people in the community. In the public sphere, capacity building often refers to strengthening the skills, competencies and abilities of people and communities in developing societies so that they are able to overcome the causes of their exclusion and suffering. While few of the participants work in, or with, developing countries, in their work with a number of volunteer publics, several discussed their work as assisting individuals to develop and enhance skills for their outreach to those outside of the dominant power groups in US culture. Others described how their work built the capacity of clients to challenge the political structures and powers in the US. For example, prior to her departure for service in developing disaster response skills amongst Guatemalans, Addyson shared, “I think we just listen to the people...because they are...I don't want to say assets, we are building capacity, and it is building capacity.”

Similarly, through her diaconal ministry experience in environmental advocacy, Becky also outlines key aspects of this art of listening in order to equip, by saying, “It is trying to encourage them to listen in their own heart and experience of whatever it is God is calling them to do. To refine and also give them resources of, ‘Here is how you might respond.’” Through her caring and faithful listening she builds their capacity for service as creation’s caregivers, a capacity that reflects the passions of their own experience.

As the practitioner whose call is the developing of a dental clinic for a primarily Latino clientele, during her interview Fredericka spoke of her attention to building the language fluency
capacity of both her Latino clients and high school youth studying Spanish who are involved in a high school Spanish honor society:

We recruited the Spanish students to the high school that my daughter goes to; the Spanish society has a service requirement. So they can come down and help translate. So, we are kind of reaching out our tentacles to anybody in the community that would have something to both give and gain from the interaction.

She also shared her efforts to facilitate her clients’ dignity, by building their capacity to participate in the ongoing work of a dental clinic through their donations towards the cost of their dental care, noting just how vital this action is in the capacity building of the free dental clinic in her community:

I have something and I'm willing to share it with you if you want to share, and help others to be able to access that same thing, to feel free to do so to the degree that you are able to do it. And [by contributing something to the dental clinic] they get to retain their dignity, they get to feel that they are helping their peers, and they really are because they really have helped us basically meet our expenditures.

As he reflected on his work, Gabe also spoke of several ways that his work with Bread for the World facilitates capacity building in others. Particularly, he talked about a particular member of his Board of Directors who was a recipient of the organization’s support and now finds herself speaking truth to political leaders:

Herself comes out of position of poverty and has been a long-time activist from Oregon. She made a strong and impassioned statement of her perspective and...she is the kind of person that if you were to listen when she’s talking to her senators and congressperson...so, she’s received that passion I think from the combination of her personal experience and then the training she’s received to be a leader. And I think
Bread for the World, through its grassroots organizing, has developed a number of leaders, some have themselves experienced hunger.

In sum, in these ministers walk with those whom they serve by being attentive to where they are situated within the larger society, by not objectifying those whom they serve, by attending to the ever growing sense of spirituality in community, and by establishing partnerships with those whom they serve with focus to develop the passions and skills of those being served.

**Building Relationships and Partnerships**

The second key theme of findings highlights that participants made this road by emphasizing that their role in building relationships and partnerships as “equipping”, one of the words used in the Bishop’s address during the Rite of Consecration for diaconal ministers. In particular the Bishop says these words, “empower, equip, and support all the baptized in the ministry of Jesus Christ,” (ELCA, 1997). They attempted to build relationships and partnerships by acting on their understanding of the Bishop’s call “to empower and equip”, and by developing partnerships with institutions,

**“Empowering and equipping”**. These participants all believed that the Bishop’s charge to ‘empower and equip” required working with others to foster building relationships and partnerships. Dorothy for example interprets the Bishop’s charge in the words of consecration in her work with college students this way:

The other word that always grabbed me was, empower, you know, empower, equip and support. That grabbed me because I didn’t have that as a young person growing up, and, so, if I could empower a college student to know the gifts that they had; to go to the next step and do something different with their life, that they never expected to do, then that was a gift that I could give them, it wasn’t just me, but it was God, you know, God working in me.
Evelyn, in her description of her own participation in congregational life, a place where, at times, she feels disenfranchised, talks about equipping as putting particular experiences into a larger frame of life experiences, both in the congregation and as a chaplain:

Connecting it back to, that is one end of equipping and kind of helping people be aware in a larger frame, you know. You do that as well in your professional life because you find yourself walking into places where people have been disenfranchised from organized religion, or hurt by practitioners of faith from other traditions or other places in their life. And that’s the place, also, where you were saying, “Hey there are other people here, we aren't all alike.”

A couple of the participants referred to the notion of “accompanying” people on a journey as a way of interpreting the Bishop’s charge to “empower and equip”. Irene for example describes her work with returning veterans and their families, “I’m addressing the suffering by accompanying veterans and their families.”

Henry also uses this term “accompany” to discuss as he equips college students with skills to discover the knowledge that they bring into the classroom and, then, he hopes to empower them on their journey of self-discovery. He also acknowledges how this changes his approach to education, evidence of partnership in the classroom:

That way of leading folks to discover the knowledge within, I think that is what faculty is asked to do, trying to accompanying them on a journey. Again, the journey of self-discovery, I think, that is another way of putting it, but, it does change the nature of the teacher.

During her years of service in congregations, Janet describes her approach to equipping and empowering members of congregations in this way:
Okay for me and the congregational setting it is knowing the systems that are in place and looking and listening to where people say, “Oh, I would like to do x, y and z.” It is understanding what the x, y and z involves and, then, either just listening to them and fostering that to a gentle, you know, encouragement. Or, it might be through prayer; it might be through direct engagement, saying, “Well have you talked to this person?” Or, giving the resources they need to self-advocate… So for me equip means just pausing and assessing from doing an analytical process and then seeing where what we can do matches and hopefully, you know, let that fresh air come in and that life. Because I think very often we function in systems that are very closed and not open. And, again, for equipping and empowering having the diaconal voice and saying, “Can we look at it this way?” and just look at the goal. Again it’s the teacher in me, you know there are multiple ways to solve, and it just doesn’t have to be this one path, for if someone wants to go another path that’s possibly their path.

It is clear that the only agenda of these diaconal servants as they walk with others throughout different phases and stages of life is being responsive to the Bishop’s charge, stated above, to equip and empower by not projecting a personal agenda, by preparing people to chart their own pathways into what might appear to be closed systems and networks.

**Developing partnerships with institutions.** Participants talked a lot about building relationships and local partnerships in the context of their own and other faith-based organizations. This effort is a direct response to the Bishop’s charge that diaconal ministers, “Lead us all in proclaiming the gospel in witness and service,” (ELCA, 1997).

Describing the important, and historic, connection of congregations in the Aiken, SC, area that works together to walk with those with need of both food and clothing, Janet shares the significance of the importance of the connections of these congregations as organizations:
So area churches together have been in ministry for twenty five years and it’s a partnership based in an ecumenical center for all mainline denominations, and an independent congregation, in eighteen counties. All are invited to participate and it’s streamlined all the food pantries, all the clothing distribution centers ...it also helped us meet the needs in a more organized systematic way so that people weren’t giving multiple services or taking advantage of multiple services and then not having resources for those who might need it one time or two times...it became an equalizer in the community that were all treated the same.

Carol shared how the efforts of her congregation’s pre-school extended across groups as they reached out to organizations that are funded with federal money in order to find educational and emotional support for children’s individual needs:

And that's what makes us different from any of the other pre-schools where in, being a church in the world means that, when a child comes in with special needs, ...they are working with me to figure out how can we help provide additional resources to the family. We've had children that have lost their parents very suddenly; I look at the role of the church to say okay, how do we provide them foster care? Are there counseling resources that we can help provide for them? Maybe they are financial hardships; there have been situations that we have been able to offer pre-school families that are not, that have never attended a Sunday service or never even talked about being in membership. That doesn't matter, we offer them, we minister to them the same way we do to the people that come and our members here. That's being the church in the world. We are ministering to them without any kind of formal membership. We provide IU services, we provide that pastoral care.
Fredericka also discussed the vital role that community partners have in the work of the volunteer dental clinic in Cumberland County, PA. Again, many of these partners represent organizations that are other than faith-based as well as school students from public schools:

And we are still in our first year of operation but we are getting some of the students from the dental hygiene and the dental assisting programs in the area where they are required to do clinical hours so we are offering that to them, and anybody we recruited the Spanish students to the high school that my daughter goes to, the Spanish society has a service requirement. So they can come down and help translate. So we are kind of reaching out our tentacles to anybody in the community that would have something to both give and gain from the interaction.

In an earlier career Gabe was a community organizer; he connects that earlier career with his service at Bread for the World from the aspect of walking the walk as it shapes results of the shared journey:

Organizers I meet use many of the same community organizing techniques that I did back in the 70s, but, they embody much more of these ideas that we talked about: engaging the politicians and corporate leaders, trying to find ways that we can work together,…we still make them uncomfortable when we think they are being unresponsive, but, we are finding ways that we can work together to solve transportation, education and racial inequality issues.

In some instances, building relationships and partnerships involves working with international connections. Addyson describes the importance of building the connection between her sponsoring organizations here in the states and the members of the Lutheran church in Guatemala. These different groups of people met through a SKYPE connection as she was officially commissioned for her work. She talked about the experience this way, “…they [the
people of Guatemala] were really captivating; so, they will be here in partnership with [my domestic] partners; and there will be relationship building. That's all part of being disaster prepared and recovering.”

Dorothy’s work in congregations is preparing members for mission trips to third world countries. A significant part of that preparation is her focus on the opportunity for travelers to meet locals where they are at and to recognize that, through this approach to meeting, travelers will experience the impact of relationships in new and unanticipated ways. She describes it using these words, “They realize that a piece of what we were doing was making relationships; and, that was probably harder for them because they didn't expect that, but then when they came back, that was the thing they remembered.”

As they worked to build partnerships with others involved in various institutions these diaconal ministers paid particular attention to, in many situations, fostering relationships and leading others in these institutions to a deeper engagement in society.

**Educating and Working Toward Social Transformation**

A third set of findings focuses on their role in educating and working for social transformation. While we see evidence of this in some of the earlier categories and quotes, this section focuses more specifically about their role as educators for social transformation. It is important here to remind the reader that these participants are ministers, and hence are motivated in their work in part by their Christian commitment. So this faith context undergirds the work that they do, including their work as educators in general and for social justice. Hence, how they educate and work for social justice is manifested and set up here by beginning with how they educate for nurturing a faith based consciousness. Next is their role in educating for faith and social justice; third is in developing a sense of emancipatory adult education; and finally in their attempts at working for a better world.
Nurturing a faith based consciousness. These participants did discuss the role of faith nurturing a faith based consciousness, both in themselves and others. Gabe described the reason that his work with Bread for the World is such a part of his personal faith-consciousness, but he also works to develop in others:

My primary goal is to help myself and the people that I had relationships with to be more truly followers of Jesus in the way that we handle and make decisions around money. And I think that helps me be... a more respectful and loving person.

Becky recognized that she always focused on faith instruction in her practice of ministry; however, as her practice evolved she realized that, “I have incorporated spirituality in a deeper way but, you know that is the continuity in most what I’m doing I think, trying to get people to, try to sense real spirit is calling them…”.

Given their own sense of faith, these ministers often create educational programs that deal with faith issues. For example, Irene, who works with returning veterans developed a program for returning veterans and their families that was modeled after an ancient Holy Week journey for Christians, The Way of the Cross, or, Stations of the Cross. In this ancient tradition each Station depicts a particular incident of Christ’s journey to his crucifixion. In striving to make this experience relevant for veterans and their families, Irene connected these stations with experiences of wounded veterans, Irene describes it this way:

One of the things we have done is have a Good Friday “Way of the Cross” service, all heading towards a particular suffering of veterans and their families. So we modified kind of a combination of traditional Catholic notions of the Way of the Cross with more…paying attention to the scriptures…looking at how to read in our experiences of nurturing veterans and their families as joining the Way of the Cross journey. That particular experience was very moving and profound experience for the participants.
In her practice of ministry as a chaplain in a public hospital, Evelyn described her role as an educator around faith development as “…it is about challenging ideas, it’s about revisiting belief systems and how they inform our understanding and our actions and speaking in each of those settings”.

In her work Fredericka describes her primary focus of educating others in the community to put God as the center of their lives as they work to live the Gospel in daily life; she speculates how she might best approach this, saying,

And how do I address what they need and what words do I say? What actions do I choose that will help move them towards a kind of model of putting God kind of in the forefront of their lives and then starting to see that they have a role within the church serving others because they all have gifts that they can give. Several years into her practice of ministry, Fredericka went on to discuss the effect of her role as an instructor of faith. Much to her surprise she observed the way in which someone whom she trained to serve as a teacher and guide in turn served another in need, becoming that person’s teacher and guide:

But the interesting twist was that the mentor then herself became fairly seriously ill and the tables turned where the young lady went then and helped her a lot. So it was a beautiful example of both of them learning that you know, it doesn’t matter who is younger or older, less or more experienced, we all have something to give in a given situation.

Finally, Dorothy reflected on her role as an educator within the college setting, especially as it compared to her service in an affluent congregation in suburban Baltimore:

…the college level it was different, than at the congregation level. Well, at the college level there was more information [about faith] that you have to transmit to them, you had
to give them information, ...But you also had to do the practical side of how do you use this information for instance in your internship, or in the types of thing you do when you go out in public or into their professions but then in the context of the church there was much more dialogue and nurturing was a bigger part of what I was teaching them.

Her conversation demonstrates the importance of inter-weaving the instruction of faith with the importance of practicing the faith.

This notion of the connection between faith or spirituality and what one does in the world was fairly central to the work of all of these diaconal ministers. For Becky, one community based consciousness raising activity is the opportunity for learners to walk to eradicate hunger; this community wide activity provides those who walk for the Church World Service (CWS) CROP Hunger Walk an opportunity to grasp in a different way the call to environmental justice. Becky speaks to this notion of the inter-connection of faith or spirituality and what one does in the world:

So for me it is all connected, you know people interested in hunger walk it [the CROP Walk] and are connected to environmental things. So, I have a lot more emphases about earth and spirituality as we walk and that has been a stronger place for their action to flow out with, to be sustained and experience. In that sense, when the hearts open there is when people learn.

In sum then, whether serving in congregations, educational institutions, or faith-based agencies diaconal ministers strive to educate to nurture a faith based consciousness. This of course also connects to their educational work for social justice.

**Educating for a faith that does justice.** The participants all emphasized the importance of educating for social justice, and living the Christian Social Gospel, which emphasizes Jesus’ concern for the poor and the oppressed, and the call to do justice in the world. In the 1960’s and
early 1970’s “the social gospel stepped outside the churches to intersect the political, social, and economic forces of changing America,” (White & Hopkins, 1976, p. xi), and, to some degree, spoke of themselves as educating others about it. While these diaconal ministers identify as ministers more so than as educators, they did talk about their educational role for social action and educating for social action when asked about their roles as educators.

As stated in the Bishop’s charge to the candidate during the Rite of Consecration (ELCA, 1997), “You have been called to the diaconate to give leadership in the Church’s mission to proclaim the gospel through word and deed…Diaconal ministry reflects the historic call of deacons to serve those most in need…serve the needy…care for the sick…comfort the distressed,” (p.166). To fulfill this charge diaconal ministers give leadership through their work as educators, both formally in training and informally through conversation and modelling through service. Thus, one aspect of the work of a diaconal minister is that of education with a special aim towards nurturing in others skill to live out the Christian Social Gospel.

Carol grounds her thoughts on educating in her congregational setting for social action toward social change, and for breaking societal barriers, in The Great Commission,

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age,’”


This text guides her service in ministry through which she strives to pass on to her adult learners the call for living social justice; in this quote she uses the phrase “breaking that gap” and “bridging that gap” instead of the words breaking societal barriers in social action:
I better understood that the whole role of the actual ministry being the church in the
world and breaking that gap and giving voice to the voiceless, I clung to that I was like
that it is a language. And so that’s why I think you see that translate into all of this small
groups in my teaching setting because if you are bridging that gap then there is
action...And love. It results in carrying the cross of the world...

Carrying the cross of the world and the skill of education requires the diaconal minister to
speak the language of the church and the world; in fact, the cross which represents this office was
developed as a reflection of this call to speak the language of the church to the world and the
language of the world to the church. The cross below, known as the cross of the ELCA diaconal
ministry community, illustrates this sense of movement between the church and the world; the
cross bar symbolizes the infinite movement of the world to the church and the church to the
world. This action fulfills words in the Bishop’s charge to the diaconal minister in the Rite of
consecration, “The Church calls diaconal ministers to speak God’s word…to God’s world…It
also calls them to speak for the needs of God’s world to the Church,” (ELCA, 1997, p. 166).

To illustrate this, early in the life of ELCA diaconal ministry, Henry spoke to the 1995
ELCA Churchwide Assembly about the difference between being bi-lingual and being a
translator and how this is descriptive of the work of the diaconal minister. An academic trained
in the intersection of faith and business ethics reflects on this movement from the day of Sabbath
to daily work:
Well it is true that just because you can speak multiple languages, function in a different environment, you can’t necessarily translate or state what makes sense…it makes sense in your own head but you have difficulty explaining it…so you have been loving your neighbor on Sunday and then treating your neighbor like a son of a bitch on Monday.

In her work within an ecumenical agency that provides care for homeless people in Aiken, SC, Janet describes the need to consider how to educate others in how to analyze the structural systems so that they can engage in grassroots social action for justice:

So when I think about the word engagement on their message it really understanding the system first that are in play and understanding what is the motivating factor for individual or individuals and then looking at the setting or the program or the network and saying we had the open time to breathe some air in the closed system and can it become more open so that people can be engaged because the spirit has stirred that up within them the desire to be engaged… and here is an important point where I think what we are going over in my leadership there again I heard the agency executive director and the staff said we don’t want the policy board we want a board of directors that engage in the grassroots action of this place.

For Becky this call to be a revolutionary is in her work to teach others throughout her church judicatory about how to be both environmentally conscious and active in the care of creation. This is particularly challenging for her in the midst of a church and social culture that is suspicious of the need for environmental care and leans into doubting the existence of global warming. Understanding this context leads her to share that her work can be filled with the challenge to cross societal barriers to educate people for social justice action as the effort that:

Can be both the physical reparation of environmental damage or problem of helping people finding clean water…it is about, it is teaching and empowering and helping the
child to inspire other people to find ways, such as speaking, social justice and social action in terms of caring for the earth. It's helping them ... to make that connection between how we care for the earth connecting to how we care for people.

In a similar manner, through his work with Bread for the World, Gabe has the opportunity to work with people both in hands-on justice service to those in need and also with those serving on the organization’s Board. He described what attracted him to serve with this ecumenical faith-based organization in this way:

We are an Ecumenical Christian organization working to end hunger by changing the politics of hunger and we are changing the politics of hunger by engaging people of faith through their church, their seminary, through their college, through their civic organization to use their public place to tell their elected officials how we can end hunger by changing US policy.

He goes on to more specifically describe the very purpose of Bread for the World embraces - the call to break societal structures that bind people into structures of poverty and hunger on both a domestic and world stage:

But if hunger is one of the things that you feel called to work towards an end of, Bread for the World is an avenue in which your efforts can be multiplied many times over and would therefore, if we are going to end hunger in Gods world, you can, you can do that in two ways which you are not at all exclusive of each other. One is to extend your arm of charity to provide food to those who need; the other way that we are also called to end hunger is to work to change the conditions that keep people hungry day after day. We have enough food in this world, and we know how to grow enough food, to feed the people in this world.
Dorothy shared a poignant story about her teaching experiences with an international student, a male Tanzanian pastor who served as an associate to their denomination’s bishop. Through this story she illustrates the many ways in which the educational process leads this particular learner to consider breaking societal barriers of his home (Tanzanian) context, and breaking long-held, internal understandings of the accepted role of women, liberating them for new options in life:

I have a really quick story, if you want one, that just crossed into my head about a gentleman (pastor) from Africa. He was at the college and he was an assistant to the Bishop in Tanzania, or someplace like that. He was spending a year with us and when this pastor came, he could not look at myself or the other female professor in the eye and, you know, to make a long story short, we developed relationship with him. He worked with us for a year, and, the last day he came and wanted a picture taken and so we took the picture. But he sat at our feet, and I said, “Come up here Charles, sit with us.” “No,” he said, “no, I wanted people to know that I have changed my thinking and now I can sit at the feet of [female] professors and I can tell my daughter that she someday can be a bishop.” I don't know even know why that popped into my head expect that when we talk about empowering. We didn't do anything except be ourselves, you know the teachers. That to me, is a huge part of the learning process. And he got something very different than I ever thought he would get.

Finally, Irene works with returning veterans and their families, along with the many community organizations that assist the veterans, to transition into participation in the life of the larger community. This work places her in a prime location to consider the call to educate persons in the community about the importance of challenging existing social structures and to
encourage those with whom she works to consider ways to break these societal barriers. During her interview, she spoke of this work in this way:

Yes, well there, you start with the perspective that people are suffering and asking why they are suffering and how might their suffering be addressed and then it is the ethical requirement of any intervener to also inquire how that suffering might be presented …so that in this area of societal participation militarism has a huge modification on everything; I mean the budget is more of a document, treating people as ends to a mean is contrary to Christian ethics, of course. Treating people as other than your neighbor, or other than one best intends, is also contrary to Christian ethics. So, it is all about how we treat people in those among us, and, then, what we are paying for happening. On a wider scale and then of course the opportunity cost of well, if we pay for this to happen then there are resources for them to happen, something better happen. So, it is an impact of social justice in about every level I can think of.

In sum, these diaconal ministers educate for social justice in three primary ways: a) as educators about the Christian Social Gospel; b) as educators working to develop a faith based consciousness; and, c) as educators teaching others how to break existing societal barriers.

**Developing a sense of emancipatory adult education.** As noted earlier, most of these participants did not immediately identify as educators but as Christian ministers who see one aspect of their work as the education of adults. Based on analysis of syllabi from their schools of theological education, however, it is clear that a standard text in religious education courses is Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1994). In many ways the reading of this text and their practice of ministry connects to this notion of believing and becoming, and how they view themselves. An important aspect of emancipatory adult education is creating a learning environment where there is a horizontal relationship between the educator and the learners.
speaking of her service as an educator in disaster response in Guatemala, Addyson emphasized meeting the people where they are, and says, “I may have to teach in Spanish,” the language of the locals and an example of a horizontal relationship.

Evelyn noted during her interview that much of what she does as a chaplain involves education:

Helping people see things from a new perspective, revisiting some of their basic beliefs and assumptions and. helping them transition to a new time in their lives where things are going to be different; processing losses, processing changes, processing limitations…that all involves education and I had not thought of it that way at all. So yes this is looking a lot broader to me right now.

Henry, in echoing some of what emancipatory education is about, describes a fundamental purpose of his work with young adults as finding ways to communicate to them the importance of viewing the world in a more encompassing manner than their previous life’s experience allows:

In that it is important to teach about the challenges of the world…I mean they were, they were in almost a very beautiful way sheltered in the colleges where I have served. I have seen my call to broaden that world view.

As an educator for faith formation based in a congregation, Carol discussed in her conversation what she experiences in her role as an adult educator, sharing the approach that she utilizes in teaching, as well as the goal that she has in mind for those participating in the learning opportunity:

To look at the whole person; that recognizes that everyone in the room it’s like they have different things that need nurtured, different things that need to be drawn out and that’s a challenge that I absolutely love, because, every time you’re teaching things the group
dynamic is going to be different. I mean you just never know who is going to be in the class, unless you have an incredibly prescribed group of people that is coming to a six week study. But it’s just so fluid an adult education that I really thrive on because I like to see that my goals to bring out best in them, and to allow them to see that they have it within themselves to see it differently.

On the other hand, Henry teaches an undergraduate population in a church-related college. While that population is the typical 18-22 year old ages, and not stereotypically considered participants in adult education, and he describes his role as teacher as, “struggling with the way to walk with an undergraduate population in hopes that the foundational ethics of their future are transformed,” as they walk with him in class. Additionally, he reflects some frustration about his use of both an action/reflection model and a service-based learning model of instructing in this way:

The way to get them to think beyond just service, there is this great issue that people and service learning tell about the students. They get so excited working at the soup kitchen one wrote in his final paper, “I hope that my children can come back and go to this college and working at the same soup kitchen that would be great.” And when you are involved…that means that the problem is still there and you are just continuing to just fix the symptoms of the problem. And certainly we have to account to those things but it shows that the students didn’t have any sense that there might be some larger structural issues that might need to be addressed, and, so I would begin try to help students work through that and think about and that was not something that they were used to doing…Students would go and they would do tutoring at the Salvation Army and they would come back and they would talk about how great it was, how much they enjoyed working with the kids and then I asked questions about what did you learn about
Johnny that you were helping this week. And it is like, “Oh, Johnny’s mum works two jobs; he never sees his mum.” Really, like, oh, really? I wonder why that is, well is it…she must not make enough money working but one job, so she has to work two?

In her work with returning veterans and their families, Irene talks about a family education day that took place in a church building, that hints at emancipatory educational opportunities that attempted to deal with practical, emotional and spiritual issues as part of the reintegration process:

We had speakers addressing various pragmatic issues like finances…we had programs for children and of course we had a meal afterwards. And it was a kind of traumatic [educational] meeting that started to evoke some of the complicated emotions people have. It was basically just an effort it accompany; I use the word accompany because as they participate in this event they are with their families as they’re in this reintegration process.

Fredericka expresses her intention to educate to cross barriers and challenge the dominant thought processes of those whom she meets, which is a hallmark of emancipatory education. This thought process is based on how media portrays those who need clinic based health and dental care. She describes her work to cross the barrier of this entrenched consciousness in this way:

So you know part of my barrier breaking in that sense is really educating the people inside the church as to the reality instead of the TV version, and rest on how these people live and you know they work usually…at least one and a half or two full-time equivalent jobs for less pay than any American would ever accept and no benefits, and it's work for them if you walked into Wal-Mart you would be paying two or three times as much for everything that you bought and so basically educating the congregation that these people are not to be demonized they are to be supportive and helped.
Lastly, Gabe spent time sharing how his practice of emancipatory education with adults evolved since the 1970’s:

I would say I was more focused on the ends of those organizing activities in the 1970s. Today I am still very committed to the end of the changes we need to bring social justice in a variety of spheres to those on the margin, but to be, its increasingly important to me on how we achieve that and that... we organize for political power and influence in a loving way in a way that does not objectify those that we are often targeting for change and that we always hold open the possibility that those that we are advocating with are they themselves children of God and are fully capable of embracing the positions that we are advocating so that we both want to encourage them to do the right thing and make in their interest to do the right thing.

As Gabe notes in his reflections on his work as a community organizer in the 1970’s, the goal of diaconal ministers in adult education is to focus on more than the end – the changes needed in society. It is vital that those whom we challenge in that process are not, in turn, objectified.

**Working for a better world.** The participants in the study all emphasized the importance of trying to create a better world that is rooted in their faith perspective, which relates back to this notion of being and becoming, but, for the sake of the community’s well-being and betterment. This faith based activity contrasts to the work for social justice that has the sense of all individuals seeking to find their inner potential within their society for the purpose of equalizing the playing field on which people live. To that end, as an environmental educator within a particular synod of the ELCA, Becky refers to her work with faithful adults this way: “…you know engaging them, helping them to move forward in terms of how they care for the earth,” as a manifestation of God’s ongoing creative activity.
Fredericka’s service with disenfranchised young adults locates her in a particularly important population to prepare adults to move into a ‘better world’. She talks about this using these words:

So the people's view of themselves become again helplessness, having nothing to offer, they internalize that message that they hear from being victims of a charity which is another uninteresting word, being a victim of charity. But, they internalize the message of helplessness and having nothing to offer. So we are trying to reverse that message and we tell them you always have something to offer no matter what, we just have to figure out what that is and have you put it up here on the table.

As noted earlier, young adults attending a Christian college most often come from privileged backgrounds, and, can be sheltered and unaware of the complexities of the world. In his classroom Henry recognized the challenge for “them to reflect on their service experience and then from that identify an issue or a problem that they knew was not going to be fixed just by doing some more service related to it”.

This notion of trying to create a better world calls people to think communally and not individually. Gabe talks about one approach to embodying this as a plea to:

Act in true Christian love to one another as we live together in society. It’s embodying in our being that, be it unwritten in form of how we live in small groups compared to the written rules and laws that we have, and, how we live together in bigger entities and cities, states, nations and global partnerships that embody that principle of love of neighbor as love of self.

He continues, suggesting an additional way to live this, “…by unleashing our voices that, that we can have a...dramatic impact on hunger in the world, and you can make a dramatic impact by writing a letter, or calling your congressman.”
As a final point, Irene talks about the approach to developing a theology of joy for returning veterans and their families as she serves in an inter-faith based agency, describing how her work functions in the small space where the distinction between being spiritual and being a person of faith exists. She describes this sense of living by anticipating joy in these words:

I don’t think it calls them out of a spiritual framework necessarily, but, in some ways it has to be spiritual because you have to have the hope that you can get better and that is what most, so many people, really lack and fear. But, unless you include anybody who hopes as a spiritual person I wouldn’t say that it is a spiritual striving that they come for. No, they want to be better; they want to not be suffering as much; that is why people come to these workshops.

From a perspective of critical theory, the findings indicate that ELCA diaconal ministers approach the work they do in their practice of ministry as change agents for society. They also describe their educational approach as one that encourages participants in their programs to live in ways that promote social justice and social change as they work for justice and peace throughout the world.

**Findings on the Teaching Perspectives Inventory**

Part of the purpose of this study was to understand how these diaconal ministers function as educators. Toward that end, participants were encouraged to take Pratt and Collins (2001) Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI). Seven of the 10 participants did so. The TPI scores participants in relation to five perspectives of teaching: a) transmission; b) apprenticeship; c) developmental; d) nurturing; and e) social reform. The results of their scores are depicted in Table 3 on the next page.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the transmission perspective has as its foundation the sense that the focus of the educator is the transmission of knowledge and facts about a particular subject
and learners are expected to learn particular subject content. All but one of the participants scored lowest in the transmission perspective. In the apprenticeship model of education the teacher focuses skillfully on sharing knowledge about a subject where, then, learners in the environment become more independent and competent. Three of the participants in this project scored highest in this area.

Table 4.3 Summary of TPI Scores

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An educator utilizing the developmental perspective understands how the learners think and the teacher’s primary goal is to create the environment where understanding moves from relatively simple to more complex; while none of the participants hold this as their dominant perspective, it is evident that for five of them it is highly influential in their practice of ministry and education. The nurturing perspective is one in which people are motivated and productive in
the learning environment when working on a particular issue and they approach this learning without fear of failure. For three of the participants this is the dominant perspective and for several others this perspective highly informs their practice. Finally, in the social reform perspective the role of the teacher is to awaken in the learner a sense of community, as well as to challenge the status quo in which learners live; of course it is hoped that learners will take a critical stance that empowers them to social action. While only one of the participants holds this as the dominant perspective, six of them scored over 30 in this perspective. Also, during the interview several participants reflected how this emphasis to change society fits into their practice of ministry and education.

In sum, knowledge of how most of the participants scored on the TPI adds greater dimension to how these ELCA diaconal ministers understand their role as educators. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

**Summary and Conclusion**

Data for this study of how ELCA diaconal ministers practice their ministry as educators of adults and how they understand and describe that role was gathered through qualitative interviews with 10 participants, and from seven responses to the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI). Analysis of the qualitative data demonstrated three key areas of findings that highlight how these diaconal ministers, in light of their Christian faith commitment, emphasize: (a) dealing with the whole person in community; (b) partnerships as capacity building; and, (c) educating and working toward social transformation. The findings from the Teaching Perspectives Inventory, add further dimension to understanding how these diaconal ministers view their role as educators.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to discover how diaconal ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) practice their ministry and describe and understand their role as educators of adults. There were three primary research questions utilized in this study: a) how do diaconal ministers describe their work, both philosophically and in the practice of what they actually do; b) how do diaconal ministers connect this philosophy not only to their practice of ministry, but, also, to their specific call to lead and equip others to a similar ministry in daily life; and, c) how do diaconal ministers describe their perspective as teachers in relationship to their learners?

This chapter will begin with a brief summary of the findings, followed by a detailed analysis of the findings in light of the theory and research literature that informs the study. Next is a discussion of diaconal ministers as adult educators, given the interplay of the role of the minister, the role of faith, and the role of the minister as educator in the faith. Third, the implications of the findings for the theory and practice of the preparation and formation of ELCA diaconal ministers will be explored. Then I will discuss the limitations of this study and make suggestions for further research. Finally, the dissertation ends with a series of my reflections on the dissertation process as a whole.

Findings Summary in Light of the Theoretical Framework

This section deals with the three primary findings that were described in detail in Chapter Four in light of the theoretical framework that informs the study. But it is important first to remind the reader that this study was grounded primarily in a critical framework and informed by the intersection of critical theory, feminist theory and liberation theology. Campbell (2000) describes liberation theology as the new kind of critical discourse about Christian faith: “one that
begins by examining the political praxis of Christians…that together Habermas and Gutiérrez have provided us with foundations for a theology of communicative and liberating praxis,” (p. iii). Historically, while critical theory emphasizes challenging structural power relations especially those based on class (Brookfield, 2005b), and critical feminist theory emphasizes not only power relations, newer works on critical theory point out that to limit understandings of critical theory as distinct from the influences of gender, race, class, and relationships and “to lay out a series of fixed characteristics of the position is contrary to the desire of such theorists,” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p.98). Recognizing this newer understanding of critical theory, the importance of connection, relationship, and affect from the field of critical theory are evident from the Frankfurt School (Umrah, 2010; Bustamante and Chaparro, 2010) as well as from the field of feminist theory (hooks, 1994; Tisdell, 1998). However, it is liberation theologies that highlight the importance of challenging oppressive power relations in society because Jesus did so in his own social context (Cone, 1990a, 1990b; Gutiérrez, 1973; West, 2004). This emphasis on social justice and Christianity is commonly referred to as the Christian Social Gospel. White and Hopkins (1976) describe how this came to the fore in the 1960s and early ‘70s when, “the social gospel stepped outside the churches to intersect the political, social, and economic forces of changing America,” (p. xi), partly in light of the influence of Martin Luther King and other justice movements and advocates connected to Christianity. Many Christian progressives concerned with issues of oppression based on structural power relations emphasize the tenets of liberation theology and the importance of the current church taking a stand on justice issues. They agree with Martin Luther King who wrote in 1963, the church has “…adjusted to the status quo, standing as a tail-light behind other community agencies rather than a headlight leading men [sic] to higher levels of justice” (King, 1975b, pp. 28-29). Hence, in following the injunction of King
and others, those who work in the Church who are concerned for justice see themselves as called to take a stand.

As noted in Chapter 4, during the Rite of Consecration the Bishop charges diaconal ministers to “empower, equip and support all the baptized in the ministry of Jesus Christ,” (ELCA, 1997). These diaconal ministers interpret this charge to be both a call for service in life tending to the needs of individual people and for challenging systems of oppression. It is a spiritual call of both being and doing, and encouraging others in their believing and becoming, which also has educational components. For the most part, the participants, eight women and two men, did not use terms like “critical theory”, “feminist theory”, and “liberation theology”; however, it is the two men who mentioned these particular terms. The implications of this cannot be determinative or predictive of how all diaconal ministers function in ministry in relationship to gender because the use of the language itself might be indicative of not only gender, but, also, the ministerial roles and contexts for service. Regardless of their language these diaconal ministers tend to have a critical lens that considers awareness of the role of power relations within the evolving understandings of critical theory. But those interviewed also emphasized the importance of meeting people where they are located in life and not pre-judging those with whom they worked according to societally established structures and patterns of power.

Diaconal ministers practice their ministry pulled by the tensions of teaching to individuals and meeting them where they are at, all the while being concerned about power relations in society on at least two levels. First, this is demonstrated through their challenge of the status quo within the US culture as they themselves strive for justice and peace and challenging social structures that oppress persons with little or no power within systems. Second, this is shown as they serve and navigate within the various structures of the ELCA.
With these initial comments in mind, this section deals more specifically with each of the main findings of the study, in light of the theoretical framework. The findings highlight how these diaconal ministers, in light of their Christian faith commitment, emphasize: a) dealing with the whole person in community; b) building relationships and partnerships; and, c) educating and working toward social transformation.

**Dealing With the Whole Person**

In this study those interviewed began by emphasizing the importance of working with the whole person within the community. They emphasized doing so in four primary ways: a) by meeting people where they were at; b) by being present to emotions; c) by attending to issues of spirituality; and, d) by engaging in capacity building (which begins to challenge power relations).

As noted above, critical theorists study power structures and dominant systems within the larger societal context with the intention to liberate people from forms of oppression (Brookfield, 2005b). The participants’ role in capacity building is part of the challenge to power relations discussed by critical theorists. It is important to note that that the discourse on critical theory has historically been deeply embedded in the thinking of White, northern, western Eurocentric/North American males who emphasize rational thought (Brookfield, 2001, 2005a; Moore, 1988; Schipani, 1988). The feminist emphasis is not only on power relations, but, also, on affect, emotions, and relationships (hooks, 1994; Tisdell, 1998) and in some cases on spirituality (Fernandez, 2003; Tisdell, 2003). This emphasis is important to the interpretation of the findings here. These participants emphasized being present to people’s emotions, and to their spirituality, while capacity building in the community. Connecting theology with the analysis of power structures within the societal context, as noted above, is what liberation theology does, and why it is important in interpreting aspects of this study. In any event, critical theory, feminist theory,
and liberation theology work together to give meaning to the findings of how these people are present to the whole person in community in these myriad ways.

**Building Relationships and Partnerships**

The importance of both challenging power relations and attending to affect and relationship emphasized by critical, feminist, and liberation theorists is very present in the second set of findings, which focuses on Building Relationships and Partnerships. The ongoing notion of liberation theology centers on finding creative ways to equip members to live out generosity in their community work (Isasi-Diaz, 2004; Lee, 2003; Phan, 2000); important in the expression of liberation theology is the delicate balance of relationships, especially as these relationships embody partnerships, both domestic and international (Hilfiker, 2005; Moe-Lobeda 2004; Schipani, 1988). Critical theorists discuss the need for assessment of ideologies that inform us about the impact of cultural systems on clubs and voluntary organizations (Brookfield, 2005, 2005b; Nesbit, 2004; Haraway, 1997). The important connection of these philosophical lenses to the practice of diaconal ministry is apparent in the second primary finding in which the practitioners: respond to the call to empower and equip others and develop with institutions.

**Educating and Working Toward Social Transformation**

The role of challenging power relations and striving for social transformation that is emphasized by critical and feminist theories (Brookfield, 2004a; Blumenfeld-Jones, 2004; hooks, 1994, 2003; Nesbitt, 2004) is also again found in liberation theology where the key role in the movement toward social transformation is a primary voice in social justice movements that are aligned with the sense of social responsibility (Lorde, 1998; Ross, 2003; West, 2004). This emphasis is described as a vital aspect of the mission of the Christian church (Elias, 1993b, 2003; Deshler, 1993; Coopman & Meidlinger, 2000; Monette, 1988; Hayes, 1988), and in the religious tradition in which diaconal ministers live their ministry. Similar concerns are evident in the third
primary finding that diaconal ministers educate and work toward social transformation. This is manifest as they foster a sense of believing and becoming through nurturing a faith based consciousness, through their educating for a faith that does justice, as they develop a sense of emancipatory adult education and as they work for a better world. This effort is best explained through a liberation theology framework, though critical and feminist theories add dimensions of understanding here. Progressive Christian theology and liberation theology emphasize a theology of hope for a better world in the sense that there is a belief that God’s creation is continually unfolding (West, 2004). The diaconal minister is expected to be lingual in both the language of the church and the language of the world. Yet there is still an emphasis on the notion of hope based on a specifically Christian vision which is not necessarily present in critical and feminist theory. Early feminist activist and liberation theologian Dorothy Day, in her description of faith-based social justice activity notes that people are change agents, institutions are not change agents and that change is, ultimately, in the hands of God (Parachin, 2000). In this vision that guides these ministers in their work to educate and work toward social transformation it is evident in their work that they work to a) nurture a faith based consciousness; b) educating for a faith that does justice; c) developing a sense of emancipatory education; and, d) working for a better world.

**Understanding Diaconal Ministers in a Ministerial and Educational Context**

Having briefly reviewed the findings of the study, this section examines these findings in light of the practice of diaconal ministers in the blend of their ministerial and educational contexts. ELCA diaconal ministers see their function primarily through a ministerial lens, however, it is clear these ministers function as both educators of adults and developers of local leadership. Both Horton and Freire (1991) discuss the foundational role of their Christian faith formation in their adult education work that connects to the notion of spirituality. In particular, Freire explains how his Christian faith was an initial motivator for his work, whereas Horton talks
about how it played out in trying to connect with the whole person and his love for people.
Horton explains, “I think if I had to put a finger on what I consider a good education, a good radical education, it wouldn't be anything about methods or techniques. It would be loving people first,” (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 177).

Lutheranism in the Contemporary Context

As throughout the history of the Lutheran church, today much discussion occurs in the ELCA regarding the Church’s understanding of ministry; no matter one’s perspective this discussion is rooted in a foundational theological text for Lutherans, The Augsburg Confession, particularly in Article V, which states:

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he [God] gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when, and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel,

(Melanchthon, 1959, p. 31)
In contemporary Lutheranism, both domestically and internationally, divergent opinions exist regarding whether this Article indicates that there is only one office for public ministry in the ELCA, pastor, or, if there is the option for the development of any number of recognized public ministries in the ELCA, ministries that evolve in response to the Church’s proclamation of the Gospel in the world. To complicate this divergence, in many Lutheran circles the position that there is only one office for ministry is labeled as the ‘orthodox’ position; that places other understandings as outside the power structures of the tradition, outside of the norm (Braaten and Jenson, 1996; Gritsch and Jenson, 1976).

In the landmark 1993 ELCA Study for Ministry, Together for Ministry, a significant portion of the document focused on the need for the ELCA to recognize numerous types of public ministries, in particular pastor, diaconal minister, deacon, and associate in ministry. While
recognizing the centrality of Melanchthon’s Augsburg Confession, Article V for the ELCA, it stresses that, “this article is about God’s ministry. It is not about officially recognized forms of ministry in the Church,” (p. 4). As outlined in Chapter 2, it is as a result of this study, and the subsequent action of the 1993 ELCA Churchwide Assembly that diaconal ministry was recognized as a public ministry in the ELCA.

Contemporary North American Lutheran theologians and ecumenical Lutheran theologians around the world continue this discussion (Erling and Stjerna, 2002; Hall, 1996; Luther, 1989; Wengert, 2008; Wilhelm, 1986). For example, from the North American perspective, Wengert (2008) describes the public ministries of the Lutheran churches as the offices of ministry as those that announce “the end --- of the law, of our lives, of sin, of death, or the world---by announcing Christ’s end; cross and resurrection,” p. 53). International Lutheran feminist scholars from Brazil suggest that liberation theology and diaconal theological reflection are connected in understanding through a similar methodology of praxis (Brakemeier, 2006) while Norwegian Lutheran scholar Dietrich (2006) urges a more comprehensive understanding of the office of ministry to include diaconal ministry stating that, “it is therefore in accordance with Luther’s main concern and the Lutheran tradition to reconsider the church’s ministerial structures from the perspective of what orders will best allow the church to carry out its mission,” (p. 71). Other ecumenical diaconal ministry scholars urge an expansive reconsideration of the office of ministry, in particular the office of deacon, or diaconal ministry (Barnett, 1995; Collins, 1990).

Lastly, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) held an international consultation, The Diaconal Ministry in the Mission of the Church, in November 2005. This consultation was attended by representatives of member LWF churches from the northern and southern hemispheres and focused conversation and understanding about diaconal ministries around the world as public, recognized ministries. The final paper that emerged from the consultation
suggests that, “...the potential of our Lutheran tradition has not yet been fully exhausted. The one public ministry of the church (CA V and CA XIV) is divinely instituted. Nonetheless, in light of ever changing historical realities, the church must address the task of ordering it anew,” (Boettcher, 2006, pp. 84-85). Building on this understanding, then, the consultation’s members call all the LWF members churches to:

Reexamine the ways in which they have ordered the ecclesial ministry, and, in particular, to do so in such a way that the diaconal responsibility of their mission is adequately expressed. We are convinced that establishing or strengthening the diaconal ministry and providing training and formation that would facilitate its equal recognition with the pastoral ministry would be an appropriate way of acknowledging and meeting this challenge. (Boettcher, 2006, p. 88)

Thus, the ten persons interviewed in this project live, and embody, their ministry within this often conflicted understanding of the not only the office of ministry in the ELCA, but, also, the role of diaconal ministers in the ELCA. They step into this practice of ministry with the perspective of making the walk into unknown territory, as outsiders to the historic structures on ministry in the Lutheran church and pioneers in the evolving landscape of the ELCA’s understandings of the office of ministry.

Keeping all of this in mind, perhaps nothing illustrates the measure of the project’s findings in the areas of the diaconal minister’s function as both minister and educator, as ministers stepping into a conflicted Lutheran context, embodying more clearly what Horton frames as loving people first, than the story Dorothy shared as highlighted in Chapter 4 about her role as an educator of adults in a Christian undergraduate college. In this story Dorothy highlights how the women faculty at this college met a particular student, a male Tanzanian, where he was in his educational and faith journey. For a year they walked with him, being
present to his emotions, hoping to build his capacity as a teacher of the faith in his home country. This male student was quite privileged in his home culture; he served as an associate to the denomination’s bishop, at the time when both roles were reserved for male clergy. As a team of educators the faculty built a relationship and partnership with this international student, and, while respecting his native culture and religious tradition, encouraged his ongoing faith development and broadened understanding of church. What happened on his final day on their campus demonstrated just how transforming his educational process was by sitting at their feet for a photo and sharing that he wants his daughter to know that someday she can be a bishop of the denomination, something that he obviously believed made for a better world and something that he never dreamed of as he arrived on this campus a year earlier. This story illustrates to some degree Dorothy’s role as an educator.

Recall from Chapter Four, that to gain a better sense of how these ministers might function as educators, even though they first identify as ministers, the participants were encouraged to take Pratt and Collins (2001) Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI) which highlights five perspectives of the adult educator: a) transmission; b) apprenticeship; c) developmental; d) nurturing; and e) social reform. As discussed in Chapter Four, all but one of the seven participants who took it scored lowest in the transmission perspective; three of them scored highest in the apprenticeship approach; three scored highest in the nurturing approach; only one scored highest in the social reform perspective, but, six of the seven participants scored over 30, which indicates it was a strong influence for most of them. None of them scored highest in the developmental perspective, but it was a significant influence in six of the seven. These findings have implications for their role not only as ministers but as educators.
Moving Beyond the Banking Model of Education

Clearly, the participants’ low scores on the transmission model indicates that as educators they tend to pay little attention to the banking model of education. In fact, this study underscores the critical importance of Freire’s (1994) challenge to the ‘banking method’ of education, the method which stresses the importance of the role of the teacher who imparts knowledge to the learner, that learners passively adapt to the teacher approach to imparting knowledge, that students are thought of primarily as individuals, and that students are thought of recipients of the impressive knowledge of the teacher. Conversely, in reference to the third research question, of how diaconal ministers describe their perspective as teachers in relationship to their learners, the TPI indicates that by adhering to Freire's understanding of a more emancipatory approach to the learning environment, participants in the study reflect an attention to meeting those whom they serve in their context and partnering with them as they walk through both the educational and ministerial process in order to build their personal skills for service and to deepen their own practices of ministry. Additionally, reflective of both the nurturing and developmental perspectives of the TPI (Pratt & Collins, 2001) diaconal ministers in this project reached out to those whom they serve, fostering both the emotions of those served and validating the important role of emotions in all of life experiences as those served continue through life’s journey. No matter where they are located, be it hospital, congregation, judicatory body, non-profit agency, or educational institution, they encouraged the emotional health of those with whom they work, through their constantly adapting their approach to the learning environment and attention to how this could enhance their interactions in ministry. As they walked with the many audiences whom they serve, this group of diaconal ministers revealed a deep conviction to provide the individuals in each audience with ample opportunity to make learning connections at their own pace, to gently challenge other leaders by standing up for folks typically standing on the outside of the
cultural majority, and to sit with people in any numbers of ministry settings in anticipation of new learnings that might emerge. Clearly, through their commitment to deal with the whole person in community the diaconal ministers involved in this project fulfil this aspect of the Bishop’s charge to them during the Rite of Consecration to “…witness to God’s love for all people,” (ELCA, 1997).

**Embracing a More Emancipatory Partnership Approach**

Based on their emphasis on building relationships and partnerships, it appears that as educators they embrace a more emancipatory and partnership approach to teaching and learning. Building on the Bishop’s charge to “empower, equip, and support all the baptized in the ministry of Jesus Christ,” (ELCA, 1997), participants describe the role of encouraging those whom they serve to find their ability to negotiate power and interest among various constituents within the group they serve (Cervero & Wilson, 1994). Many did so by embracing an apprenticeship or nurturing perspective that would encourage the building of relationships and partnerships with others. This was also a part of capacity building in the community, which has emancipatory potential to move people to social justice.

**Implications for Theory and Practice**

The study and its findings in light of the theoretical framing offer implications for both the theory and practice for adult education.

**Implications for Theory**

There is some discussion in the field on spirituality and adult education (English, 2005b, English & Tisdell, 2010; Tisdell, 2003). There is clearly much discussion on critical and feminist theory (Belenky, et al, 1997; Brookfield, 2001, 2005a; Butterwork & Sleman, 2003; Elias & Merriam, 2005; Haraway, 1997; hooks, 1994, 2003; Johnson-Baily & Cervero, 1996; Nesbitt, 2004). However, there is not much theoretical consideration of a critical emancipatory
spirituality of adult education, though Tisdell (2003) discusses an emancipatory spirituality of women educators for social change, and English (2005b) notes that a sense of spirituality and spiritual commitment was a strong influence in the early leaders of the field. Still, within the field of adult education, the notion of a critical emancipatory spirituality of adult education is relatively undeveloped.

“Critical spirituality” is a relatively new term to describe a sense of how a sense of spirituality does in fact infuse the social justice efforts of educators informed by critical and feminist perspectives and is primarily rooted in a combination of critical theory and pedagogy, with an emphasis on the role of spirituality in the motivation and practices of many teachers and activists (Bussey, 2006; Milojevic, 2005). McCray et al (2012) studied critical spirituality in the context of the Roman Catholic system of education, pointing out the impact of critical spirituality on the development of educational leadership, whereas, Milojevic (2005) examines it from a more general sense of spirituality especially grounded in “Tantric, Vedic, and Buddhist influences and the potential of [these] worldviews to engage with critical pedagogies and present influences and dilemmas” (p. 1). Moore (2010) grounds critical spirituality in Marx, Giroux, and Welch, describing a practice of critical spirituality that is rooted in social cultural theorists. Scholars from the African American community, Dantley (2005), Wilms (2007), and West (1999), root their study of critical spirituality and the religious practices of African American communities (largely Christian), particularly as it pushes educators to involvement in social justice action. In her work, Poppo (2007) understands critical spirituality as arising from a postmodern Christian focus that is deeply grounded in a liberation theology which demands, “critical inquiry for the use of G*d-talk in educational endeavors, and puts forth one such process that works to liberate rather than oppress,” (p. 66). Finally, Bussey (2006) describes critical spirituality as connecting the deepest yearnings of the soul with the dominant hegemonic structures of politics, which, “builds
on the modernist capacity for self-reflection allowing it to escape from the maze of the mind and find a contingent fulfilment in the soul,” (p. 43).

Boyd (2012) has also recently analyzed the critical spirituality of Paulo Freire, and what it suggests for adult education, noting that Freire’s work in adult education is aimed at utilizing a radical and critical pedagogy to generate both social and personal transformation. To accomplish these two things Boyd (2012) points out four ways that Freire’s critical spirituality rooted in his Christian faith influences the field of adult education, and has implications for practice of educators. Boyd suggests that progressive educators grounded in a similar critical spirituality to Paulo Freire would: a) examine the contexts of their own religious and cultural situations, as that context provides numerous resources shaping their view of justice, the world and the human beings; b) focus on what they are for in their education and not only what they are against as this vision is grounded in both their perspective of critical theory and their spiritual tradition; c) rooted in engaging continuously analyzing of the power structures that define and limit them; and d) live and work in the sense of hope in that gives a deeper meaning of the work they do.

Implications for Practice

Considering this notion of the theoretical development of critical spirituality offers implications for practice in general and for diaconal ministers in particular. Scholars (Bussey, 2006; Moore, 2010; McCray, et al, 2012; Poppo, 2007; Wilms, 2007) agree that important dimensions of critical spirituality include, of course, a sense of spirituality that is connected to action and the following five components related to education in a contemporary context: a) critical self-reflection by the educator for deeper self-awareness and potential self-liberation; b) progressive curricular innovation; c) community engagement (walking the talk); d) the valuing of the many different (and sometimes disparate) voices in the learning environment; and, e) equipping those in the learning environment to recognize and analyze closely held ideologies and
understandings. The following paragraphs briefly examine these five important aspects of critical spirituality and the connection each has to the practice of diaconal ministry in the ELCA.

The practice of critical self-reflection in the experience of Christian spirituality by the minister who is an educator is essential in order for there to be an opportunity for deeper self-awareness and, then, the potential self-liberation that is called for in the Christian faith. This fosters in the diaconal minister the mindset to engage critically with well-known religious teachings and practices in the same way that an emphasis on postmodern thought can introduce the awareness of the pluralistic and transitory nature of religious teaching and practices (McCray, et al, 2012). This emphasis on postmodern thought not only challenges the claims of ‘universal truth’ that have historically emerged in Christian theology, it also,

…welcomes inquiry into the particular voices that share how religion shapes particular truths in distinct contexts. A further discussion exploring the ways in which those truths encourage or limit unnecessary suffering is particularly fitting in the postmodern conversation that often struggles with questions of justice, (Poppo, 2007, p. 61).

It is through employing what Fiorenza (1998a) describes as this ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ that the diaconal minister begins to more fully explore the meaning of the Bishop’s charge during the Rite of Consecration to: “…cross every barrier that stands between the church and its ministry in the broader world” and to “serve the needy, care for the sick, comfort the distressed,” (ELCA, 1997, p. 2).

The opportunity to learn through progressive curricular innovation in which partners from all walks of life come together to discuss “how the school (or religious education) can be an active partner with others in the community to see equity and fairness shaping the lives of those inside as well as outside of the school,” (Dantley, 2010, pp. 217-218), encourages two aspects of the findings of this study. First, by involving numerous community partners in their practice of
ministry diaconal ministers will meet members of their communities where they are at; second, this meeting provides partners in the conversation an opportunity to develop their sense of agency within the dominant culture in the US. In their shared work the emerging partnerships employ what Fiorenza (1998a) describes as the hermeneutic of proclamation in which work focuses on recognizing the ways which scripture has been used to support those theologies that maintain exploitative power relations and is now understood and used to challenges those existent structures and relations. An illustration of a scripture text that is used to proclaim a challenge existing power structures and relations comes from John 2, when Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple.

Critical spirituality’s focus on community engagement and walking the talk directly connects with the theme of this dissertation that we make the way as we go, or, Se hace vamino al andar (Machado). This understanding of the practice of moving an internal understanding to an external action is described by theorists of critical spirituality as transformative for both the individual and for all of society and humanity (Dantley, 2005; Milojevic, 2005; and McCray, et al, 2012). This aspect of critical spirituality demonstrate the connection between critical theory, Christian spirituality and liberation theology as “this juxtaposition is reminiscent of Freire’s dialogue where Freire advocates the teacher can only teach when they are simultaneously learning as a student and being able to embrace the changes that may occur within themselves,” (Milojevic, 2005, p. 14). For diaconal ministers who promise in their Rite of Consecration to, “exemplify Christ-like self-giving,” and “witness to God’s love for all people,” (ELCA, 1997, p. 1) the call to walk the talk is foundational to the practice of their ministry.

The valuing of the many different (and sometimes disparate) voices in the learning environment is another aspect of critical spirituality that intersects with the findings of this study. Milojevic (2005) frames this as the opportunity to see spirituality as “a work in progress rather
than a statement of absolute, never changeable truths,” (p. 8). The journey to this valuing
requires persons to be involved in dialogue, modeling, and community engagement with the
awareness that religious teachings include not only a wide array of spiritual traditions, but, also,
that their ongoing development that is crucial in our lives (Milojevic, 2005; McCray, et al, 2012).
It also allows the Christian community to remember times when they were oppressed, as well as
their continual struggle against that oppression; Fiorenza (1998a) calls this the ‘hermeneutic of
remembrance’. For diaconal ministers this understanding of the importance of appreciating and
respecting these distinct voices incorporates the identification with the other and the call for
social justice in both the practice of spirituality and understandings of critical theory.

The final dimension of critical spirituality, equipping those in the learning environment to
recognize and analyze the closely held ideologies and understandings, directly connects the
diaconal minister’s practice in response to the Bishop’s charge to them during the Rite of
Consecration to, “empower, equip, and support all the baptized in the ministry of Jesus Christ,”
(ELCA, 1997, p.1). By recognizing that new stories can be created, the hermeneutic of creative
actualization (Fiorenza, 1998a) allows for the chance for a sweeping readjusting of education in
hope of challenging hegemonic dialogue so that:

…we become ready to clean up after ourselves, to reevaluate actions, all with the style of
humor and openness to failure. The key here is not being paralyzed by either moral
failure or by political actions that are ineffective. We can accept that we can only do our
best, with a style of not expecting perfection or saintliness from ourselves and others. It is
easier to act in ambiguous situation, not being defeated or paralyzed by the mere fact of
As they practice ministry and equip others through their practice as educators of adults, diaconal ministers foster a growing awareness that they are called to build a yet undreamed of future.

In order to further contextualize what such a theorizing might suggest for practice, it is helpful here to apprise the reader of the latest developments in the ELCA about the education of pastors and other religious educators and leaders. On July 1, 2012, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), the major accrediting body for theological schools in North America, changed the academic structure of theological education programs in two areas. First, is the movement away from the 50 year old emphasis on content knowledge to a competency and outcomes based education in the three areas of biblical knowledge, historical and theological studies, and practical knowledge (such as worship, pastoral care, church music, and preaching). The second is in the reduction in the minimum number of credit hours required for master’s degrees in theology and related areas and the proliferation of online learning. The findings of the study might have some implications for practice.

As an adult educator and an ELCA diaconal minister myself, who is grounded in a sense of critical spirituality, I would recommend the following three things: a) including the study of critical spirituality in the theological education of diaconal ministers; b) developing a competency and assessment tool for the skill set that reflects preparation for service as a change agent in culture; and c) creating methods for diaconal community formation utilizing social media and online learning that relates back to this notion of a critical spirituality.

The study of critical spirituality would integrate the learners’ minds, bodies, souls, and ethics in a style of action/reflection learning that reminds them that they are “ancestors for the future,” (McCray, et al, 2012). As noted in Chapter Two, religious educators are caught in the tension of passing on very historic teachings and teaching for today’s world. As religious
educators being adept in the practice of critical spirituality, the diaconal minister will utilize skills that challenge long held tenets of scripture and theology that often dictate elements of faith, (Bussey, 2006 and Poppo, 2007). Through the creation of new partnerships and new stories it is possible to shape better institutional structures as well as organizational cultures as new relationships are created and partners each find individual agency and work together for the good of the larger context.

Additionally, this study of critical spirituality connects with what is known in Protestant Christian circles as the theology of hope. Promulgated by Jurgen Moltmann in his landmark work *Theology of Hope* (1964), he was drawn to the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory through his study of existentialist philosophy, which studies not only the thinking human, but, rather, the active thinking, feeling, living human. Rooted in this dynamic type of thinking, the key to understanding the theology of hope is an understanding that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit stand outside of time rather than being rooted in any particular time and that these theological categories of the past are now open to re-consideration and correction (Scaer, 1970). As diaconal ministers prepare to serve at the intersection of church and world, the ability to traverse the numerous fields of liberation theology, spirituality, and critical theory might well be grounded in this theology of hope as it stands in tension with the Christian Social Gospel.

Diaconal ministers are charged with many tasks that represent a skill set as change agents in culture. This is demonstrated in the numerous charges to the diaconal minister in the Rite of Consecration: cross barriers, serve those most in need, empower, equip, support, proclaim in witness and service, and seek out those places where the gospel of Jesus meets human need (ELCA, 1997). While the concepts of liberation theology, feminist theory, and critical theory were a part of the curriculum in the dominant model of education in theological schools in North America there was no opportunity for diaconal ministers (or other ministers) to develop skills that
connected these theories to the practice of ministry, or in relation to critical spirituality. In this old model, even though field education opportunities were required components in the formation of diaconal ministers these opportunities were located in well-established congregations and agencies that are deeply embedded in the church’s dominant culture as well as the dominant culture of the larger US. In the newly emerging competency-based education, it will be important that opportunities are developed to allow candidates for diaconal ministry to bring together existent skill sets from their life of public vocation with aspects of theological education that emphasize adult education, liberation theology, feminist theory and critical theory in an action/reflection model of learning (Mendenhall, 2013, and Greenstein, 2013).

An important aspect of service as diaconal ministers is the opportunity to be grounded in community; the connection with the larger diaconal ministry community begins during the formation phase of preparation and continues throughout the diaconal minister’s years of service. Within the community of diaconal ministers there are varying understandings of how this grounding is made manifest. For some it is simply a grounding in the diaconal ministry community; for others this grounding includes connections within their location for service in ministry or their school for theological education; for many this grounding involves a complex weaving of multiple communities, such as the diaconal ministry community, the location of service, the local geographic community, and the larger community (communities) of faith. In coming years it will be important to explore how community might be developed through the use of social media and online learning (Haraway, 1997), with a consideration of how this might relate back to the notion of critical spirituality. For example, how might closed groups on Facebook allow the development of community between diaconal ministers who serve in similar locations (e.g. social service agency or congregation or non-profit community organization or higher education)? Or, how might Twitter develop community between diaconal ministers who
serve in similar ministry specializations where more immediate expressions of support or insights for practice could be helpful (e.g. chaplaincy, advocacy, service-based learning, youth ministry)? Additionally, increased use of online learning opportunities could facilitate the creation of not only various communities of learners, but, also, opportunities for the graduate theological school learning that is required for diaconal ministry preparation. There could be discussions of critical spirituality and what it might mean in the current world within these contexts.

**Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

As stated in Chapter One, all research projects carry with them inherent assumptions and limitations. This study is limited in the sense that it is an examination of only 10 of ELCA diaconal ministers in the ELCA. While it is a mixed method study in the sense that it did make use of participants’ results on the quantitative instrument of the Teaching Perspectives Inventory, it is predominantly a qualitative research project that attempts to study the particular in depth (Merriam, 2009). Results are not necessarily intended to be generalizable in the quantitative sense; however, it would be up to other ELCA diaconal ministers to see if the results of this study apply to their lives; further, pastoral ministers in other denominations who are also not clergy may find the results of the study useful.

In spite of these limitations this study makes several contributions to the both the field of adult education and the larger field of religious studies. First, this study fills a gap in adult education literature as it brings to the forefront consciousness of the sphere of religious workers with adults as both learners and practitioners of adult education and brings into this gap a particular set of voices of experience and passion. Second, in the field of religious education there is little training of adult educators; rather, practitioners are trained in educational theories from kindergarten through high school; the voices of those involved in this study reflect ministers who serve as educators of adults in a variety of ministerial settings. Lastly, this study provides a
bridge between the spheres of the philosophies and practices of public adult education and religions education.

The strengths and limitations offer possibilities for further research; as I began this research project I suggested that this study, being the first research done with the practitioners of the ministry, could serve in multiple ways as a springboard for future research on ELCA diaconal ministers. Of particular interest was to examine the way in which this project informed my work with those preparing for service as diaconal ministers. A secondary point of interest articulated was how the results of this project might nurture persons serving as ELCA diaconal ministers. The final hope was that the results of this project could inform the academic preparation and formation of candidates for diaconal ministry.

Before looking at implications for future research on the practice of diaconal ministry as both ministry and education, it is important to share that the life of ELCA diaconal ministry is very short-term. While the life of diaconal ministry officially began in mid-1996 with the first consecrations to the roster, beginning in 2011 the denomination embarked on a journey to, once again, restructure the recognized and rostered ministries of persons who serve as other than ordained ministers. The primary reason that is spoken for the review and eventual restructuring is to alleviate confusion amongst members of the ELCA with the differences between the three rosters of Word and Service leaders in the ELCA: a) associates in ministry; b) deaconesses; and c) diaconal ministers. However, the official reason shared by the ELCA Church Council to establish the Word and Service Task Force to embark on this work is, “…in order to facilitate the creation of such a unified roster, to develop a process outlining how the existing lay rosters would be closed, and to provide a process for transition of existing associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses into such a new roster, and in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary, to consider and propose amendments to the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing
Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to accomplish its recommendations," (Office of the Secretary, 2013). The timeline for reporting to the whole ELCA for discussion, consideration, and vote is at the denomination’s August 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

However, within this reality there are some opportunities for research with diaconal ministers. For example, there might be a large quantitative study that explores connections between particular aspects of theological education, the practice of ministry, and how well diaconal ministers perceived they were prepared to serve as agents of social change in the name of the ELCA. Second, as members of the roster move through this period of change between now and 2016 a qualitative study focused on the thoughts, feelings, and reflections of current diaconal ministers as they consider proposed changes and the impact this might have on their lives. Finally, building on the Hartley study (2000) that provided an initial venture into the ecumenical American diaconate, a mixed methods study focused on the various educational perspectives and frameworks for preparation in the time of change in theological education would fill a void in the ecumenical literature of the diaconate.

Looking to the future, this leads to a rather obvious statement that there will not be future research opportunities for persons serving the ELCA as diaconal ministers. One potential outcome of the Task Force’s work and the vote of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly is to discontinue the Church’s acknowledgment of any recognized public ministry other than pastor. Should that option become reality there will not be an option for future research on the work of a particular group of people who serve the ELCA in this type of public ministry. However, if the 2016 Assembly votes to establish a new structure for Word & Service ministry a myriad of research opportunities present themselves. These research opportunities should most certainly be rooted in the Rite by which candidates are entered to the roster, especially as that approved Rite would reflect how the denomination understands this emerging ministry. I suggest that formal
research about both the understanding of how these leaders practice their ministry and how this practice fulfills the expectations of the ministry would be most beneficial to the denomination.

Since the Word and Service Task Force began its work I have repeatedly offered portions of this project for their consideration. However, in each instance these offers have been summarily rebuffed with only lukewarm interest expressed in hearing a brief overview of my findings. When a few sentence overview of the findings was shared there were no follow-up questions or interactions.

All of the above reflect numerous findings in this project’s literature review. Of particular interest are these: English (2005c, 2006), Simsek and Louis (1994), and Gioia and Thomas (1996) who discuss the fundamental role of the earlier institutional identity in a change process and that change that comes from the top-down tends to be held in suspicion, particularly by those most impacted by any change; hooks (2003) who describes the spiritual weariness of those who constantly battle the structure of an institution; and, finally, the finding that none of the religious education literature mentions the importance of the position of the learner in the learning environment (or, in this case, the position of the diaconal ministry practitioner who has done research in the field).

**Final Thoughts**

Over 10 years ago when I began this degree program I discovered the language and academic material to identify, analyze, support, and nurture my philosophic lens of critical theory. At some point early in the coursework I finally realized that throughout the years of my practice of ministry, whenever I entered a room I immediately analyzed the power dynamics and positionality in the room. Inevitably, in a field dominated and controlled for millennia by male clergy, and almost always White male clergy, in my position as a White female church professional other than clergy I stood outside of the recognized power structure; not only did I
constantly struggle to “fit in” and be accepted as a colleague, at times I also was verbally told that I was the outsider and those in power intended to keep me in my place. Over the years this practice in power analysis was coupled with a growing feminist philosophy and together these applied lenses created in me a concern for all of those who stand outside of the recognized power group, those not allowed to be insiders within the group with historic control, the ones who did not have privilege – be it due to role in ministry, gender, race, sexual orientation or identification, or one with some visible or invisible disability. Also, as a diaconal minister serving in a mainline Protestant Christian tradition, I am deeply rooted in expressions of Christian spirituality, recognizing it as foundational in my daily life; this is something that connects with every aspect of my life. Over the years of my practice of ministry, and within the framework of the practice of a critical spiritual reflection, I continually struggled with my ‘outsider’ experience in the structures of ELCA, wondering specifically how others in ministry leadership positions could so demonstrate their love of power, authority and control. The words Richard Foster, a well-known Christian Quaker theologian in the area of Christian spirituality, shared during a spiritual retreat in which I was a participant, struck a chord deep within me, “The true test of spirituality [is] in the freedom to live among people compassionately.” His call to a compassionate Christian spirituality echoes an understanding of spiritual practice as a journey, a walking of the road. The language that adult educators such as Myles Horton and Paulo Freire (each who has a deep sense of Christian faith underlying his work) use to describe the journey of adult education that ‘we make the road as we walk the road’ echoed in my thinking and came to life in my practice of education with adults.

Armed with this growing awareness I knew that for my dissertation research I had to study the group of people of which I was a part, an ELCA diaconal minister. As the third person consecrated to this service in the ELCA I stand on the shoulders of all those who came before me.
in any role of the historic diaconate and, at this time in history I simply had to contribute to the body of knowledge that informed this modern version of an historic function in Christian ministry, grounded in my understanding of liberation theologies, and sense of spirituality that does justice, and my emerging understanding of critical and feminist theory. Make no mistake; I recognized a deep-seeded passion to pursue this study because of my profound concern not only for the community of which I am a part, but, also a concern to understand the dynamics of the outsider. In the process of becoming more knowledgeable and grounded in critical and feminist theory, and some of the more emancipatory spirituality literature in education, I decided to pursue this dissertation topic of ELCA diaconal ministers.

To accomplish this, I was honored to be invited into the lives of ten of my diaconal ministry colleagues, folks who hoped to follow the pioneering path on which I walked. As I listened to their stories and experiences my appreciation for our partnership, our journey of making the road as we walked grew immeasurably. Come August 2016 we have no idea if the practice of ELCA diaconal ministry will continue, will be merged with other ‘other than clergy’ ministry leaders into a new ministry, or, if this group of ministry practitioners will come to an end. To quote Horton, “You can't be a revolutionary, you can't want to change society if you don't love people, there's no point in it,” (Horton, 2003j, p. 107). Quite simply, both those whom I interviewed and I love people, and, yes, we are revolutionaries within the ELCA system of leadership! Also, in the Freierian sense of journeying, as I walked with my colleagues on this dissertation journey I discovered a deep sense of the emerging study of critical spirituality which Bussey (2006) describes this way: “So critical spirituality creates new categories for making sense of reality and acting upon it. It fills the hole in holism by actively promoting an integrated vision of the human being and thus challenges the dominant hegemonic discourse that stifles agency and colonises the future (Milojevic 2005),” (p. 42).
Finally, I reflect on one particular aspect of the essay that I wrote for the application process for the Adult Education Doctoral Program that I completed on February 18, 2003. Applicants were asked to address one of two questions. The one I chose was to respond to was the statement, “Adults Learn no Differently than Children”. The writing assignment required me to frame my argument around questions, such as: do you agree with this statement; if so, why? Do you disagree with this statement; if so, why? As a certified preschool/kindergarten teacher and certified director of day care centers my immediate response to this option was, “That’s no challenge…of course the ways that adults learn is not so different from the ways children learn.” And I tackled the assignment.

As I finished writing Chapter 5 I smile when I recall what I wrote in that sample that was part of the admission process: in early childhood education you meet and accept the child where she/he is; in early childhood education you listen to one voice as it speaks at any given moment – this means that you guide children to respect the voices of others in the classroom setting, including those who are different from is culturally recognized as ‘normal’; that you encourage your students to be creative and growing in self-awareness and self-confidence; that you treat each learner with respect and dignity; that you utilize positive re-direction; and a couple of other things, I am certain.

Imagine my surprise when much of the substance of this first writing experience re-appeared in the findings and analysis of my research project; however, as a result of my work in this program I am now equipped to describe each of these areas of education using the language of theory and practice that are distinctive to each. An overarching theme of each and every aspect of my life, that love of people and deep-seeded desire to accept people where they are and hold their integrity in mind, is the core of what binds tougher seemingly disparate aspects of my professional and personal styles. While I don’t know where my next academic ventures and calls
in service will lead, I know that to my core I am an educator and I am eager to take the next steps of my educator’s journey.
References


http://www.users.muohio.edu/wilmsce/bibliography.html


Appendix A

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

CONSECRATION OF DIACONAL MINISTERS
AND DEACONESSES

Commended by the Church Council

August 1997

1. This rite is properly set within the liturgy for Holy Communion. This order is used following the Sermon (18). The Creed may be said between the Sermon and the Hymn of the Day.

2. The presiding minister is normally the bishop of the synod in which the candidate(s) is called.

3. The Hymn of the Day is sung.

4. The candidate(s) is/are presented to the presiding minister and to the assembled congregation by the designated presenter.

Presenter: I present for consecration as a diaconal minister(s)/deaconess(s) name name , who has been prepared and approved by synod and called by calling body .

C Thanks be to God.

Sit

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5. The presenter steps aside, and the presiding minister addresses the candidate(s):

P All baptized Christians are called to share in Christ’s ministry of love and service in the world, to the glory of God and for the sake of the human family and the whole creation.

The Church calls diaconal ministers to speak God’s Word, the gospel and the apostolic faith, to God’s world. It also calls them to speak for the needs of God’s world to the Church. This call is a call to public witness and service that exemplifies Christ-like self-giving and leads the Church and all its baptized members to witness to Christ in the world.

Diaconal ministry reflects the historic call of deacons to serve those most in need on behalf of the Church. You have been called to the diaconate to give leadership in the Church’s mission to proclaim the gospel through word and deed. Therefore serve the needy, care for the sick, comfort the distressed, and through words and actions, witness to God’s love for all people.

In the exercise of diaconal ministry cross every barrier that stands between the Church and its ministry in the broader world. Seek out those places where the gospel of Jesus Christ meets human need. Serve Christ with pastors and bishops, other diaconal ministers, and associates in ministry. Empower, equip, and support all the baptized in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Lead us all in proclaiming the gospel in witness and service.

As Saint Paul teaches:"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives to everyone ability for particular service. The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person, for the good of all." (1 Cor. 12:4-7)

6. The presiding minister questions the candidate(s):

P Before almighty God, to whom you must give account, and in the presence of this assembly, I ask: Will you accept this ministry, and as a servant of God perform the work of a diaconal minister/deaconess in the Church?

R I will, and I ask God to help me.

P The Church in which you will serve confesses that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God and are the norm of its faith and life. We accept, teach, and confess the Apostles’, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds. We also acknowledge the Lutheran Confessions as true witnesses and faithful expositions of the Holy Scriptures. Will you serve in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and these creeds and confessions?

R I will, and I ask God to help me.

P Will you be diligent in your study of the Holy Scriptures and faithful in your use of the means of grace and in prayer?

R I will, and I ask God to help me.
P Will you witness in word and deed, and by your own example encourage God's people in faithful service and holy living?

R I will, and I ask God to help me.

P Almighty God, who has given you the will to do these things, graciously give you the strength and compassion to perform them.

C Amen

Stand

7. The prayers are said. Other appropriate prayers may be used instead.

A Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

For the holy catholic Church, that it may be filled with your love, may hunger for truth, and may thirst after righteousness: Lord in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A For all the members of the Church, that they may serve you in true and godly lives: Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A For name(s) , our bishop(s), for our pastors, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry and for all those responsible for the care and nurture of your people: Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A For name(s) , called to be a diaconal minister/deaconess in your Church, that, sustained and encouraged by the indwelling of your Holy Spirit, she/he/they may faithfully fulfill the duties of this ministry: Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A For the Church, that in faithful witness it may proclaim the Gospel and in humble love serve the poor: Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A For the nations of the world and their leaders, that they may work for justice and promote the dignity and freedom of every person: Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.
A  For the just and proper use of your creation, that the world may be freed from poverty and famine: Lord, in your mercy,

C  hear our prayer.

Other intercessions may be offered.

A  For the glorious company of all the saints, those who have died in faith and those who live in certain hope, we praise you; that their witness may give us courage until the day of Jesus Christ: Lord, in your mercy,

C  hear our prayer.

P  Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C  Amen

8. A hymn may be sung.

9. The candidate(s) may kneel. The presiding minister begins the thanksgiving.

P  The Lord be with you.

C  And also with you.

P  Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C  It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P  Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father: We thank you for sending your son, Jesus, your Word in flesh who proclaimed your kingdom in words and deeds of service to the poor and the suffering. Christ took on himself the form of a servant for the sake of all. He showed us that whoever would be great must be servant of all. We praise you for the many ministries in your Church, and for calling this your servant/these your servants to this ministry of service. (540)

10. The presiding minister lays both hands on the head of each candidate:

P  Heavenly Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon name, called to be a diaconal minister/deaconess in your Church. Consecrate her/him to this holy ministry and empower her/his service.

Following the laying on of hands, the diaconal minister/deaconess remains kneeling.

P  Bless her/his/their service, that she/he/they may worthily exercise the ministry entrusted to her/him/them. Let her/his/their life and teaching so reflect your grace that many may come to know you and love you through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (541)
C Amen

P The public exercise of diaconal ministry is committed to you in the name of the Father, and of the Son (+), and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen

11. The diaconal minister/deaconess stands.

12. When a deaconess is consecrated the head of the Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America gives a cross to the deaconess. The presiding minister says:

P Receive and wear this cross as a sign of your calling to serve Christ and his people. Confess your faith in the risen Christ, and bear in your heart the love of Christ who died on the cross for you.

13. A verse of Scripture may be selected and read for the deaconess by the head of the Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

14. An assisting minister presents the newly consecrated diaconal minister/deaconess with a basin and a large plain white towel.

P Receive this basin and towel as a sign that you are to serve as Christ served, humbling himself and taking the form of a servant.

Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says:

“Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example; that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” (John 13:12b-17)

15. The presiding minister and diaconal minister/deaconess turn to face the assembled congregation.

P People of God, will you receive name(s), who is/are consecrated to diaconal ministry to serve all people in Christ’s name?

C We will.

P Will you pray for her/him/them, help and honor her/him/them for her/his/their work’s sake, and in all things strive to live together in the peace and unity of Christ?

C We will.

16. The diaconal minister/deaconess may kneel for the blessing:
The God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen

When a deaconess is consecrated the following blessing may be used in place of (16).

Eternal God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, creator of man and woman: You anointed with the Spirit Miriam and Deborah and Hannah and Huldah, you chose the virgin Mary to be the mother of your only Son, and you set apart women for service in your holy temple. Bless this your servant who has been consecrated a deaconess. Protect her, and grant that in singleness of purpose and with a willing mind she may accomplish the service committed to her to the praise of Christ, to whom be glory with you and the Holy Spirit forever. (542)

Amen

17. The peace is shared.

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And also with you.

The ministers, the diaconal minister/deaconess, and the congregation may greet one another in the peace of Christ.

Peace be with you. Peace be with you

18. All return to their places.

Sit

19. The service continues with the Offering (24)

20. The diaconal minister/deaconess may assist in the historic deacon’s roles in Holy Communion: receiving the gifts of bread and wine; preparing the altar; distributing Holy Communion; caring for the altar and vessels following the distribution. Reading the Gospel in the assembly will have taken place prior to this rite. It is especially appropriate for the newly consecrated diaconal minister(s) to take the Holy Communion to the sick or homebound immediately following this service.
APPENDIX B

Bishop’s Address to the Diaconal Ministry Candidate during the Rite of Consecration

All baptized Christians are called to share in Christ’s ministry of love and service in the world, to the glory of God and for the sake of the human family and the whole creation.

The Church calls diaconal ministers to speak God’s Word, the gospel and the apostolic faith, to God’s world. It also calls them to speak for the needs of God’s world to the Church. This call is a call to public witness and service that exemplifies Christ-like self-giving and leads the Church and all its baptized members to witness to Christ in the world.

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APPENDIX C

Date: December 09, 2011
From: The Office for Research Protections - FWAP: FWA00001534
       Stephanie L. Krout, Compliance Coordinator
To: Nancy E. Gable
Re: Determination of Exemption

IRB Protocol ID: 33869
Follow-up Date: October 16, 2016
Title of Protocol: We Make the Road by Walking: Diocesan Ministers as Emancipatory Educators of Adults

The Office for Research Protections (ORP) has received and reviewed the above referenced eSubmission application. It has been determined that your research is exempt from IRB initial and ongoing review, as currently described in the application. You may begin your research. Please note that this research study is not to begin until the approval letter from the IRB office at ELCA Office of Research and Evaluation is obtained.

The category within the federal regulations under which your research is exempt is:

45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Given that the IRB is not involved in the initial and ongoing review of this research, it is the investigator's responsibility to review IRB Policy III "Exempt Review Process and Determination," which outlines:

- What it means to be exempt and how determinations are made
- What changes to the research protocol are and are not required to be reported to the ORP
- Ongoing actions post-exemption determination including addressing problems and complaints, reporting closed research to the ORP and research audits
- What occurs at the time of follow-up

Please do not hesitate to contact the Office for Research Protections (ORP) if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your continued efforts in protecting human participants in research.
This correspondence should be maintained with your research records.
APPENDIX D

Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of my research process. It is really exciting to be interviewing colleagues in ministry about their practice of ministry and how you perceive the ELCA’s structure and politics impacting your practice.

When you completed the TPI online and received your results – what did you think about your dominant teaching perspective? As you previously considered your work as an educator of adults how did you define and describe that work? Describe to me how taking the TPI and reading the descriptions of its findings helps you to better understand your practice of ministry as an educator in the ELCA.

What do you think of social justice? How do you describe social justice work? What do you think of social justice work?

Now, let’s look together at the Bishop’s Address to the Candidate during the Rite of Consecration. Do you remember the worship service that included your consecration to diaconal ministry? What were you feeling that day as you heard the Bishop’s Address? Did you think differently about the office of diaconal ministry after that day?

As you practice your ministry, can you see ways that what you do lives out this Address? Share a few of those ways with me, please.

On the short answer response section of this project you described a particular experience in ministry during which, or after which, you realized that it best illustrates your call to diaconal ministry. On this page is your description. Thank you for sharing this important life experience – will you share with me how you perceive this incident lives out the Bishop’s Address?

Can you describe a particular time when the ELCA’s structure assisted you in your practice of ministry?

Can you describe a particular time when the denomination’s structure impeded your practice of ministry?

Try to recall the barriers that were in your mind when you answered my question about barriers that you experience in your ministry. Again, I have your responses with me if that helps your thinking process as you share more with me about those barriers.
Look again at the Bishop’s Address and tell me if there is one thing that you are asked to be embodying in diaconal ministry that you are not embodying and share with me what that might be and why you believe this is the case.

Again, I thank you for your willingness to be a part of this research project. In a few weeks I’ll send to you a transcript of this conversation and ask you if this is what you recall sharing during our time together.
July 8, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

Nancy Gable has approval to invite ELCA diaconal ministers in active service to participate in a study of how they understand their work as adult educators in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As part of this approval, Ms. Gable must guarantee the confidentiality of the participants and limit her research to the role of diaconal ministers within the ELCA as educators including their own understanding of their roles as adult educators.

Kenneth W. Inskeep
Research and Evaluation Director

David Swartling
Secretary
VITA

Nancy Eileen Gable

EDUCATION

Penn State University, Harrisburg, PA
- Currently in the Adult Education Doctoral Program
  - Dissertation defense is proposed for Spring 2014
- Early Childhood Education courses – Spring 1985

Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Gettysburg, PA
- Master of Arts in Religion – May 1979
  - Concentrations in Religious Education and Youth Ministry

Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA
- Bachelor of Science in Music Education – May 1977
  - Cumulative Average 3.52

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

Coordinator for Missional Leadership – Region 8 (Mid-Atlantic Region)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, IL
  - July 2006 – present

Associate Dean for Church Vocations and Diaconal Ministry Preparation
- Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Gettysburg, PA

Director of Educational Ministry
- Grace Lutheran Church, State College, PA
  - October 1981 – October 1991

Director for Christian Education and Youth Ministry
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Waukegan, IL
  - May 1979 – May 1981

RELATED EXPERIENCES

“The Diaconal Ministry in the Mission of the Church”
- Consultation, November 2005, Sao Leopoldo, Brazil
  - Sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation (Geneva, Switzerland)
    - Member of Planning Team
    - Member of Writing Team
    - Keynote Presenter: “We Didn’t Know They Existed”

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST