

Clergywomen and Role Management:
A Study of PC(USA) Clergywomen Negotiating Maternity Leave

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ABSTRACT

While there is abundant research and literature on the transition to becoming a mother while working and on mothers and work-life balance, literature on clergy and, in particular, clergywomen and work-life balance is scarce. This study contributes to that literature by utilizing role theory and grounded theory methods to investigate the experience of 12 clergywomen who negotiated maternity leave with their congregations and the implications of that process on how they understood and managed their roles as mothers and pastors. The result is a model for role management through the process of negotiating maternity leave which identifies and describes the causal conditions; personal, church and intervening factors; overall experience of negotiation and consequences of the negotiation, including decisions about role management. Major findings include the observations that the most influential church factor seems to be the overall stability and organizational health of the congregation and its leadership and that a presbytery level policy may be the only effective intervention in a difficult negotiation. Limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for future study, clinical implications, and recommendations for denominational leaders are also discussed.

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In all our lives and varied ministries, may our souls flourish and Holy Wisdom be glorified.

*Can a woman forget her nursing child,
or show no compassion for the child of her womb?
Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.
~ Isaiah 49:15 (NRSV)*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Problem and its Setting

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (Cohany & Sok, 2007), the percentage of married mothers in the workforce has risen from 17 percent in 1948 to its peak in the mid-1990s at around 70 percent. Married mothers of children under the age of one year were no exception to this dramatic increase, reaching a peak of 59.2 percent in 1997. Since that time, there has been a slight drop but no clear downward trend: the percentage of working mothers of infants hovers just under 55 percent. For such mothers with a Bachelor's degree or higher, the percentage is highest: at 62.9 percent in 2005, compared to 46.5 percent for high school graduates with no college.

Since the first ordination of a woman to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament in 1956, the number of clergywomen in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PC(USA)) has grown dramatically. Despite many challenges, women continue to find this calling to be rewarding. However, little is known about the interaction of mother and pastor roles in the experience of clergywomen.

Recent social science literature on the transition to motherhood frames the experience as either a crisis (Entwisle & Doering, 1981) or a developmental turning point (Antonucci & Mikus, 1988; Leifer, 1980). Regardless of which way of thinking about the transition suits a new mother, it is clearly a time of challenge on many levels: physical, psychological, spiritual, relational, social and vocational. Many factors contribute to how well a mother adjusts to her new role, and how easily she is able to renegotiate her old roles as partner, daughter, homemaker or employee/professional in relation to motherhood.

This study will shine a spotlight on that liminal time between a clergywoman having one primary role as a pastor, and having two primary roles: pastor and mother. The negotiation of

maternity leave, in its particular relevance to both roles, has the potential for long lasting consequences on the clergywoman's experience of her overall sense of work/life balance. For clergywomen who are first time mothers, this negotiation may also be the very first experience of strain between the roles of pastor and mother.

In his analysis of prenatal interviews with couples, Brazelton observed the impact of available maternity leave on the transition to parenthood.

As they talk to me, they share the passion and work of making the future adjustment to parenthood with either the hoped-for normal or the dreaded impaired infant. However, when both parents anticipate the pressure of having to return to work "too early" (in their own words, "before three months"), they seem to guard against talking about their future baby as a person and about their future role as parents. Instead, their concerns are expressed in terms of the instrumental work of adjusting to time demands, to schedules, to lining up the necessary substitute care. Very little can be elicited from them about their dreams of the baby or their vision of themselves as new parents. Perhaps they are already defending themselves against too intense an attachment in anticipation of the pain of separating prematurely from the new baby. (Brazelton, 1986, p. 16)

In sum, the transition to motherhood is challenging to women's identity. Through the lens of role theory, this challenge is conceptualized as the development of a new role which may enhance as well as cause distress, in itself and in relation to other roles. Maternity leave may be a sacred time for women to acclimate and adjust to the shifting roles; however, as noted by Brazelton's subjects, this time may feel too short to some working parents to adequately adjust.

Clergywomen who are mothers are a rarely studied population with unique boundary issues. Very little is known about their transition to motherhood. Only two known studies examined this topic (Abernethy, 1991; Cooper-White, 2004), neither of which focused specifically on the negotiation of maternity leave. And yet, for several reasons, it is vital to the health of these women and to the health of the congregations which depend on their leadership that we understand their experience.

As it currently stands, the PC(USA) does not mandate or even mention maternity leave in the Book of Order (BOO) (PC(USA), 2011), a constitutional document of the church (see Appendix A for a glossary of ecclesiastical and Presbyterian terms). The BOO (PC(USA), 2011) assigns the responsibility for providing “adequacy of compensation” to the Elders of individual congregations and their corporate members (G-7.0300a and G-10.0102n), under the authority of their local judicatory, the presbytery (G-14.0506e). It is fairly standard for presbyteries, regional governing bodies of the PC(USA), to provide minimum guidelines to congregations for pastors’ salaries, study leave, sick leave and vacation time, but not typical for them to give any guidance on maternity leave. According to staff in Presbyterian Research Services (D. Bruce, personal communication, 2011) and the Racial Ethnic and Women’s Ministry Division (N. Young, personal communication, 2011), there is no record of how many presbyteries provide a minimal maternity leave policy, but there seem to be few. This leaves the negotiation to the pastor and her congregation, and, as seen through the lens of Role Theory, may result in the experience of internal conflict for the pastor and mother-to-be.

The question of this study is how expectant clergywomen experience the process of negotiating maternity leave and whether or not this experience has implications for their roles as pastor and mother.

Significance of the Study

The Rev. Margaret Towner was the first woman to be ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament (hereafter “clergy”) in the northern line of the Presbyterian Church in 1956. Eight years later, The Rev. Dr. Rachel Henderlite was ordained in the southern line; these two lines were reunited in 1983. As of 2008, women made up 27% of the ordained clergy, a larger percentage than ever before (Lindsey, 2010). Despite growing numbers of women in parish ministry, models for ministry are largely based on male clergy experience, just as it is with other professional career paths. Still, many women acknowledge that the journey of ministry, while not an easy one, is generally rewarding (McDuff, 2001; Zikmund, Lummis, & Change, 1998).

Meanwhile, the PC(USA) has had an ongoing concern regarding clergy – male or female – leaving parish ministry early in their career. In the early 1990s, the average number of clergy who left within their first seven years of service was 68 per year. By 2000, the number was up to 96 (Board of Pensions of the PC(USA), 2004). In comparison, according to Research Services of the PC(USA) (2002), the denomination ordained between 327 and 408 each year between 1994 and 2002. This means that in the year 2000, for example, in which 408 new pastors were ordained, a number equal to over 23% of those left the ministry – and that does not include those who retired, but just those who left in their first seven years of ministry.

The results of a 2008 survey of 725 PC(USA) pastors engaged in parish ministry reveal that 22% had, in the previous two years, “very seriously” or “seriously” considered leaving parish ministry for another kind of ministry and 13% had considered leaving the ordained ministry altogether (Presbyterian Church (USA), 2008a).

In their extensive 2005 study of clergy who left parish ministry, Hoge and Wenger (2005) found that PC(USA) clergywomen left the ministry at higher rates than their male colleagues and

than the clergywomen in the United Methodist and Lutheran (ELCA) Churches. The reasons for this are not known. Their entire sample of clergy, drawn from five denominations, pointed to a varied list of reasons for leaving their congregations. However, clergywomen cited with far greater frequency than clergymen the need to care for children and other family (15% compared to 2%). The average age of the clergy who cited this reason was 38, while the average for the rest of the sample was 44. This age difference may be indicative of clergy in the childbearing years. More women (21%) than men (16%) cited conflict with staff or laity as a motivating factor for leaving. The reason most frequently identified as of “great importance” or “somewhat important” among all PC(USA) clergy in the sample who left parish ministry was feeling drained by the demands placed on them (68%). Forty three percent said that a lack of support from denomination officials was a reason that contributed to their leaving (Hoge & Wenger, 2005).

Aware that proportionally fewer women than men are serving in congregations as opposed to other types of validated ministry, the 212th General Assembly directed the Advisory Council on Women’s Concerns to look at the issue and they found a similar answer (Presbyterian Church (USA), 2002). In answer to the question of why they had left parish ministry, the clergywomen in their sample, which included fully 36% of all PC(USA) clergywomen, most frequently noted reasons for leaving their congregation (other than to accept another type of call) were “internal church politics – issues with staff” (including elders) at 12% and “family time” at 10% (PC(USA), 2002).

This is consistent with an earlier study of PC(USA) clergywomen which found that those between the ages of 20 and 39 were more likely to be unemployed than older clergywomen, and their most frequently cited reason for unemployment was “childrearing responsibilities” (PC(USA), 1993).

The transition to motherhood is a major one for any woman and especially for working women. Through this experience a new working mother comes to understand herself and her place in the world in radically new ways. Maternity leave can be a time of adjusting to this new role, as well as physical recovery from labor and delivery. But, as noted above, the denomination has no national policy. Some presbyteries do, but that is not typical. There are no available statistics on the number of congregations that have a maternity leave policy. Even when congregations are encouraged to set up policies, these policies may vary greatly.

Clergymen who are pregnant, or aiming to become so, are frequently left on their own to negotiate a maternity leave policy and a shared expectation with the congregation regarding how this emerging role will affect all of them. Because there is no uniform policy, pregnancy and early maternity can become an uneasy transition, with hazy and inconsistent expectations of the new mothers from the congregation. It may be that, in their adjustment to motherhood, the clergymen themselves have unclear and perhaps unrealistic expectations of themselves.

Role theory tells us that when role expectations are unclear or conflicting, individuals may exit the role (Burr, Leigh, Day & Constantine, 1979). In light of concerns regarding young clergy leaving parish ministry, it seems important to investigate the experience of clergymen becoming mothers, since it is one possible occasion for role strain. The focus of this study will be on the experience of PC(USA) clergymen as they negotiate their first maternity leave, on the threshold of new motherhood. The results may inform church leaders on all levels within the PC(USA), as well as those in other denomination who ordain women.

Furthermore, mental health professionals working with professional women of a variety of professions and clergymen in particular, may find the information enlightening and normalizing for their clients.

Rationale

Since so little is known about the experience of clergywomen negotiating maternity leave, an qualitative interview format using open-ended questions to elicit a variety of angles on the experience seems ideal.

Qualitative research is designed to draw new concepts and ideas out of the lived experience of a subject sample. By its nature, it is not intended to be objective; in fact, qualitative research assumes that objective reality does not necessarily exist (Creswell, 2007). Instead, it argues that subjective interpretations are what drive individuals and groups. They are how we craft our shared reality.

This study will use a type of qualitative research known as grounded theory. This methodology is drawn out of the field of sociology and is used to generate a theory about a process that is rooted in the lived experience of those going through the process (Creswell, 2007). Drawn from lived experience, it is, thus, “grounded” in experience. This is in contrast to a theory which is developed independent of personal experience and may miss important aspects of the actual process. Further, rather than simply looking for the essence of a phenomenon, which in this case is the negotiation of maternity leave, grounded theory is looking for the complex interactions that influence the experience and may result in a variety of outcomes for those who experience in the process.

This is important because, in this context, negotiating maternity leave may be for clergywomen an experience of confusion or clarity, of incredible support or great disappointment. That experience may have bearing on the relationship between a pastor and her congregation, her husband, her family, and herself. In the end, the experience will have implications for the future of her ministry and the choices she makes for herself and her family.

Theoretical Framework

In addition to grounded theory, symbolic interaction theory – or more specifically, role theory – will be used to guide this study. Symbolic Interaction Theory focuses on the meaning that individuals make of actions and experiences, and, in the development of role theory, especially focuses on the meaning individuals make of their various roles (Burr et al., 1979). It finds great importance in reflecting on the meaning, for example, of being a mother, a wife, and a pastor – roles which are always negotiated in some way within relationships.

Goode (1960) further developed the concept of *role strain*, or “the felt difficulty in fulfilling role obligations” (p. 483) which can be experienced as both demands and conflicts. He assumed that any role will be over-demanding and that the individual “must move through a continuous sequence of role decisions and bargains, by which he [sic] attempts to adjust to these demands” (p. 495).

Later theorists continued to develop the idea of role strain through a number of concepts. *Role overload* is experienced when the expectations for a role are unreasonable, or the expectations of various roles together are over-taxing. When the demands of various roles, or of responsibilities within one role, are contradictory, there is *role conflict*. This study is particularly interested in the possible conflict between the roles of pastor and mother. Role theory proposes that an individual, or “actor,” will be more satisfied with a role if he or she feels able to do a good job fulfilling the expected role. When the expectations are not clear, the result is *role ambiguity* and the individual may feel they are not able to fulfill the role. When role overload, role conflict, or role ambiguity are present and unresolved, the individual is more likely to abandon the role altogether.

Kieren and Munroe (1988) use the label “absorptive” to describe a phenomenon that combines these three concepts of Symbolic Interaction theory with the concept of the mesosystem in Ecological theory. Their research suggested that “[j]obs [that are absorptive] involve the whole person and intrude on all aspects of a person’s life. . . . Absorptive work roles are not only greedy with respect to the person in the role, they often demand investments from other family members as well” (pp. 240-241). Kieren and Munro (1988) were specifically interested in clergy and their families and found that the absorptive role of pastor can result in mental and emotional overload and cause stress in clergymembers’ marriages and families.

More recently, role theorists have challenged the assumptions of their predecessors: that role demands are infinite and strain ubiquitous, that multiple roles lead to greater role strain, that the strain of roles is more salient than the benefits, and that individual time and energy for a role are finite (Marks, 1977; Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Sieber, 1974; Tiedje et al., 1990). Many benefits of multiple roles have been identified by various scholars: roles providing a buffer against strains or failures in other roles (Sieber, 1974) additional sources of social support and the development of skills that transfer between roles (Tiedje et al., 1990) and an increased sense of meaning, personal worth and purpose (Sieber, 1974; Thoits, 1986; Tiedje et al., 1990). Thoits (1986) found an inverse relationship between the number of roles held and distress in her study of both men and women. Marks (1977), in a theoretical article, emphasized that energy goes two ways between an individual and a role; an individual may very well find her or himself energized in all roles by the fulfillment in a particular role. Marks and MacDermid (1996) suggested that *role balance*, or fully engaging in every role, would lead to a greater sense of *role ease* than the traditional strategy of hierarchically ordering commitments.

However, Tiedje (1990) observed that such balancing of roles did not always lead to an experience of what she referred to as *role enhancement*. In a study of professional women with young children, she found that role conflict and role enhancement were not mutually exclusive experiences but rather independent dimensions. Therefore, she suggested a typology that allows for both, neither, and either to be relevant for a woman's experience. Despite arguments for the benefits of multiple roles on self-esteem (Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Sieber, 1974), she also found that role conflict was the best predictor of poor outcomes in terms of women's depression and parenting satisfaction even when a woman also experienced high levels of role enhancement. A rich body of literature examining both working mothers and clergy through the lens of role theory is available and will be reviewed below.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experience of clergywomen who have gone through the process of negotiating maternity leave with their congregations and to generate a theoretical model for the process through which they experienced the negotiation and managed their ongoing and newly developing roles as pastor and mother. Therefore, the major research questions are (1) How do expectant mothers who are clergywomen experience the process of negotiating maternity leave with their congregations?; (2) What factors contribute to that experience?; and (3) What is the impact of the process of negotiating maternity leave on the subsequent meaning PC(USA) clergywomen make of their roles of pastor and mother and how they manage those roles?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Transition to Working Motherhood

The transition to motherhood is a challenge by all accounts (Arendell, 2000; Frone, 2003; Leifer, 1980; McMahon, 1995). Among the issues faced by new mothers are biological changes (Choi, Henshaw, Baker, & Tree, 2005; Smith, 1999); changes in identity (Bailey, 2000; Haynes, 2008; McMahon, 1995; Millward, 2006; Smith, 1999); receiving conflicting messages about the meaning of motherhood (Arendell, 2000; Chodorow, 1978; Choi et al., 2005; Millward, 2006); and the changing nature of relationships in family and work environments (Arendell, 2000; Bailey, 2000; Choi et al., 2005; Haynes, 2008; Millward, 2006; Smith, 1999).

Recent research has found that there are a number of factors that influence this transition. Because this study is about clergywomen negotiating maternity leave, this researcher will limit the focus to those factors most salient to women's early transition into first-time motherhood and being a professional working mother. This transition can be a process fraught with "self-doubt and guilt" (Haynes, 2008, p. 637) about both the mother and the professional roles (Bailey, 2000; Haynes, 2008; Millward, 2006).

Several studies suggest that women's adjustment to being a new working mother is negatively impacted by employers' and co-workers' ambivalence toward the woman's pregnancy and maternity, as well as other signs of an unsupportive environment (Belsky, Perry-Jenkins, & Crouter, 1985; Haynes, 2008; Millward, 2006). According to these studies, ambivalence and lack of support may be reflected in: exclusion from the planning process for maternity-leave coverage; unrealistic expectations regarding availability; changed or reduced responsibility before leave and permanent changes of responsibility post-leave; avoidance of acknowledging the worker's

changed life situation; and even belittling or condescending comments about motherhood or the worker's commitment to her career.

Lack of support may lead women to question their future place in an organization (Millward, 2006). In regard to the shift from a balance of employee and mother role to solely the mother role, Millward, based on his research, observed that "[t]he . . .realignment of commitment appeared to be more a response to the way the system had reintegrated them (i.e. poorly) back into the workplace, rather than being an automatic consequence of motherhood" (p. 326).

Factors that seem to help women in the adjustment to being a mother working outside the home include the converse of the negative factors: namely, a supportive organizational environment (Belsky et al., 1985; Haynes, 2008; McGovern et al., 2007; Millward, 2006). This support was expressed through realistic expectations and flexibility regarding hours and childcare issues, continued social contact with the organizational team during maternity leave so the new mother could stay caught up on changes in the office, an atmosphere in which she could share her experience openly with others and be appreciated (Haynes, 2008; Millward, 2006), and a sense of job security through the transition (Carlson et al., 2011). Positive working mother role models were also named as a source of social support for new mothers (Haynes, 2008; Millward, 2006).

Length of maternity leave is a major factor that may be linked to a supportive work environment. The driving force behind the advocacy that eventually resulted in the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) were concerns about the health of post-partum working mothers and their infants (Chatterji & Markowitz, 2005; Taubman-Ben-Ari, Shlomo, Sivan, & Dolizki, 2009; Wisensale, 2001). FMLA mandates a twelve week unpaid leave in companies of 50 or more employees (Wisensale, 2001).

In a conversation regarding recovery from labor, obstetrician K. Adhoot reported that the customary medical advice is that women with normal deliveries should rest for six weeks, based on the time it takes for the uterus to contract to normal size and for symptoms related to that and to vaginal delivery to subside. Women who have had a caesarean section should rest for eight weeks (personal communication, October 28, 2011). One study found that a majority of new mothers were still coping with at least one physical side effect five weeks after birth (McGovern et al., 2006).

However, studies have shown that longer maternity leaves (12 weeks or more) may be beneficial to the mother's physical and mental health. Gjerdingen, Froberg, Chaloner, and McGovern (1993) found that the symptoms most frequently reported by postpartum mothers at one month were significantly less often reported after three months. Another study agreed that time off of work was associated with better health; the study found that the first major turning point for physical health was at twelve weeks of leave, the first major turning point for mental health was at fifteen weeks of leave, and the first major turning point for role function was at 20 weeks of leave (McGovern et al., 1997). In contrast, Killien, Habermann and Jarrett (2001) found no relationship between length of leave and mother's postpartum health.

In connection to mental health, a number of studies suggest that longer maternity leave facilitates the working mother's mental well being. An early study found that women with leaves of fifteen to twenty-four weeks of leave did better on mental health assessments than did mothers with nine weeks or less of leave (McGovern et al., 1997). Another study suggests that, when combined with other risk factors such as marital trouble or problems at work, short maternity leave puts women at risk for depression and feelings of anger (Hyde & Klein, 1995). Feldman, Sussman, and Zigler (2004) found that maternal depression was correlated with shorter leave,

lower adaptation to work and reduced marital support, as well as less involvement with the infant. In contrast, longer leave was correlated with higher self-esteem and marital adjustment. They suggest that a longer leave time may serve as “a buffer against maternal stress and depression” (Feldman et al., 2004, p. 474). Chatterji and Markowitz (2005) concur that longer leave is associated with fewer symptoms of depression and they found that for every additional week of leave there was a 6-7% decline in the number or frequency of depressive symptoms.

Because this study is concerned with the development of healthy role balance, the relationship between mother and child is also a valid factor to consider. The twelve weeks mandated by FMLA is based on the studies of experts like Brazelton who focus on the development of newborns, the adjustment and developmental identity of new mothers, and attachment between mother and child (Brazelton, 1986; Taubman-Ben-Ari et al., 2009; Wisensale, 2001). According to Brazelton (1986), the infant’s central nervous system reaches a milestone at twelve weeks – at this point the infant has normally acclimated to the cycle of day and night and can more readily handle the stimulation of the day, resulting in more smiles, coos, and ability to engage with those around them. In turn, the parents receive this as positive feedback from their infants, have learned how to read their child’s signals, have a greater sense of mastery and are getting better sleep at night themselves. Assessing the factors related to the child’s well being and attachment, Brazelton (1986) recommended a four month paid maternity leave to ensure the establishment of ego and a secure base for the child, and strong sense of parental role for the mother.

Other studies also suggest that longer leaves benefit the development of maternal identity and bond with infant. Feldman et al. (2004) found a correlation between maternal leave of twelve weeks or longer and knowledge of infant development. In a review of the literature, Staehelin,

Bertea and Stutz (2007) report three studies which suggest that mothers with longer leave were more likely to breastfeed and breastfeed for longer, a factor that may contribute to infant health and mother-child attachment. Clark and Hyde (1997) observed significantly more negative interactions at four months between mothers and infants when the mother had a maternity leave of only six weeks compared with those who had leave of twelve weeks. Mothers with longer leave showed greater sensitivity to their children and stronger attachment to them.

Longer leave time may also be helpful in the return to the workplace. A study by Brown, Ferrara and Schley (2002) found that mothers' satisfaction with employers' maternity leave policy is positively correlated with job satisfaction during pregnancy, although there was no significant correlation with job satisfaction after pregnancy. However, women generally reported lower levels of job satisfaction during and after their pregnancies than before. In a Japanese study, firms with longer family leave policies (the legal minimum in Japan is eight weeks) had lower turn-over of female employees (Yanadori & Kato, 2009). A Canadian study found a similar trend: companies with longer leave policies (greater than 17 weeks) had less turnover (Baker & Milligan, 2008).

In terms of benefits, clergy are considered to be employees of a local congregation. Congregations do not usually have the requisite fifty employees to be under the obligations of the FMLA. However, as research suggests, having a clear and generous maternity leave policy may benefit clergywomen, their families, and the church.

Mothers and Work-Life Balance

Early research on multiple roles assumed that the result of combining roles would be role strain (Goode, 1960; Marks, 1977). Thus, it was assumed that mothers would experience role strain as they add that particular role to their repertoire, and that strain is associated with some

level of mental, emotional, or physical distress. As research continued, it became clear that multiple roles also carried some benefit for women (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Thoits, 1983), and at the very least both positives and negatives needed to be acknowledged. Then in the 1990s, research shifted from solely examining mothers – or comparing mothers to fathers (Crouter, 1984) – to exploring the factors or role-qualities that made for healthy work-life balance for everyone, including mothers. This led to attempts to create integrative models of the work-family interface that differentiate work-to-home from home-to-work conflict (e.g. Frone, 2003).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) first defined work-family conflict as “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (p. 77). Recent scholarship has discussed the existence of positive and negative spill-over from work-to-family and family-to-work. Predictors of conflict with origins in the work role include extended hours of work, intense psychological engagement, rigid scheduling, unsupportive environments and other work-related stressors such as little decision making latitude (Frone, 2003; Glass & Estes, 1997; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Predictors of conflict from the family role include having a child of any age, but especially young children along with child care issues, and lower levels of spousal support (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

Research has established a clear relationship between work-family conflict and negative consequences for individuals, families, and organizations. Kossek and Ozeki’s (1998) meta-analysis of research on role-strain concluded that role strain was negatively correlated with levels of life-satisfaction. For employed mothers of infants, in particular, work-family conflict predicts poorer physical and mental health, which in turn predicts job turnover (Carlson et al., 2011). The conflict also causes marriage and family satisfaction to suffer (Frone, 2003; Glass & Estes, 1997).

At work, the correlates of work-family conflict have been reported as: tardiness, absenteeism, lower productivity, low job-satisfaction, stress, and intentions to quit (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Carlson et al., 2011; Frye & Breugh, 2004; Glass & Estes, 1997).

Despite cultural changes in gender roles, employed mothers still experience more work-family conflict than men, and seem to show more signs of work-life balance distress (Choi et al., 2005; Higgins, Duxbury, & Lee, 1994; E. J. Hill, 2005; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Women have difficulty finding a satisfactory balance and “[w]hen family responsibilities expand, mothers are more likely than fathers to change jobs, to work part time or exit the labor force for a spell because families cannot afford to lose father’s wages” (Glass & Estes, 1997, p. 297). As mothers exit the labor force, they may experience, in the long-term, lower levels of financial and occupational attainment.

Some studies have focused on what women do to cope with the strain of multiple roles. Given the prevailing cultural ideology of “intensive mothering,” which views “the mother as sole source of child guidance, nurturance, education and physical and emotional sustenance” (Johnston & Swanson, 2007, p. 448), Johnston and Swanson (2007) found that full-time employed mothers attempted to resolve the “dialectic of work and home” in several ways. The most effective way was to utilize cognitive and behavioral reframes regarding both roles. They regarded daycare as an important social development opportunity for their children and accepted the belief that fathers and child care workers could also be “good mothers.” They felt that working outside the home made them better mothers – work was a break from the pressure of the mother role and a source of felt competence and social support – and better role models. These women often had strong professional identities, but not so strong as to usurp the mother identity. Behavioral reframes

included working from home and bringing children to work. Obviously, such a strategy would necessitate the employer's support.

Many studies have found that employed mothers experience greater resiliency when they have a sense of self-efficacy and control or decision making latitude on the job (Erdwins, Buffardi, Casper, & O'Brien, 2001; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Keeton, Perry-Jenkins, & Sayer, 2008; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). This self-efficacy and control, in turn, may be facilitated by effective work-family policies and support in the work place.

Research shows that parents want and need work-family benefits, and those who receive such benefits show greater organizational loyalty and lower intentions to leave compared with employees at companies without such benefits (Anderson et al., 2002; Carlson et al., 2011; Grover & Crooker, 1995). Several policies have been shown to help in the work-life balance of parents. The most significant policy is flextime, allowing parents to work at home if necessary, for example because of a sick child, or at least to set their own hours within parameters so that they can, for example, be at home to meet their children after school (Anderson et al., 2002; Glass & Estes, 1997; Roehling, Roehling, & Moen, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). The option of reducing hours, in the form of parental leave at the birth of a child or shifting to part-time work, is also an important work-family policy, and is linked to higher productivity (Glass & Estes, 1997). Although on-site childcare seems like it would be helpful, and is certainly a popular desire of parents (Glass & Estes, 1997), it has not been shown to actually reduce work-family conflict – possibly because there is still no contingency plan for a sick child (Anderson et al., 2002; Glass & Estes, 1997).

Many studies indicate that a supportive supervisor, coworkers, and organization predict reduced work-family conflict (for example Erdwins et al., 2001; Frye & Breaugh, 2004). A

critical finding regarding work-family policies is that, no matter how many policies are available to workers, they will not be effective in alleviating work-life balance if the prevailing culture of the organization or the attitude of the supervisor is not supportive (Anderson et al., 2002; Frye & Breugh, 2004; Glass & Estes, 1997; Roehling et al., 2001). For example, organizations that merely tolerate parental leave are not necessarily helping with work-family conflict. In fact, studies suggest that parents will either choose not to use available family policies or consider leaving an organization if they believe that to use the policy would have negative consequences for their career (Anderson et al., 2002; Frye & Breugh, 2004; Sabbatini, Crosby, Barreto, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2009; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999).

Several studies found supervisor support to be a stronger predictor of the loyalty of working parents than actual work-family policies (Cook, 2009; Erdwins et al., 2001; Roehling et al., 2001; Thompson et al., 1999). This support could be manifest as setting a good example of work-life balance, not pressuring employees to work over-time, expressing concern for employee's work-life balance, understanding calls from home or use of sick-leave to care for sick children, encouraging use of flextime and work from home options, and checking the disparaging comments of other employees (Cook, 2009; Erdwins et al., 2001; Thompson et al., 1999). Interestingly, there seems to be a connection between having a supportive supervisor and perceived self-efficacy among employed parents (Erdwins et al., 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995).

Many employed mothers can't afford not to work; however, income is not the only benefit that employed mothers gain from engaging in the work-life balancing act. Grzywacz and Marks (2000) found that women reported more positive spillover from work to family than men; the positive qualities linked to this experience were social support and decision latitude. Barnett and Hyde (2001) identify an even more comprehensive list of benefits of multiple roles: "buffering

[the strains of other roles], added income, social support, opportunities to experience success, expanded frame of reference, increased self-complexity, similarity of experiences, and gender-role ideology” (p. 784).

In summary, research indicates that both work and family can be good for mothers and their families; the right policies and environments can make them even better. Further, policies and environments that facilitate work-life balance may lead to greater stability in the workforce for employers, or, in this case, in pastoral leadership for congregations.

Clergy and Role Strain

Awareness in scholarly articles of pastors’ experience of role strain and boundary ambiguity extends back to the mid-1950s, but the focus was on strain and conflict within the role itself (Blizzard, 1958a, 1958b). Of note is the conflict identified between the theological dimension of pastor and the functional dimension of pastor. For example, while a pastor may envision himself (all pastors in the study were male) as a “mediator between God and man” or a “servant,” spiritual life and service were not found to be high on the list of qualities necessary to be an effective or successful pastor; in contrast, having integrity and being outgoing were markers for effectiveness and success (Blizzard, 1958a). The changing American culture was an acknowledged influence, as pastors were more and more expected to function in non-traditional ways such as “parish promoter,” “interpersonal relations specialist,” and “community problem solver,” which are hard to balance with more traditional understandings of the pastor as scholar, evangelist, and liturgist (Blizzard, 1958b).

As the civil rights movement developed, so did the scope of role strain awareness. Mills (1968) theorized that there were actually three conflicts: 1) the “externally structured” role conflict reflected in conflicting expectations of the denomination, colleagues, and congregations;

2) the conflict between the internal norms of the pastor and the external norms of society; and 3) the internalized conflicts of pastors which may reflect external conflict or conflicting values within individual pastors, such as service versus achievement (Mills, 1968). In particular, Hadden (1968) pointed to the conflict between the roles of comforter and challenger, an internalized “identity crisis” that pastors absorbed from the conflict within the culture itself, as well as a conflict between themselves as clergy compelled to speak a prophetic word and their congregants who desired a refuge from the conflict in society.

This problem of defining the role of pastor is still a struggle for pastors, but one which has been largely neglected by scholars since that time. Only one recent study could be found that acknowledged the strain of a pastor’s many roles:

Overwhelmingly, the pastors in the focus group told us that they felt incompetent in determining priorities among the competing values and ideals that guide their ministries, and that they were unable to distinguish between goal setting in reference to their congregational ministries and goal setting in their own professional and personal lives. (Jenkins, 2002, p. 13)

It is important to note that none of the early scholarly conversations approached an understanding of inter-role conflict or work-life balance issue of pastors and, despite several mainline denominations having opened ordination to women, all research assumed clergy were men and used male clergy in their samples.

In the mid-1980s, a slow trickle of scholarly work emerged regarding clergy families and stress. This research coincided with the development of research regarding work-life balance for the general population. Indeed, many of the stressors and issues of clergy marriages and families

are the same as other marriages and families, especially dual career families. However, clergy and their families encounter unique issues due to the vocational role of the clergy member.

For example, a strong conviction of being “called by God,” the importance of obeying God’s will, and putting others first are all identified as internal sources of strain for pastors (Blanton, 1992; Kieren & Munro, 1988). These convictions may lead clergy and their families to stay committed beyond their ability to cope. On the other hand, these convictions may be retooled as sources of resilience in coping with external sources of stress, as long as these convictions are balanced with self-care and clarifying boundaries (Meek et al., 2003). These convictions might be considered internal sources of career stress.

External sources of career related stress have been correlated with negative impacts for clergy, their marriages and their families (Benda & DiBlasio, 1992; Lee, 1999; Lee & Balswick, 1989; Morris & Blanton, 1994b; Ostrander, Henry, & Fournier, 1994; Warner & Carter, 1984). Some of these external sources of stress are simply built into the nature of parish work. One issue is a shortage of time. Like many professionals, clergy often feel that they cannot accomplish all they have to do within the time that they have to do it. However, the literature shows that clergy struggle with additional time related issues that impact their personal, marital and family life (Blanton, 1992; Darling, McWey, & Hill, 2006; Hill, Darling, & Raimondi, 2003; Jinkins, 2002; Kieren & Munro, 1988; Mace & Mace, 1982; Morris & Blanton, 1998; Morris & Blanton, 1994b). Committee meetings, fellowship activities, and pastoral counseling often occur during the evenings or on weekends, when church members have free time to meet. This often conflicts with family time and couple time for clergy families, and is in addition to the time that the clergy parent/spouse is unavailable during Sunday and holiday worship services and activities. Further, clergy are often expected to be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This means that their

personal and family time may be trumped by emergencies – even if it means ending a vacation early. One clergyperson’s spouse observed: “Our time belongs to the church” (Hill et al., 2003, p. 154).

Loneliness and lack of social support are related factors that have a negative impact on the well-being of clergy and their families, and one study found that clergymen and their wives were lonelier than their own lay church members (Warner & Carter, 1984). The mobility of some denominations placement systems contributes to this, regularly uprooting families when pastors are assigned to another congregation. This may separate the family members from friends and extended family as well as removing them from their accustomed activities and resources (Hill et al., 2003; Morris & Blanton, 1998). Other dynamics that appear to be at work include the “pedestal effect” and the inherent loneliness of leadership, as it becomes less clear who can be trusted (Beebe, 2007; Hall, 1997; Hill et al., 2003; Jinkins, 2002; Morris & Blanton, 1994b). Based on his research, Beebe (2007) suggested that some clergy may feel caught in a “double bind”: they want to connect with people on a deep and spiritual level, but those same people may be a source of stress due to their unrealistic expectations.

A lack of privacy and personal space is identified as another common strain for clergy and their families (Hill et al., 2003). Research finds that clergy families say they often feel that they live “in a fishbowl” or a “glass house” (Hill et al., 2003; Malony, 1988). This experience is connected to several boundary issues. On a mundane level, clergy families that live in a parsonage may find church members assume they are welcome at any time (Hill et al., 2003; Lee, 1988; Lee & Iverson-Gilbert, 2003). And just as clergy are expected to be available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, they may be approached by congregants or other community members in any public venue – the grocery store, the gym, or the salon, for example (Hill et al., 2003; Lee &

Iverson-Gilbert, 2003). But the “fishbowl” effect can be much more intrusive. Many congregations, and indeed communities, expect clergy to be role models of Christian virtue, and this part of the job is one that extends to the spouse and children (Blanton, 1992; Hall, 1997; Hill et al., 2003; Kieren & Munro, 1988; Mace & Mace, 1982; Morris & Blanton, 1998; Warner & Carter, 1984). Mace and Mace (1982) found in their interviews with clergy couples that congregational “superhuman standards” of clergy marriages and families were the most frequently cited disadvantage to being a clergy couple.

Other external sources of clergy family stress that have been reported in the literature include a lack of congregational fit with the theology, vision and gifts of the pastor, which could lead to conflict (Hill et al., 2003; Jenkins, 2002), and inadequate compensation, which may cause financial stress (Blanton, 1992; Jones & Yutzenka, 2003; Mace & Mace, 1982; Morris & Blanton, 1994b).

The research indicates that these external stressors of being in a pastoral role can cause problems in a marriage or family. Further, they open the door for a normative state of boundary ambiguity (Kieren & Munro, 1988; Lee, 1988, 1999; Ostrander et al., 1994). It is from this normative state that more pathological issues arise and may cause problems within the marriage and family, in addition to clergy person’s life and job satisfaction (Lee & Balswick, 1989).

Although awareness of the boundary ambiguity experienced by clergy and their families has been discussed for some time, Lee (1995) has most fully developed the concept. He identified the intrusiveness of congregations as a new type of boundary ambiguity unique to clergy. Rather than the uncertainty being about who is in or out of the family, as may be experienced by divorced families struggling with boundary ambiguity, the uncertainty for clergy and their families is about who has the right to define rules and roles. Lee (1999) later

categorized four types of intrusive demands: personal criticism, presumptive expectations, boundary ambiguity, and family criticism.

In his research, Lee found that personal criticism was most stressful for clergy, followed by family criticism and presumptive expectations (i.e. decisions made without the clergyperson that affects her/him and her/his family). General boundary ambiguity (i.e. a member comes by the clergyperson's home unannounced) was taken more in stride. In earlier research, Lee and Balswick (1989) found that families which reported more intrusive demands from their congregations also reported more family stress.

In summary, many studies have found that issues of boundary ambiguity and the intrusive demands of congregations are linked to negative outcomes for marriage, family, life, and job satisfaction. These external sources of stress are extensive, and seem to have a stronger negative impact on clergy families than normative life stressors, such as a move or a health crisis (Ostrander et al., 1994).

Another angle on the health of clergy and their families is to look at the impact of one such normative stressor – having children. Two studies explored the impact of having children on clergy couples. Benda (1992) found that the number of children five years and younger actually had a positive correlation with marital adjustment, possibly because having children gives clergy a legitimate reason to define clearer boundaries between work and home. However, the study did not report what percentage of the clergy in the sample was female. Another study found that although clergy couples with children reported more stressful events and more perception of psychological and physical stress, their overall quality of life was similar to clergy couples without children (Darling et al., 2006).

The literature points to many possible strategies for coping with boundary ambiguity and role strain. Although most are based on theory rather than empirical data (exceptions include Kieren & Munro, 1988; Meek et al., 2003), the recommendations of these studies should be noted.

Primarily, clergy and their spouses should set strong yet flexible boundaries between their congregational life and work and their family and personal life (Kieren & Munro, 1988; Lee, 1995; Meek et al., 2003; Ostrander et al., 1994). Studies recommend that clergy restrict the time they spend in church related activities (Hall, 1997), take time for themselves and their family (Hall, 1997; Kieren & Munro, 1988; Moy & Malony, 1987), take family vacations (Hall, 1997), and be more available to their children than they are to their congregations (Lee, 1995). This last recommendation is especially important in light of the findings of one study that children of clergy parents perceived their families to be less close than their parents did (Moy & Malony, 1987). They can also strengthen family boundaries and relationships by practicing clear communication and being open about problems. Lee (1995) suggests that clergy families develop a “plausibility structure” that “tolerates the vicissitudes of ministry without rejecting the calling” (p. 81).

Studies also recommend cultivating social support, which correlated with various measures of well-being for clergy couples (Morris & Blanton, 1994b). Connections with extended family may buffer the stress at church and help ensure that clergy families are not seeking to have their needs for support met in their congregation (Henry, Chertok, Keys, & Jegerski, 1991). Friends, mentors and colleagues can help pastors and their family members strengthen their identity outside the roles expected by the congregation (Morris & Blanton, 1994b), help share the emotional load (Hall, 1997; Jenkins, 2002; Meek et al., 2003; Morris &

Blanton, 1994b) and assist in problem solving (Hill et al., 2003). Cultivating support through spiritual life is also an important coping strategy. Experiencing God's nurture, being dependant on God's strength, and releasing difficult matters into God's hands may also buffer the stress of church work (Hall, 1997; Jenkins, 2002; Meek et al., 2003).

These strategies may help clergy and their families negotiate the boundary intrusions of congregations; however, boundary ambiguity is not easily negotiated on only one side. One study found that clergy who felt the support of a good number of individuals within their congregations did better on five different assessments of well-being, including marital satisfaction (Lee & Iverson-Gilbert, 2003). It seems that clergy families need to know they are a part of the congregation and will receive mutual care, but that their separateness is respected (Lee & Balswick, 1989). Of course, this is easier when "congregational fit" is good (Hill et al., 2003).

In light of these many internal and external career related stressors, several studies specifically recommend that denominations set standards to protect boundaries for clergy (Hoge & Wenger, 2005; Meek et al., 2003; Morris & Blanton, 1994a; Morris & Blanton, 1995).

Clergywomen, Motherhood and Role Strain

Despite the fact that women now make up on average 15% of ordained clergy in Mainline Protestant denominations (Lehman, 2002; Zikmund et al., 1998) and that there is so much research examining working women and role strain, most research on clergy and clergy families have included only male clergy in their samples (Jones & Yutzenka, 2003 is an exception).

However, there are several studies indicating the experience of strain between the roles of pastor and mother/wife or work-life balance challenges, both in a general population of clergywomen, and among Presbyterian clergywomen in particular. These studies found that clergywomen report many of the same challenges that general clergy samples report: the internal

stressor of being “called” to ministry (Shehan, Wiggins, & Cody-Rydzewski, 2007), the time crunch and other work-life balance problems (Frame & Shehan, 2004; Hoge & Wenger, 2005; PC(USA), 1993, 2002; Shehan et al., 2007), loneliness and lack of social support (Frame & Shehan, 2004; PC(USA), 1993, 2002), and inadequate compensation (PC(USA), 2002; Shehan et al., 2007).

Married clergywomen, having the challenges of being both professional working women and clergy, experience a significant amount of role strain (Frame & Shehan, 2005; Lehman, 2002; Zikmund et al., 1998). However, the literature is divided on whether clergywomen or clergymen have a harder time with this (cf, Rayburn, Richmond, & Rodgers, 1988; Zikmund et al., 1998). One study found that young clergy, particularly young women, experienced more role overload, role ambiguity and role boundary issues than clergy over age 35 (Richmond, Rayburn, & Rodgers, 1988). Another study found that married clergywomen seem to have more role strain than single (Rayburn, 1991). That same study found that Presbyterian clergywomen had the highest in overall strain in comparison to nuns, female rabbis, and Methodist and Episcopal clergywomen (Rayburn, 1991).

Some stressors for clergywomen are like those of other professional women. Given their high level of education, not to mention their sense of call, it is likely that they are highly committed to their vocations. Yet clergywomen may also find that, for various reasons, their spouses’ careers takes precedence over their own and limits their professional advancement (Lehman, 2002). They may find their husband’s traditional expectations for them as wives and mothers to be a source of strain (Frame & Shehan, 2005).

Clergywomen are aware of the unequal gender expectations for working women at home and of the dynamics of being a woman in a traditionally male vocation (PC(USA), 2002). These gender issues appear in several areas.

One such area is resistance to women's leadership in the church (Frame & Shehan, 2004; Lehman, 2002). This may be expressed in bias for young, married clergy men in the parish (Nesbitt, 1997). It appears that clergywomen get less desirable and lower paying ministry positions and that the types of first placements they receive are less associated with upward career mobility (Lehman, 2002; McDuff, 2001; Nesbitt, 1995, 1997; PC(USA), 2002; Zikmund et al., 1998). Studies indicate that, while a spouse and family appear to be an asset for clergymen, these "assets" add nothing or may possibly be detrimental to the career development of clergywomen (Nesbitt, 1995, 1997).

In his study of gender barriers for clergywomen, Lehman (1985) identified six main gender stereotypes behind resistance to women in ministry from parishioners, some of which were related to work-family conflict: women are likely to have higher absenteeism than men (27%), they will have more job turnover (18%), they are more likely to have emotional problems due to multiple roles (53%), and their children will become maladjusted (30%). Other stereotypes included that women are weak leaders (37%) and they are not temperamentally suited to pastoral ministry (18%).

Ministry is traditionally considered a two-person career, an expectation that most clergywomen – even those who are married – cannot meet (Frame & Shehan, 2005; Nesbitt, 1997; PC(USA), 2002). It seems likely that more clergywomen than clergymen have spouses who work full time (Lehman, 2002).

Clergywomen say they experience more suspicion and rejection from their colleagues and congregations than clergymen, and get more resistance when they go against traditional thoughts and ways than their male peers (Frame & Shehan, 2004; Rayburn, 1991). A survey of PC(USA) clergywomen found that 80% of those women had experienced sexism in their congregations, and 75% felt their vocational opportunities were limited because of sexism (PC(USA), 1993).

Finally, those most likely to be resistant to clergywomen are those parishioners who are in congregational leadership and who are the biggest financial supporters of the church (Lehman, 2002). In regard to maternity leave, it is the leadership with whom clergywomen currently have to negotiate a policy.

One of the most effective strategies for clergywomen in overcoming resistance to their leadership is to extend their care-giving roles from home into their work with parishioners (Frame & Shehan, 2004; PC(USA), 2002). This relational approach seems to be expected of women; at the same time, it may cause greater boundary ambiguity and role overload (Frame & Shehan, 2004; PC(USA), 2002).

Less resistance to clergywomen has been found in recent research among Presbyterian members, lay leaders and clergy. While 82% of members said that “most people” in their congregation would be “very comfortable” with a woman as an Elder (an elected lay leadership position), 58% said that “most people” would be comfortable with a woman as their pastor. This number drops to 48% when the pastoral position under consideration is the Head of Staff (HOS) of a multi-pastor church. At the same time, 63% of members surveyed indicated that they, personally, had no preference as to the gender of their pastor (Presbyterian Church (USA), 2008b).

While congregations may be mostly open to women in ministry, it is not clear if they are aware of the practical needs clergywomen may require in relation to parenthood. Two qualitative studies on clergywomen and their transition to motherhood suggest that clergywomen experience quite varied responses from their congregations (Abernethy, 1991; Cooper-White, 2004). These studies, though not presented in academic journals, suggest that while many congregations were helpful and excited, – treating the event as “a royal birth” (Abernethy, 1991, p. 11) – some congregations were in denial about the changes ahead. Furthermore, others experienced as either directly or indirectly hostile. Cooper-White (2004) noted that those congregations who were most in denial were ones with few children. Abernethy’s (1991) interviews revealed that the response of the congregation was mostly reflective of the existing relationship between the clergywoman and her congregation – that is, a relationship that was solid usually continued to grow strong and a relationship that was weak proceeded to collapse.

Both studies found that clergywomen had to redefine their roles, boundaries and priorities with congregations following the birth of their child. In her analysis, Abernethy (1991) observed that the transition to motherhood could lead to distress and a fragmentation of self-identity and professional purpose or it could lead to a more complete integration of self, family, congregation and God.

Clergywomen often found their connection to parishioners strengthened by their new role and experience; however they also found they were discovering their own limits as they felt the heightening tension between their multiple roles (Cooper-White, 2004). New clergy mothers had to modify expectations for their availability to the congregation – “the old pattern of ministerial caretaking no longer made sense once they had an actual child to care for” (Abernethy, 1991; Cooper-White, 2004, p. 17) – and learn to say no. This was often met with resistance from the

congregation. This could be conceptualized as a simple employer-employee problem, but given the nature of the parishioner-pastor relationship, Abernethy frames this as a “sibling rivalry” (p. 12).

Another type of role negotiation for clergy mothers is learning to identify and be clear about which role one is speaking from – for example, as a mother of a child in the nursery or as a pastor concerned for all the children of the church (Cooper-White, 2004).

Finally, while some clergy mothers may accept the sacrifice of slowing the trajectory of their career for the sake of having a family, others may struggle with the impact it will have in the short and long term on their careers and with the double standard it implies for mothers in comparison with fathers. As a result of this and other strains, some new mothers choose to leave the ministry, at least temporarily (Cooper-White, 2004; Hoge & Wenger, 2005; PC(USA), 2002).

Renegotiating roles and expectations could be considered a coping strategy, undertaken with the emergence of a new primary role. Abernethy (1991) also identified some pre-emptive strategies for coping with the transition to motherhood. Some clergywomen were very intentional in their planning for motherhood: they tried to time their pregnancy with the church calendar, they negotiated maternity leave in their original contract, they talked with their lay leaders about the inevitable changes and prepared for them, and they took time for themselves in their pregnancy. Other effective coping skills reported by clergywomen include: open, honest communication with one’s spouse, which leads to more support and understanding (Abernethy, 1991); receiving support from outside of the family, especially from members of one’s congregation (Abernethy, 1991; Cooper-White, 2004); and open and honest communication with the congregation, which could be related to role negotiation (Abernethy, 1991). “[T]he older sibling may have feelings about the arrival of the new baby, but he/she (i.e.: the church) will likely cope adequately if those

feelings – both of joy and frustration – are heard without judgment and responded to with affection” (Abernethy, 1991, p. 15).

Although negotiating maternity leave into the original contract with a congregation may be a pre-emptive strategy (Abernethy, 1991), there is no study that looks at the process of clergywomen negotiating leave. Among denominations that ordain women, only the United Methodist Church has a denomination-wide maternity leave policy (Abernethy, 1991; see United Methodist Church, 2008, ¶ 356). Cooper-White (2004) reported that most of the women she interviewed found that the absence of any maternity leave policy “forced them to return much sooner than they felt appropriate” (p. 16). This seems to indicate that there was no policy negotiated at all. Therefore, this study expands the literature on clergywomen, the transition to motherhood and role strain by focusing on one aspect of the transition to motherhood that has not been examined: the actual negotiation of maternity leave and associated implications for role management.

Research Questions

Whether it is done well before pregnancy or in the midst of it, negotiating maternity leave may be a clergywoman’s first taste of role-strain in connection to motherhood. Not only is the clergywoman adding a new role to her life, she is doing so relatively unschooled in the reality of new motherhood and without denominational guidelines or formal support. The major research questions of this study, then, are (1) How do expectant mothers who are clergywomen experience the process of negotiating maternity leave with their congregations?; (2) What factors contribute to that experience?; and (3) What is the impact of the process of negotiating maternity leave on the subsequent meaning PC(USA) clergywomen make of their roles of pastor and mother and how they manage those roles?

Chapter 3: Methods

Qualitative methods allow researchers to understand the uniqueness of individuals and their context, providing a richer understanding of an area of inquiry (Creswell, 2007). In addition, Creswell suggests that this methodology empowers individuals who may previously been silenced or disenfranchised to “share their stories” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). Since little is known about clergywomen’s experience negotiating maternity leave and there are few forums in which these women can discuss their experience, a qualitative study is ideally suited to the problem. Further, since the literature suggests that clergywomen have varied experiences with their congregations in the transition to motherhood (Abernethy, 1991; Cooper-White, 2004), a grounded theory study is particularly appropriate for drawing out the story of what contributes to the experience and what the variety of outcomes might be.

This study used a semi-structured qualitative interview to investigate the experience of clergywomen negotiating their maternity leave with their congregations and the perceived implications of that process on the meaning they make of their identity as pastor and mother.

Participants

The researcher began recruiting participants for the study only after receiving approval for the proposed study by the Institutional Review Board of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Appendix F). The purposive criteria for participants were that they be clergywomen who negotiated maternity leave for their first biological child while serving a congregation of the PC(USA) full time. To reduce variables, clergywomen who negotiated leave for the adoption of a child were not included in this study.

Twelve participants were recruited for this study through convenience, snow-ball sampling, beginning with appeals to Executive Presbyters throughout the country to notify

eligible clergywomen (Appendix B) and to the Deborah's Daughters clergywomen contact list of the Women's Leadership Development Office of the PC(USA) in Louisville, Kentucky (Appendix C). In total, forty-seven clergywomen either contacted the researcher directly by email or were recommended to the researcher by Presbytery executives or other clergywomen over the course of six weeks of recruiting and interviewing. Seven were immediately excluded because the researcher already knew them from seminary or professional circles. Fourteen of the remaining forty were ineligible, based on the purposive criteria. From the remaining thirty-six, the researcher interviewed the first eleven who were eligible, as they were available. The researcher then sought out one additional clergywoman, through word of mouth, who had been a solo pastor at the time of her negotiation in an effort to enrich the data.

Participation was completely voluntary, and clergywomen were reassured of the confidentiality of their identities. All identifying information was kept separate from the data, protected in a private location and concealed in the presentation of the results. No payment or tangible incentive was offered.

Procedures

As eligible participants contacted the researcher by email, she then contacted them by phone to schedule a telephone interview. During this initial telephone conversation, the researcher screened participants for eligibility and offered information regarding the purpose of the study. The researcher emailed each participant the Informed Consent Form (Appendix D) and the forms were signed and returned by email, fax or U.S. mail. The researcher made a reminder call regarding the upcoming phone interview a week before the scheduled interview.

The researcher conducted the interviews from her home telephone, equipped with a recording device. Prior to beginning recording, the researcher reviewed the Informed Consent

Form, including the purpose of the study, potential risks and benefits, and how the study results would be used. The researcher again reassured the participants of confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. After their verbal consent was obtained, the researcher explained the process of qualitative analysis and inquired as to whether the participants would like to view the results of the analysis in order to comment and/or verify that it reflected their experience. Every participant indicated interest.

The researcher began the interview with a brief list of demographic questions, including age, number of children, the number of years in ministry before negotiating maternity leave, the point in the tenure in the particular parish at which the leave was negotiated, and whether or not the presbytery had a maternity leave policy.

Following the collection of demographic data, the researcher began the semi-structured qualitative interview as described below.

Instrument

The basic outline of the semi-structured interview with example questions, and some explanatory script, was as follows:

Part 1: The process of negotiation:

- When did you begin thinking about maternity leave?
- What resources did you turn to as aids in the process of negotiating maternity leave?
- As you know, the transition to motherhood is full of challenges. During the negotiation process, what needs were you aware you would have during that transition?
- Every session and every congregation is different in its organization and dynamics. As best you can remember, what was your experience of negotiating maternity leave like?
- How did you feel about the process in general?

- What factors do you believe contributed to this experience?

Part 2: Role Management: We all have many roles within our work and home life (e.g. wife, daughter, mother, pastor – and various sub-roles within that role such as counselor and community leader). Sometimes these roles are in contradiction and other times they enhance one another; sometimes one role becomes more salient and other times all the roles seem to be in balance.

- What role(s) did you find yourself taking on in the process of negotiating maternity leave?
- How would you describe how these roles interacted with one another?
- How did the process affect your relationship with the congregation?
- How did the experience affect your understanding of yourself as a pastor?
- How did the experience affect your understanding of yourself as a mother?
- Was the process clarifying in terms of your roles or did it make things more confusing for you?

Concluding question:

- Is there anything else that you think might be relevant to share about your experience negotiating maternity leave and how it may have shaped your sense of self as a pastor and as a mother?

This interview protocol was pilot tested to ensure the effectiveness of the questions in prompting women to share the desired experience.

During the interview, the researcher used active listening to elicit the participants experience, the sense they made of the process, and the impact it had on how they managed their roles as pastor and mother. The use of grounded theory as a methodology allowed the researcher to begin forming tentative theories throughout the data collection process. Utilizing these

tentative theories she developed additional questions that yielded richer data and a fuller understanding of the process under investigation. At the same time, the researcher always took care to allow the participants to determine what was important in the process themselves.

Analysis

All the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed. The researcher then read through the transcripts two times while listening to the recording to ensure they were accurate and to become familiar with the data as a whole, making any necessary corrections in transcription before proceeding to analysis. When all the interviews were completed and transcribed, the transcripts were assigned to a heuristic unit in ATLAS.ti V5.0 (Muhr, 2004) for coding.

The researcher began analysis with the use of the method of constant comparison. The researcher and advising researcher recorded their thoughts throughout the analysis process as memos in order to capture any emerging ideas or themes related to the experience of the participants or the connections between that experience and the guiding theories of the study. Analysis throughout the process enabled the researcher to use the patterns and themes that emerge from one interview to inform the direction of the subsequent interviews and ensure saturation of data.

Following a modified version of Strauss and Corbin's (1990) methodology for grounded theory analysis, the researcher first analyzed the data by open coding for general categories of information. Using the constant comparative method, the researcher examined the transcripts for new information regarding the categories until it seemed that the categories were saturated.

From this list of categories, the researcher discerned the categories which seemed to be the essence of the experience of negotiating maternity leave or those things which appeared central to the process of negotiating maternity leave. These categories, grouped under the heading of

“Experience of Negotiation,” became the central feature of the theory. The researcher then began axial coding to understand the interconnections of the general categories, particularly in relation to the experience of negotiation. In the process of axial coding, causal conditions and various kinds of factors were seen as contributing to the experience of negotiation. Other categories were understood to be consequences of the experience for the clergywomen. These larger categories seemed to represent the process of role management through the experience of negotiating maternity leave and were organized into a chart that presents the basic theoretical model.

Finally, analysis continued through selective coding as the researcher further analyzed the ways in which the sub-categories and categories impacted one another and refined the model (See Table 2).

Bracketing and Validity

Because the researcher has personal experience with the process of negotiating maternity leave with a congregation, she attempted to bracket her assumptions in order to preserve the quality of the data collection and analysis. She began by answering the original interview questions based on her own experience and then journaled about the assumptions she had about what she would find. This journaling was done before the interviews began, but the checking of assumptions continued throughout process of interviewing and analysis.

To provide further reliability and validity to the analysis, the researcher’s thesis advisor was an equal partner in the analysis of the data. Her perspective invaluable in this regard at all stages. The researcher met with her several times and communicated by email and by phone regarding the interviews and the developing codes and model. At several points the advisor redirected the researcher, feeling that she was missing the broader picture because of her own

bias. In those instances, the researcher trusted the advisor's instinct and took on various other perspectives on the data.

For example, the researcher had assumed that only clergywomen who were in a situation where there was no maternity leave policy would consider themselves to have negotiated maternity leave. When participant number three reported a pre-existing leave policy at her church which she considered "fair," the researcher was certain that the participant's interview was ineligible since, in the researcher's mind, she hadn't actually "negotiated" leave. The advisor encouraged the researcher to consider the interview's relevance. This was probably the beginning of the shift in qualitative method from phenomenology to grounded theory.

The researcher also found it helpful to re-read each interview and make a generalization of whether the clergywoman reported a generally positive or negative experience. This generalization was important to make because certain aspects of almost every woman's experience felt negative to her, and it seemed that negativity was overshadowing the positive experiences that half of the women were reporting. Periodically, the advisor suggested that a code needed to be adjusted because of the researcher's struggle with bias. For example, the researcher observed the theme of "difficulty advocating for oneself," while the advisor noticed a broader theme of "advocating for oneself," which may have been experienced in a variety of ways by the clergywomen rather than just negatively.

Finally, once the analysis was completed, the researcher sent all the participants the results of the analysis and invited them to provide their feedback to validate the analysis or note its limitations. Their responses are noted at the end of Chapter Four.

It is hoped that these steps helped to minimize the researcher's unconscious bias and ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

Demographic and Other Descriptive Data

Twelve participants were individually interviewed by phone. Their ages at the time of negotiating maternity leave ranged from 27 to 38 years of age. Ten were Associate Pastors (APs) and two were Solo Pastors (SPs) at the time of the negotiation. In every case, the position was the clergywoman's first ordained position.

Three of the twelve participants in this study reported that the presbytery of which their congregation was a part, had a policy which applied to their congregation. In one of those situations, the participant reported that the policy was too vague to be of use to her in her negotiation. Two of the twelve reported that their individual congregations already had a policy. The other seven were at churches that neither had a policy at the congregational or presbytery level.

As a generalization, six clergywomen reported a positive experience, five a negative experience, and one reported a mixed experience. The one that reported a mixed experience noted that the presence of a presbytery policy on maternity leave salvaged an otherwise negative experience.

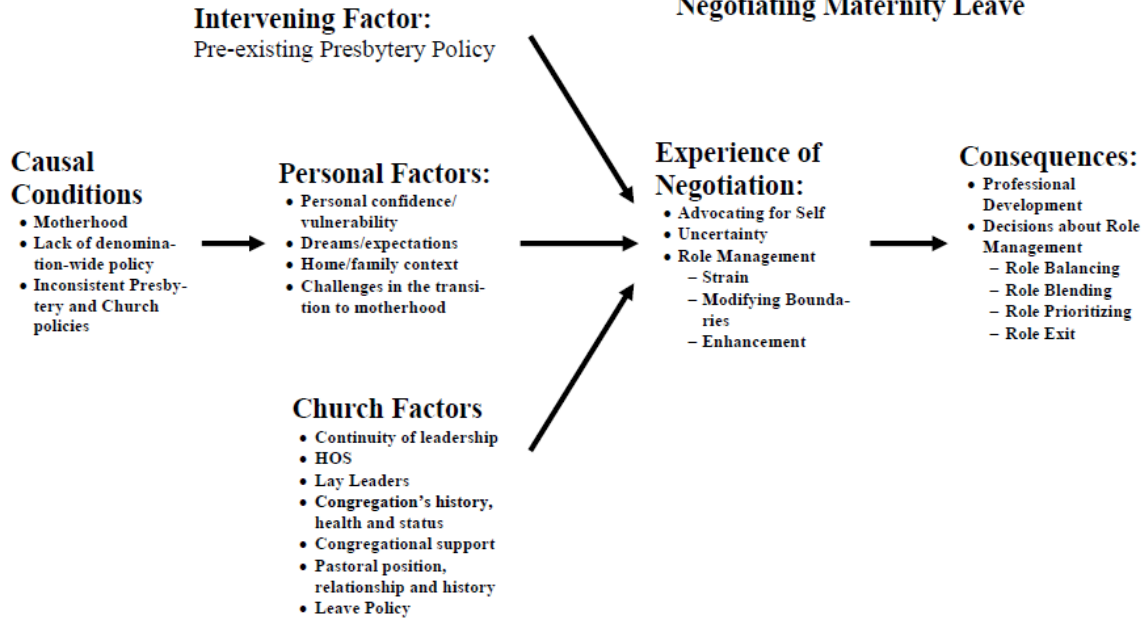
The number of years served before initiating the discussion ranged from zero to 6 years. Six participants discussed maternity leave when negotiating their original terms of call. Two of those discussions were initiated by the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) or the HOS as they explained the employee policies of the church. The other four clergywomen initiated the conversation themselves. Of those four, only participant 12, who was pregnant at the time, was able to successfully negotiate leave. In the remaining cases, the participants reported that the PNC would not commit to anything and lay leadership would not engage a discussion until the

clergywoman was actually pregnant. These clergywomen reported that the process was difficult and had a negative impact on their relationships with church leadership – even if they were satisfied with the resulting maternity leave policy.

The resulting maternity leave policies ranged from 6 weeks paid leave to 12 weeks paid leave, with a variety of arrangements in between. There was no clear connection between length of leave and perceived experience, although it should be noted that none of the clergywomen received less than six weeks, the typical recommendation of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (Adhoot, personal communication, October 28, 2011).

Table 1: Demographic and Other Descriptive Data								
Participant	Age at interview	Age at time negotiation was initiated	Years served when negotiation was initiated	Years served when policy actually set	Presbytery Policy	Church Policy	Perceived experience	Resulting Leave
1	33	27	0	unclear, because policy unstable	no	no	negative	12 weeks paid
2	42	34	0	4	"not solid"	no	negative	6 weeks paid, 8 weeks if C-section
3	35	26	0	0	no	yes	positive	6 weeks paid, may add 2-3 weeks vacation
4	32	31	0	2	didn't know	yes, but negotiated for additional	positive	6 weeks paid, return to work for 6 weeks at part-time
5	42	35	5	5	yes	no	positive	8 weeks paid, may add 4 weeks vacation
6	36	28	3.5	3.5	no	no	negative	6 weeks pd, up to 6 weeks without pay
7	31	29	3	3	no	no	positive	8 weeks paid, may add 4 weeks vacation
8	39	36	3	3	no	no	negative	6 weeks paid, may add 3 weeks vacation
9	35	28	2.5	2.5	yes	no	mixed	8 weeks paid at 75% salary, full housing, may add 4 weeks vacation
10	32	28	0	1	no	no	negative	6 weeks paid, may use vacation time and extend with unpaid leave
11	45	37	6	6	no	no	positive	12 weeks paid
12	32	26	0	0	no	no	positive	6 weeks paid

Table 2:
A Theoretical Model for Role Management
through the Process of
Negotiating Maternity Leave



A Model for Role Management through the Process of Negotiating Maternity Leave

During the process of qualitative analysis, a model for understanding the experience of negotiating maternity leave emerged. In open coding, two layers of themes developed: first, the experience of the phenomenon and second, the context of the negotiation or factors that impacted the negotiation.

As the analysis of subthemes and their relationships continued through axial coding, a model emerged for understanding the experience of negotiating maternity leave (see Table 2) starting with causal conditions. Causal conditions are the circumstances that led these

clergywomen to discuss maternity leave with their churches. Based on these interviews, there were three broad categories of factors that influenced the experience of the negotiation: factors within the church setting and factors from the clergywoman's home and personal life. There also appeared to be one intervening factor, a factor that seemed to dramatically alter the course of the negotiation process. All of these church, personal and intervening factors interacted to produce within the clergywoman an overall experience of the negotiation. As part of this process, it appears that the clergywomen made choices about how she was going to manage her roles to achieve a tolerable work-life balance for herself and her family. Each of these categories will be discussed in more detail below.

Causal Conditions

Motherhood. Participants indicated common causal conditions: women are the child-bearers of the human race. They are also the ones who are equipped to breastfeed. These biological facts of childbirth, breastfeeding, and the accompanying complications like sleep deprivation have an impact on women's professional lives as they start their families. Still participants wanted to become mothers. As one participant said:

We had tried for so long and had not taken the step of going through any fertility treatments or anything, but we had just kind of tried on our own and you know, gone to the doctor and talked through the process for so long. We wanted a child... it's interesting. Prior to sort of starting to try, I didn't really ever have a burning desire for children. But just a switch was turned I feel like, and once you decide you want it it's like your focus.

Lack of clear maternity leave policies. Participants were aware that not all churches or Presbyteries have policies and that there is no denomination-wide policy. One participant described how a lack of an existing policy affected her negotiation:

The lack of resources that were available to me played into it in a big way because I felt like because there was so little support through the presbytery and through the denomination that I felt a big push to be very clear about what maternity leave was going to look like and how it was going to be. Not having anything in place that was clear – especially from the presbytery – that was so hard because you know, the congregation turned to the presbytery for guidance and suggestion and you know, what would be a good way to do this? Nothing. “Well, we don’t know.” I went into this presbytery and I was the only clergywoman under 60, so they didn’t know.

Among the participants in this study, three reported that their presbytery had a policy, although in one of those situations the participant stated that the policy was too vague to help her in the negotiation process. Two participants reported that their congregation already had a policy. The other seven participants reported that there was no policy at either the congregational or presbytery level.

These causal conditions set the stage for a negotiation, but the participants discussed a number of other factors that interacted with one another and together seemed to influence the overall experience of the negotiation.

Personal Factors

Personal confidence and vulnerability. It seemed evident from the interviews that several main personal factors contributed to the experience. First, the clergywomen seemed to be

equipped with varying levels of personal confidence and vulnerability, which seemed to affect how they responded to the challenges they faced in the negotiation process. For example, one participant reflected on her experience:

I think I learned that you just need to ask for what you need and don't take no for an answer. I just wasn't confident in what I wanted or what I needed, and I was so worried that I would lose my position if I pushed for more time off or more paid leave that I didn't want to put that in jeopardy because we couldn't have made it financially at that point. So it was a delicate balance, and now if I had it to do over I just - I might have left sooner. I might've insisted on more paid leave and said, "Look, my family cannot do this. Help me." But I was naïve I guess is the word I'm looking for. I was naïve.

Confidence in adjustment to the mother role also appeared as a factor. As one participant said: "[W]hile this was a first child, I feel like, in some ways, she was my tenth child, because I baby-sat so much. (Laughs) Um, I'm just real laid back about that, and my husband as well."

Greater self-confidence may have helped all of the clergywoman in their negotiations, but it would be too simple to say that all the clergywomen who reported a positive negotiation had greater self-confidence than those who reported a negative experience. Self-confidence was simply one variable among many.

Dreams and expectations. The clergywomen in these interviews reported having heard stories, both bad and good, of other clergywomen who had negotiated maternity and the transition to motherhood with their congregations. Some of these stories were heard through their social networks while others were first-hand accounts from close colleagues. These stories may have contributed to some clergywomen having anxiety when approaching the leaders of their churches;

other seemed to be excited about the possibilities. Here, one participant spoke of the model she had in mind:

[O]ne other pastor in the presbytery who had been a pastor in a larger church in the neighboring city had an article written about her in the local paper, about bringing her youngest son to work with her. She had a crib in her office, and that's kind of where I got the idea of doing all that. And we had actually purchased two cribs, so that I had one at work and one at home. And her church was incredibly supportive of her as a mom; and my church, I think looking back on it, would've really preferred if I had been single and... no ties (laughing) and within the community and done everything that they wanted.

Home and family context. The interviews also indicated that a number of home and family factors seemed to play into the discussion, especially in terms of the needs they thought they would have during maternity leave and the transition to motherhood. These included: financial concerns that would prevent the clergywoman from taking much unpaid leave; living at a distance from parents and extended family or, in one case, the death of a parent in recent years; timing of the pregnancy in relation to marriage; and clergy-couple issues, such as requiring childcare for the same atypical hours that clergy work which are not covered by most day-care providers, or needing to live outside the clergywoman's church community at location between both partners' churches.

One factor in home life seemed especially significant for one clergywoman: her partner was a stay-at-home dad for their first child's early years. It seems as though a home situation like this may alleviate the anticipated role strain of the new clergy-mom, especially if her maternity leave is shorter. It was for this participant:

[B]ecause I knew that...my husband, would be home with the baby, I think there was less...I think I would have been more concerned and more kind of emotional about it if I had been dropping her at day care every day, if I knew that after six weeks I would have been dropping her off at daycare. But I wasn't. I was just walking two blocks down the street to spend eight hours at work. I knew that I would probably see her at least once during that time period and, and then I'd see her when I got home.

Challenges in the transition to motherhood. Finally, the participants' interviews suggested that both typical and unusual challenges in the transition to motherhood also played into their negotiation process with their congregations. These challenges included: difficulty conceiving, the journey of Invitro Fertilization, gestational diabetes, bed-rest due to complications, the commitment to breastfeed and associated difficulties, and newborns with health issues.

Church Factors

The clergywomen in this study mentioned many factors that contributed to the experience of the negotiation on the congregation and presbytery level. On the congregational level, these included: the personalities of and relationships among the pastoral staff and lay leadership; the attitudes of the HOS and lay leadership regarding maternity leave; the health, history and status of the congregation; and the clergywoman's pastoral relationship and history with the congregation.

Factors in experiences perceived to be positive. In negotiations that went well, relationships among staff members, especially between the clergywoman and her HOS if she had one, and between staff and the lay leadership were reasonably good. Some HOSs had already worked to cultivate, as one participant put it, "an ethos of caring for staff" and were intentional

about building up the staff as a healthy team. Most of these HOSs were personally supportive of the clergywomen and willing to advocate for her.

Some were supportive of maternity leave in principle or for personal reasons. For example, one HOS had watched his own daughter utilize a leave policy and have a difficult transition to motherhood. One participant described her HOS's commitment to maternity leave:

I have the fortune of working with a colleague who's right about my age and in the stage of life my husband and I are in. And so, I know that as he came here, one of the big things that he did was negotiate paternity leave as part of his call, which I think is really unusual...and so he had kind of gone down that road. Even when we talked prior to my coming here he made sure I knew about maternity policy and that it. . .you know, what it was and all that.

In these supportive experiences, the lay leadership had a history of working well with the pastors, appreciating their leadership. One clergywoman, a SP, reported that her PNC had been specifically asked not to consider a woman pastor, but chose to ignore that directive in supportive of what they all felt was a great match between their congregation and the clergywoman when they were interviewing. Some lay leaders were personally supportive and committed to the clergywomen. In one case, a lay leader had dual-relationships with both the clergywoman and the HOS as their doctor, and this dual-relationship may have benefited her when she needed to go on bed-rest.

It appears that some lay leaders in situations where the negotiation went well may have been challenged by the idea of maternity leave and other requests related to adjusting to motherhood, noting, for example, that they had not been given a long maternity leave by their employer. In the end however, they were sympathetic and gracious. In the two cases where there

was an existing policy at the presbytery level, the lay leaders seemed to adopt it without much resistance, and, according to participants, the lay leaders presented a united message of support for the policy to the congregation.

This sympathetic and gracious attitude seems important because it appears that this is one of the few factors that differentiate the negotiation process in churches that were perceived to be supportive. For example, similar to the churches where the negotiation process was difficult, some of these churches that were perceived to be supportive had not previously had a woman pastor, had only had clergywomen beyond child-bearing years, or had never had a pastor with young children. They are congregations of all sizes and varying community types.

There were ways in which these congregations were different, however. The congregation may have considered itself a leading church in the presbytery, carrying the presbytery financially and modeling best practices for other congregations. One congregation had close ties to a community agency that provided a twelve week maternity leave to its female employees and allowed their employees to bring their newborns to work for the first six months. That congregation decided to adopt that policy. Two churches had already had an experience with the HOS taking a Sabbatical. As one clergywoman noted:

[T]his church had...gotten a sense of what it meant to have one pastor for three months. And so I think that came into play too. There was a sense of peace and calm in the conversation because they knew that it was do-able to only have one pastor at a time.

Two of the churches had a history of examining work-life issues, one with other staff and another through its community involvement developing a child-care center in partnership with major business and government agencies.

Generally speaking, these congregations were healthy organizations in terms of communication and relationships with staff. Participants indicated that they seemed to be able to handle changes and “firsts” in a healthy manner, keeping everything “above board.” Another clergywoman emphasized:

[T]his is a church that has had a history of really loving and caring for their pastors.... I mean they’ve challenged the pastors, but they have always - I just think that they have a good history of working to find a good fit in a minister, and then you know, caring for them through that.

Several of the congregations seemed to be facing significant challenges in their own congregational journey, but the clergywomen reported that they handled these challenges well. For example, the participant who reported that her PNC ignored the directive from members of their congregation not to call a woman pastor also noted that her congregation had been without a pastor for some time and was in a rural community with a dwindling population. She felt that, rather than be resentful of their situation, they adapted and became excited about the arrival of a new young family in their midst.

Congregations where clergywomen had a positive experience seemed eager to embrace the clergywoman’s new role as mother. They seemed to interact with the new family as if they were extended family and friends. They threw baby showers, visited the family on leave, brought meals, and offered emotional support and practical advice. Many of these clergywomen reported that the congregation became their support system and extended family. The clergywoman with the dual-relationship with her doctor tells her story this way:

The doctor was there, the nurse practitioner was there, the woman in the congregation who said she’d be our charge nurse was in fact there the whole time.

Our pediatrician was one of our good friends and he ... was there for four hours and was there when [our son] was born, and this was a person who we vacation with them now even though we've left that congregation and he's kind of like an adopted – they're kind of not quite our parents' generation, they're sort of in-between, but our kids are kind of like their grandchildren.... I mean, we were literally surrounded by members and friends in the congregation and it was such an incredible birth experience because of that that we felt amazingly blessed, and that was a lot because of our relationships with all the folks there.

The contribution of the pastoral relationship to the negotiation of maternity leave is unclear. The type of position the clergywoman held did not appear to make any difference. The length of time served at the time of negotiation ranged from 0 to 6 years, slightly longer than the range for clergywomen who had negative experiences. Those with longer relationships more often mentioned experiencing, as one participant put it, a “sense of “trust.” Here, the clergywomen who had been with her congregation the longest speaks of the impact of time. She and her husband were both APs for the same congregation.

[W]e were at the six-year mark with our service with that congregation. And so by then the congregation as a whole, they liked us, they respected us, they trusted us. We had reached that point where they were willing to share more with us, and so it was a great big adventure to be pregnant. I mean, he was welcomed into the world as a church kid....

The length of leave as a factor in the experience of the negotiation is also unclear. One clergywoman was offered twelve weeks, two were offered eight weeks, and three were offered six. All had the option to extend with vacation. One clergywoman was offered the option

between the church's six week policy or FMLA's three months unpaid. She chose the six weeks paid leave, but asked the personnel committee to allow her to come back part-time for an additional six weeks. She reported, "Their response was, pretty much, you know, "Yes, we understand and that makes sense.... It was very gracious."

As the discussion now moves from the factors involved in experiences perceived to be positive, it should be noted that the clergywomen who perceived a positive experience did not share as many details about the process as those who characterized their overall experience as negative. It may be that they took their experience for granted or that they simply had other things they were more focused on at the time. These women share more about such things as their experiences with new motherhood at home, work-life balance challenges after returning from maternity leave, the ways that motherhood enhanced their ministry, and their second experience of negotiating maternity leave at a new church. Clergywomen who had a difficult experience shared more about the process itself.

Factors in experiences perceived to be negative. In this study, the congregations where the maternity leave negotiation did not go well had an overarching issue of the lack of continuity of leadership. This issue was noted by five of the six participants who reported a negative or mixed experience. Evidence of this discontinuity included four clergywomen reporting turnover in the HOS/Interim HOS position, two clergywomen reporting turnover of the Personnel Elder or members, and two clergywomen reporting that the verbal agreement about maternity leave established with the PNC was not honored by the Session. The result was that the maternity leave policy never seemed to be settled.

The five AP participants who had negative or mixed experiences all indicated that their HOSs were unwilling to advocate for them in the negotiation process. Most of these HOSs were

male, but one was a woman. In all five cases, participants reported that there was some problem in the relationship, such as a personality conflict, communication problems, general disagreement about the vision of their ministry, and/or competition and jealousy. Three of these participants reported that the HOS had tried to eliminate the participant's position, cut it back to part-time, or was planning to turn over the entire staff. In the one case where the congregation was not in transition, the participant's poor relationship with the HOS seemed to be the main issue. Two clergywomen who reported working with an interim HOS found him or her to be too "hands-off," in the words of one participant, to get involved in the negotiation process; another clergywoman reported that it was the interim HOS who was trying to eliminate her position. In negative negotiation experiences, the maternity leave discussion made the already difficult relationship between the clergywoman and her HOS or Session worse. One of these clergywomen, whose HOS had unsuccessfully tried to eliminate her position in the church while she was on medical leave the year before, explained:

So what ended up happening was I took my medical leave in [year], my maternity leave [the next year] and that would have been the year he was due his sabbatical. So you know, his comment over and over again was, "Well, I can't take my sabbatical because you just had medical leave and maternity leave two years in a row. So I have to wait another full year before I can take my sabbatical" [said in nasty tone].... It was such a hostile environment and continues to be so. [Laughs] It was horrible. It was horrible. I almost quit the ministry over the whole thing. It was horrible. It was a horrible thing to go through.

The clergywomen in this study indicated that they perceived lay leadership in these negative situations as unsympathetic to the issues involved in the transition to motherhood.

According to four clergywomen, lay leadership seemed to approach the discussion of maternity leave as a business issue, sometimes even noting that they were under no legal obligation to provide any maternity leave. In all of five cases, the participants reported that lay leaders avoided setting a policy until a few months before the clergywoman was due to deliver, leaving her feeling anxious about the days after the delivery. In two cases, after granting the maternity leave, participants reported that the lay leaders considered making the clergywoman ineligible for the annual across-the-board staff raises or cost-of-living-adjustments. Three AP clergywoman said that they were treated as though inferior: they were an “underling,” a “junior” pastor or “a kid they had to show the ropes” or even “reprimand.” Two clergywomen reported that they had a negative history with the lay leadership involved. One clergywoman shared regarding her experience:

The chair of the [Personnel] committee was . . . definitely not in my camp to begin with. He’s the one that told me that within a year, the HOS was going to...transition his entire pastoral team and admin team to one that he thought was better to be in line with his vision. So pretty much from the get-go I didn’t have a good relationship.... So when I started negotiating...I think he really thought I was just being spiteful because he knew that I knew that I was going to be gone soon, and that I should take the church for whatever I could before I left, which I wasn’t even at that point planning to leave at all.

In some cases, the personal issues and professional background of lay leaders seemed to contribute to the negativity of the negotiations. Finally, resonant with the theme of discontinuity, three clergywomen reported other conflict in the churches: either among lay leaders on the Personnel committee or Session and between lay leaders and the HOS. Although there may have

been one or two supportive lay persons involved, they did not seem to have the power in the church to advocate effectively for the clergywoman.

As with the congregations where maternity leave negotiations went smoothly, these congregations had a variety of experiences with women clergy. Some had not had an installed woman pastor before, or only clergywomen who were beyond their child-bearing years. However, two had previously negotiated maternity leave with a clergywoman, with no evident problem. These are congregations of all sizes and community types.

Again, the most significant factor seems to be the congregation's state of transition and discontinuity and how the pastoral and lay leadership dealt with that transition and the anxiety of their congregations. One clergywoman named the dysfunctional behaviors she saw in her congregation: "parking lot meetings," in which secret plans are made to take actions or overturn decisions; a "shadow Session" of self-appointed leaders who are not currently serving on the Session but feel that they are the real leadership and decision makers of the church; and families vying for dominance in the church. In another church, a participant reported that the HOS, who had split the congregation, was eventually asked by the presbytery's Committee on Ministry to leave.

In the analysis, it seems that the general members of the congregations where women felt they had difficulty negotiating leave were just as excited and supportive as those where there was a smooth negotiation. In every congregation, members threw showers, visited, and brought meals. One clergywoman explained that, without her prompting, members who were not in leadership expressed their hopes for a long maternity leave for her and her child, although a lengthy leave did not come to pass. Again, in most cases, the supportive members became an

extended family and social support for the clergywoman and her family. The problem seemed to be that those who were supportive were not in positions to influence decisions.

The only sign of a lack of support from the congregation in general was, perhaps, in a lack of awareness of the difficulty the clergywoman had keeping up with her pre-motherhood pace of ministry. One of the clergywomen noted:

We didn't even talk about any of that. [N]one of my hours changed. None of my demands on what I was doing changed at all. I mean I was still getting up at 6 AM and going to these bible studies.... I was still doing all of my usual jobs. I was just bringing [my daughter] with me...especially when she was little and I was breastfeeding her. There was no reduction in my evening hours. There was no real planning - I mean, we didn't have family in the [metro] area...to even really kind of say that they could help. I lucked out that my husband['s] job was pretty flexible. But no, we didn't talk about anything, about how my hours would change. I had to go on a retreat at the end of March [two months after her child was born] with our youth because I got a call that they didn't have another advisor and they needed another advisor.

Generally, all of the congregations were very excited for their pastors to become mothers, but there seemed to be a contrast between the excitement and support of congregation members who were not involved in the process of the negotiation and the negativity of the leaders. The result of this contrast was an experience of “dichotomy” or “mixed messages” for the clergywomen, as two women noted. Sometimes the contrast was within the lay leaders themselves, as one participant reflected:

[A]long the way, every single person has said the right thing. And I'm talking about the people in leadership here, the people really making the decisions. They've said: "We're so excited for you," "We want to support you and your family," "We realize flexibility is the most important thing," "We, we realize you need time away from the church. . . ." You know, so, they've said those right things and they very much think they mean it. [T]hese are not ill-meaning people; they're not bad people, they're very good people. But I also think that when you come from a business world perspective, when you are an employment lawyer, and your job, all day, every day, is about "What do we have to do?" that your sort of good intentions get trumped by what you do all day, every day. And, so while it feels very disorienting to me at times, that they say one thing and then do another, or they do something and then three days later they do something different...in my better moments, I try to have compassion for the fact that this is just a reflection of the tension that they live everyday between Christian faith and how we run our world. It's frustrating to be caught in the middle of the tension.

As noted above, the pastoral position of the clergywoman did not seem to make a difference as to whether the process was positive or negative. The length of time served by clergywomen who had a negative experience was somewhat shorter, perhaps indicating a less secure relationship. Since this study is of the clergywomen's experience and not of the congregation, it is hard to discern the difference between a problem of a match between pastor and congregation and an unhealthy patterns of dealing with conflict within the church. However, it did seem that, at least in the case of APs, if the match was an issue it was related to interactions with the HOS, Personnel and Session, not with the leaders in their particular ministry areas.

Because these clergywomen tended to be in congregations that were in transition, in many cases they had taken on more responsibility for that very reason. According to two clergywomen, this additional commitment and sacrifice did not seem to be appreciated by the church leadership when it came time to create a policy. One participant relayed her feelings of being taken for granted:

[W]hen will they say, “We have asked above and beyond from her during this interim; why wouldn’t we give her time at home with her family? She’s more than given us family time to spare.... You know she sacrificed her family during this interim for us; let’s allow her some time at home.” What I’m realizing saying this is that I felt, I feel like they were more concerned about only doing what they had to do, or meeting the minimum, legally speaking, which is hard because, you know, none of us approach our job with, “Okay, I’m only going to do the minimum.” Especially when the church is in crisis. And the fact that I was negotiating at a time when the church was in crisis and I was very much going above and beyond in many ways, the church was still saying, “Well. . .I don’t know if we should do that, let’s just worry about giving her the minimum.” Admittedly, they didn’t. They got to a very different point; but the fact that that was their default in the conversation was enormously hurtful.

One clergywoman had a unique history with her congregation in that the personnel committee had previously granted her a paid three-month medical leave to complete her IVF treatments. She reported that the tone changed from one of generosity to resistance: “people were saying ‘Why are we turning around and paying her again?’” She reflected on this, saying: “I

think having not had to negotiate the medical leave of absence, my maternity leave negotiations would have gone much more smoothly.”

Intervening Factor

It is difficult to assert with confidence what interventions will turn around a difficult maternity leave negotiation, given the small sample size and qualitative nature of this study. Several clergywomen who had good experiences attributed the smoothness to the advocacy of their HOS. However, it is hard to distinguish the HOS’s ability to advocate from the health of the congregation and its leadership. It may be that the negotiation would have gone smooth without the HOS’s intervention. There were no instances reported in this study of a HOS who went up against a resistant lay leadership on the clergywoman’s behalf. Perhaps this happened behind closed doors, but that is unknown. A pre-existing church policy certainly did seem to ease the discussion, but again, in the two cases where a policy existed, the congregation, as assessed from the interviews, seemed to be a healthy congregation.

In this study of clergywomen’s experience, there was only one factor that did actually change the direction of a negotiation process: the existence of a presbytery maternity leave policy. In the two cases where the presbytery had a clear maternity leave policy, participants reported that the negotiation either went well or was mixed, but satisfactory in the end. The participant who reported a mixed experience described a strained relationship with her personnel committee, and said: “There’s not really a better way to say it than it just got weird. But we got through it.... [T]he policy was very helpful and we just got through it.”

The other participant whose presbytery had a policy found it was not only accepted, but embraced by her congregation. Noting that churches did not have to adopt the policy of the presbytery, she said: “the church I served immediately adopted that policy because that was what

was available and they were very open to that.” She reported that this was facilitated by her HOS who had a daughter, also a pastor, who had recently had a baby and used the policy. This particularly stood out to her because their professional relationship was not always harmonious.

I think because of his daughter’s experience he was more receptive to saying,

“Yeah, let’s do this.” I think he would have accepted it, but because his daughter had been through this and had used the parental leave policy of the presbytery, that you know, it kind of seemed like he said, “Well yeah.”

The Experience of Negotiating Maternity Leave

Three themes were observed in the interviews that seemed to distill the general experience of negotiating one’s first maternity leave, regardless of the outcome: advocating for oneself, ambiguity/personal uncertainty, and role management.

Advocating for oneself. From the interviews of this study, it seemed that AP clergywomen who had positive negotiations with their congregations regarding maternity leave did not feel alone in advocating for themselves. One clergywoman accepted the existing church as, in her words, “fair,” and felt no need to advocate for anything different. In the three cases where a leave policy needed to be established, the AP clergywomen reported that their HOSs formed a united front with them in presenting the presbytery policy or crafting a policy to present to the relevant lay leadership. Further, their HOSs took the lead in interpreting the policy positively for the congregation. This seemed to empower the women to focus on their mother role. One clergywoman noted:

I felt right away very supported, but it seems like at that point I didn’t feel like a pastor anymore. Not in a bad way, but just like the role. All of a sudden there were these other people taking care of me, whereas for most of the time I had been

really on the edge of – well, just anxiety about my job... And I was really feeling very drawn at that point to be more in a maternal, motherly role than really worrying about my pastoral duties.

In the case of the SP whose negotiation went well, there was no presbytery policy to point to, but the clergywoman seemed to have leverage in the negotiation because she had not yet accepted the call and the PNC were excited about her being pregnant. She was comfortable being, as she put it herself, “bold” in presenting the options to the PNC.

In the situations where the negotiations were difficult and negative, the clergywomen interviewed for this study seemed to be torn between their roles as pastor and mother and perceived themselves as being alone – if not undermined – in their advocacy for themselves and their families. One clergywoman put it this way:

[I]t made it feel like I was an employee in a different way. A subordinate employee that’s begging the employer for something instead of a leader. You know, negotiating as an equal. Some of that I think was age difference and some of that was employee/employer. The folks that I was working with were top of their respective careers and you know, had staff.... So it felt like I was being treated as this underling, and so the role of Pastor was tossed out the window in the negotiation process and now I was an employee of the church and these were the bosses.

Conflict between the roles of pastor and mother was evident in reports by the clergywomen that they felt that they had to keep the peace in the church. One clergywoman felt that to approach the issue on a moral and theological level would be seen as a conflict of interest or an affront to the HOS who seemed to be approaching the issue with the lay leaders from a

business perspective. Although the clergywomen reported feeling isolated in their pursuit of a fair maternity leave policy, they also did not feel that they could draw other church members into the discussion. As one clergywoman said:

It would have felt like I had been politicking or I was being gossipy or passive aggressive or something like that. . . . [M]y encounters with the congregation are for me to be there for them. So it feels inappropriate for me to say in those settings, “Here’s what’s going on with me.” You know? Even if they ask.

A sense of being torn between roles is also evident in the clergywomen reports of being unsure of what was fair to ask of their congregations, and of being fully aware of the repercussions their absence and new role would have on the life of the congregation. This loyalty to the pastor role seems to have been assisted by the clergywomen’s lack of awareness of what recovery from labor and what the adjustment to motherhood would require of them. Three clergywomen found their maternity leaves to be too short. One woman expressed her regret:

I did not realize how hard it was going to be after I gave birth. I had to have...a C-section. I didn’t realize how long it was going to take to recover from that. I didn’t realize with, you know, kind of a sickly baby...her first six months were just brutal, brutal.... If I had known...I would have negotiated, you know, like six weeks paid, six weeks unpaid.... But as it was, I ended up taking my maternity leave and then coming back, oh gosh, for maybe two months; then I put in my resignation. I was done.

In the analysis of the interviews, it also seemed that the personal insecurity and vulnerability theme in personal factors came into play for these clergywomen. One of them commented:

“And I was young. I mean, some part of me said I guess it is unfair that I’m asking for, you know, 12 weeks of paid leave.... But now, looking back on it, how I had all these friggin’ church meetings or leave mornings at 6 am to go lead Bible studies? I was working my butt off! I think now I was definitely entitled to twelve weeks paid leave. So it was funny in an ironic way that I actually, now looking back on it, actually really did question myself. . . . I remember turning to my husband, saying, ‘Well, you know, at least we still have insurance.’”

The relationship with the HOS and lay leaders sometimes interacted with that insecurity. One participant explained: “I felt belittled a lot [voice breaks], like I was inexperienced and young and wet behind the ears. I was afraid a lot to push for the things that I really wanted because I didn’t want to lose my job.”

Uncertainty. Nearly every clergywoman knew she was entering an unknown land with motherhood and the uncertainty appeared to have had an impact on their lives.

I kind of remember the moment when I stopped waking up in the middle of the night thinking about work and I started waking up in the middle of the night thinking about this child that we were about to have (laughs). So I don’t know, you know, in terms of roles, like, transitioning from that, being that pastor role, for, as such a significant. . . part of who I was to kind of then putting that into the, adding the mom role. Adding space in my brain for the mom role.

Even those who entered with more confidence now report looking back on that time as one of slight naivety. The clergywoman who started her first call pregnant seemed to feel the uncertainty not only of the new mother role, but also of the reality of being a pastor. For her, the uncertainty strengthened her self-advocacy. Here, she describes the experience of negotiating:

It made me stronger to be able to advocate for myself and also my family. To be able to even give definition to unknowns, you know, in terms of not having any idea of what I was going to need as a pastor. Not having any idea what I was going to need as a mother. But being able to say look, I need the time and the space to figure it out, so please give me six weeks to do this on my terms and for me to figure this out without anybody else telling me how I should do it.

Some of the clergywomen in this study remember being aware that their new role was going to be difficult to manage with the prior expectations of their church work. Others were not. One participant told the story of her sudden awareness of this new work/life struggle:

I think the bed-rest pulled the rug out from under me. I mean, I was always a go-go, organized, you know... “I am woman, hear me roar” kind of pastor and all of a sudden I couldn’t do all that and a lot of my identity at the time was wrapped up in that title “Pastor”.... But, in a really bizarre kind of way I guess, that prepared me for what was to come, because in the first weeks of being a mother, I mean, it’s not about you!”

In the case of clergywomen who reported a negative experience, this uncertainty about the mother role and its impact on their other roles was complicated by uncertainty about what length of time they were going to have to acclimate to their mother role, as their congregational

leadership delayed the decision about maternity leave until they were almost through the pregnancy.

Role management. In the analysis of the interviews of this study, several themes emerged related to role management in the negotiations. These themes often continued into the transition to motherhood. The themes were: role strain, role enhancement, and modifying boundaries.

Role strain. Role strain is defined here as conflict between roles or negative spill-over between roles. For some of the clergywomen, the conflict between roles was reported in relating to the lay leadership on Personnel during the negotiation. One participant said:

In many ways, I felt like I had to sort of set aside the pastor role and forget that I was pastor to these people in order to...stand up for myself enough to get what I thought was fair or what they had already promised. And in some ways it's been hard to re-instate the pastor role with a couple of them because of, maybe, how contentious it got at different points.

All the clergywomen interviewed tended to primarily report negative spill-over from home-to-work during their pregnancies and maternity leave negotiations. They noted the impact of hormones on their emotions in settings from baptisms to policy negotiations. They reported struggling with the impact of the baby on the church calendar and their work planning, concerned about the programs they had worked so hard to build. The more frequent reporting of home-to-work negative spill-over may be an indication that, at least during their pregnancies, the pastor role was still primary. As one clergywoman noted:

[A]t that point, the hierarchy was marriage, church and then family. I was attempting at that point to make my family fit into my role as Pastor because I had

taken vows. And I meant them. And nothing was going to get in the way of my call to be a pastor.

Particularly when the interactions around negotiating maternity leave were negative, the clergywomen began to report intrusion from work-to-home life. A lack of support for the leave policy seemed to be viewed as a threat to the family and prompted the development of protective feelings. One participant noted that the negotiation made her realize: “I didn’t have much trust for the Personnel committee. I didn’t have much trust for general members of the congregation when it came to my son.” Another said, “Gosh, it just made me feel really unprepared [laughs] because I wasn’t getting what I thought I needed from my church which was a giant part of my identity....” For another clergywoman, the negative spill-over was apparent even before she got to the point of negotiation: she reported that the stressful environment of her church staff was an impediment to conceiving in the first place.

Most negative spill-over from church was reported following the birth of the child. Several discovered that the leave time was too short and they struggled with returning to work. One said, “I did have a C-section, and came back I think at the start of week eight and nearly killed myself. I really needed to wait longer.” The maternity leave of three participants was interrupted partway by the church. However, this was only seen as a negative thing when the relationship with the church leadership and the negotiation had been difficult.

Modifying boundaries. As the literature indicates, the role of pastor is one in which permeable boundaries are inevitable; the pastor is a part of the community of a congregation. How and when permeability is appropriate is a negotiation unique to each pastor and congregation, and the development of the mother role puts the negotiation back on the table.

Pregnancy seemed to provide an opportunity for many of the clergywomen to experience appropriate and caring boundary crossings. This was experienced by clergywomen, regardless of their maternity leave negotiation experience, since much of the expressions of interest and caring were offered by the general membership of the congregation rather than those involved in the negotiation. Some of the participants reported that the permeable boundaries seemed to be natural, since their friendships and social circles already overlapped with the congregation and its community. For others, it seemed to be a pleasant surprise. As one clergywoman noted:

I think the other thing that this whole process helped me to do was to be vulnerable, because I was not vulnerable. And I'm very careful about that.

Nobody wants a pastor who just needs to be taken care of all the time. But...I was so amazed with how interested people were.... They were interested in knowing about labor and about her birth and about the struggles that we face, and that has been such a beautiful thing to me. So it has shown me that as a pastor you can show weakness or vulnerability and that's okay and that's a good thing sometimes.

Sometimes lay leaders seemed to have trouble with these changing boundaries.

Participants shared that some members were upset by or confused regarding having the baby at the office or at church on Sundays, while others were very supportive and pitched in to help. This discomfort was present in congregations, regardless of the positive and negative negotiations. For example, one clergywoman reported that she felt her negotiation went smoothly; nevertheless, she recounts an uncomfortable conversation with the chair of Personnel regarding breastfeeding in the office:

I remember when I was talking to the head of Personnel about the possibility of bringing the baby in afterward, and he was kind of, "Well. . . why?" (laughs)

“Well. . . . How long?. . . And. . .When?” Sort of a confusion over, um. . .I think probably because they, you know, as much because they had never done it before, because they hadn’t had a female pastor, and . . . because he was a guy.

While these examples seem to be fairly appropriate boundary negotiations, others were not. For example, when one clergywoman found herself pregnant immediately after getting married, a prominent member of the congregation confronted her about her sex life, wondering if she had gotten married because she was pregnant.

In such negative interactions, clergywomen seemed to begin to draw a more rigid boundary between themselves and the lay leaders. This was often in contrast to the permeable boundary that more supportive church members shared with them. Speaking of the experience of her church during the negotiation time, one participant commented: “There’s been a real dichotomy, because it’s made me feel closer to the congregation and more frustrated with Personnel.”

Role enhancement. From the interviews, it was apparent that there were a number of ways in which both the pastor role and the mother role were enhanced by the whole journey to motherhood, regardless of the experience of maternity leave. For example, several clergywomen noted that motherhood gave them great awareness and legitimacy in their ministry to families. Here, however, we will focus on those benefits linked directly to the maternity leave negotiation.

Only those clergywomen who had a positive experience of negotiation spoke of blending roles, as seen in the preceding discussion of boundaries, and of their congregations as extended family. For example, one clergywoman said:

[T]hrough newsletters and other places where I could write and speak to people...I talked in terms of the congregation being aunts and uncles and grandmas and

grandpas and brothers and sisters to her, to our child. I mean I really believe that; that's how we should live in community, not just so-and-so that I go to church with but as a real family.

This framing of the relationship between the pastor's family and congregation was of benefit to both the pastor and mother roles. These clergywomen reported that they felt grateful toward their congregations and closer to them. As one participant stated:

"I have to say I was very thankful for this particular congregation. 'Cause like I said...asking for something a little bit different than what they had been used to.... You know, sometimes churches...it's hard for them to do anything that they're not used to."

Clergywomen who perceived a positive negotiation experience also spoke of the relational power of being vulnerable in their pastor role, as noted above in the preceding section on modifying boundaries, and of being empowered by the congregation through the maternity leave to set up a better work/life balance. The clergywoman who had a mixed experience used similar language in reference to her maternity leave:

It's a lot harder to make changes to how I operate in ministry in the middle of ministry, but when I step away for two or three months I can come back and act in a different way and minister in a different way.... [I]t definitely helped strengthen me that way, because I had a chance to reflect and come back in a way that I wanted to and to make some changes that I wanted to make.

In contrast, clergywomen in this study who had a negative experience of negotiating leave more often spoke of learning to better advocate for themselves and of a realization of growing protectiveness for their children. The first experience might enhance both mother and pastor

roles, while the latter is an enhancement of the mother role alone. It may also be related to the formation of more rigid boundaries and, ultimately, choices about the pastoral role.

Consequences

In the analysis of the interviews, two major themes regarding the consequences of the experience of negotiation maternity leave emerged: professional development and decisions about role management.

Professional development. Every clergywoman spoke of learning something from the process of negotiating with their congregations and from the maternity leave itself. This was true regardless of whether the experience was perceived as positive or negative. Those who reported having had a negative experience talked more about realizing that they needed to advocate for themselves because no one else would. But clergywomen of both experiences felt that the experience of negotiating and taking maternity leave helped them learn the importance of self-care and find a better balance in their lives. A few spoke of learning to empower the congregation more, as they realized they could not and need not do everything. Others reworked their sense of call to involve their ministry to people outside the congregation, when they either took a break from ministry, or found their work with the congregation frustrating and so focused more energy outside of it. Many of the clergywomen reported that their call to ministry expanded to include more work on the presbytery level, where they could work for a presbytery maternity leave policy for the sake of other clergywomen.

Decisions about role management. Four major decisions about role management following the maternity leave negotiation were observed in the clergywomen's interviews: seeking role balance, role blending, prioritizing roles, and role exit. Some participants overlapped these categories.

Role balance. “Role balance” in this study is characterized by the attempt to keep both jobs as of equal priority, but manage them with clear boundaries. Many of the clergywomen used the phrase “role balance;” but on closer examination, actually fit better into another category. For this reason, only one clergywoman fits into this category, because she showed no evidence of considering the other options. This clergywoman was only a few months into her experience of motherhood and had had a positive experience negotiation leave with her congregation.

Role blending. “Blending” was a phrase used by some of the participants as they noted the permeability of the boundary between their roles. This was seen as an ideal and goal of their role management, although giving her family the higher priority may have been a secondary strategy. One clergywoman spoke of role blending this way:

[The two roles] were complimentary of one another. They felt very organic and very fluid, very natural. The manse was right next door to the church. My office was in the manse, so I knew going into it that it was going to be a full integration of all of it. No separation. I knew that. I knew that going in.

Four of the participants used this kind of language, and all of them reported having had a positive experience in their negotiation of leave. Three of them remained with their congregations for at least two years beyond the birth of their first child. This role blending was sought most especially in the early years of motherhood. Two of these clergywomen reported shifting out of this way of thinking as their children became older and their family needs more incompatible with their own pastoral role expectations. Here, one participant talks about shifting away from “blended roles”:

That was great until they got older and could open the door to my office, and all of those kinds of things, and then I started dreaming of daycare and wanting that so

badly. I needed more separation. I needed to not be so organic. I needed more separation, so that's what it is today. Now that I'm in a new call and my office is in the church and that church is 10 minutes from my house, the girls go to daycare and school and I get to come to the office and have more of a separation of the two and...it was desperately needed, and it works so well. And I was so ready for it, but I don't think I would have been ready for it when they were babies. I know I wouldn't have been, or I would've had a really hard time; but they're older now.

Role prioritizing. All five of the clergywomen who had a negative experience of negotiating leave talked about making their child a higher priority, sometimes noting that they would be willing to leave the church if they felt that priority was compromised. None of them talked about role blending, except as an ideal they had prior to their experience or as a hopeful possibility in a new, supportive congregation.

Also under the category of prioritizing is one unique outcome: a clergywomen whose stay-at-home husband enabled her to put more of her energy into her pastoral role. This participant had had a positive maternity leave negotiation experience.

Role exit. Four of the clergywomen exited their role soon after returning from maternity leave, but under very different circumstances. One participant, who reported having had a smooth negotiation, was married to another pastor and, together, they had planned their transition to parenthood as also a time of transition to a new call. She remained engaged in training her replacement right up until she left, and she later found her new ministry positions as ideal for her vision of blending roles.

The other three clergywomen chose to exit their roles. All of them had reported a negative experience negotiating maternity leave and spoke of making their family a higher priority. One

was asked to leave soon after she returned from maternity leave. She reported a history of conflict with the congregation and decided to take a break from parish ministry to focus on her son. She is now in a part-time, uninstalled church position where she is finding “blending” more of an option. A second clergywoman felt pressured to leave by her HOS and Personnel committee. She spoke with great pain of her decision:

And so the last three months I was at my church, I was trying really hard to fulfill some kind of role that I thought they wanted me to play, and it turned out that I didn't want to play that role. I didn't want to do it there. Maybe I wanted to play that role in some other kind of setting where I felt more supported, but I didn't want to be there. I didn't want my kid there. I didn't want my husband there. And so I resigned.... Because my baby was in day care for 12 hours on Wednesdays [sobs] and I was willing to do that because of my call, and then, like, “This is crazy-ness!” Why should your family and your marriage suffer for a call? I don't think this is what God is asking from you. And so at that point in my life, I think I had to decide to lay aside my call to the church in order to fulfill my call as a mom and a wife. Oh man, did I resent God for asking me to do that because I was ready to give that church my life, you know? To be there forever. And God gave me a new call, and it wasn't in the church. And I just - I never had thought that God could do that.

This clergywoman is not currently serving a congregation, and said that she feels she would not be able to achieve a satisfactory balance. Finally, the third of these clergywomen began looking for a new position of her own volition after her return to work. Though not formally pressured to

leave, she felt she could not keep up her previous pace, which seemed necessary for the program life of the church, while also meeting the needs of her child.

Participants' Responses

This analysis of the data was sent to the twelve participants for their comments. Six responded – three who had reported positive experiences of negotiating maternity leave and two who had reported negative experiences of negotiating maternity leave. All concurred with the analysis and model as inclusive of their experience.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The current literature suggests that the transition from professional to professional working mother is a challenge for women (Arendell, 2000; Millward, 2006), resulting in both role strain (Frone, 2003; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) and role enhancement (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Two existing studies of clergywomen going through the transition to motherhood seem to concur with these findings, highlighting some unique issues for clergywomen (Abernethy, 1991; Cooper-White, 2004). Prior literature also suggests that a supportive work environment and family policies are linked to better adjustment to motherhood and reintegration in the workplace, with parallel benefits for the mother's mental health (Chatterji & Markowitz, 2005; Feldman et al., 2004) and life and work satisfaction (Anderson et al., 2002; Millward, 2006).

The findings of this study of clergywomen negotiating maternity leave with their congregations are consistent with the literature, and contribute some new observations about the factors and interactions in the process which contribute to a clergywoman's decisions about managing her roles as mother and pastor. This chapter will further elucidate the connections and disconnections with the existing literature and highlight the new observations made in this study.

The Transition to Working Motherhood

Consistent with the literature demonstrating the intra- and inter-personal challenge of the transition to working motherhood, the participants in the current study reported difficulties in the transition, whether they perceived a supportive maternity leave negotiation or not. Challenges included advocating for self and future family needs with HOSs and lay leadership, uncertainty about those needs and the inevitable changes in the pastor role, strain between mother and pastor roles and changing boundaries in relationships. In contrast to the role strain they experienced was

also a sense of role enhancement as they received the support of their congregations and gained a sense of legitimacy in their ministries to families.

Previous literature has suggested that a supportive supervisor, work environment, and work-family policies are a helpful factor in this transition (Anderson et al., 2002; Chatterji & Markowitz, 2005; Feldman et al., 2004; Millward, 2006). The experiences of the clergywomen in this study seem to reflect those findings. Those who reported experiencing a positive negotiation of maternity leave also perceived a supportive relationship with their HOS and lay leadership as well as general satisfaction with their leave policy. In some cases, the maternity leave policy already existed, either in the church policies or those of the Presbytery.

Some studies suggested that a longer leave was linked with better mental and physical health and adaptation to work (Feldman et al., 2004; Hyde & Klein, 1995; McGovern et al., 1997). The current study did not find a clear connection between length of leave and personal and work outcomes. Two women who reported a good experience negotiating leave and who remained in their positions for longer than a year after their child was born had only 6 weeks of paid leave, a relatively short leave in comparison with the lengths of leave discussed in the literature. The stable and supportive church leadership and the ability to advocate for oneself seemed to be stronger factors in these cases. Similarly, one participant who reported a negative experience received twelve weeks of paid leave; her difficult relationships with the constantly changing church leadership and the discussion of policy changes both before and after her leave seemed to be the troubling factors. However, other clergywomen in this study who reported a negative experience, and who did leave their positions soon after returning from leave, did indicate that they were dissatisfied with the length of their maternity leave. It may be that, since clergywomen are usually a part of the negotiation process, rather than simply being told what the

policy of the church is, it is the attitudes and interactions around setting the maternity leave policy that are a larger source of stress and that these attitudes and interactions are sometimes reflected in the length of the leave. This finding may also be the result of the unique relationship between a pastor and her congregation, in contrast to the relationship of professional women working in corporate environments.

The current study does not seem to support findings that suggested a relationship between the length of leave and maternal bond with her infant (Clark & Hyde, 1997; Feldman et al., 2004). Clergywomen who reported a negative experience of negotiating or having a short maternity leave reported no negative effect on their relationship with their child, when directly asked how their experience affected their relationship. However, some of them did report the growth of protective feelings toward their child and negative feelings toward their congregations. It seems that they may have chosen at this point to make their relationship with their infant and their mother role a higher priority. Of course, this study was not designed to assess the relationship between clergywomen and their infants, so another study may come to different conclusions.

Mothers and Work-Life Balance

The apparent struggles of these clergywomen with work-life balance and the ways they attempted to cope with that struggle seem to confirm the existing literature on mothers and work life balance. Of the possibilities suggested by the literature, these clergywomen most reported experiencing role conflict in the form of problematic scheduling and hours, unsupportive environments and child care issues (Frone, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). This study adds to that list of experiences of role strain the strain felt in actually advocating for oneself and one's family with those one has previously felt called to put before oneself. As the literature regarding professional women indicates, clergywomen attempted to resolve some work-family conflict by

bringing children to work or working from home (Johnston & Swanson, 2007). This may be one area in which being a pastor, with permeable boundaries and work schedules, may be an asset, if the congregational leadership is supportive.

The literature suggests that the correlates of work-family conflict include low job-satisfaction, intentions to quit, and job turn-over (Anderson et al., 2002; Carlson et al., 2011; Frye & Breugh, 2004). Similarly, this study also finds that the consequences of the experience of role strain in these situations may be the constriction of the role in relation to the involved church leadership or even role exit as a clergywoman leaves a position for another that allows for greater role balance or takes a hiatus from parish ministry.

The results of this study seem to indicate the importance of a supportive supervisor, co-workers and organizational culture – in this case HOSs, lay leadership and congregational attitudes – factors that the literature suggests reduce role-conflict and increase worker loyalty (Anderson et al., 2002; Erdwins et al., 2001; Frye & Breugh, 2004). Further, several of these studies indicated that no matter what work-family policies were available, if the prevailing culture of the organization is not supportive of the policies, the policies will not be effective in helping employees manage role-conflict (Anderson et al., 2002; Frye & Breugh, 2004; Roehling et al., 2001). This finding was confirmed in this study in one clergywoman's experience: when the congregational leadership was not supportive of the maternity leave policy that she negotiated and continued to debate the church's maternity leave policy when she returned from leave, the ongoing negative experience with the lay leadership seemed to outweigh the benefit of the relatively lengthy maternity leave that she had been given. Similarly, the positive experience of two clergywomen who had supportive HOSs and lay leadership, even in the face of relatively short maternity leaves, fits with the conclusions drawn by other studies that supervisor support is

a stronger predictor of worker loyalty than actual work-family policies (Cook, 2009; Erdwins et al., 2001). Other literature suggests that the presence of work-family benefits contribute to worker loyalty (Anderson et al., 2002; Carlson et al., 2011), and the relative contentedness of the clergywomen who entered congregations or presbyteries with existing maternity leave policies seems to corroborate with that finding.

Several studies suggested that a sense of self-efficacy and control or decision making latitude on the job strengthens resiliency in employed mothers (Erdwins et al., 2001; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Keeton et al., 2008). This may connect with the difficulty – or even impossibility – that some of these clergy women reported feeling as they advocated for themselves. A feeling of having no say in a policy being created that would impact her and her family may have contributed to a lack of resiliency in the position.

Clergy and Role Strain

The literature on clergy and role strain suggests several general areas of strain that seem consistent with observations in this study. Although intra-role strain, or strain between sub-roles of one role, has not been studied much in the recent past, this intra-role strain seemed evident in discussions the clergywomen's of difficulty advocating for themselves. Specifically, it seemed that the clergywomen were aware of the dual-roles of employee and leader within their pastoral position. In most cases, particularly in difficult negotiations as an AP, clergywomen seemed to back away from the leadership role, at least in the context of the negotiation and with the church leaders involved.

The conviction of being “called by God” to serve and to put the congregation first (Blanton, 1992; Kieren & Munro, 1988) was an evident strain in these negotiations as well. This was a particularly painful experience for one clergywoman in this study. However, as Meek et al.

(2003) suggested, a sense of call was also used as a source of resilience in coping as several of the clergywomen who had negative experiences reframed their new motherhood as a sacred calling in itself and developed a new understanding of work-life balance.

External sources of career stress that have been correlated with negative outcomes for clergy and their home life were also found to be factors for the clergywomen of this study as they prepared for motherhood and managed their competing roles. These appeared to factor into the outcome for their ministry. Every participant in this study mentioned difficulties posed by the evening and weekend hours of pastoral work particularly as they began juggling care for their nursing infant with meetings and retreats; some of them also mentioned their maternity leave being interrupted by parish emergencies (Hill et al., 2003; Morris & Blanton, 1994b). Lack of social support outside of the congregation was evident in that most of the clergywomen mentioned living at a distance from family, who were unable to come and support them through the transition. In most cases, the general membership of the congregation reached out in support of the clergywomen and their families as they transitioned to a new life-stage. Indeed, several of the clergywomen who perceived having had positive maternity leave negotiations felt that opening themselves up to the care of the congregation was a great learning experience for them about the mutual care between a pastor and her congregation. A lack of privacy and personal space is another well documented stressor for clergy and their families (Hill et al., 2003; Malony, 1988; Morris & Blanton, 1998). In this study, there were experiences of both extremes: congregations respecting the privacy of their clergywomen during maternity leave and lay leaders intruding into the personal business of clergywomen when they believed their social mores had been violated. And finally, the stressor of a lack of congregational fit (Hill et al., 2003; Jinkins, 2002) was seen in the situation of at least one clergywoman who reported that her vision for

shared ministry was in conflict with the church leadership's expectation of the pastor carrying the load. It seems no surprise that she had a difficult experience trying to negotiate leave from the time she arrived until she actually had a child four years later, and that she was asked to resign soon after her return from maternity leave.

Lee's (1995, 1999) discussion of the intrusiveness of congregations and of boundary ambiguity in the pastoral relationship sheds interesting light on the experiences of the clergywomen in this study. His research suggests that personal criticism, family criticism and presumptive expectations were more stressful for clergy than general boundary ambiguity (1999). This seems consistent with the results of this study, in which a difficult process negotiating maternity leave – involving personal criticism and presumptive expectations – seemed to be more disturbing than unexpected visits by church members or even an interrupted maternity leave.

One difference in findings is that much of the literature links these stressors to negative outcomes for pastors' marriage and family life as well as job satisfaction. Although the latter was evident in the experiences of those clergywoman who felt they had a difficult time negotiating leave with their congregations, if stress was felt by them in their marriage or family life, these women chose to give their marriage and family life priority by exiting the ministry or finding a new call.

Two studies suggested that having children had a positive impact on the lives of clergy (Benda & DiBlasio, 1992; Darling et al., 2006). Benda (1992) suggested that this was, perhaps, because it provided clergy with a legitimate reason for defining clearer boundaries between work and home. The current study supports these findings and Benda's speculation. Most of the clergywomen in this study reported having found a better work-life balance since having children, whether they stayed in the congregation where they negotiated leave or moved on.

Studies of clergy and role strain point to a number of coping strategies for clergy to exercise which, theoretically, may help manage the strain. The clergywomen in this study appeared to engage these strategies, but with mixed results: setting strong but flexible boundaries around their families and personal time (Lee, 1995; Meek et al., 2003), allowing members to support them in their time of transition (Lee & Balswick, 1989), being more available to their children than to their congregations (Lee, 1995), cultivating their spiritual lives apart from their work (Jenkins, 2002; Meek et al., 2003), seeking social support outside of the congregation (Henry et al., 1991; Meek et al., 2003) and developing a framework for understanding their relationship with the church in a way that allows for the ups and downs of parish life without it affecting their overall sense of call (Lee, 1995). For the clergywomen of this study, it seems that negotiating firm but flexible boundaries was generally a goal; the difficulties seemed to arise when the leadership of the church was unreceptive to this idea.

Clergywomen, Motherhood and Role Strain

As noted in the literature review, research suggests that clergywomen have many of the same stressors as clergy and professional women in general. These stressors were also seen in this study, as noted in the discussion above. Stressors not yet discussed are those related to gender.

Although the literature notes the possibility (Frame & Shehan, 2005; Lehman, 2002), the clergywomen in this study did not seem to have gender based stressors from home. They did not report problems with their husbands' careers taking precedence or with their husbands having traditional expectations of them as wives and mothers. In fact, one participant's husband was a stay-at-home father, allowing her to focus on her church-work. The only sign of traditional gender expectations in the home was that one participant, whose husband was a pastor in another

church, had primary responsibility for their infant on Sunday mornings – in a church without a nursery.

In relation to the church, as noted in the literature (Lehman, 1980, 2002; Nesbitt, 1997; Presbyterian Church (USA), 2002), gender issues in the church did seem to pose some difficulty. However, this study did not ask about gender issues directly. One woman encountered a congregation that directed its PNC not to nominate a woman as pastor; in her words, the PNC “ignored” that directive. One clergywoman noted the difficulty that women had managing boundaries with their congregations as well as managing work-life balance in comparison to their male colleagues. Other participants noted that their congregations seemed to have been accustomed to male pastors being far more available to them than they felt that they could be, especially when the additional role of mother began. Their comments suggested that this difficulty was related to historical expectations of male clergy being able to depend on a spouse who does most of the work at home.

Nesbitt (1995, 1997) suggested that, while for clergymen having children was seen as an asset in the profession, for clergywomen this was not so – at least in the long term. The current study found that, at least in the short term, having children seemed to have had a mixed influence on the clergywoman’s career. These clergywomen reported that there ways that having children enhanced the pastor role. However, this was not a longitudinal study, so the long term impact on career trajectory is unknown.

The negotiation of maternity leave may be an instance in which clergywomen are challenging the traditional ways and expectations within the church, a situation that some studies suggest puts them at risk of suspicion, rejection and resistance (Frame & Shehan, 2004; Rayburn, 1991). Lehman’s research seemed to find that it was church members in congregational

leadership who were most resistant to clergywomen, rather than the general members. This study found a sharp contrast for clergywomen who had difficulty negotiating their maternity leave between their experience of church leadership, which seemed resistant to them, and of the general church membership which seemed excited and supportive of their transition to motherhood.

The current study confirms many, but not all, of the findings in the two known studies of clergywomen transitioning to motherhood (Abernethy, 1991; Cooper-White, 2004). Both studies suggested that clergywomen had to redefine their roles, boundaries and priorities with congregations after their first child was born. This study confirmed that finding and suggests that this process may begin during the negotiation of maternity leave and pregnancy. Abernethy (1991) found that the transition to motherhood could result in distress and a splitting of self-identity and professional purpose or lead to a more complete integration of self, family, congregation and God. Using the concepts of boundaries and role theory, this study found that some clergywomen might resolve their distress through the drawing of rigid boundaries between their roles at one end of the spectrum, which generally led to role exit, or they may integrate or “blend” the roles at the other end of the spectrum. In between, there seemed to be room for prioritizing and attempts to find balance.

Abernethy’s (1991) research suggested that the response of the congregation reflected their pre-existing relationship with the clergywoman: good relationships became stronger and poor relationships got worse. This seems to hold true for the clergywomen of this study, though not purely. This study seems to have discovered the importance of differentiating church leadership, which includes both lay leaders and the HOS, from the congregation in general. The clergywomen of this study who felt they had a good experience in negotiating leave also reported supportive relationships with their HOS and lay leaders. Many of those who felt they had a

difficult or mixed experience reported a pre-existing strained relationship with their HOS or lay leadership – but not all. Some of these clergywomen reported being surprised by the lack of support since they felt that they had a good relationship with the congregation and had served the congregation well. The missing variable seems to be that these unsupportive congregations were in a state of transition.

Cooper-White (2004) noted that the congregations who were most in denial of the practical needs of a pastor transitioning to motherhood were those with few children. This was true in the case of one SP in the present study, but another congregation with few children was eager to embrace another clergywoman and her new family.

Abernethy (1991) and Cooper-White (2004) suggested that open and honest communication with the congregation and receiving support from the congregation could be effective coping strategies. This study confirmed those as effective strategies for some of its participants. However, the latter seemed to be a helpful strategy only when the congregation was in a stable place in its own journey or coping in a healthy manner with its anxiety about transition or change. Finally, although Abernethy (1991) notes that negotiating maternity leave in the original contract was a pre-emptive strategy for coping with the stress of the transition to motherhood, none of the clergywomen in this study were able to accomplish that goal except for the clergywoman who was actually pregnant at the time. Perhaps, again, this coping strategy depends on the state of the congregation and the ability of its leadership to healthfully manage anxiety and change.

Summary of Unique Contributions of the Current Study

There have been few studies of the experience of clergywomen and fewer of clergywomen's transition to motherhood. This study focused on one specific experience of

clergywomen in the transition to motherhood and attempted to develop a theoretical model for how clergywomen manage role strain in the process. The resulting model suggests some new observations about the dynamics of clergywomen's experience.

Clergywomen brought several personal factors to the negotiation process. Their personal confidence and vulnerability contributed to their pre-existing relationship with church leadership as well as their ability to advocate for themselves and successfully manage the roles. Finally, their hopes and expectations, their home situation and their unique challenges in the transition to motherhood played had an influence on their overall perceived experience.

Within the church setting, the factors that led to a difficult negotiation seemed to rest largely on whether or not the congregation was stable and whether or not it handled change in a healthy way. The result of their general environment was a continuum from sympathetic and gracious to cold and "business minded," as one participant put it. The clergywoman's relationship with the HOS seemed to correlate with the general environment of congregational leadership but was not necessarily an intervening factor. Attempting to negotiate maternity leave in the original terms of call was not an effective strategy for clergywomen in this study who were not already pregnant. The existence of a clear Presbytery maternity leave policy was the only factor that seemed to intervene in a negotiation that a clergywoman perceived to be difficult. Finally, the length of the leave did not appear to be as significant a factor as the overall climate of the leadership in the clergywomen's experience.

Beyond a gracious and healthy leadership environment, some congregations where the clergywomen reported having a positive experience of the negotiation had experience with Sabbaticals or with discussing work/life issues and what organizations call "best practices" in human resource management.

Negotiating maternity leave is an opportunity for clergywomen to advocate for themselves and their families. In perceived positive experiences this was not difficult to do and may even have been unnecessary, although the clergywoman may later realize that she was naïve in her assumptions about how much time she would need. Self-advocacy was much more difficult for women who perceived the negotiations as negative. Besides a negative reception from the lay leadership, this difficulty seemed to be the result of a felt conflict between the roles of pastor and mother and of personal vulnerability.

All of the clergywomen felt that this process helped them learn to advocate for themselves and to find a better work/life balance. In all cases, the clergywomen found motherhood an enhancement to their role as pastor, but this was particularly so for those who had reported a positive experience in the negotiation process.

Finally, many clergywomen in this study seemed to dream of blending their roles of pastor and mother, but in the end, this worked out only for a few. Prioritizing roles seemed to be more realistic, both for those who reported a positive experience negotiating leave and for those who reported a negative experience. For several participants, role exit in the form of finding a new ministry position where they felt they could have a better work/life balance or of taking a hiatus from parish ministry was the best solution to managing their roles of both pastor and mother.

Study Limitations

Some limitations of this study were built into the design of the study. The participants are all clergywomen of the PC(USA), and so the relevance of this study to other denominations and religious bodies is unclear. Further, only biological mothers were included in the study, so the experience of clergywomen who adopted their first child is probably not reflected here.

Another limitation of the design is the self-selecting, word-of-mouth convenience sample. Although the participants were from all over the U.S., the researcher did not attempt to gain full representation from geographic regions. Nor was this the case with the racial make-up of the sample or the sizes and community-types of their congregations.

Further, the researcher cannot say that the proportion of women with negative and positive experiences reflects the actual proportion of women in the denomination who have had negative and positive experiences of negotiating leave. For example, it may be that a disproportionate number of women who had negative experiences wanted to talk about them. On the other hand, it is possible that the study contained a disproportionately high number of clergywomen with positive experiences, because some clergywomen who perceived negative experiences may have withdrawn from the denomination so much that they did not hear about the study or did not want to talk with anyone about their experience. Hoge and Wenger (2005) found evidence of this limitation in their study. Similarly, although this study provides some numbers to indicate how many women reported a certain type of factor being involved or a certain kind of role management decision, the number is not intended to indicate a proportion. It is merely to provide validity to the report. In a qualitative study, the aim is to gather the richness and diversity of the experience, not numbers.

As noted in Chapter Four, clergywomen who had a positive experience of negotiating maternity leave did not share in as much detail regarding their experience as did the clergywomen who had negative experiences. This may be due to the greater complexity of negative experiences, but perhaps more could be learned about the positive experiences with new questions.

Moreover, the study was retrospective nature, so some aspects of the clergywomen's experience may have been forgotten or their perceptions changed over time. In addition, this data was drawn from the experience of clergywomen only, as opposed to including also interviews with their HOSs, congregations, spouses and children. When the clergywomen describe the interactions they had and the impact on their relationships, only their perceptions are available from which to draw a model. Finally, this study began as a phenomenological study and the interview questions were only designed to draw out the essence of the experience of negotiating leave, rather than fleshing out the entire process. Only during the analysis did the researcher find that the data was lending itself to a grounded theory study. There are more questions that may have been helpful to more fully develop the model.

Even as this study applies to PC(USA) clergywomen, there are additional limitations. While the sample size is moderately large (12), most of the participants were APs. Given the time constraints of the study, the researcher was not able to seek out more SPs to saturate the data. There may be elements to SPs' experience, then, that are missing from the study. For example, the ability of so many of the clergywomen who perceived that they had a negative experience to differentiate their relationship with lay leaders involved in the discussion from their relationship with the general membership of the congregation may be related to the size of the congregations they were serving and their role as an associate pastor. It seems reasonable to consider that some SPs who have a negative experience negotiating leave in small congregations would have a harder time doing so.

Future Research

The findings of this research may be expanded upon in several ways. This study shed some light on the process and experience of clergywomen negotiating maternity leave, and the

results of the study would benefit from further examination. Since the sample included only two SPs and no HOSs, it would be helpful to know what, if anything, further interviews with clergywomen serving on their own or as HOSs would add to this theory. Similarly, this sample did not include clergywomen who adopted their first child. A study of clergywomen negotiating the process of adoption, which may include travel time, and maternity leave at the point of adoption, would contribute further information regarding the transition to motherhood.

This study was qualitative. A quantitative study of clergywomen who have gone through the experience negotiating maternity leave might clarify the frequency of this situation; how often it is experienced as positive, negative or mixed; and how great an impact clergywomen feel it has on the direction of their short- and long-term career path.

This study was of the perspective of clergywomen on their experience negotiating leave. A study of the experience of negotiation from the perspective of other parties in the negotiation process, such as lay leaders or HOSs, may be helpful in more fully understanding the dynamics of occasions when the negotiation goes well and when it does not. Studying this process from multiple perspectives would help ensure a balanced understanding of the process and the factors affecting the quality of the experience. Further studies of congregations where the negotiation of maternity leave went well for clergywomen might elucidate “best practices” for congregations.

Finally, it would be interesting to discern the nature of the relationship between clergywomen’s experience of work-life balance with their congregations and their experience of role enhancement. That is, do clergywomen who experience support in their work-life balance find that motherhood augments their experience as pastors more frequently than clergywomen who do not feel supported, or is there evidence that role enhancement is a separate phenomenon?

Clinical Implications

Previous researchers have recommended that clergy develop clear but flexible boundaries with their congregations (Lee, 1995; Meek et al., 2003), and that is one strategy that the clergywomen in this study used. Clinicians may find this to be an effective intervention for clergywomen, as long as the clinician understands the unique starting point of clergy-congregation boundaries: namely, the congregation is the clergyperson's community. In congregations that are more intrusive, preserving clear but flexible boundaries may be an ongoing struggle.

For clergywomen who are having a difficult time negotiating maternity leave and the early transition to motherhood with their congregations, developing a sense of sacred calling apart from the particular church – and even apart from parish ministry entirely – may strengthen them to advocate for themselves and make the hard decisions necessary to protect their family, while maintaining, in Lee's (1995) words "a plausibility structure that tolerates the vicissitudes of ministry without rejecting the calling" (Lee, 1995, p. 81). Protective feelings for their expected child and relationship with their expected child should be normalized and seen as a tool for clarifying boundaries. Their right to advocate for themselves should be confirmed, because in some case these clergywomen felt guilty asking for what they needed.

Uncertainty and ambiguity about the mother role, future work/life balance and what time would be available to them in the form of maternity leave to begin to adjust to the new reality were experienced by most of the clergywomen in this study. Especially when they are overwhelmed and having a difficult experience, helping them name the points of confusion may empower them to begin to problem solve. Some education on the importance of maternity leave

for physical and emotional health as well as for bonding with their child might be useful to them and empower them to argue their case with lay leaders and/or their HOS.

It may be beneficial for clergywomen to systematically consider their options in managing the two roles, in addition to any other significant roles they may have in their lives. Many clergywomen may hope for role blending, but role balance and prioritizing may be more realistic options. In the process of this examination, highlighting the ways in which having children will enhance their role as pastor may be reassuring and empowering. Role exit should be presented as a legitimate option that is no reflection of God's call in their lives to be a pastor. Such a discussion may strengthen the felt self-efficacy of the women as they manage their roles.

The decisions of congregational leadership about the maternity leave policy were sometimes seen by the participants in this study as a comment on their ministry – either a sign of gratitude and approval or referendum and judgment. Helping clergywomen see that these decisions are more a reflection of the health of the congregation's leadership and not of them, their call to ministry or their skills in ministry may be vital in cultivating resilience in both their professional and personal lives.

Finally, clergywomen who are struggling with their congregational leaders in the process of negotiating leave need an empathic voice to confirm that sometimes the church does not behave in a caring and compassionate manner and that, in the words of one participant, "it's frustrating to be caught in the tension" as lay leaders struggle with their own confusion about managing the business of a faith community.

Recommendations for Denominational Leaders

Ministry to congregations in transition or which have unhealthy organizational patterns of communication or managing conflict is a part of the call to be a pastor – but the families and physical and emotional health of clergywomen need to be protected from the negative spillover.

As seminaries prepare young women and men for ministry to churches that may or may not be in transition, and may or may not have good communication patterns, they should prepare them to expect presumptive expectations from the congregation as well as the HOSs they may work with. They might equip them to knowledgeably advocate for themselves and handle the lack of respect they may experience in everyday encounters that may erode their confidence in themselves as religious leaders.

Clergywomen who are becoming mothers – and likely many clergymen who are becoming fathers – may need the help of the denomination to set a reasonable leave policy that is not subject to the caprice of the moment in a congregation. Given the struggle that so many lay leaders and HOSs seemed to have in this study making decisions that honor both the call of the congregation to be a supportive faith community and to meet the other practical aspects of being an organization, a model for a healthy discussion on the national or presbytery level may be of benefit to local congregations and clergywomen. In addition to the pastoral and theological aspects of this discussion, it should also include empirically grounded findings on maternity leave, the transition to motherhood and organizational loyalty.

The denomination might take this a step further and determine a minimum standard for maternity and parental leave, based on the discussion recommended above. Such standards might reduce the frequency of clergywomen in congregations that are not stable or which do not handle

change well would feeling the need to leave their congregations or even parish ministry entirely in order to protect their physical and emotional health and their relationship with their families.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study adds to the limited literature on clergywomen and is significant in that it focuses on a specific process along the way as clergywomen transition to working motherhood: negotiating maternity leave. It examines the factors that contribute to that experience, the elements of the experience itself and the professional development and decisions made about role management that may be a consequence of the experience. Analysis of the twelve interviews suggest that the major factor in the perceived experience of clergywomen negotiating maternity leave with their congregations may be the overall stability and organizational health of the congregation and that the only effective intervention in a perceived negative experience may be a presbytery level policy. Further, analysis suggests that, at least in perceived positive experiences, the roles of pastor and mother may be mutually enhancing, resulting in a stronger bond between pastor and congregation. It is hoped that the results of this study might help clergy, congregations, presbyteries and denominational leaders in their efforts to retain and sustain pastoral leadership and cultivate the benefits of clergywomen also living the role of mother.

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Appendix A: Glossary of Ecclesiastical and Presbyterian Terminology	
Associate Pastor (AP)	Pastor, other than the head of staff of a congregation, who may be responsible for specific program areas, but also preaches and administers the sacraments.
Call	A term that may apply to the formal agreement to serve a particular congregation or the overall sense of a person of having been drawn by God into a sacred responsibility.
Clergy	A generic term referring to the professional religious leadership of any religious body.
Denomination	A nation-wide religious body, in this case the PC (USA), which is rooted in historic theological and organizational commitments.
Elder	A formally elected lay leader of the congregation; an ordained position. Elders typically chair the committees of the local congregation. Most relevant here is the Personnel committee.
Head of staff (HOS)	The installed pastor on staff responsible for the oversight of other pastors and church employees. Sometimes referred to as the senior pastor.
Interim	A pastor who is contracted for a temporary position, rather than installed. The primary purpose of this role is to help a congregation fill a leadership gap while it searches for its next installed pastor. If this person fills the Head of staff position, he or she may be referred to as the acting Head of Staff.
Lay leaders	Any member of the congregation who fulfills some leadership role, formal or informal, in the congregation. This term includes Elders.
Manse	A church-owned house in which the Pastor and her family live.
Pastor nominating committee (PNC)	An elected church committee, made up of elders and other lay leaders, given the task of searching for and recommending a candidate for ordained ministry to the congregation, who then votes on the candidate. May be referred to as the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) in the case of a search for an Associate Pastor.
Pastoral relationship	The relationship between a pastor and her congregation, including her role in the congregation, length of service and her history and interactions with church members.
Presbytery	A regional governing body of Presbyterian churches, made up of all ordained pastors and an equal number of elected elders representing their congregations. Of note here: the Presbytery usually sets a minimum standard for compensation and benefits such as vacation and study leave.
Sabbatical	A leave of absence for a pastor, usually three months in length, which is intended to be a time of both study and spiritual renewal. It is sometimes negotiated into the terms of call, often using the biblical concept of Sabbath to support the option every seven years. Some Presbyteries have guidelines for this in their minimum compensation policies.
Session	The official and elected governing body of the local congregation, made up of all the ordained pastors and elders of the particular congregation.
Solo Pastor (SP)	An installed Pastor who serves as the only Minister of Word and Sacrament to a congregation.
Terms of call	The benefits package of a pastor, including salary, housing allowance, vacation and study leave. This is voted upon annually by the entire congregation.
Validated Ministry	A position recognized by the Presbytery as a legitimate setting for ordained ministry, although it is not involve a congregational setting. This may include clergy who working for non-profits or as counselors.

Appendix B: Recruitment Email to Presbytery Executives

[Current Date]

Dear Presbytery Executive,

I am currently working on my thesis for a second Master's degree, in Marriage and Family Therapy, at Virginia Tech. Through the course of my work, I have had a research interest in issues that are unique to clergy and their families.

In general, work-life balance is a struggle for many working women, especially mothers. As you may have experienced, both male and female clergy have a unique relationship with their "employer" and this may or may not have an influence on issues of work-life balance. Thus, I chose a related topic for my thesis research: the experience of Presbyterian clergywomen with work-life balance as they negotiating maternity leave with their congregations.

It is my hope to make a rich composite of women's experience of this process, so I am in search of participants with a variety of stories to tell. Participants must have negotiated maternity leave within the last ten years for their first biological child, while serving a congregation full-time. Participants may value a confidential listener who will not judge them and who will celebrate their good experiences with them. I also plan to share this composite, while protecting the identities of the participants, with denominational leadership in the hope of having some effect on future policy decisions.

For more information on this study, please contact me at rev.erin.sharp@gmail.com or 540-841-5903. Attached is a flier for distribution to Presbyteries and to other clergywomen you know who may be interested. Please share this information with as many folks as you can!

Many blessings on your varied ministries in Christ's name!

Sincerely,

Rev. Erin C. Sharp
Minister for Discipleship, Grace Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Virginia
At-Large, National Capital Presbytery

Appendix C: Recruitment Email to Deborah's Daughters Contacts

[Current Date]

Dear Clergy Sisters,

I received your name from the Office for Women's Leadership Development in Louisville. Hopefully, you will not mind this unsolicited email regarding an issue many clergywomen face.

I am currently working on my thesis for a second Master's degree, in Marriage and Family Therapy, at Virginia Tech. Through the course of my work, I have had a research interest in issues that are unique to clergy and their families.

As you may have experienced, work-life balance is a struggle for many working women, especially mothers. Clergy have a unique relationship with their "employer" and this may or may not have an influence on issues of work-life balance. Thus, I chose a related topic for my thesis research: the experience of Presbyterian clergywomen with work-life balance as they negotiating maternity leave with their congregations.

It is my hope to make a rich composite of women's experience of this process, so I am in search of participants with a variety of stories to tell. Participants must have negotiated maternity leave within the last ten years for their first biological child, while serving a congregation full-time. Participants may value a confidential listener who will not judge them and who will celebrate their good experiences with them. I also plan to share this composite, while protecting the identities of the participants, with denominational leadership in the hope of having some effect on future policy decisions.

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Many blessings on your varied ministries in Christ's name!

Sincerely,

Rev. Erin C. Sharp
Minister for Discipleship, Grace Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Virginia
At-Large, National Capital Presbytery

Appendix D: Recruitment Flier

Attention: Presbyterian Clergymoms!!!

Work-life balance is a struggle for many working moms. Clergy have a unique relationship with their “employer” that affects this balance in distinctive ways. Our pioneering clergy foremothers brought down many barriers, but we’re still learning about the unique dynamics of things such as balancing the dual roles of clergy and mother. As new generations of clergywomen find themselves contemplating the transition to motherhood, sharing what we have experienced might empower a new generation. What was your experience of trying to balance church and family responsibilities in the transition to motherhood? I’d like to hear about it!



I’m seeking participants for this thesis research project exploring the varied experiences of clergywomen with work-life balance as they enter motherhood, particularly focusing on the negotiation of maternity leave as one marker in the transition. This is your chance to share about your experience in a confidential, non-judgmental telephone conversation. An analysis of the interviews, concealing all identifying information, will be shared with denominational leaders and may affect future policy decisions. Participating clergywomen must have negotiated their maternity leave for their first biological child within the last ten years.

For more information, please contact Erin Sharp, graduate student at Virginia Tech and Presbyterian pastor, at rev.erin.sharp@gmail.com.

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY Informed Consent Form

Study: The Experience of Clergywomen Negotiating Maternity Leave with their Congregations

Investigators: Dr. Angela Huebner and Rev. Erin Sharp of Virginia Tech

We invite your voluntary participation in this thesis research project. Please read the following information about the project. If you would like to participate, please sign in the appropriate lines below and return to the researchers by PDF at rev.erin.sharp@gmail.com or by postal service to Rev. Erin Sharp, Attn: Thesis research, 8524 Riverside Rd., Alexandria, VA 22308.

I. Purpose of the Project

To understand the experience of clergywomen who are becoming mothers for the first time as they negotiate maternity leave with their congregations. Eight to twelve Presbyterian clergywomen will be interviewed. These women will have negotiated maternity leave with their congregations for the birth of their first biological child within the last ten years, while serving their congregations full time.

II. Participation

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to engage in one audio-recorded telephone interview with the co-researcher. The time required is estimated to be about an hour. If you choose, you will be provided a composite summary of the data analysis and provide feedback as to whether or not you feel the summary reflects your experience. This additional commitment would help provide validity to the study.

III. Potential Risks of the Study

Risks are minimal. However, the interview may bring up unpleasant memories and feelings for you. Should you be interested, referrals can be provided to experienced therapists; however, you would be responsible for any expenses accrued in therapy.

IV. Benefits

While there is no guarantee of benefits, the interview will provide you with an opportunity to talk about their personal experience. You may value this non-judgmental setting to give voice to feelings about a possibly difficult transition in your life; or you might enjoy the chance to share good news about a congregation that was empowering for you and shared your joy about your hoped for child. Further, participants may find it rewarding to know that a summary and discussion of results, presented in a way that preserves your confidentiality, will be provided to denominational leaders and may have an influence on future policy decisions.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

Your confidentiality will be maintained through the separation of the data and your contact information. Interviews and information forms will be assigned a number as the data is collected. A data key, with that number and your contact information, will be kept in a

protected file on the researcher's home computer. The data key will be destroyed following the completion of data analysis. All other files, including sound files, transcriptions, and demographic information, will be destroyed following the successful defense of the thesis.

It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

No compensation is offered.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate there will not be any negative consequences. Please be aware that if you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time or choose not to answer any questions.

VIII. Subject's Responsibilities

If you agree to participate in this study, you will have the following responsibilities:

- To engage in a recorded telephone interview, of approximately one hour in duration.
- To answer truthfully, to the best of your ability, the researcher's questions about your experience.

IX. Subject's Permission

I have read and understood the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

Signed Name: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subject's rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Investigator: Rev. Erin Sharp
540-841-5903
rev.erin.sharp@gmail.com

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Angela Huebner
703-538-8491
ahuebner@nvc.vt.edu

Department Head: Dr. Eric McCollum
703-538-8460
emccollu@vt.edu

David M. Moore
Chair, Virginia Tech Institutional Review
Board for Human Subjects
Office of Research Compliance
2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
Blacksburg, VA 24060
540-231-4991
moored@vt.edu

Appendix F: IRB Approval Letter



VirginiaTech

Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959
e-mail irb@vt.edu
Website: www.irb.vt.edu

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 22, 2011

TO: Angela J. Huebner, Erin Sharp

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires May 31, 2014)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Clergywomen Negotiating Maternity Leave

IRB NUMBER: 11-1092

Effective December 21, 2011, the Virginia Tech IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore, approved the new protocol for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm> (please review before the commencement of your research).

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved as: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6, 7**

Protocol Approval Date: **12/21/2011**

Protocol Expiration Date: **12/20/2012**

Continuing Review Due Date*: **12/6/2012**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals / work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution