BREAKING THE STAINED GLASS CEILING:

INTERSECTIONALITY AND THE FEMALE ORDINATION MOVEMENT IN THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

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Thesis Abstract

This thesis examines the female ordination movement within the Catholic Church as a feminist social justice collective seeking to overturn gender based oppression within this religious institution. Through a study of three communities, Mary Mother of Jesus, Good Shepherd, and Mary Magdalene Apostolic Catholic Community, this thesis explores the emancipatory strategies utilized by the female ordination movement to instil equality within the Church and within society. Each community's commitment to gender inclusivity intersects with additional areas of structural reform, including LGBTIQ equality, racial justice, social welfare provision for the poor and the elimination of power and hierarchy within organized religion. This study is thus motivated by the question of how the female ordination movement is incorporating intersectional considerations within its fight of oppression in the Roman Catholic Church.

Informed by a feminist epistemology, this thesis integrates the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and kyriarchy to explore the positioning of the female ordination movement around multiple axes of domination within the Catholic Church, including sexism, racism, homophobia and classism. The methodology is triangulated. Firstly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of this movement and were evaluated through narrative analysis. Second, participation observation of the communities' liturgies was evaluated through ritual analysis. This dual methodological approach addresses both the core beliefs and communal acts of these communities and understands their activism as both ideological and performative in nature.

Given that women have been noticeably absent from the androcentric history of the Roman Catholic Church, and given also that there have been few fieldwork-based studies to date of feminist Catholic communities, the inclusion of these women's voices and experiences represents an important contribution to scholarly inquiries investigating sexism and feminist

activism within religious structures. This thesis draws upon their voices and their communal activities to fill a lacuna in research surrounding the tensions between feminism and patriarchy, and the ways in which intersectional feminism is transforming the structures and nature of Catholicism.

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<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Ordination, say yes to life,

To freedom, to women's power, to women's authority.

Spirit, living in and through community,

Rest gently on my soul.

Infusing new life, new freedom, new power, new authority,

For all women in the twenty-first century.

Women's spirit rising,

Lost for a thousand generations.

The flame unnourished,

Light a spark within the psyche of women.

Now, fed by the fuel of women's passion,

Ignited again.

Phoenix arising from the ashes for healing into oneness,

into the sacred that is, was, and will be.

– Katy Zatsick, Roman Catholic Woman Priest

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ARCWP	Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests
CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith
CTA	Call To Action
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trangender, Intersex, and Queer
MMACC	Mary Magdalene Apostolic Catholic Community
MMOJ	Mary Mother of Jesus Catholic Community
RCWP	Roman Catholic Women Priests
WATER	Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual
WCC	Women's Church Convergence
WOC	Women's Ordination Conference
WOW	Women's Ordination Worldwide

<u>Preface: Breaking the Sense of Self- The Effect of Research on the Researcher</u>

The experience of being in the field and immersing myself within the communities of

MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC was a transformative experience. Discussions within

the academy focus heavily on how researchers affect their research, i.e. on issues of

reflexivity, subjectivity and objectivity, but rarely provide insights on the potential effects of

the *research* on the *researcher*. Whilst it is relatively uncommon, a reflection of how the

research and the experiences of conducting fieldwork can shape, change or impact upon the

researcher is a necessary methodological consideration for empirical research.

Whilst in the field I was challenged by a traumatic experience that led me to quite

unexpected, yet also quite astonishing outcomes. I draw upon fieldwork notes from 11th

April, 2014 to elucidate this traumatic experience and its metamorphic implications for my

research and for my own consciousness.

> Now, I want you to quickly do some visualization—picture the worst fieldwork disaster story you can imagine, then double it and that was my experience today. Whilst I was waiting for a bus to take me to Sarasota in a humid, run-down Orlando bus terminal I witnessed what can only be described as a gang of men who were attempting to rob and physically assault an elderly woman. Unable to sit idly by and watch this woman face this trauma I intervened. Thankfully the elderly woman was able to escape unharmed, but unfortunately I was robbed, beaten and stabbed by this group of men.
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> As I lay bleeding, bruised and bewildered on the bitumen floor of the bus terminal, no one came to my aid. Not one of the people sitting asked me if I was alright or if I needed assistance. I then hobbled to the ATM to withdraw some replacement cash only to have my ATM card chewed up and possessed by the machine.
>
> Upset and a little overwhelmed, I was then beckoned to board the bus to Sarasota. I explained to the bus driver what had happened and explained my intentions to phone the police immediately. I was abruptly told by the surly bus driver that he would not wait for me and that I would have to wait five more days for the next bus to Sarasota. Ravaged by fear and devoid of rational thought, I couldn't entertain the possibility of spending five days in this squalid bus terminal. So I was bundled into the mini bus, still bleeding and in shock.
>
> Our bus then got in a major accident in which I sustained a neck injury and an even greater serve of anxiety. We were thrown off the bus forty minutes away from our

intended destination. I called a taxi and contemplated an experience which I thought could not get any worse…oh how I was wrong.

As I sat in the taxi on the way to my accommodation I was regaled with tales of the constant rapes, abductions, robberies and other criminal behaviour which occur in the vicinity of where I was supposed to be staying. The taxi driver did not even feel safe driving her cab through there, and initially refused to take me to my destination.

Once inside my room, things continued to worsen. My room was decrepit with pieces of the roof falling on my head as I opened the door, a rat jumping out at me out of a hole in the shower wall and freshly used equipment for producing drugs in the kitchenette area. More alarming however were the safety risks outside of my room. There were people attempting to break into my room every hour. I spent the night perched on a chair propped up against the door, fending off potential intruders. It was the most frightening night of my life.

I feared for my personal safety, but I did not know where to turn. I was not thinking rationally, I had no knowledge of the local area and I was badly affected both physically and mentally by the events of the day. I phoned Jack Duffy, a prominent member of the Mary Mother of Jesus (MMOJ) community, and the only person I had to contact in Sarasota. I had never spoken with Jack before, we had only exchanged a couple of emails. As soon as I explained my situation Jack displayed his concern and sprang into action to assist me. Initially I had only rung him to enquire as to whether he knew of a more desirable and safe hotel to stay in Sarasota. He would have none of that though.

Jack began to hatch a plan, as he described, to 'rescue' me from 'that rat hole.' He rang several members of MMOJ and the community was spurred into action. These arrangements were all being made without my knowledge, by people who had never met me and who had no reason to show me compassion or to assist me in this way. Jack said to me words which gave me an instant sense of comfort and hope, he said 'do not worry, the community will sort this out, this is what we do: we are Christians after all, we will get you through this.' All of this from a man whom I had emailed twice.

The next morning Jack arrived at my doorstep with a beaming smile, a big hug and an exuberant exclamation of 'G'day mate!' He loaded my bags into his car and began what he called his 'rescue mission'. He took me to get some food, he took me to get medical care and most of all he listened to me and showed me care, consideration and supreme benevolence. During our day together he was also calling different members of the community trying to organize accommodation for me with one of his friends at MMOJ.

We then arrived at MMOJ for the Vigil Mass and my fate had been sealed for me. The members of the community amongst themselves had organized a place for me stay and before I knew it my heavy bags were being bundled into Mary Al's car ready for me to leave with her after the Mass. This was an extremely humbling and affirming moment. After such trauma I was stunned by the kindness and compassion of these strangers who owed me nothing, yet offered me everything. I felt very much as though I was imposing and I was very apologetic for burdening Mary Al and the other members of MMOJ who had organized my rescue. They all responded with the simple response of 'We are Christians, this is what we do. Let us do this for you.'

> Their dedication to Christian charity and altruism was manifest. At a time of despair and need, they were a beacon of hope and consolation. I felt instantly at peace and comforted in those first moments in the foyer of St. Andrews Church. They were so welcoming and so kind to me. They made me feel a part of their community without having even met me. I was immediately embraced by the members of MMOJ and I was invited to share in their community.
>
> The most powerful example of the communal spirit and the commitment to Christian values at work within the MMOJ community occurred outside of church walls, rather it was revealed to me through the supreme kindness and hospitality of its members in my time of need.
>
>   - Fieldwork Notes 11/04/14.

This excerpt from my fieldwork notes attests to the impact that the communal response from the parishioners of MMOJ had on my perceptions of this community and on the rapport that developed between the community and myself. The extreme measures of kindness and charity extended by the MMOJ community touched me and endeared them to me. This undoubtedly came to be reflected in my positive experiences of and sentiments towards this community, and indeed this was true at all of my fieldwork sites.

Such a traumatic episode, however, also reveals the issue of researcher vulnerability. Whilst conducting fieldwork, researchers are often in unknown locations, away from the comforts of home and the support of our personalized networks of support (Lalich 2001: 134). Richardson et al (1979) thereby state that qualitative researchers in the field must be aware of their own vulnerabilities and make every effort to guard against them. I was placed in a vulnerable position by virtue of the attack at the bus station in Orlando. The distress caused by this incident placed me in a precarious position, as a researcher and more generally as a person.

The irrevocably transformative nature of this research attests to the capacity of research to incur profound changes upon its contingent researcher. Therefore, I would posit that a necessary methodological consideration for any empirical study is the potential impact that the research experience has upon the researcher. The researcher also needs to mediate her

own reflexivity practices and objectivity during this process of self-evaluation and reflection, in order to assure the reliability of her findings. Although I strove to maintain constant objectivity in observing the rituals of these communities and hearing their stories first hand, I could not help but be affected by this renewed vision of Catholicism. It was a moving, touching and yet disturbing experience, which overturned all of what I thought I knew about my faith and my religious identity. It is concerns such as those listed above which continue to 'haunt' (Hamabata, 1996) and discomfit me, as both a researcher and as a feminist Catholic.

This research has acutely affected my consciousness and conception of self. An event such as this was transformative for my view of these communities, but also for my view of my own faith and the capacity of Christian compassion. As a disgruntled Catholic I had held all of these reservations towards the Church and towards the treatment of women and LGBTIQ persons within the Church for so long and finally I was at a place where I could see this vision converted into action. At the very first inclusive Mass I attended, I remember sitting at the back of the church, scribing fieldwork notes and openly sobbing, utterly captivated and enchanted by the experience of seeing a woman say Mass and hearing a congregation celebrate their faith, *my* faith, in terms that were inclusive, tolerant and wholeheartedly progressive. This was a ground-breaking and earth-shattering moment for me, as it satiated my existential desire for an enlightened and renewed rendering of Catholicism that was consonant with my own personal liberal ideology.

As will be explored in detail throughout this thesis, my encounters with the inclusive communities of the female ordination movement have been echoed in the spiritual biographies of the respondents. Many of the respondents spoke of the unique ways in which their experiences with MMOJ, as with MMACC and the Good Shepherd, opened their eyes to the true capacity of Christian kindness and compassion, and liberated them from the alienation and marginalization that had consumed their lives as women in the Church. Just as

my encounter with these communities was transformative for my own view of faith, the members of this movement have been provided with a renewed sense of fulfilment, affirmation and solidarity as a result of their involvement in these communities. The powerful ways in which these communities inspire such forms of inclusivity, as well as the dynamic methods by which they resist the structural violence of institutionalized Catholicism, are worthy of investigation and empirical enquiry.

Introduction: Foundations of the Stained Glass Ceiling

'Of the many threats that Christianity has to face in modern times, gender equality is one of the most serious, though perhaps the most underestimated by the Churches'

(Woodhead, 2004: 141).

'For as long as the Church can remember women have been oppressed and treated as unequal, unfit, unworthy. Until this oppression ceases, until inequality is overshadowed by equality, the Church can never truly be a just institution'- Sonya.

Emerging in the USA and Europe as a challenge to centuries of all-male spiritual leadership within the Roman Catholic Church, the female ordination movement is a dynamic and forceful example of the paradoxical binary of institutional oppression and individual liberation operating within the contemporary religious sphere. Though it has comprehensively challenged various parts of this religious institution for decades, this transformative movement for reform and renewal in the Church remains a relatively under-researched and tragically misunderstood example of feminist activism within a conservative religious institution.

This thesis aims to contribute to the field of feminist research by empirically examining how the female ordination movement's intersectional politics and its approach to combatting oppression both within the Catholic Church and within society addresses domination along the lines of gender, class, age, sexuality, socioeconomic status and race. This study draws upon the voices of women priests and their allies to fill a lacuna in research surrounding the tensions between feminism and patriarchy and the ways in which intersectional feminism is transforming the structures and nature of Catholicism. The discussion of the movement's reinvention of a comprehensively inclusive form of Catholicism will be supported by narrative analysis of the respondents' spiritual biographies and by ritual analysis of the reimagined acts of collective worship performed in these women-led communities.

This research understands feminist women's engagement with religion as inherently agentic as they strategically attempt to disentangle themselves from the confines of traditional gender roles and to change religious beliefs and practices (see for example, Arthur, 1998; Weaver, 1995). By examining how women construct themselves through religious ritual, narrative and community, this thesis explores how contemporary religious ideologies have been appropriated, subverted, or adopted in the service of imagining alternative feminist religious realities. The narratives of the respondents document the unique pathways to resistance, empowerment and reinvention through ritual and through the building of feminist egalitarian communities by women priests and their supporters in three separate Catholic communities in the USA. These communities are Mary Magdalene Apostle Catholic Community (MMACC) in San Diego, California, Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community (MMOJ) in Sarasota, Florida and the Good Shepherd Inclusive Community in Fort Myers, Florida.

The narratives and acts of creative ritualization which feature in these inclusive communities occur against the backdrop of systemic oppression within the institutional Catholic Church. Drawing on the idea of 'the stained glass ceiling' (Adams, 2007), this thesis also explores the ways in which the Roman Catholic Church has promulgated and institutionalized doctrines that serve to marginalize and suppress the participation of women. The motif of the stained glass ceiling has powerful connotations: the allusion to 'stained glass' is symbolic of the orthodoxy, dogma and traditional authority of the Church whilst the addition of the term 'ceiling', especially within the context of the feminist construct of the 'glass ceiling', portrays these aspects of Catholic Christianity as inherently prohibitive for women.

Whilst notions of the 'glass ceiling' have been regularly applied to women's participation in the workforce,[1] the 'stained glass ceiling effect' as described by Adams (2007) provides a

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[1] See for example, Cotter et al., 2001; Hesse-Biber and Carter, 2005; Hyun, 2005; Lyness and Thompson, 2007; and Snyder and Green, 2008.

new model for understanding the marginalization of women in a religious context. Adams argues that the religious nature of these institutions generates unique forms of oppression for women as the Church draws upon a confluence of scriptural and secular ideas to circumscribe the opportunities and decision making opportunities available for women.

Gender was the primary vehicle through which oppression was experienced and articulated for the respondents, but they also concomitantly recognized ways in which gender discrimination coincided with other layers of repression, such as clerical authoritarianism, racism and racialization, the mistreatment of the poor and homeless and discrimination against the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) community. In this way, the image of the stained glass ceiling also provides a symbolic representation of the intersection of forms of oppression encountered by the respondents as they negotiated the practices and conventions of the Catholic Church. Composed of many overlapping and interdependent fragments, the stained glass motif reflects the intricate mosaic of kyriarchy that affects women and men in the Church in myriad ways, ultimately serving to restrict and constrain their spiritual and personal autonomy.

The idea of kyriarchy has also been employed as a conceptual lens through which to understand the multivalent forms of oppression in operation in the Roman Catholic context. The neologism 'kyriarchy' is an intersectional extension of the concept of patriarchy, designed to acknowledge that gender is not the sole determinant of one's relationship to power and that other structural conditions mediate patterns of oppression and subjugation (Abrahams, 2005; Kwok, 2009; Moxnes, 2010; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1992). These structures of domination and control are interactive and co-constituting and 'they draw from one another to support their own power' (Matsuda, 1991: 1189). Kyriarchy is the social system that keeps all intersecting oppressions in place (Kwok, 2009). Therefore, the concept of kyriarchy encompasses sexism, racism, economic injustice and other forms of dominating

hierarchy in which the subordination of one person or group to another is internalized and institutionalized (Kwok, 2009).

In response to the various modes of systematic oppression that they have experienced, the women priests of the female ordination movement have integrated feminist ideology with Catholic spirituality and have liberated themselves and their members from institutional repression within the canonical Catholic Church. Such an emancipatory project thereby attests to the potential for religion, and more specifically for feminist interpretations of religion, to engender distinct forms of empowerment and liberation.

The female ordination movement perceives its mission within the Church as not only breaking the stained glass ceiling in terms of the opportunities available for women in the Church but also as shattering the structural foundations that can allow for the institutionalization of all forms of domination. In this way, the female ordination movement is engaged in a simultaneously sacramental and political project as the women seek to overturn kyriarchal repression within the Church through a restructuring of the paradigms underlying the Catholic priesthood and Church hierarchy. The female ordination movement thereby provides a fertile case study for examining how religion can both repress individual freedoms and also be used to mobilize political, social and spiritual liberation from institutional disempowerment.

Contextualizing the Study: The American Religious Landscape

The case studies selected for this study were chosen because the USA is the epicentre of the female ordination movement with the largest concentration of women-led inclusive communities. It is my contention that the female ordination movement has been able to entrench itself within the USA because of the very nature of the American religious landscape. North American Catholicism has been described as 'vibrant and dissenting'

(Dillon, 2010) partly as a result of its unique trajectory within American history. In America, the Roman Catholic Church is an 'outsider', by virtue of the fact that it is 'an immigrant institution in an historically Protestant culture [that] up until the 1960s at least, enjoyed little public legitimacy' (Dillon, 1996: 26). This positionality has granted the American Catholic Church the space to define itself simultaneously in connection with the American social landscape and with the Universal Roman Church. Thus, Casanova argues that historically Catholicism in the USA has functioned in four separate ways: 'structurally as a sect, systemically as a denomination, congregationally as a territorial national Church, and, ecclesiologically as a member of the Universal Church' (1992: 78).

However, religion and social reform in the USA continue to have a complex relationship and the American Catholic Church provides an apposite case study for examining how women can agitate for change within a traditional Christian faith. This focus on the North American context is not intended to suggest that religion in general and Catholicism in particular is not significant or worthy of study elsewhere. However, given the dynamism and diversity of the American religious landscape, it is my ambition that the results of this thesis will be constructive for scholars working both inside and outside of the American context, and that it 'will contribute to ferment in the sociology of religion in sites far beyond American borders' (Dillon, 2003: 10).

To understand the American religious context some attention must also be paid to the larger American cultural rhetoric in which Enlightenment notions of individualism and personal liberty lay at the forefront of the national imaginary (see, for example, Farrelly, 2012; Howard Ecklund, 2003; and Phillips, 1983). Scholars such as Dolan (2002, 2011) and McGreevy (2003) have acknowledged that for many years the relationship between Catholicism and American culture was marked by extreme tension (Farrelly, 2012).

The 'American consensus,' or the foundational principles of American identity, was initially thought to be incompatible with the Catholic mindset that demanded submission and piety. Consequently, 'American Catholics were always under the constraint of having to prove their absolute allegiance to the American civil religion, without putting into question their equally absolute allegiance to Rome' (Casanova, 1992: 78). Casanova also argues that 'in the process of trying to perform this balancing act, the American Catholic Church became the most "American," i.e. patriotic, of all American denominations and the most "Roman" of all the national Catholic Churches' (1992: 78).

Colonial Catholics were able to develop an 'American Catholic' identity that was distinct from the religious identity that existed in predominantly Catholic countries such as Spain and France as it embraced the Enlightenment principles upon which the American identity would rest. Farrelly argues that this emergent 'Colonial Catholicism' displayed a liberal mindset that stressed 'the importance of individual autonomy within the community of the Church, the limited scope of the Pope's jurisdiction in America, and the need for membership within a particular religious organization to be completely voluntary' (2012: 24). This ideological grounding of the Church in the USA seemingly laid the foundations for a less traditional and more heterodoxical articulation of Catholicism that granted its believers increased levels of autonomy and self-determinism.

However, many contemporary scholars and commentators have documented the overt authoritarianism and dogmatism of the American Catholic Church and have consequently argued that 'Roman Catholicism in America is becoming a divided Church' (Manning, 1997: 375). There is a substantial body of literature exploring this division between the increasingly liberal American Catholic laity and the conservative Vatican bureaucracy (see for example, Bianchi and Ruether, 1992; D'Antonio, 1994, 1995; Dillon, 1999; Greeley, 1990; Hoge, 1981; Manning, 1997; and Seidler and Meyer, 1989).

Mirroring wider political and ideological cleavages in the late-modern American context, there is an ever-widening chasm between conservative and progressive elements within the American Catholic Church. On the far right is a conservative group, rooted in the traditional, hierarchical exercise of authority, who emphasize the credibility of the Catholic Church and who assert the need for canonical orthodoxy (see, for example, D'Antonio et al., 2011; and Kennedy, 1988). At the other end of the spectrum are progressive Catholics who advocate a more relative and deinstitutionalized rendering of faith and who believe that the locus of authority should lie with the believer.

Numerous studies have highlighted the growing diversity of religious forms, practices and beliefs in the American context whilst at the same time acknowledging that religious and spiritual beliefs have become more individualized and traditional religions have declined in terms of their institutional authority (Hopflinger et al., 2012). Recent survey results indicate that the majority of American Catholics disagree with the magisterium and with the clergy on several issues including mass attendance, birth control and abortion (see, D'Antonio 1994; D'Antonio et al., 2011). This trend toward detraditionalization and the personalization of faith will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Five.

As a result, a recent Pew Research Report on 'America's Changing Religious Landscape' indicates that people in the American context are leaving the Church in greater numbers than ever before. According to this survey, the number of religiously unaffiliated adults has dramatically increased since 2007 with 56 million 'religious nones' eclipsing the rates of Catholics or mainline Protestants in America, and second in size only to evangelical Protestants. Catholicism in particular has been a victim of this exodus from the Church, with 41% of adults who were raised in the Catholic Church no longer identifying as Catholic and 12.9% of all American adults identifying as former Catholics (Pew Research Center, 2015:

9). Contrastingly, only 2% of American adults have converted to Catholicism and no other religious group in the survey registered such a disproportionate ratio of losses to gains.

Catholic adherence in America is declining as both a percentage and in absolute numbers (Pew Research Center, 2015). This survey states that 'there are approximately 51 million Catholic adults in the U.S. today, roughly 3 million fewer than in 2007' (Pew Research Center, 2015: 9). One of the primary factors in the exponential increase in 'religious nones' is generational replacement, with millenials leaving organized religion and displaying less connection to official Churches than older generations. The large numbers of youth leaving the Church seems to indicate the inability of the Church to relate to the needs of contemporary Americans and its inability to remain relevant for people within a pluralistic and deinstitutionalized religious context.

It is also essential to acknowledge that in the twenty-first century women's attachment and allegiance to Christian Churches is declining. In terms of gender, the Pew report finds that although women are more likely than men to identify with Christian groups (75% vs 66%), they are also becoming less Christian and more unaffiliated (Pew Research Center, 2015). There are many studies that indicate that there is a distinct erosion of loyalty to the Church amongst Catholic women. For example, 'women's rate of weekly Mass attendance declined more rapidly than men's during the period of 2005-2015' (Shriver Report, 2015) and 'the number of women who said they would "never leave the Church" fell from 68% to 56%' in this same period (Pew Research Center, 2015: 21).

The results of these surveys suggest that 'the Church may be reaching a tipping point when it comes to the loyalty of its most reliable core membership' (Gibson, 2003: 56). This decline is the result of forces in broader society as well as in the Church, as within the context of feminist advancements and the push towards liberalization and gender equality within secular

American society many Catholic women are unwilling to accept the 'structural violence' (Galtung, 1969) of institutionalized patriarchy. A direct corollary of 'the Church's continuing failure to support gender equality—in practice if not in theory—is the alienation of women and men sympathetic to the ideal ' (Woodhead, 2004: 143). The work of scholars such as Browne and Lukes (1988); Greeley and Durkin (1984); and Winter, Lummis, and Stokes (1994) has also given voice to the intense feelings of dissatisfaction and anger felt amongst Catholic women as a result of their subordinate position in the Church.

As Bishop Bridget Mary Meehan of the MMOJ community explains, 'many Catholic Christians find themselves to be pilgrims in exile, walking a desert path as God is leading them out of misogynistic and legalistic modes of worship and into the genuine worship of spirit and truth which does not revere power, but respects individuals as sacred and created in the image of God' (2010: 144). The dissident female ordination movement within the Catholic Church thus demonstrates that 'religious phenomena are constantly evolving, embedded in the complex and dynamic interplay of social and political forces and resistances' (Hopflinger, 2012: 618). Women priests identify their mission as providing a renewed form of Catholicism and inclusive worshipping communities for these exiled Catholics and they seek to 'welcome in all of those who have been marginalized, and alienated by the Church and all of those who feel that they can no longer belong to the mainstream Catholic Church in good conscience' (Via, Interview, 04/04/14).

Moreover, the Catholic Church in the USA has recently been confronting a number of internal and external crises that have eroded its institutional authority and that have further accelerated its deinstitutionalization and declining rates of adherence. These crises have acted as both a catalyst and an impetus for women to mobilize for change in the Church and to pursue new articulations of their faith in inclusive communities. Perhaps the greatest controversy affecting the Catholic Church in the contemporary era is the clerical sexual abuse

scandal, which has been described as the gravest moral crisis for the Catholic Church in centuries (see, for example, D'Antonio, 2013).

Clerical sexual abuse has been a serious issue in the American Catholic Church in terms of both the number of perpetrators and the frequency with which priests and bishops have used their positions of power to molest young, vulnerable children and adolescents (Jenkins, 2001). Between 1950 and 2010 there were 10,667 allegations of child sexual abuse in the American Catholic Church and 4,392 American clergy have been charged with sexual abuse (Hart, 2011). Bishop Accountability Reports estimate that in the period 1950-2007 the Roman Catholic Church has paid over US$3 billion in compensation to the victims of sexual abuse in the United States alone (Richardson, 2002).

There have been many objections that the Catholic Church has been more interested in defending and safeguarding the reputation of the institution and its clergy than in supporting the victims of these crimes.[2] As will be explored in further detail in Chapter Five of this thesis, the respondents conceived of clerical sexual abuse and its cover-up as an instance of the Church's abuse of its power and as a corollary of the monarchic model of governance in which the Catholic hierarchy is unrestricted in its exercise of authority. In this sense Jenkins argues that 'the problem of abusive clergy centres on the misdeeds of the institutions in which they serve, and the rhetoric employed to denounce ecclesiastical authorities suggests extensive malfeasance or even complicity' and that the 'images presented of the Catholic Church are of extreme and unhealthy secrecy and official cynicism' (2001: 4). The respondents observed similar abuses of power in relation to gendered issues within the Church, such as the Vatican's investigation of women religious in the United States,[3] and

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[2] For example, Bishop Bridget Mary Meehan argues that 'the Vatican's new guidelines that extend the statute of limitations for ten years and that streamline cases of sexual abuse in the Church court system are mere window-dressing, but do not indicate significant change' (2010: 75).

[3] The Vatican's Apostolic Visitation, an investigation of women religious in U.S.A, was perceived as a crackdown on liberal-minded American nuns and their supporters. Cardinal Franc Rode, head of the Vatican's

argued that the punitive nature of the Catholic hierarchy has laid the foundations for the systemic oppression of women within the Church.

Consequently, the female ordination movement advocates for structural change, for greater accountability within the Church and for the creation of more democratic and participatory models of governance, in line with the reforms of Vatican II, as strategies to combat clerical sexual abuse and to overturn kyriarchal forces within this religious institution. They also advance women's ordination and a ban on mandatory celibacy for priests as ways to reconceptualize the Catholic paradigm of priesthood, and to engender greater healing and renewal within the Catholic tradition.[4]

Second, the current priest shortage is a factor that is also undermining the stability of the Catholic Church. According to Dillon, this issue is 'most acute in the U.S.' where 'the aging of current cohorts of priests and the lack of young priests to replace them presents a significant challenge to maintaining the pastoral and sacramental life of Catholicism' (2010, July 19). Research indicates that in recent years the American Catholic Church has been marked by deleterious trends such as the dwindling supply of priests, the increasing number of lay people per priest, the declining number of priests per parish and the increasing number of 'priestless' parishes (Hoge, 2002). This scarcity of priests is acute, with a 43% decline in ordinations worldwide between 1981 and 2014 and a 26% increase of Catholic parishes that have no resident priest in this same period (Davidson, 2014).

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council on religious life, told Vatican Radio what prompted the probe: 'most of all, you could say, it involves a certain secular mentality that has spread in these religious families and, perhaps, also a certain "feminist" spirit' (quoted in Bushey, 2010). As yet the results of this official investigation are not yet fully known, but few are optimistic about its outcome for nuns in the U.S., or the precedent which this approach sets for the control of women in the Church.

[4] In the seminal documentary on the female ordination movement, *Pink Smoke over the Vatican*, feminist the*logian Edwina Gateley explains that '[they] have a broken Church, because [they] had not mothers, only fathers, so there was a lack of balance that leads to sin and that leads to disorder and that plays a major part in the Church's sexual abuse problem' (Hart, 2011).

This rapid decline is expected to continue as in the United States there are currently more priests aged over ninety than under thirty (Bonavoglia, 2006). Such statistical observations indicate to researchers such as Richard Schoenherr that 'the current clergy shortage is a distinct Catholic crisis' (1993: 6). With the number of men committing themselves to the priesthood declining, so are the number of priests available to serve the growing U.S. population. Church after church is being closed and this development not only leaves people without guidance for their religious needs but it also leaves huge voids in Catholic schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and ancillary services.

Advocates for the ordination of women have pointed to declining vocations and have made the utilitarian argument that women must be ordained in order to alleviate the severe priest shortage within the Catholic Church.[5] For example, Diana from MMOJ argued that 'it is urgent for the Church to welcome Women Priests once again into their ranks' as the 'acceptance of women priests can help the Church to flourish' and restore itself within the contemporary religious sphere (Milesko, Interview, 12/04/14).

However, the Church has been reluctant to pursue female ordination as a solution to the priest shortage and unwilling to embrace the assets that women could offer to the priesthood. To the respondents, this obstinate androcentrism stands as an obstruction both to the sustainability of the Catholic Church and to the realization of gender equality within this religious institution. The exclusion of women from the priesthood, even amidst 'the severe, almost catastrophic shortage of male priests' (Roberts, 2011: 27) represents a further testament to the pervasive patriarchal attitudes and modes of gender-based oppression that have permeated the Catholic Church. Female ordination therefore serves as a battleground for emerging debates

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[5] Respondent Mary Murray of the MMOJ community alluded to the various strategies which the Catholic Church is exploring to combat the priest shortage, such as exchange programs for priests from Africa, and argued that 'they feel like a really bad fit and it feels like there would be a far more sensible and more reasonable alternative if women were given more opportunities and responsibilities within the Church' (Murray, Interview, 14/04/14).

surrounding Church authority, detraditionalization and religious agency, with women's participation in the Church presenting itself as a 'kind of litmus test that distinguishes the more liberal laity, women in particular, from the more conservative male leadership' (Manning, 1997: 376).

Recent polls and surveys attest to the growing liberalism of the Catholic laity and indicate that the majority of Catholics around the world 'would like to see women have equal standing in ordained ministry: in France (83%), Spain (78%), Argentina (60%), Italy (59%) and Brazil (54%)' (Univision Noticias, 2014). In the U.S., this level of support for women priests is even higher, with 88% of American Catholics in favour of the ordination of women according to the 2015 Shriver Report. Given that one decade earlier only 64% of American Catholics supported women's ordination (Gallup Organization, 2005) there are clear signs of shifting attitudes and an intensification of calls for the inclusion of women in the hierarchy of the Church.

Indeed, recent polls indicate that Pope Francis' popularity amongst American Catholics has dropped from 76% in February, 2014, to 59% in July, 2015 as a result of his failure to sanction female ordination or to allow priests to marry (Gallup Organization 2015), and only 29 % of American Catholics indicated that a male, celibate clergy was 'very important' (Shriver Report, 2015). Each of the ordained women priests interviewed in this study described the various affirmations for female ministry that they received from their communities, and the openness of the people to their priesthood. For woman priest Katy, this indication of public approbation was a symbol of hope, an indication of the overwhelming support for the female ordination movement and a sign that 'the tides are turning - real change for women in the Church is coming' (Zatsick, Interview, 12/04/14).

Positioning the Female Ordination Movement

Since Vatican II (1962-1965) an increasingly vocal group of Catholic women has mobilized

to push for women's ordination and for gender equality within the Roman Catholic Church

and has been met with resistance and reproach from this religious institution. Through an

intensification of effort and against the backdrop of the crises affecting the Church, the

female ordination movement has evolved from an ecclesiastical movement primarily made up

of nuns and sympathetic clergy, into a more diversified movement that involves lay women

and men committed to feminist principles and ideals (Jablonski, 1988). Laicized priest and

co-founder of MMACC, Rod, constructed a powerful and poignant narrative that illustrates

the clerical position on the prohibition of ordination for women. He explained that after his

ordination he was sent to Rome and was taken out by his local bishop and a few cardinals to

celebrate his admission into the clerical elite.

Although Rod was just 'a young, green priest,' there was a decisive moment in this

interaction with his superiors which to him exemplified the Church's 'spiteful and limited

approach to ordination' (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14). He explained that during this dinner

somebody brought up the issue of the ordination of women and in response 'one of the

Vatican officials said "ordaining a woman is like baptizing a dog!"' (Stephens, Interview,

09/04/14). Aside from the outright denunciation of the prospect of female ordination, the

Vatican representative's implication that women are equivalent to dogs and this inbuilt

devaluation of women in the eyes of clerical officials alerted Rod to the highly patriarchal

and discriminatory attitudes towards women within the Catholic Church.

Woodhead (2007) argues that the exclusion of women from the Catholic priesthood is

representative of the Church's deep unease about the autonomy of women more generally.

For the respondents, ordination is thus imbued with a symbolic and transcendent value since

it stands as a crucial symbol of women's oppression and rejection within the Church. For, as

Simone lamented, 'when you grow up seeing only men at the altar, you are made to think that only God is a male, and if God is only a male and if God is choosing men to be at the altar then there must be something wrong with being a female' (Tyrell, Interview, 08/04/14). There was a corresponding perception amongst the respondents that the dominance of men in the leadership of the Church and the supposed ontological differences between men and women has systematically cast women as the 'second sex' (Beauvoir, [1949] 2011).

As an authority in the generation of social and legal norms concerning marriage, the family, women's property rights and women's reproductive choices, among other issues, the Catholic Church's conservatism also affects the position and entitlements of women within wider society and serves to perpetuate the patriarchal ordering of late modern society. Especially having regard to the ordination of women in other Christian denominations[6] and other religious traditions,[7] and the Vatican's unwillingness to adapt to contemporary advancements in the realm of gender, the issue of female ordination reflects the Church's deeper ideological struggle against the liberal modernity that is symbolized by gender equality (Chaves, 1997, Zeller, 2003).

Some commentators will dismiss the female ordination movement and discount it as little more than a culture war issue (Manson, 2014). However, in reality this cause transcends the debate between traditional and progressive values and stands for so much more than simply making women priests. The female ordination movement, at its heart, is an attempt to impel

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[6] There are many other Christian denominations within the USA that have identified the need for female standpoints to be incorporated into formal ministry. The Quakers, or Society of Friends, was the first Christian denomination to grant women equal access to leadership in the second half of the seventeenth century. Some 200 years later the Congregationalists ordained their first woman in 1853. Only in 1955 did the Northern Presbyterian Church ordain women to full ministry (followed by the far more conservative Southern Presbyterian Church in 1964). In 1956, the Methodist Church ordained women, the Lutheran Church followed in 1970, and the Episcopalian Church in 1976 (Ruther, 2011a).

[7] In an address to the 2001 Women's Worldwide Conference, Joan Chittister looked to other religions embracing female leadership and explained that 'In Asia, Buddhist women are demanding ordination and the right to make the sacred Mandalas. In India, women are beginning to do the sacred dances and light the sacred fires. In Judaism, women study Torah and carry the scrolls and read the scriptures and lead the congregations. Only in the most backward, most legalistic, most primitive of cultures are women made invisible, made useless, made less than fully human, less than fully spiritual' (quoted in Meehan, 2010: 12).

the Catholic Church, one of the largest and most influential religious institutions in the world, to lift women up as equal to men and to make a public and political statement of the need for gender parity in contemporary society.

Consequently, the men and women who are the subject of this study frame gender oppression within the Church and the prohibition of women's ordination as an issue of social justice. Their commitment to social justice principles 'produces counter-hegemonic readings … which foster and encourage an inclusive ethics based on social justice' (McPhillips, 2013: 29). The female ordination movement's campaign for inclusion moves beyond the Catholic context as they seek to define their cause as a universal justice issue so that women in other religious and social contexts might be inspired to agitate for change. Many of the respondents drew ideological parallels between the American Civil Rights movement and the female ordination movement, arguing that 'just like Rosa Parks refused to sit at the back of the bus we're refusing to sit at the back of the Church anymore' (Duffy, Interview, 12/04/14). Moreover, South African Bishop Patricia Fresen equated the Church's prohibition of female ordination to the policies of Apartheid, and in channelling the wisdom of Nelson Mandela argued that:

> Now we in the Church are on another "long walk to freedom", this time to freedom from sexism, from unjust discrimination against women in the Church, freedom from oppression by the privileged clerical caste in the Church. Once again we need to stand together in protest, to break the unjust laws because we cannot wait forever (quoted in Ronan, 2007:166).

Inasmuch as they wish to continue the core practices and hallmarks of the Catholic tradition, the female ordination movement seeks not to remain within the institutional structures of the Roman Catholic Church but rather to resist and push the boundaries of the Church (Moon, 2008). Women priests and their supporters claim not to be a counter-current to the Roman Catholic Church, nor do they perceive themselves as seceding from the Church (Moon,

2008). Nonetheless, in their goal of transforming the Church from within, the female ordination movement positions itself on the margins of the Church and as being independent from canonical strictures.

In order to escape the oppressive elements of Catholic Christianity and to emphasize the liberatory aspects of this religious tradition, the female ordination movement assumes a 'selectively heterodox position' in which the women 'refuse to give up their membership in the Church and yet refuse to be limited or oppressed by the institution's androcentric orientation' (Jablonski, 1988: 173). By defining themselves as a liberation movement within and on the edges of the institutional Church, women priests and their supporters locate their efforts to reform the Church in the context of a broader movement that embraces the principles of both feminism and liberation the*logy (Jablonski, 1988; the term the*logy is explained below at page 25).

Scholars such as Mahmood (2001, 2004), Orsi (1996), and Stacey and Gerard (1990) have argued that women acting within conservative religions can actively challenge the boundaries of their religious traditions to negotiate for the needs of women and for wider social change. Organized religion therefore must be conceptualized as a major site of cultural practice, identity formation, governmentality (Foucault, 1979) and symbolic control (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). The female ordination movement's creation of new, inclusive and subversive religious spaces provides their members with a place to experiment with gender roles and sexuality (see for example, Palmer, 1994).

However, the female ordination movement has been repudiated by both the Vatican, which has excommunicated women priests and their supporters, and by some Catholic feminists who have levelled various critiques at this collective. The primary criticism which is made in relation to the female ordination movement is its continuance of canonical systems of

ordination and the concern that women priests 'are recreating a clerical hierarchy and hence selling out the vision of egalitarian worshipping communities [that] practice a discipleship of equals' (Ruether, 2011: 69). Such critiques ponder whether the model of ordination adopted by women priests will engender equality and structural change within the current Roman Catholic Church, or whether the movement is further reinforcing kyriarchal models of power and obedience as well as reinscribing essential notions of women (Moon, 2008).

Further, Marion Ronan (2007), who has been an ardent advocate of women's ordination, has labelled Roman Catholic women priests as a white elitist movement that has failed to reach out to or inspire women of colour or from ethnic minorities. Finally, Helena Moon (2008) has argued that women priests need a 'queering of theology' and a 'queering of God' in order to create a more accommodating space for LGBTIQ Catholics. These accusations and assessments need to be examined in the light of the empirical results of this study. Overall, as will be explored in Chapters Four to Seven below, the factor which these critics fail to recognize is the intersectional considerations of the movement and the various ways in which the movement implements inclusivity in their constituent communities.

Establishing the Fundamentals of the Thesis

The oppressive as well as the liberatory potential of religious structures and authorities has been explored by numerous scholars in a variety of social contexts. However, the majority of theorists have examined these competing dynamics in isolation rather than in conjunction with one another and in so doing they have ignored the complexity and possible interconnection of oppression and liberation. Traditionally, radical post-patriarchal or post-Christian feminists, such as Mary Daly, have argued that organized religion is so irrevocably misogynistic that women have no option other than to abandon Christianity. Whilst many of

their critical insights as to the oppressive nature of ecclesial patriarchy are valid and important, these approaches must also be complemented and balanced with an understanding of how women choose to work actively for change and reform within their respective religious traditions.

Rather than focusing on Daly's renowned question 'why stay?' (1978), this study chooses to ask 'how do they stay?' and it focuses on the dynamic acts of the*logical and ritualistic reinvigoration in which these feminist women are engaged. Since feminist studies of religion are 'concerned with women's experience of oppression and have as [their] goal the liberation of both sexes' this discipline must 'develop the tools and methods to make explicit the theological significance of women's experience *of* and struggle *for* equality' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993: 135). Therefore, rather than the post-Christian model of self-imposed alienation and detachment as a form of women's liberation, this thesis explores 'religious forms of feminism' (Woodhead, 2007) that allow women to seek liberation from patriarchy through the renewal and reframing of Catholic Christianity.

Central to these discussions is an appreciation of women's agency and an eschewal of the assumption that women's involvement in religion is a sign of their complicity and subservience to the patriarchal order. Burke has stated that investigating agency for religious women is both empirically and theoretically interesting because 'agency is typically defined through intention and autonomy and those characteristics do not typically describe religious women' (2012: 122) and ultimately appear 'to defy the prevailing notion of what agency is' (2012: 129). This emergent focus on agency has played a formative role in expanding debates about agency beyond the reductionist categories of submission and patriarchy (see, for example, Boddy, 1989 and Mahmood, 2001).

Such a multi-layered approach needs to have cognisance of the intersection of oppression and liberation for a feminist movement operating within a religious context. This thesis therefore acknowledges that Catholicism has been historically oppressive for women whilst advancing the argument that this view must be complemented by an appreciation of the agency and creativity of feminist movements for change operating within this religious structure. Thus, it must be recognized that religion, whilst disempowering in its institutional expressions, can also serve as a conduit and basis for female empowerment, liberation and self-determination. This fact has been relatively underappreciated and undeveloped by feminist writings and as such it serves as a new insight for the field of gender and religion.

Literature is beginning to emerge that gives voice to the ways in which Catholic women are reshaping their Church and reclaiming women's agency in the context of institutionalized misogyny and homphobia, for example Baggett (2009), Bruce (2011) and Konieczny (2013). The strategies and ideology of the female ordination movement must be understood as being positioned within these broader acts of feminist resistance and this thesis consequently adds to the small yet growing corpus of literature exploring women's agency in a Church based setting. Significantly though, this thesis contributes to this field through its thorough examination of female ordination as a new site for women's contestation of kyriarchy in the Catholic Church. Although some studies have provided critiques of the activities of the female ordination movement within the Catholic Church, such as Moon (2008) and Ronan (2007), these studies have largely relied on secondary data and, even where primary data is used, it is limited in scope. These studies have provided interesting ideas and historical descriptions of the development of the female ordination movement and they have also contributed to raising the visibility of this movement but their contributions are limited by the fact that the authors did not experience or discuss the dynamic 'lived religion' (Ammerman, 1994) of these inclusive communities.

The lack of in-depth semi-structured interviews with a mixture of both women priests and lay members of the communities has meant that the studies to date could not have hoped to discover the rich spiritual biographies of these individuals or their motivations for engaging in such 'religious forms of feminism' (Woodhead, 2007). Further, the absence of ethnographic participant observation has meant that the authors could not witness the unique and dynamic ways in which these communities transform Catholic ritual and create democratic, egalitarian communities free from traditional models of ecclesial hierarchy.

Indeed, a review of the literature and research in the field demonstrates that there is a lack of ethnographic studies which seek to illustrate the perspectives of women within this religious tradition and more pertinently there is a lack of ethnographies that explore non-traditional and progressive renderings of Catholicism or resistance activist movements within Catholicism. The vast majority of religiously-based ethnographies are focused upon Islam and variations of Islamic rituals and embodied acts (see for example, Hounet 2012; Mahmood 2005; and Raudvere 2003). Yet, despite the relevant field of enquiry and the theoretical framework being identified, there is a pronounced lack of research into Catholic rituals and Catholic communal practices from an ethnographic standpoint.

Ethnographies that do exist in relation to the realm of Catholicism pertain primarily to ethnographies of Catholic schools and education systems (Vick, 1989), ethnographies of diasporic Latino Catholic communities (Molero, 2005), or ethnographies of Catholic pilgrimages (Amiotte-Suchet and Grandjean, 2013). This study, although modest, seeks to address this gap in the existing literature and to provide a comprehensive representation of the ideological and performative acts of resistance, renewal and reform being adopted by women priests and their inclusive communities.

This study also contributes to discussions on the female ordination movement's projects outside the realm of gender by examining the ways in which its constituent communities apply an intersectional approach to their resistance against kyriarchy in the Church. Within the context of research concerning the female ordination movement, there has been limited scholarly application of kyriarchy to the female ordination movement outside of Moon's study (2008). Even in Moon's work, kyriarchy did not serve as a focal point and did not guide her analysis of this feminist movement. Moreover, intersectionality has not yet been applied to the limited studies of women priests in the Catholic Church. This thesis will attempt to fill these voids in the field by applying the concept of kyriarchy to the 'intersecting matrix of systematic oppressions, including sexism, racism and LGBT-phobia' (Walsh, 2015: 62) at play within the Catholic context. The approach which is adopted within this study should thereby provide scope for an expansive discussion of the convergence of forces of oppression within this case study, as institutionalized patriarchy is shown to intersect with other forms of domination in forming systemic kyriarchy within the Roman Catholic Church.

Methodological and Conceptual Framework
As will be explored in Chapter Three, this qualitative study utilizes semi-structured interviews and ethnographic participant observation as its core methods and it is informed by a feminist methodology. The potential of the feminist method to empower and liberate was a formative consideration in the design and implementation of the underlying feminist research methodology that underlies this study, as it focuses on marginalized, oppressed and silenced women within the Catholic Church. Feminist social research is embedded in anti-oppressive principles and empowerment practice and it is highly congruent with a commitment to social

justice and equality.[8] In this project of rediscovery and reinterpretation, feminist methodologies transport women 'from the category of "other", which gains definition and agency in relation to men, to the category of "self", which participates in its own becoming through control of definitions and the knowledge-producing process' (Jones, 2002: 78).

It is an underlying premise of this thesis that, as an androcentric institution, the masculine voice and male experience have been privileged in the Catholic Church and the experience of women has been largely ignored, delegitimized, or subsumed into a masculinist account of religious life. As a piece of feminist research, this research positions itself as a counter current to these 'blind spots' within the Catholic imaginary (Wallace, 1996). This thesis values the unique perspectives and standpoints of the respondents and it seeks to describe and examine the ways in which their feminisms are lived, rather than to provide prescriptions as to how feminism should be lived (see Wickramasinghe, 2010; Zwissler, 2010).

The feminist methodology adopted for this study is accompanied by a feminist epistemology that shaped the conceptual framework of this thesis. Patriarchy serves as a conceptual tool for feminist theologians and feminist thinkers to interrogate the 'silencing and oppression of marginalized women' (Hunt, 2001a, 2001b; Isherwood and McEwan, 1993; Johnson, 1993) within the Church, as well as the existence of a 'white, male, heteronormative hegemony' (Aquino, 2007; Ruether, 1983) within Roman Catholic ideology. Thus, according to Beechey, a theory of patriarchy is 'an attempt to penetrate particular experiences and manifestations of women's oppression' in order to formulate a coherent theory of subordination (1979: 66).Within this context, patriarchy is useful for defining the nature of the gendered forms of oppression operating within the Roman Catholic context.

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[8] See for example, Dominelli and McLeod, 1989; Featherstone, 1997, 1999; Grau, 1992; Langan and Day, 1992; and Perry et al., 2006.

However, feminist theories have begun to shift perspectives over the years and they have integrated theoretical approaches other than patriarchy into their discussions of gender, sex, and sexuality (see for example, Lorber, 2010).In particular, the concept of kyriarchy, originally developed by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in the field of feminist the*logy, has been adopted in a range of feminist and progressive academic spaces to discuss the issues of power, knowledge, and authority within the context of religion[9]. Kyriarchy provides for a more nuanced understanding of the power differentials at play, and it outlines a conceptual framework for examining who is oppressed and how (Osborne, 2015). Given the persistent critiques of patriarchy as an essentializing concept, a theme which will later be discussed in Chapter One, I would advance kyriarchy as a more apt theoretical tool for examining the multi-layered and interlocking axes of oppression operating within the contemporary realm of religion.

Furthermore, this thesis seeks to integrate kyriarchy with intersectionality to provide a conceptual framework that acknowledges the complex ways in which oppression is both experienced, addressed and overcome by the female ordination movement. Developed by critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) intersectionality is a 'methodological and theoretical tool to analyze how historically specific kinds of power and/or constraining normativity … such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, disability, nationality and so on interact and in doing so produce different kinds of social inequalities and social relations' (Lykke, 2010: 50). Intersectionality is committed to uncovering 'marginalized experience' and incisively examines issues of gender, sexuality, cultural difference and personhood, as well as the need to acknowledge the personhood of marginalized groups (Walsh, 2015).

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[9] In addition to the use of kyriarchy as a hermeneutical tool for the analysis of religious texts scholars such as Kienzle and Nienhuis (2001), Moon (2008), and Moxnes (2010) have used kyriarchy 'to conceptualize power in religious structures and organizations', as well as examine 'the relationship between religion and other power structures' (Osborne, 2015: 137).

An intersectional feminist approach emphasizes the importance of the social, political and economic structures that shape society and stresses that gender must be considered when examining the effects of oppression and powerlessness in our society (see for example, Collins, 1991; Crenshaw, 1991; and Lorde, 1984).[10] An empirical study that is intersectional in nature and that draws from kyriarchy to establish its theory of structural power can demonstrate how intersectional identities and lived experiences are produced and experienced through kyriarchy (Osborne, 2015; Turner and Maschi, 2014). Combining these two concepts in an integrated framework provides social researchers with new ways to explore individual, lived experiences within the context of structural power and the ways that structural power is constructed, maintained and perpetuated. The conceptual framework developed for this thesis embraces intersectionality and kyriarchy and it can therefore lead to a more comprehensive picture of oppressed groups 'shaped from the outset by diverse voices', which Hunt identifies as a key goal of contemporary feminism (2001a: 743).

This study thus seeks to fill a lacuna in the field, first, by advocating for an integrated conceptual framework that utilizes both intersectionality and kyriarchy; and second, by advancing the liberatory potential of intersectionality as a political tool for oppressed groups in their contestation of kyriarchy. In identifying the diverse interests and layers of the female ordination movement, this thesis endeavours to negate the claims of critics such as Gervais (2011) and Moon (2008) who denigrate the movement as being based on 'gender essentialism' and the reinstatement of a matriarchal gendered hierarchy. Rather, the integrated conceptual framework of this study allows for a holistic view of the dynamic strategies being employed by the female ordination movement in its contestation of Catholic kyriarchy.

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[10] See also, Abromovitz, 2012; Carr, 2003; Ehrenreich, 2001; Grosz, 2010; Kabeer, 2009; Kemp & Brandwein, 2010; and Steinem, 1983.

Terminology

It is necessary to provide a brief description of the basic vocabulary and terminology of the field in order to add clarity and definition to the terms used throughout this thesis. Firstly, like feminist theologians such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2011) I have adopted the convention of using an asterisk in the term 'feminist the*logy' in order to avoid relying on gendered terminology. The*logy, as an alternative term, is utilized here as a means to discuss this field in neither masculine [theology] nor feminine [thealogy] gendered terms. Where theology is used without an asterisk, the term refers to malestream or canonical interpretations of theology, or occurs within a cited passage.

Second, I have also utilized the term 'malestream' as coined by feminist Mary O'Brien (1981) to describe the centrality of the male gendered standpoint and the peripheralization of female standpoints. Malestream conceptual frameworks are consequently built upon 'beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions that give higher value, prestige, status, or weight to what is traditionally identified as male,' and 'put men up and women down' (Warren, 1989: 46). As an ideology based on male supremacy and superiority, malestream thought stabilizes, institutionalizes and reinforces the patriarchal order.

Third, the term 'canonical' designates teachings, structures, and Churches pertaining to, established by, or conforming to institutional Roman Catholicism. It was used by the respondents to differentiate the work of their inclusive communities from the institutional Church, and therefore it is a term that is loaded with connotations of traditionalism, orthodoxy, and authoritarianism.

Fourth, within Catholicism the magisterium is the official body that has the authority to determine and prescribe the authentic teachings of the Church. Consisting of the Pope and the

Bishops who are in communion with him, the magisterium calls upon sacred tradition and sacred scripture to establish and govern the infallible doctrines within the Catholic tradition.

Fifth, in contrast to the theological functions of the magisterium, the Roman Curia performs a largely administrative role and supports the Pope in 'the daily exercise of his primatial jurisdiction over the Roman Catholic Church' (Martin, 1913: 12).

Sixth, the term 'deacon' refers to an ordained minister within the Church. Holy Orders are conferred upon three ranks of clergy in the Catholic tradition: bishops, priests, and deacons, and these clergy sit below the Pope and the Cardinals in the hierarchy of the Church.[11] Deacons can perform certain sacramental functions including baptisms, the delivery of homilies, the distribution of communion, and conducting funeral services. There have been recent calls for the Church to admit women to the diaconate (the office of deacon) but this move has been met with aversion from the magisterium, and a sense amongst Catholic women that this shift would not fundamentally change the position or the capacities of women within the Church.

Seventh, 'women religious' is the term scholars presently use to refer to women in the Catholic tradition who are commonly known as 'sisters' or 'nuns' and who perform the vocations open to women within the Church (see, for example Gervais, 2011). By contrast, 'religious women' refers to lay women who are engaged in religious devotion or who belong to religious communities.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the subtle yet significant difference between 'women priests' and 'Women-Priests'. Women-Priests refers to the model of ordination in which

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[11] The Catholic Church recognizes two types of deacons; permanent deacons who have no intention of becoming a priest but who wish to assist their parish priest, and transitional deacons who are seminarians in the final phase of their training for the Catholic priesthood. After serving as a deacon in a parish for a year a transitional deacon can be ordained as a Catholic priest. The female ordination movement has adopted the model of the diaconate to its ordination process, and women priests must all serve as a deacon for a year as preparation for their ministry.

ordination is the key goal. As an articulation of liberal feminism, the aim of proponents of the Women-Priest model is to ordain women within the current structures of the Church. By contrast, a woman priest simply refers to a woman who has been ordained and who acts in a ministerial capacity. In the religious lexicon, the word 'ministry' has broader connotations than ordained ministry, but the term is utilized here to refer to ordained ministry only in order to emphasize the importance of ordination as a vocational and justice issue for women in the female ordination movement.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into two distinct sections. Consisting of three chapters (the Literature Review, Historical Context Chapter and Methodology Chapter), Section I contextualizes the case study of the female ordination movement in the Catholic Church and it establishes the core methodological and conceptual framework for this study. Chapter One, the Literature Review, considers the existing literature and scholarly discourse that elucidates the nature of gendered oppression within religious structures. The Literature Review is divided into two core sections: oppression and liberation. This partitioning reflects the overall argument that the female ordination movement is caught in the nexus of oppression and liberation, and it also complements the structuring of Chapters Four to Seven.

Chapter Two considers the historical foundations of patriarchal ideology within this religious institution, as well as the ways in which the female ordination movement has reclaimed the lineage of women priests and women's involvement in the Church as a tool of legitimization. This chapter is essential for contextualizing the case studies that follow and for providing the necessary background information in order to enable an in-depth analysis of the female ordination movement in the following chapters. Chapter Three is the final chapter of Section

I, and it outlines the core conceptual and methodological frameworks that have shaped and guided the nature of this research.

Section II comprises four chapters and contains the core analysis and research findings of this thesis. Chapter Four focuses on the issue of gender (*in*) equality within the Roman Catholic Church, and utilizes data from all three case studies to explore the respondents' encounters with institutionalized patriarchy and the ways in which the female ordination movement is contesting such forms of oppression. Chapters Five to Seven adopts a case study approach with each chapter focusing on a different community and with a different area of injustice being addressed in each instance.

Chapter Five examines hierarchy and authoritarianism as an axis of domination in the Church, and the ways in which the MMOJ Community is dismantling the clerical power model. Chapter Six, focused on the Good Shepherd community, discusses the ways in which poverty intersects with racialization and racism in the American context and the ways in which the Catholic Church has perpetuated these forms of social marginalization. Chapter Seven concludes this section by examining the ways in which the MMACC community is recognizing and overturning homophobia and injustice for the LGBTIQ community.

Each chapter in this section first looks at the ways in which the particular issue under discussion is oppressive within the Catholic context and then how the female ordination movement is seeking to liberate its members from that form of domination. The experiences of oppression for respondents of this study are accessed using narrative and thematic analysis, and the modes of liberation are discussed using a combination of narrative analysis and ritual analysis.

Section I: Conceptual and Historical Origins of the Stained Glass Ceiling in the Catholic Church

Section I lays the conceptual foundation for understanding women's oppression in the Catholic Church, as well as the efforts by the female ordination movement to contest the kyriarchy of Catholic Christianity. This section has three objectives. Firstly, Chapter One, the Literature Review, will position this study by discussing the relevant literature in the field. The Literature Review is divided into two core sections: oppression and liberation. In discussing the tension between these two dynamics, this chapter will explore how 'women's active support for a movement that seems to be inimical to their own interests and agendas, at a historical moment when more emancipatory possibilities would appear to be available to women, raises fresh dilemmas for feminists' (Mahmood, 2001:202).

The Literature Review will initially address classical critical approaches that frame religion as an inherently patriarchal and kyriarchal force that ensures the oppression of women. Feminist critics such as Simone de Beauvoir ([1949] 2011) and Mary Daly (1968, 1973, 1984, 1993), argue that because of the inexorability of this institutionalized sexism, women can only attain liberation from ecclesial oppression by leaving religious structures. This section will also problematize accounts of oppression that focus solely on patriarchy, and it will introduce kyriarchy and intersectionality as more apposite conceptual tools for this present study.

By contrast, the second section of the Literature Review focusses on a new body of literature that has emerged out of feminist the*logy and feminist sociology. This scholarship acknowledges that women's experience cannot simply be understood by looking through the lens of oppression, and instead uses intersectional theorizing to comprehend the agency of women working to counteract and reshape religious traditions from within. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, in her 'critical theology of liberation,' thus argues that an understanding

of women's precarious place in patriarchal religion must 'acknowledge and critically analyze the oppressive structures of the Christian Church and tradition, while at the same time rediscovering the liberating traditions and elements of Christian faith and community' (1993: 139). In expounding the political potential of feminism for faith this chapter also discusses scholarly approaches to resistance and agency within religion, and challenges approaches that singularly focus on resistance as a conceptual frame for understanding women's dissidence in religious settings.

Chapter Two seeks to contextualize the female ordination movement, by discussing the background to the prohibition of women's ordination, both historically and theologically, as well as recounting the core events in the development of this movement. This chapter has several aims. Firstly, it contextualizes this study with an understanding of the Catholic Church's rationale for limiting ordination to men. The foundations of patriarchy within the Church are discussed with a view to understanding why the issue of female ordination is so controversial within Catholicism. Second, this chapter discusses the feminist objections to the prohibition of female ministry. Third, the key events and groups that have contributed to the development of the female ordination movement are outlined, and the core charism and ideology of this movement are explained.

Haskins (2003) notes gender bias in the Roman Catholic Church's position on women priests, and adamantly maintains that its refusal to ordain women is a decision based on centuries of tradition. Dale Spender (1983) has also argued that the absence of women's voices and their invisibility in history is fundamental to the perpetuation and hegemony of patriarchal power. The following discussion in this chapter builds upon this idea to highlight the point that a value-free, objective historiography is a scholarly fiction and that all interpretations of texts depend upon the presuppositions, intellectual concepts, politics or prejudices of the interpreter and historian (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993: 62). Consequently, contrasts can be

drawn between the institutional *his-story* and the emergent *her-story* of women's ordination in the Catholic Church.

Finally, Chapter Three will conclude this section by providing an account of the methodological approach adopted for this study. Informed by a feminist epistemology, the core intention and methodological objective for this this study is to develop a holistic and multifaceted understanding of the female ordination movement, at both the personal level of the individual believers, and the collective level of the communities to which they belong. To this end, a dual-layered methodology has been adopted for this research.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants, and were analyzed using narrative analysis to develop a sense of the spiritual biographies and core beliefs of members of the female ordination movement. This data was complemented by participant ethnography of the various liturgical and extra-ecclesial activities of their communities, which was analyzed using ritual analysis. This triangulated approach allows for a conceptualization of the ideological and performative acts of resistance deployed by the female ordination movement, and the ways in which their communities are transforming the Catholic tradition in both thought and action.

Chapter 1: Literature Review and Epistemological Framework

1.1 <u>Feminist Analyses of Oppression: Women as Objects of the Patriarchal Church</u>

Critical theorizations of religion, from sociologists, social theorists, feminist theologians, and feminist activists alike, have argued that institutions of religion tend to use logics of control in order to dominate their adherents. Early radical feminist texts, such as those of Shulamith Firestone (1970) and Kate Millett (1969) in particular, were especially critical of religion. Such theories have posited religion broadly, and Christianity in particular, as 'an oppressive, silencing force', and an 'oppressive mechanism of power' (Carrette, 2000: 38), built upon 'a constant principle of coercion' (Foucault, 1980). These perspectives have traditionally been based on a Marxian analysis, which conceptualizes religion as an ideological belief system that perpetuates social stratification and the creation of hierarchical systems of subordination (Raines, 2002).

In his dualistic typology of 'oppressive religion' and 'revolutionary religion', Marx ([1844] 2005) contends that oppressive religion not only legitimates the established order of society but in turn enforces the domination and exploitation of one group of people over another (Lundskow, 2008). For Marx, religion was ultimately something to be discarded, because it served as a fundamental obstacle to the revolutionary change that would institute genuine and ideal social, political and economic equality between all peoples. Critiques based on a Marxian interpretation have subsequently demarcated religion as imposing 'dogmatic dedication to a massive bureaucratic institution' (Wilcox, 2013: 213), which requires submission and devotional deference, and which ultimately perpetuates complex structures of domination and control.[12]

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[12] See Douglas (2011); Ethelia (2004); Watton (2005), Jacobs (2003), and Woodhead (2007) for further discussion of the oppressive nature of religion.

Feminist theorists have built upon such understandings, arguing that 'religion is a powerful source of tradition and meaning and thus it can serve to keep even brutal systems of patriarchal oppression in line' (Cudd, 2006: 170). So ingrained and entrenched are the dictates of religious subservience within religious practice that many theorists have advanced that 'popular opinions of religion expect it to be a source of oppression rather than an opportunity for resistance' (Wilcox, 2013: 213).

Implicit in this perspective, perhaps, is the recognition that Christianity's complex role in human oppression is exemplified by its role in the oppression of women, and in its legitimation of patriarchy. The contributions of feminist theologians and feminist theorists of religion confirm that to varying degrees women are 'systematically exploited' (Carr, 1982: 179), are 'marginalized again and again' (Kwok, 2002: 29), are 'rendered powerless' (Farley, 1990), and are 'left open to violence, both physical force and covert structures of repression' (Russell et al., 1996: 307) by religious authorities and religious structures. Such discussions of the androcentric traditions of the Church have exposed the 'deep-seated and brutalizing misogyny in Western Christian culture which has had profound effects for women and for men' (Forde, 2013: 27).

Feminist political scientist Iris Marion Young (1990) developed five criteria with which to ascertain whether and to what extent social groups are oppressed: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and systemic violence. In addition to Young's (1990) five criteria, two new aspects of women's subjugation which relate more directly to Church and the*logy have been articulated by feminist the*logian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1993). Schüssler Fiorenza also elucidates the dynamics of 'silencing' and 'vilification and trivializing' as crucial components of the oppression of women within Christianity (1993: 311). The existence of each of these modes of oppression within organized religion has laid the foundations for a feminist critique of the insidious forms of

patriarchal and kyriarchal domination that have governed gender politics within the realm of religion (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1992). In accordance, White and Dobris have identified three central themes of feminist responses to patriarchal religion. The three main ideas that emerge from a feminist reading of organized religion are: '1) the Church uses women, 2) the Church degrades women, and 3) the Church kills women figuratively and literally' (1993: 242). These three themes coalesce in the view that the Church and feminism are mutually exclusive, and that deference to a patriarchal religious structure is contradictory to a commitment to feminist politics.

Feminist the*logy has interrogated the space opened up by radical feminism and it has defined 'women's present position in the Church and ministry as that of inequality and injustice' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993: 135). However, feminist the*logy moved away from the trends in radical feminism that perceived all religion as anathema for women's rights, and instead sought to expose the patriarchal roots and realities of Christianity, offering alternative interpretations of scripture and tradition from a feminist standpoint. Feminist the*logy is thereby 'engaged in a critique of the androcentrism and misogyny of patriarchal theology' (Ruether, 1985: 704), and it seeks to explore women's experiences of oppression and discrimination within ecclesial structures.

This focus on gender-based oppression within religion is perhaps best exemplified by the work of post-Christian philosopher and feminist theologian Mary Daly (1973, 1974, 1975), who recognized Christianity's long history of complicity in the oppression of women. According to Burke, such patterns of patriarchal oppression are prolific within 'gender-traditional religions' such as Catholicism that 'promote strict gender relationships based on male headship and women's submission' (Burke, 2012: 122). These religions tend to emphasize and reify presumed ontological differences between men and women, noting that 'men are predisposed to leadership, activity and a strong work ethic,' while women are

'naturally nurturing, passive, and receptive' (Brink and Mencher, 1997: 122). Feminist the*logians such as Christ and Plaskow (1979) argue that the sexism of the Christian tradition is integrally related to the dualistic and hierarchical mentality that Christianity inherited from the classical world. According to them, this classical dualism became the model for the oppression of women in the Church whereby 'the culture-creating males identified the positive sides of the dualism with themselves and identified the negative sides with the women over whom they claimed the right to rule' (1979:5). As the feminist critique of Christianity developed, it became apparent that the androcentric image of God as male was the fundamental cause of women's oppression in the Church. Scholars began to recognize that the related issues of God as Master, masculine language, the exclusion of women in leadership and ritual, and Church teachings on sexual ethics, marriage, and family were systematically related to the masculinist worldview of the biblical faith (Christ and Plaskow, 1979: 5).

In turn, feminist the*logians began to realise that the exclusion, marginalization and oppression of women within religion was not incidental or accidental but rather was systemic and structural (Schneiders, 2004). Whilst conventional theological accounts define sin as an individual transgression, an act of infidelity against God, liberation theologians and feminist theologians urge us to perceive sin not just in personal, individual terms, but also in terms of structures and institutions (Baum, 1975; Ruether, 2001; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993). Feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether attests to the structural basis of 'ecclesial patriarchy' in her assertion that 'the oppressive force of Christianity for women and other subjugated people comes from a patriarchal reading of the whole system of Christianity' (2001: 91). By applying a feminist lens to institutional Catholicism, it becomes patent that 'misogyny is not just a result of the personal prejudices of Catholic leaders and Churchmen, but is rather built into the structures of the religion' (Jenkins, 2003: 87). Such claims have been repeatedly

established in the field, with countless studies and theoretical exegeses acknowledging that 'the structures of the Catholic Church today continue to be heavily patriarchal' (Curran, 2008: 151).

One particular rendering of this structural argument is provided by Schüssler Fiorenza who posits institutionalized sexism as a 'structural sin' committed by the Roman Catholic Church towards women throughout history. She explains that the notion of sexism as a structural sin encompasses 'the dehumanizing trends, injustices, and discrimination of institutions, the theology and symbol system that legitimate these institutions, and the collective and personal "false consciousness" created by sexist institutions and ideologies and internalized in socialization and education' (1993: 140). By appropriating Paulo Freire's pivotal concept of 'false consciousness' (1973), Schüssler Fiorenza argues that the structural institutionalization of sexism within the Church leads oppressed people and groups to accept their oppression and to internalise the values of the oppressor.

She therein advances an understanding of 'patriarchal sexism as evil transpersonal power and as structural sin,' which is institutionalized in societal and ecclesial oppressive structures (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1933: 141). According to Schüssler Fiorenza, such a conceptualization helps us to trace the impact that sexism has on the sacramental symbol of the Church, and to better 'understand the deep-seated, almost irrational refusal of the male institutional Church to admit women to the sacramental priesthood' (1993: 1410. Further, she argues that 'it helps us to understand why the structural sin of sexism cannot but engender the symbolic sin of patriarchal sexism' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993: 141).

Scholars such as Ruether (2013), Taylor Edmisten (2010) and Zagano (2011) have juxtaposed the issue of female ordination against the Catholic Church's treatment of clerical sexual abuse in order to further demonstrate the structural imbeddedness of patriarchy within

this religious institution. According to July 15, 2010 press releases by the Vatican, women who attempt ordination and those bishops who ordain them are guilty of 'grave crimes'; the same calibre of punishment directed to priests who commit acts of pedophilia or sexual abuse. Ruether suggests that 'such an equation of women's ordination with sexual abuse not only is offensive and lacking in moral credibility, but seemed to reveal the frenetic rage with which the Vatican views women's quest for ordination' (2013: 51-52). For scholars and for social commentators alike, not only did the inexplicable linkage between women seeking odination and pedophile priests detract attention from the enormity of the sexual abuse scandal, but it also served to 'focus the klieg lights once again on the Church's longstanding and ingrained negative attitudes toward women' (McBrien, 2010, September 13).

Some general theories of structural violence can be and have been used by feminists to make sense of what is happening in the Church. One such structural mode of framing the issue is that offered by Johan Galtung (1969). His-concept of 'structural violence' encapsulates many different forms of social and institutional failings that have real, if not always immediately appreciable, consequences in peoples' lives. Farmer, expanding upon Galtung's theory, asserts that:

> Structural violence is one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm's way … The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people (Farmer, 1999: 1490).

The 'injury' described by Farmer can be symbolic and metaphorical in nature, and is understood as being enforced by systemic acts of discrimination and inequality. Institutionalized sexism is one such example of structural violence. Gervais thereby describes the acute and tangible 'pains of patriarchy,' and concedes that the experience of women in religion is a 'study in paradox, pain, and punishment' (Gervais, 2012: 164). Further, Carter

affirms, 'dominance over women is a form of oppression that often leads to violence, real or symbolic' (Carter, 2014: 3). Thus, the gendered oppression experienced and conveyed by the respondents represents a pernicious and persistent form of 'structural violence,' which serves to constrain the free exercise and realization of women's agency whilst they operate within this kyriarchal structure.

According to Galtung (1990), structural violence is legitimized or justified by 'cultural violence,' comprising aspects of a culture, such as religion, the*logy or ideology, that validate these acts of discrimination. In this instance, the structural violence of sexism within the Roman Catholic Church has been legitimized and perpetuated by the culture and ideology of Catholicism, which is rooted in patriarchy, misogyny and imperialism. Galtung's paradigm of structural violence bears a striking resemblance to Schüssler Fiorenza's concept of 'sexism as a structural sin' (1993). By integrating Schüssler Fiorenza's pronouncements on the structural nature of ecclesial patriarchy with Galtung's theory of 'structural violence,' a comprehensive understanding of the nature of oppression within the Catholic Church can be attained. The manifestations of gendered oppression, as experienced and as constructed by the respondents in this study, were understood in relation to ecclesial structural issues such as the Church hierarchy, clerical authoritarianism, and the institutionalisation of punitive stances towards the disenfranchised. The respondents have made firm connections between these structural elements of the Church and the institutionalization of patriarchal modes of oppression.

1.1.1   The Contributions of Simone de Beauvoir and Mary Daly

Simone de Beauvoir's foundational texts have formed the cornerstone of the feminist critique of the patriarchal subordination of women within religion. Beauvoir was a French existentialist feminist whose work preceded and inspired the so-called 'Second Wave of feminism' as it developed in the late 1960s and 1970s in the West. Her revolutionary text *Le Deuxieme sexe* (*The Second Sex*) ([1949] 2011), has attained totemic status within feminism, and it has been extolled as the 'definitive analysis of sexism' (Firestone, 1970: 7). Scholars such as Dorothy Kaufman have observed that '*The Second Sex* is where contemporary feminism began' (1986: 128).

Beauvoir's constructionist view of gender, that 'one is not born but rather becomes woman,' ([1949] 2011: 301) has framed the field of Western feminist scholarly enquiry (Dietz, 1992). This conceptualization differentiates sex from gender, and suggests that gender is an aspect of identity that is gradually acquired and that is socially constructed (Butler, 1986). Beauvoir's analysis of gender oppression rests upon the radical argument that notions of the female body, femininity, women's essential nature, and the conditions that underwrite these identities are masculinist social constructions (Dietz, 1992).

Beauvoir argues that it is the social construction of women as the quintessential 'Other' that is fundamental to women's oppression. Beauvoir frames her discussion of patriarchy through the Hegelian concept of the Other, and her discussion of the masculine Self and feminine Other serves as a reworking of Hegel's dialectic of master and slave ([1807] 1977). Her primary thesis is that men fundamentally oppress women by positing woman as the Other to man, and by defining women only in relation to and by man (Dietz, 1992). For as Beauvoir explains, 'She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her' ([1949] 2011: xix). The result of this gender imbalance is that 'She is the incidental, the

inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other' (Beauvoir [1949] 2011: xix).

Beauvoir argues that, whilst it is natural for humans to understand themselves in opposition to others, in defining woman as exclusively Other man is effectively denying her full humanity. Women, Beauvoir argues, must overcome the confines of Otherness by discarding masculinist ideas about womanhood and rejecting the conventions of marriage and motherhood that sustain them. It is only then that women can 'participate in full humanity' (Beauvoir [1949] 2011: xix), and reclaim their rights of self-definition and their position as autonomous subjects. Beauvoir's attack of the patriarchal roots of women's oppression helped to inspire subsequent feminist developments, including Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Mary Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968), Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969), and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970).

Inspired by Beauvoir's forceful critique of patriarchy and the Catholic Church, Daly's work stands as a comprehensive treatise against the Church's treatment of women. In *The Church and the Second Sex*, Daly credits Beauvoir's book as 'the most influential, comprehensive, and vigorous work written that highlights the generally oppressive situation of women in the Church' (Daly, 1968: 14). Further, Daly extolled *The Second Sex* for 'ma[king] possible dialogue among women about their lives,' and argued that '*The Second Sex* helped to generate an atmosphere in which women could utter their own thoughts' (Daly, 1984; 374).

Instilled with this imperative to empower women through awareness of their own oppression within the Church, Daly identified and extended five recurring themes in Beauvoir's work that captured the nature of Church-based sexism. These aspects of domination are oppression and deception, dogma versus women, harmful moral teaching, women's exclusion from the hierarchy, and the failed promise of transcendence through religion (Berry, 2000). Ultimately

these modes of repression coalesced to form the basis of Daly's belief that 'the Church is guilty of the oppression and deception of women' (1968: 15).

Each of Daly's works reflects her concerns with women's oppression and male supremacy in the Church, and throughout her work she concerned herself with the development of a model for a spiritual revolution (Pears, 2004: 47). A broad range of feminist scholars[13] have commended, and have appropriated, Daly's confrontation of religious sexism, and 'the way in which she challenged women to face the painful effect that sexism within the Church had on their womanhood' (Ruether, 1988: 187). Akin to many of her contemporaries, Daly correlated women's oppression within the Church with the existence of deeply embedded patriarchal structures, which sought to institutionalize the dominance of men. For, as she elegantly explains:

> The symbol of the Father God spawned in the human imagination and sustained as plausible by patriarchy, has in turn rendered service to this type of society by making its mechanisms for the oppression of women appear right and fitting. If God in "his" heaven is a father ruling "his" people, then it is in the "nature" of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male dominated (Daly, 1973:13).

Such a feminist critique of androcentric Christianity, and the subsequent subjugation of women, highlights the 'Catholic Church's lack of acknowledgement of its discrimination against women' (Korte, 2000: 82). Another of Daly's primary objectives was to expose the masculine bias of Christian theology upon which Catholic institutions are built. Daly conceptualizes institutional religion's utilization of biblical texts and exegeses as a misogynistic attempt to perpetuate men's hegemonic belief in the inferiority of women. For Daly, these texts and ideas are worthy of analysis as they represent the ideological foundations upon which religious institutions are built. In her analysis of Christian

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[13] Such as Engelsman, 1986; Heschel, 1986; Shield, 1984; Pears, 2002, 2004; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993, Ruether, 1983.

documents, Daly states that they contain outright contradictions relating to the insistence on the inviolable worth of all human beings on the one hand and the dissemination of oppressive misogynistic ideas on the other (Daly, 1968).

Daly contends that the ingrained subordination of women within the Church stems from the Church's dualistic view of women as 'both virgin and whore' (1968: 54), which 'idealises women on the one side and on the other it humiliates them' (1968: 53). To Daly, this dualism presents a dialectic tension between the pseudo-glorifications of women and the degrading teachings and practices about women. Ultimately for Daly, this conflicting paradigm of gender roles for women within the Church serves to symbolize women as the embodiment of 'temptation, lust and sin in the eyes of the Catholic Church' (Daly, 1975: 53).

Daly argues that this gender stereotyping is highly disempowering as it undermines the virtuousness, integrity and level of privilege of women within the Church, whilst elevating men to positions of moral and institutional authority. For Daly, by relying on such misogynistic and androcentric conceptions of the*logy and of gender roles, the Catholic Church has carved itself as an oppressively male-dominated institution and the last stronghold of anachronism and prejudice (Wood, 2013).

Around 1975 Daly made an epistemological shift from a feminist theologian to a post-Christian philosopher. Following this change she came to identify that the Catholic Church was so oppressive and disempowering for women that feminism and Catholicism in particular, and feminism and religion more generally, were incompatible and were mutually exclusive. In her later work, Daly asserted that the biblical traditions were 'too broken to be fixed' and that their patriarchal symbols and values were too central to be overcome (1973: 121). As such, for Daly, patriarchy's manifestations are so deeply embedded in Christianity

that women will never be able to experience wholeness, healing, integrity and autonomy until they reject biblical tradition as demeaning and harmful to women (Gross, 1996).

Daly thereby claims that the canonical, patriarchal God needs 'to be made redundant for women' (1973: 13), and that women need to 'reclaim their own reality' (1993: 152), free from institutional subjugation within the Catholic Church. Whilst Daly's body of theory is highly radical in its post-Christian orientation, it nevertheless embodies feminist the*logy's theoretical contestation of gender-based oppression within the Church and its commitment to engendering spiritual liberation for repressed women. Such a feminist interpretation serves to locate the place of women in religious structures within the broader nexus of disempowerment, subjugation, and patriarchal repression.

Both Beauvoir's and Daly's works have been subjected to wide-ranging critique, with special attention being given to the assumptions concerning sex, race, class, gender and sexuality that informs their analysis of women's oppression.[14] Dietz argues that when these texts are analyzed from this diversity perspective, their 'account of women appears insufficiently attentive to class and racial inequality and burdened by heterosexist assumptions' (1992: 83). On the surface, given that Daly was a lesbian and her work was woman-centred (so much so that she faced disciplinary action at her university for running women-only classes) the critique of heterosexism appears to be an odd statement. Further, with regard to the issue of sexuality, the philosopher Claudia Card contends that in *The Second Sex* Beauvoir not only 'incidentally' formulated her position on lesbianism but also created an invidious theoretical distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality by recognizing the former as a 'choice' and the latter as 'fundamental' (Card, 1990: 290-292). Card subsequently argues that

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[14] See for example, Seigfried (1980); Braidotti (1991); Mitchell (1974); Rowbotham (1973); Barrett ([1980] 1988); and O'Brien (1981).

'*The Second Sex* was not intended to rock the heterosexual boat, but, on the contrary, to claim it' (1990: 291).

However, additional critics such as Spelman argue that with regard to the issues of race and class, Beauvoir and Daly take 'the lives of white middle-class women to be paradigmatic for the situation of "women" ' (Spelman, 1988: 77). Feminists Patricia Hill Collins (1998a, 1998b, 2000) and Audre Lorde (1984) would assert that this homogenizing view of women's positionality is a mistake that flows from problematic assumptions about how to investigate both gender and power. In particular, in a letter that she wrote to Mary Daly as a response to Daly's text *Gyn/Ecology*, Audre Lorde took offence at 'the assumption that the herstory and myth of white women is the legitimate and sole herstory and myth of all women to call upon for power and background, and that non-white women and [their] herstories are noteworthy only as decorations, or examples of female victimization' (1984: 69).

In this letter Lorde also critiqued Daly's essentialism, arguing that 'to imply that all women suffer the same oppression simply because we are women is to lose sight of the many varied tools of patriarchy,' and that 'what [Daly] excluded from *Gyn/Ecology* dismissed [Lorde's] heritage and the heritage of all other noneuropean women, and denied the real connections that exist between all of us' (1984: 67-68). Both Beauvoir and Daly's analyses lacked an intersectional view of oppression, as they focused on patriarchy and gender as the focal dimension of women's subjugation. Whilst their work may not necessarily be useful for this study's examination of kyriarchal webs of oppression within the Church, such as heterosexism and racism, the import of Beauvoir and Daly's insight on patriarchal oppression cannot be overlooked or underestimated.

1.1.2 Patriarchy, Kyriarchy and Intersectionality: Problematizing Conceptions of Oppression
Central to feminist theorizations of oppression within religion is the concept of patriarchy and

patriarchal axes of domination. When feminists address questions of women's subordination

and analyze particular forms of misogyny, patriarchy is used as a conceptual tool to elucidate

the systems in which women experience discrimination, subordination, violence, exploitation

and violence by men (Bhasin, 1993; Hunnicutt, 2009; Maseno and Kilonzo, 2011). Patriarchy

is an elusive concept to define, as it is encumbered by different feminist (and anti-feminist)

interpretations and is built upon different epistemological and ontological assumptions. For

some commentators patriarchy simply refers to male power over women. For others it

encapsulates an ideological element, as patriarchy becomes equated with male ideology and

'malestream values' (O'Brien, 1981).

Lerner, in her seminal work on patriarchy,[15] expounds that 'nowhere in history is evidence to

be found of an overthrow of power from female to male,' and as such 'patriarchy was not an

event, but rather developed over a period of nearly 2500 years at different times and different

places' (1986: 54). The creation of patriarchal concepts, according to Lerner (1986) was

subsequently internalized and inculcated into the ideological constructs of societies. These

concepts were inherently androcentric, according to scholars such as Van Leeuwen, as they

constructed 'men as the bearers of authority and power, and deprived women of any authority

or power' (Van Leeuwen, 1993: 137). [16] French materialist feminist Colette Guillaumin

consequently argues that it is through the appropriation of women's bodies by men that they

are exploited under patriarchy, or in what she terms 'sexage' (1995: 99). For Guillaumin, the

direct physical appropriation of women's bodies, sexuality, and time by men has developed a

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[15] See also Therborn (2004).
[16] Walby subsequently isolates six structures of patriarchy, which are defined in terms of the social relationship in each structure. These six structures are '… a patriarchal mode of production in which women's labour is expropriated by their husbands; patriarchal relations within waged labour; the patriarchal state; male violence; patriarchal relations in sexuality and patriarchal culture' (Walby, 1989: 220).

'relation of appropriation,' which in turn has justified the ideological supremacy of men over women.

From the 1960s onwards, the concept of patriarchy was mobilized differently by feminists working from different theoretical and political perspectives (Pedwell, 2013). According to Mirkin (1984), the concept of patriarchy gained traction and began to transcend the confines of pure academic application as a result of the insights offered in Kate Millett's book *Sexual Politics* (1969). Millett popularized the theoretical concept of patriarchy by contextualizing this paradigm within the social realities and sexist restrictions imposed upon women, and by making powerful connections between male authority and the social institutions of the day. For as she explains,

> … our society, like all other historical civilizations, is a patriarchy. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance—in short, every avenue of power … including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands (Millet 1968:25).

Such an insight illuminated the extent of the pervasiveness of male control in all spheres of society, including the economy, the law, religion, education, the military and the domestic sphere, as well as the diverse forms in which patriarchal control has manifested within capitalist societies.

As a result of radical feminist theorizing[17] patriarchy is subsequently understood as institutionalized sexism that 'fosters sexist discrimination and human rights abuses' (Hull, 1998: 97), and that 'reinforces the subordination of women and weak, marginalized groups' (Ruether, 1983: 61). This understanding of the material conditions of patriarchy and of sexism, provided the platform for feminist the*logy and feminist studies of religion to critique the androcentric concentration of authority within religious structures as well as the systematic discrimination of women within religious institutions and traditions.

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[17] Such as Millett (1969), Firestone (1979), and Daly (1968).

However, whilst useful in a confined study of male-dominated structures and institutions, the ultimate conceptual scope of patriarchy has been critiqued and destabilized. The concept 'patriarchy', while being vital for feminist analysis, has been criticized for 'not being able to deal with historical and cross-cultural variation in the forms of women's subordination' (Walby, 1989: 213). Some feminist theorists have subsequently rejected patriarchy as an ahistorical, universalizing, and totalizing concept.[18] The critics of the concept have focused upon problems that existing theories of patriarchy have in dealing with historical and cross-cultural variation in gender inequality, and with differences among women, especially in relation to ethnicity and class (hooks, 2000b; Rowbotham, 1981).[19] Further, from a Marxian perspective, the theories of an all-encompassing patriarchy raise troubling questions about the possibilities and mechanisms of change (Wilson, 2000). Bennett claims that 'for many feminist thinkers, patriarchy was de-politicized by an ambivalence towards the term' (2006: 65), as feminists came to focus less on women's oppression and victimization, and more on women's agency.

Furthermore, and perhaps linked to the critiques offered earlier by Lorde and Collins, patriarchy has been criticized for its myopic concentration solely on gender as a locus for oppression. A number of theorists have identified the need for an improved way to conceptualize the interplay of difference, positionality, and power, within the realm of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; hooks 1982, 1989, 2000a, 2000b).[20] Quinn has argued that in order to learn about people, we need to better conceptualize the power relationships and structures that shape our society and that are 'masked and made manifest along the multiple lines of race, gender, class, and sexuality' (2002: 242). Audre Lorde affirms the need for greater diversity in feminist analyses of oppression, and argues that 'it is a particular

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[18] See for example, Barrett, 1980, Randall, 1982, Smart, 1984, Wilson, 2000.
[19] See also: Barrett, 1980; Beechey, 1979; Coward, 1978; Molyneux, 1979; Sargent, 1981; Segal, 1987.
[20] See also: Aquino, 2015; Cole, 2009; Collins 1998a, 1998b, 2000; Osborne, 2015; Walter, 2010; Young 2005.

academic ignorance to assume any discussion of feminist theory without examining our many differences and without a significant input from poor women, Black women and Third World women, and lesbians' (Lorde, 1984: 110).

Thus, intersectionality was developed as a methodological and theoretical tool by critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) to best conceptualize the existence of multiple axes of identity that may govern an individual's relationship to power. Intersectionality emerged from critical race theory but it has been applied in many other fields of research. Feminists interested in issues of imperialism, colonialism, disability, gender identity, queerness and class have critiqued the universalizing trends of identity politics and white, middle-class western feminism that have overlooked crucial differences of class and race (Osborne, 2015).[21]

As Crenshaw argues, 'the problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference … but rather the opposite—that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup difference' (1991: 1242). The experiences of white, heterosexual, and middle-class women are not representative of all women's experiences, yet this archetype of womanhood has tended to dominate feminist discourse (Osborne, 2015). Consequently, many theorists have noted that feminism has been reluctant to engage with race and other sites of oppression resulting in the exclusion and erasure of many women's experiences, especially women of colour.[22]

Intersectionality addresses these critiques by disrupting the binary perspective that can occur when engaging solely in feminist theory, critical race theory, Marxist theory, or queer theory. Kartzow explains that 'instead of examining gender, race, class, age, and sexuality as separate categories of oppression, intersectionality explores how these categories mutually

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[21] See also: Bruns, 2010; Fuchs, 2008; Hunt, 2001b; and Kang, 2005.
[22] See for example, Andersen, 2005; Bhavnan, 2007; Bruns, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Collins 1998a, 1998b, 2000, hooks 2000a, 2000b; Kartzow, 2010.

construct one another' (2012: 370). Intersectionality thereby acknowledges that an individual may belong to multiple disadvantaged groups or identities and that this positionality compounds and complicates their experiences of oppression (Matsuda, 1991).

Intersectionality also recognizes that one can simultaneously belong to both privileged and oppressed groups (Cole, 2009), and that different identities may even seem to conflict with one another at times (Maddison and Scalmer, 2006). As these social categories intersect, they define, support and strengthen one another, coalescing to form what Conkey (2005) identifies as the hierarchies of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Because these axes of privilege and oppression 'overlap and interact' and mutually constitute each other, 'none can be thoroughly analyzed in isolation from its effect on the whole' (Bain, 2011: 57) without the risk of unintentionally reinforcing these structures (Schneider and Trentaz, 2008).

As such, intersectional theorists are particularly concerned with questions relating to 'how these systems mutually construct one another, or … how they "articulate" with one another' (Collins, 1998b: 63). However, it is crucial to note that intersectionality is not purely additive, nor does it suggest a 'ranking' or 'stacking' of fixed differences (Valentine, 2007). For, as Barager explains, 'a person's identity is not the sum total of the pain of each separate form of marginalization. … Blackness is lived differently by women than by men, and being female is not a uniform experience across race, class, age, or disability' (2009: 2). An additive approach would also fail to recognize that, for example, 'a Black woman does not experience oppression just as a Black person and as a woman, but that the specific combination is a particular site of oppression' (Osborne, 2015: 133).

Although she did not use the term 'intersectionality', Patricia Hill Collins offered a particularly insightful articulation of this concept, through her discussion of power relations and the domination of African-American women. Women of colour have often been critics of

mainstream/whitestream feminism, which, often through patriarchy, positioned men as universal oppressors and women as universally oppressed (Collins 2000; hooks 2000b). However, this perspective neglects the fact that many women of colour have also experienced oppression and exploitation at the hands of white women, and many feel that race is at least as great a determinant of their experiences as gender (Collins, 1990, 2000; hooks, 1982, 2000b).

Collins' book *Black Feminist Thought* examined the 'situated, subjugated standpoint' of African-American women in order to understand 'Black feminist thought as a partial perspective on domination' (1990: 236). She argues that white male interests pervade the thematic content of conventional scholarship and that as a result, 'Black women's experiences with work, family, motherhood, political activism, and sexual politics have been routinely distorted in or excluded from traditional academic discourse' (Collins, 1990: 201). Collins therefore is pressing for a reconceptualization of social theory in which analysis starts from the unique vision of 'outsider' groups, and in which conventional concepts of race, class and gender are informed and changed by including the concrete experiences and definitions of subordinate groups (Wallace, 1996).

A review of the relevant literature and applications of intersectionality reveals that this theoretical tool can have distinct advantages for a feminist analysis of oppression and empowerment. Through intersectionality feminists have an opportunity to 'overturn institutional oppressions' and thereby 'undermine the cultural acceptance of those oppressions in other, more pervasive contexts' (Walsh, 2015: 63). Thus, an intersectionalist approach takes into account the issue of power and raises the question of whose interests are legitimized, whose needs are served, and what power relations are supported (Moxnes,

2010).[23] An intersectional approach does not only acknowledge the presence of multiple axes of oppression but also examines how they may relate to one another or co-constitute one another (Frye et al., 2008; Osborne, 2015).

Patriarchy, as an analytical tool, lacks the latitude of intersectionality and subsequently overlooks the interconnections between gendered oppression and other power structures, such as race and class. 'Kyriarchy' was Schüssler Fiorenza's (1992) conceptual alternative to help fill this lacuna in feminist discourse and feminist conceptualizations of religious oppression. Developed in feminist biblical hermeneutics, kyriarchy transcends the confines of patriarchy to incorporate the intersectional structural conditions which produce and reproduce inequality. Commonly associated with post-structuralist feminism (Walsh, 2015), kyriarchy 'decentres gender as an analytical and epistemic category' (Power, 2001: 70), and describes a 'complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social structures of superordination and subordination, of ruling and oppression' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 2001: 63).

Like Crenshaw (1989, 1991), Schüssler Fiorenza critiqued mainstream, Western feminist theory for focusing solely on women's oppression, as this limited approach 'masks the complex interstructuring of patriarchal dominations inscribed within women and in the relationships of dominance and subordination between women' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1992: 123). Kyriarchy places intersectionality within the context of structural power, and thereby describes 'multiple, interacting structures of power and domination' (Osborne, 2015: 132). Kim and Whitehead assert that 'while patriarchy signifies domination of all men over all women, kyriarchy helps us to understand the complex power relations through which

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[23] As such, intersectionality provides an effective means to explore the interactions between 'simultaneously linked identities and positions in the social hierarchy' (Frye et al., 2008: 619) in an integrated way, 'theorize the relationship between different social categories' (Valentine, 2007: 10) and understand these relationships 'as dynamic processes rather than as separate categories' (Watson and Ratna, 2011: 75).

differences among wo/men are produced as well as the discursive construction of the subject as positioned across multiple axes of difference' (2009: 6).

In this way, kyriarchy resonates strongly with Marilyn Frye's (1983) structural vision of oppression based on the analogy of a bird cage as representative of the interrelated forces and barriers that comprise patterns of domination and subjugation. She explains that:

> If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires. … It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically, and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere. ... It is perfectly obvious that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon (1983:6).

In this analogy, each wire in the cage symbolizes an axis of difference that restricts an individual and each wire further complicates and consolidates that individual's confinement. Definitions of these axes of difference vary across the field, but may include the categories of race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, gender, gender identity/expressions/conformity, relationship status, ability, body type/size, age, colonial status, and national identity (Kim and Whitehead, 2009; Kwok, 2009; LeFrançois, 2013; Lelwica et al., 2009; Osborne, 2015; Schüssler Fiorenza, 2005: 115).

As expounded by Schüssler Fiorenza, drawing on the work of bell hooks (1982, 1989, 2000a, 2000b), kyriarchy allows for an understanding of how such interlocking systems of oppression 'criss-cross the subject positions that the politics of domination offers to individuals' (1992: 123). Unlike the singular model of patriarchy, Schüssler Fiorenza's idea of kyriarchy conceptually incorporates the multiple, intersecting and co-constitutive structures of power and oppression into its evaluation of domination and repression (Aquino, 2007; Bruns, 2010; Osborne, 2015). In conceptualizing the interconnection of such oppressive structures, kyriarchy is also able to account for relative privilege and establishes a hierarchical understanding of intersectional oppression. For, as bell hooks argued, 'white

women can be privileged in whiteness and oppressed in gender, and white women can act as oppressor or be oppressed' (2000b: 16).

It must be understood, however, that 'kyriarchy does not conflate and collapse all structures (like patriarchy, colonialism, racism, heterosexism, etc.) into a single structure' (Osborne, 2015: 137). Although there may be commonality in the patterns and characteristics shared by oppressive structures, 'they are not all the same and do not all function identically' (Matsuda, 1991: 1188). Thus, different structures of oppression are not 'synonymous', as bell hooks explains, but rather 'they are linked and yet differ' (1989: 125).

Kyriarchy, like other conceptual frameworks that 'seek to account for multiple axes of difference and identity, or that destabilise universalizing categories' (Osborne, 2015: 144), has been subject to critique and evaluation by a range of feminist and non-feminist scholars alike. For, as Derickson explains, the rise in postmodernist and poststructuralist approaches has made it difficult for those with emancipatory goals because of the loss of universalizing categories like 'woman', and the fear that 'by trying to develop a more complex and non-binary understanding of power and oppression, we may lose relevance and pertinence' (2009: 896).

However, scholars such as Osborne have argued that kyriarchy and intersectionality can actually overcome some of the challenges presented by postmodernism, as 'they supply us with a way to acknowledge intragroup difference and acknowledge multiple structures of oppression and privilege without over-essentializing, over-generalizing or homogenizing oppressed peoples' identities' (2015: 144). Osborne thereby explains that 'the benefit of a kyriarchal conception of power and an intersectional understanding of kyriarchy is that it gives us a way to acknowledge that a person may sit across any number of different identity groups and that difference exists within any given identity group' (2015: 139).

There are a number of benefits to employing intersectionality and kyriarchy together as an integrated framework. This cohesive conceptual framework provides the researcher with new, more nuanced language that better represents the complexity of power, social relationships and subordination. Further, this conceptual framework raises vital questions about how knowledge is produced and privileged, and encourages us to explore alternative research methodologies and social theories that are 'rooted in processes of social change and propose emancipation and justice as the primary objectives of knowledge' (Aquino, 2007: 17).

An integrated framework also improves our capacity to examine individual experiences of marginality and vulnerability within the context of structural power (Osborne, 2015). The complex understanding of identities, marginality, privilege and power that both intersectionality and kyriarchy offer us can help to challenge those who are in power and to counteract those voices that are validated by kyriarchy (Powell, 2011). An integrated approach can therefore 'bring together discussions regarding ethnicity, class, gender, and age,' and 'look at the relationship between the various categories, suggesting a theoretical vocabulary that speaks about hierarchy and social categories in a more complex way' (Kartzow, 2010: 365).

Such an integrated conceptual framework has particular utility for the sociology of religion in general, and a study of the female ordination movement in the Roman Catholic Church in particular. Scholars have suggested that sociological studies of religion have neglected the relationship between gender and other axes of identity, like class and age (Valentine, 2007), that such studies have continued to marginalize women and members of minority groups (Dias and Blecha, 2007), and that an intersectional study of kyriarchal forces within religion could help to widen this narrow focus.

The broader perspective of an intersectionalist approach destabilizes the hegemony of heteronormative and masculinist images within Catholicism, and allows for a more expansive and inclusive vision of the lived experience of Catholics in the contemporary Church. An integrated conceptual framework could be used to explore the ways in which members of certain groups experience engagement with formal religion, and how their experience may be mitigated or complicated by the presence of other axes of identity, such as their gender, class, level of ability, or ethnicity.

1.2 Liberation, Resistance and Agency: Reconceptualizing Catholic Women as Empowered Subjects

Many studies of women in gender-traditional religions, such as Catholicism, contemplate women's acquiescence by juxtaposing their agency against their complicity. For example, Andrea Dworkin provides a provocative study of right-wing women who 'agitate for their own subordination' by collaborating with men for the limitation of women's freedoms (1983: 194). Dworkin explains that right-wing women frequently 'act on behalf of male authority over women, on behalf of a hierarchy in which women are subservient to men,' and 'on behalf of religion as an expression of transcendent male supremacy' (1983: 193).

Dworkin analyzes the reasons for and mechanisms of this collusion, and concludes that women are knowingly and unknowingly complicit in structures and processes that could be considered to perpetuate their oppression. This paradox is encapsulated within Chong's central research question of 'why are women supportive of religious groups that seem designed to perpetuate their subordination?' (2006: 697). Further, as explored above, Daly suggests that women's liberation from oppressive religious structures can only be achieved through an exodus from traditional religion and an abandonment of all adherence and affiliation to religious identity.

Such an approach displays a nihilistic and defeatist attitude to the ability of women to act as agentic reformers in the face of kyriarchal structures. Moreover, this approach has been challenged by recent scholarship that acknowledges that whilst women may experience conservative religions as restrictive, they are also empowered by their participation in and observance of religious traditions (see, for example Bartkowski and Read, 2003; Griffith, 1997; Manning, 1999). [24]

For example, Woodhead (2007) criticizes feminist explanations that simply equate religion with patriarchy and the systematic oppression of women. While accepting that much traditional religion is patriarchal, she emphasizes that this is not true of all aspects of religion. Using the motif of the hijab worn by some Muslim women, Woodhead (2007) argues that there are 'religious forms of feminism' that are inspired by the ways in which women use religion to gain personal or spiritual freedom.

Feminism in the secular world has made crucial contributions to the liberation of women through the breaking down of oppressive barriers that had confined women to silence and submission throughout history.[25] For, as Schneiders affirms, 'the liberation which contemporary feminists seek is not merely freedom from marginalization, oppression, discrimination, and violence, but freedom for self-definition, self-affirmation, and self-determination; in other words, the effective recognition of their full humanity as persons and the freedom to exercise that personhood in every sphere' (2004: 9).

It is necessary also to consider the potential of feminist thought and praxis for the empowerment of women within religion. Scholars such as Beverly Wildung Harrison (1986,

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[24] Other studies which affirm the potential for women's liberation through religion include Brasher (1998); Chen (2005); Chong (2006); Davidman (1991); Gallagher (2004), (2007); Hartman (2007); Macleod (1991); and Stacey and Gerrard (1990).
[25] See for example, Judith Stacey and Barrie Thorne's (1985) paper titled 'The Missing Feminist Revolution in Sociology.'

2004); Judith Plaskow (1979, 1980); Sheila Collins (1972, 1979); Nelle Morton (1975, 1985)

Letty Russell (1974, 1982, 1993); Anne Barstow (1976, 1986); Carol Christ (1979, 1980,

2003); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1975, 1979, 1981, 1984, 1985, 1992, 1993); and

Rosemary Radford Reuther (1976, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1988, 2001, 2003) have decisively

shaped feminist studies in religion. Through their contributions, a wealth of scholarship has

emerged that acknowledges the dynamic acts of resistance, renewal, and revitalization being

enacted by feminist women within the Church and the potential for religion and religiously-

inspired activism to serve as a source of liberation. Within this context, both activism and

feminist thought coalesce to produce an evolving woman-consciousness that transcends the

oppressive dictates of patriarchal religion, and that inspires women (such as women priests

and their supporters) to agitate for reform within the Church.

1.2.1 Feminist Liberation The*logy

Feminist the*logy lies at the forefront of discourse surrounding the liberation of religious

women, as it 'bears with it a surge of ontological hope' (Daly, 1973: 32) for women 'engaged

in the exodus from patriarchy' (Ruether, 1985: 710). It must be recognized that the*logy is

'culturally conditioned, and contextually shapes, reflects and serves a particular groups'

interests' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1975: 616). During the 1970s, at the peak of the second wave

of feminism, Christian feminism arose as a movement that challenged Scripture and the basic

interpretation regarding women's roles in the Church and society (Pierce and Groothuis

2004:17) and feminist the*logy, inspired by the developments of feminism in society and in

the academy, developed as a mode of critical enquiry into the religious and societal

oppression of women.

Feminist the*logy shares the concerns and goals of the body of work referred to as liberation theology, as it positively gives voice to the new freedom of women and men, promotes new symbols, myths and lifestyles, raises new questions and opens up different horizons (see, for example, Alves, 1968; O'Connor, 1975; and Russell, 1974). However, Schüssler Fiorenza argues that 'because Christian symbols and thought are deeply embedded in patriarchal traditions and sexist structures, and because women belong to all races, classes, and cultures, its scope is more radical and universal than that of critical and liberation theology' (1993: 68).

For feminist the*logians, the major areas of concern and reform include the ordination of women, the re-imagination of Catholic rituals and scripture, reframing the relationship between clergy and laity, the recognition of equal spiritual and moral abilities, reproductive rights, contesting male dominance in Christian marriage, and the search for a feminine or gender-transcendent divine (Daggers, 2001; Clack, 1999; McEwan, 1999; McPhillips, 1999; Polinska, 2004). Their political movement for reform within the Church is motivated not solely by a quest for equality but also by the women's conviction that the*ology and Church 'have to be liberated and humanized if they are to serve people and not oppress them' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993: 63). Collins explains that:

> Feminist theologians are not trying to appropriate male religious symbols for themselves, but to right an imbalance in the system, which has shaped religious consciousness since the time of the patriarchs. But in order to right this imbalance they must first upset the applecart; which is to say that the feminist theologians are not reformers but revolutionaries' (1972:796).

Feminist the*logy has been demarcated as a 'revitalization movement' (Wallace, 1956), which is orchestrating theoretical and political change (McPhillips, 1999). It is fascinated by the vision of equality, wholeness, and freedom, based on the conviction that Christian the*logy and Christian faith are capable of transcending their own ideological sexist forms.

(Schüssler Fiorenza,1993:70). Therefore, Schneiders argues that feminist the*logy complements traditional the*logy, by 'raising to visibility that part of Christian history and experience which has been almost completely overlooked or deliberately silenced in the course of the development of the theological tradition, namely the experience and contribution of women' (1991: 1). This redefinition and this recapturing of the feminine within Christianity is vital for the empowerment of religious women, because as Daly argues, 'our liberation consists in refusing to be "the Other" and asserting instead "I am"- without making another "the Other"' (1973: 34).

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's (1975, 1993) 'critical theology of liberation'[26] offers a forceful example of a feminist the*logy, as she examines the power of feminism to transform patriarchal religions. Schüssler Fiorenza's critical theology of liberation conceives of feminism not just as a theoretical or analytical framework but rather as a women's liberation movement for societal and ecclesial change (Heyward, 1985). The 'critical theology of liberation' has a dualistic intention: firstly, to understand and appreciate women's experiences and struggles against Church and society, and second, to advocate for the full equality of women through the reform of Church structures and the*logy.

A critical the*logy of liberation calls for a paradigm shift within the Church, as it seeks to 'transform an androcentric, clerical theology that legitimates patriarchal oppressions into a theology that promotes and enhances the liberation of the people of God, the majority of whom are women' (1993: 267). Schüssler Fiorenza explains that her model is committed to the struggle against kyriarchal oppression in Church and society and seeks to interrupt the patriarchal silencing of women within the Church. This emancipatory framework does not support the integration of women into sexist structures, nor does it encourage Daly's notion

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[26] Whilst the gender neutral the*logy is used throughout this thesis, in Schüssler Fiorenza's original texts, 'theology' is used.

of utopian separation, but rather it envisages the transformation of the Church, both in terms of ecclesial structures and women's personal consciousness. Schüssler Fiorenza thereby argues that a critical theology of liberation can contribute to 'an ethos and imagination that fosters a democratic religious vision' (1993: 356) for women within the Catholic Church.

Fundamental to Schüssler Fiorenza's critical theology of liberation is the concept of '*ekklēsia*' (1993), which she defines as an 'imagined community' with the potential to foster solidarity and co-operation among women united in the struggle for their liberation and empowerment within the Church. As an articulation of feminist utopian thought, the *ekklēsia* of women, much like Christine de Pizan's 'city of ladies' ([1405] 1999) is the product of critical reimagining and imaginative projection (Castelli, 2003). Schüssler Fiorenza explains that *ekklēsia* seeks to articulate a 'common ground' for the mobilization and support of women who are committed to feminist principles and a feminist reenvisioning of Catholic communities.

Schüssler Fiorenza's model of the *ekklēsia* of women resonates strongly with foundational feminist idea of 'sisterhood' (see, for example, Morgan, 1970, 1984, 2003). According to Morgan (1984), because 'sisterhood' implies mutual commitment and unity, it provides a community of emancipatory solidarity for those who are oppressed but on their way to liberation. Building on the classical functionalist discussions of religious solidarity, the idea of communalism, which provides believers with means of exchanging, sharing and validating together their personal convictions (Hervieu- Léger, 2003: 161), emerges within the literature as a potential source of empowerment for women who wish to liberate themselves from ecclesial patriarchy. For as Audre Lorde confirms, 'without community there is no liberation, only the most temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression' (1984: 112).

The concept of *ekklēsia* is based upon the early Christian vision of the 'discipleship of equals', which advocates a fierce egalitarianism that renounces sexism, racism and exploitation of any kind. The *ekklēsia* of women seeks neither to reproduce the masculinist ordering or machismo of the Catholic Church nor to reinscribe white, heterosexist definitions of femininity as the marker for equality (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993). Its intersectional focus is not solely on women, and men are free to join the discipleship of equals in the pursuit of equality and renewal in the Church. The *ekklēsia* of women is also inherently political in nature, as it functions as a democratic assembly in explicit opposition to other hierarchical structures and as a symbolic space for the staging of a future vision for equality in the Church. As will be discussed in Chapters 4-7 of this thesis, the various communities of this study have sought to operationalize the model of *ekklēsia* espoused by Schüssler Fiorenza in their women-led communities founded upon a discipleship of equals.

1.2.2 Negotiating Feminism and Catholicism

Whilst feminist the*logy as an epistemology has been able to integrate feminist ideas with Christianity in theoretical terms, the negotiation process for religious women pursuing full and equal inclusion in the Church has been somewhat more complex in practice. Countless scholars and social commentators have expressed doubt about the compatibility of feminism and certain conservative religious traditions, and have described the category of 'Catholic feminist' as oxymoronic. For example, Mary Daly has provocatively claimed that to be a feminist and a member of the Roman Catholic Church equates to being black and a member of the Ku Klux Klan (1985).

The focal point of many studies analyzing feminist Catholics has been centred on ascertaining why women would choose to stay in an inherently misogynistic religious

tradition, and how they are able to reconcile the ideological differences between their feminist leanings and the Church, which has been described as 'anti-feminist' (Steichen, 1991) and as antithetical to the aims and intentions of feminism itself. For example, the central question posed by eminent feminist the*logian Joan Chittister in her book *Called to Question* is 'why do we, as women, continue to align ourselves with an institution so closed, so heretical, so sinful?' (2004: 169). In her study of women religious in Canada, Gervais (2012) posed a similar, albeit more pejorative, question. She asked her respondents, 'As a woman who engages in feminist spirituality and activism, and/or who promotes gender equality, how and why do you remain a member of the Catholic Church, an institution that you yourself have referred to as patriarchal and hierarchical? How do you reconcile that?' (2012: 396).

The practice of asking a feminist woman who also identifies as Catholic, 'why stay?' (Daly, 1991) is a recurring theme and a pivotal aspect of investigations of women's participation in religious structures. Whilst this question is interesting and necessary, constructing this line of enquiry as the focal point of an empirical study of feminist Catholic women limits the ultimate scope of the data collected. Such an approach implies that women should simply leave religious structures rather than focusing on how they are integrating their faith and their feminist ideology, and how they are seeking to decouple institutionalized patriarchy from traditional Catholicism. Rather than focusing on why women should leave kyriarchal Catholicism, this present study chooses to emphasize the dynamic and complex tactics of resistance, renewal, and reform being performed by feminist women and men of the female ordination movement.

This bricolaging process, however, is challenging for religious women, as they seek to embrace a feminist ethos whilst also retaining their Catholic faith (see, for example, Stopler, 2005; Henold, 2008; Woodcock Tentler, 2009). Some isolated studies, such as those

conducted by Kaufman (1991), Beaman (2001), and Olshan and Schmidt (1994),[27] have shown that women are able to mediate the collision of feminism and faith without great disruption or difficulty. However, Gervais (2012) argues that such scholarship 'usurps attention away from the tensions that women continue to experience as feminists within traditional religious institutions, as shown by other studies' (2012: 386).

For example, Christ & Plaskow (1979) speculate that the conflict between feminist ideals and Catholic spirituality presents at the least a major challenge and, at the worst, a major existential crisis for most Catholic women. According to Jablonski (1988), being a feminist and a Catholic consigns women to a perpetual state of paradox. Jablonski argues that the movement for women's ordination in the Church epitomizes this 'paradoxical situation' facing women of faith, as these women are deeply troubled by the Church's structural and ideological position on women's issues, yet struggle to break free from their Roman Catholic identity.

This research fits into a larger body of literature reviewing the negotiation of religious identities, including the work of Davidman, 1991; Dillon, 1999; Manning, 1999; and Wuthnow, 1991. Emerging research and discourse within this field is exploring how women who identify as both devout Catholics and committed feminists are able to navigate between these two apparently contradictory identities (Howard Ecklund, 2003). While many studies have emphasized the incompatibility between feminism and Catholicism, others have explored the potential for reconciliation, negotiation, and integration and the engendering of unique forms of Catholic feminism (see, for example, Barr Ebest, 2003; Chittister, 1998; Manning, 1999, Schneiders, 2004).

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[27] Kaufman (1991) found that Orthodox Jewish women avoid tensions by adopting 'proto-feminist principles'. Beaman (2001) observed how Latter-Day Saints women maintain their agency within a patriarchal religion. Similarly, Olshan and Schmidt (1994) found that despite their religion's patriarchal structure, Amish women contently exhibit feminist attributes of self-assurance, entrepreneurship, and strength.

Schneiders (2004) offers a particularly pertinent reflection on women's experiences with Catholicism and feminism through her typology of 'Feminist Catholics' and 'Catholic Feminists'. Schneiders' (2004) distinction between Feminist Catholics and Catholic Feminists recognizes both the conflicts and connections that arise for religious women and outlines the core tactics used by these women in their confrontation with ecclesial patriarchy. Within the category of 'Feminist Catholic', Schneiders (2004) identifies 'Catholic' as the substantive identity in order to demonstrate that the spirituality of these women remains within the Catholic tradition, and that they identify as belonging to the Catholic Church (Gervais, 2012). The modifier is 'Feminist', because these women have a feminist consciousness and actively oppose the patriarchal aspects of the Church. These women are usually engaged in ecclesiastical reform, and employ feminist approaches of co-operative governance as they establish alternative models of grassroots religious communities (Schneiders, 2004). Whilst Feminist Catholics are attempting to undermine the patriarchal foundations of the Church, they do not aim for institutional or structural reform. Their strategies could thus be said to align to a liberal feminist perspective.

By contrast, the 'Catholic Feminist' category gives life to radical feminist ideals. For this group, the substantive is 'Feminist', given that the primary emphasis is on feminism, and the women's spirituality is renewed in the light of developments in feminist the*logy and feminist approaches to worship. 'Catholic' is the modifier insofar as Catholic Feminists have a 'partial identification' with the institutional Church (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993), but only to the extent that they may enrich their essentially feminist spirituality with certain aspects of Catholicism that they still find meaningful (Schneiders, 2004; Gervais, 2012). The primary social location and focus of personal commitment for these women is to feminism, and this attribute is what characterizes and determines the extent of their participation in the Catholic tradition (Christ & Plaskow, 1979).

Given that Catholic Feminists' starting point is women's experience, rather than the maintenance of an androcentric religious tradition, they are neither engaged in institutional Church reform nor are they waiting for permission (Gervais, 2012). Instead, 'they are busy being Church' by concentrating on 'interconnectedness expressed in full participation, circularity of organization and shared leadership, artistic beauty, inclusiveness, and joy' (Schneiders 2004: 106, 105). Thus, Catholic Feminists are using 'women's standpoint' (Smith, 1992) to create new imaginaries and develop new rituals that are non-patriarchal and, by extension, are non-oppressive and non-exclusionary.

Several empirical studies have explored and expanded upon women's own experiential accounts of the negotiation of feminism and Catholicism, offering new voices to a body of work that has previously drawn on authors' own experiences (Chittister, 1995, 1998, 2004), journalistic accounts (Reed, 2004), or on lay women's perspectives (Howard Ecklund, 2003; Smyth, 2007).[28] Howard Ecklund's 2003 study of a Catholic congregation found that women used various modes of identity negotiation to express how feminism was lived out in relationship to Catholicism. She proposed three possibilities for such negotiation: 'women re-interpret feminism in light of Catholicism, re-interpret Catholicism in light of feminism, or see both feminism and Catholicism as very subjective and individual identities' (2003: 516).

Similarly, Gervais interviewed progressive nuns and concluded that women religious managed these tensions by employing 'various modes and degrees of acceptance, avoidance, or alternatives' (2012: 398). For most women religious, the first step in this process was to accept and acknowledge the conflicts between their faith and their feminist ideals, and to actively distinguish between the constraints of the canonical Church and the openness offered by their own vision of faith. The women religious studied by Gervais (2012) were then able to engage in acts of resistance either through avoiding Church traditions and rituals, which

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[28] See also Lamont, 1992; Thumma, 1991; Wuthnow, 1991.

they perceive to be misogynistic, or through creating viable alternatives to Catholic practices, such as gender inclusive language, which celebrate women in uplifting ways.[29]

In conjunction, several studies also emphasize the potential benefits for a feminist inspired spirituality within the Catholic tradition. Chittister (1995, 1998, 2004) and Johnson (2002a, 2002b) persistently emphasize the potential of feminist spirituality within Catholicism, and they implore the necessity of a feminist-Christian symbiosis. Winter (2002), while mindful of the pain involved in women religious gaining institutional legitimacy, contends that the co-existence of feminism and Catholicism is a viable end to pursue and that it has already yielded significant gains, albeit mainly at the grassroots level. Further, Leonard (2007, 2008) and Dunne (2008) explore the theological and spiritual alternatives that Canadian Roman Catholic women and women religious have developed in order to overcome the prohibition on women's ordination.

One such example of these alternatives is explored by Gervais (2012). Her findings illustrate how women religious, a population that is often assumed to be traditional and loyally compliant with their Church, engage in feminist-based transformative strategies to engender change both within and outside the Roman Catholic Church (Gervais, 2012). This concurrent emphasis on belonging to, whilst also changing the Church, characterizes a feminist Catholic position that reinforces 'reform from within' (Schneiders, 2004). Collectively, this research reveals that, whilst women experience considerable tension between feminism and Catholicism, they are also employing syncretic strategies to manage and integrate these two orientations (Gervais, 2011, 2012). In doing so, these women are able to transform their spiritual, governance, and activist practices and empower themselves through a progressive rendering of Catholicism, free from misogyny or domination.

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[29] See, for example, Fischer, 1998; Johnson, 2002a, 2002b.

1.2.3 Resistance and Agency

Feminist theory has a long history in debating the politics of difference, developing extensive

and detailed conceptualizations of 'the subject', 'agency', and 'resistance'. Given that

struggle, emancipation and transformative change are fundamental to feminism, its theorizing

is grounded in the issue of resistance. 'Resistance' involves reforming society or specific

organizations in order to achieve gender equality and to remove gender distinctions such as

the barriers that prevent women from competing equally with men (Witz, 1990, Allen, 1999).

The goal of resistance is the redistribution of rights to achieve gender equality, and some of

the substantial body of literature on this topic examines ways in which women can 'break

through the glass ceiling' (see Brewis and Linstead, 2004).

In discussing these attempts for transformative change, resistance is understood as 'the

politics of reform, the politics of revolution, and the politics of re-inscription, relating to

liberal, structuralist, and post-structuralist approaches in feminism, respectively' (Thomas

and Davies, 2005: 714). There are detailed debates around the meanings of identity politics,

resistance and praxis between feminists, as well as between feminism and other disciplines

devoted to understanding and changing the world for oppressed and marginalized groups

(Thomas, 2005). These debates have contributed to a sophisticated theorizing on resistance

that has centred on a number of tensions including the subject of resistance, what counts as

resistance, and when resistance counts (Thomas and Davies, 2005).

Hollander and Einwohner (2004) provide perhaps the most extensive and analytical

conceptualization of resistance within sociology. These theorists identify three central aspects

relating to sociological understandings of resistance. Firstly, the core issues of visibility and

intent highlight the interactional nature of resistance. Resistance is defined not only by

resisters' perceptions of their own behaviour, but also by targets' and/or others' recognition of and reaction to this behaviour, and understanding the interaction between each of these parties is at the core of understanding the concept of resistance (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). Second, by examining the interactional nature of resistance, the central role of power becomes apparent and salient (Tomlinson, 1998). The importance of power in this context is exemplified in Foucault's oft-cited dictum, 'where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (1978: 95).

Consequently, scholars such as Faith (1994) have adopted a dialectical materialist approach, and have posited that resistance and domination are caught in a cyclical relationship: domination incites resistance, which leads to the further exercise of power, which provokes further resistance and so forth. Flowerdew argues then that 'in situations of conflict, it may be the case that strategies of dominancy [*sic*] can only be understood within the context of the resistance strategies with which they are confronted and which they seek to overcome' (1997: 318). Finally, Hollander and Einwohner (2004) explain that the concept of resistance is socially constructed. In this assertion, they are supporting the previous work of theorists such as Gal (1995), Prasad and Prasad (1993) and Gordon (1993) who acknowledge that resisters, their targets and third party observers all participate in and contribute to this construction process.

Although many scholars have treated resistance as though it were easily identified and uncomplicated, Hollander (2002) argues that there is considerable disagreement and ambiguity concerning what this concept signifies, and as such resistance represents an inherently complex set of thoughts and behaviours. In particular, two strains of complexity can be identified throughout the literature on resistance. Firstly, it is argued that resistance does not always conform to clear-cut patterns of subversion, negation, or outright rejection.

Rather, even while resisting power, individuals or groups may simultaneously support the structures of domination that necessitate resistance in the first place (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004). Various authors have referred to this complexity as *accommodation* (Sotirin and Gottfried, 1999; Weitz, 2001), *ambiguity* (Trethewey, 1997), *complicity* (Healey, 1999; Ortner, 1995), *conformity* (St. Martin and Gavey, 1996), or *assimilation* (Faith, 1994).

These authors stress that a single activity may constitute both resistance and accommodation to different aspects of power or authority, and that actors may challenge their own positions within a given structure without challenging the validity of the overall institution (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004). The second, related source of complexity within this field is that neither resisters nor dominators are homogenous categories and inevitably there is variation and deviation in both groups (Ortner, 1995). Miller argues that most studies of resistance are problematic because 'they begin by dividing the population into the powerful and the powerless' (1997:32). Miller suggests that this false dichotomy overlooks the concomitance of intersectional systems of hierarchy, and that it fails to acknowledge that individuals can be simultaneously powerful and powerless within different systems.

Whilst this increased attention to resistance is provocative and promising, much of this work uses the concept of resistance in an unfocused way (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004: 547). Scholars such as Acker (1990) have argued that the framing of resistance within the politics of reform contributes to making gender invisible within organizations, facilitating an overtly liberal and individualistic view of success, influence and power and an under-theorizing of the ways that resistance and control are implicated in political agendas to change gender relations. Rather, an approach that understands noncompliance in the context of individual agency allows for a more holistic discussion of social actors and categories associated with opposition.

Agency is defined as 'the capacity for autonomous action and the realizing of one's own interests in the face of often overwhelming cultural sanctions and structural inequalities' (McNay, 2000: 10), and is generally performed 'against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles (whether individual or collective)' (Mahmood, 2001: 206). In other words, individuals exhibit agency when they act in unexpected ways in opposition to social institutions (Giddens, 1979) and internalized customs and traditions (Bourdieu, 1990). Agency is thus most manifest when individuals or groups resist the *status quo*.

However, rather than being understood as individual resistance to transcendent power and its systems, Elizabeth Pritchard has argued that agency is 'eminently social' (2006: 280), and is enacted through conscious connection to others. The concept of agency, and in particular the fundamental debate surrounding the structure/agency dualism, has been crucial within sociological discourse. In this debate, individuals are understood in relational terms as being subject to an external governing force defined as the system, structure, or society. Sztompka (1994) explains that, within this schema, individuals are either determined by the system (structural-model, epitomized by the work of Durkheim) or they act upon it (action-model, as espoused by Simmel and Weber). The concept of agency is essential for the action-model, which attempts to comprehend individuals' capacities in terms of acting independently of, or against, structural constraints.

Intrinsic to this analysis is a humanistic conception, linking agency to concepts such as rationality, wilful action, individual autonomy, and moral authority (Davies, 2000). Drawing on post-1970s developments in the social sciences that have theorized about the operation of human agency within structures of subordination, feminists have sought to understand the ways in which women resist the dominant male order by subverting the hegemonic meanings

of patriarchal cultural practices and reappropriating them for their own interests and agendas (Mahmood, 2001).

Various scholars in the field have operationalized the concept of agency to formulate significant observations relating to women's involvement in patriarchal religions. These include questions such as, why are educated women drawn to conservative religions? (Chong, 2006; Davidman, 1991), and how do they make sense of such religions? (Chen, 2005). Are these women opposed to equality and freedom? (Gallagher, 2004; Stacey and Gerard, 1990). Are women contributing to the reproduction of their own domination? (Mahmood, 2001). Avishai (2008), using the notion of capacity for agency, argues that the implicit assumption that religious women are oppressed or are operating with a false consciousness underlies the majority of studies into women's religious lives.

Drawing on a large body of scholarship focusing on how women negotiate their lives within patriarchal systems (see, for example, Boddy, 1989; and Kandiyoti 1988), feminist scholars of religion have attempted to illuminate religious women's agency and therefore to overcome characterizations that religious women are victims or unwitting 'doormats' (Stacey and Gerrard, 1990) when their beliefs differ from modern and secular understandings of gender equality (see Burke, 2012; Griffith 1997; Mahmood 2005). By focusing on and elucidating religious women's agency, scholars understand these women as actors rather than as simply acted upon by male-dominated institutions (Burke, 2012).

Within this discussion, a model of the different types of agency performed by women who participate in gender-traditional religions has been expounded by Burke (2012). Burke draws heavily upon the contributions of Orit Avishai's (2008) influential study of women's agency in Orthodox Judaism, and isolates four distinct articulations of noncompliance in a religious setting. These are *resistance* agency, *empowerment* agency, *instrumental* agency, and

compliant agency. This typology is functional in establishing the nature and forms of women's agency within the context of organised religion. Firstly, the resistance agency approach focuses on women who attempt to challenge or change some aspect of their religion (see for example, Arthur 1998; Bayes and Tohidi 2001; Brink and Mencher, 1997; Gerami and Lehnerer, 2001; Hartman, 2007; Katzenstein, 1998; Salime, 2008; Weaver, 1995). Scholars such as Manning (1999) and Stacey and Gerrard (1990) make direct links to resistance agency and the activist imperatives espoused by the feminist movement.

Women's resistance or noncompliance has been documented within many gender-traditional faiths and almost all Christian denominations within the United States (Burke, 2012). This resistance can be overt: for example, Katzenstein describes American feminists within the Catholic Church who 'challenged, discomfited, and provoked, unleashing a wholesale disturbance of long settled assumptions, rules, and practices' (1998: 7), and Burke discusses women who have also created informal networks of sympathizers and formal events to demand Church reform (Burke, 2012).

Within other faiths, the forms of resistance may be less explicit and more moderate in orientation. For example, Arthur (1998) documented Mennonite women who contested men's control of their bodies by deviating from strict dress codes and wearing cinched belts around their waists in order to accentuate their womanly silhouette. These slight modifications exhibit agency through what Judith Butler defines as 'the possibility of a variation', which disrupts the 'regulated process of repetition' of the *status quo* (Butler 1999: 185).

However, following on from broader critiques concerning the concept of resistance, the notion of agency as resistance has been problematized by the implicit correlation between agency and sedition. Feminist scholars of religion, especially those focusing on women in conservative monotheistic religious traditions, such as Abu-Lughod (1990); Griffith (1997)

and Mahmood (2005), insist that it is overly simplistic and erroneous to understand personal agency exclusively in terms of resistance.

Writing in relation to Muslim women, Mahmood argues that defining agency in this way excludes the perspectives of women who comply with aspects of their religion, and 'ignores other modalities of agency whose meaning and effect are not captured within the logic of subversion and resignification of hegemonic terms of discourse' (2005: 153). Such an understanding assumes that women adhere to religious prescriptions uncritically and negates the possibility for personally fulfilling and self-constituted articulations of faith (see for example, Beck, 2010). Many studies demonstrate that religious women are able to resist official dogma through partial compliance as they adapt their religion to the realities of their lives (Pevey et al., 1996) and create individual interpretations of Church teachings and practices (Chen, 2005; Gallagher, 2003, 2004).[30]

Second, the empowerment agency approach focuses on how women reinterpret religious doctrine or practices in ways that make them feel empowered in their everyday life (Burke, 2012; Beaman 2001; Read and Bartkowski 2000; Wolkomir 2004).[31] Like the previously-discussed resistance agency, empowerment agency assumes that the foundational elements and essence of gender-traditional religions are inherently patriarchal and are subsequently oppressive for women. However, unlike resistance agency, the empowerment model does not require that women challenge or attempt to change religious beliefs or practices themselves, but rather that women change their response to beliefs or practices (see for example, Brink and Mencher 1997; Franks 2001; Griffith 1997).[32] Burke (2012) explains that proponents of

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[30] See also Griffith, 1997; Hartman, 2007.
[31] See also Brasher 1998; Brink and Mencher 1997; Elson 2007; Franks 2001; Griffith 1997; Ozorak 1996; Pevey et al. 1996; Rose 1987.
[32] See also Brasher 1998; Beaman 2001; Elson 2007; Ozorak 1996; Pevey et al. 1996; Read and Bartkowski 2000; Rose 1987; Wolkomir, 2004.

this model analyze how women utilize religion to empower themselves in their daily lives, focusing mostly on affect and subjective understandings of how religion makes women feel.

Scholars have harnessed these types of empowerment arguments in their discussions of women who actively choose wear the Islamic headscarf or veil in Western countries.[33] In this regard, the contributions of Bartkowski and Read (2003) and Mir (2009) reveal that, far from representations of the veil as epitomizing women's subordination to men, veiling may actually allow women to feel empowered within a cultural context that overtly sexualizes women's body through clothing, hairstyles, and make-up. According to Afshar (2008), women who choose to veil may also feel that they are contesting and counteracting Western cultural imperialism and pernicious systems of Islamophobia. However, just as with the resistance agency model, within the empowerment model, 'women who do not perceive a disconnect between their religious faith and the modern world in which they live or who do not perceive this disconnect to be problematic are excluded from being agents' (Burke, 2012: 126).

Third, in contrast to the empowerment model, the instrumental approach focuses on the non-religious positive outcomes of religious practice, rather than on subjective feelings of emancipation. Avishai (2008) categorizes this mode of agency as 'strategic compliance.' In this model, agency is located in the strategic utilization and navigation of religious traditions and practices to meet the demands of contemporary life (Avishai, 2008). Empirical studies from scholars such as Chong (2008), Jalal (1991), Mir (2009) and Burke (2012) identify

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[33] For example, accounts of women refusing to adhere to veiling practices were popularized in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, and countless memoirs written by Muslim women express their agency through their resistance to Muslim men and the oppressive tenets of Islamic law (Mahmood, 2009; Kortweg, 2008). Other studies document the resistance agency enacted by Muslim women's groups as they gain visibility within their communities and advocate for women's civil rights related to divorce, alimony, child custody laws, and access to education and employment (Bayes and Tohidi, 2001; Salime, 2008).

women as strategic, agentic subjects who use religion for extra-religious ends, such as economic opportunities, domestic relations, political ideologies, and cultural affiliation.[34]

For example, Chen (2005) observes that Taiwanese women who converted to Buddhism or Christianity after immigrating to the United States exercise their religion in their negotiation of patriarchal family structures. Gallagher's 2007 study of Syrian Muslim women also affirms the potential instrumentality of religion for women by explaining that these women routinely employed religious rationales and justifications to eschew unappealing employment prospects.

This approach to understanding the capacity of women's action in religion is informed by a theoretical tradition in the sociology of culture that conceptualizes religion as a cultural repertoire and a dynamic tool kit that does not prescribe action but rather creates a set of schemas and possibilities for action (See for example, Swidler, 1986 and Sewell, 1992). Whilst the instrumental approach extends the framing of agency beyond the dichotimization of subordination versus subversion, empowerment, or accommodation, this analysis still rests on problematic assumptions (Avishai, 2008). Notably, this approach assumes that all religious observance by women is premeditated and calculated and negates the transcendent mysticism of faith that impels women to seek religious fulfilment. This approach also overlooks the structural, social, and cultural factors that constitute and inform religious adherence, and it fails to recognize that in many cases religious devotion is not strategic but is rather a 'mode of conduct and a state of being' (Avishai, 2008: 412).

The final approach, compliant agency, attempts to overcome the limitations of the previous three approaches by recognizing agency in women who participate in gender-traditional religions for reasons that do not conform to notions of resistance, empowerment or

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[34] For further studies which highlight the instrumentality of agency in religion, see Afshar (2008); Bartkowski and Read (2003); Davidman (1991); Franks (2001); Gallagher (2003); Orsi (1996).

instrumentality. This approach focuses on the multiple and diverse ways in which women conform to the rules of gender-traditional religions. Avishai's (2008) 'doing religion' frame has been particularly meaningful for discourse surrounding women's active compliance in religious structures. Drawing on a study that examined how Orthodox Jewish Israeli women observe, negotiate, and make sense of regulations of marital sexuality, Avishai explains women's agency as religious conduct, or the 'doing of religion.' Rather than asking why religious women comply, or assuming that women's compliance signals their oppression, the 'doing religion' frame examines agency as religious conduct and religiosity as a constructed status.

By focusing on 'doing religion' as an articulation of agency, Avishai's frame considers how women articulate and perform their religious observance. Similarly, Mahmood examines compliance as an agentic strategy through the use of Foucault's model of subjectivation, in which '… the very processes and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means through which she becomes a self-conscious entity and agent' (2005: 17). Mahmood seeks to disrupt models that exclusively position subjects in opposition to cultural norms, and instead proposes an alternative formulation of agency that understands the processes by which women consciously embrace and strive to embody these norms.

The work of scholars such as Bauman (2008), Bilge (2010), and Hoyt 2007 also builds upon this idea that the observance of religious ideals does not imply outright acquiescence. [35] Indeed, many recent ethnographies have argued that women within conservative traditions negotiate for their own needs and interests, challenging and changing the boundaries of their traditions, but within limits. In a similar manner to Gervais' 2011 discussion of feminist Catholics and Catholic feminists, these religious women are able to integrate their faith with their feminist ideology, and perform their religious activities in self-fulfilling ways.

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[35] See also Avishai 2008; Bracke 2003; Griffith 1997; Korteweg 2008; and Mack 2003.

Mahmood argues that even when women's actions seem to reinscribe what appear to be 'instruments of their own oppression,' the social analyst can look to 'moments of disruption of, and articulation of points of opposition to, male authority that are either located in the interstices of a woman's consciousness (often read as a nascent feminist consciousness) or in the objective effects of the women's actions, however unintended they may be' (2001:206). Of course even compliant women have agency, but their active negotiation of that compliance does not make their actions inherently 'feminist'. Otherwise we could say that all women are feminist and that patriarchy, male supremacy, and kyriarchy are simply discursive constructs with no basis in actual relationships of power. One cannot defend conservative religious stances embraced by women by trying to squeeze them into a 'feminist' frame. The exercise of agency and feminist action are not synonymous *per se*. The logic deployed in this thesis is that feminist action requires a further dimension of understanding.

Clearly women's conscious involvement in gender-traditional religions is a complex proposition for scholarly investigation. Rather than framing women's experiences with conservative religions within the overly simplistic dichotomy that positions agency against complicity, and rather than assuming that all instances of women acting within religious traditions are inherently feminist, conservative scholars need to re-evaluate their assumptions about religious agency, subjectivity, and the unique forces that drive and constitute religious women. Given this understanding I argue that the analytical tools used to assess religious women's agency must be redefined in the light of this revision. Discussions of the liberatory potential of religion for women need to advance beyond the resistance paradigm and address 'ends other than emancipation' by recognizing the feminist meanings and significance of religious devotions in women's lives (Hollywood, 2004: 528).

As has been set out across this Literature Review, I would contend that a constructive way to achieve this aim is the application of an intersectional approach to understanding the

motivations, will and consciousness of women's agency as they negotiate the religious realm. An intersectional understanding allows for both structural and symbolic interpretations of women's participation in religious traditions, and it addresses issues relating to the influence of cultural, racial, and familial factors in their decision to partake in formal religion. Intersectionality allows scholars to 'make sense of the complexity, ambiguity, and transience of religious traditions as they come in contact with competing ideas about women, gender, family, and sexuality' (Bilge, 2010: 429).

An intersectional approach thereby provides an expansive vision of agency, subject, autonomy and empowerment within the context of women's participation in gender-traditional religions. Furthermore, as Bilge (2010) argues, making intersectionality converse with poststructuralist accounts to rethink religious agency will also push intersectionality scholarship into new theoretical grounds, where it can systematically attend to the role of social divisions such as gender, race, and class within the religious sphere.

Despite the problematic nature of agency, it must still be acknowledged that debates over agency for women who participate in gender-traditional religions continue to offer theoretical gains for feminist sociology and offer promising directions for future research. For as feminist the*logian Mary Hunt confirms, 'the point is that at a time when participation in most parishes is not good for the spiritual health of feminists, women's religious agency is the key for women to regain power over their spiritual lives' (2011: 87). For example, Gervais (2011) conducted an insightful empirical study of feminist ideals and practices amongst a group of women religious in Ontario, Canada. The study explored these women's resistance against patriarchal control within the Church, and outlined the feminist-oriented governance, spiritual, and activist practices that they have reshaped to be more inclusive and progressive.

The focus of Gervais' sample is interesting, as women religious are conventionally understood as compliant subjects of the Church who follow their vows of obedience and who conform to Church dictates and regulations. However, these women overtly and covertly resisted the controlling prohibitions of the Church through both action and inaction. These women would engage in what Schneiders defines as 'activism from within' (1995), where they would remain a part of the institutional Church but would 'strategically boycott' (Gervais, 2011), abandon, or reshape traditional Catholic practices, which they found to be inimical to their feminist ideals.

These agentic practices serve as a testament to the intensity of their resolve against the institutional Church, as well as their desire to assert their own self-determinism and autonomy in their spiritual lives. The women religious of Gervais' study thereby gave voice to the auto-ethnographic observations of Feminist the*logian Dorothy Pommerleau, who expressed that '[she] was raised a "religious object"… [she is] now in the process of becoming a "religious subject"—someone who names and creates their own spirituality, someone who joins hands with other oppressed women and caring men to create a renewed Church' (Pommerleau, 1978: 20).

By intertwining their advancements in women-centred spirituality, governance, and activism, Gervais argues that these feminist women religious must be recognized as 'protagonists and midwives of new ways,' who are transforming their own consciousness and 'propelling change by, with, and for women towards indispensable spiritual, institutional, and societal rewards' (2011: 13).   The findings of Gervais' study thus demonstrate the powerful ways in which feminist women are able to liberate themselves from oppression within the institutional Church, and attests to the benefits of an empirical approach that gives voice to the agency and empowerment of women, rather than merely focusing on ideas of domination , submission, and repression.

Chapter 2: *His*tory or *Her*story? Competing Perspectives Underpinning the Issue of Female Ordination in the Catholic Church.

2.1 His-story of the Ban of Women's Ordination and the Roman Catholic Church

The dominant voice in the institutional narrative of the Roman Catholic Church has always come from a male perspective, which has consistently silenced and suppressed the contribution of women. Throughout the history of the Church mainstream theologians have continued to oppose the ordination of women, appealing to a mixture of scripture, Church tradition and natural law. For, as Pope John Paul II declared:

> [The Church] holds that it is not admissible to ordain women to the priesthood, for very fundamental reasons. These reasons include: the example recorded in the Sacred Scriptures of Christ choosing his Apostles only from among men; the constant practice of the Church, which has imitated Christ in choosing only men; and [the Church's] living teaching authority which has consistently held that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is in accordance with God's plan for his Church (*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 1994).

A common theme used by the Church throughout history to justify the lesser status of women has been the presumed ontological differences between men and women, which has been reflected in Catholic thought and the*logy as well as in the promulgation of official doctrines and papal decrees. This belief in the ontological difference between men and women provides the strictest separation between male and female roles (Butler, 1990) with the necessary corollary of limiting women's participation within the Church. By only calling men to the priestly order and ministry the Church 'intends to remain faithful to the type of ordinated ministry willed by Jesus Christ and maintained by the Apostles' (*Inter Insigniores*, 1976). The magisterium's account of the history of the Church, and its claim that there is no evidence of women ministering throughout the ages, therein seeks to affirm and protect the authority of patriarchal tradition within this religious institution.

Religious ideas, ideologies and traditions 'do not grow in vacuums' but rather they 'must always be viewed within the particular context of their location in history and in time'

(Sharma, 2011: 28). The Roman Catholic Church has been ideologically structured around patriarchal attitudes and has long viewed women as biologically and spiritually inferior to men (Tavard, 1973). Such reasoning has been used to disqualify women from holding positions of clerical authority and to relegate women to a position of relative powerlessness within the Church. It is necessary to trace the place of women in the Early Church and in Church thought in order to understand how such oppressive forms of ecclesial patriarchy have developed and become embedded within the Roman Catholic tradition. A thorough analysis of early religion, archaic and pre-historic societies and the roots of patriarchy is well beyond the intentions and scope of this thesis; however this chapter will briefly consider some of the formative elements in the evolution of patriarchy within the Roman Catholic Church.

Christianity emerged in a context in that was dominated by Judaism and Greco-Roman culture in which men were placed in positions of authority in Church and in society. In the period spanning the first to fifth centuries, the Church became increasingly hierarchical, bureaucratized and institutionalized through the development of its doctrines, teachings and practices (Cardman, 1999). As it assumed a greater scope of authority in the economic, social and political atmosphere of the Greco-Roman world the Church came to adopt, ostensibly in the interests of gaining legitimacy and acceptance, the cultural values of that environment, which in turn led to the increasing marginalization of women in Church ministries and in the Church's overarching ethos. As the Church became organized around the patriarchal culture in which it was embedded, the roles of women became increasingly more restricted (Sawyer, 1996). In particular, the Church was able to eliminate women from ecclesial leadership through women's domestication and subordination under male authority in the home, in society, and more particularly, in the Church (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993).

This structural exclusion of women was reinforced by the core thinkers and theologians within the Early Church whose pronouncements provided an ideological justification for the inequality of women in the Christian community. For as Schüssler Fiorenza argues: 'hand in hand with repression within the Church went a theological defence for such an oppression of women' (1993: 69). Texts from seminal theological figures such as Tertullian (155-240 AD), Epiphanius (310-403 AD), John Chrysostom (349-403 AD) and Augustine (354-430 AD) during this period of institutionalization each display a systematic tendency to control, silence and exclude women. These texts and these patterns of thought both reflected and shaped the dominant attitudes towards women in the Church.

Theological writing on this subject remained consistent for the following millennium. These ideologues disseminated the normative beliefs that women were to be viewed, in the words of Thomas Aquinas, as 'defective and misbegotten,' as 'naturally subject to man,' (cited in Kirk-Duggan and Torjesen, 2010: 99), and, according to Tertullian, as 'the devil's gateway' (cited in Ussher, 1997: 381). In particular, the writings of Tertullian, a 3rd century Christian theologian, argued that because women share the same sex as Eve they must also possess the same sinful and morally corrupt disposition as this much maligned biblical figure. Eve and the Old Testament have long served as primary sources for women's oppression at the hands of religion (see for example Ruether, 1975).[36] The patriarchal construction of Eve, espoused and perpetuated by Tertullian, had a great influence on early thought within the emerging Church. Such patterns of thinking allowed men to isolate women as the source of evil and suffering in the world and justified the Church's control of female bodies and female sexuality.

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[36] Woodhead notes the earliest Christian theological basis for forming a position on the roles of women is in the Book of Genesis, where readers are drawn to the conclusion that women are below men and 'that the image of God shines more brightly' in men than women (2004: 92).

Subsequently, Thomas Aquinas, the leading Dominican scholastic theologian of the 13th Century, denounced leadership by women and reasserted deeply held cultural prejudices that women were inferior to men, both by nature and by law. Aquinas sought to finish any dispute over women's role in society by advocating an Aristotelian approach to understanding women. Aristotle believed that women should be viewed as inherently flawed beings that lack equal capacity with men for mental, volitional and physical prowess (Ruether, 2011). For, as Aquinas explains, 'woman is something defective and accidental … simply a failed man' (cited in Hart, 2011). Because of this presumed ontological difference women are deemed to be inherently subordinate to men and incapable of exercising public leadership in society or the Church. According to Aquinas, because women are 'lacking full humanness they cannot represent Christ, the exemplar of full humanity, and so cannot be ordained to the priesthood' (Ruether, 2011: 65).

This ontological justification continues to be the foundation of the argument against the possibility of ordaining women into the priesthood today and is reflected in various Church doctrines including the *Inter Insigniores* Declaration (1976), discussed below. It is somewhat understandable that both the Church Fathers and Thomas Aquinas, because of their misinformation about genetics and biology as well as their blind acceptance of the patriarchal image and status of women in their times, fell into such grave errors (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993). However, it is inexplicable that the Catholic Church seeks to justify such errors in the current century through its continuation of gendered discrimination and institutionalized misogyny. Unfortunately, the Thomist devaluation of women continues to influence Catholic thought and practice, most glaringly through the prohibition of female ordination.

2.1.1 Doctrinal Perspective

The Catholic doctrine on the ordination of women, as expressed in Canon 1024 and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, is that 'only a baptized man validly receives ordination' (Canon 1024, 1577). Thus, Canon 1024, through its patent omission of females, denies full membership to women in the Church. Interestingly, however, Canon 1024 seems to stand in stark contrast to Canon 849 which states that baptism is the gateway to the sacraments, including Holy Orders (Meehan, 2010).

A recurring theme throughout the unique brand of liberation theology espoused by the female ordination movement is the idea that baptism is a redemptive force which casts all those baptized into the Roman Catholic Church as equal and inseparable by class, race, or gender (see for example Raming, 2004). Proponents of female ordination are thereby troubled by the differences between Canon 849 and Canon 1024 and the apparent contradiction between baptismal equality and gendered determinism. For members of the female ordination movement baptism, as the central and foundational sacrament, should be the only necessary prerequisite for all additional sacraments, including ordination. However, the Catholic Church teaches that male priesthood is a matter of divine law, meaning that it comes directly from 'God's will' and is thus doctrinal.

The Church's prohibition of the ordination of women is justified by the androcentric assumptions contained within the doctrine of apostolic succession. That doctrine is founded upon the origins of the Early Church in which Jesus made the twelve apostles the first priests. This understanding of apostolic succession assumes that each validly-ordained Catholic priest can trace his episcopal consecration in an unbroken line back to the original apostles. Since there is an assumption that the twelve apostles were all males, this doctrine holds that only men are eligible to be ordained as priests. The Church teaching on the restriction of its ordination to men is that masculinity was integral to the personhood of both Jesus and the

men he called forward to be apostles *(Inter Insigniores*, 1976, discussed in more detail below).

Through this teaching the Catholic Church differentiates an ontological or essential difference between maleness and femaleness as two distinct ways of expressing common humanity. Consequently, Kelley has argued that this doctrine 'puts women in both a position of dependence and subordination that ultimately maintains the patriarchal structure of Catholic Christianity' (2011: 1218-9). Moreover, the doctrine of apostolic succession has recently been subjected to a wide range of criticisms, attacking both its theological and its historical basis. The*logians such as Father Richard McBrien have argued that we must 'reject the simplistic, mechanistic notion of apostolic succession', which he likens to simply 'passing on the baton' (2008: 26).

Further, Father Francis Sullivan, Professor of ecclesiology, writes that 'neither the New Testament nor early Christian history offers support for a notion of apostolic succession as an unbroken line of episcopal ordination from Christ through the apostles down through the centuries to the bishops of today' (cited in McBrien, 2008). Consequently, the Vatican's declaration that apostolic succession is 'by divine institution and is without reproach' (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1965) must be seriously interrogated. If this doctrine lacks historical and the*logical validity, the whole basis of the masculinist paradigm of Catholic priesthood can be understood as being built upon false foundations. The respondents in this study, who will be identified in more detail in Chapter Three, mentioned these doctrinal justifications for banning women's ordination and categorized these teachings as a misappropriation of theology used to further oppress and restrict women within the Church.

Despite these questionable underpinnings, the paradigm of Catholic priesthood as being reserved for men has been institutionalized and enshrined through various Papal encyclicals

and through Vatican correspondence that affirm the androcentrism of Catholic ministry.

These declarations and writings are representative of the Church's theological position on the

issue of female ordination. I will look to three core Papal writings in particular that exemplify

and that have established the official institutional position on the issue of ordination. These

documents are *Inter Insigniores* (1976), *Mulieris Dignatiem* (1988), and *Ordinatio*

Sacredotalis (1994).

Firstly, in January 1976 the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) issued the

Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood, also

referred to as *Inter Insigniores,* which stands as a definitive authority in the Church's

justification for prohibiting female ordination. *Inter Insigniores* states that for doctrinal,

historical, and theological reasons the Church 'does not consider herself authorized to admit

women to priestly ordination'. This Declaration was issued following the Episcopal Church's

decision to allow the ordination of women and it was perceived as a signal that the Vatican

wanted to dispel any speculation that the Catholic Church would follow this religious

institution's example (Jablonski, 1988). The overarching reasons given for upholding the

prohibition of female ordination were the Church's determination to remain faithful to its

traditions, its fidelity to Christ's will and most importantly the iconic value of male

representation of the divine (Swidler & Swidler, 1977).

This Declaration first advanced the *in persona Christi* argument, which contends that women

cannot be ordained as priests as they do not bear a physical resemblance to Jesus, whom they

would be representing (Daigler, 2012). *Inter Insigniores* extends the conception of

ontological gender differences espoused in the doctrine of apostolic succession, offering a

biologistic rationale for limiting the priesthood to men. In strikingly similar terms to the

claims of Thomas Aquinas, this argument rests on the assumption that maleness is intrinsic to

the essential nature of Christ and so women are incapable of symbolizing Christ. *Inter Insigniores* explains that, although this position may cause pain, its positive value will become apparent in the long run because it will be constructive in deepening the Church's understanding of the differing roles of men and women (Haskins, 2003).

Second, *Mulieris Dignatiem,* or 'On the Dignity and Vocation of Women,' was an apostolic letter issued by Pope John Paul II in 1988, and it can be understood as reiterating the Roman Catholic attitude towards women and as setting out appropriate roles for women in the contemporary Church. It is crucial to consider this letter as it outlines the 'special' vocations reserved for women within the Christian community and in turn it uses these restrictive gender roles to justify why women cannot be ordained as priests. John Paul II described himself as the 'feminist Pope' and this letter was his attempt to call for the development of a 'new feminism' designed to honour and celebrate the 'feminine genius' of women (Kaveny, 2011). John Paul II's vision for this new form of Catholic 'feminism' was one that emphasized sexual difference, glorified women's essential role as mother and wife and championed papal loyalty. This 'new feminism' advanced an outlook on women that was severely limited and that served to sustain the primacy of patriarchal gender norms.

John Paul II's ideas concerning women were built upon on a conceptual slippage between 'feminism' and 'the feminine', so that his 'new feminism' was recast to represent something entirely opposite to the ideals of feminist thought. *Mulieris Dignatiem* advocated Christian complementarianism, the view that men and women are 'equal but different'; that is, that men and women are equally valuable but that there are differing, often non-overlapping, roles between men and women in terms of marriage, Church leadership and otherwise. *Mulieris Dignatiem* assigned primary leadership roles to men and support roles to women based on the interpretation of certain biblical passages. In particular, John Paul II considered issues like

Mary as the Mother of Christ, the story of Genesis, and the Church as the 'bride of Christ' (Kaveny, 2011) to emphasize the importance of traditional gender roles for women.

In *Mulieris Dignatiem* John Paul II designated mother and virgin as the only acceptable vocations for women in the Church, and he argued that Christianity values women who fulfil these roles with grace and humility. Rather than outrightly prohibiting the possibility of women climbing the clerical ranks, this declaration serves to constrain the perceived talents and gifts of women in the Church. The complementarian ethic used by John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignatiem* is thus simply a discursive ploy, also used by men within other religious traditions, to cloak the same old patriarchal hierarchy with the Emperor's new 'feminist' clothes. *Mulieris Dignatiem* compelled women to submit to these limited and highly feminized traditional roles and it sought to use these patriarchal gender norms as a defence for maintaining an exclusively male clergy.

Third, following his 'feminist period' John Paul II reverted to the doctrinal position that strictly interdicted the possibility of female ordination in the Catholic Church. Pope Paul VI's earlier *Inter Insigniores* Declaration against the ordination of women was repeated and reaffirmed by Pope John Paul II's *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* in 1994, which made the teaching definitive and forbade any future discussion on this topic. In this apostolic letter, known in English as 'On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone,' John Paul II attempted to dismiss categorically any claims that God was capable of calling women to be priests in the Catholic Church. John Paul II reutilized previous papal justifications for banning female ordination, arguing that Jesus chose only men as his apostles and that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is in accordance with God's plan (Manson, 2014).

However, in an attempt to mollify or perhaps to pacify the female contingent within the Church, John Paul II also drew upon the complementarian ethic embedded in *Mulieris*

Dignatiem (1988) stating that the role and presence of women within the Church 'although not linked to the ministerial priesthood remains absolutely necessary and irreplaceable' (*Ordinatio Sacredotalis*, 1994). John Paul II used these claims to conclude that 'in order that all doubt may be removed … I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgement is to be held definitively by all the Church's faithful.'

Ordinatio Sacerdotalis was not issued under the extraordinary papal magisterium as an *ex cathedra* statement and so it is not considered infallible in itself.[37] However, in 1995 the CDF issued its opinion that the teaching of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* had been 'set forth infallibly by the ordinary and universal Magisterium' and accordingly was 'to be held definitively, as belonging to the deposit of faith' (as cited in Daigler, 2012). There is still much debate as to whether *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* truly qualifies as an infallible teaching with many declaring this position to be a blatant case of 'creeping infallibility' (Robinson, 2008). Meehan, for example, argues that this 'teaching cannot be considered to be infallible, because it does not reflect the *sensus fidelium*, the sense of the faith believing community' (Meehan, 2010: 71). Meehan's assertion is supported by recent survey statistics,[38] as outlined in the introduction, which capture the extensive support for women's ordination within the Catholic community.

Nevertheless, this Declaration has attained the status of infallibility within Church law and Church teaching within the current Papal administration. It was *Ordinatio Sacredotalis* that Pope Francis invoked during his famed interview aboard an aeroplane in 2013 when he firmly stated that 'with regard to the ordination of women, the Church has spoken and says no … That door is closed' (cited in Manson, 2014: 2). Aside from the unfortunate parallels

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[37] The term *ex cathedra* is used to describe an official pronouncement from the Pope on doctrines of faith and morals that is considered to be binding and infallible, and which must be accepted by all Catholics (Sullivan, 1983).

[38] See for example, the 2015 Shriver Report, the 2014 Univision Poll, and the 2005 Gallup Organization Survey.

drawn between the Church's stance towards female ordination and its handling of clerical sexual abuse behind closed doors, this statement is significant as it reflects the inexorability of the magisterium's proscription of female ordination. The effect is that no one expects a reversal in official Vatican policy surrounding the possibility of women's ministry in the Church in the immediate future. This conservatism on the issue of women within the Church contrasts markedly with Pope Francis' liberal standpoint in other areas built upon a commitment to transformation within the Church, to social justice, and to the liberation of marginalized peoples.

Accordingly, the respondents were divided as to whether the newly-appointed Pope Francis could reform this deeply patriarchal institutional structure and whether he could truly 'offer hope for women in the Church' (Stanley, 2013: 12). Academic discourse surrounding the emergence of Pope Francis is generally confined to perspectives in which he 'advances a hopeful future for a liberated Church' (Kasper, 2015: 16) and that 'signal his intent that henceforth things [will] be very different for the Church and its billion or more members' (Vallely, 2013: 3). However, Pope Francis was a polarizing subject for the respondents, because 'even though Francis is more progressive than the others before him, he is still unwilling to budge and is set on saving the priesthood for the boys' (Duffy, Interview, 12/04/14). Ultimately Pope Francis' closed policy towards women's ordination has served to nullify the potential impact that he could have had in renewing the hierarchy and structures of the Church and it has left the respondents dissatisfied, disappointed and longing for a Pope who acknowledges women in a meaningful way.

Moreover, many respondents conveyed the opinion that irrespective of any limited contributions that Pope Francis may have made thus far his ultimate ability to inspire change within Catholicism was constrained by institutional factors within the Church, such as the aforementioned doctrinal teachings of Catholic Christianity. There was a sense of scepticism

amongst the respondents because 'in the Roman Catholic Church even if you have a good guy at the top, he can't make real change unless everyone below him also carried out those changes' (Judy Lee). As will be outlined in Chapter 7 on the MMOJ case study, the respondents were deeply troubled by the structural conditions of the institutional Catholic Church that imposes an ecclesial hierarchy built upon patriarchy, power and prestige. Therefore, rather than pinning their hopes on the progressive outlook of Francis, MMOJ, Good Shepherd, and MMACC shared a commitment to transforming the structures and hierarchy of the Church to create the necessary conditions in which women and men could both minister in the Church.

Given the deep misogyny embedded within the Roman Catholic Church's doctrinal position on ordination it is unsurprising that there has been a range of feminist objections to this androcentric practice. In stark contrast to the *Inter Insigniores* issued the same year, a 1976 report by the Pontifical Biblical Commission supports the research of Scripture scholars, canon lawyers and many faithful Catholics who have studied the Scriptures and concludes that there is no justification in the Bible for excluding women from the priesthood (Bourgeois, 2013). Feminist the*logians have analyzed each of the Church's documents prohibiting the ordination of women and have found that none of them could be considered conclusive because of their questionable assumptions about human nature, their outdated understanding of biology, and the inconsistency of their theological symbolism (Van der Meer, 1973).

The Catholic prohibition of female ordination is understood by feminist the*logians as resting upon 'a false interpretation of carefully selected religious texts … executed almost exclusively by powerful male leaders within the Christian faith to proclaim the lower status of women and girls' (Carter, 2014: 3-4). The*logians have struggled to reconcile the Church's one-dimensional analysis of the necessity of biological maleness as a qualification

for ordination with the Church's rich emancipatory foundations in which Jesus was 'the greatest liberator of women' (Carter, 2014: 56) and disseminated a brand of the*logy which was founded upon egalitarianism.

Some the*logians, such as the eminent Karl Rahner (2011), have even suggested that such literal essentialism about Christ's maleness and its necessity for his sacramental representation is heretical. Those arguing for women's ministry claim biblical support for the notion of gender equality and nondifference and point to passages in the New Testament Churches that openly depict women serving in positions of authority (Adam, 2007; Chaves, 1997; Witherington, 1988). In particular, feminist the*logians have drawn heavily upon the New Testament verse: 'in Christ there is neither male nor female, we all are one' (Galatians 3: 28) to argue that men and women can provide equal images of God, thus making them fully capable of representing Christ as priests.

In this sense, the*logy has been utilized as a tool for confronting and overwriting the misappropriation of biblical texts throughout Catholic doctrine. Through this theopolitical debate, Catholic feminists have come to realize that power, not purity of doctrine, was at stake. The hierarchy's refusal to ordain women became representative of institutionalized machismo and gendered politics within the Church more broadly, and served to illustrate the rampant authoritarianism that has circumvented the relationship between women and clergy within the institutional Church. For feminist Catholics, their mission became imbued with a political imperative to demand equality in the Church and to secure the sacramental agency of women within a transformed religious institution.

2.2 *Her-story*: Working Towards Women's Ordination in the Church

For the female ordination movement the first stage in this 'cartography of struggle' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993) has been to challenge and to rewrite the patriarchal history of the Church that had previously rendered feminist challenges to elite male power invisible and non-existent. Fuelled by a desire to overturn the hegemonic belief in the ontological deficiencies of women, this movement holds firmly that 'it is not women's inferiority that has determined their historical insignificance: it is their historical insignificance that has doomed them to inferiority' (Beauvoir, 2009: 151). Feminist scholars, therefore, rightly argue that for too long the Christian tradition has been recorded and studied by theologians, who have consciously or unconsciously, understood reality from a patriarchal perspective of male dominance (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993).

The female ordination movement has subsequently sought to apply critical feminist revisionism to the history of women in the Catholic Church in order to develop a meaningful 'herstory' built upon an 'emancipatory intellectual history and creative vision of women in biblical religions' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993: 4). Herstory, as a critical feminist approach, emphasizes that women's lives, deeds, and participation have been neglected or undervalued in conventional histories (Miller & Swift, 1976). The female ordination movement has appropriated the use of herstory as a political tool to expose the insidious patriarchy of Catholic Christianity and to recapture the rich legacy of female ministry and vision within the Church.

Accordingly, feminists involved in the female ordination movement have sought to reclaim the ancient heritage of women priests and female ministry as a means of establishing the legitimacy of their cause. Whilst the Vatican hierarchy maintains that women have never held important leadership or clerical positions within the Catholic Church, recent scholarship points to the existence of female apostles, deacons, priests and even bishops throughout the

history of the Church. This scholarship exposes evidence of women exercising 'true and proper ministerial priesthood' throughout Italy, Egypt, Greece, Ireland, and many other parts of the world (Madigan & Osiek, 2005: 3)

Through evidence drawn from hermeneutical re-readings of biblical texts, comparative historical research and archaeological findings, a transformed image of the Church emerges: one in which women have played a vital role in all dimensions of ministry. In fact, this revisionism reveals that far from being a constant throughout Church history, as the Vatican claims, the prohibition of female ordination is only a relatively recent phenomenon. Women priests and their supporters point to this 1200-year history of women in leadership roles in order to disprove the official Vatican stance and to destabilize the ideologies of thinkers such as Tertullian and Aquinas. In so doing, they have undermined the theological and ideological foundations on which the prohibition of female ordination rests, and in turn they have demanded the return of women priests in the Roman Catholic Church.

In order to recover the herstory of female ministry in the Early Church, feminist the*logians have conducted a thorough hermeneutical analysis of biblical texts to find authoritative examples of women performing priestly and apostolic functions. The*logians have found numerous passages and prominent female figures within the Scriptures that support the ordination of women. [39] Firstly, in Romans 16: 1-2, Phoebe the deacon was praised by St. Paul for her leadership of the Church of Cenchreae. Second, in Romans 16:7 we can read that in the Early Church of Rome a woman named Junia was described by Paul as an 'apostle' and was imprisoned for spreading Christianity (Bourgeois, 2013). In fact, in this verse St. Paul identifies Junia as senior in the faith to himself, labelling her and her husband as

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[39] See for example, Irvin (2006); Meehan (2010); Morris (1973); Raming (2004); Ruether (2011b, 2014); Tetlow (1980); and Wjingaards (2002).

'outstanding apostles' (Keble, 2010). This instance is the only time that Paul refers to anyone other than the Twelve or himself as apostles.

Third, in John 20:1-18, Mary Magdalene (the first witness of the Resurrection) was commissioned by Jesus to be 'the apostle to the apostles'. After his crucifixion Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and Mary (his mother) at the tomb and said to them 'be the first teachers to the teachers, so that Peter, who denied me, learns that I can also choose women as apostles' (Brock, 2003:15). Brock (2003) concludes that the key criteria for apostleship in the Early Church were the experience of an appearance of the resurrected Christ and a divine calling. Irvin further explains that 'in the Early Church women's ordination was based upon their succession from the apostles, including women such as Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary from Magdala, Phoebe, Petronella and others about whose status among the founders of the Church there could be no doubt' (2006: 36). As such Phoebe, Junia, Mary Magdalene and Mary were all originally considered to be apostles, thereby negating the androcentric claims of the doctrine of apostolic succession. This hermeneutical re-reading of biblical texts undermines the veracity of the scriptural justifications against women's ordination used by the magisterium, and in turn supports the legacy of women acting in positions of influence throughout Church history.

Comparative historical research has also uncovered countless examples of women priests in both ancient and more contemporary contexts. Ludmila Javorova, a Czechoslovakian woman born in 1932, may not be the only ordained Roman Catholic Woman Priest since the first century but her story, recorded in various primary sources, provides a particularly captivating narrative of the courage of women priests acting in defiance of the Roman Catholic Church. Following the communist coup d'etat in Czechoslovakia in 1948 it became increasingly dangerous for Catholics to practice their faith openly. During the Stalinist trials thousands of

priests were deported, jailed or killed and the Church was forced to go underground (Kaiser & Wohnout, 2004).

At great personal risk, Ludmila was secretly ordained as a Roman Catholic priest by Bishop Felix Davidek in 1970 and worked with him in Czechoslovakia's clandestine Church. For Davidek women's ordination was made an imperative because of the nuns and other Catholic women who were detained in gender-segregated prisons and who were unable to receive the sacraments or pastoral care from male priests. Davidek ordained many women, not just Ludmila, to minister to women in these prisons, firm in his conviction that:

> Canon law must not infringe on God's law... It is insufficient today to keep only the male component. The people need the ordination of women. A woman is much better at dealing with women's problems than a man is, especially with regard to the sacrament of reconciliation. They are literally waiting for it and the Church should not prevent it (Felix Davidek, 1970, cited in Winter, 2001: 12).

In highly secretive and precarious conditions Ludmila, along with the other unidentified women priests of Davidek's underground Church, performed a variety of sacramental and pastoral duties. Parallels can be drawn here between the great need for priests in communist Czechoslovakia and the current priest shortage in the United States and elsewhere. In both cases there is a pragmatic reason for ordaining women priests in order to ensure the sustainability and vitality of the Catholic Church. However, history shows us that the Church is highly resistant to the prospect of female ordination, regardless of its practicability or functionality.

In the case of Ludmila, the collapse of the Iron Curtain brought her twenty-year underground priesthood to an end. After declaring the now-deceased Davidek insane, the Vatican barred Ludmila from acting as a priest refusing to recognize her Holy Orders or her years of service (Ertel & Motylewicz, 1995). This denial of her priestly ministry was especially wounding for Ludmila who still refuses to renounce her ordination. Although she is forbidden from acting

as a priest Javorova has emerged as a heroine of the women's ordination movement. She joins the likes of other 'disobedient Catholic women' (Meehan, 2010), such as St. Joan of Arc, St. Mary MacKillop, and Catherine of Siena, who confronted the abuses and corruption of the Catholic Church throughout history, and who continue to inspire a commitment to dissonance and resistance within the female ordination movement.

To complement such historical examples of female ministry, scholars have drawn upon archaeological proof as confirmation of women acting as priests, bishops and ecclesiastical leaders in antiquity. Through careful examination of ancient artefacts uncovered in the Holy Land during the past century, Catholic the*logian and archaeologist Dr. Dorothy Irvine has discovered strong evidence of women in leadership roles in the burgeoning Church. Firstly, there have been numerous examples of tombstones and burial inscriptions that identify women as priests. For example, in a burial site in Thera, Greece, there is a grave marked as belonging to Epikto the 'presbytis', which means 'priest', or 'presbyter' (Eisen, 2000: 123).

Second, in the cathedral at Annaba, a fourth century mosaic display covering the tomb of Guilia Runa contains an epigraphical description acknowledging her as 'Guilia Runa, woman priest' (Meehan, 2010). Third, in the Catacombs of Priscilla, Rome, there is a fresco titled 'Fresco Panis', which dates back to 350 AD. This fresco depicts a female deacon, robed in vibrant liturgical vestments, performing a public worship. On the left side of this scene is a woman, dressed in the traditional alb, chasuble and amice, holding a gospel scroll, who is clearly being ordained as a priest by a bishop. This fresco also shows a group of women conducting a Eucharistic banquet. Irvin confirms that 'the slope of the shoulders, feminine postures and jaw lines, earlobes, breasts, and upswept hair-do's with forehead curls' all attest to the 'femininity' of those pictured in this expansive mural (2006: 61). Whilst this list is not

exhaustive, it is representative of the vast collection of archaeological and epigraphical sources that point to the existence and prevalence of female ministry throughout the ages.

These artefacts capture the reality of female ministry in the Early Church, and authenticate an aspect of Church history that has been suppressed for so many years. Today women priests have a feeling that they are being called, and although Church doctrine disavows their call to vocation, history supports the position that women's ministry in the Church is in fact accordance with early Catholic teaching and practice. By reasserting this ecclesialheritage of women in the Church, the female ordination movement is able to amass a compelling herstory that gives it impetus, direction and authority for reclaiming the tradition of women's clerical leadership in the contemporary context.

2.2.1 Key Events in the Development of the Female Ordination Movement

There are a number of key events in the modern herstory of the female ordination movement that have contributed to its development and expansion. Firstly, the landmark Second Vatican Council, 21st Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church (informally referred to as 'Vatican II') was of huge importance for the advancement of women's rights in the Catholic Church and for the development of Catholic movements oriented around social justice. Vatican II, which was held between 1962 and 1965, was convened as a means of spiritual renewal and modernization for the Catholic Church in the areas of biblical interpretation, ecumenism and liturgy. Pope John XXIII opened the Council with the metaphor of opening the windows of the Church to let in fresh air, fresh light, and a fresh perspective of what the Catholic tradition entailed.

The impulse of the documents and the Council deliberations generated great impetus for the transformation of Church structures, practices and teachings. The main areas of reform

included: the greater involvement of the laity; an agreement to counteract the monarchic nature of Church hierarchy; freedom of religion and conscience; an open attitude to scholarly study of the Bible; changes in texts, forms and language used in celebrations and the administration of sacraments; the translation of the Order of Mass from Latin into local languages and dialects; ecumenism;[40] and an acknowledgement that because of profound changes to the nature of humanity, the Church needed to relate itself to the needs and values of contemporary culture (D'Antonio et al., 2011; and O'Reilly, 2013).

For the respondents of this study, many of whom experienced the vitality of the post-Vatican II era firsthand, this event had fundamental impacts on their faith and on their connection to the Church. Ginny argued that the value of Vatican II was that it transformed the traditionalist Church with 'new ways and new approaches… it was a fresh breath of air that came in and blew open all the possibilities that the Church could be, and brought it along into the current century' (Vanderway, Interview, 07/04/14). The respondents were especially enthralled by the emerging sensibility and growing momentum for eradicating domination within the Church. For as Rod explains:

> Vatican II was just truly groundbreaking; I took that the image of opening the windows of the Church, and it inspired me towards broader justice initiatives. Don't just open the windows; break down walls of injustice and barriers of oppression and make this project of renewal larger and make the Church better (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14).

In particular, Vatican II was initially identified as creating greater opportunities for the inclusion and elevation of the status of women within the Church. On the eve of Vatican II, Canon law still viewed women as ontologically inferior to men, so there was a great hope among feminist Catholics that Vatican II would provide an opportunity for the Church to abandon Thomist teachings and introduce full equality for women. Women from legal,

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[40] Ecumenism refers to interdenominational sharing and cooperation among Christians and their Churches (see for example, Murphy and Asprey, 2008).

the*logical, and political backgrounds all petitioned the Council to sanction the ordination of women and to allow for the greater participation of women in sacramental, liturgical and pastoral roles.

However, as Hofmann explains, 'the Council considered the standing of women in the Church only in passing and left things essentially unchanged. The Council fathers reconfirmed the male monopoly of the priesthood, the rule of priestly celibacy, and the ban on abortion' (Hofmann, 2002: 188). Whilst small progresses were made for women in areas, such as banning the need for women to cover their heads in Church, the fundamental bases of injustice for women were left untouched and were reinscribed into the fabric of Catholic Christianity. For the respondents, the magisterium's unwillingness to include women's equality as a focus for the revitalization of the Church represented a failed promise and served to deepen their mistrust of this patriarchal institution. Many Catholic women shared these acute feelings of disenchantment in the aftermath of Vatican II and used this disappointment to mobilize into feminist collectives committed to women's empowerment within the Church. These groups were galvanized around a commitment to Vatican II ideals and ideology and they have formed the basis of the female ordination movement in its current articulation.

Following on the from the momentum of Vatican II, the initial conference on women's ordination in the Roman Catholic Church was held in Detroit in 1975. As the first of its kind the Detroit Conference was a milestone in the history of the American Catholic feminist movement. Combining scholarship, liturgy and protest, the conference inspired women to rally around the issue of women's ordination (Henold cited in Lindley & Stebner, 2008). Pioneering feminist scholars, including Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Catherina Halkes, Gertrude Heinzelmass, Joan Morris and Ida Raming, were involved. Their presence at the conference attests to the powerful connection between feminist theory and feminist

praxis and serves as an early indication of the importance of feminist theory and the*logy for the women priests movement.

The conference covered a range of themes, including: patriarchy as a world-view in Church and in society; the definition of woman as man's 'other' in the Church; the need for women to seek self-understanding and spiritual fulfilment in communion with other Christian women; and the prophetic role of women in bringing about ecclesiastical change (Turner, 1980). The vast array of historical and biblical research that was compiled and presented by the conference speakers added legitimacy to claims that women's ordination was an important and viable issue for the institutional Catholic Church to consider (Moon, 2008).

Emboldened by the high attendance at the conference,[41] the conference organizers established an ongoing alliance, which they called The Women's Ordination Conference (WOC).The WOC has employed various tactics in their activism, including lobbying the Catholic Church on various women's issues, engaging in dialogue with members of the Church hierarchy for reform, fostering women-led inclusive Catholic communities, participating in public protest, and holding regular conferences (Dillon, 1999; Henold, cited in Lindley & Stebner, 2008).

The WOC sponsored another conference in Baltimore in 1978 largely in response to the Vatican's issuing of the *Inter Insignores* Declaration, which was interpreted by WOC as an attempt to halt or reverse the liberalizing effects of Vatican II (Bader Papa, 1981; Jablonski, 1988). Despite the groundswell of public support for women's ordination that surrounded the Baltimore conference, this event was unsuccessful in initiating a united campaign for women's ordination (Ruether, 1985). Rather, the 1978 WOC conference is significant because it signalled the decline of the WOC, and presaged the development of 'Women-Church,' an unorthodox feminist approach to ecclesiastical reform. Women-Church, as first

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[41] The planners of the Detroit conference had initially expected a maximum attendance of 600 people, but they received in excess of 1000 applications and were forced to limit their registrations to 1200 people (Ruether, 1999).

articulated by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza at the WOC conference, is a feminist approach to religious communalization which recognizes that religious thought and practice must reflect women's experiences.[42] Hierarchy and formal patterns of clerical structuring are rejected in Women-Church, and all structures within the community are transformed to reflect a commitment to egalitarianism and female empowerment. Women-Church is thus 'an example of how a feminist concept, coupled with religious commitment, animates a women's movement' (Hunt, 2009: 85).

However, this approach has not been accepted by all supporters of female ordination and an ideological schism has emerged within the movement between 'Women-Church' and 'Women-Priests' models. Whereas Women-Church advocates a holistic reform of the structures of the Church, Women-Priests is focused on ordaining women priests within the Catholic Church in its current form. This schism more broadly corresponds to divisions between liberal and radical feminism, which differentiates between reform occurring within existing structures (liberal feminism), and a revolutionizing of the structures themselves (radical feminism). The consequences of the Women-Priests versus Women-Church debate have been formative for the lack of organizational unity within the female ordination movement.

Amidst these cleavages in the movement, the frustration of long-time supporters of women's ordination gave way to open rebellion with several key players taking a decisive step in escalating the female ordination movement. On 29th June, 2002 a cluster of renegade male clerics ordained seven women as the first female priests aboard a boat on the River Danube. The ordinations took place on an international waterway so as to prevent Vatican sanctions against a particular nation or diocese, and they were shrouded in secrecy so as to prevent Vatican attempts to thwart this clandestine event. The group was heralded as '*The Danube*

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[42] See for example Schüssler Fiorenza 1993; Ruether 1985, 1986, 2011a, 2011b; Hunt 2009, 2011.

Seven'; a nickname that highlights the infamy and distinction surrounding this affair. The women of the Danube Seven, Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger, Adeline Theresia Roitinger, Gisela Forster, Iris Muller, Ida Raming, Pia Brunner, and Angela White (a pseudonym for Dagmar Celeste Braun), originated from Germany, Austria and the United States.

Like other Catholics, these women believed in apostolic succession, the idea that priestly ordinations are valid if the bishop who performs the rites can trace his ecclesiastical lineage back 2,000 years to the original 12 apostles. Accordingly, the women were ordained by Bishop Rómulo Antonio Braschi, an Independent Catholic bishop who was staunchly opposed to the prohibition of female ordination. The bishop used the same rites that are used for male candidates, and the women took the same vows, prostrating themselves as men do when they are being ordained (Loh 2013). As will be further discussed in Chapter Four, it appears contradictory that these women would seek to apply actively the doctrine and ordination practices that had for so long ensured their oppression and exclusion within the Church. However, supporters of both Women-Priests and Women-Church models have sought to utilize apostolic succession as a tool of authenticity to signal that their ordinations are valid and should be recognized as legitimate by the Church. For as woman priest Jane Via affirms, 'if we want to make change, *real* change within the Church, we have to follow and *then* subvert the traditional structures and ways of the Church' (Via, Interview, 4th April, 2014).

Because these ceremonies were the first public ordinations of women priests in the contemporary era of the Church, many argue that the Danube Seven stands as the genesis of the female ordination movement in its current form. This open act of defiance of Canon law and Church doctrine was the catalyst for the mobilization of this movement built on resistance, renewal and liberation. The Danube Seven ordinations were inspirational for many women who had long felt a calling to priestly ministry and these ordinations inspired such

women to pursue ordination for themselves. For, as Bishop Dana Reynolds explains, 'never in my wildest dreams did I ever even give myself the opportunity to imagine being a priest, because no matter how hard we pushed, I just didn't think that it was possible in my lifetime…so when I heard about the Danube Seven it was like a new era of hope was dawning in the Church' (as cited in Hart, 2011).

As a result, more ordinations followed in Europe and North America. The first ordination in North America occurred in 2005, with nine women being ordained aboard a boat on the St. Lawrence Seaway in Canada. In 2006 the first ordination occurred in the United States, when twelve women were ordained at the confluence of the three great rivers in Pittsburgh (Hart, 2011). Shortly after these ordinations a male Roman Catholic bishop, whose identity will remain secret until after his death, agreed to ordain two of the Danube Seven priests (Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger and Gisela Forster) as Roman Catholic bishops. The male bishop granted this ordination in the presence of witnesses, but otherwise in secrecy, in order to avoid reprisals from the Vatican (Meehan, 2010).

These ordinations of female bishops were a crucial step for the sustainability and self-sufficiency of the movement. Now that the movement had female bishops, it could conduct its own ordinations of women priests in accordance with apostolic succession but without the assistance or intercession of male bishops. As a result of this autonomy, the female ordination movement has continued to gain momentum and to expand. As of September, 2015 there were internationally 12 bishops, 155 ordained women priests, 33 Deacons, 21 candidates, and 7 deceased women priests (RCWP, 2015).

However, the Vatican has declared these ordinations to be 'illegal and null' (Meehan 2010, 47) and considers them to be an act of heretical heterodoxy. The ordinations were valid but illicit, that is, they were conducted in accordance with the doctrine of apostolic succession but

they contravened Canon 1024 that prohibits the ordination of any woman to the priesthood. This perspective was institutionalized on May 29, 2008 when the Vatican's CDF issued and published a decree that women priests and the bishops who ordain them would be excommunicated *latae sententiae*, meaning that the penalty is applied automatically. Excommunication is an institutional act of religious censure and spiritual condemnation used to deprive, suspend, or limit membership in a religious community (Rahner, 1975).

The Vatican has thus responded to the plight of women priests in quite a caustic and punitive fashion: excommunicating women who have been ordained as priests; excommunicating men and women who have publicly supported the ordination of women priests; and excommunicating male priests who have advocated for or aided this movement. As the latest method enacted by Church authorities to intentionally exclude women from full participation and leadership, such a criminalizing codification has exacerbated the already unequal position of women in the Catholic Church (Gervais, 2011). Whether this Vatican reaction represents fear amongst the magisterium or just dogged authoritarianism in an archaic and traditionalist institution remains to be seen. For example, Bishop Bridget Mary explained that 'the Roman Catholic Women Priests, who confront patriarchy and the abuse of power and sexism in the institutional Church, trigger a profound fear in ecclesiastical leaders' (Meehan, 2010: 50), which has 'led to our excommunication and the excommunication of our supporters' (Meehan, 2010: 50).

For women priests and their supporters, however, the early papal excommunications held no threat or sting. Some members of the movement overtly rejected the penalty of excommunication on the grounds that membership to a faith can only be constituted through self-definition and cannot be ruptured by an external party. For, as woman priest Katy Zatsick explained, 'excommunication implies that you no longer have any association with or tie to the Roman Catholic Church. But that is absolute baloney, the Church can't excommunicate

me, because only I can decide whether I belong to the Church and whether I have a connection with the Church' (Zatsick, Interview, 12/04/14). Others claimed this punishment as a badge of honour as they positioned themselves within the Catholic Church's extensive record of vilified visionaries. For example, Bishop Bridget Mary jokingly rebuffed the seven notices of excommunication that she had received from the Vatican, saying that 'if you look at the trajectory of some of our recent female saints, particularly Blessed Mary MacKillop, they were excommunicated before they were made saints. As far as I can see it, I'm just on the fast-track to sainthood!' (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14).

In fact, rather than rupturing women priests from their Church, excommunication has acted as a source of solidarity, unifying the movement around a collective outsider identity within the Church. The issue of excommunication has also intensified many members' dedication to the cause, and it has stimulated further support for the movement from Catholics outraged by the Church's response to women priests. Bishop Bridget Mary expressed pride in this resiliency, stating that 'no matter what the Vatican has done to penalize us, the result has been the growth of our movement, as more support and more women step up to serve in a renewed priestly ministry in inclusive Catholic communities' (2010:53).

However, the excommunication of women priests has been a significant affliction when considered in the context of the Church's treatment of clerical sex abuse. On July 15, 2010, the Vatican declared the ordination of women to be a grave crime. The ordination of women appeared on *delicta graviora,* the list of the most serious crimes against Roman Catholic canon law, placing it in the same category as sexual abuse of children by priests (Aldredge-Clanton, 2011). When the Vatican tacitly equated the ordination of women priests to paedophilia in the Church, by declaring both *delicta graviora*, the outcry from Catholics was both immediate and powerful.

More hurtful still for members of the movement was the Vatican's uninterrupted excommunication of women priests in the face of its continual pardoning of sexual offenders in the clergy. For, as one of my respondents lamented, 'the Church must really hate us. By excommunicating us and by not excommunicating paedophile priests they are openly saying that we as women priests are worse than sex abusers; it's just so offensive, it's an affront to women, and that is some level of hate, on an institutional scale' (Poppins, Interview, 08/04/14). For many Catholics, this fierce punishment 'demonstrated just how sexist and out-of-touch the hierarchy has become' (Bourgeois, 2013: 26) and reinforced the necessity for radical transformation to occur in the Church.

2.2.2 Key Groups in the Movement

Rather than having a single organizational structure, the female ordination movement is constituted by a multitude of advocacy groups and inclusive Catholic communities dedicated to a feminist reimagining of Catholic thought and practice. Pluralism and the creation of non-hierarchical structures are key tenets of feminism. The practices of the female ordination movement are thus consistent with feminist thought and praxis. However, as previously mentioned the movement has been divided on the central issue of whether its core focus should be ordaining women or pursuing structural change within the Church. This schism of Women-Priest and Women-Church models has in turn been reflected in the absence of a unilateral organization acting for female ordination. Perhaps this lack of a unifying structure also stems from a distrust of the institutional Catholic Church, and the unwillingness of women to replicate or reinstate the traditional Catholic model of hierarchy. Again, this focus on de-institutionalization resonates strongly with the underlying principles of feminist organizing.

Nevertheless, many groups have been founded throughout the world advocating for women's ordination in the Catholic Church. Whilst the women's ordination movement in its current form is most active within North America, the push for women's equality in the Church originated in the U.K.[43] and Europe, and inspired the creation of many reformist groups internationally. Attesting to the transnational nature of this movement a myriad of groups aligned to the cause of female ordination has developed in various national contexts. These include: Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW), We Are Church (Germany), BASIC (Ireland), Catholic Women's Ordination (England), *Femmes et Hommes egalité, droits et libertés dans les églises et la société* (France), Catholic Network for Women's Equality (Canada), Women and the Australian Church (Australia), and Phoebe (Japan), aptly named after Phoebe the woman deacon recorded in the Bible. These organizations are each independent of and unrecognized by the institutional Roman Catholic Church.

Whilst these groups have done important work in raising awareness of the female ordination movement in their localized contexts, the true epicentre of the movement now lies in North America. This region contains the greatest number of women-led inclusive communities and feminist-oriented Catholic advocacy groups and it has established itself as being at the vanguard of women's justice issues in the Catholic Church (Hunt, 2009). Within the American context, the Women's Church Convergence (WCC) has carried the feminist agenda of Catholic women. This organization is a coalition of autonomous Catholic-rooted groups, committed to 'amplifying diverse, feminist faith-filled voices' (WCC, 2007) through the creation of an *ekklēsia* of women that is participative, egalitarian and self-governing. The WCC aims to connect, support and represent people and groups who seek full dignity, social justice and equality for all women.

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[43] The first recorded Catholic organization advocating for women's rights was St. Joan's Alliance, founded in London in 1911. Named after St. Joan of Arc, the organization's mission was to 'secure political, social, and economic equality between men and women, and to further the work and usefulness of Catholic women as citizens' (Pelzer, 1992: 2).

The Convergence meets twice a year and is made up of thirty-five grassroots groups working for gender reform in the Catholic Church including Call to Action (CTA), the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC), the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), Critical Mass, and Corpus. There are also many issue-specific groups attached to the WCC, including Dignity (focused on LGBTIQ equality), Catholics for Choice (centred on reproductive justice), and Sisters of Providence Peace with Justice Committee (dedicated to pacifism). The diversity and breadth of these causes attests to the intersectional nature of this movement as a wide range of issues, all centred on justice and equality, transectionally overlap with the primary concern for gender parity in the Church.

Also associated to the WCC are Roman Catholic Women Priests (RCWP) and the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests (ARCWP), the chief governing associations responsible for the theological formation and ordination of women priests. Whilst both are committed to gender equality and social justice within the Church, RCWP and ARCWP each has its own administrative structure and unique approach to governance, and both bodies regularly collaborate on and share resources. ARCWP seceded from RCWP, further adding to the internal divisions within the female ordination movement. It was however quite difficult to find precise details on the reasons behind the split between RCWP and ARCWP, as neither their websites, nor their members whom I interviewed, disclosed information relating to this schism.

I would speculate, however, that this separation of RCWP and ARCWP stems from fundamental disagreements relating to the Women-Priests versus Women-Church debate. It is my contention that ARCWP established itself out of a perceived fear of the nascent clericalism that was beginning to suffuse the RCWP organization. Whilst RCWP advocates a more liberal approach to the transformation of Catholic ecclesial structures, ARCWP appears to be more radical and subversive in its orientation. Nevertheless, RCWP, through its strong

membership base, has established itself as the focal point of activism within the female ordination movement. RCWP is arguably the most influential and important organization within this movement, as it is an authority in the*logy and spiritual formation as well as being a key innovator in liturgical practices and inclusive language and a point of reference for women priests worldwide. Therefore, for purposes of this thesis, I will focus on RCWP as the core organizing body of the female ordination movement in the USA.

The proclaimed mission of RCWP is to '... spiritually prepare, ordain, and support women and men from all states of life, who are theologically qualified, who are committed to an inclusive model of Church and who are called by the Holy Spirit and their communities to minister within the Roman Catholic Church' (RCWP, 2012). The core purpose of RCWP is not to control or regulate its constituent Church communities, but rather it seeks to provide support for women who have a vocational calling to the Catholic priesthood. RCWP has developed rigorous models of spiritual formation and discernment for prospective women priests which requires women to complete postgraduate level studies in the*logy or Divinity, as well as continuing study with courses specifically designed by RCWP. The women priests whom I interviewed, except for Nancy Corran, had all been prepared and ordained by RCWP. This organization conducts and oversees the ordination process and provides a source of ongoing support and direction for women priests working in non-canonical Catholic communities such as MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC.

2.2.3 Charism and Ideology

The specific charism of the female ordination movement is to live Gospel equality and justice for all, and it 'work[s] in solidarity with the poor, exploited, and marginalized for structural and transformative justice in partnership with all believers' (RCWP, 2015). Roman Catholic

women priests are at the forefront of a model of service that offers disenfranchised Catholics a renewed priestly ministry in grassroots communities. These communities have embraced the mantle of 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw, 1991) as they acknowledge the overlapping systems of oppression operating within the Church. The movement is concerned with overturning kyriarchy in the Church, by reversing homophobia, racism, classism, and clerical authoritarianism, and moving towards a truly inclusive and liberatory vision of Catholicism.

In this mission for reform, the female ordination movement uniquely integrates aspects of both continuity and transformation, with a shared commitment to upholding essential Catholic traditions and to the reframing of those elements of Catholicism that are oppressive or unjust. From its inception the movement has emphasized that its position is in line with the earliest traditions of the Church (Carr, 1980). Rue (2006) identifies that the female ordination movement, coming from both Women-Priest and Women-Church perspectives, replicates the traditional model of the Catholic priesthood in several ways. Firstly, and most crucially, the movement invokes apostolic succession in its ordination of women priests and bishops. Second, the ordination rite duplicates the key moments of the traditional liturgy, with two key exceptions: there is no promise of obedience to the bishop, and the vows are revised using inclusive language. Third, women use the titles and traditional nomenclature of deacon, priest or bishop. Fourth, women priests respond to the needs of their parishioners with the sacraments.

Moreover, the movement for female ordination holds that its arguments for the inclusion of women in the Church are consistent with both the ecclesiology and eschatology of Vatican II (Carr, 1980). Vatican II had encouraged increased collegiality in the hierarchy and greater participation among the laity in worship and in ecclesiastical decision-making. It had also acknowledged that the Church had been—and would continue to be—influenced by changes in secular society (Carr, 1980), which would now include a greater push towards gender

equality and LGBTIQ justice. The female ordination movement has embraced these tenets, and perceives itself to be bringing the failed liberatory promises of Vatican II to fruition in the contemporary Church.

Whilst the ordination movement is seeking to maintain these aspects of Catholicism, there is also a multitude of conventions that it is seeking to revolutionize. Firstly, the movement seeks to have an egalitarian and democratic structure. Second, the female ordination movement is specific about the kind of renewed priestly ministry it would accept: one without clericalism, without mandatory celibacy, without restrictions on the basis of sexuality, without obedience to a bishop, without hierarchy, but with the inclusion of all and a focus on social justice (Hunt, 2011). Third, gender equality is inscribed into each aspect of Church and community life, and an expansive feminist the*logy is articulated, in which men and women are both granted sacramental agency through equal representation. This overarching commitment to innovation is central to the female ordination movement's vision for social justice in the Church. Each of these areas of reform will be explored in further detail in Chapters 4-7 of this thesis.

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

3.1 Methodological Approaches in the Sociological Field of Religion

The empirical study of religion is enmeshed with distinct methodological considerations by virtue of the very subject matter with which it concerns itself. Sociological enquiry, as a product of the Enlightenment and as a discipline firmly entrenched in the belief of the redemptive power of rationality, has traditionally been pervaded by the idiom of secularism. The result, according to Michele Dillon, is an inherent 'intellectual bias in social theory toward the incompatibility of rationality and religion' (2003: 6). Because 'secularization is the core myth that defines [this] discipline' (Ammerman, 1994: 289), the content of religious beliefs, the autonomous force and reality of religiosity and its vision for a different humanity have typically been treated with ambivalence and avoidance within classical sociological accounts (see, for example, Beck, 2010; and Smith et al., 2013).

Consequently, some sociologists of religion have adopted a 'methodological secularism' (Beck, 2010) in their study of religion whereby religious phenomena have been removed from the metaphysical sphere of religiosity and have been explained primarily in terms of their social causes and functions. Such sociological accounts of religion have myopically focused on structural and functional interpretations that 'tell us nothing about the whys and wherefores of belief, faith, religious communities or the cultural productivity of religion' (Riis, 1989: 138). While this methodological secularist approach may 'satisfy the sceptical scientific mind' (Beck, 2010: 6), it unfortunately 'renders invisible and incomprehensible something that increasingly determines reality, namely the re-mystification of reality by religion' (Beck, 2010: 7)[44] and overlooks the interactional aspects of religious activity (Ayella, 1990). As a result of this secularist approach, religion has been frequently

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[44] See also, Willey (2010) and Barker (1995).

overlooked or excluded as a key variable in social scientific studies, leaving an important dimension of American life unexamined (Dillon, 2003).

Methodological secularism has been interrogated and destabilized by Jürgen Habermas (2006, 2007, 2008) and the field of postsecularism. Postsecularism asserts that the secular trends of modernism are failing and instead it refers to a range of theories and supporting examples that demonstrate the persistence and revitalization of religion in the contemporary milieu.[45] Habermas, who was originally a major proponent of the secularization thesis, uses these phenomena to disavow the stratification or separation of faith and reason and instead he argues that collective social consciousness and social research need to adjust their epistemologies in order to accommodate religious and secular perspectives. Habermas calls for a *via media* between modernizing secularization and the fundamentalism of religious orthodoxies,[46] and argues that the 'epistemic duty' of 'determining the boundary between the secular and the religious should be a cooperative task undertaken by both sides' (2001: 22).[47]

Of particular pertinence for the sociological study of religion in the postsecular age, Habermas calls for the 'reflexive overcoming of a modern self-understanding that has become hardened and exclusive in its secularism' (2005: 145). He asserts that individuals and academics alike should 'respect the power of articulation of religious language' and recapture the 'regenerative power religion offers for a dwindling normative consciousness' (2005: 250). Post-secular sociological approaches treat religion as an empirically observable social fact and attend to the plurality of ways in which religion is significant within society (Dillon, 2003). Various supporters of postsecularism have lamented the tendency for studies of

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[45] Habermas argues that 'the missionary expansion, a fundamentalist radicalization, and the political instrumentalization of the potential for violence innate in many of the world religions' (2008: 18) have converged to create the worldwide resurgence of religion.

[46] See, Harrington, 2007; Ratti, 2013; Rosati, 2015; and Taylor, 2007.

[47] He further suggests that the postsecularist approach must simultaneously embrace a 'readiness to take part in the cooperative translation of these contents out of the religious idioms into a universally acceptable language', and an 'open-mindedness toward the possible radical content of religious contributions' (2005: 11).

religion to concentrate purely on secular conceptions of religion as 'institutional' (Harris et al, 1982), 'Church-oriented' (Luckman, 1967) or 'official' (Towler, 1974; Blaikie, 1978; Williams, 1980; Robertson, 1978). Studies with this focus occupy a legitimate place within the sociology of religion, but postsecularists argue that they need to be supplemented by analyses of what has variously been termed 'common', 'popular', 'non-official', 'everyday', 'vernacular', 'extra-ecclesiastical' or 'folk' religion (Black & Glasner, 1995; Habel, 1980; Clark, 1982) in order to provide enriching data on the patterns of contemporary religiosity and the real-life experiences of believers. Such contributions have been made by various qualitative studies of women's agency in religious structures, such as the work of Baggett (2009), Konieczny (2013) and Bruce (2011).

Feminist scholars of religion have been influenced by the insights of postsecularism and the 'postsecularist turn in feminism' (Braidotti, 2008) has reinvigorated studies of the involvement of women within religious traditions and structures.[48] Just as feminism is constantly evolving, the sociology of religion is also subject to historical shifts and transformations. Woodhead suggests that the current 'wave' of the sociology of religion 'corresponds not only chronologically but also methodologically with third wave feminism,' which has given rise to a wealth of new gender-focused studies within the sociology of religion (2003:68).The 'feminist mode of production' (Stanley, 1990), as an emerging analytic category relies upon an epistemic standpoint in which gender is brought to the centre of the research process.

This integration of a feminist consciousness into methodological approaches 'opens up intellectual and emotional spaces for all women to articulate their relations to one another and to wider society-spaces where the personal transforms into the political' (Hesse-Biber, 2012: 2). Neitz argues that this focus on the location and experiences of women necessitates a

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[48] See also Bracke, 2008.

reorientation in the sociological study of religion that transcends the confines of institutional religion and pays more attention to women's 'devotional practice, wider cultural discourse, bridging boundaries, and moving between public and private' (2003: 289). Post-secular feminists are encouraging sociologists of religion to adopt a methodological approach that attends to the subjective elements of women's religious practice and that examines the performance of religion on the margins of society and religion (see, for example, Gilkes, 2000; Nason-Clark and Peña, 2007).

3.2 Methodology Adopted for this Study

3.2.1 Feminist Methodology

Drawing on the logic of postsecular feminist approaches to religion, this study is informed by a feminist methodology and epistemology. The question as to whether there is a single feminist method has pervaded the social sciences and social research (Lawson, 1995; Moss, 1993; Stacey, 1988). [49] Whilst there is not one distinct, linear conception of what comprises a feminist methodology, as this approach is thought to be 'constraining for the progression of feminist knowledge' (Pini and Bease, 2013: 4), some common characteristics, components and elements of the feminist method can be identified.

Firstly, the feminist method is rooted in a staunch critique of masculinist approaches to social science research as 'an approach which has considerable capacity to distort or even potentially silence women's experiences' (Pini and Pease, 2013: 3). Accordingly the feminist method recognizes that certain types of knowledge have been subjugated by dominant epistemologies derived by masculine ways of defining knowledge and conducting social science research (Lloyd, 1984; Moss, 1993). The core aim of feminist methodology therefore

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[49] See also, Fonow and Cook, 1991; Coyner, 1993.

is committed to giving 'women a voice' as researchers (Finch, 1984) and to conducting research designed to 'empower' those in need of empowering (Lather, 1991; Probyn, 1993; St Pierre and Pillow, 2000). An oft-quoted axiom was that a feminist methodology should entail 'research *for* women, rather than research *on* women' (Edwards, 1990: 479), and consequently feminist research is posited as being *for* the oppressed, not simply *on* the oppressed (Pini and Bease, 2013; Sandoval, 2000; and Stanley, 1990). Feminist methodology as a politically charged epistemic project entails an ontology that aspires towards the liberation of formerly subjugated knowledges.

A second shared characteristic of feminist methods is that they have been cognised as simultaneously a *prescriptive project*, loosely defined by critiques of unjust gendered institutions, practices and social arrangements, and as an *analytical project* that strives to explain the social world and gendered imbalances contained therein (Avishai et al., 2013; Mahmood, 2004; Moss, 1993; Pini and Bease, 2013). Saba Mahmood explains that 'feminism, therefore, offers both a diagnosis of women's status across cultures, as well as a prescription for changing the situation of women who are understood to be marginal, subordinate and oppressed' (2001: 207). Feminist researchers have generally envisaged these imperatives to be complementary and reciprocal. It is understood that social progress is advanced when those who are historically disenfranchised are able to shed light on social injustices and actively participate in the generation of meaningful social change (Alexander and Mohanty, 1997; Avishai et al. 2013; Reinharz, 1992).

Third, feminist qualitative research also necessitates a balance between objectivity and subjectivity, positioning the researcher in relation to the topic of research and the study participants. The feminist method 'builds on experience and accepts subjective experiences as valid forms of existence' (Moss, 1993: 48). This synthesis of objectivity and subjectivity presents a subversion of traditional, masculinist science and its ontological foundations. As

Bain explains, 'the masculinist knower never problematized his own positionality or considered the potential partiality of his perceptive' (2009: 488). By contrast, implicit to all feminist methodologies is a sensibility of the impact of the researcher on the research and the development of complex webs of intersubjectivity between the researcher and her respondents. A feminist methodology thereby has an overarching commitment to subjective objectivity, in other words a pursuit to 'know the other' (Mies, 1983), and to recognize the ethical implications of the possible exploitation of the 'researched' as 'objects' of knowledge (Fonow and Cook, 1990).

3.2.2 Qualitative Methods

This thesis utilizes qualitative methods which are argued to be especially apposite for the feminist study of religion. The use of qualitative methods is supported by a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology which regards the object of social research as 'coming to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them' (Glesne, 1999: 5). A constructivist ontology views knowledge as internally constructed and contingent on convention, perception and social experience, whilst an interpretivist epistemology understands social reality as multiple, relative and dependent upon other social systems for meaning (see, for example, Berger and Luckmann, 1966 and Lincoln and Guba, 1985). [50] When combined, a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology comprehend knowledge as socially constructed, rather than objectively determined.

To understand the nature of these constructed realities qualitative researchers interact and talk with participants, seeking out 'the variety of perspectives rather than just reducing the multiple interpretations to a norm' (Glesne, 1999: 5). Wilson is steadfast in advocating

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[50] See also, Black, 2006; Hirschman, 1985; and Neuman, 2000.

qualitative methodology for the sociological study of religion, arguing that the sociologist 'must avoid the impression of using methods that appear to trivialize, disparage or relativize the religious activities of their respondents through quantification' (1982, 15). Qualitative research is therefore appropriate for this study as it allows for the generation of varied and multiplicitous data that acknowledges the diversity of the highly personalized contemporary religious experience (Bryman, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).

Whilst some contemporary sociological studies of religion utilize qualitative empirical methods (Watson, 2009; De Groot et al, 2005), many studies continue to rely upon quantitative methods that measure the rates of religious adherence rather than its specific articulations within society, or its consequences for the social order (Pollack, 2008; Houtman & Mascini, 2002). [51] However, quantitative methods have the propensity to desacralize and diminish crucial aspects of the religious experience that are best captured by qualitative sociological enquiry. For this study, which seeks to explore the nature of inclusive communities that collectively constitute the female ordination movement (a field which has hitherto been largely disregarded by empirical study) inductive qualitative methods provide the most fertile basis for exploration, as they generate unique and rich descriptions of the subjective religious lives of the respondents and of their communities.

3.3 Methods Adopted for This Study

3.3.1 Dual Methodology

Whilst feminist research is framed by specific methodological and epistemological approaches feminist qualitative research does not function under one feminist methodology but rather utilizes varied research methods that mesh intellectually with the methodology (see

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[51] See also, Pollack & Pickel, 2007; Smith et al, 2002.

for example, Reinharz, 1992). Accordingly, I have chosen two particular qualitative methods to enable me to conduct two levels of analysis. These dual levels of analysis are firstly the personal beliefs of the individual members of these groups and second the collective rituals of the communities that comprise the female ordination movement.

These two aspects traditionally would have presented a schism and would have stood as the object of heated debate within the field of religious studies. The key area of contention surrounds the question as to whether social researchers should seek to understand the beliefs of constituent members of religious groups or whether they should solely examine their practices and ritual acts. Many researchers, such as Neitz (2004), have argued that the sociological study of religion must focus on an examination of religious practice alone. However to my mind this is a reductionist approach that leaves the researcher devoid of an understanding of the beliefs and ontologies that inform and shape these ritual acts.

Therefore, I adopted a dual-layered approach to my methodology. I have conducted semi-structured interviews in order to speak to the women and men directly involved in these communities and to hear their stories, their beliefs, their perceptions and their interpretations of this faith-based movement. I have then used narrative analysis to examine this data. This interview data was then complemented by ethnographic observation of the various liturgies, prayer groups, social events and spiritual gatherings of these communities. Ritual analysis was employed to assess the various collective acts of these inclusive communities and to shed light on the ritualized acts that were found to engender powerful forms of 'vocational kinship' (Skinner Keller, 2006).

3.3.2 Exploring Beliefs: Semi-Structured Interviews and Narrative Analysis

The first layer of analysis sought to uncover the personal beliefs and experiences of the respondents as they encountered and contested oppression within the canonical Catholic Church. Semi-structured interviews were utilized in this study to develop a 'spiritual biography' (Skinner Keller, 2006) of my respondents. Despite their patent utility for qualitative research, semi-structured interviews have been criticized by survey researchers for the lack of generalizable data that they generate. For, semi-structured interviewing 'only addresses the experiences of a small group of people' and thus 'there is no concern with obtaining a representative sample from a larger population' (Traver, 2006: 103). While the methods I employed did not generate a representative sample, this study did not aim for generalizability and instead it sought to explore a relatively under-researched topic in breadth rather than in depth.

As a result, this exploratory study illuminates important social processes concerning the female ordination movement specifically and progressive religious formations more generally. In particular, the semi-structured interviews have allowed me to elicit information regarding the beliefs of the members of these communities, their motivations for leaving the canonical Catholic Church, as well as their perceptions of their communities. As the 'superlative method of social science research' (Becker & Geer, 2002: 345), semi-structured interviews were utilized in this study in order to 'answer social questions through the subjective meanings and understandings people bring to their interpretation of the social world' (Traver, 2006: 86).

Resembling an open-ended conversation, semi-structured interviews are guided by general themes rather than a set of rigid, predetermined questions and thereby allow the researcher to address meaning and specific issues thoroughly as the interviewee raises them (Becker & Geer, 2002; Traver, 2006). Moreover, semi-structured interviews 'involve one-on-one, face-

to-face interaction between an interviewer and an informant, and seek to build the kind of intimacy that is common for mutual self-disclosure' (Johnson, 2002: 103). As such, this method tends to 'involve a greater expression of the interviewee's self' (Johnson, 2002: 103) and thus it 'yields deeper information and knowledge than is sought in surveys, structured interviewing or focus groups' (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002: 114).

Whilst conducting the semi-structured interviews I attempted to develop a strong rapport and connection with my respondents by stressing the conversational nature of my interviews and I strove to establish a relaxed and informal atmosphere (see, for example, Langellier, 1989). Recognizing that women's stories are reciprocal, multilayered, and polyvocal (Lawless, 1991), I tried to engage in a conversational dialogue with my respondents but without influencing their narratives any more than was necessary. Semi-structured interviews were therefore highly valuable for generating expansive and illuminating conversations about the individual respondents' religiosity and experiences of inclusive Catholic communities.

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews was assessed using narrative analysis. Narrative analysis uses sources such as stories, autobiographies, journals, conversations, interviews and life experience as 'the units of analysis to research and understand the way people create meaning in their lives' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 98). Narrative analysis has been promoted by feminist theorists as a form of analysis that pays attention not only to what women and men have said but increasingly to how they have said it, by considering the factors that have influenced and shaped their worldviews. MacIntyre stresses that within a sociological study of religion 'the moral claims of respondents only make sense when they are embedded within a narrative framework' (MacIntyre, 1984: 32). Feminist researchers understand narratives as not only representational but as constitutive, in the sense that they define and contribute towards the production of our personal identities (Neitz, 2004).

Narrative analysis thereby offers a way of conceptualizing identity that is neither universal nor essentialist, but rather temporally and culturally specific (Neitz, 2004). It 'embeds the actor within relationships and stories that shift over time and space' (Somers and Gibson, 1994: 65) and links actor and community, intentions and acts (Neitz, 2004). In the context of religious research, narrative analysis grants the researcher insight into the religious trajectory and 'spiritual biography' (Skinner Keller, 2006) of the individual believer, as well as providing a sense of how his or her faith is cultivated and expressed through their involvement within religious communities.

One key implication of the emphasis on personal stories contained within the narrative analysis approach is that, in a similar way to grounded theory, researchers must 'start from the bottom up' (Ammerman, 1994: 290). Ammerman eloquently explains the stages of narrative analysis of members of religious communities as follows:

> Firstly, we start with located, embodied individuals, and we listen to their stories. Second, we pay special attention to the voices of the people who are at the margins rather than in the centres of power. Third, we start with lived religion and cultural practices rather than with organizations, structures and dogmas (Ammerman, 1994: 291).

This process as outlined by Ammerman (1994) has formed the basis of the narrative analysis undertaken in this study. I have sought to evaluate carefully the stories of the men and women who have experienced acute forms of marginalization within the Catholic Church. In so doing my narrative analysis recounted and evaluated how their faith lives evolved as they felt a disassociation from the traditional Catholic Church, how they became involved with the female ordination movement, and finally how they conceptualized their participation within their inclusive Catholic communities. Particular consideration was given to factors such as 'social influences that constricted their lives, conditions that enabled them to break out of traditional social role of women and to claim their own rights; their life cycle; and relationships which were critical in their movement into public life' (Skinner Keller, 2006:

72) Narrative analysis of the interview data provided enriching insight into the religious identity of my respondents and the personal beliefs that underlie their involvement in these progressive Catholic communities.

3.3.3 Exploring Collective Ritual: Participant Ethnography and Ritual Analysis

The performative functions and collective solidarities of the communities involved in this study were investigated through participant ethnography and ritual analysis. For, as Nietz suggests, 'stories are the places that we start, but they do not stand alone; they are entries into relational matrices' (2004: 399). Of particular significance for this study were an examination of how the ritual and liturgical practices of MMOJ, Good Shepherd, and MMACC were adapted to reflect their ideological commitment to inclusivity and an appreciation of how these collective acts created the conditions for their solidarity. Participant ethnography was the key method utilized in order to gain a sense of the various articulations of collective 'vocational kinship' (Skinner Keller, 2006) which these communities created and sustained.

McNamara explains that ethnography 'constitutes the exploration of culture and subculture through application of qualitative research methods designed to produce thick descriptions' (2009: 164). Clifford Geertz's (1973) 'thick description' approach encourages ethnographers to explain the cultural context and socio-cultural meanings that people attribute to certain acts. Implicit to thick ethnographic observations of religious subjects is a transition 'away from thinking of religion primarily in terms of beliefs and rules and towards thinking of religion also in terms of practices' (Neitz, 2004: 392). Given the centrality of ritual within Catholicism, ethnographic observations of liturgies and sacred performances were necessary to fully comprehend the performative and collective acts that are central to these inclusive Catholic communities.

The ethnographic observations undertaken in this research were assessed and enriched through ritual analysis that sought to comprehend the meanings underlying these performative acts. Ritual analysis has been employed by several sociologists and anthropologists of religion in order to conceptualize the collective actions that constitute and reproduce the spiritual realities of religious communities. This form of analysis thereby understands rituals as performed representations of the values, beliefs and epistemological foundations of a social grouping (see, for example, Bender and Taves, 2012; Schultz and Lavenda, 2005).

Given the performative nature of religious acts, ritual analysis recognizes that cultural practices should be read as texts comprising 'webs of significance' (Geertz, 1973). Following the contribution of Clifford Geertz, ritualized collective acts (such as liturgies or Masses) as well as embodied practices (fellowshipping at a morning tea after a church service for example: see, Ammerman, 2003), can be analyzed as a performative process that stands as the culmination of the formative cultural values that define and sustain the group. Inspired by the work of Mahmood, I have linked my analysis of ritual to 'issues of embodiment, emotions and individual autonomy' (2001b: 827). Mahmood affirms that 'it is only by exploring these traditions in relation to the practical engagements and forms of life in which they are embedded that we can come to understand the significance of subordination to the women that embody it' (Mahmood, 2001a: 225). Ritual analysis thereby provides a fertile conduit by which to explore the ideological and performative bases of the communities involved in this study.

Thus, in addition to my narrative analysis of individual beliefs, I have conducted ritual analysis of the various liturgies, services and prayer services that I observed. These collective acts simultaneously embodied and recreated the solidarities that underlie these communities. I therefore have adopted a two-layered approach to my methodology which has allowed me

firstly to understand why these individuals were pursuing a different vision of Catholicism; second, to experience these acts and religious performances in action and to appreciate how these communities have transformed traditional Catholic practices; and third, to apprehend how the participants interpret their community's inclusive ideology and collective acts.

Whilst I have employed a dual approach to my methodology, common to all methods of conducting feminist research is the importance placed on the reality and the diversity of women's experience. For as Saba Mahmood eloquently explains, 'it is important to take into consideration the desires, motivations, commitments, and aspirations of the people to whom these practices are important' (Mahmood, 2001a: 225). In accordance with my underlying feminist methodology, whilst undertaking narrative analysis on the data from semi-structured interviews and completing ritual analysis of ethnographic observations, I strove to value each and every participant and each community in a way that respected the inherent meaning and symbolism behind their religious expressions.

3.3.4 Sampling and Recruitment

The rationale behind the selection of the three particular fieldwork sites chosen was threefold. Firstly, I chose to limit my case studies to the United States of America because this national context lies at the forefront of the women's ordination movement and contains some of its most influential leaders. The USA contains more women-priest led Church parishes than any other nation, and it thereby provided an apposite contextual focus for my fieldwork. Second, whilst these communities all share a commitment to female ordination and to eradicating gender-based oppression within the Church their concern with gender intersected with other areas of interest. The inclusion of three different communities with differing social justice orientations has allowed for the diversification of my data set and has enabled me to use

intersectional theory to deepen my understandings of how these communities practise and imagine their spiritual lives. Third, these were the communities that were most eager to become involved in the study and so it was practical to choose them.[52]

Once I had developed contact with the leaders of each of these communities, I utilized the purposive sampling strategy of passive snowballing to recruit interview subjects. The pastor or community leader acted as a gatekeeper and referred me to members of their community who were interested in becoming involved in the study. In terms of the ethnographic observation I obtained written consent from the pastor of each community indicating that she was willing for me observe its communal liturgies and extra-ecclesiastical activities. Prior to the commencement of each Mass or gathering, the pastor would introduce me to the community and disclose my purposes for being there. Parishioners were given the opportunity to object to my presence in their community and to voice any concerns that they may have had in relation to my research. There were no protestations or complaints, and I was free to observe and participate in these events.

The sample for this study consisted of thirty-two self-identified progressive Catholic believers who are members of the female ordination movement. I interviewed thirteen members of the MMACC parish, seventeen members of the MMOJ parish, and the two female pastors from the Good Shepherd parish. Whilst this sample size of interviewees was not exhaustive, the detailed depth and scale of each semi-structured interview provided extensive data on both the individual respondents' spiritual biography, as well as their understandings and experiences of the female ordination movement.

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[52] In the initial stages of my research design, I emailed all of the women-priest led Catholic parishes whose contact information was available on the Roman Catholic Women Priest (RCWP) organisation's public website. I received positive responses from MMACC and MMOJ, and the pastoral team of MMOJ then referred me to the Good Shepherd community who were also keen to participate in this study.

Amongst the respondents there were ordained women priests as well as lay men and women. My sample from MMACC comprised ten women and three men, but there was a strong male presence in the Church community. At MMOJ, the ratio of male to female respondents was relatively higher with twelve women and five men included in the study. At Good Shepherd I was only able to interview formally the two female pastors, but I had the opportunity to speak to many community members before and after the Mass, and these conversations were noted in my ethnographic observations. The number of interviews conducted at MMACC, MMOJ and Good Shepherd may appear to be slightly unbalanced. In part this is due to time constraints and the limited time that I was able to spend with the Good Shepherd community, but largely the lack of interviews conducted at Good Shepherd is due to the issue of consent. Because many members of the Good Shepherd were perceived to be vulnerable, whether due to mental or physical illness or a history of trauma and destitution, the two Judys were keen to protect their community. As a result, I was able to obtain the two Judys' consent to be interviewed, but they were conscious of the need to safeguard their congregants and instead suggested that I elicit the stories and opinions of their communities in a less intimidating and more informal manner.

In total, I interviewed twenty-four women and eight men. Given that the female ordination movement is an example of feminist activism within the realms of religion, it is unsurprising that there were more female than male participants in these communities and that there were more women than men involved in this research. That being said, the scale of male presence and involvement within these women-led communities was an unforeseen and highly interesting outcome of this research. In selecting this sample, there was no systematic bias in the inclusion or exclusion of particular candidates. The demographic composition of each community will be explored in more detail in Chapters 5-7.

3.3.5 Interviews and Ethnographic Observations

As earlier indicated, my data set was comprised of thirty-two semi-structured interviews with members of the MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC communities (see Appendix A). The interviews were conducted with each participant using a thematic interview guide (see Appendix B). [53] All interviews were structured in the same format, centred on four broad sections, but they were quite free-flowing in order to grant the respondents agency to construct their own spiritual biographies.

The first section sought to elicit background information from the respondents in the form of an oral history of their faith journey and their current motivations for attending these progressive women-led Churches and for supporting the female ordination movement. The second and third sections allowed the respondents to explore the ways in which they felt that their parish was different from more canonical Catholic Churches and allowed them to develop a definition of the ethos of the female ordination movement. The final section of the interview focused on the conditions that created solidarity within these communities, including religious rituals, inclusive language and social events and gatherings. These interviews generated rich and descriptive data that was analyzed through the coding and subsequent thematic analysis of both these inductive themes and additional *a priori* codes.

The data obtained from ethnographic observation complemented and extended the semi-structured interview material. I was able to observe and participate in a wide range of both sacred and secular activities at each of the fieldwork sites. At MMACC I observed a small Thursday Mass, a Sunday afternoon Mass, a contemplative prayer group, a homeless ministry, a social gathering before the Sunday mass and a group dinner. At MMOJ, I was able to observe a regular Sunday Mass, an ecumenical Seder dinner, community outreach in

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[53] These interviews were digitally recorded, and were subsequently transcribed. The interviews ranged in duration from forty-two minutes to one hundred and seventy minutes, and were held at a location that was convenient for the participant.

the form of Easter basket packing, a pastoral planning meeting for an ecumenical Easter service, the Holy Thursday ecumenical liturgy, the Easter Mass, a meeting of the MMOJ book club and an Easter social gathering. At Good Shepherd I was more limited as to the time that I was able to spend immersed in this community, but I observed the preparations for the Holy Thursday morning liturgy, the Holy Thursday liturgy itself and a community social gathering and dinner. The variety of the events that I was able to witness and analyze provided me with interesting and stimulating data which has formed the basis of a rich empirical study.

3.4 Methodological Considerations

3.4.1 Ethical Considerations

The intimacy that is a formative element of semi-structured interviews must however be approached with caution and ethical diligence. Semi-structured interviews require ethical caution due to the potential for the coercion or compulsion of the participants, as well as the probable revelation of sensitive or personal information. Given this study's highly sensitive subject matter of religion and faith, and given that many members of this group expressed to me a fear of reprisals, recriminations or sanctions from the official Catholic Church, measures were taken to ensure the ethical integrity of the study and to protect the respondents from potential harm. Participation in the study was completely voluntary and the informed consent of each participant was assured through the provision of a Participant Information Sheet and a Participant Consent Form. In the Consent Form there was a provision in which the participants were able to indicate how they would like to be identified (by name, by organization, or unidentified).

It is useful here to consider the work of Bell (2013) and her insight that we must consider the motivations of respondents in participating in a research study in order to cater to their needs

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and observe ethical diligence in our interactions with them. The majority of the respondents indicated a zealousness to have their name and personal story to be included in the study and understood self-identifying in this study as an act of rebellion and dissidence. However, for some participants, past experiences with the often-punitive nature of the Roman Catholic Church against members of the female ordination movement provided a deterrent and a disincentive against being identified in this study. Some respondents still worked in the Catholic Church and feared dismissal, some were former priests or nuns within the Catholic Church and feared reputational damage, and one couple was anxious about the prospect of excommunication as a result of involvement with this apparently subversive movement. A total of seven participants indicated that they did not wish to be identified by name in this study and for these respondents a pseudonym was used in order to preserve their anonymity.

3.4.2 Reflexivity and Objectivity

Reflexivity, as a core feminist concept, was an additional ethical consideration of this study and was a technique that allowed this research to be conducted ethically. Feminist methodology has been premised upon an understanding of the researcher's intersubjectivity and the idea that the researcher is not 'outside' the topic of research, but rather is a person who is also grounded in a social setting (see, for example, Stanley, 1990). The concept of reflexivity therefore refers to the process of 'interpreting one's own interpretation, looking at one's perspective from other's perspectives and turning a self-critical eye onto one's own authority as interpreter and author' (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009: vii). A more comprehensive conceptualization of reflexivity as a methodological concern is provided by Patton who argues that 'reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one's own interviews and those to whom one reports' (200: 65).

More recently scholars have begun to recognize the inherent value of reflexive thinking and reflexive methodological practice, in which they critically engage with their own role as constructors of their scholarship and as interpreters of social reality rather than attempting to take the role of an objective observer (Belhassen, 2012). Central to the concept of reflexivity is an understanding that both the participants and the researcher inevitably influence social research. My own reflexivity has served to make me powerfully aware of my subject position in this intricate and delicately balanced project. Adopting a reflexive gaze to this present study, as a disaffected progressive Catholic who is sympathetic to the plight of women in the Church, my personal religious beliefs and feminist ideology emerged as potential sources of conflict in attaining an unbiased and sociologically valid study. There were two central areas in which my personal worldview could have potentially affected the veracity of my research: firstly, my gender and my feminist epistemology and second, in terms of my religious background as a Catholic.

Firstly, given that this is a study of communities mobilized around issues of gender equality, my sensibility as a woman, and as a woman who is firmly committed to feminist ideals, was an aspect that I had to consider and address. Feminists have long understood that methods are never free of epistemological assumptions (Collins, 2000; Naples, 2003). Reflecting on the institutionalization of feminist knowledge production and frameworks, Thorne contemplated the question: 'as feminist sociology becomes increasingly institutionalized as a subfield, how can its practitioners sustain a broad outlook and a critical edge?' (2006: 475). Thorne's resolution was that feminist sociologists must continue to challenge disciplinary hierarchies and boundaries by sustaining a critical focus on the issues which we seek to understand (Thorne, 2006).

Therefore, I had to ensure that I was constantly critical and self-reflexive about my feminist standpoint within the context of my research. I had to be quite introspective as I endeavoured

to ensure that my feminist tendencies, and my position as a female and feminist researcher, did not compromise this investigation. This self-reflexivity was achieved by adopting Avishai et al.'s (2013) concept of institutional reflexivity, which they see as an imperative requirement for feminist researchers in the field. Avishai et al. define institutional reflexivity as 'understanding how feminist theoretical and methodological frameworks both constrain and enable particular interpretations of those issues' (2013: 398). The question of how my gender, or my gendered ideologies, suffuses and influences my research was an important factor for the design and execution of reliable research practice.

The need to be reflexive of my subjectivity in terms of my own religious background was an additional methodological consideration of this study. Certainly my values had 'determined the topic selected for investigation and the way in which research findings would be utilized' (Leming, 1989: 36). As a likeminded progressive Catholic, my personal religious belief was a possible source of conflict in attaining an impartial study of faith. To remove the potential for the permeation of religious beliefs into the process or for the contamination of empirical results, De Vries offers the methodological framework of 'compartmentalization' (1989).

De Vries explains that Christian sociologists who adhere to compartmentalization 'proceed by doing the very best sociology they can do …while they are doing their sociological work, the rules of sociology take priority as their faith commitment is not allowed to influence their method' (1989: 12). In this way, compartmentalization has similarities with Weber's (1949) value-freedom (*wertfreiheit*) and value-relevance (*wertbeziehung*) principles, whereby the sociologist must be value-aware and value-explicit and must 'distinguish between (subjective) values and (objective) facts' (Leming, 1989: 37). De Vries' and Weber's models provide examples of ways in which researchers are able to address and manage the tensions in conducting empirical research on faith. However to my mind these approaches are somewhat extreme in their orientation. Whilst these approaches have certainly helped me to

think through my position as a researcher who is fully invested in the topic and whilst they have allowed me to adopt appropriate reflexivity practices, I also acknowledge the benefits of this subjectivity.

Rather than any potentially deleterious effect that this factor may have had on the study, many contemporary sociologists have posited subjectivity as a positive and productive element of social research (see, for example Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Oleson, 1994; Peshkin, 1988b; Wolcott, 1994). In the tradition of feminist standpoint epistemology, and the work of scholars such as Dorothy Smith (1974, 1990a, 1990b) and Patricia Hill Collins (2009),[54] I would argue that this intersubjectivity has provided an epistemic advantage. Without this 'Insider' knowledge, I would have been labelled as what Merton famously dubbed an 'Outsider' (1972) and the intimate and poignant information that I was able to access would have been unattainable. Instead, my Insider knowledge and subjective standpoint enabled me to probe issues sensitively, a possibility which may not have been available to Outsiders and which may otherwise have been denied to me.

Therefore, when approaching my research I can identify several ways in which my subjectivity, in terms both of my gendered orientation and my religious inclination, has served as an asset rather than as a threat for my research. Firstly, within the context of this study, my knowledge of the institutions and practices of the Catholic faith have enabled me to ask the respondents accurate and relevant questions that lay at the core of their faith practices. Further, my Roman Catholic sensibility gave me insight into various elements and tenets of the faith and thereby enabled me to analyze the data with a distinct perspicacity of the meaning and significance of the responses. In addition, given that I knew how Catholicism is traditionally and officially practised, I could determine in what manner and to what extent the

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[54] For further information on feminist standpoint epistemology see Hartsock, 2004; Hekman, 1997; and Narayan, 1989.

groups in question have appropriated, reshaped and modified traditional Catholic practices in order to accommodate their commitment to innovative reform.

Second, this knowledge of the Catholic faith also aided in the construction of relevant interview questions and in the ability to understand the intricacy of the responses that I might expect to receive. Leming, a practising Christian sociologist, had a similar experience in his research and proclaims 'what does Durkheim know of my Christian faith? … As an outsider and a "value-free" sociologist, he could not possibly understand the complex mysteries of my faith and religious experience' (1989: 156).

Third, my own 'Insider' (Merton, 1972) position as a Roman Catholic was also beneficial in enabling me to establish rapport and a close connection with my participants through mutual faith. Described by Glesne as a 'distance reducing, anxiety-quieting, trust-building mechanism' (1999: 96), rapport was crucial in making the respondents feel comfortable and in encouraging them to share their personal views and most intimate thoughts (Freilich, 1977; Mitchell, 1993; Spradley, 1979). Knowing that I shared their beliefs and their stances toward the Church increased the openness, receptiveness and willingness of participants to be interviewed and to share their stories with me. Given that this is a group which has been condemned, chastised and targeted because of the beliefs and practices of its members, my position, as a sympathetic, disaffected Catholic woman allowed the respondents to feel comfortable in expressing their views, knowing that I would not judge, criticize or censure them. Had the respondents been interviewed by someone outside of this progressive, feminist interpretation of Roman Catholicism, they may have been less willing to divulge these highly personal feelings and beliefs for fear of judgment or disfavour.

This point is especially salient given the reception that this movement has received from more conservative Catholics and from the institutional Church. Many respondents spoke to

me about protestors gathering outside their Church with banners that read 'God made Peter and Paul, not Petra and Paula', and hurling abuse and vicious taunts at them during masses. One woman priest, who wished to remain anonymous, revealed to me that her house had been firebombed with a flaming cross being thrown through her window. Others spoke to me frequently about the loss of friends, family and associates because of their involvement with the movement. One man even confided in me that his wife left him because of his support for the movement.

Moreover, framing myself as a student, as a social researcher was a motivating incentive for these communities. Given that the participants had a social justice emphasis and a desire to transform the Church, they wanted to spread awareness about their movement. Thus I firmly believe that the rich data which I gathered would not have been obtained without my feminist Catholic subjectivity and the close connection to my research subjects. Whilst I implemented a range of strategies and techniques that helped me to be aware of the complexities that are always present in any researcher/participant relationship, I would extend the premise that in the study of religious groups and movements oriented towards gendered concerns subjectivity can be an asset for researchers. Indeed, the methods conducted within this thesis provide one such instance of the utility of personal subjectivity for researchers as they seek to examine the dynamic social lives of religious communities.

Section II: Between Oppression and Liberation— Kyriarchy and Intersectionality

'To be a minority in the Church is to be an outsider. To be a woman, to be gay, to be Black, to be Hispanic, to be poor, to be disabled in the Church is to be an outcast'- Jolene.

Section II takes a case-study approach to examine the ways in which women priests and their communities are confronting the various articulations of kyriarchy in the Roman Catholic Church. The respondents all acknowledge that gender inequality intersects with various other manifestations of oppression and that this complicates women's position and experiences within the Catholic Church. The communities of MMOJ, Good Shepherd, and MMACC consequently have devoted themselves to overcoming various axes of repression within the Church and within wider society. Their emphasis on inclusivity and affirmation is inspired by various incarnations of liberation theology, including feminist the*logy, queer the*logy, and the 'The*logy of the Poor' (Lee, 2010), as each community has integrated a commitment to Christian ideals with a commitment to feminist ideology.

Their emergent feminist political approach locates itself in opposition to all forms of discrimination within Roman Catholicism, and seeks to empower all those who have been marginalized within the canonical Church. By focusing on the feminist strategies of MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMOJ, the dynamic ways in which the female ordination movement and women priests are restructuring and renewing the Catholic Church will be established. Each chapter will address a particular layer of oppression and will be structured to explore: i) narrative analysis of the manner in which it is oppressive, ii) the ways in which it is being reformed and reconceptualized by the community and iii) the performative ways in which rituals and the communal activities of the community have been adjusted to reflect this paradigm shift away from domination.

Chapter Four explores the issue of gender inequality in the Catholic Church and the female ordination movement's ideological commitment to contesting such unjust, patriarchal structures. Throughout the respondents' narratives and spiritual biographies it became clear that institutionalized patriarchy within the Church is founded upon two mutually sustaining pillars: androcentrism and sexism. The combined effect of these patriarchal forces is that women are understood as 'man's Other' and the 'Second Sex' (Beauvoir, [1949] 2011) in all aspects of Church ideology and practice. The female ordination movement, inspired by Women-Church principles and feminist the*logy, has sought to overturn the androcentrism and sexism of patriarchal Catholicism and to create new feminist spaces for ritualization and communal worship.

Chapter Five locates gender oppression in the context of broader structural conditions within the Catholic Church and considers the role of those elements in the production and extension of kyriarchy within this religious institution. Whilst many of the respondents across the MMACC and Good Shepherd communities also express dissatisfaction with the structural model of hierarchy and authority in the Roman Catholic Church, the commitment to de-institutionalization was most pronounced and patent within the MMOJ community of Sarasota, Florida. Inspired by a feminist egalitarian approach, MMOJ acknowledged that whilst power in the Catholic Church is invested exclusively in men, it is also dispersed disproportionately to members of the clerical elite. In this context, authoritarian clericalism is understood as an additional layer of oppression for women in the Roman Catholic Church that actively 'enforces and reinforces patriarchal and hierarchical control as the lifeblood of this religion' (Poppins, Interview, 08/04/14).

The core focus of MMOJ, also referred to as Mary Mojo, is on dismantling the clerical power model built on authority and prestige, and creating a detraditionalized and democratized vision of religious community, free of hierarchy or top-down power structures. In this light,

one must recognize that Mary Mojo's capacity to integrate feminism and Catholicism is shaped not only by their openness to feminist orientations, but also by their carefully considered conceptions of Catholicism and 'Church' (Gervais, 2012; Winter, 2002).

Chapter Six explores a similarly revolutionary approach to the redefinition of Church and ministry in a Catholic context. The Good Shepherd community is built on a radical and empowering model of inclusivity and serves as an exemplar of what McConnell and McKinley define as the 'planting, revitalizing, and growing Churches that reach the economically and socially downtrodden' in the 'hard places' where the poor live (2016: 2). Good Shepherd was established by a former nun and social worker, affectionately referred to as 'the two Judys', whose social welfare initiative and House Church grew out of their food truck ministry in the urban slums of Fort Myers. Their 'Theology of the Poor' (Lee, 2010) integrates religious ideals with political interests and shows the capacity of religious leaders and religious communities to mobilize for social change. In turn, this community demonstrates how it is possible to practice Church outside of institutional walls through mutual ministry, pastoral work and through the building of a rich the*logical understanding with and for the people being served.

Through their work with the poor, the two Judys have come to realize that poverty in the USA often intersects with distinct patterns of racialization, in which African-Americans are disproportionately affected. Intersectionality is gaining ground as a desired way of deepening understandings of the persisting and overlapping forms of inequalities engendered by poverty (see for example, Norris et. al., 2013). In acknowledging this intersectionality within their own ministry the two Judys also sought to address racial injustice within society and within the Church and to empower their members through an affirmation of African-American culture and modes of worship.

Chapter Seven explores similar patterns of empowerment, but does so within the context of MMACC's pro-LGBTIQ ministry. Critics of the female ordination movement, such as Moon (2008), have argued that as part of their performative resistance of institutional patriarchy, women priests must also address the heterosexual condition of Christian theology and theological doctrine. Moon has contended that 'until they tackle heterosexism and homophobia within the Church hierarchy, the womenpriest movement only stands to address the dualistic framework of male/female gender dichotomy' and 'they become silent contributors to the axes of kyriarchal oppression if they move to the side of those with power who oppress' (2008: 67). Mary Magdalene Apostolic Catholic Community (MMACC) has taken up this responsibility, and is founded upon a commitment to overturning the Church's condemnation of LGBTIQ individuals and reclaiming human sexuality through word and action. Through their 'queering' of the*logy and of ritual practice MMACC provides a religious space that affirms homosexuality and that is supportive of a range of sexual identities.

The scathing and highly critical views expressed by the respondents in this section, whilst appearing somewhat hyperbolic in their contempt towards the Catholic Church, arerecurring and overt elements of the respondents' narratives. The themes explored in this chapter should not be viewed as evidence of bias or partiality on the part of the author, but rather should be seen as representative of both the opinions of the men and women of this study and the vehemency of this movement's opposition to what they identify as kyriarchal modes of control imbedded within the Roman Catholic Church.

Chapter 4: Gender (In)Equality and the Roman Catholic Church

<u>4.1 Androcentrism and Sexism as Modes of Oppression</u>

> **'For as long as the Church can remember, women have been oppressed and treated as unequal, y'know unfit, unworthy. Until this oppression ceases, until inequality is overshadowed by equality the Church can never truly be a Church of equals'- Sonya.**

Androcentrism,[55] or 'man-centredness,' describes the normative process that positions males, male bodies and the masculine at the centre of social, historical and religious thought, and the idea that masculinity defines what it means to be fully human (Migliorino Miller, 2006) (see for example, Hauke, 1995; Moitra, 2002; and Simpson, 1993). In discussing the androcentrism of the Catholic Church, the respondents described a gendered hierarchy that places men as the governing agents within Church life and that understands women as largely subservient and powerless beings. The institutional clerical hierarchy of the Church, as well as its constituent parish communities, is governed by an all-male paradigm. The women involved in this study applied an Aristotelian logic to the dominance of men at the apex of Church hierarchy. The respondents framed the ascendancy of males within the Church in terms of the syllogistic belief that a penis is the requisite determinant of supremacy. To be powerful and to have influence within the Catholic Church 'it seems that all you need is a penis', according to Carol, whose tongue in cheek remark reflects the frustrations of women who have been routinely discounted in the Church because of their gender and corporeal limitations (Spong, Interview, 05/04/14).

This gendered segregation of entitlement and opportunity has distinctly damaging implications for the way in which men and women respectively are viewed within the Church. By placing solely men in positions of responsibility, power and prestige within the Catholic hierarchy and imaginary, Father Roy Bourgeois (2013) argues that men are able to claim ownership of the Church. This hierarchical dominance has allowed men within the Catholic Church to impose

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[55] The analytic concept of androcentrism was introduced by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1914) to capture the societal fixation on and universality of masculinity.

themselves as the governing authority throughout its institutional structure thereby imbuing their position with ascendancy, authority and advantage. The respondents firmly believed that the hegemony of men within the Catholic Church has been established and accepted as normative because of the institutional configuration of the Church, the dominance of masculine language and imagery within the Church, as well as the masculinist attitudes of the clergy.

The female respondents reflected upon the implications of both the androcentric attitudes of the clergy and their segregation away from women in terms of the clergy's inability to relate to the experiences of women. This depreciation of women by some members of the clergy was understood by the respondents as arising from structural conditions of seminary training programs, by which trainee priests were sequestered away from female contact or interaction. From his experience training inside a Catholic seminary, Lee was able to make reflexively an assessment about the extent to which male priests' socialization involves and incorporates women. His overall assessment was that because male priests are isolated and secluded away from women from a very young age, sometimes as young as eight years old, many priests develop an unbalanced and myopic view of women as they have had minimal contact and interactions with the opposite sex. Lee explained:

> That used to really aggravate me! These men would have no real contact with women, no real understanding of what women were, what they dealt with, what they had to go through, yet they were so quick to form judgements and make decisions about them. (Bryers, Interview, 14/04/14).

Many respondents confirmed Lee's frustrations citing examples in which the priest was unable to relate to their experience as women, mothers, or wives and instead administered painfully callous accusations, judgements and treatment. In particular the respondents, in consonance with many other feminist critiques of the Catholic Church, disapproved of the clergy's rigid and unfeeling

stance towards the issues of contraception, abortion and divorce.[56] The Catholic opposition to these issues is grounded in so-called natural law, scriptural interpretation and moral principles, and the Church establishes legitimacy for its stance on contraception, abortion, divorce and reproductive technologies by 'combining doctrinal with culturally salient, secular arguments' (Dillon, 1996: 25). The Church's unwillingness to change its institutional position was particularly troubling for the respondents in light of the liberalization of social attitudes towards contraception, abortion and divorce and the prospect of greater freedom and sexual autonomy contained within Vatican II. [57]

Specifically, Carol's personal experience of the clergy's insensitivity towards contraception and their lack of understanding on these issues for women provide a framework within which to discuss the androcentrism and rigidity of the Catholic clergy. Carol was married at nineteen and by the age of twenty-four she already had five children. Her rapidly-growing family placed immeasurable pressures on her relationship with her husband and on their financial situation as well as on Carol's physical and mental health. Carol and her husband were completely overwhelmed and decided that contraception was crucial to their material and emotional survival. As a 'good Catholic girl' (Bonavoglia, 2006) Carol went to confession to discuss her decision to go on the pill with her parish priest but she was met with a response that showed no awareness of physiology or reproductive science, and that dismissed Carol's fears on the basis that 'it's not that easy to get pregnant' and 'what does another child or another five children matter, they're all God's blessings' (Spong, Interview, 05/04/14). Carol was infuriated by the priest's apathetic and uninterested response, explaining that:

> The priest and the Church didn't have compassion for the consequences of their attitudes
> towards birth control for me or my husband. They didn't have any compassion for me as

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[56] See also, Colker, 1989; Campbell, 1960; Dillon 1995, 1996; Dombrowski and Deltete, 2000; and Miller, 2014).

[57] For example, a study by D'Antonio et al. (2011) showed that women are increasingly seeing the individual rather than the Church as the 'proper locus of moral authority' on issues such as divorce and remarriage, contraception, homosexuality and non-marital sex.

a woman being denied the opportunity to take birth control. It should have been my choice but it was out of reach because of the Church's condemning stance towards it. If this was an issue to do with men, you can bet that it would have the Church's attention, but because it was to do with women, there was no compassion, no sensitivity, no understanding and no interest (Spong, Interview, 05/04/14).

Many of the respondents explained that the clergy's attitude towards contraception, abortion and divorce is particularly harmful because these issues intersect with broader areas of inequality and hardship for women. In the Catholic tradition marriage is perceived as an indissoluble sacrament and the Church's subsequent repudiation of divorce is intertwined not only with marriage and remarriage, but also with issues of sexuality, celibacy and women's virtuousness (Jenks, 2002).[58] Whilst the Catholic hierarchy outwardly condemns domestic violence, the respondents understood the Church's androcentric conception of marriage and its prohibitive stance towards divorce as confining many women within abusive relationships and perpetuating the cycle of domestic violence. For example, Marilyn recalled that she had been married to an abusive alcoholic who beat not only her but also her young children. When Marilyn decided to leave her husband she sought consolation from her parish priest but was met with reproach and harmful accusations. She explained that:

> The priest looked at me, rolled his eyes and said "what did you do to make your husband so angry? Clearly, you were not fulfilling your duty of being his wife. Marriage is a sacred bond that cannot be broken; you cannot leave him, even if he hits you. This is your cross to bear until you can learn to be a better wife. Go home, be more submissive and maybe he won't get so angry at you!" (Jenai, Interview, 19/04/14).

Marilyn was deeply hurt by this statement of blame and by the priest's inability to empathize with her position and she felt that this was a 'second layer of abuse; not only did [her] husband abuse [her] and get away with it, but then the priest abused [her] even more' (Jenai, Interview, 19/04/14).

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[58] The respondents and many feminist commentators alike have therefore noted that marriage is a 'dangerous' institution for women in the Church (Dworkin, 1983) and have positioned marriage as a locus of sexual harassment, matrimonial submission and female domestic enslavement (see, for example MacKinnon, 1987).

Similarly, many respondents saw the Church's uncompromising and punitive stance towards abortion as a further source of cruelty for women. One of the women I spoke with at MMACC described to me the brutality that she received from her parish priest after she was forced to have an emergency surgical abortion following an ectopic pregnancy. She explained that rather than offering her sympathy or care the priest spat at her and told her that she was 'a whore who would rot in hell' (Fieldwork Notes, 06/04/14). The respondents also linked their encounters with abortion to the hyper-conservative approaches of the Church in Latin America where women have been excommunicated and even imprisoned as a result of miscarriages or reproductive failures.[59]

Whilst the respondents were not pro-abortion they were all pro-choice and they held a firm commitment to the right for women to have autonomy over their bodies and to the primacy of individual conscience, as embraced in the reforms of Vatican II. The Catholic Church's denial of women's reproductive and sexual rights was perceived by the respondents as a violation of the bodily integrity, personhood, equality and diversity of women (Correa and Petchesky, 1994), and one which constituted a particularly savage form of structural violence.

The androcentrism of the Catholic Church has also laid the foundations for systemic patterns of sexism and sexist discrimination against women.[60] For example, Jane provided a narrative of the intense forms of misogyny she endured whilst she attending a Catholic theological college, an example which serves as a reflection and an extension of the deeply ingrained patriarchy of institutional Catholicism. Whilst feminists have provided many critical analyses of ecclesiastical

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[59] The criminalization of abortion, and the consequent imprisonment of women who have had miscarriages, has been especially acute in El Salvador. One such example is documented by Colin Francome: 'one woman called Manuella, who was a 32-year-old-mother of two children, had a miscarriage with severe complications and was in distress and went to the hospital. A doctor accused her of an illegal abortion and called the police. She was refused proper legal advice and was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment. Shortly after her incarceration she was diagnosed with advanced Hodgkin's Lymphoma and it was suggested that this was the cause of her miscarriage. In 2010 she died while still in prison' (2016: 152). Unfortunately, Manuella's case is not atypical and countless women have been imprisoned throughout Latin America, largely as a result of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in this region.

[60] For further information on sexism see Cudd and Andreasen (2005); Cudd and Jones (2005); Hauke (1995) and Hurst (2007).

hierarchy and of patriarchal religious structures, there is a paucity of feminist analysis of theological educational institutions and of the position of female academics within this field. There is a myriad of sources that affirm the pervasive sexism within academia generally (see for example, Hall, 2010; Hampson, 1990; Paris, 1993; and Riley et al., 2006), but few scholars have drawn attention to the institutionalized oppression of women both within the discipline of theology and within the Catholic education system.

Within theological institutions, notions of leadership, superiority and academic excellence continue to be characterized as distinctly masculine, thereby delimiting and devaluing the potential contribution of women (Morley, 2000) and instituting overt and covert forms of sexism that 'ultimately reveal the androcentric character of religious organizations more generally' (Schüssler Fiorenza 1993: 123). Jane's narrative embodies these observations, as she was the only girl in her class and she recalled traumatic memories of being continually teased, sneered at and debased with taunts that were all centred on her gender. When reflecting upon her treatment by male peers during her time at college, Jane recalled that they used to call her an 'ornament' of the program, thereby echoing the patriarchal devaluing of women and women's abilities within the Church. As a term of derision, 'ornament' conjures connotations of lowliness, subservience and fulfilling merely an auxiliary or subsidiary function. More broadly, this invective term is representative of the routine acts of feminization utilized by her colleagues to remind her of her subordinate status. [61] The men of the college hyper-feminized Jane with taunts that over-emphasized her feminine attributes, such as her clothes, her hairstyle and her high-pitched voice, and that negated her aptitude for capacities outside of this realm.

Unfortunately, Jane's experiences of misogyny within the Catholic education system continued into her professional career as an academic at the University of San Diego, a Catholic university.

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[61] For further information on feminization as a technique of control and oppression see Collins (2004) and Kimmel and Aronson (2004).

Jane's narrative resonated with the experiences of several other respondents, including Oliva, Ginny, Teresa and Beryl, who also worked in Catholic institutions, schools and administrative offices. Jane was the only woman in the theology department at University of San Diego and she felt that she was intruding upon a very traditional and exceptionally conservative 'boys' club'. Jane recounted numerous instances of professional discrimination by the clergy at her place of work on the basis of her gender and her unwillingness to conform to constraining gender expectations. For example, she was denied tenure, which was given to her male colleagues, was refused a leave of absence, which many men had received, and was a victim of the gendered pay gap that Bacchi and Eveline (2010) define as 'a relation of inequality'. Although she had a higher research output and a greater teaching load, Jane received less than half the wage of her male counterparts. Gender wage inequality, as experienced by Jane, is an integral feature of an androcentric system that values the work of men more than that of women (Pocock and Alexander, 1999). This structuring in turn reflects a politics of advantage that favours masculine bodies and ideals and that perpetuates sexist discrimination on an institutional scale (Eveline, 1994).

For many of the respondents, institutional sexism within the Catholic Church has influenced, and in turn has been consolidated by, micropolitics and the bullying of women by members of the clerical elite within a parish setting. The conceptual framework of micropolitics, as advanced by scholars such as Bird (2000) and Morley (2000; 2006), examines the subtle and complex forms of gendered discrimination within an organizational context and illustrates how gendered power relations symbolically and materially regulate women's everyday experiences. Almost all of the female respondents painted a picture of parish life in which women routinely face hostility and torment in their dealings with their parish priests. For the respondents, the expansion of an exceptionally powerful and privileged male clerical culture has created the platform for gendered

micropolitics and the widespread exploitation, abuse, intimidation and victimization of women sitting in the pews.

Oliva's narrative chronicling the treatment she received from priests whilst trying to develop religious education programs for women in Panama epitomizes the tales of clerical bullying shared by the respondents. Given what she perceived to be the Catholic Church's censure of the religious education of women, it is unsurprising that Oliva encountered opposition and antagonism to her attempts to implement female-oriented catechism projects (see also Tamez, 1987). Oliva recounts that the priests were extremely aggressive and unpleasant to her, continually overpowering and chastising her attempts at reform. She explained that:

> It was very hard to be doing that, to be constantly battling with the clergy and I even remember painfully, one of the priests said to me "who do you think you are? A boxer? You're trying to punch everybody into doing what you want to do!" Really though, it was the priest who was trying to punch me into doing what he wanted (Espin, Interview, 06/04/14).

The positionality of priest as a 'boxer' in this quote highlights the modes of coercion and intimidation routinely employed by the clergy to dominate women in the Church. These insults reflect both the clergy's disregard and disdain for women and the forceful opposition by priests to projects of resistance designed to shake the *status quo* and to liberate women. This micropolitical bullying of women, as an interactional process, further demonstrates that the institutional Catholic Church is ideologically and materially structured by gender.

Moreover, there was a consensus amongst the respondents, male and female alike, that sexism within the Church has been sustained by the existence of rigid gender roles and expectations that cast women as 'man's Other' (Beauvoir [1949] 2011). In the *Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan's reference to 'the problem that has no name' calls attention to the limiting effects of patriarchal gender roles. Feminist scholars such as Basow (1992) and Eagly et al. (2004) explain that gender stereotypes are constructed by socializing agents and forces within society, through the construction of socially shared descriptive norms and

prescriptive norms that perpetuate the demarcation of gender roles. The circumscribed roles that women can play within the masculinized and patriarchal field of Catholicism serves to paint women as wholly inferior and as subservient to their male counterparts.

Michelle's narrative of her life as a nun gives voice to the restricted vocations and opportunities open to women as the 'Second Sex' in the Catholic Church. Michelle, from an early age, identified a deep affinity with the Catholic Church and a profound desire to serve the Church and its people. As a woman, however, there were distinct limitations placed upon what was deemed by the Church to be an appropriate and acceptable vocation for her. After attending graduate school and being made to consider her own personal development and self-actualization, Michelle came to realise that life as a nun was 'in actuality a very limited existence' and that 'nuns were sheltered away and kept out of sight' (Royale, Interview, 16/04/14). In comparing her role as a nun with that of male priests in the Church, Michelle lamented that 'as nuns we did all the hard work, but we were silenced; priests were treated as saints for following their vocation, whilst we were just given the dirty jobs that no one else wanted to do' (Royale, Interview, 16/04/14).

In conceptualizing the nature of this gendered division of vocations, Michelle notes that 'it was very much about rules, about regulations, about what was acceptable and unacceptable for a *female* nun to do compared to a *male* priest' (Royale, Interview, 16/04/14). Given that being a nun is in reality the only formal vocation open to women in the Catholic Church and given that critics of female ordination often claim that the priesthood is reserved for males and that women who want to be priests should just reconcile themselves to being nuns (Pell et al., 1993), the experience of Michelle as a nun casts a shadow over the opportunities for religious service available to women in the Catholic Church (see also Trebbi, 2009).

Lay women within this study shared similar encounters with the restrictive gender roles imposed upon women by the Catholic Church. Sociologists of religion have begun to examine what various religious traditions teach about the proper roles and responsibilities for women and men and how gender influences people's positions in their religious organisations.[62] In the most extensive examination Ebaugh and Saltzman Chafetz (1999, 2000) studied immigrant religious institutions (both Christian and non-Christian) and found that women are uniformly forced to reproduce traditional patriarchal cultures through the performance of domesticated duties such as cooking, cleaning, caring for children and other subsidiary roles within their religious communities. Within the respondents' narratives similar configurations of gender roles and expectations were present and had powerful implications for their positionality within the Church.

For example, Diana was heavily involved in the running of parish life, cleaning the sanctuary and the presbytery, playing the organ, singing in Church choirs, organizing all the arrangements and music for the Masses and looking after the children in the Sunday school. Apart from the gendered dimensions of this division of labour, Diana became cognisant of the fact that women were contributing greatly to the parishes, performing the bulk of the tasks needed to ensure the functioning of the parish, and yet their contributions were understated and unappreciated. To illustrate this view, Diana remarks that 'it always struck me that the priests, these men would have perfectly manicured nails and yet the women of the parish worked their fingers to the bone to keep the place running' (Milesko, Interview, 12/04/14). In her experience, 'women did all the work, were expected to do all of the work, purely because they were women and they were there to be servile and to serve the men of the Church' (Milesko, Interview, 12/04/14).

The respondents also recalled with great resentment numerous examples that were illustrative of their limited participation and the 'restricted autonomy of women acting within this religious

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[62] See for example Cadge (2004); Seager, 1999; and Smith, 1999.

sphere' (O'Neill et al., 2014:3). The respondents believed that the constraints placed upon women's sacramental agency were an exercise of institutional sexism that produced and reproduced the marginal place of women within Catholic thought and practice. In this way the respondents of this study gave voice to the image of the 'stained glass ceiling' (Adams, 2007): the sexist ways in which Catholic parishes are configured to prevent women from reaching positions of leadership or acting in a liturgical capacity.

The female respondents gave various examples of roles that they had been excluded from on the basis of their gender, including priests, homilists, readers, cantors, deacons, altar servers, acolytes and ministers of communion, and argued that these functions should be opened up to all people within the Church. Whilst some women's feelings of disenfranchisement were centred on the fact that their gender prevented women from becoming priests, other respondents had 'never been called to be a priest, but would like for women to be given the chance to be able to do more in the Church, to be more involved and to be *enabled* rather than being constantly *disabled'* (Spong, Interview, 05/04/14).

Perhaps the most forceful narrative of such limitation and confinement comes from Bishop Patricia Fresen, a former Dominican nun and educator of seminary priests. Her story[63] was repeatedly raised by the respondents as evidence of the shackles imposed on women's participation and serves as an evocative example of the stained glass ceiling operating in the Roman Catholic Church. Fresen joined the Dominican order of nuns in South Africa and began to work in schools, taking a firm stand for justice and equality amidst the exclusionary policies of Apartheid. Her sense of the injustices faced by women in the Church was crystallized when she was sent to Rome to study theology and recognized that she had a call to priesthood that would never be accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. As each ordination came around, even

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[63] Although I was not able to interview Patricia Fresen personally, each of the respondents made references to her spiritual biography within their interviews, and I was able to gain Fresen's personal insights from an interview conducted between her and Jules Hart in Hart's influential documentary *Pink Smoke Over the Vatican* (2011).

though she was receiving better marks in theology than many of the young men who were being ordained, Fresen was prohibited from pursuing her vocation solely because she was a woman.

After pursuing these studies in theology in Rome, Fresen began to teach trainee priests in South Africa's only seminary as the sole female faculty member. Here she found herself in a paradoxical and exasperating situation: she could teach the seminarians homiletics and direct them in how to preach, even appearing in videos delivering a model homily, yet she could never execute an actual homily to these men in a liturgy or a Mass. Her frustrations began to intensify as year after year she watched the men whom she had trained in the seminary go on and be ordained whilst her own call to ordination and to ministry went unrecognized. Fresen reflects that 'it started with a little niggle, y'know there's something wrong here- [she] was automatically discredited because of [her] gender, never mind how much [she] might have felt that [she] was called and never mind what gifts [she] had to offer' (Fresen, in Hart, 2011).

For former priest Lee, these limitations which were imposed upon Fresen's ministry were highly problematic. For, as he explains, 'there is something that has got to make everybody uncomfortable; how can she train men and prepare men for the priesthood and be good enough to do that and how can she be better trained than a great deal of male priests out there yet nobody offers her a role as a priest just because she is a woman' (Bryers, Interview, 14/04/14). For Lee, this situation was purely illogical and was characteristic of the Catholic Church's continued attempts to thwart women having an authoritative role in the Church. The limitations and restrictions imposed upon the capacities open for women within the Catholic Church are not isolated to this narrative and, as Jack affirms, 'sadly there are a lot of Patricia Fresens running around the Catholic Church, all feeling as though their hands are tied and their mouths are gagged' (Duffy, Interview, 12/04/14).

Consequently, the sexist limitation of women's agency and autonomy must be understood as a mode of governmentality by which the Catholic Church is able to maintain its control and domination over its female subjects. The Church's patriarchal and sexist stance towards women serves as a source of 'cultural violence' that supports and entrenches gendered 'structural violence' (Galtung, 1969). These patriarchal attitudes that underlie Catholic ideology and practice thereby become subsumed into wider societal norms and values and provide the 'social excuse' for justifying such sexist acts of discrimination (Corran, Interview, 03/04/14).

For as Betty explains 'if the Church does not include women in church decision making then it implicitly gives permission to the rest of society to treat women as less than equals as well' (Poppins, Interview, 08/04/14). Such assertions point toward the concept of the 'reproduction of inequality' (Schwalbe et al, 2000: 420) and the key role of the Church in inculcating the ideological basis for the sexism and the systemic subjugation of women in society. From this understanding, the Roman Catholic Church's articulations of sexism, built upon notions of androcentrism, have provided a 'broad justification for gender inequality' (Napier et al, 2010) and have formed the cultural basis for justifying and sustaining such acts of 'structural violence' towards women.

4.2 Moving from a Male Church to Women-Church

'We're bringing women back to the centre, and we're moving the Church forward with a feminist vision that celebrates the humanity and wholeness of women'- Carol.

The feminist ordination movement has confronted the systemic androcentrism and sexism of the Catholic Church through its integration of three key dynamics: feminist ideology, feminist the*logy and Women-Church principles. The respondents' innovative practices of feminist spirituality and feminist communalization represent positive steps forward in

transforming androcentric religious structures (Gervais, 2011; Schneiders, 2004). The previously-discussed manifestations of patriarchal constraint conflicted with the respondents' commitment to feminist principles. This tension was experienced in multiple sites and across vocational, social and institutional contexts (Lux-Sterritt and Mangion, 2011).

Similar to the findings of Gervais's (2012) and Howard Ecklund's (2003) empirical studies, the clash between Catholic belief and feminist ideology was experienced through painful and anger-generating tensions in the personal lives and spiritualties of the respondents. However, in contrast to the experiences documented in previous research, the respondents of this study have been able to move past these conflicts and to find a productive space for the integration of their feminist and Catholic identities. As these women experienced both conflict and integration between aspects of Catholicism and feminism they interchangeably and simultaneously embodied characteristics of 'feminist Catholics' and 'Catholic feminists' as discussed in Chapter One of this thesis (Schneiders, 2004).

 The respondents primarily aligned with the 'feminist Catholic' identifier within Schneider's typology, but some also engaged in and adapted Catholic feminist strategies within their feminist projects. Thus, whilst these concepts are constructive in distinguishing between two fundamentally different approaches, this study seeks to move beyond a simplistic binary opposition in order to conceptualize the overlapping of these identities as well as the potential for new religious feminist Catholic identities. The following section will fulfil this aim by exploring the female ordination movement's utilization of feminist ideology, feminist the*logy and Women-Church principles in its cultivation of inclusive spaces for empowering religious practice.

Firstly, the communities in this study have been informed and constituted by key feminist organizing and ideological principles. The movement for women's ordination in the Church,

as well as the development of inclusive women-led religious communities must be understood within the context of second-wave feminism and its focus on eradicating sexism and the oppression of women (Moon, 2008). As such their feminist politics involve placing women at the centre of the Church as active agents and empowered subjects in order to 'make women's experiences visible, reveal the sexist biases and tacitly male assumptions of traditional knowledge … and open the way to gendered understanding' (Stacey and Thorne, 1985: 302).

The respondents all enunciated different ways in which this feminist vision is realized in their communities, including 'working for sexual equality and the liberation of all women';[64] encouraging 'love and respect for women and men, just as God intended'; [65] and embodying 'equality, community, unity and non-hierarchical'[66] values in their configurations of Church. The feminist orientation of these communities can best be summarized by the themes of equality, community and the empowerment of women. The communities embraced a more flexible and pragmatic form of feminism, which vacillates between a theological opposition to ecclesial patriarchy and a more secular vision of women's equality.

It is important, however, to recognize what the term 'feminism' explicitly means for women and men involved in these communities and the connections which they perceive between their commitment to feminist ideals and their Catholic faith. Whilst the pastoral teams of each community emphasize the importance of feminism for their spiritual and political projects and whilst their communities support these ideals, the respondents varied in the extent to which they openly identified as feminist. Three differing levels of feminist identification can be observed amongst the respondents: *outright* feminists, *nascent* feminists and *latent* feminists.

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[64] (Milesko, Interview, 12/04/14).
[65] (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14).
[66] (Validivia, Interview, 15/04/14).

The outright feminists are women who openly identify as feminists and who construct their participation in the cause of female ordination as grounded in their feminist epistemology and their feminist political activism. The outright feminists of this study are vociferous in their condemnation of ecclesial patriarchy and they are committed to feminist projects both within the Church and throughout broader society. Marilyn typified the position of outright feminists, explaining that '[she] had always been a feminist, and [she] became involved in the women's liberation movement in the Sixties because [she] wanted to pursue change and progress for women and it was this same burning passion that motivated [her] to work for justice for women in the Church' (Jenai, Interview, 19/04/14).

By contrast the latent feminists, whilst fully supportive of women priests and the greater involvement of women in the Church, struggle with the term 'feminist' and do not overtly define their commitment to egalitarianism as an extension of feminism. For example, Teresa maintained that 'a lot of the people in this community are feminists, but [she did not] really classify [herself] as a feminist, instead [she] saw [herself] as dedicated to equality for everyone, men, women, gays, straights, cats and dogs' (MacEachern, Interview, 18/04/14).

The latent feminist position, as personified by Teresa, draws parallels with Misciagno's (1997) label of 'de Facto feminist,' which draws attention to the phenomenon of people who support feminist positions but who do not outwardly categorize themselves as feminists. Whilst tacitly committed to feminist principles, these respondents framed the women priests issue more in terms of social justice and equality and positioned their involvement in the movement within the context of broader liberal and modernist shifts towards egalitarianism.

The nascent category represents a midpoint on the spectrum of feminist identification between the outright and latent positions. Nascent feminists within this sample have not always identified as outright feminists but their feminist consciousness have been awakened

through their participation in women-led Catholic communities. Mary Al exemplified this position, identifying that '[she] had never considered herself as a feminist but over the last five years as [she] became more involved in MMOJ [her] eyes began to be opened to the ways in which feminism can be productive and the ways in which feminism was important to [her] as a woman' (Gagnon, Interview, 15/04/14).

A particularly striking example of the nascent position was articulated by Ford, who admitted that he was a male chauvinist in his earlier years who openly disrespected women and who was blind to injustice occurring around him. Ford commented that women priests and their inclusive Catholic communities offered him 'more expansive horizons to really evaluate how prejudiced [he] was and how [he] could adjust [his] beliefs and actions to be more inclusive of everyone and to be on the right side of oppression' (Englerth, Interview, 16/04/14). The nascent feminists within this study, many of whom were male, emphasized the capacity of these women-led communities to transform the hearts and minds of their members, and to show them the benefits of feminist thought and praxis for renewed articulations of Catholic Christianity.

A surprising and unintended finding of this research was the extent to which male respondents embraced and supported this feminist-oriented movement. Many of the male respondents expressed a firm belief that 'what we as men in the Church do and have done to women is so unbelievably wrong, just awful' and that 'if you stand back and do nothing, then you are actively condoning the oppression of women in the Church' (Tyrell, Interview, 08/04/14). Thus, many male respondents accepted culpability for the repression of women in the Church exclaiming that 'it is just inconceivable as to why the Church and more importantly why other men in the Church can't see this and can't see that we need to help women in their struggle for equality' (Wilhelmy, Interview, 07/04/14).

Their support was also in part motivated by a belief that 'without women's rights being respected and honoured, it limits the rights of men because it actually separates us from the reality of humanity, which is both male and female' (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14). The female respondents felt inspired and supported by their male counterparts' advocacy for women's rights in the Church and argued that 'to have men working with women for change was a big sign of hope for the Church that you have men who are willing to stand up for women and that you have men who are acknowledging that there is something fundamentally wrong with the way the Church treats women' (Jenai, Interview, 19/04/14).

Such observations of men as 'powerful profeminist allies' (Kimmel, 2010)[67] counteracts the claims of scholars such as Schenk (1982) who declare that feminism is 'anti-male', and the contentions of radical feminist perspectives that question whether men can ever truly be feminists (Koeldt et al., 1973). For male respondents such as Robert, Patrick, Lee, Ivan, Jack, Roland and Ford, their support of the female ordination movement is grounded in the concept of solidarity, which Father Roy Bourgeois defines as 'accompanying and making another's struggle and justice for equality your own struggle' (2013: 15). These men are able consciously and unconsciously to embrace feminist perspectives and 'engage in a variety of public and private activities to help bring about gender justice and equality' (Goldrick- Jones, 2002: 1).

The involvement of males in the women-led communities of this study attests to the gendered diversity of these parishes and contests claims that the female ordination movement is an elitist women's movement that supplants ecclesial patriarchy with an equally exclusive form of matriarchal control (see for example Moon, 2008). Rather, the communities established themselves as 'a Church for women *and* for men; the language is for both women and for men, the imagery is for women and men, the rituals are for women and men, so both women

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[67] See also Pronger (1998).

and men *can* celebrate here and *be* celebrated here' (Espin, Interview, 06/04/14). The incorporation of men into these communities was seen as a crucial part of their mission for inclusion because 'if we exclude someone on the basis of their gender, then we are just as bad, just as unjust as the canonical Church itself' (Vanderway, Interview, 07/04/14).

The communities' inclusion of men is just one instance of their feminist-inspired politics of intersectionality, which was emphasized as a way to combat the alienation faced by the victims of Catholic kyriarchy. Nancy explained that the female ordination movement has a comprehensive and holistic approach to its ministry, aiming to meet the needs of

> … all of those who are marginalized or who have been marginalized. People who've been driven away because of the theology, people who are outcast because they don't believe certain things or can't practice in a certain way, gays, lesbians, people who have been thrown out by the Church, who have been ostracized and who have been told that they are less than human, people who have been divorced, people who have been touched by the sexual hypocrisy that goes on in the Church, priests who want to be married but still practice their priesthood … they are the people that we want to serve and want to welcome back to the Church (Corran, Interview, 03/04/14).

The female ordination movement's intersectional politics is identified as an imperative of their faith, and is informed by the scriptural verse: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians, 3:20). Moreover, their feminist ethic and intersectional approach was also a direct response to the gospel message that 'our God is a God of equality and Jesus was the most inclusive person who ever walked on the face of the earth' (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14). Inspired both by their faith convictions and by their feminist ideology, the communities of the female ordination movement seek to realize this vision of supreme inclusivity. As will be explored in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, the communities of this study all embrace an intersectional approach to their ministry and to their models of Church.

As part of their intersectional approach, and like their secular counterparts, members of the female ordination movement have engaged in feminist-inspired political action to fight for various social justice campaigns within the Church and in wider society. As they confront the androcentrism of the Catholic Church, women priests and their supporters also engage in broader issues of social, economic and ecological justice at the grassroots level of project initiation, provision and implementation. Each community in this study is involved in a variety of grassroots projects, including: food pantries, feeding the homeless, raising money for breast cancer research, environmental stewardship programs and domestic violence support.

These women and men also mobilize their feminist ethic on more political levels where they organize and participate in petitions, letter writing, vigils and public protests against human rights violations, gender-based discrimination and violence, economic injustice, child poverty, homelessness, human trafficking and the mistreatment of refugees, among other issues (see also, Gervais and Sjolander, 2015). For example, the female ordination movement has been particularly involved in protests against the School of the Americas torture program[68] and against the death penalty. Such acts of political protest and social change were constructed as imperatives within each of the communities studied and many respondents identified this social justice focus as one of the things that they loved most about these communities. Their involvements in these acts of political protest and civic dissidence, whilst inspired by their commitment to feminist political ideals, have not been confined to

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[68] The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, formerly known as the US Army School of the Americas, is an institute at Fort Benning run by the U.S. Department of Defence. Since 1961, this institution has specifically focused on anti-communist counterinsurgency training and has educated Latin American dictators and military personnel in the use of torture. The School of the Americas has been criticized as a result of the extensive human rights violations committed by its students. In 1990, former Maryknoll Father, and now Roman Catholic Woman Priest, Roy Bourgeois established the 'School of the Americas Watch' to protest against this state-sanctioned torture program. Their activities include launching public education campaigns, lobbying congress, and holding demonstrations and non-violent resistance at the School of the Americas facility.

women's issues and instead have adopted an intersectional approach in recognising the breadth and diversity of oppression.

Second, members of the female ordination movement have applied a secular feminist theoretical framework to their understanding of the*logy and their approach to feminine spirituality. Recognizing that Catholic theology is rooted in an androcentric approach that subordinates women's religiosity, the female ordination movement has been mobilized and inspired by feminist the*logy which seeks to unmask the oppressive functions of patriarchal theology and which 'explores women's experience of oppression and discrimination in society and religion as well as [their] experiences of hope, love and faith in the struggle for liberation and well-being' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993: 253). Three key moments or insights of feminist the*logy can be isolated: the critique of the masculine bias of theology, the search for alternative traditions that support the autonomous personhood of women, and concerted efforts to restate the norms and methods of theology itself in the light of this critique and alternative tradition (Ruether, 1985: 709).

The female ordination movement generally, and MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC in particular, have employed each of these dimensions in their construction of a feminist model of the*logy that recognizes women's agency as a key interpretive category and that seeks to liberate women from the ideological strictures of androcentric conceptions of the sacred. Their radical feminist spirituality is framed over and against the patriarchal theology and sexist praxis of the institutional Church and critiques the overt misogyny of Catholic Christianity (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993; Ruether, 1985). In this way, they are 'transforming the faiths of the fathers' as they carve out an inclusive sacramental space that acknowledges and celebrates the feminine (Braude, 2004).

As part of this feminist approach to the*logy and scriptural interpretation, the pastoral teams of MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC have revised their lectionary[69] to incorporate feminine voices and female biblical wisdom. The lectionary of the Roman Rite of Mass is infused with an androcentric approach to representing the divine and predominantly it uses psalms and extracts from the Bible that assert a masculine point of view or that are centred upon male figures. The respondents lamented that the canonical lectionary 'passed over these fabulous stories of women doing marvellous things in the Bible,' and that 'the Church taught its people that only men matter and that only men can have a connection to God or to Jesus' (Via, Interview, 04/04/14).

The pastoral teams of MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC have resolved that they could not perpetuate this scriptural androcentrism and silencing of women and instead they have created a reworked feminist lectionary that has built upon contemporary Biblical translations and feminist the*logical and historical revisionism to provide a more inclusive collection of liturgical readings to be used within their communities. In exposing the scriptural foundations of the feminine face of God, the women priests encourage their parishioners to take ownership of their place in the Church as empowered agents and sacramental equals. The effect of this the*logical reimagination on the sense of self-worth of the respondents is immense: 'the readings are so much more extensive here, we consider stories and parables that the Church discounts and we are encouraged to use these stories to see that women are equally important and equally sacred parts of the Church' (Validivia, Interview, 05/04/14).

The respondents were all unanimous in believing that such an expansive view of the*logy is the product of the 'foresight, insight, imagination, and creativity' of their female priests (Bentley, Interview, 08/04/14), who have integrated their extensive theological knowledge

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[69] A lectionary is a collection of the core scripture readings appointed for Christian worship on a specific day or liturgical occasion. After the Second Vatican Council, the Holy See promulgated the *Ordo Lectionum Missae* (Order of the Readings for Mass) which contained the official arrangement of scripture passages to be read at each Mass and principal feast day.

with their feminist standpoint to provide a renewed and reinvigorated approach to scriptural worship. In this way, the inspired feminist the*logy of MMOJ, MMACC and Good Shepherd generates new stories and new sacramental symbols that 'allow the divine to be experienced in places where it had not been experienced before and in ways that it had not been allowed to be imagined before' (Ruether, 1985: 711). This 'rich the*logical exploration of women and the feminine' gave the respondents great hope, as 'changing the Church's theology [provided them] with the reason and the foundations to change [their] systems and [their] structures' (Corran, Interview, 03/04/14).

Third, as part of their 'emancipatory ecclesial praxis', the feminist the*logy of the female ordination movement aims to transform the structural sins of Catholic patriarchy through the development of Women-Church communities. Women-Church models of inclusive communities have been praised by feminist theologians and theorists as a more sustainable and emancipatory alternative to the Women-Priest framework. The model of Women-Church is premised upon the belief that 'to achieve women's emancipation in particular and that of the laity in general, nothing short of a reconceptualization of Church and ministry is necessary' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993: 32). Hunt explains that 'rather than simply "add women and stir",' Women-Church involves a 'wholesale renewal of the structures of Catholic communities, with or without ordained men, priests, men or women' (2011: 88).

Analysts of the female ordination movement, such as Moon (2008), have erroneously assumed that this group is singularly committed to a Women-Priest model that seeks to replicate an androcentric paradigm of Catholic community and thereby reinscribe the patriarchal oppression of women within the Church. However, in reality the respondents of this study were highly critical of Women-Priest principles, and they identified the fact that the inclusion of women into ordained ministry in the Church needs to be accompanied by a broad and holistic regeneration of the structural and ideological basis of Roman Catholicism.

As Jane Via explains, 'the female ordination movement has never simply called for the inclusion of women into the existing clerical hierarchy of the Catholic Church,' but rather they are 'dedicated number one to the ordination of women, and number two, to the ordination of women in a renewed Catholic Church' (Via, Interview, 04/04/14).

In each of their innovations towards a Women-Church model of religious communalization the communities have embraced aspects of human-centred and women-focused feminist spirituality (Johnson, 2002b; Winter, 2002). MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC are seeking to reform the Church through the creation of democratic, egalitarian communities' and have 'created alternative women's liturgical groups and feminist grassroots communities where all members participate as equals' (Ruether, 1998: 67). Their model of Church is circular and horizontal and represents a break from the patriarchal model emanating from Rome where men dominate and claim ownership of the Church and the truth.

Core to this vision has been the integration of the laity into all aspects of liturgical ministries and ecclesial activities. This empowerment of the laity, as will be further discussed in Chapter Five, is indicative of the female ordination movement's intentional feminist horizontal diffusion of power that supports participation among those who would be otherwise disengaged, underserviced, or excluded (see, for example, Chittister, 2004; Reed, 2004; Gervais and Sjolander, 2015).

However it must be acknowledged that, whilst these communities have been emboldened by feminist the*logy and womanist paradigms, their Women-Church principles have also been integrated with an intersectional approach to inclusivity. Whereas the nucleus of Women-Church identity lies in its commitment to women, each community in this study focused on the inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTIQ individuals, the poor, the homeless and the handicapped and perceived this outreach to be as equally important as and mutually

constitutive to their outreach to women (see also Zeller, 2003). Thus, MMOJ, Good Shepherd

and MMACC must be understood as extending the Women-Church paradigm to model a

form of intersectional inclusivity that constructs and contests women's oppression in relation

to wider patterns of marginalization and social disenfranchisement.

As the culmination of MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC's pursuit for gender equality and

the expansion of women's opportunities within the Church, female ordination serves as a further

way in which the female ordination movement is practising Women-Church. Despite the

institutional chastisement of the female ordination movement by the Roman Catholic Church, the

men and women of this study all expressed a clear conviction that Catholic women are being

called to the priesthood and they indicated their unwavering support for women's ordination and

women's full inclusion in the Church. The Church's repudiation of the 'deep faith and deep

sense of calling by God to the priesthood borne by many devout women' (Bourgeois, 2013:16),

was understood by the respondents as extremely limited in its view of ordination and in its view

of the capacities of women. For as Jack suggests:

> Women in the Church are telling us that God is calling them to the priesthood, who are
> we, as men, to say that our call is valid, but yours is not? Didn't God create men and
> women as equals? Doesn't the call to the priesthood come from God? Then, how can you
> deny if a woman has a calling to serve the Church as a priest? (Duffy, Interview,
> 12/04/14).

Their support of female ordination and women's full equality in the Church is an extension and

reflection of each community's commitment to social justice. Women's ordination is therein

imbued with a symbolic quality, as a symbol for women's equality and the intrusion of secular,

liberal feminism into the realm of conservative, patriarchal religious regimes.

Each community in this study, as well as the wider structures of RCWP and ARCWP,

support the ordination of women through both ideology and praxis and they have created a

space in which female liturgical leadership is affirmed and celebrated. MMOJ, Good

Shepherd and MMACC have each held or participated in the ordination ceremonies of

women priests and they have constructed these rituals as a powerful site of performative resistance and cognitive dissidence. Some respondents in this study also signalled their support for female ordination by attending ordination ceremonies of women priests which in turn had a transformative effect on their personal religiosity. For example, whilst attending an ordination of a woman priest Sonya felt that she 'was part of something really momentous, something that was actively changing the course of history and changing the course of the Catholic Church' (Briggs, Interview, 18/04/14).

In conjunction, each of the respondents' approbation of female ordination is firmly built upon a recognition of the specific assets that women could bring to the priesthood. There was a consensus amongst the respondents that the Catholic Church's prohibition of female ordination is 'contrary to the best interests of the whole Church,' because 'by ignoring half of the world's population we are missing out on the insights and gifts which they could offer' (Englerth, Interview, 16/04/14). Wallace posits that female priests and pastors possess a greater capacity to identify with their parishioners than celibate, male priests and because of 'their need to transform the traditional conception of the role of a pastor, they innovate in ways that empower parishioners and create a greater spirit of community' (1992: 171). The respondents all agreed with this position and they contended that if the Church were to open its doors to women's ministry that 'women priests would bring women's wisdom, women's experiences and women's healing to the institutional Church' (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14).

The narratives of the respondents were inundated with references to women priests as 'dynamic and brilliant visionaries,' as 'incredibly adept at spiritual mysticism,' as 'liturgically creative' and as 'gifted in offering pastoral support to their communities' (Royale, Interview, 16/04/14). There was a definite emphasis within the respondents' narratives of the gender-specific gifts that women bring to the priesthood, centred on their unique standpoint and experiences. Thus, many respondents made a clear distinction between

'feminine' and 'masculine' sensibilities, and suggested that 'if you go deeper and look at the great deal of distress in our world and in our Church, the feminine is so much more in touch with that than the masculine' (Murray, Interview, 14/04/14).

Therefore, in a sign of contradiction, whilst the members of the female ordination movement seek to expand the roles and gender norms available to women, in their narratives of what women bring to the Church they have essentialized what constitutes the 'feminine'. Feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz states that essentialism:

> …entails the belief that those characteristics defined as women's essence are shared in common by all women at all times. … Her essence underlies all the apparent variations differentiating women from each other. Essentialism thus refers to the existence of fixed characteristic, given attributes and ahistorical functions that limit the possibilities of change and thus of social reorganization (1995: 36).

In describing the ministerial gifts of women priests, the respondents exhibited signs of biological determinism as they associated qualities such as softness and humility exclusively with the realm of the feminine. This insistence on the peaceful, nurturing and comforting qualities of women does not advance the prospects of gender equality but rather it serves to confine women to restrictive gender roles and gendered identities. By applying an essentialized vision of femininity to the priesthood and by espousing notions such as 'women make better priests,' the respondents run the risk of being co-opted into the patriarchal power structure of the Catholic Church (see also, Moon, 2008).

Essentializing women only serves to reify and further privilege the patriarchal and androcentric conception of women's qualities. For example, Catherine MacKinnon (1989) argues that women think in relational terms, and that whilst women value care as a positive feminine attribute, perhaps they actually value care because men have valued women according to the care they give to men. MacKinnon therefore concludes that women think in such relational terms and essentialize feminine virtues because 'women's social existence is defined in relation to men' (1989: 51). These androcentric systems are utilized to maintain patriarchal hegemony since by

homogenizing women into one singular category the binary between men and women is strengthened, resulting in the continual subordination of women (see for example, Grosz, 1995; Slaney, 1997; Threadgold, 1990; and Ussher, 1997).

If women priests and their supporters aim to contest and reform the patriarchal and kyriarchal assumptions of the Church then a comprehensive reimagination of the roles, capacities and value of women as priests and not as women must be emphasized as an imperative. A greater focus on the social construction of gender roles and on 'gender performativity' (Butler, 1988) will allow women priests to view their gender as a set of tools to be 'reused and rethought, exposed as strategic instruments and effects and subjected to a critical reinscription and redeployment' (Butler and Scott, 1992: 25).

The essentialization of gender is further problematic in that it obscures the significance of other aspects of women's identities, such as race, class and sexual orientation, and subsequently marginalizes the experiences and standpoints of women of colour, non-Western women, queer women and non-Cisgender women. Essentialized perspectives make universalizing and normalizing claims 'for and about women, which are only true of white, Western, heterosexual, Cisgender, middle- or -upper class women' (DiQuinzio, 1993: 2). Rather, in order to combat the kyriarchy of the Catholic Church, women priests must apply an intersectional logic of thinking that incorporates the interlocking categories of race, class, sexuality, and gender into consideration and that disrupts the patriarchal and ethnocentric heteronormativity embedded within conventional dualistic gender frameworks (see, for example, DiQuinzio, 1993; and Moon, 2008).

Moreover, whilst the priesthood has been heralded by the female ordination movement as a key step in the pursuit of gender equality in the Church, the nature and underlying principles by which women priests are ordained must also be interrogated. Such analysis must question

whether the female ordination movement has internalized malestream values and has reinscribed canonical Catholic patriarchy into their systems of ordination and their models of priesthood. Thus, this study must assess whether, as participant and woman priest Katy expressed it, 'women (in this movement) are participating in their own oppression' by continuing Catholic practices that sustain the patriarchal subjugation of women (Zatsick, Interview, 12/04/14).

Such critiques echo African-American lesbian feminist Audre Lorde's declaration that 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' (1984: 12). Applying Lorde's axiom to the current case study, traditional Catholic rites, practices and ideological structures, as patriarchal axes of control and submission, would constitute the master's tools. Lorde warns against using such 'tools' to overthrow the *status quo*, as 'they may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never dismantle the master's house' (1984: 112). Rather, in order to transcend prejudice and oppression, new tools must be forged that are free from the vestiges of patriarchal authoritarianism and domination.

It is surprising, given that the doctrine of apostolic succession has been one of the primary obstructions to women's ordination, that most of the women in this study believed that their ordinations need to stand in line with apostolic succession and adhere to this canonical 'invented tradition' (Hobsbawm, 1983). According to historian Eric Hobsbawm, 'invented tradition is a set of accepted rituals or symbolic practices which seek to instil certain values and norms of behaviour, which over time, naturally engenders coherence and succession with the past' (1983: 2). The tradition of apostolic succession can thereby be conceived of as an invention of tradition utilized by the Catholic Church for centuries in order to institutionalize paternalism and patriarchalism in the Church and to exacerbate the hierarchical and elitist divide between clergy and laypeople (Moon, 2008).

Critics such as Moon have been 'somewhat disturbed that these women would be so deferential to the male-dominated tradition of apostolic succession' (2008: 120) and that women are accepting the master's tools as the core criterion for ordination. Moon demarcates apostolic succession as a 'patriarchal fiction', that has been 'created by male structural advantages' on the basis of 'male "tradition", that has appropriated women leaders to be less important and out of direct spiritual line to Jesus' (2008: 122-3). 'The entire process of women's adoption of apostolic succession', to critics such as Moon, has consequently been delineated as 'a symbol of the abuse of male patriarchal power, violence against wo/men and oppression of laypeople and women religious' (2008: 125). Moon therefore emphasizes the need for the reinvigoration of ordination practices through 'creative and life-giving ways of engaging in the ministry of the discipleship of equals, without following the theological model of male apostolic succession' (2008:132).

Whilst Moon's evaluation of the movement presents a valid criticism of the theological bases of female ordination, a holistic analysis of this movement must also consider the subversive potential for the movement's utilization of apostolic succession. In reality, members of the movement are highly reflexive and engage critically with their model of ordination and governance through ongoing discussion, debate and consultation around these issues. Rod elaborates that 'the community at Mary Mag believes in the gift and ministry of ordination, and [they] wouldn't follow [apostolic succession] if [they] didn't think that it was important to signal that women are not playing mass, they're not playing ordination, this is real' (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14). Bishop Patricia Fresen, in the *Pink Smoke* documentary (Hart, 2011) explains that the movement is in a 'transitional time' and is 'constantly evolving to the point where the practice of ordination and apostolic succession could be eradicated altogether.' But for now, Fresen argues, '[they] need to claim for women their equal right with men to be ordained'.

This emerging differentiation is exemplified by the narrative of Nancy Corran, whose ordination represents a deviation from canonical conventions. Nancy, who was trained in an

ecumenical theological seminary and who served as an assistant homilist at MMACC for many years, was not ordained by a bishop, nor can her ordination be traced through the patriarchal lineage set out by apostolic succession. Rather, Nancy was called to ordination by MMACC and her ordination was sanctified and certified by this community. In Nancy's ordination ceremony, 'the people laid hands on the ordained, rather than the other way round; it's all about the community confirming the priest and establishing them as a servant of that community' (Corran, Interview, 03/04/14). Nancy's ordination thus serves as a striking counterpoint to Moon's critiques of the movement's dependence on apostolic succession as a model for ordination and attests to the growing flexibility and dynamism of the movement.

Whilst apostolic succession was crucial for early ordinations, perhaps as the movement begins to grow and develop a stronger sense of autonomy it will continue to cultivate non-traditional and democratic models of clergy and ordination. Furthermore, Moon fails to recognize that ordination is not the core basis of this feminist movement for justice in the Church. Inspired by Women-Church principles, ordination through apostolic succession is not the primary concern of the movement, but rather it provides a necessary portal and entry point by which to legitimize their subversive activities. Ordination through apostolic succession is thus the beginning, not the totality, of the female ordination movement. This movement's focus is on using the platform that legitimate ordination affords them, to fight repression and disempowerment and to change the patriarchal traditions and kyriarchal structures of Roman Catholicism.

4.3 The Feminization of Rituals

MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC's communal liturgies stand as 'strategies of place' where women priests and their supporters are able to create sacramental alternatives to the androcentrism and kyriarchy of institutional Catholicism (see also Leming, 2007). As Women-Church paradigms are rooted in ideals of solidarity and mutuality, women priests express their commitment to feminist the*logy through communal rituals that strategically integrate their feminist orientations with their Catholic faith. Women priests have developed creative approaches to ritualization that are symbolic of their mission to work on the margins of the Church to restore women to the centre of Church the*logy and practice. To borrow Judith Butler's (1990) terminology, by consciously engaging in a 'gender performance' and a ritualistic performance of faith that does not reify existing binary gender dualisms, but rather that celebrates wholeness and equality, women priests are able to make powerful statements concerning gender politics within the Catholic Church. Women priests and their communities are consequently able to reshape and reintegrate what it means to be a feminist woman and a Catholic through their celebration of identity through ritual (see also Dillon, 1999 and Gervais, 2012).

As an active form of performative resistance, the revised liturgies celebrated at MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC advocate for and partake in religious rites and expressions of faith that are fully inclusive of both women and men in terms of language, symbolism and participation (see also Gervais, 2012). The function of these inclusive rituals is not for women to have a Church of their own, because it is not a movement for women only; rather, their intention is to 'articulate a new vision for Church, one which allows for the recovery of a creative, intuitive, imaginative and instinctive reinterpretation of tradition' (Winter, 2002: 28).   These feminist-inspired rituals and religious practices in turn inspire new models of

community that cultivate congregants' sense of self both in terms of their rejection of

Catholic orthodoxy and their emergent sacramental autonomy.

One of the primarymeans whereby women priests contest androcentrism in the Church and

model gender inclusivity in their rituals is at the level of language, as they assert women's

right to claim and name the divine in gender-neutral terms. The study of language and

rhetoric as a contested site of gendered struggle has generated a burgeoning body of feminist

research (see, for example, Crawford, 1995; Fairclough, 1989; and Spender, 1985[70]). Mary

Daly (1973), for example, explored the gendered social constructionism of language and

argued that 'God talk' and masculine language in the religious realm overtly maintains and

reinforces women's subordination.[71] Many of the respondents presented views in consonance

with that of Daly, arguing that:

> During a Mass we all stand on sacred ground and we all equally reflect the sacred.
> But if you constantly only hear one kind of language, and if the feminine is always
> excluded because God is always referred to as "He" or "Father", then you always
> assume that women are inferior. (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14).

The respondents all conveyed that the use of androcentric language, such as masculine

pronouns to refer to the divine, has the dual effect of presenting a gendered image of God and

of reinforcing maleness as the generic human experience within the Church (Kelley, 2011).

The respondents also identified linguistic patterns within the Church, and within the most

recent translation of the Mass,[72] that were rooted in hierarchy, empire and domination and

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[70] See also, Coates, 1993; Fulkerson, 1994; Lakoff, 1976; Pidwell, 1998; and Threadgold and Cranny-Francis, 1990.

[71] In particular, Daly argued that the term 'God' can be used oppressively against women in a number of ways: 'first it occurs in an overt manner when theologians proclaim women's subordination to be God's will'; 'second, even in the absence of such explicitly oppressive justification, the phenomenon is present when one-sex symbolism for God and the human relationship to God is to be used'; and 'third, even when the basic assumption of God-language appear to be non-sexist, and even when the language is somewhat purified of fixation upon maleness, it is damaging and implicitly compatible with sexism and it encourages detachment from the reality of the human struggle against oppression in its concrete manifestations' (1973: 19-20).

[72] In 2011, the Roman Catholic Church commissioned and ratified a new translation of the Mass, which altered the phrasing of key prayers and intercessions, and which was viewed by the respondents as regressive and exclusionary. Most shocking to the respondents was the changing of the phrase 'Christ's blood poured out for

that ultimately served to sustain the patriarchal sexism of Catholic Christianity. For Daly, women's liberation necessitates a 'castration of language and images [that are] embedded in the structures of a sexist world' (1985: 9) and she urges women to use language strategically to reclaim their power and to achieve revolutionary feminist ends.

Although her radical post-Christian strategy of deconstructing and exorcising 'God' was too extreme for many feminist Catholics, Daly's critique of the androcentric language of theology and worship has provided many women priests with the insight that canonical language thwarts women's spiritual development and intensifies their feelings of alienation and marginalization within organized religion (Jablonski, 1988). The women priests of this study subsequently identified language as a key modality by which to transform rituals and the*logical understandings, and they argued that alternative readings of scriptures, hymns, and liturgical prayers can liberate those oppressed by kyriarchal structures (Masenya, 1995; Osborne, 2015).

As Women-Church practitioners, these women priests appropriate Schüssler Fiorenza's (1993) 'feminist hermeneutic' approach to their ritualizing, examining religious texts for potentially pejorative or alienating views of women and ensuring that all prayers, hymns, songs, homilies and scriptural readings are feminine-based and gender-inclusive (Jablonski, 1988).[73] Whilst the women priests of this study seek to create a semantic space for women, they also seek to complement this feminine imagery with language that affirms the mutuality of all genders so as to prevent a reverse sexist understanding of God in terms of cultural femininity. In this way, their renewed language seeks to 'transcend patriarchal as well as

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all' to 'Christ's blood poured out for many,' as it symbolized the 'Church actively saying that not everyone is welcome here, and that points to so much of what is wrong in the Catholic Church and so much of what is right in women-led inclusive communities' (Englerth, Interview, 16/04/14).

[73] Whilst RCWP and ARCWP provide guidelines and the*logical resources to assist in this reconstruction of liturgical language, each of the women priests in this study utilized their extensive the*logical training to re-translate, recalibrate and rewrite the language of the Mass to embrace a fuller and richer understanding of God. This was also often an interactive process, as the pastoral team would consult with the liturgical committee or the*logically-trained members of their community to contribute to their restructuring of communal rituals.

matriarchal language and symbols, while at the same time employing a variety of human symbols and images that reflect the pluraformity of human experiences' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993: 95).

There are several examples that exemplify the ways in which women priests and their communities have adjusted their semantic expressions of faith to create inclusive ritual spaces. For example, the new canonical translation of the Nicene Creed, or the Profession of Faith, the prayer that embodies the core tenets and beliefs of the Catholic faith, says that:

> We believe in one <u>Lord</u>, Jesus Christ, the only <u>Son</u> of God, eternally begotten of the <u>Father</u>, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, <u>begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father.</u> Through <u>Him</u> all things were made. For us <u>men</u> and for <u>our salvation</u> <u>He</u> came down from heaven: and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate <u>He</u> was born of the Virgin Mary, and <u>became man</u>. For our sake <u>He</u> was crucified under Pontius Pilate; <u>He</u> suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day <u>He</u> rose again in fulfilment of the Scriptures; <u>He</u> ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the <u>Father</u>. <u>He</u> will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and <u>His</u> kingdom will have no end.
>
> We believe in the Holy Spirit, the <u>Lord</u>, the giver of life, who proceeds from the <u>Father</u> and the <u>Son</u>. With the <u>Father</u> and the <u>Son</u> <u>he</u> is worshipped and glorified. <u>He</u> has spoken through the Prophets (Roman Missal, 2011).

All phrasing that is masculine in nature, that alludes to the masculine face of God, or that conveys a relationship to God in terms of supremacy or control in this creed has been underlined. This coding emphasizes the pervasiveness of masculine imagery and masculine modes of expression to refer to the divine. The symbolism underlying this phrasing is clear: God is male, Jesus, His son, is male, and the Church, who are understood in a relation of domination to God, are also male. This true extent of the androcentrism and misogyny embedded within this seminal prayer is made salient when it is juxtaposed with the revised profession of faith celebrated at MMOJ Masses:

> We believe in God, <u>Creator</u> of a world and beauty and promise, the beginning and ending of life, <u>father and mother</u> in the love and nurture <u>of all creation</u>. We believe in Jesus, the Christ, who is our love, our hope, and our light. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the <u>breath of Wisdom Sophia</u> who energizes and guides <u>us</u> to build <u>caring communities</u> and <u>to challenge our oppression, exploitation and injustices</u>. We believe

that God loves <u>us</u> passionately and forgives <u>us</u> for everything. We believe that <u>we are radiant images of God</u> who calls us to live fully, love tenderly and serve generously (Fieldwork Notes, 12/04/14).

This reworked creed features gender-balanced language that presents God as neither male nor female and that highlights the unity of the community, rather than elevating the masculine perspective as the exemplar. In all of the prayers, readings and hymns performed at MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC, whenever a masculine term such as 'he,' 'father,' or 'brother' is used it is immediately counterbalanced with the feminine equivalent, so that the community would pray 'Our Father, our Mother' or 'He is risen from the dead, She is risen from the dead'.

Moreover, in this prayer the traditional nomenclature of male dominance and submission is replaced with a more holistic and positive view of the congregation's relationship to the divine. The language is poetic and lyrical, conjuring evocative images that capture the transcendence of their the*logical vision of God. This profession of faith is freed from notions of God's ascendancy or sacrificial love, and instead it emphasizes the values of mutuality, compassion and the message of liberation within the gospels.

In this attempt to represent the divine in inclusive terms, the women priests of this study have also deployed expansive metaphors and titles to refer to God, including the Source of all being, Holy One, Shekinah,[74] rock, saviour, lover, liberator, midwife, judge, friend, companion, sister-brother and shepherd. The women priests encourage their congregations to use a rich array of names and images for the divine so that the Church's over-reliance on masculine imagery and patriarchal domination will be transformed and so that a more expansive the*logical view of God is attained. Rod argues that 'the language we use

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[74] Bridget Mary explained that 'in the Jewish tradition, the Spirit of God was described by the feminine image of Shekinah. Shekinah is the feminine Hebrew word for "dwelling" and can be translated directly as the one who dwells' (2010: 70). Shekinah designates God's presence dwelling among the people, and is referred to in a number of biblical passages in the Book of Exodus (see, Meehan, 2007). The Shekinah, God's powerful feminine presence, appeared in light, cloud and fire, and accompanied the Israelites as they journeyed through the wilderness.

encourages a broader understanding and a greater sense of the cosmological realities of God and nature, and expands the human experience and the human psyche' (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14).

In particular, the women priests have appropriated the the*logical concept of Sophia, the Greek word for Wisdom, to satiate their desire for liturgical imagery that is inclusive of and inspirational for women.[75] Women priests have utilized Sophia as a way to articulate the feminine face of the Holy Spirit and have adapted the traditional Trinity 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' to incorporate Sophia. Their reformulation of the trinity: 'Our Creator, our Brother Jesus, and Wisdom Sophia' allows for a complementary representation of the divine in gender neutral and balanced terms. This revised trinity also informs the community's use of the neologism 'kin-dom' as a substitution for the traditional nomenclature of 'kingdom.' This simple recalibration re-prioritizes the unity of the Christian community and the equality of all believers, and removes imperialistic or monarchic terms that reflect the oppression of one group of people by a sovereign God.

When these revised prayers, hymns and scriptures are proclaimed by the congregation, the liberatory imperative of their faith and Women-Church principles more generally are made real. By infusing all their rituals and communal religious acts with inclusive language, women priests are able to affirm the inherent equality of their communities. The shared invocation of inclusive prayers allows for a performative expression of feminist the*logy that 'liberates [their] feelings and our thinking about God and moves [them] toward mutuality and community in [their] relationships with one another' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14).

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[75] In the Bible, Wisdom, or Sophia, is described as female 'portraying her as a mother, sister, female lover, hostess, preacher, a woman of strength, knowledge and justice, part of the ongoing creative process' (Meehan, 2007: 16). Godwin explains that 'in some traditions Sophia was thought to be the powerful female part of God's soul' (1994: 203). According to a number of New Testament texts, the Messianic work of Jesus is identical to the Divine Sophia (see, Calles Barger, 2007; and Schüssler Fiorenza, 2015). As a result, 'the Eastern Christians held Sophia in great love and devotion,' however, 'none of this much appealed to the patriarchs of Rome who dismissed Sophia as a foolish, clamorous woman and knowing nothing' (Godwin, 1994: 203).

The female respondents explained that the innovative language and creative imagery used during the liturgies explicitly appealed to them as women and conjured feelings of acceptance and affirmation that they had never felt in a canonical Church before. For, as Michelle explained, 'it just really helped my psyche and my sense of worth in the Church to be able to stand alongside people and be able to feel as represented as them and to feel that we were genuinely praying for one another in unison, that is a completely uplifting and unifying experience' (Royale, Interview, 16/04/14). Through their discursive reconstruction of liturgical language and imagery, the women priests of this study were able to model an interactional and relational cosmology of interdependence that galvanized their Women-Church community in thought and in action.

The communities in this study also sought to realize their vision of female liturgical leadership through the inclusion of women in key sacramental roles and the subversion of traditionally male roles in rituals. The presence of a woman standing in the male-dominated realm of the altar performing a sacramental role reserved for men allows women priests to work within the boundaries of Catholic rituals and then open them to new understandings of the priesthood, transforming rituals from the inside. The inclusion of female ministry instils MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC's rituals with symbolic capital, as women priests stand as a symbol of 'justice, integrity, shared power, fresh air and new beginnings within the Church' (Zatsick, Interview, 12/04/14).

The salience of women acting as priests was not lost on the respondents who felt that 'seeing a woman standing with a stole or in robes behind the altar preaching from the pulpit and blessing the Eucharist is the single most symbolic and concrete thing that is different here than canonical Churches, and is the most significant way in which our rituals reflect our commitment to combatting sexism in the Church' (Validivia, Interview, 05/04/14).

Whilst acting in this ministerial role women priests have also been able to appropriate the liturgical space of the homily as a discursive tool to strive for the fuller inclusion of women in all areas of Church life. The women priests of this study strategically positioned themselves to usurp the privileges and authority conventionally reserved for male priests in the delivery of homilies, but they also used this ritual as a space to push for structural change in the Church. As will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six, the women priests of MMOJ and Good Shepherd have applied innovative approaches to preaching, such as dialogue homilies and traditional Black Gospel style sermons, that reflected their commitment to empowering the laity and meeting the specific needs of their diverse communities.

Many respondents conveyed that the silencing and subordination of women has frequently been perpetuated by the priest's sermons. However, in their renewal of homilies, women priests are also able to bring different gendered meanings to the subject position of preacher (see, for example, Davies, 1988; Pidwell, 1998). Whilst I do not wish to impose an essentialist analysis of the gender-specific gifts that women priests bring to preaching, it must be acknowledged that the standpoint of the women priests as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters imbues their homilies with resonance for the women of their congregations. Perhaps the most profound example of this effect emerged when witnessing Nancy Corran preach whilst she pregnant. Nancy, who already had a young son, would frequently speak about the spiritual rewards and challenges of being a mother and for the female congregants 'this was such a beautiful and moving thing to witness, as it was as if women's voices and women's experiences were finally being supported in the Church' (Spong, Interview, 05/04/14). The confluence of images of Nancy as a priest, a wife and a mother imbued her ministry with a sense of wholeness and with a connection to the lived experience of each woman gathered in the Church. Rather than reifying restrictive gender norms in which women are solely confined to roles such as wife or mother, the

visibility and celebration of Nancy's multifaceted personhood affirmed the women's capacity to perform multiple roles and to assume multiple identities.

A further example of the symbolic power of women priest's inclusion in sacramental rituals was Bridget Mary's portrayal of Jesus during MMOJ's ecumenical Holy Thursday liturgy. This liturgy commemorates the Last Supper prior to Jesus' crucifixion and it conventionally takes the form of a recitation or recreation of the gospel reading of the events leading up to Jesus' death. In canonical parishes the role of Jesus is always performed by the male priest, who resting upon his apostolic connection to Jesus, is able to assert his superiority over the remainder of the congregation. However, as will be further discussed in Chapter Five, MMOJ's rendering of the Holy Thursday liturgy as witnessed by me was observed as a joint celebration of MMOJ and St. Andrew's United Congregation Church and it was freed from canonical conventions, instead adopting inclusivity as its core message.

Gender was one aspect of inclusivity within this ritual and the liturgical committee selected Bridget Mary to perform the role of Jesus as a sign of their performative resistance to sexist discrimination within the Church. Many parishioners had quite an emotional response to the insertion of a woman (and in particular a woman priest) into this crucial liturgical ritual, especially in the pivotal role of Jesus. As I looked out into the congregation I could see people openly weeping as both a mixture of sorrow and relief: a spontaneous outpouring of emotion in this highly poignant and stirring dramatization. This feminine portrayal of Jesus represented an important shift in gendered politics within the Catholic tradition and for MMOJ this statement was enhanced by the liberatory symbolism and message of Easter. Bridget Mary explained that Easter was particularly significant for women because 'Easter is about celebrating new life and rising up with Christ, and as we rise up we're claiming that liberating, healing, transforming love and using that as motivation to continue on in our struggle against oppression in the Church' (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14).

It is clear therefore that women priests and their supporters have been experiencing and performing 'Church' in creative ways as a result of their dedication to inclusive language and the integration of women-centred approaches to ritualization (see, for example, Ebaugh, 1993). Through this understanding of ritual, the composition and symbolic meanings of rituals have the power to transform social consciousness and group identity. Within their innovative approaches to ritualization, women priests seek to construct women as agentival subjects who are empowered by their newfound connection to and ownership of the sacraments. Northrup highlights that 'ritualization can function as a powerful tool because of its ability not only to reflect but also to construct various aspects of social reality' (1997: 86). Through this recalibration of Catholic ritual women priests have deconstructed the 'pathology of the Church, its exclusivity, its deep misogyny and its sexist approach towards women' (McGill, Interview, 19/04/14) and have offered concrete strategies to overturn these forms of structural violence. The following three chapters proceed to give voice to the similar ways in which women priests are combatting other aspects of Catholic kyriarchy and creating safe worship spaces for those on the margins of the institutional Church.

Chapter 5: Contesting Power, Authority, and Hierarchy— Mary Mother of Jesus Community

5.1: A Very Un-Traditional History

MMOJ's distrust of Church authority and its commitment to innovative forms of religious communalization are inscribed in its very history and development. This community was formed by Bishop Bridget Mary Meehan, a visionary and key figure in the international female ordination movement, who is committed to providing renewed articulations of Catholic spirituality for disaffected Catholics. Frustrated by the 'Church triumphant model' (Meehan, Interview, 14th April, 2014) of worship performed in the Churches in the Sarasota area, Meehan conducted detraditionalized House Church celebrations on Saturday evenings in her trailer home. These informal yet highly spiritual gatherings were an attempt to recreate the ideals of the Early Christian Church and of Vatican II, which extolled the home as a more personalized setting for spiritual enrichment and for the performance of Church.

In these communal liturgies the butler coffee table, spread with a tie-dyed silk scarf, was transformed into an altar. Worshippers gathered together around this makeshift altar, seated on mismatching chairs pulled in from various rooms, whilst Bridget Mary facilitated the service from her pastel pink sofa. Respondents such as Jack, who were at the very first House Church Masses in Bridget Mary's trailer, described these gatherings as 'a high point in [their] spiritual lives,' because of the 'authentic way' the liturgy was celebrated, in which '[they] felt truly connected to each other and to the Catholic faith, and also free to celebrate [their] faith without all the disruptions and stiffness of a canonical Mass' (Duffy, Interview, 12th April, 2014).

Upon hearing of the Danube Seven (see *ante* page 103) Bridget Mary was completely captivated by the prospect of fulfilling her lifelong desire to be ordained as a Roman Catholic Church priest. She was enlivened by the experience of being able to preside at a Catholic

Mass, and she drew great strength from the support and approbation of her House Church community, who signalled to her that they wanted her to be their priest. One of the women who attended her House Church even donated her frequent flyer points so that she could attend the first ordination of women in North America, held on the St. Lawrence Seaway in Canada in 2005. For Bridget Mary, this affirmation was a definitive influence in her decision to be ordained 'because as a priest you really should be called from the community, they should recognize the gifts and the call. It should be verified *by* the people, and you should act *for* the people' (Meehan, Interview, 14th April, 2014). This inversion of the authoritarian model of the Catholic priesthood, in which the clergy should be answerable to the laity rather than the clergy dominating the laity, came to be a hallmark of both Bridget Mary's ministry and the overarching ethos of the MMOJ community.

Bridget Mary was ordained in 2006 in Pittsburgh, and following increased media attention and general interest in her unorthodox ordination attendance at the small House Church began to surge. As numbers continued to rise and as a stable membership base of likeminded thinkers emerged, Bridget Mary and the House Church decided to identify themselves formally as Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Community (MMOJ). In 2008, MMOJ also advertized in the local *Sarasota Herald Tribune* newspaper and extended an invitation for others to attend their inclusive House Church Masses. The local Roman Catholic Diocese of Venice, Florida responded immediately to news of MMOJ, and it 'sent official spies' (Duffy, Interview, 12th April, 2014) to the House Church to investigate. The Diocese also ordered the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* to stop running this religious service announcement, but the editors refused to comply. The local Bishop Frank Dewane then wrote several op- ed pieces in the same paper, claiming that Bridget Mary was 'a woman pretending she was ordained' and was 'pretending to be a real priest' (Duffy, Interview, 12th April, 2014) and the Diocese placed an announcement in the paper stating that 'no such worship site exists within the Diocese, nor is

it recognized by the Diocese of Venice' (Lyons, 2008, February 26). The Venice Diocese also bought out all of the religious services announcement space available in the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* in an attempt to suppress MMOJ and to prevent people from finding out about its Masses.

This early encounter with the Venice Diocese was a forceful example of the institutional repression that the members of MMOJ had experienced throughout their lives in the Church. Rather than acting as a deterrent, however, this censure solidified the community and united its members around both their shared dissatisfaction with the canonical Church and their desire to pursue a democratized and deinstitutionalized rendering of the Catholic faith in an inclusive, grassroots community. Further, after the Diocese's media response to MMOJ, in a sign of the growing antipathy towards the authoritarianism and rigidity of the institutional Catholic Church, the community's attendance tripled in size. In her book Bridget Mary explains that 'every time the hierarchy denounces us and condemns our inclusive worshipping communities, we grow', and as a result she felt that 'when incidents like this happen, I wonder if we should send a thank you note to the bishop' (Meehan, 2010: 31).

More and more people flocked to Bridget Mary's trailer and crowded together in her small living room to experience this humble and uplifting celebration of the sacraments and the community began to outgrow its surroundings. After consulting with the MMOJ community, she contacted St Andrew's United Congregational Church (UCC) in the hope of sharing their worship space. Phil Garrison, the Pastor at St. Andrew's, was extremely open to the idea of hosting the MMOJ community, because 'MMOJ fits into that fabric of [St. Andrew's] openness to people who are faithful on their journey' (Garrison, Interview, 14th April, 2014). This transition has been quite natural and the communities of MMOJ and St. Andrew's have developed a close bond, collaborating on several charity projects together and sharing prayer circles and a receptiveness to ecumenical dialogue.

This community has a much older demographic base than MMACC or Good Shepherd and comprises in part a transient community of 'Snowbird' retirees who migrate to sunny Florida in the winter. As a result, its attendance and group membership varies seasonally, fluctuating from approximately eighty members in the winter months to a much lower base of around fifteen parishioners in the summer period. Fortunately the research with this community was conducted during its peak period in which the full range of sacramental and extra-ecclesial functions was performed. However, this changeability and instability offers quite a challenge for the MMOJ community, particularly having regard to its collective identity formation and the constancy of its activities. The members of MMOJ were fully cognisant of such limitations and were quite reflexive in their estimation of the strengths and weaknesses of their community. Whilst there are certain limitations to the MMOJ community, their communal and sacramental activities still provide an interesting case study of detraditionalization and deinstitutionalization in contemporary religion.

5.2 Power through Hierarchy

5.2.1 Clerical Supremacy and Hierarchical Control

> ***'We are just small cogs in the Church wheel …and many people have been pushed aside, dismissed and treated very badly, as the hierarchy continually reinstates itself and its power'- Jolene.***

The respondents' views serve to establish the hierarchical clericalism of the Catholic Church as a structural source of kyriarchal oppression that is especially pronounced for women. Their narratives reinforce the argument that this ingrained 'structural violence' (Galtung, 1969) is engendered by the 'fundamental ordering of the Church as a patriarchal hierarchy of priest over laity and male over female' that is then extended in 'a hierarchy among male clergy: priests, bishops, Patriarchs, or Pope' (Ruether, 2001: 99). In this authoritarian structure, 'each

level of hierarchy concentrates power and authority over the lower levels' (Ruether, 2001: 99) culminating to 'create a tightly knit and devastatingly effective system of theological symbols to enforce the belief that patriarchal hierarchy is God's intended social order' (Ruether, 2001: 100). In particular, the members of MMOJ have identified that the canonical clerical system has reinscribed the kyriarchal ordering of priest over laity and has consolidated the patriarchal suppression of women within the Church.

Teresa's narrative gives voice to the problems of the Catholic paradigm of priesthood through her encounters with clerical privilege. Teresa was born into a staunch Catholic family and had four uncles who were all ordained priests. Within her family, as a microcosm of the wider Catholic community, these priests were revered to the point of obsession. Teresa explained that 'whenever a priest came over to visit, even though he was just my mother's brother, just a person like you or me, they treated him as if he were God' (MacEachern, Interview, 18/04/14). In particular, one of Teresa's uncles was a Monseigneur, or Bishop, and she explained that the treatment which he received and that he demanded was even more extreme in orientation: 'if he walked in a room the world just stopped; people would kiss his feet and bow before him and he would prance about the room with his nose in the air and a look of disdain painted across his face' (MacEachern, Interview, 18/04/14). Whilst these examples may have the appearance of triviality or may seem to be representative of mere familial idiosyncrasies, for Teresa they reflected the relations of power and authority upon which the Catholic priesthood is based.

Teresa explained that within the Catholic Church there is an assumption of ontological difference between the clergy and the laity, with a belief that the clergy have 'magic fingers, and magic abilities' and that they are eminently superior because of their presumed connection to God. She delineated clerical supremacy within the Church as being tied to the

sacrificial power of the priest, rooted in his ability to consecrate the Eucharist.[76] This Catholic

teaching is a construct upon which are hung authority, power, and even notions about who

has access to the divine. Rue (2006) argues that in this theology the Church elevates a

sacrificial priesthood with the priest's power of offering the sacrifice of the Mass, and in turn

the priest himself becomes the sacred reality. Even outside her family, Teresa had always

struggled with the degree of authority that was bestowed upon the priesthood because of

these sacramental functions and she was critical of the ways in which members of the clergy

would abuse their status to position themselves as more powerful and holier than the laity.

Teresa's narrative underscores the power imbalances between the clergy and the laity that

were repeatedly discussed and criticized by each of the respondents. This model of clerical

supremacy is built upon an 'asymmetric dualism of power between Church and world, clergy

and laity, religious and secular, men and women' that is generated by patriarchal and

hierarchical clerical models (Boff, 1993: 301). Boff (1985) quotes two Popes that have

pursued and institutionalized this systemic form of clericalism, which is so central to the

Catholic model of patriarchal hierarchy. Firstly, he quotes Gregory XVI (1831-1846) who

said that 'no one can deny that the Church is an unequal society in which God destined some

to be governors and others to be servants. The latter are the laity; the former, the clergy,' and

second, he quotes Pius X who said that 'only the college of pastors has the right and authority

to lead and govern. The Masses have no right or authority except that of being governed, like

an obedient flock that follows its Shepherd' (1985: 142). The respondents correspondingly

characterized the clerical system as being fundamentally flawed, as it 'creates a power caste

that makes decisions, both practical and spiritual, privileging the clergy and oppressing the

laity' (Hunt, 2009: 88).

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[76] Bouclin clarifies the source of clerical power in a sacrificial priesthood, explaining that 'according to Church teaching, sacrificial priesthood means that the priest offers, through the agency of bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ for the salvation of humanity. In doing so, the priest is not acting as an ordinary man, but supernaturally, in the person of Christ as a mediator between God and the faithful' (2006: 36).

This authoritarianism was understood by the respondents as occurring on both a micro scale within individual parishes, and on a macro scale in the hierarchical structures and culture of institutional Catholicism.[77] The respondents of this study posited the system of clerical hierarchy as a mode of 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1979) employed by the Church to control and regulate its subjects.[78] Sherry described priests as key agents in these processes of governmentality, as they use their power, their privilege and their authority to impose 'strict punishments and penalties for anyone who dares to step out of line' (Robertson, Interview, 19/04/14). For example, the Church's administering of papal excommunications to women priests and their supporters stands as an illustration of the punitive nature of the institutional Catholic Church and its propensity to suppress individuals or groups who are noncompliant or subversionary. In the face of such punishment, members of the laity are expected to internalize the norms and dogmas of the Church and, in a manner similar to the Foucauldian model of the panopticon, self-discipline their actions and behaviours in order to avoid punishment from members of the clerical elite. This complex web of internalization, normalization and self-regulation in turn is used by the Church to transform the laity into 'docile bodies' (Foucault, 1975) and to assert the authority of the priesthood and the hierarchy.

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[77] The oppressive nature of such hierarchical Church structures has been widely criticized by scholars such as Dulles (2002); Levering (2010); and Viola (2012). Such critiques have highlighted the absolutism of Church structures, as well as the 'systematic abuses of power and categorical examples of despotism' that hierarchical structures within the Catholic Church 'assert over the dispossessed and disenfranchised' (Murphy, 2008: 59-60).

[78] Governmentality is an approach to the study of power, generally associated with the willing participation of the governed, that emphasizes the regulation of people's conduct through various strategies of discipline, normalization and self-discipline (see for example, Gruber, 1989; Li, 2007; and Smart, 1985).

5.2.2 Moving Towards a Feminist Egalitarian Model of Priesthood and Church

'When people are empowered to be decision makers, and empowered to use their gifts, and empowered to worship as a true community of equals, that is when they are free'- Bridget Mary.

Rather than reproducing this patriarchal model of ministry and co-opting women into a system of kyriarchy, the members of MMOJ, like the female ordination movement more widely, seek to reconceptualize the paradigms underlying the Catholic priesthood. Some respondents, who displayed a more extreme view, disputed the need for priests at all and looked to a time in the Church where there will be no ordained priests. These respondents were inspired by Gary Wills' influential book *Why Priests? A Failed Tradition* (2013), which questioned the dubious historical basis of the priesthood and argued that Jesus in fact did not ordain anyone and instead held a vision in which every member of the Church performed priestly functions.[79] Whilst not all of the respondents held such a radical view, they all engaged in dialogue concerning what the role and functionality of a priest should ideally be.

This conversation sits more broadly in the context of discourse surrounding the meaning of ordination as both concept and praxis within the female ordination movement. Appreciating the significance of such concerns, RCWP has established a Structure Committee comprised of women priests and deacons to address the theme of leadership in the Church and to explore important questions, such as who should call a woman forth to be ordained, herself or her community? How is ministry changed when one is ministering from the margins? What exactly should the role of the priest be? How does this redefinition affect the roles of the priest within the context of a Mass or worship celebration? What role should parishioners

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[79] Wills writes that 'nowhere is it indicated there was an official presider at the Christian meal, much less that consecrating the bread and wine was a task delegated to persons of a certain rank. It is a mark of the gospel's fidelity to the follower's original status that not one of them mentions a Christian priest or priesthood. When the term priesthood finally occurs, in the pseudo-Petrine letters, it refers to the whole Christian community (1 Peter 2.5, 2.9) and the "Peter" of this letter refers to himself not as priest but as a "fellow elder" to the other elders' (2013: 69-70).

take? And, should there be a division between the ordained and the laity at all? Through its innovative approach to ministry and to ritual performances, MMOJ seeks to interrogate and resolve these questions. Within this discourse the meaning of what it is to be a 'priest' needs careful reflection and deliberation.

Specifically, MMOJ's feminist critique of the Catholic priesthood has questioned the foundations of the sacrificial power of the priest and it has concluded that within its community 'there are no magic fingers' or 'special marks' that make the priests more intelligent or more powerful, or that afford the priests any sense of privilege (Zatsick, Interview, 12/04/14). Rather than possessing an inherently sacramental role, the respondents understood their priests to be performing a primarily pastoral role. Ford described the nature of this pastoral role as 'fostering the development and spirit of the community, guiding where necessary,' but making sure that 'leading is only done in a sense that you all walk down the path together and alongside each other as equals' (Englerth, Interview, 16/04/14).

Therefore, an important aspect of MMOJ's redefinition of the priesthood has been to invert the traditional master-servant dualism and to redefine the priesthood as a role that is performed in relation to the community, rather than as a position that elevates the clergy above their congregation. Accordingly, Bridget Mary understood MMOJ as being founded upon a 'renewed priestly ministry' where the priests are 'one with whom they serve' in a 'relationship of service rather than of domination' (Meehan, 2010: 23). Their approach to ministry was informed by Bishop Fritz Lobinger's (2002) archetype of a 'Church in Communion,' a participatory model where leadership is not limited to the ordained and in which the community becomes the source of sanctification.

In this way, MMOJ's vision of the priesthood is informed by an inclusive feminist the*logy that views the community as the source of Christ's sacramental power. According to Hunt,

this sort of ecclesiology would eradicate 'the sexist symbols of domination and passivity that have characterized the Catholic priesthood and replace them with symbols of collegiality' (2011: 169). Bridget Mary clarified the fact that the community co-celebrates the Mass together and whoever leads the service is simply there to facilitate that communal celebration. Rather than reifying the differences between themselves and their community, the presiders at MMOJ seek to create a harmonious and participatory environment in which the presider is on an equal footing with the congregation whom they serve.

The priests at MMOJ preferred to consider themselves as 'presiders' and were quick to stamp out any language, behaviour, or practice that might distinguish themselves from their community. To this end, Bridget Mary, Lee, and the other ordained members of MMOJ's pastoral team broke with the traditions of the canonical Catholic Church and declined to use their formal titles of Bishop or Father. [80] Similarly, other markers of clerical prestige such as vestments, the collar, and ceremonial patterns of kneeling and bowing before the priest, are absent from MMOJ Masses. Whilst some women priests in the United States have been known to wear clerical collars, the women priests of MMOJ and their parishioners revile clerical vestments and special garments as they 'separate the priest apart from the community, they imply that the priest is better and is holier than everyone else and [they are] just a complete waste of money' (MacEachern, Interview, 18/04/14).[81]

As a result, the women priests and the presiders of MMOJ would typically wear simple clothing more reflective of their inclusive community and redirect the money usually spent on such sartorial splendour within canonical parishes to more charitable efforts. Each of the

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[80] When I asked Bishop Bridget Mary what I should refer to her as, she replied that 'in our Church we are all family; I see myself as your sister and your companion, so when people inquire as to what they should call me, my response is simple: just call me Bridget Mary!' (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14).

[81] Milesko (2013) argues that the traditional garments worn by the priest—the alb, beretta, cassock, chasuble, cincture, manipule, stole, and surplice—which cost over $30,000 for one set, are designed to make the clergy less approachable and to separate them from the laity. She elaborates that 'some people feel that the clergy dress pretentiously so the laity will think they're above the law; others say that when the clergy don vestments, they think they are God's emissary' (2013: 77).

women priests and lay presiders at MMOJ also abstain from wearing a clerical collar as they wish to separate themselves from, rather than reinstate, the authoritarianism upon which the canonical priesthood is founded. Within the female ordination movement the clerical collar in particular has been imbued with a political significance, with the collar being renounced by women priests as an encapsulation of all the ills of the male priesthood. [82] Whilst a simple gesture, the absence of clerical vestments within MMOJ is significant, as it serves as both a symbolic and a physical incarnation of their detraditionalized approach to ministry.

MMOJ's renewed paradigm of the priesthood draws heavily on Vatican II principles. Hill (1998) and Stagaman (1999) have argued that Vatican II provided a healthy antidote to the excesses of clerical authoritarianism as it called for the greater involvement of the laity and the priesthood of all believers. This shift in ideology was reflected in the changed vocabulary of conciliar documents. Instead of issuing condemnations, the Council Fathers of Vatican II employed words of reciprocity such as 'cooperation', 'partnership', and 'collaboration', and the Council Fathers no longer referred to the laity as 'subjects' nor did they describe the clerical structure of the Catholic Church as 'monarchical' (O'Malley, 2010: 243). In terms of the priesthood, this stylistic change translated into a de-emphasis on hierarchy, and a greater appreciation for the competencies of lay people. [83] The changed nature between the priest and the laity is most visible in the discussion of the common priesthood of all believers, in which the traditional vertical conception of the Church (from God to Pope, through the bishops and

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[82] At least one conservative woman priest in America has been noted to wear a clerical collar, and this move has been renounced by the mainstream elements of the movement, as a co-option of canonical Catholic practices. Jane Via, founding pastor of MMACC in San Diego (see Chapter Seven) explains that this move has been criticized by women priests, because 'there's nothing renewed about wearing Roman collars; it's hierarchical, it's patriarchal, it's monarchical, it's sexist' (Via, Interview, 04/14/14). For as Hunt affirms, 'this is the new face of the Catholic priesthood—it is not ringed by a clerical collar' (2011: 169).

[83] Although the Council Fathers of Vatican II reaffirmed the sacrificial and hierarchical character of the priesthood, they no longer placed the ordination and authority of the priests in the foreground of the Catholic imaginary. Instead they highlighted the priest's status as a co-participant in Christ's mission along with the laity, and no longer characterized the priest as a man apart, intrinsically different from his lay congregants. Lay Catholics, wanting a more active role in the Church, now argued that they could and indeed should perform many duties previously reserved for the priesthood (McEnroy, 1996).

priests and finally to the laity) is supplanted with a horizontal one (the Church as the 'people of God') (D'Antonio, 1966; O'Malley, 2010; Vorgrimler, 1967).

The respondents described with great delight the initial sense of emancipation and encouragement that Vatican II created for the laity. However, as Sonya explained, 'there was a general shift in the years after Vatican II towards reining in the power of the laity yet again. And sometimes, very covertly where it wasn't even noticeable, until all of a sudden you realize that the doors were closed and the windows were closed and they were taking back that call for laity to be really part an integral part, of the Church and Church life' (Briggs, Interview, 18/04/14).

By contrast, MMOJ has reinstated this Vatican II principle through its focus on the empowerment and full participation of the laity. Ruether has expressed concern that 'there does not seem to be a way for laypeople to become members of this movement, laypeople who support women priests but do not want to become a priest' (2011: 70). In actuality, however, MMOJ firmly believes that the experiences, voices and gifts of lay people should be welcomed in all of the decision making, leadership and sacramental functions of their community.

The mission of the MMOJ pastoral team, then, is to 'enable, support and affirm' the call of the laity to be involved in all aspects of the Catholic community (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14). The lay members of MMOJ interpreted this redefinition as a source of empowerment as it allowed them to accept their own power as agents in the sacramental functions of the Church. Mary Murray designates MMOJ's approach to the incorporation of its laity as based on a sense of 'you are capable of doing this,' rather than 'we'll let you do this', and argued that this approach constitutes a shift in 'inspiring people to own these responsibilities more, to become more involved, and to allow it affect how you see your place

and your worth within the Church' (Murray, Interview, 14/04/14). To this end, the pastoral team at MMOJ emphasize the importance of training and preparing lay people for liturgical tasks and provide resources and training to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills.

The respondents firmly believed that lay ministry was a crucial way of transforming the Catholic Church, as it confronted the canonical paradigms of ordination and priestly ministry and allowed for a more representative and participatory worship space. Apart from empowering more people to minister, the community believed that opening up the model of the priesthood to the laity would also pave the way for the ordination of women within the canonical Catholic Church. Given the rigidity of the canonical model of the priesthood, the respondents believed that female ordination in the Church could only occur through the gradual introduction of more diverse forms of ministry. The respondents saw lay ministry as a 'way to shake up what the Church sees as the things that you need to be a priest, and show that the Church has been wrong about it for years and that we need to change this narrow ideal' (Duffy, Interview, 12/04/14).

MMOJ also challenged the canonical paradigm of the priesthood by allowing married couples to preside over the Mass and by removing celibacy as a requirement for ordination. MMOJ frequently adopt a team approach to their liturgies, with various combinations of a married male priest, a married couple of a former priest and former nun, an ordained woman priest, or a lay parishioner all presiding together. Here, each category of believer in the MMOJ community is represented and this approach provides for an inclusive and dispersed leadership of the Mass in accordance with the progressive and anti-hierarchical attitudes of MMOJ. It is also a powerful symbolic image to see a union of woman and man, ordained and lay, married and single, all enlivened and empowered to celebrate the Mass by MMOJ's deinstitutionalized and detraditionalized approach to leadership within the Church.

In conjunction, MMOJ's reconceptualization of the Catholic priesthood has been accompanied by a transformation of the hierarchy that underlies traditional patterns of clerical supremacy. The respondents, and feminist the*logians alike, have noted that patriarchy in the Church would not be eradicated by simply allowing women to be ordained into a patriarchal and hierarchical structure. Rather, the clerical structure needs to be changed from an imperial model of power as domination where power is unevenly distributed, to an open, participatory model. MMOJ understands its vision of community as rooted in Early Church ideals,[84] and feminist egalitarianism.[85] Feminist egalitarianism as an ideology has real implications for the operation of religious communities such as MMOJ. For example, competition must give way to co-operation and the sharing of resources; violence and coercion must be replaced by dialogue and consensus building; the rights of all to participate must be vindicated; and inclusion must replace exclusion (Schneiders, 2004). The strengths derived from this egalitarian and non-hierarchical communal arrangement enable the members of MMOJ to pursue feminist-inspired spiritualities modelled around the ethics of equality, inclusivity and mutuality.

Marilyn provided a poignant description of the ways in which MMOJ is attempting to subvert the traditional paradigm of Church hierarchy and to inculcate a feminist egalitarian model of community. She explains that:

> There are two visions of how to be a Church or how to be a religious community; there is a ladder where there is all this hierarchy and the people at the top of the ladder, the clergy, have dominance over the lay people below them. And then there is another vision which is that of a dancing circle; everyone is united in this circle,

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[84] Sullivan (1983) identified the Early Church as a 'colloquium', or a conversational community engaged in dialogue at every step of its discernment and operations. In various ways, feminist the*logians, and many of the respondents alike, emphasized that Jesus rejected all hierarchical forms of power in his early community of followers and explicitly warned that Christian leadership should not be exercised as the power to lord over others, but in serving, mutual reciprocity, and the priesthood of all. See for example, Orsy (1987), Gaillardetz (1992), and Migliorino Miller (2015).

[85] Feminist egalitarianism is not constituted by a utopian blindness to or denial of differences, but rather is predicated upon a refusal to dichotomize differences into the categories of inferiority or superiority (Schneiders, 2004). Further, feminist egalitarianism renounces matrices of domination or subordination, and instead emphasizes the essential similarities between people as the basis of equality.

balanced and equal and everyone is celebrating each other's gifts and the faith together. To me we are the dancing circle; we are all the priests, there is no ladder but instead we are a circle' (Jenai, Interview, 19/04/14).

Marilyn's allegorical distinction between a ladder and a dancing circle as the bases for the structuring of religious communities provides an insightful way to appreciate the dynamic means whereby MMOJ is seeking to dismantle clerical hierarchy. The motif of the ladder symbolically demonstrates the manner in which the Catholic Church is rigidly structured and also represents the ways in which this configuration is constraining and restrictive for those on the lowest rung of the Church hierarchy. By contrast, Marilyn's motif of a circle conveys the sense of equality and parity that is emphasized in feminist egalitarianism.

Rather than power being concentrated within an exclusive clerical elite, at MMOJ power is decentralized and is evenly dispersed amongst all members of the community. Marilyn's circular model also provides a metaphorical and visual representation of the connections made between members of MMOJ, as they join together and mutually construct their community as a site of interdependence and solidarity. It is clear therefore, that MMOJ is moving from a conception of Church as a traditional model of '*power over*' to a renewed vision of the Church as '*power for*' or '*power with*'.

In this process of disengaging from canonical models of clerical hierarchy, MMOJ are also reconceptualizing what it understands to be 'Church'. The radical feminist spirituality espoused by members of the female ordination movement proclaims wholeness, healing love and spiritual power as the basis of their faith and develops the construct of 'Church' as a source of empowerment rather than as a locus of oppression. For the respondents, the concept of Church is thus stripped of its authoritarian connotations. It is no longer linked to the monolithic history of empire, as embodied in the supremacy of the Vatican, nor is it linked to its vestiges of wealth, power, or authority. Furthermore, 'Church' does not represent the

hierarchical ordering of the various offices of the magisterium and clergy who form an imposing pyramid of authority over the laity.

Rather, for the respondents, Church was wholly synonymous with the community and the Church was to be constituted 'by the community, with the community, for the community' (Duffy, Interview, 12/07/14). Here Jack's description of the nature of communal ties within MMOJ invokes the democratic ideal of government of the people, for the people, by the people, as expressed in Abraham Lincoln's historic Gettysburg address (1863). Lincoln's formulation of 'of the people, by the people, and for the people' (cited in Peatman, 2013) was repeatedly raised and utilized by the respondents as a framework for understanding the participatory functions of their communities. The salience of this framework for the respondents reflects the centrality of Lincoln's Gettysburg address for the American vision of egalitarian democracy. Respondents such as Jack extended this framework with the insertion of the 'with the community' phrase, suggesting that the female ordination movement is not merely based upon a democratic mode of governance but rather that it is a true participatory movement.

MMOJ has also sought to implement a new model of Church community on a more micro scale through the creation of a democratic, transparent and accountable system of governance within the parish.[86] It is unsurprising that several scholars have recognized that the laity's access to decision-making and leadership within Church structures is a key factor in its levels of autonomy and satisfaction and that an oligarchic approach to parish governance is inhibiting for the vibrancy and vitality of a religious community (see for example, Iber, 2011;

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[86] Mary Murray explained that under Vatican II, parish councils and parish roundtables were created to provide 'the people of the parish with a say in how the parish was to be run,' however in practice 'a lot of priests have shut them down and restrict the role they can play, because the priest thinks that he is the king and that he can rule the parish however he wants to' (Murray, Interview, 14/04/14).

Rausch, 1989; and Stagaman, 1999).[87] Contrastingly, MMOJ, inspired by feminist egalitarianism, models its governance on the concept of the 'discipleship of equals,' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993) and it sees a decentralized and democratic approach to community leadership as a way to live this biblical ideal in practice.

Accordingly, echoing Marilyn's motif of the 'dancing circle', the MMOJ community has a 'leadership circle' consisting of two women priests, two married priest couples, a liturgical dancer, a music minister and several lay members of the congregation. The purpose of this leadership circle has been partly administrative and partly out of legal necessity. As a non-for-profit organization MMOJ are compelled by American law to have a governing board that performs various directorial functions such as the handling of fiscal decisions. [88] The leadership circle fulfils this legal requirement but it does so in a way that is consonant with MMOJ's commitment to de-institutionalization. This break from canonical models of parish hierarchy is being realized through concerted efforts to feminize MMOJ's organizational structures through circular models of governance (see for example, Gervais, 2011, 2012). The RCWP movement on a broader scale has also adopted an inclusive approach to governance, free of hierarchy or matrices of domination. [89]

Similar to the feminist nuns in Gervais' 2011 study, MMOJ has developed unique forms of 'organizational inclusivity' that assert democracy and participation as imperatives in the governance of their community. Rather than canonical constructs of hierarchical councils or

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[87] See also, Boff, 1985; Drayne, 1966; Kung and Swidler, 1987;McKenzie, 1966; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1983; Swidler and Fransen, 1982.

[88] This is an important point to make in relation to the groups of the female ordination movement, and it represents a problem that non-hierarchical and especially feminist NGOs repeatedly encounter. For further information on the challenges posed to such groups, see Balka, 1997; Bretherton, 2003; and Witz and Savage, 1991.

[89] RCWP has divorced itself from the hierarchical structuring of the institutional Roman Catholic Church, and instead it is based around a decentralized model. Whilst RCWP does have bishops, such as Bridget Mary, these individuals have neither the power nor the status of bishops in the institutional Church. Rather than an authoritative role, the function of bishops in RCWP is purely administrative and sacramental, as they serve to support prospective women priests and to prepare them for ordination. Furthermore, women priests and their communities owe no obedience or deference to either the RCWP structure, or to RCWP bishops. Each of these communities operates independently of each other, and has full autonomy.

committees in which a select few rule over the majority, the boundaries of its leadership circle are not fixed and are open to all members of MMOJ to share their opinions, their concerns and their gifts with the community.

The respondents referred to their inclusive communal structure as a 'round table model of governance' (Bryers, Interview, 14/04/14) achieved through the 'democratic distribution of tasks' (Dumont, 1995: 173) whereby each person could be involved in an area of their choosing, including finance, education, social justice and spiritual formation. Furthermore, on a more informal level, during each MMOJ Mass there was a public announcements segment that was open to every community member. In a manner similar to the Early Church model of the colloquium (Sullivan, 1983), this space was a platform for the parishioners to voice freely any queries or suggestions and to give information of upcoming events or issues of interest.

In addition, there are other indications of the community's inclusive and de-traditionalized approach to governance. Firstly, at MMOJ the priests' obedience lies not to the bishop, but rather to the community whom they serve. Second, several of MMOJ's priests, including Katy Zatsick, were called forth by the community to be their presider. In this case, rather than being forced to submit to a priest not of their choosing, the community is granted the authority to decide whom they want as their representative and it is able to retain or dismiss the priest as it sees fit. Third, the community actively holds several interactive workshops throughout the year based on the theme of community. These occasions were an opportunity for the group to come together and to evaluate reflexively their operations, as well as to collaborate on ideas for improving and enriching its parish.

An important aspect of MMOJ's democratic approach to governance is the creation of accountable structures to combat what the respondents saw as the errant corruption of the

Roman Catholic Church. To evade corruption RCWP and its constituent communities have also sought to instil three core qualities. These are: transparency in all of its dealings; inclusiveness among all of its people; and open-minded education, as opposed to the blind indoctrination of its members. In her book, Diana also advocated for a fourth and most important characteristic arguing that within grassroots Catholic groups 'the message of Jesus-to care for the poor, the suffering, and the marginalized- must be kept in the forefront of everything they do at all times' (Milesko, 2013: 203).

However, the prospect of embodying this feminist egalitarian vision in concrete structures has not been without challenges for the MMOJ community for the following reasons. Firstly, since none of the parishioners had previous experience in a non-oppressive and de-traditionalized religious community, some of the respondents unwittingly internalized and reproduced traditional models of governance in which the priest held ultimate authority. This trend is, however, understandable given the deferential nature of the clerical-laity divide that is so heavily ingrained within canonical Catholic culture and it is something that will undoubtedly resolve itself as parishioners become normalized into the feminist egalitarian structuring of MMOJ.

Second, some of the respondents commented that in certain ways MMOJ have a lack of clear organizational procedure and firm direction because of the highly democratic nature of the community. Whilst the community excels in fostering equality in its liturgies, it has found it more difficult to engender inclusivity in its organizational structure. For example, Ivan explained that because leadership is dispersed throughout the community 'most decisions are made on an *ad-hoc* basis, with whoever happens to be there at that time deciding that this is how we're going to do it today, and then potentially someone changing that decision the next

day' (Royale, 16/04/14).[90] As a result, whilst the community envisages itself as a community of equals and strives to inscribe this commitment into its governance, Ivan perceived MMOJ as operating more as a disparate group of individual decision makers who are sometimes unintentionally at cross purposes.

Third, as a result of this pluralistic approach to governance, Michelle noted that in MMOJ 'we are often democratic to a fault' (Royale, Interview, 16/04/14). Due to their deep commitment to equality in the Church and their willingness to question the *status quo*, most of MMOJ's members hold quite definite views about how the community should be run and they are unafraid to assert these ideas within the various forums offered at MMOJ. Whilst the freedom of expression afforded to MMOJ's members is empowering, at times it can also complicate the running of the parish. For example, Ivan uses the example of the announcements section of the weekly Mass, which often takes half an hour, to argue that the members of MMOJ are too unrestricted and are given too much latitude, which often results in disagreements.

Mary Murray, however, disagrees with Ivan's pessimistic account of MMOJ's participatory model and argues that 'leadership by the group, sure it's messy, and sure people can at times be impossible to deal with, but I think we are all deeply enough invested in the success of Mary Mojo as a community that together we're all on the same page and we're all striving for the same goal' (Murray, Interview, 14/04/14). Mary's argument here demonstrates that whilst there are certain conflicts arising, MMOJ is attempting to manage these tensions collectively

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[90] To further illustrate the *ad-hoc* nature of decision making in MMOJ, Ivan recounted an episode to do with the processes of developing a system of name tags for community members. He and his wife Michelle, in consultation with the community, decided that it would be an excellent idea for everyone to wear name tags to aid in the creation of collegiality. After the community agreed, Michelle investigated the costing and production of these nametags and found that each nametag would cost $4.50 and the community was charged accordingly. After a couple of months another group member decided that the group should charge $5 for the nametags, so that the extra 50 cents could be put towards a communal fund in case there were group members who could not afford to purchase a name tag. A few months after that, someone in the community felt that the nametags should be free of charge and accordingly changed the guidelines surrounding the cost of the nametags. Whilst this issue is a small and seemingly inconsequential example, for Ivan it highlighted the impulsive and at times inconsistent manner in which MMOJ operates.

in order to show that feminist models of community and alternative constructions of what it means to be a 'Church' are both possible and beneficial. Again, whilst assessing the limitations and issues associated with the implementation of MMOJ's circular model of governance, it is also necessary to acknowledge that MMOJ is still in a transitional stage of group development and that its structural operations may require revisions as MMOJ progresses from its utopian foundations into a stable religious community.

5.2.3 The Empowerment of the Laity Through Communal Ritual Engagement

MMOJ's innovative use of shared dialogue homilies or meditative reflections, rather than conventional and staid models of priestly sermons, is a testament to its reconceptualization of the relationship between the priesthood and the laity and the democratic nature in which spirituality is performed in this religious community. The Catholic Church has traditionally constructed the sermon, or homily, as an exercise of the priest's status as 'God's steward' on Earth (Stott, 1982) and as an opportunity for him to assert his divine power over his congregation.[91] The deific power of the priest is reflected in the traditional structuring of the sermon as a 'one-to-many lecture form' that precludes congregational participation or involvement and that sanctifies the opinions of the priest (Halliday & Hasan, 1989: 76). This is a ritual that cements the priest's authority and the parishioner's submission and subservience.

The women priests' desire for access to the preaching office was consequently tempered by an awareness of its potential for authoritarianism and the maintenance of clerical privilege

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[91] Catholic Christianity maintains that all priests claim an inherent authority in their role of 'trustees of divine revelation or, as the apostle Paul expressed, "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1)' (Stott, 1982: 57). The homily is generally constructed in canonical parishes as a time in which the priest explains official Church stances towards issues and in which one single man makes pronouncements for the rest of his flock to follow, without taking into account the varying opinions and experiences of those who are seated in the pews.

(Procter- Smith, 1990) and they adjusted the function and form of their sermons to reflect their ideological commitment to overturning these complex webs of oppression. Specifically, the one-to-many model of communication traditionally utilized in canonical sermons is discomfiting for the presiders of MMOJ as it fails to reflect their the*logy of the 'priesthood of all believers' (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14). Instead, women priests believe in and seek to actualize a 'low theology of ordination' which holds that the authority to interpret the scriptures and give spiritual direction and encouragement resides in the whole congregation, rather than solely with the priest (Pidwell, 1998).

To this end, the dialogue homilies practised at Mary Mojo subvert traditional preaching models that replicate and sustain the paradigm of clerical privilege and instead embrace a more collaborative approach to preaching. Katy, a woman priest and member of the MMOJ pastoral team, explained that MMOJ's use of dialogue homilies allows for a 'mutual preaching experience,' in which 'it's not a case of [the priest] preaching at them,' but instead is 'participation and equality in action, where everyone is encouraged to speak up and have a voice' (Zatsick, Interview, 12/04/14).

The prospect of dialogue homilies rose to prominence after the liberating momentum of Vatican II, but as with most Vatican II reforms this form of preaching was quickly discarded and not fully realized in most Catholic parishes. The pastoral team of MMOJ have sought to restore this Vatican II practice through interactive and meditative homilies that affirm every member of the congregation as 'gifted' in some way and as thus being able to contribute to the service of worship (Pidwell, 1998).[92] Each dialogue homily begins with a brief interpretation of the scriptural readings set for that week or a meditative reflection on core Christian ideals. Typically this discussion would be connected to wider ideas of social justice

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[92] Bridget Mary made this approach an imperative within her ministry, explaining that 'I am good at putting people in a space where they can recognize what their treasures are—their treasures are there, but they just have to open their eyes and be aware that they carry the light and the Holy Spirit within them' (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14).

or women's experiences in the Church and the presider would then pose a broad reflection question to the congregation.

For example, at the Easter Sunday Vigil I attended in 2014, Bridget Mary spoke to the congregation about Jesus' unconditional and sacrificial love and then asked the community 'how are you called to open your hearts and love between the lines in your own lives?' This question challenged members of the congregation to intensify their practice of loving others and to embrace the inclusive and tolerant ethos that MMOJ espouses. The people seated around the church then freely shared their views and experiences and learned from one another's struggles and triumphs. This discussion was an interactive exchange in which people were free to interject and in which they contributed to a rich chorus of contrasting views.

The people of MMOJ obviously enjoy the experience of dialogue homilies. They spoke vividly and dramatically with an abundance of vocal colour and they enjoyed interacting with other members of their community. The parishioners also relished the agency that this ritualistic reworking offered to them as they were encouraged to relativize or operationalize the gospels within their own life experiences rather than to rely upon the advice of their parish priest. This flexibility within MMOJ's approach to liturgy displays a respect for each parishioner's 'God of One's Own' (Beck, 2010) and empowers each believer to take an active role in the construction and celebration of her or his faith.

In addition, the detraditionalized and communal ambience in which MMOJ performs the Lord's Prayer in its Mass provides both a visual and symbolic representation of this community's de-hierachicalized approach to spiritual worship.[93] As explored in Chapter

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[93] The Lord's Prayer also referred to as Our Father, *Pater Noster*, and the Model Prayer, is a venerated Christian prayer that, according to the New Testament, was taught by Jesus to his disciples. Highlighting the scope and foundational importance of the Lord's Prayer, initial words on the topic from the Catechism of the Catholic

Four, inclusive language is prioritized within the rituals of each of the communities studied. In particular, the Lord's Prayer was reimagined and rearticulated in a feminist key with gender-neutral language such that it was actually expressed as 'Our Father, Our Mother.' At MMOJ, the inclusivity of this ritual transcends the discursive realm of language, as it is performed in a space and a manner that materially reflects the community's repudiation of hierarchy.

As it comes time for this ritual the congregation move from the pews up to the altar, where everyone gathers in a unified circle. The space in which this ritual is performed is significant for several reasons. The altar is a sacramental space which in a canonical setting is reserved for the priest alone, with the lay congregation being positioned as passive recipients of the liturgy and being spiritually inferior to the clergy on the altar. This spatial configuration gives rise to an important question as to whether the laity should be understood as submissive subjects or as active agents in the construction and veneration of their faith.

Rather than being positioned higher than the congregation, MMOJ's modified altar is recast as a simple, round table placed on the same level as the congregation. Traditionally the altar is constructed as the bastion of authority in the Church with the clergy being both figuratively and literally elevated above their congregation of laypersons. However, in MMOJ's arrangement, the aura surrounding the altar is removed and the respondents are made to feel that 'there is no distance between the presider and the people; we are all on the same level and we are all equal' (Briggs, Interview, 18/04/14). By positioning the people with the presiders at the very front of the church, rather than leaving them in the back of the pews, there is no sense of the supremacy of the clergy. Rather this ritual was an exercise in collective worship and an experience shared by the clergy and the laity on an even footing.

Church teach that it 'is truly the summary of the whole gospel' (2012: 2759). Thus, the manner in which this central prayer is performed underscores the community's approach to their faith more generally.

Moreover, by congregating in this way, the circular model of a discipleship of equals is invoked both symbolically and in the physical assembly of parishioners linked in a circle around the altar.[94]

In a step beyond the inclusive rephrasing of the Lord's Prayer and beyond the spatial configuration in which it was performed, the parishioners join hands to represent physically the egalitarian basis of their community. Whilst the holding of hands during the Our Father is often observed in canonical parishes it is mostly performed amongst family units rather than as a whole community. Further, as former priest Lee explained to me, under no circumstances is the priest allowed to hold hands with the congregation during this ritual in mainstream Churches but instead he must remain on *his* altar. By contrast, during this ritual at Mary Mojo, each person reaches out to one another with outstretched hands, in a sign of unity and 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim, 1955).[95] This liturgical practice allowed the group to come together, simultaneously communicate the same thought and participate in the same action, buoyed by a sense of excitement and unification. Mary Al treasured this simple act, as 'holding hands just connects you to each other on a deep level, it's a heart-warming part of the liturgy in which a stranger can become a friend and in which our fundamental equality is brought to the fore' (Gagnon, Interview, 15/04/14).

 At the portion of the prayer that says 'for thine is the kin-dom, the power and the glory of God' the community was exultant lifting up each other's hands towards the heavens in a moment of exuberance and fervour. As the small but important change in wording to this

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[94] Being in a circle allowed each parishioner to feel part of the community. In an important moment of inclusion members of MMOJ with disabilities were accommodated and incorporated into this ritual. One parishioner, who had been confined to a wheelchair for many years, explained to me that 'in a canonical parish they were always trying to push me out of the way, as if I was a nuisance and as I didn't belong, but here they bring me back to the centre and they actually go out of their way to make sure that I can fit in' (Fieldwork Notes, 19/04/14).

[95] For Durkheim, the ritualized nature of religion necessarily entailed ceremonial rites and communal gatherings in which a sense of group solidarity is affirmed and heightened in a state of 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim, 1955), or communal zeal. For as Morrison asserts 'Durkheim believed that periodic cycles of assembly marked by social ritual put into action the mythical history of the group. Only during these rituals does the group act under conditions of collective unity, and this rivets them to a common social purpose and re-enacts their core beliefs' (1995: 199).

section of the prayer indicates—kin-dom instead of kingdom—the collective reciting of the prayer is a moment of unity and shared celebration. The parishioners then continued to hold hands as they swayed and sang an extremely moving *A capella* hymn. They freely sang to each other:

> Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with me, let this be the moment now. With every step I take let this be my solemn vow; to take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me! (Fieldwork Notes, 12/04/14).

This instance was an extremely emotive experience: many members of the congregation openly wept or beamed with peaceful smiles in a captivating moment of collective effervescence. The parishioners gave themselves fully to this experience, which made for a compelling and impassioned ambience within the church. The lyrics of this hymn and its positioning at this part of the Mass were also laden with significance. Not only was it an opportunity to move the parishioners and to reassert their communal unity, but it was also a tool to motivate and reaffirm the feminist egalitarian imperatives of the community based around mutual respect and tolerance.

5.3 Institutionalized Power and Authority in the Catholic Church

5.3.1 Authority and Infallibility

'Religion and theology have become a weapon for the hierarchy to use against its people, as the Church seeks to imprint itself more forcefully within society'- Sherry.

Many respondents identified the institutional Church's abuse of its authority, rooted in claims of its own infallibility, as an additional structural feature of kyriarchal control within Catholic Christianity. For centuries the hierarchy has attended to its teaching responsibility by adhering to a monarchical style of leadership and governance, relying on a unique brand of

traditional authority.[96] Consequently, the respondents conceptualized the institutional Church structure as 'a total monarchy', as it 'is all powerful', is 'autocratic', is 'capable of controlling huge sections of society,' yet 'is answerable to nobody' and has 'no checks or balances, no regulation of its operations' (Milesko, Interview, 12/04/14). Such an observation is affirmed by the Church's doctrine of infallibility in which the Pope, the head of the Church, has 'elevated himself above the human condition of fallibility and defined himself/had himself defined as participating in divine inerrancy and indefectibility' (Ruether, 2001: 99).[97]

The doctrine of infallibility was understood by the respondents as epitomizing the untenable and flawed foundations of Church authority and providing the structural justification for the clergy's abuses of power. Mary Al argued that 'the Church is dysfunctional, it is hypocritical, it is judgemental, it is punitive, and that all comes from the longstanding tradition of the Church, the structures of the Church all built on this whole idea of infallibility' (Gagnon, Interview, 15/04/14). For the respondents, infallibility translated into an uncompromising and oligarchic sense of authority amongst the Church hierarchy and fuelled the magisterium's belief that the Roman Catholic Church was the one true Church.

Ford offered a narrative of his encounters with clerical authority that further expounded the implications of the submissiveness required by the doctrine of infallibility. Ford was born into the Catholic tradition, attending Catholic schools, acting as an altar server and even briefly training at a seminary to become a priest. However, as Ford matured and gained a greater insight into the workings of the clergy, he developed a strong resentment of the Catholic hierarchy and their ways of commanding their people. He described their authority over the Masses as based on a model of 'pray, pay, and obey' (Englerth, Interview, 16/04/14).

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[96] The Church's authority is sacramental, theological and eschatological in nature, and its teaching authority covers a broad range of moral and structural issues. In its most formal sense, the Church's claims to authority rest on the scriptures, apostolic succession and tradition (Noonan, 2005).

[97] With the results of the First Vatican Council (Vatican I) the infallibility of the Church and of the Bishop of Rome were inextricably intertwined, resulting in a concentration of power in Rome and 'a juridical interpretation of all ecclesiastical powers' (Stagaman, 1999: xvi).

He summarized this tripartite model as follows: 'people were taught 1) to pray the way they said we should pray, 2) to pay the Church ridiculous amounts of money to avoid going to hell and 3) to believe that whatever they said was fundamentally right and that it would be wrong to even dare to disobey them' (Englerth, Interview, 16/04/14).

Ford's compliance with this model, however, was shaken by the extreme authoritarianism he experienced from the local bishop of the Venice Diocese. He explained that this bishop epitomized and embodied the absolutism of clerical authority as he made irrational demands of the laity and routinely abused his position as a religious leader. Ford also became conscious of the hierarchy's abuse of authority through various scandals involving the Catholic clergy. Firstly, Ford saw the ramifications of the 'pay' component of the Church's model of authority in the widespread allegations of corruption and financial venality that have plagued the Vatican in recent years. He perceived the institutions of the Church as being consumed with money, infected by greed and buoyed by a belief that they were impervious to secular legal standards of propriety.

The clerical sexual abuse scandal, as discussed in the Introduction, enhanced and heightened Ford's issues with clerical authority and with their abuses of power. This scandal had similarly ruptural effects for the other respondents who perceived the offending clergy as having manipulated their position of power and their divine link to God. For example, Diana divulged that one of her family friends was abused by her parish priest who told the young girl that '[she] should have sex with [him], because God wanted [her] to have sex with [him], and please God' (Milesko, Interview, 12/04/14). According to the respondents this predatory behaviour was perpetuated and concealed for so long because 'the Church has absolute power and is accountable to no one' (McGill, Interview, 19/04/14).

The respondents were appalled not just by the sexual abuse of children by members of the clergy but also by the calculated ways in which the institutional Church attempted to cover up these malfeasances and to protect their clergy rather than the victims. The respondents found it unconscionable that the Church would conspire to suppress information relating to this scandal and that it would defend the criminal priests rather than stand up for the members of the Church who were abused, violated and let down by the hierarchy. The respondents correspondingly categorized the Church hierarchy as possessing 'an overblown sense of authority and a disproportionately small sense of responsibility' (Boyle, Interview, 18/04/14).

Many of the respondents and many Catholics around the world reacted to the clerical abuse scandal by choosing to leave the Church, as they could no longer trust or respect such a morally errant and culpable institution. Ford explained that 'it was like a ball of yarn; as [he] heard about the crimes members of the clergy had committed it started to unravel for [him] and it just kept unwinding as [he] kept on seeing more and more of the skulduggery and exploitation carried out behind this veil of infallibility and supreme holiness' (Englerth, Interview, 16/04/14). For the respondents this abuse of power has de-legitimized and undermined the institutional clout and status of the Church in their own lives and it has encouraged many to pursue de-traditionalized forms of worship, such as MMOJ, that are divorced from the corrupt structures of the institutional Church.

5.3.2 Moving Towards a Deinstitutionalized Form of Religiosity

'*Jesus Christ would not recognize the institutional Church today from what he originally founded… MMOJ is actually closer to the heart of Christ than the kind of structures of glory and privilege in the current Catholic Church' – Bridget Mary.*

MMOJ and its members seek to transcend the authoritarian structures of the Catholic Church by removing Catholicism from its institutional foundations and by practising a more personalized articulation of the Catholic faith. The Catholic Church's claims to infallible authority, as empirically discussed in the previous section, have been confronted by contemporary sociological theorizing that acknowledges the individualization of religion and of religiosity within organic society.[98] Proponents of the individualization thesis argue that the pervasive individualization and subsequent deinstitutionalization of religiosity will confer great 'losses to the Churches and the traditional religious forms' (Pollack, 2008: 168) to the degree that 'Church-centred religiosity is likely to become a localized and peripheral phenomenon of subjective consciousness' (Luckmann, 1963: 159).

Accordingly, the people of MMOJ have rejected the magisterium as the sole source of authority in the Church and instead they are pursuing de-institutionalized articulations of Catholicism (see for example, D'Antonio, 1994; and Jacobs, 2003). The respondents were no longer imprisoned by the absolutism of the Catholic Church and were freed from the restrictive dogmas, exegeses and conventions that upheld the infallibility of the Roman Catholic Church. The members of MMOJ identified that their own programme of deinstitutionalization is not an isolated or atypical phenomenon and positioned their activities within broader patterns of contemporary religion. For, as Ivan explains, 'not just at MMOJ,

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[98] The individualization thesis, advanced by sociologists such as Beck (2010), Davie (2002), Heelas, 1996a, b) Hervieu-Léger (2003) and Lichterman (1996, 2007) contends that the 'revitalization of religiosity and spirituality in the twenty-first century' is predicated on 'exemplary religious individualism' (Beck, 2010: 11). According to the individualization thesis, this 'privatization and individualization' (Luckmann, 1963) of faith, has stimulated a formative and widespread emphasis on self-fulfilment amongst individual faith believers.

but in society more generally, there is a real shift towards moving away from traditional authority structures in the Church' and more of an emphasis on 'communities themselves working out what is meaningful, what is right and what direction as a collective they want to take' (Royale, Interview, 16/04/14). For Meehan and her small flock, moving away from the large, institutionalized Church was essential for their own spiritual wellbeing and also represented opportunities for the survival of Roman Catholicism more generally (Rife, 2007).

Currently, D'Antonio et al. point to a 'crisis of authority in Catholic modernity' (2011: 273) and all indications from social research are that acceptance of the Catholic Church's moral and institutional authority has been diminishing,[99] partly as a result of the emphasis on personal conscience contained within Vatican II. For the majority of Catholics, Vatican II was viewed as bringing the archaic Church closer to the modern world with its emphasis on rational authority and personal responsibility (D'Antonio et al., 2011). [100] For the respondents, the legacy of Vatican II has come to mean combining faith, reason and personal experience to reach decisions on a wide range of moral issues. Katy explained that 'Vatican II told us that we were given a brain so that we could question things and not just accept them blindly and if we did just accept what was told to us by those up on high, then we were actually committing a sin' (Zatsick, Interview, 12/04/14).

Indeed, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who subsequently became Pope Benedict XVI , noted in his official commentary on Vatican II that 'over the pope as an expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority, there stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, even, if necessary, against the requirements of ecclesiastical authority' (cited

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[99] For further studies of the diminishing authority of the Catholic Church see Casanova, 1994; D'Antonio et al. (2011); Dillon, (1999); Gibson (2003); Greeley (1973); Noonan, 2005; Oakley and Russett (2003) and Steinfels (2003).
[100] Kennedy (1988) argues that until Vatican II, the Church's supreme teaching authority was largely unchallenged and uncontested. Vatican II therein inculcated the growth of progressive and rational thinking in a previously irrational structure and gave believers spiritual autonomy in a space that was previously marked by submission and acquiescence. On matters of moral authority Vatican II encouraged laypeople to believe that they had freedom of conscience.

in Vorgrimler, 1967: 49). Cardinal Walter Kasper, former president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, affirmed this notion of the primacy of conscience stating that 'some situations oblige one to obey God and one's own conscience, rather than the leaders of the Church' (Corpus Reports, November/December, 2005).

In reality, however, the institutional Church has been less than encouraging of an approach that privileges individual conscience over official Catholic teaching, as it was thought to destabilize the authority of the Church. Given the inherent contradictions between these avowals of the primacy of conscience and the Church's calls for absolute obedience, it is unsurprising that there has been a schism between the magisterium's theoretical support of individual conscience and its actual application within Catholic dogma.

However, MMOJ has identified the primacy of conscience amongst its believers as one of its foundational principles and its pastoral team has sought in various ways to encourage critical discernment and the personalization of faith as imperatives for its members. Rather than encouraging people to leave religion altogether, as the institutional Church had feared, MMOJ's focus on personalized forms of faith actually serves as an incentive for many of its members and unites them in a unique form of 'elusive togetherness' (Lichterman, 2005). The issue of conscience is written into the community's mission statement and was frequently highlighted in the community's shared dialogue homilies. The community also created various platforms, such as a weekly Book Club and an issue-based group called Critical Mass, which allowed its members the opportunity to develop their own informed perspective.

Mary Murray is firm in her belief that MMOJ has actively fostered a sense of de-institutionalization amongst its members as 'this community is made up of thinking people, who are all encouraged by the pastoral team to think outside the box and to follow [their] own hearts in areas of faith' (Murray, Interview, 14/04/14). The inquisitive and subversive

culture within the MMOJ parish has opened others up to 'engage with new perspectives, to challenge [their] assumptions about the Church and broaden [their] horizons about the role of the individual in religion' (Englerth, Interview, 16/04/14). Teresa explained that this introspective process is 'very much about putting yourself in the driving seat, gaining control back and having the space to be able to question things and be critical of the institutions and the official stances and to be able to pursue something that is more open-minded' (Interview, MacEachern, Interview, 18/04/14).

Accordingly, each of the respondents admitted to creating what Hervieu- Léger (2003) defines as an 'à la carte religion,' that included or rejected various aspects of Catholicism on the basis of whether they were personally meaningful or not. In contrast to the 'by the book' Catholics of canonical parishes who accepted all of the teachings of the Catholic Church as sacred and inviolable, the preponderance of respondents self-identified themselves as 'cherry-picking Catholics,' 'pick 'n mix Catholics,' 'supermarket Catholics,' or 'cafeteria Catholics,' who structured their faith solely around the beliefs which were personally relevant or significant for their lives (Gagnon, Interview, 15/04/14). Encompassing a diffuse assemblage of various religious beliefs, these subjective 'God[s] of One's Own' (Beck, 2010) were fashioned by the respondents in order to satiate their personal needs for comfort, reassurance and self-actualization. D'Antonio et al's empirical study of American Catholics affirms this assertion by illustrating that 'Catholics are increasingly seeing authority in individual consciences' and 'as acceptance of Church leaders as the locus of moral authority declines, individual authority increases' (2011: 285). D'Antonio uses these findings to conclude that 'the laity are developing an image of a good Catholic very much at variance with the traditional model set forth by the magisterium in Rome' (1994: 384).

The majority of the respondents' religiosity was subsequently formulated around a 'decoupling of (institutional) religion and (subjective) faith' (Beck, 2010: 26). Whilst the

respondents conceptualized religion as the 'rigid structures, hierarchy, and rules' of the Catholic Church, their faith was understood more in terms of scriptural interpretations and Catholicism's 'message of love, kindness, being charitable, working for justice, and following the example of Jesus' (Milesko, Interview, 12/04/14). Diana concluded that identifying with this version of Catholicism did not require institutional affiliation, as 'faith is not a *having*; it is a *doing*, a *becoming'* (Milesko, Interview, 12/04/14). This process of de-institutionalization was a tool of both resistance and self-preservation for the members of MMOJ as they were able to divorce the liberatory and fulfilling aspects of their faith from the kyriarchal influences of institutional Catholicism and in so doing attain spiritual emancipation.

Moreover, in their reconceptualization of religion and faith, the respondents expressed a shift towards more ecumenical expressions of spirituality that encouraged greater interdenominational and interfaith collaboration. Many of the respondents' narratives featured examples of ways in which they were not allowed to partake in other religious events or to have any connection with other religious traditions, as they grew up in an era of not knowing, understanding or appreciating faiths outside Catholicism.[101] Michelle also explained that the current Bishop of Venice is particularly unsupportive and obstructive of ecumenical events as he upholds the traditional canonical view that 'the Catholic Church is the one true Church, superior to all other Churches and averse to collaboration with other Churches' (Royale, Interview, 16/04/14).

The respondents tied the rigid denominationalism of the Catholic Church to its absolute sense of authority and argued that the women priests movement as a whole, and their community in particular, was trying to move towards a transdenominational vision of wholeness and the

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[101] For instance, Jack recounted that as a child he was unable to go to Cub Scout meetings as they took place in a Methodist Church hall and as an adult he was unable to attend his Presbyterian grandfather's funeral and could not be the best man at his Presbyterian cousin's wedding because 'in those days as a Catholic you could not even set foot in a Protestant Church' (Interview, Duffy, 12/04/14).

restoration of ecumenical co-operation that was underscored in Vatican II.[102] For as Bridget

Mary affirmed: 'women priests see ourselves on a path to oneness and harmony between the

religions, and we are helping to make waves and blaze a trail in the Church' (Meehan,

Interview, 14/04/14).

Just as they wish to instil gender equality in the Church, the women priests of this study

displays a commitment to creating Christian unity and unity amongst other religious

traditions. Jack explained that inherent in this course is a redefinition of 'Church' away from

denominational divides and towards a more inclusive vision of 'Church' as the *ekklēsia* of

people, such that 'Lutherans, Catholics, Jews, Muslims are all in the same Church because

[they] all belong to the same body of religious belief and commitment' (Duffy, Interview,

12/04/14). Indeed, many of the members of MMOJ were not originally from a Catholic

background themselves but were still made to feel welcome and are still able to participate in

all aspects of the life of the Mary Mojo community.

Marilyn incisively suggested therefore that MMOJ's commitment to interfaith and

ecumenical unity is built upon a 'sense of one river, many wells; there may be many wells,

many different faiths, but there is only one river, one fundamental life force of God' (Jenai,

Interview, 19/04/14). To this end, MMOJ as a community is infused with a commitment to

the sharing, collaboration, and unity between faiths and religions.[103] The pastoral team has

invited various leaders from other religious traditions to celebrate the Mass with them at

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[102] The opening words of the Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* — 'The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council'— portend Vatican II's commitment to the breaking down of denominational barriers. More recently this stance was affirmed by Pope John Paul II, who declared that 'it is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian unity, is not just some sort of "appendix" which is added to the Church's traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does' (John Paul II, UT Unum Sint, 1995, cited in Power, 2008).

[103] The respondents' narratives also recounted various instances in which they explored interdenominational pursuits whilst simultaneously belonging to MMOJ including: their participation in ecumenical Christian or multi-denominational groups; their involvement with the Christian Charismatic movement ;and their experimentation with elements of esoteric Christianity, Hinduism, Kabala, Buddhism and New Age mysticism.

MMOJ, including a Methodist minister and the rabbi from the local Messianic synagogue. As will be discussed below, MMOJ has emphasized the similarities between Reform Judaism and their brand of Christianity and it performs a special version of the Passover Seder dinner in solidarity with its Jewish brothers and sisters.

It is also important to note that Mary Mojo's services are conducted within the grounds of St Andrew's United Congregational Church and a strong bond has been cultivated between these two communities through various joint activities.[104] This sense of co-operation motivated Pastor Phil and Bridget Mary to perform a shared interdenominational liturgy for the MMOJ and Good Shepherd communities over the Easter season. The Holy Thursday liturgy displayed inclusivity and respect for each religious tradition as well as a willingness to be reflexive and flexible—traits that are not commonly associated with the monolithic Catholic tradition. This event also displayed a shift towards greater hybridization in the construction and performance of religious rituals and there was an appreciation that traditions, conventions and rigid rules are irrelevant in the performance of the Christian faith. Rather, a discernibly detraditionalized and deinstitutionalized approach to rituals and to ecumenical dialogue was made salient in this innovative Holy Thursday liturgy.

5.3.3 The Deinstitutionalization of Ritual

To achieve this deinstitutionalization of faith MMOJ not only provides possibilities for playing with ritual elements from other religious traditions but it also incorporates personal preferences as legitimate components of ritual. In emphasizing creativity and personal taste,

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[104] For example, the two communities have joined together in a mission project connected to the 'Sanctuary of Sarasota' project. This is a social welfare project to address the homelessness crisis in the Sarasota area through the provision of basic necessities and shelter for those in need. St Andrew's and MMOJ have partnered in the weekly delivery of food to this community and also coproduce baskets for the homeless, filled with toiletries and personal hygiene supplies. Bridget Mary and Pastor Phil also co-created interfaith worship services for the homeless.

the approaches of this community remove rituals from their institutional dimensions of orthodoxy and allow for individual autonomy in the performance of liturgical celebrations. As Ronald Grimes writes, 'the notion of experimenting ritually implies attitudes far more flexible than those we normally associate with religious rites, which we typically think of as relatively fixed and unquestionable' (1990: 27).

As compared to formalized ritual in traditional Catholic congregations, MMOJ offers a far more relaxed, unregimented approach to ritualization. Whilst the core components of the Catholic Mass were observed, including the reading of the gospel and the blessing of the Eucharist, the parishioners' engagement with these rites is unfettered by the ritualized choreography of traditional Catholic liturgies. Rather than mandatory set rules or dictates regarding when members of the congregation had to sit, stand or kneel, as is customary at canonical Catholic parishes, parishioners at MMOJ are free to decide on their own terms how they would like to worship during the Mass. Some choose to sit for the entire Mass, some kneel at different points; others choose to stand intermittently with their eyes closed deep in contemplation. Some parishioners elect to embrace more charismatic expressions of faith, by extending their palms in a sign of openness, or raising their arms in adulation at various stages of the Mass.

All of these forms of veneration are respected and these personalized expressions of faith are facilitated by the air of tolerance and acceptance that permeates the soul of MMOJ. In this sense, this reinterpretation of rituals as an opportunity for sefl actualization is collectively shared by the MMOJ community. Many respondents, such as Sherry, valued such forms of impulsiveness and informality as more genuine expressions of faith than those allowed for in the canonical tradition. Sherry explained that '[she cherished] a kind of more uninhibited and free flowing form of ritual' because 'the more formulistic rituals at other Catholic Churches

lack meaning; they seem cold and like people are just going through the motions' (Robertson, Interview, 19/04/14).

For ritual to be effective for Sherry, she must be emotionally engaged and the rite must 'speak to her' by 'inspiring a sense of transcendence, and opportunity for her to encounter the sacred on [her] own terms' (Robertson, Interview, 19/04/14).

Sherry's focus on personal experience, as symbolic of wider attitudes within the MMOJ community, emphasizes the point that ritual spontaneity provides opportunities to address individual concerns within the context of community and allows individual believers to distinguish their personal religiosity from the confines of institutionalized patterns of ritualization. As Catherine Bell writes of such approaches to ritual, 'the new paradigm is directed more inward than outward, apt to define community and society in terms of the self,' rather than in terms of the religious tradition or institution (1997: 241). Grimes highlights the contextual particularity of these patterns, arguing that this kind of 'experimenting with ritual is an expression of a specifically North American ethos, one that posits experience as a primary value,' (1990: 111) and that such attitudes reflect larger cultural discourses about the self, relationality and authority within the American religious landscape.

MMOJ also seeks to incorporate an appreciation of other religious traditions into its ritualizing. After its regular Mass in the week preceding Easter, the MMOJ community held a Seder dinner in their communal hall to celebrate and commemorate the Jewish Passover, or *Pesach*.[105] This celebration of a Jewish festival is indicative of MMOJ's embracing attitude towards interfaith dialogue, and its willingness to challenge the institutional stances of the Roman Catholic Church. The ritual meal that honours the events of the Exodus is called the Seder, and traditionally families and friends gather to the read the sacred text of the

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[105] Pesach is the great Jewish feast of redemption and liberation that commemorates the Israelites' deliverance from their bondage in Egypt as recounted in the Book of Exodus.

Haggadah,[106] sing special Passover songs, partake in symbolic foods placed on the Passover

Seder Plate and observe ritual acts such as drinking four cups of wine and reclining in

freedom at various points of the Haggadah recitation (Bradshaw and Hoffman Lawrence,

1999).

In the Christian tradition it is believed that the Last Supper was a Passover Seder celebrated

by Jesus and the twelve disciples. For the members of Mary Mojo the Christian observance of

this ritual celebrates not only the tradition of Christ's last supper but also provides a means of

honouring the Jewish roots of the Christian faith and the continuities that these religious

traditions share. The MMOJ community wanted to hold a Christian version of a Seder dinner

so as to 'recreate and feel closer to what Jesus experienced and also to stand in solidarity with

[their] Jewish brothers and sisters' (Gagnon, Interview, 15/04/14). The Seder dinner was

organized by a member of the MMOJ community whose husband was Jewish and was fitted

out with all of the customary Seder provisions. Those in attendance paid a small donation to

participate in the Seder, which was then given to support the charitable works of the Good

Shepherd community.

The MMOJ community created a revised Christian Haggadah making the service essentially

Christian but with Jewish references. Members of the community took turns in reading

sections of this text, as is customary in Jewish Seders, and paused at various points to discuss

common themes of peace, freedom and religious tolerance shared in both the Jewish and

Christian traditions. The members of MMOJ were especially engrossed in the emphasis on

slavery and liberation contained within the ritual elements of the Seder (see for example,

Doering, 2007). Many drew connections between the servitude of the Israelites and women's

subjugation in the Church and saw the emancipatory message of the Passover as a motif for

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[106] The *Haggadah* contains the narrative of the Israelite exodus from Egypt, special blessings and rituals, commentaries from the Talmud and special Passover songs.

the female ordination movement.[107] Jolene explained that 'just as the Israelites were trapped in Egypt and just as God delivered them, so too can women be liberated from our subordination in the Church' (Boyle, Interview, 18/04/14).

MMOJ also observed the traditional foods arranged on the Passover Seder plate, including bitter herbs (*Maror* and *Chazeret*), a fruit and nut paste (C*haroset*), celery dipped in salt water (Karpas), roasted lamb or goat (Z*eroa*), a hardboiled egg (*Beitzah*) and unleavened flat bread (*Matzo, Matza, or Matzah*) (Bradshaw and Hoffman Lawrence, 1999). Each of these six items arranged around the Seder plate has special significance to the retelling of the Exodus from Egypt.[108] Whilst not all of the respondents were initially aware of the significance of these foods, they were keen to learn and discover the symbolic meaning behind each of them.

The respondents thoroughly enjoyed the experience of a Seder dinner and found that it bestowed upon them a deeper understanding of both the foundations of the Christian Easter story and Jewish Passover traditions. The institutional Catholic Church, however, has been opposed to the practice of observing a Seder dinner or practising any other elements of the Jewish faith.[109] Yet the MMOJ community regards these institutional positions with contempt and perceives them as evidence of the Church's desire to control its members and to confine them to distinct, bounded practices. For as Marilyn explained, 'to ignore these traditions,

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[107] Whilst the members of MMOJ utilized this connection it is important to note that this comparison has been criticized because both 'women' and 'Jews' take on a symbolic value and the comparison is set up as if no women were also Jewish (see for example, Las, 2015). Therefore as with all 'women/race' comparisons, the comparison between women's oppression and the servitude of the Israelites is problematic (see Hull et al, 1982).

[108] The symbolic foods placed on the Seder plate evoke the twin themes of slavery and liberation. *Maror* and *Chazeret* symbolize the bitterness and harshness of slavery; *Charoset* represents the mortar used by the Jewish slaves to build the storehouses of Egypt; *Zeroa* represents the Pesach sacrifice; and *Beitzah* symbolizes the festival sacrifice. The seventh symbolic item used during the meal—a stack of three unleavened *Matzah breads*—is placed on its own plate on the Seder table and symbolizes that the Israelites left Egypt in such haste they could not wait for their bread dough to rise and the bread, when baked, was Matzah (Bradshaw and Hoffman Lawrence, 1999).

[109] The Church magisterium has disapproved of conducting a Seder as a public ritual or devotion of the Church and has directed that no Seders should be performed on Catholic Church property (see for example Hitchcock, 2012). The Church contends that, because the Seder has been superseded by the Catholic Mass, observing the Seder is a form of 'false worship' and Catholics should limit their commemoration of the Last Supper to the Holy Thursday Mass (Jones, 2015, April 2).

these traditions that moulded our own Catholic tradition, that is simply nearsighted and provides for a very shallow conception of spirituality' (Jenai, Interview, 19/04/14).

There was unanimity amongst the respondents that such a progressive commemoration of the Last Supper could not have occurred in a canonical parish. A group of genial women stopped me after the dinner and one of them, without provocation, mused: 'Aren't we lucky to have this space to witness such beautiful and fresh interpretations of ritual? No way that you could get this at the Catholic Church down the road!' Her companion then quipped, 'Oh no dear, over there they're probably swinging incense and chanting 17th century Latin as we speak! Thank God that we don't have to go through that!' (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14). By contrast, the respondents revelled in what they identified as the anagogic depth of ritual that was stimulated by this holistic assimilation of religious practices and approaches to worship. There was an understanding amongst the respondents that such ecumenical and integrated approaches to worship were 'the first step in healing all the Church, in getting rid of authoritarianism and power, and instead bringing us all together into one body, one Church, united in the fight against power and oppression' (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14).

Chapter 6: The Intersection of Poverty and Racism— The Good Shepherd Community

This chapter seeks to explore the intersections both of gender and poverty, and of poverty and racialization and it examines the feminist praxis of empowerment as a strategy in combatting these axes of oppression within the Church. Just as with MMOJ, the two Judys perceived their mission to be rooted in Vatican II ideals. Vatican II carried forward Pope John's enthusiasm for human rights, stating in one of its documents that 'every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent' (quoted in Jablonski, 1988: 167).[110] The pastoral team of the Good Shepherd community found its vocational call to the priesthood through its ministry amongst the poor of Fort Myers.[111] By pursuing their radically illicit ordination in the Catholic Church, the two Judys felt that their vocation was 'symbolically and actually a call to step out of the institutional Church and to serve the poorest of the poor right there where they are' (Lee, 2010: 111).

In the wake of debates about Charitable Choice and President Bush's Faith-Based Initiative,[112] there is a wealth of literature that examines the role of Churches in the deployment of social welfare and social justice activities (see for example, Chaves and

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[110] Further, the need for justice for the poor is rooted in Lumen Gentium's statements on Economic and Social Life. This section begins with the following words: 'In the sphere of economics and social life, too, the dignity and entire vocation of the human person as well as the welfare of society as a whole have to be respected and fostered; for [hu]man is the source, the focus and the end of all economic and social life' (quoted in Hefner, 2013: 8). Further, paragraph 66 states that: 'To fulfil the requirements of justice and equity, every effort must be made to put an end as soon as possible to the immense economic inequalities which exist in the world and increase from day to day, linked with individual and social discrimination' (quoted in Hefner, 2013: 8).

[111] Judy Lee was ordained as a Roman Catholic woman priest in 2008 in Boston and Judy B in 2010.

[112] President George W. Bush originated the Faith-Based Initiative in January 2001, which is a program that provides funding to religious organizations and faith-based institutions with federal funding to deliver government-mandated social services. The Faith-Based Initiative builds on the controversial Charitable Choice provision in American law. Cnann and Boddie explain that 'the objectives of Charitable Choice are to encourage states and counties to increase the participation of nonprofit organizations in the provision of federally funded welfare programs, with specific mention of faith-based organizations; establish eligibility for faith-based organizations as contractors for services on the same basis as other organizations; protect the religious character and employment exemption status of participating faith-based organizations; and safeguard the religious freedom of participants' (2002: 224). The idea of Charitable Choice and the Faith-Based Initiative have come under close scrutiny as they have 'significantly changed the historic relationship between the religious community and the public sector by opening the door for mixing religion and publicly supported social services' (Dibadj, 2002: 530).

Higgins, 1992; Freedman, 1993; and Patillo-McCoy, 1998). However, the majority of this work relies upon data from congregations operating outside low-income neighbourhoods rather than within them, and it provides a somewhat unbalanced picture of the role of Churches in these community development projects (Owens and Smith, 2005). Instead, this study uses primary data from a Church working within a low-income area to examine the ways in which religious communities and religious leaders can draw upon their experiences and encounters with poverty to mobilize for social transformation.

By coupling pastoral ministry with social work practice the two Judys deployed a holistic model of faith-based development rooted in both ecclesial and extra-ecclesial tasks. In her work on women in the Southern United States Maria Frederick (2003) highlights a distinction, traced by Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya (1990), between 'priestly' and 'prophetic' functions. Priestly functions focus on 'maintaining the spiritual life of members' whereas prophetic functions focus on 'political concerns and activities in the wider community' (1990: 12). Religious communities that have social justice and political aims must negotiate these two functions and this process is an undertaking that is embraced by the pastoral leadership team at the Good Shepherd community. A dynamic combination of priestly and prophetic functions allows the two Judys to minister to their congregation whilst also attending to their broader aims of welfare provision and racial equality.

6.1 Good Shepherd History

The Good Shepherd community was established by Judy Beaumont, a former Benedictine nun and teacher, and Judy Lee, a former social worker. Judy B was raised in a Catholic family in downtown Chicago and became enamoured with the vibrant social justice imperative of Vatican II. She served as a nun for thirty-five years and during this time she became very involved in various social movements, such as United Farmworkers, the anti-nuclear pacifism movement and protests against the Vietnam War. Judy B was imprisoned several times for her acts of civil disobedience but always retained an ardent commitment to challenging injustices. Judy B also held a special devotion to the rights of poor women and opened a shelter for homeless women in Hartford, Connecticut.

During this time Judy Lee was occupied as a social work practitioner and academic at New York University (N.Y.U.) and at the University of Connecticut when she discovered Judy B's shelter. The two Judys, brought together by their shared sense of faith and their commitment to the poor, began to collaborate on a range of programmes for the homeless in this area and fell in love. Judy B subsequently left the convent and the couple continued their work in the Hartford area. After some time in Connecticut they elected to retire to the warmer region of Fort Myers. However, their plans for retirement were short-lived as they became aware of the severe social privation in South-west Florida and felt compelled to initiate programmes to meet the needs of the poor and marginalized in this area.

This situation of poverty was extremely pronounced in Fort Myers and the two Judys were confronted by the levels of destitution, inequality and homelessness that were conditioned and exacerbated by institutional factors, such as the lack of affordable housing and state-supported programs in this county. In a journal entry from that time, subsequently published in her book *Come By Here: Church With the Poor* (2010), Judy Lee wrote:

There was raw need everywhere. One man, Troy, an uninsured jobless labourer had been discharged from the hospital next to the park into the rain with awful injuries. He hobbled toward us in his underwear! There was a woman, Ellen, eight months pregnant and running from an abusive mate. I tried to refer her to the Domestic Abuse shelter but they had no room. A younger Black woman, Avery, just out of jail asked me for dry clothes, and Susan, a bearded eighty year old woman with vivid blue eyes said that she was very hungry… I went to each one and did what I could. I gave the man pants and a shirt and a sleeping bag and made sure someone would stick with him. …We had to start serving the hot meal in the rain and it suddenly poured. Food was getting soaked…just looking at this group of tired, wet, broken down people touched my heart deeply (2010: 19-20).

The two Judys were also shocked by the secondary effects of poverty and homelessness, including lack of adequate healthcare,[113] serious medical conditions,[114] poor educational outcomes, alcoholism and drug addiction,[115] as well as the more stigmatized statuses of mental illness and developmental delay that have been noted as especially prevalent amongst the poor (see for example, Belle, 1990; Saraceno and Barbui, 1997). Initially the two Judys could not face working in the streets because 'the scene was too bleak; there were precious few resources for homeless people, the attitudes among some so-called professionals and others were regressive, and this is a politically conservative, right −wing area, so [they] just could not bear the pain of trying to help with totally inadequate back-up' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14).

However, through their original parish of St Peter Cleaver, the two Judys began to realize their calling to minister to the poor. They offered various services such as an after-school program for poor children, a school education program and a ministry service to women affected by AIDS, but their activities were limited by their obstructionist and misogynistic parish priest. Judy Lee explained that this experience was extremely frustrating, as 'there was

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[113] In her book Judy Lee explains that there are almost 44 million Americans without health insurance. The population she serves in her ministry 'is a population high at risk for life-threatening illnesses and death. The cost of housing them is minimal compared to the health care and other county costs they amass in a year's time' (2010: 90).

[114] Many of the Good Shepherd members also experienced acute medical conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, glaucoma, arthritis and cancer, which had been aggravated by their time on the streets and by their inability to access adequate healthcare.

[115] See, for example, Duck (2015).

so much need and we were so willing to minister to that need but the priest was so caught up in these patriarchal ideas of what a woman could and should do, that he wouldn't let us work for real change in the community, he would only let us do the things in the parish that he didn't want to do' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14). This incident was a disturbing encounter for Judy Lee as '[she] had fallen in love with the social justice vision of the Catholic Church but [she] came to realize that the Church does not live that promise and is more interested in having expensive buildings and fancy vestments whilst the poor are left outside, starving in the cold' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14). Through this experience, Judy Lee had an awakening in which 'the real face of the Church was unmasked, as an institution built on greed, corruption and a disregard for those on the margins of society' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14).

The two Judys were so dismayed by the situation in this parish that they left the institutional Catholic Church and in 2006 they became involved in a feeding program with the youth group from the Lamb of God Lutheran Church. In one of her books, Judy Lee explains that she relished the opportunity to participate in this program and to 'experience a Church where the social and political ramifications of living the Gospel are broadly preached and realized through action' (2010: 112). Every Saturday night the two Judys partnered with this group to feed the homeless in a city park in Fort Myers, and they became aware of the spiritual needs of those they were serving. They began to integrate ecumenical worship services into the feeding program, but the members of Lamb of God were extremely disapproving of women acting in a ministerial capacity. In the face of extreme censure, Judy Lee and Judy B seceded from the Lamb of God program, and developed their own feeding ministry built upon both 'priestly functions' and 'prophetic functions' (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990).

They developed their 'Church in the Park' ministry in February, 2007, in which they held a weekly ecumenical Mass and provided food, clothing and basic necessities to the poor and homeless in Lion Park. A community began to develop around the Church in the Park and in

December, 2008 the two Judys expanded their ministry by purchasing a foreclosed property in a nearby neighbourhood in order to provide a stable base for their growing congregation. Through the help of their Church in the Park community, they restored this derelict building, and converted it into Joshua House, a residential facility for those transitioning out of homelessness.[116] The two Judys have housed over one hundred people in Joshua House and have been able to transition the majority of these individuals into permanent, affordable housing.

Joshua House has several different functions: it has a self-contained section dedicated to housing the homeless, it has a kitchen to feed the needy, it has a room for children's catechism and also a room for the young adults group, as well as a dining room for community gatherings and a sanctuary space at the front of the house for Masses and liturgical celebrations. Further, there is a communal area in the backyard of the dwelling that is used as a space for social get-togethers before and after mass. The two Judys continue to offer the Church in the Park ministry every Friday and also to offer an inclusive Mass in the Roman Catholic tradition in their House Church every Sunday afternoon. Worship is followed by a free communal meal where the community feeds the hungry and tends to the needs of the disadvantaged, and Sunday school and youth group is held later in the afternoon.[117]

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[116] There is a historical context to this sort of initiative, and the work carried out by the two Judys draws inspiration from the tradition of settlement houses. The most famous settlement house in the US is Hull House, founded by Jane Addams, who was the second woman to win the Nobel Prize, and Ellen Gates Starr. Although these initiatives were mostly secular rather than religious, the settlement house movement was subsequently carried on, from the 1920s, by the Hospitality Houses of the Catholic Worker movement founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. The prophetic functions of the two Judys draw parallels with this tradition of middle-class charity for the poor that seeks to integrate the impoverished into the community, including through housing, education and other social needs.

[117] Several scholars have illustrated that food and food-oriented events are essential components of the social fabric of mainline American Churches (see for example, Absolom & Roberts, 2011; Blesedell Crepeau, 2014; Palmer, 2011; Sacks, 2000 and Shordike and Pierce, 2005). As was explored in the discussion of MMOJ's Seder dinner, rituals centred around the sharing of food are also significant within other religious traditions, such as Judasim and Islam. Palmer argues that these actions revolving around the preparation and sharing of food

Judy B describes the development of the Good Shepherd community as a natural and organic progression of their Church in the Park ministry. Their membership base is both stable and transitory, as the people in attendance are a mixture of regular community members, volunteers and other homeless people who attend services sporadically. Most of the community members have received aid in some kind from the two Judys and many are formerly homeless who have been placed in permanent housing or who are currently homeless and are in the process of being housed through the two Judys' interventions.

A few other members of the congregation, however, do not conform to this social type and were inspired by the vision of church and charity upon which the Good Shepherd community was built. Judy B explained that '[they] have maybe five or six attendees who are not poor, who are doctors, teachers, and university professors, who stand by [them] and stand side by side with [them]' (Beaumont, Interview, 17/04/14). It is unsurprising, then, that when asked what they appreciated most about their Church the Good Shepherd community emphasized themes of acceptance, inclusivity, human connection, fellowship, friendship and self-worth.

6.2: Social Welfare

6.2.1 The Place of the Poor within the Catholic Church

Just as lepers, cripples and the blind were marked as others at the time Jesus was alive, today it is the poor who are considered to be the lowest of the low'- Judy Lee.

The United States is a country that is markedly divided on economic lines, with a widening chasm between the rich and the poor and distinct patterns of socioeconomic inequality. [118]   In 2014, at the time of this research, the official poverty rate in the U.S. was 14.8 %, with 46.7

'create a sense of community, which transforms beliefs into actions by fostering relationships, compassion and hospitality' (2011: 122).

[118] Here, 'the poor' is shorthand for 'the highly diverse people who are poor' (Lee, 2010: 17), recognizing that poverty and social inequality in America cut across a range of class, gender and racial lines.

million people living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). This official statistic, however, does not include the indigence and struggles of the working poor who, due to escalating housing prices and general living expenses, also face economic hardship. When the reality of the working poor is taken into account, Duncan (2014) estimates that the true face of poverty in America is much more alarming, with 100 million people (almost a third of the nation's total population) living in precarity. The second layer of poverty is homelessness and according to Judy Lee, 'between 2.5 and 3.5 million people in the U.S.A. are homeless for some period of time every year' (2010:18).

Several scholars have examined this state of poverty and inequality the U.S. and have given voice to the structural violence faced by the poor and disenfranchised within contemporary America as a result of their economic status (see for example, Edin and Shaefer, 2015; Kneebone and Berube, 2013; and Schwartz, 2005).[119] These studies have found that within the U.S. poverty has a direct link to an individual's 'cultural capital' (Boudieu, 1986)—that is, non-economic means of upward social mobility, notably educational qualifications and associated social grooming—and their access to a variety of opportunities and vehicles for social advancement. Pastor Judy Lee, who has over forty years' professional experience both as a social worker and as a social work academic, explains that 'the poor are unwitting participants in systems of exploitation and oppression where others gain from their labours and their low status' (Interview, Lee, 17/04/14).[120] In this way, Judy Lee connected the

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[119] See also Duncan. 2014; Hacker, 2006; Haymes et.al., 2015; Hefner, 2013; and Schwartz, 2005.
[120] Further, she reasoned that: 'We all live with uncertainty in times of economic upheaval, but the poor live with bad news daily. Employment is suddenly gone, meagre welfare for the children runs out, the price of housing and gasoline barely affordable on minimum wage incomes. And on top of all of this, they are made to feel responsible for their own poverty and as though they are not good enough. They long for good news, but everywhere they turn, they face cruelty, hardship, and discrimination' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14).

situation of the poor to broader structural conditions within American society that perpetuate the cycle of poverty, homelessness and dependency.[121]

Furthermore, the respondents expressed the view that the oppressive conditions of the poor were exacerbated by their marginalization within and disempowerment by the Roman Catholic Church. Whilst the two Judys acknowledged that the Catholic Church provides services for the poor such as soup kitchens and works of mercy and supports the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society, they voiced a deep conviction that the Church is not inclusive of those living on the margins of society. Judy Lee conveyed the opinion that part of the reason for the marginalization of the poor within the Catholic Church has to do with stigma, as the Church labels the poor and homeless with negative associations (see, Goffman, 1963).[122] Myers argues that the way in which the Church stigmatizes the poor is inherently 'dangerous, because the institution tends to view the poor as a group that is helpless thus giving themselves permission to look down on them and even play God in their lives' (2011: 105). The Church reifies the social stigma associated with poverty and confines the poor to the periphery of the Catholic community on the basis of their otherness.

A man I spoke with after the Mass, named Jerel, gave voice to the stigma inflicted on the poor and homeless as he recalled his experiences of being a homeless drug addict on the streets of Detroit. Detroit is a city profoundly impacted, firstly, by the slow decline in U.S. automobile manufacturing since the oil crises in the 1970s and second, by the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. Jerel recalled that he would walk through his derelict neighbourhood marked by cracked windows, boarded up houses and graffiti stained walls,

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[121] For example, many of the homeless whom Judy Lee serves at the Church in the Park were originally employed in the construction and property industries. Judy Lee described the correlation between the recent fall in the housing market to 'the subsequent unemployment and underemployment in the building trades and real estate jobs, coupled with low salaries in the unskilled sector,' and concluded that 'it is not surprising to find that almost 70% of the people who come to us from these industries had no income or had woefully low incomes, and found they could no longer support themselves or their families' (Lee, 2010: 92).

[122] Erving Goffman provides the classic definition of social stigma as 'the phenomenon whereby an individual with an attribute which is deeply discredited by his/her society is rejected as a result of the attribute' (1963: 2).

and would see the unspoiled church building, 'red and proud, with beautifully manicured grass', seemingly untouched by the disintegration of the lives of the poor who lived on the city's outskirts (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14). He said that if he or his homeless friends approached the Church, the priest and the parishioners would rush inside and close all of the doors, as if to bar them from entering their pristine environment.

Jerel explained that a sense of hostility developed from himself and his friends towards the Church because '[they] saw it as a posh person's club, an exclusive club that might every now and then give [them] some food, but a place that [they] were never truly welcomed, somewhere [they] could never belong because [they] were poor' (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14). Many of the people I spoke with at the Good Shepherd community expressed feelings and stories that echoed Jerel's narrative. As a result of the Church's treatment, many members of the Good Shepherd felt that they were made to feel 'poor not just in an economic sense but also poor in spirit due to being stigmatized and outcast because of mental illness, racial, cultural, gender discrimination, sexual orientation, or any other stigmatized difference' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14).

Aside from the Church's unwillingness to embrace fully the disenfranchised as equal members of the Catholic family, the two Judys also observed a paternalism and condescension in the Church's treatment of the poor. Judy Lee explained that there is a disjuncture in the Church's logic of 'I'm doing this for you, and I will now do this with you and we will work together' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14). Other commentators have observed that whilst the Church may be committed to helping the poor through charitable acts, it is unwilling to address the underlying causes of poverty and maintains an aloof distance from the poor (see for example, Calderisi, 2013; and Reidy, 2012). Quoting Dorothy Day (1981: 150), Judy Lee concludes that 'there is plenty of charity but too little justice' for the poor within the Catholic Church. As Pope Francis publicly describes how much he yearns for a

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'poor Church and a Church for the poor'(Lanser, 2014), the two Judys challenge the institutional Roman Catholic Church to become a Church not just *for* but a Church *with* the poor. Rather than simply 'continuing to give alms to the beggars at the gate' the two Judys' ministry invites people to 'see that there are no more beggars at the gate, only our brothers and sisters, our family members' (Lee, 2010: 17).

By applying an intersectional lens to the situation of poverty in the U.S. and to the two Judys' encounters with the poor and homeless, it also becomes clear that gender exacerbates and complicates an individual's relationship to poverty.[123] Currently, 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty are women or girls (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010). This figure is less dramatic within the American context, but poverty rates are still higher for women than men (13.8% of women are poor compared to 11% of men), elderly women are more likely to be poor than elderly men, and women are recorded as being poorer than men in all racial and ethnic groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Literature in the field has highlighted this feminization of poverty as a global trend, noting the 'persistent and increasing economic burden placed on women and girls' (Chant, 2007: 7). Much of the literature on the gendered dimension of poverty identifies three main aspects of this disparity: 'one, women experience a higher incidence of poverty; two, women's poverty is more severe; and three, the incidence of women's poverty is increasing over time' (Phillips, 2006: 31).[124]

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[123] Further, to cite another well-known UN statistic, women work two-thirds of the world's working hours, but earn only 10% of the world's income and own less than 1% of the world's property (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010).

[124] This literature explains several factors that contribute to the feminization of poverty. These aspects include: women are victims of the gender wage gap; women are traditionally segregated into low paying occupations; women are more likely to bear the costs of raising children; pregnancy affects women's work and educational opportunities; women spend more time providing unpaid caregiving than men; and domestic and sexual violence can push women into a cycle of poverty (see for example Catagay, 1998; Chant, 2003, 2007; Fukuda-Parr, 1999; Goldberg and Kremen, 1990; Hefner, 2013; and Phillips, 2006).

Through her work at the women's shelter in Connecticut and in the Good Shepherd community in Fort Myers, Judy B witnessed the ways in which poverty disproportionately affected women. She explained that 'women are frequently dealt a bad hand when it comes to poverty, they have the lower earning capacity than men, they have less professional opportunities than men, they have lower status and esteem within society, and they are lumped with the caring responsibilities for their children' (Beaumont, Interview, 17/04/14). According to Judy B, these factors often coalesce to make women dependent on men for their economic survival and place them in a position of economic precarity. To make these observations is not to cast women as a class with the ontological status of victim, but rather to underscore the distinct forms of subjugation women face in late-modern capitalist society.

Many respondents across all three case studies examined in this thesis raised similar points in their discussions, and in doing so they have made connections between the feminization of poverty and the social authority of the Roman Catholic Church. In particular, the respondents believed that women's abject poverty was correlated to traditional gender norms that have been enforced and entrenched by the patriarchal Church. For example Oliva, who spent many years working in women's development in Latin America, explained that 'if you look to many of the countries that are underdeveloped and in which women are the poorest, these will be countries in which the Catholic Church has so much power and so much sway' (Espin, Interview, 6/04/14). Judy Lee was firm in her belief that 'until the Roman Catholic Church changes its theology of women and makes women fully equal partners in the church, there is not going to be a remedy for poverty in the world, or social injustices' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14). While in most cases the Roman Catholic Church did not create these afflictions, its official stance towards women serves to reinforce and perpetuate the latter's suffering (Manson, 2014).

The struggle over women's ordination is thus not simply a culture war issue, but rather it is a movement that seeks to demonstrate that the Roman Catholic Church's denial of women has global consequences (Manson, 2014). The Good Shepherd community, as a broader reflection of the aims of this movement, seeks to dismantle the poverty, abuse and violence that are tied to the systematic belief that women and men are not equal. Judy Lee was indignant in her assertion that 'the Church says that it is so dedicated to the poor, well one of the best things it could do for the poor and for women and for children is to ordain women and give women more positions of leadership in the Church' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14). In this sense, for the two Judys female ordination is not simply about allowing women to be priests but rather 'it is about helping Church leaders recognize that if they were to include women in their leadership as their equals, they could truly be a powerful force for economic and social justice for women and children throughout our world' (Beaumont, Interview, 17/04/14).

6.2.2 Moving Towards a Church with the Poor
'The poor need a hand up rather than to be pushed down…we are a Church for the poor, working alongside and with the poor'- Judy Lee.

The two Judys inspire the members of the Good Shepherd community to throw off the chains of both material poverty and their internalized oppression and to seek to empower the poor as active agents within the Church and within society. Empowerment has become a central tenet of feminist theory and feminist political projects and it is focused upon increasing 'the personal, interpersonal and political power of oppressed and marginalized populations for individual and collective transformation' (Lee, 2001: 12).The two Judys have displayed a strong feminist political consciousness as they have sought to build this emancipatory model

of Church at the margins and edges of society, in a space occupied by extremely vulnerable and disempowered individuals.[125]

Within this liminal space, the two Judys have sought to reimagine the role of Churches in the provision of social welfare as well as the way in which the Church caters for the spiritual and subjective needs of the poor. Judy Lee (2010) understands this new paradigm of social welfare ministry as 'a Church *with* the Poor'. The community of the Good Shepherd has been modelled on a holistic vision of welfare provision in which the poor are taken from a position of dependency and subordination to an empowered state of self-determination and active participation. The two Judys seek to actualize their Church '*with* the poor' and in turn to overcome the oppression of the poor both within the Church and within broader society through a combination of priestly and prophetic functions.

Firstly, the priestly functions of the two Judys have developed a unique and emancipatory approach to ministry centred upon liberation theology and their own conception of the 'Theology of the Poor'. Here, the insights of liberation theology, which emerged as both an ideology and a social movement within Latin America as a moral reaction to the poverty and extensive social inequalities in this region, have been particularly significant for the two Judys. Liberation theology has been described as 'an interpretation of Christian faith out of the experience of the poor,' and 'an attempt to read the Bible and key Christian doctrines with the eyes of the poor' (Berryman, 1987: 4).[126] Liberation theology has had profound effects for indigent Catholics around the world, as it 'has served as a basis for the

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[125] Winter defines this space of 'the edge' as 'a place for pioneering efforts where movements often originate, energy accumulates, risk taking is no big deal and people connect with each other to accomplish what is worthwhile' (2009: 181-182).

[126] The Peruvian Priest Gustavo Gutiérrez's ([1971] 1988) methodological innovation was an ontological reorientation that invites the Church and all its people to view theology from the perspective of the poor and the oppressed (see for example, Sobrino, 1984; 1990; 1991; 1999). Liberation theology can also be understood as an attempt to restore the principles of the Early Church, which emphasized Christ's redemptive power and the social justice message for the poor contained within the Gospels (see for example, Myers, 2011; and Bediako, 1996).

visualization and effectuation of independence, justice, and human transformation' (Loue, 2014: 23).

Whilst liberation theology has been a highly influential social movement within Latin America, the official Catholic magisterium in Rome (as well as Catholic offices in other regions of the world) has been less than supportive of this radical approach to social inclusion within the Church.[127] One exception to this trend is Pope Francis who, as a result of his experiences and socialization in the Argentinian social and religious context, has been forthright in his espousal of liberation theology and its implications for the Church's attitudes towards the poor. However, Francis has been confronted by the institutional conservatism of the Catholic Church and its distinctly moderate and restrained approach to the poor (see, for example, Hebblethwaite, 1999; McGovern, 1990; and Pinder, 2016). In this sense, even though Pope Francis as an individual has displayed a predelection towards liberation theology, because of the deeply hierarchical and conservative nature of the Roman Curia, his personal dedication to achieving social justice for the poor has not been realised within the Roman Catholic Church.

Conversely, the two Judys have emphasized the inherent value of Latin American articulations of liberation theology as a way to speak to and empower their community of poor and homeless people and this commitment sets the Good Shepherd community apart

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[127] Curnow (2015) has argued that theological debates centred on the 'Preferential Option for the Poor' exemplify the tensions and conflicts that divide liberation the*logians and the Roman Catholic magisterium. This preferential treatment of and for the poor is arguably the foundation of liberation theology, and whilst the institutional Church has ostensibly affirmed this position, critics argue that their 'mere repetition of a common phrase belies vastly differing theological stances and agendas' (Curnow, 2015: 28). Latin American liberation theology was admonished by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1984 and 1986. The Vatican rejected these forms of the*logy 'for focusing on institutionalized or systemic sin, and for identifying the Catholic Church hierarchy in South America as members of the same privileged class that had long been oppressing indigenous populations form the arrival of Pizarro onward' (Wojda, 1995: 47). The Vatican and its official offices in Rome have also discounted Latin American liberation theology because of its prioritization of poverty over sin, and its incompatibility with the European context. Similarly, Latin American liberation theology has met extensive opposition in the United States where its detractors have labelled it as 'Christianized Marxism' (Horowitz, 2000).

from canonical Catholic parishes. Whilst liberation theology was a formative influence in the pastoral ministry and mission of the Good Shepherd community, the two Judys have customized this ideology to reflect more accurately the specific considerations that they faced in their ministry in Fort Myers. Judy Lee termed this adaptation of liberation theology a 'Theology of the Poor'.[128]

Like liberation theology, the Theology of the Poor is grounded in the experiences of the disenfranchised and advances that 'the good news for the poor has two central themes: Jesus as Healer and Jesus as Liberator' (Lee, 2010: 28). The central difference between liberation theology and the Theology of the Poor, however, concerns the issue of the Preferential Option for the Poor. Judy Lee explains that rather than adopting an approach that simply favours the poor there should be no scope to ignore the needs of the poor and this obligation must be emphasized as a precondition of the Christian faith. By reprioritizing the needs of the socially marginalized as the central focus of faith, the Theology of the Poor advocates a radical form of social inclusivity and seeks to expose and counter the exclusion of the poor within the institutional Church.

Throughout their Masses and within their more informal encounters with their parishioners, this pastoral team has sought to identify sites of oppression within their congregation's lives and to utilize these sites as hermeneutical tools in their preaching and interpretation of biblical wisdom. In a similar way to MMOJ's emphasis on the right to self-determination in faith, the two Judys are also convinced of the potential for the poor to have agency in the construction and performance of their faith. Judy B explained that 'there is this stereotype that poor people and the homeless are stupid and that has held them back in the Church for so

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[128] Judy Lee explains the core of the Theology of the Poor as follows: 'The Good News comes first to the poor, who are beloved of God and fed, nourished and empowered by Love to live and flourish with dignity, and to overthrow the systems that exploit and oppress. In this struggle, that is actually a class struggle, God clearly and strongly takes the side of the poor. This does not mean that God does not love all people, but that when some exploit and hurt and oppress others, God is on the side of the exploited, not the exploiter' (2010: 26).

long. But these people want to learn, they want to be enlightened and they want to have the chance to make decisions about their faith for themselves' (Beaumont, Interview, 17/04/14).

To this end, the two Judys would frequently draw on personal examples of hardship faced by members of their community, such as addiction, joblessness, or health concerns, to contextualize the meaning of the gospels and to make them relevant for their congregation. For example, Judy Lee made a comparison between the Lesson of the Widow's Mite, which is presented in the Synoptic gospels (Mark 12: 41-44, Luke 21: 1-4) and congregant Daphne's experiences of living as a poor widow and her generosity in the face of her adversity. [129]

The Theology of the Poor also seeks to be inclusive in terms of gender and it draws heavily on feminist the*logy and the similarities between women's subjugation and the oppression faced by the poor. Judy Lee believes that women share a mutual affinity with the poor as they have similar experiences of domination and are equally in need of empowerment and emancipation.[130] However, she strongly feels that the message of freedom embodied in traditional liberation theology does not adequately address women's encounters with oppression as it is 'trapped in male God-language' and imagery that 'fails to capture the feminine experience of tyranny' (2010: 65). In this way, Judy Lee exposes the latent gender bias contained within mainstream liberation theology and seeks to develop a new body of emancipatory the*logy that acknowledges the feminine face of God and that is inclusive of women. The gender neutrality of Lee's Theology of the Poor is particularly important given

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[129] In this story, a widow donates two small coins to the temple and while the wealthy people of the temple donated much more, Jesus expresses his delight at the widow's selflessness in the face of her destitution (Maynard-Reid, 2004). Jesus explains to his disciples that the small sacrifices of the poor mean more to God than the extravagant, but proportionately lesser, donations of the rich.

[130] In acknowledging the parallels between women's experiences of oppression and the oppression of the poor, the Theology of the Poor draws upon the work of many feminist the*logians, including Mary Hunt's political vision of 'fierce tenderness in action' that includes 'all who have been systematically cast aside in favour of the prevailing powers' (1991: 9). It is also informed by feminist the*logian Susan Ross as the Theology of the Poor calls its followers to a radical form of love that 'deepens relation, embodies and extends community, passes on the gifts of life, especially when it is thwarted by injustice' (1998: 18).

the aforementioned feminization of poverty and the complex ways in which gender intersects with socioeconomic status.

In blending the personal and the political and in attending to the 'divine-human nexus' (Hunt, 1991:9), Judy Lee moves the*logy to the forefront of the struggle for justice and change. She shows how an inclusive rendering of the*logy that builds upon ideas of liberation and empowerment and that is attuned to feminist principles can observe an intersectional approach to combating the multi-layered nature of kyriarchal oppression. Her Theology of the Poor adopts an approach that uses her experiences with sexism and the oppression faced by women in Church and in society to advocate for the needs of the poor. This radical form of the*logy serves to move the poor from the margins of the Church imaginary to the very centre and in so doing reorients both the priestly and prophetic functions of ministry.

Second, the two Judys' prophetic functions, built upon a feminist empowerment model of social work practice, seek to improve the material conditions of the poor through social outreach and the provision of necessary goods and services. A central prerequisite of the Theology of the Poor is that 'being Good News to the poor must include being poor no more' (2010: 10) so the ministry of the two Judys necessarily involves prophetic functions that address the material roots of poverty and oppression. In this way, the two Judys emphasize the active role that Churches and faith-based organizations can play in welfare provision and community development (see for example, Anheier, 2014; McConnell and McKinley, 2016; and Wallace et. al., 2004).[131] Judy B explained that 'the primary goal of Good Shepherd's ministry is to reduce poverty and to end homelessness one person at a time' (Beaumont, Interview, 17/04/14). Further, Judy Lee emphasized this commitment to praxis through her

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[131] For further information on the role of Churches and faith-based organizations in social welfare provision see Cavendish, 1999; Owens and Smith, 2005; Patillo- McCoy, 1998; Pinder, 2016; and Sawyer, 1994.

statement that 'you can't just tell a person who is hungry "be fed"; you need to get them food! You can't tell a person who is homeless "be housed"; you need to get them shelter' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14).

Through their weekly Church in the Park ministry the two Judys come into direct contact with the poor and homeless of the Fort Myers region and use this space as an opportunity for social outreach and social action. Each Saturday approximately one hundred homeless and poor people gather in this park and the two Judys supply food, clean clothes, sleeping bags, back packs and other requested items to the needy. The two Judys make a special effort during the Church in the Park to 'get to know each person as an individual and to assess what needs are their top priority and how [they] could best assist them' (Lee, 2010: 80). This delivery of prophetic functions is a collaborative exchange in which the community is 'consulted in defining their need as true partners' (Childs, 2013: 2) and is given the freedom to name the aid they require.

Individuals may also request counselling and referral for issues such as housing, employment, disability and housing applications, mental health, physical illness, substance abuse treatment, furniture, security deposit assistance and vouchers for utility payments. Each Tuesday Judy Lee holds an open house consultation in Joshua House, in which people can meet with her to discuss these issues. Using her extensive social work experience, Judy Lee then initiates plans to secure social security appointments, food stamp applications, medical appointments, eye exams and meetings with relevant state-run service departments for those in need. Judy Lee also organizes interim housing for those transitioning out of homelessness.

During these consultations Judy B opens the communal pantry where donated items are made available for those in need. There is a food pantry for non-perishable items, such as canned foods, rice, flour, sugar, coffee and tea. Other items available include clothing, sheets, towels,

personal hygiene products and small household items. Whilst running the pantry, Judy B also offers a space for the community's 'Tuesday Clubhouse' in which informal systems of kinship and support are developed through social interaction. Whilst the pantry meets the material needs of the poor, Judy B's facilitation of the Tuesday Clubhouse also provides a space in which their need for friendship and a sense of belonging is satisfied.

The two Judys' prophetic functions have been guided by the empowerment model of social work.[132] The notion of empowerment is an essential part of feminist social work praxis, and it emphasizes personal connection and the power of mutuality to establish respect, interest, empathy and responsiveness (Genero et.al., 1992; Jordan et.al., 1991; and Turner and Marsh, 2014).[133] It is salient to note that not all social work practice is inherently empowering and in particular many of the institutional Catholic Church mandated services have been 'delivered in ways that are not responsive to empowerment-oriented principles or to the exigencies of the people being served' (Adams, 2008: 23).

By contrast, the empowerment model adopted by the two Judys seeks to increase the personal, interpersonal and political power of oppressed and marginalized populations for individual and collective transformation (Lee, 2001). This transformation occurs as people are empowered through consciousness-raising that allows them to see and reach for alternatives and liberate themselves from the bonds of their oppression (Harris, 1993; Lee and Hudson, 2011). Judy Lee explains that there are three interlocking dimensions of empowerment that need to be addressed. These elements are '(1) the development of a more positive and potent sense of self; (2) the construction of knowledge and capacity for more

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[132] The empowerment model of social work has been discussed extensively by scholars and social work practitioners. In particular the contributions of Adams, 2008; Eamon, 2008;Germain, 1979, 1991; Gutierrez and Lewis, 1999; Hudson, 2009; Miley, O'Melia, and Dubois, 2009; Shera and Wells, 1999; and Walton, Sandau-Beckler, and Mannes, 2001 have been constructive for the development of this area of social work practice.
[133] As bell hooks affirms, 'radical post-modernism calls attention to those shared sensibilities which cross the boundaries of class, gender, race, etc. that could be fertile ground for the construction of empathy—ties that would promote recognition of common communities and serve as a basis for solidarity and coalition' (1990: 26-27).

critical comprehension of the web of social and political realities of one's environment; and (3) the cultivation of resources and strategies, or more functional competence, for attainment of personal and collective goals, or liberation' (2001:163).Further, a basic assumption of the empowerment approach is that oppression is a structurally based phenomenon and it takes an ecological perspective, as advanced by theorist Carel Germain (1979, 1991), to address the interdependence and connection of forms of oppression.[134]

This approach encourages people to work actively to change both their oppressive environment and also to mitigate the effects of their internalized oppression. Individual achievement and broader social action are inextricably intertwined, as individuals are encouraged to 'take control, achieve self-direction and seek inclusiveness rooted in connectedness with the experiences of other people' (Adams, 2008: 18). Such an approach highly benefits marginalized populations, such as the abject poor, the homeless, the working poor, people of colour and women, who are struggling with difficult realities and systemic and structural violence (Lee & Hudson, 2011; Norris et al., 2013).

One community member, Loretta, exemplified the benefits of such an approach. Loretta is a forty-eight year old African-American woman who came to the Church in the Park ministry with a long history of homelessness and mental health issues. As a result of her bipolar disorder she was prone to fits of rage and agitation and she had been banned from sitting in parks or attending local Churches. Loretta was also forbidden from using services such as shelters, soup kitchens, and housing supervised by the mental health system. Judy Lee took special care to get to know Loretta and to ascertain her material and spiritual needs as well as to cultivate her creative and artistic gifts as a way to give back to the community. The two

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[134] In her co-authored book with Rhonda Hudson, Judy Lee (2011) also argues that empowerment for women and other vulnerable populations is expanding from merely personal empowerment to political empowerment. Even as the two Judys work to meet the individual needs of the poor, they understand these needs as evidence of the systemic problems in the wider community.

Judys housed Loretta in their Joshua House residence and provided intensive counselling for her.

During one of their sessions, Judy Lee encouraged Loretta to convey her feelings of disempowerment through her gift of creative writing. Loretta was able to take ownership of her experience through her story of the 'throwaway dog,' which stood as an allegorical representation of her own exiled status and marginalization within society. The 'throwaway dog' allowed Loretta to connect with her feelings of difference, isolation, alienation, and express the various ways in which she felt misunderstood and mistreated. This step was a watershed moment for Loretta, as together with Judy Lee she was able to identify her struggles and commit to transforming her life. Through her personal determination, and the assistance of the two Judys who worked to secure her disability welfare entitlements, Loretta was able to transition into her own accommodation, stabilize her mental health condition, and reconnect with her family and friends.

This independence reinvigorated her sense of self-worth and 'gave a new sense of the intelligent, creative, witty, and capable person that she was' (Lee, 2010: 167). Loretta is still a central member of the vibrant Good Shepherd community, where she gives back to the community through her art and various acts of service. Echoing her story of the throwaway dog, Loretta made the observation to me that 'the Good Shepherd is like a family, I'm not a throwaway here, I'm not an outcast; I'm someone's sister, someone's friend, I'm important because we are all important here' (Fieldwork Notes, 17th April, 2014). Loretta's case demonstrates how working with women from a feminist empowerment approach helps them to gain control over their environment, develop self-esteem and self-efficacy and adopt new positive behaviours (Turner and Maschi, 2014).

A feminist approach to empowerment also stresses the need to increase the personal, interpersonal and political power of oppressed and marginalized people so that they can band together as communities and take action to improve their situations (Freire, 1973, 1990, 1994; Gutierrez, 1990). The empowerment approach to social work emphasizes reciprocity and the members of this egalitarian community extend justice through their generosity and their contributions to the community (Childs, 2013).

The two Judys recalled multiple ways in which members of the Good Shepherd gave back to their community. Many of the Good Shepherd members whose social security benefits had been secured by the work of the two Judys make sure to give a portion of their welfare payment to the community each week as they see it as their responsibility to 'pay it forward, to show appreciation for the blessing [they] had been given by the two Judys and to make sure that they could give the same support to someone else who may need it' (Gil, Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14).

Community member Ralph provides perhaps the most telling example of this reciprocity. After the two Judys found Ralph permanent housing and secured his Disability Benefits, he felt an immense sense of gratitude and indebtedness to the community. Two years later, Ralph is the backbone of a circle of Elders in the House Church. In a discreet and understated way, he regularly makes large donations to the ministry and on a weekly basis he supplies bus passes for all who need them. Ralph's partner Mimi has in turn been inspired by Ralph's generosity towards the community. Mimi cleans the House Church every week and helps to cook and serve the weekly meal after Mass. She also donates items that she buys in the thrift store to the community pantry every week in the hope of helping others.

Other members of the community who are not poor have also emphasized the importance of contributing to the community in order to empower and support their brothers and sisters. For

example, one of the attendees is a doctor at a local hospital, who treats the community members without cost and who provides the medical documentation needed for applications for disability social security and for state-supported housing for the disabled and mentally ill. Another community member is a teacher who volunteers in the after-school tutoring program and assists with the children's Sunday school classes. Other community members offer transportation services to take people to necessary medical appointments or to meetings with various social services outlets.

Myers explains that in order to combat poverty 'there are many things that need changing that can only be addressed by the community working together' (2011: 182). Judy Lee affirms the communal ethos of Good Shepherd by describing this community as 'a Church that is more like a big family' and a 'Church that instinctively meets the needs of its community members' because of its commitment to mutuality. Whilst the two Judys are often overcome by the selflessness of their community, they also see this element as the crucial foundation of a Church with the poor. Judy Lee explains that 'as people give more of themselves and embrace what we do here, they sanctify the community and make it an empowered community of equals striving to empower others through love, kindness and mutual support' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14).

6.2.3 Rituals with the Poor
The rituals and liturgical activities of the Good Shepherd ministry seek to actualize the Theology of the Poor through an affirmation of the disenfranchised members of the community and an emphasis on the need to serve one another. Its innovative approach to ritualizing is an attempt to move the community from self-centredness to a communal ethic of

reciprocity and mutuality.[135] Through this reorientation, the poor are brought to the centre of liturgy and the ritual aspects of the community are adapted to reflect social justice principles of equality, justice and inclusivity. The ritualized activities of the Good Shepherd community can again be partitioned into both priestly and prophetic functions as the two Judys seek to create a performative space for the empowerment of the poor and socially marginalized.

It is first necessary to consider the space in which these rituals are performed. Just as with MMOJ's detraditionalized and de-hierarchicalized structuring of liturgical space, the community of Good Shepherd seeks to embody its commitment to the poor through the space in which its communal liturgies are celebrated. None of Good Shepherd's ritualization is enacted in opulent Church buildings: rather, the two Judys strive to create Church 'where people are, in a city Park, in the woods and streets, in hospitals and most importantly in [their] House Church in the Joshua House complex' (Beaumont, Interview, 17/04/14).

In an effort to transcend the exclusionary ethic of the Catholic Church, in both a physical and symbolic way, the two Judys have deliberately selected spaces to perform Mass and communal rituals that are more inclusive and more conducive to the process of community building. The weekly Masses held in the chapel of the Joshua House complex offer a unique experience of the ways in which an understanding of 'Church' as a community can be divorced from definitions of 'Church' as an edifice.[136]

Within this space, the two Judys adapt many of their priestly rituals to better reflect their status of a Church with the poor. An important feature of the Holy Thursday liturgy is Maundy, or the washing of the feet, a ritual that is redolent of Jesus washing the feet of his

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[135] See for example, Ross (1998).

[136] The celebration of House Church liturgies is a popular trend within the wider female ordination movement. Some women priests performed House Churches because they could not get access to institutional Church spaces and others felt that the House Church offered a more spiritual and charismatic encounter with the Christian faith. Like Biblical figures such as Prisca, Lydia, Mary, Mother of John Mark, and many other women who led worship in their homes in the Early Church, women priests often celebrate liturgies in a more humble and authentic House Church setting.

disciples at the Last Supper. Schroers and Staubli explain that foot washing was 'considered the lowest service of a slave' and 'thus it was one of the daily activities that reflected social classes and structures of domination' (1998: 197).[137] Jesus, against the protests of his disciples, subverted these social norms and social practices and washed the feet of his disciples. Jesus performed this act to symbolize that he was as one with his disciples and to convey the inherent equality that marked their relationship.[138] To reaffirm this message within Catholic liturgy the priest emulates Jesus by washing the feet of twelve parishioners as a sign of fraternity.

Traditionally in canonical parishes this is a ritual that is performed by one male priest to a select few of the congregation, who in accordance with the doctrine of apostolic succession, are also men. At the Vatican level, this has also been a tradition carried out by one male, the Pope, to a select group of males. However, in 2013 Pope Francis, in a startling break from tradition, conducted the washing of the feet ritual at a prison where he got down on his hands and knees to wash the feet of twelve inmates, two of whom were women. This event sparked vibrant discussion and contestation from conservative elements within the Church, but for members of the female ordination movement it was a symbol of hope and optimism for the increased inclusion of women and minorities in the Catholic Church. Pope Francis' nonconformist approach to the washing of the feet reflects the radical nature of Jesus' original act and demonstrates that this is a ritual that is able to be co-opted for important social justice intentions and political meanings.

The two Judys and the Good Shepherd community followed Pope Francis' pioneering example and revised this ritual act in a way that accommodated their Theology of the Poor. It began with the two Judys each washing the feet of the closest parishioner to them. That

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[137] The root of this practice appears to be found in the hospitality customs of ancient civilizations, in which a host would provide a servant to wash the feet of his or her guests.

[138] According to the*logians such as Pinson, this act of extreme humility 'cleansed the disciples' hearts of selfish ambition, killed their pride and taught them the lesson of love' (2006: 23).

parishioner would then wash another parishioner's feet and so forth until each person had been washed and each person had had the opportunity to wash another. The small House Church was filled with activity and movement as each person spurred into action to serve one another. The people of the Good Shepherd parish tenderly and carefully washed the feet of their fellow community members and took time to connect to each other in this moment of deep reflection.

To ground their ritual activity within the context of the scriptures and the example set by Jesus, Elder Gary read the following Bible passage, which explained the significance of what the community was doing:

> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them (John 13.12–17).

As the community washed each other's feet, the two Judys also offered words of support and encouragement and through their rhetoric they were able to connect this act to Christian messages of justice, equality, as well as more secular notions of humanism. At one point Judy B explained the significance of this ritual act to the congregation, noting that 'Jesus said "I'm washing feet to teach you to wash one another's feet…to learn how to be one with another".' Judy Lee then added that 'in so many ways I am proud to be a part of this community, because we serve one another. We wash each other's feet because we are one with another' (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14). The congregants then, overcome by the candid invocations of the two Judys, turned to the person they had washed and said things such as 'I am one with you,' 'I will serve you,' and 'I am your servant' (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14). This spontaneous moment of collective affirmation consolidated the call to service and solidarity contained within the act of the washing of the feet.

The gesture of washing feet is not only important as an act of humility and equality; it also breaks that physical barrier, expressing human warmth, and worth, through touch. One significant aspect of socioeconomic exclusion and isolation is the lack of physical contact with other human beings. Judy B shared with me the insight that 'after thoroughly scrubbing one man's feet, [she] looked up to see him crying.' She explained that 'he seldom has any sort of physical contact with others and that he feels invisible as he walks the street, but in this one moment, he felt that he was not alone and he was worthy' (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14).

In this reworking of the washing of the feet, each parishioner is affirmed as holy and is made to feel a part of the ritual, providing a strong sense of empowerment. There was an emphasis on the need to serve the poor but the poor and homeless were also enabled to partake in this ritual in a meaningful way. The ritual was not being performed to them or for them, but rather the whole community was actively involved in performing this ritual as a collective alongside one another. In this way, the Good Shepherd Community was performing an important aspect of the 'Church with the poor' paradigm as they were operationalizing the priesthood of all believers.

After the Mass a community member confided in me that she 'expected to be healing other people by washing their feet but [she] didn't realise that [she] would also be healed by the renewing of this call to serve other people' (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14). This self- healing is contextualized, however, as part of strengthening communities and society. Moreover, the language which they use is that of anti-oppression, moving away from privilege, self-focus and pride to connect with other people. This ritual, through symbolism and action, clearly encouraged the community to be a servant to one another, to treat the poor with respect and to live out their commitment to faith through benevolence and compassion.

There is also a prophetic dimension to this reinterpretation of the washing of the feet, with the homeless members of the congregation being given special attention and care. Many health care practitioners and academics have noted the high incidence of podiatric issues amongst the homeless, with foot pain and infections four times more frequent in homeless people (see, for example Coyne, 2007, and Fisher and Collins, 2002). Whereas in the canonical Church the priest will simply pour water and oil over the feet of twelve selected parishioners, many of whom 'have arrived with freshly buffed and pedicured toes' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14) at the Good Shepherd community, the feet of the homeless are thoroughly scrubbed, they are treated with antibacterial ointments, soothing lotions and oils, and they are provided with clean socks and new shoes if required. In this sense the washing of the feet as performed by the Good Shepherd community 'is much more than symbolism, it's about addressing really functional problems,' according to community volunteer Maria (Fieldwork notes, 17/04/14). Further, this act serves as a boost for the mental health and wellbeing of the homeless, giving them 'a shot of self-esteem that volunteers and people who want to care for them can help them turn their lives around' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14). A homeless man named Marcus gave voice to this sense of hope, by revealing to me that 'having [his] feet done gives [him] a little patience to keep walking one foot after the next and to keep believing that there is good in the world' (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14). This practice shows how Good Shepherd's prophetic acts of compassion are regular and routinized aspects of their communal rituals. The ritual of foot washing, as reimagined at the Good Shepherd community, is thereby a mixture of priestly and prophetic functions as it 'brings physical relief as well as a spiritual message' and therein 'begins the process of empowering the community to serve and to be served' (Lee, 2010: 122).

<u>6.3. Racial Injustice</u>

6.3.1 African-Americans and the Catholic Church

'There is no denying that the Catholic Church is a white Church. The spirit of segregation and racial exclusion still lives in this institution- Judy B.

Through their ministry, the two Judys also became conscious of the many ways in which poverty intersects with race in American society and in particular the racism and racialization that affect African-Americans.[139] Their firsthand encounters with the poor opened them up to the fact that those who are being left on the margins of society, without housing, an education, stable employment or access to income are overwhelmingly people of colour.[140] According to U.S. Census data, the highest poverty rate by ethnicity is found among the African-American community with 26% of this racial group living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). African-American women, in particular, face high rates of poverty. The Census data reported that over a quarter of Black women are poor and Black women are at least twice as likely as white women to be living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

The two Judys acknowledged that African-Americans generally, and African-American women specifically, are overrepresented within the poor whom they serve in Fort Myers and they understood the racialization of poverty as a form of structural violence within American society. Marable has linked the neo-Marxist concept of racialization to the political economy of U.S. capitalism and has examined the impacts of these processes on the economic

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[139] Emerson (2010) has argued that racialization, rather than racism, provides a more accurate lens by which to understand ethnic relations within contemporary American society. Racialization, as a social process, reifies social categories on the basis of race and allocates access, opportunities and capital unequally along racial lines (see, for example, Dalal, 2002; Goldberg, 2005; and Murji and Solomos, 2005). From this racialization perspective, racism is not individual overt prejudice but rather it is the collective misuse of power that creates inequality in the distribution of social resources (Emerson, 2010).

[140] Analysts such as Bump (2014) and Cole (2016) have argued that institutional and structural racism directly cause and perpetuate cycles of poverty within the African-American community. According to U.S. Census data, the highest poverty rate by ethnicity is found among the African-American community with 26% of this racial group living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). African-American women, in particular, face high rates of poverty. The Census data reported that over a quarter of Black women are poor and Black women are at least twice as likely as white women to be living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

participation of African-Americans. He has concluded that African-Americans are afflicted with several oppressive structures, including 'mass unemployment, mass incarceration and mass disenfranchisement', with each factor 'creating an ever-widening circle of social disadvantage, poverty and civil death, touching the lives of millions of Black Americans' (Marable, 1984: 102).

Whilst a full account of the origins and depth of racism in contemporary American society is beyond the reach of this thesis, several key points must be made in relation to the patterns of racialization and racial oppression within contemporary American society. Firstly, within scholarly discourse there has been a tendency to confine analysis to the 'Black-white binary' (Delgado and Stefanic, 2012) or 'Black exceptionalism' (Cole, 2016), which restrict accounts of racism to the experiences of African-Americans in a hegemonic white social milieu. This chapter does not seek to contribute to this myopia, or to essentialize the complex nature of racism in American society by discounting the experiences of other ethnic minorities, but rather it merely seeks to explore the nature of racial discrimination as experienced by the predominantly African-American sample of this case study.[141]

 Race relations in the US are path-dependently linked to the history of slavery, post-emancipation socioeconomic exclusion, segregation and the Civil Rights movement. Wallis identifies racism as 'America's original sin', as the very foundations of this nation are 'tied to the near extermination of one race of people and the enslavement of another' (2016: 1). Wallis (2016) argues that at times racism manifests itself in covert ways, such as the recent

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[141] Judy Lee and Judy B also recognized that the Hispanic community faced acute forms of discrimination and marginalization. They had extended support to the Hispanic community within Fort Myers, but had found that members of this ethnic group were less receptive to becoming involved with the Good Shepherd community. There are a range of reasons behind this reticence. For example, Judy Lee explains that 'Hispanics have developed their own helping networks due to the language barrier and the high levels of anti-Hispanic sentiment strong in this area, even amongst other poor and homeless people in the park' (2010: 92).

Charlestown massacre,[142] but also lingers more pervasively in implicit and covert ways in American institutions and cultural ideologies. This systemic racialization has both manifested into and been sustained by white privilege, or the 'assumption of racial entitlement and the normality of whiteness' (Wallis, 2016: 2).[143]

Academic perspectives, such as critical race theory (see, for example, Harris, 1993 and Lipsitz, 2006) and whiteness studies, use the concept of white privilege to analyze how 'whites are able to maintain an elevated status in society that masks racial inequality' (McIntosh, 1990: 33).[144] Accordingly, whites in Eurocentric Western societies enjoy advantages that non-whites do not experience 'as an invisible package of unearned assets' (McIntosh, 1990: 31). Just as males within the Catholic system of patriarchy are favoured as a result of their gender, within a system of white privilege whites are favoured as a result of their race, resulting in the peripheralization of ethnic minorities in general and in particular the oppression of racialized women (see, Crenshaw, 1991) . In a painfully telling sign of the effects of this marginalization, Desiree confided in me that '[she] wished that [she] had been born white; because if [she] was white [she] wouldn't have had nearly as many problems or troubles' (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14).

Within their narratives, the respondents also observed that the Catholic Church has perpetuated and sustained these patterns of racialization and institutionalized racism and has

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[142] On Wednesday June 17, 2015, a young white supremacist invaded the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charlestown, South Carolina. There he murdered nine Black Christians who were gathered for their Wednesday night prayer meeting. This horrific event in American history will likely set the tone for the framework of a new national conversation on racism. Wallis argues that 'this massacre must be turned into a redemptive moment. Charleston showed how painfully true it still is- in 2015, in the United States- there is still no safe place for Black people in America, even in the sacred space of their own Churches. That must change absolutely, unequivocally and fundamentally in every aspect of American life' (2016: 1).

[143] White privilege refers to the hegemonic structures, practices and ideologies that reproduce whites' privileged status (Sue, 2003). As early as 1935, W.E.B. Du Bois identified white supremacy as a global phenomenon affecting social conditions and race relations around the world. Kendall describes white privilege as 'an institutional, rather than personal, set of beliefs' that are bestowed upon 'people whose race resembles that of those in power' (2006: 63).

[144] Whilst white privilege has received some critical opposition within academia, see for example, Blum (2008) and Hartigan (2005), it has been brought into the mainstream consciousness through the contemporary Black Lives Matter campaign and was utilized by the respondents as a conceptual tool to explain their social reality.

further entrenched their experiences of racial discrimination.[145] The respondents were forthright in their belief that Black lives are diminished by the Church's action and inaction as they identified both overt and covert examples of racial discrimination within the Catholic Church.[146] Historians such as Cyprian Davis (1991, 1998) provide compelling evidence that 'the Catholic Church has not always been a reconciling Church when it comes to Black-white relationships in the United States' (1998: 20). Similarly, the respondents provided several examples of the Church's complicit racism and racialization throughout history, including the Church's exploitation of indentured slaves and its reluctance to support the abolition movement because many of the prominent abolitionists were also anti-Catholic (Davis, 1991; Nilson, 2010). [147]

Judy Lee and Judy B were united in their view that 'by not confronting its own role in the history of colonialism, slavery and the abuse of civil liberties, the institutional Church and its members perpetuate the structures of racism' (Beaumont, Interview, 17/04/14).[148] Further, the members of the Good Shepherd community discussed the 'excuses given for racist behaviour in the Church, such as "progress takes time," "we have to be prudent," and "we can't afford to alienate white Catholics or we'll never be able to change their attitudes" ' (Raboteau, 1986: 124). For many, the institutional Church's position represented complicit

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[145] Amidst assertions that the Catholic Church was a 'white, racist institution' and assumptions about the incompatibility of black spirituality to canonical Catholicism, questions have been repeatedly raised as to 'whether Blacks should be allowed to belong to or fully participate in the Catholic Church' (Sharps, 1997: 29).
[146] The respondents unequivocally defined the Church as a racist institution and justified this premise with the historical observation that all too often individual Catholics and the institutional Catholic Church have tolerated and actively promoted the oppression of Black people (Nilson, 2010). For example, various historians have argued that the Catholic Church was not a significant ally or collaborator for racial justice before or during the Civil Rights movement (see, for example, Nilson, 2010; and Wenzel, 2001).
[147] Davis (1991) explains that before the Civil War lay Catholics and ordained Catholics, particularly priests and bishops from the Jesuit Order, owned slaves and were encouraged to do so. There were even senior members of the Church hierarchy, such as Bishop John England of Charleston and his successor Bishop Patrick Lynch, who used their platform of authority to defend slavery, thereby masking and excusing the horrors of this violation of personal autonomy (Davis, 1991; Nilson, 2010).
[148] In conjunction, Nilson asserts that 'wherever there is division, enmity, or discrimination, reconciliation must be the mission of the Church,' and 'where the Church is not about the task of reconciliation, it has lost its way, working at cross purposes to its own identity and misunderstanding of its fundamental task' (2010: 84).

assent of racist attitudes and practices and served to encourage their members and their Churches to uphold this exclusionary ideology.

One of the congregants, Jewel, provided a painful narrative of the effects of such racialized Church policies through her encounter with segregation in the pews of her local Catholic Church.[149] Jewel explained that 'every Black American remembers the sting of their first experience of racism and [hers] occurred within a segregated Church' (Fieldwork notes, 17/04/14). Jewel was raised in a devout Catholic family and found herself as an outsider both within the predominantly Protestant Black community and within the Eurocentric Catholic Church. Set apart from other Catholics by race and from other African-Americans by religion, Black Catholics such as Jewel have experienced to a heightened degree the 'double-consciousness,' that W.E.B. Du Bois ([1903] 1994) claimed characterizes the African-American experience more generally (see also, Raboteau, 1986, 1995).

These subjective feelings of marginalization were compounded by the Catholic Church's segregationist arrangement of space, in which the ideology of white privilege was realized in a tangible way. Jewel explained that as she entered the church she was met with the following scene:

> Inside we were shushed and crowded by the ushers into a half pew in the very back of the church with the only other Black worshipers. The pew was so far back that we couldn't see nothing and hearing the priest was real tricky too. The pew was broken and had nails sticking out of it that kept on jabbing my backside. The area we were given was too small to seat all of us, so we had to take turns kneeling and sitting. But, directly in front of us were two white men comfortably reclining in a cushioned pew all to themselves (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14).

The symbolism of this partitioning of the Black and white members of the congregation was not lost on young Jewel, who remarked that 'the message was obvious: they belonged there and we didn't, this was their Church, not ours' (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14). Moreover,

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[149] In relation to the practice of segregation within churches, Martin Luther King Jnr. famously said that 'I am ashamed and appalled that eleven o'clock on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in Christian America' (cited in Wallis, 2016: 97).

because Jewel and her fellow African-American congregants were seated at the back of the Church they were pushed to the back of the queue for receiving communion. She recalled with frustration and sadness that the priest repeatedly passed her and her family by until he had made sure that the white congregants had received the Eucharist. In the end, there were not enough communion wafers for the whole congregation and Jewel and her family missed out. This episode was extremely scarring for Jewel, and she felt betrayed by an institution that she had thought preached love, unity and harmony.

Whilst the Catholic Church no longer officially practises segregation within its parishes, the racialized ideologies that underpinned this policy still resonate in many aspects of contemporary Catholicism. Several scholars have attributed this peripheralization of African-Americans within the Catholic imaginary to the overwhelming whiteness of the Church in America and the subsequent institutionalization of white privilege. The respondents gave voice to the ways in which white supremacy has permeated the Church and constructed the core of Catholic leadership and ideology as premised on the belief that 'Catholic = white,' because 'many Church leaders identify themselves unconsciously as white and see people of colour as the "other" ' (Massingale, 2010: 81). This white privilege in turn has created whiteness as the normative worldview of the Church and it has precluded unique aspects of Black culture and heritage.

This 'whitewashing effect' (Brown et al., 2003) has had distinct implications on the respondents' sense of belonging in the Church, marking them as outsiders worshipping in a foreign and exclusionary terrain. Whilst there are some exceptions to this bleak record of Church leadership, Cone argues that within the Church 'there is a widespread ignorance of and resistance to the truth that racism is a systemic phenomenon' (2012: 145). With certain advancements in the enfranchisement of African-Americans more broadly in society, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the inauguration of President

Barack Obama and various other developments in civil liberties, many Catholics believe that

the struggle is over and that American society has moved to a post-racist state of social

cohesion. Within this context, many white Catholics continue to see racism as a problem of

personal attitudes that require individual repentance and conversion rather than understanding

the structural and endemic nature of racialization processes (see, for example, Steinhorn and

Diggs-Brown, 2000). As a result, the Church and its white members are still far from

understanding the injurious ways in which racialized notions and racist practices persist

within their institution.

6.3.2 Towards an Empowered Black Church

'Ours is a Church for everyone: race is not a source of division, it is a source of enrichment' Judy B.

The two Judys have sought to move their vision of Church closer to notions of unity

embedded within Early Church principles,[150] Vatican II reforms and the paradigm of 'the

Beloved Community' and they have created the Good Shepherd community as a multiracial

Church that is affirming of Black culture and Black heritage. [151] The 'Beloved Community'

was Martin Luther King Jnr's image for 'both the fulfilment of the American dream and the

actualization of the kingdom of God, a society where all live lives that befit their dignity as

children of God; a society where everyone is accepted and where everyone belongs' (Mash,

2005: 84).[152] The two Judys both made specific reference to King's Beloved Community and

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[150] Judy Lee and Judy B took inspiration from the Early Church that was comprised of a multicultural display of harmony and that emphasized racial and cultural inclusion as an original message of the first disciples of Jesus (Wallis, 2016).

[151] Recent studies all point towards racial conformity and isolation in the contemporary Church with only 7.4% of Christian congregations in the United States recorded as multiracial (Emerson, 2013). By contrast, the Good Shepherd community is committed to a vision of racial unity and it has sought to 'practice a model of Church that reflects the grand diversity of the people of God' (Beaumont, Interview, 17/04/14).

[152] King's utopian paradigm of the 'Beloved Community,' although articulated through dissimilar political aims, shares the overarching aspirations and tenets of the Catholic Church. The 'Beloved Community' bears striking resemblance to the opening of the Vatican II document Lumen Gentium, which proclaims that 'By her

positioned their ecclesial aims within the context of this political paradigm.[153] In actualizing the Beloved Community, the two Judys pursued a redefinition of Catholicism that explored alternative cultural expressions of faith and that claimed continuity with Black Church traditions. Their ministry is committed to recognizing and breaking down the structures of racialization and racism that have proliferated within the Catholic Church.

In the design of this vision of cultural hybridity Good Shepherd has employed and drawn upon aspects of Afrocentrism, which has been defined as 'a methodology for scholarship and political practice that puts people of African descent at the centre, rather than at the margins' (Ransby and Matthews, 1993: 58).In each aspect of their ministry, the two Judys emphasize the importance of addressing the cultural needs and aspirations of African-American people and empowering Black Catholics to have total control over their faith without being dominated by the Eurocentric white male hierarchy of the institutional Church (Sharps, 1997).

Emerson (2013) posits five key ingredients for creating successful multiracial congregations. These elements are: intentionality, diversity, a spirit of inclusion, empowered leadership, and adaptability. Through these key aspects the Church is able to change from a policy of assimilation or monoculture to a policy of pluralism. The two Judys have actively incorporated each of these aspects and through careful deliberation and consultation with their Black congregation they have been able to create successfully a multiracial congregation that is respectful of racial and cultural specificities and that seeks to embrace these differences in both ideological and performative ways.

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relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humanity. That is, the Church is a sign and instrument of such union and unity' (Vorgrimler, 1967: 15).
[153] Their supreme vision of inclusivity has strong correlations with King's model of the Beloved Community, which provided a powerful vision of 'a new coming together, a new community that welcomes all peoples in all their diverse ethnicities and nationalities, and where every group, clan, and tribe is included and invited in' (Wallis, 2016: 97).

It is necessary, however, to acknowledge the whiteness of the two Judys as a potential source of conflict and to question whether their racial privilege translates into an outsider status within the Black community. According to Perkins, those persons who are not indigenous members of a community and who desire to create sustainable faith-based revitalization must make a long-term commitment to meeting the needs of their community through the 'three Rs: relocation—physically moving into the target neighborhood; reconciliation—restoring the relationship between people and God, and between people and each other; and redistribution—voluntarily giving of one's self to empower the disadvantaged to do for themselves' (Perkins, 1996: 10). Perkins' three Rs are inherent in the strategy of the two Judys and in their work at the Good Shepherd community. They live within and amongst the community whom they serve and their whiteness is an inessential and irrelevant aspect of their ministry that does not set them apart from their community.

The two Judys are also not foreign to African-American religious communities and they draw upon their years of experiences in ethnically diverse parishes to guide their priestly and prophetic functions. In her book, Judy Lee explains that 'only "wise" outsiders may interact positively with the stigmatized and they may be accorded a measure of acceptance, a measure of "courtesy membership" in the clan' (2010: 35). Judy Lee believes this statement to be true within the Good Shepherd community, and as a result she feels that she 'was never an outsider, even though [she] was a white, middle-upper class woman; [she] was just one of the family, helping out a friend' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14).

Nevertheless, to prevent essentialism or reductionism in this celebration of African-American culture and spirituality, the two Judys have two community Elders who are routinely consulted on issues of cultural authenticity. In a manner similar to traditional Black Churches, they also utilize the knowledge and experiences of the Elders to promote awareness amongst the community of their common social history and 'collective moral

identity' (Birch and Rasmussen, 1989: 122). Judy Lee explained that the inclusion of Elders within the Good Shepherd community was '[her] way of empowering this growing Church' and ensuring that 'the people are able to connect to a genuine articulation of their Black culture and worship' (2010: 36).

In this way, the two Judys recognize and pay homage to the centrality of the Church for African-Americans and its role in the survival of Black communities and Black culture (Loue, 2014). A wealth of scholarly material has acknowledged the prominent role of Black Churches in the community life of African-Americans (see for example, Frazier, 1963; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; and Wilmore, 1984).[154] This literature has revealed that due to a long history of racial oppression and the absence of strong secular organizations, African-Americans have historically looked to their Churches as their chief source of culture, music, values, community cohesion and political activism (Patillo-McCoy, 1998; Raboteau, 2001). As a result, Lincoln and Mamiya describe the Church as 'the cultural womb of the Black community' (1990: 8) and Nelson identifies the Church as 'an essential thread in the shared fabric of African-American culture' (1998: 251).

The pastoral team of the Good Shepherd community looks to the insights of African-American liberation theology to support the empowerment of Black Catholics. The two Judys thereby utilize religion as a conduit to 'recast African-Americans' image from that of deficiency and deviance to one of power and strength' (Loue, 2014: 23).Given the pervasive ethnocentrism and Eurocentrism of the canonical Catholic Church, it is unsurprising that theology emerging from a Western, white context is considered normative and that theology that deviates from this standpoint is suppressed or ignored (see, for example, Rah, 2010). However, commentators such as Wallis (2016) have argued that 'if white Christians hope to

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[154] See also, Billingsley, 1992; Ellison and Gay, 1990; Ellison and Sherkat, 1990; Freedman, 1993; Nelsen and Nelsen, 1975; Pinder, 2016; and Stump, 1987.

build multiracial and multicultural communities of faith, they must be prepared to listen to and include the worldviews and theologies of non-whites and non-Westerners' (2016: 68).

African-American liberation theology draws heavily on Latin American liberation theology to realize its spiritual and political project of emancipation.[155] The Black experience of oppression by whites and the ensuing struggle for self-determination and autonomy formed the ideological foundation for Black liberation theology as it focused on human transformation as the key to liberation. In 1969, the National Committee of Black Churchmen eloquently summarized the core tenets of this body of theology:

> Black theology is a theology of liberation… Black theology is a theology of 'blackness'. It is the affirmation of black humanity that emancipates black people from white racism, this providing authentic freedom for both white and black people. It affirms the humanity of white people in that it says no to the encroachment of white oppression (National Committee of Black Churchmen 1969, in Wilmore and Cone 1979:101).

From this understanding of Black theology, emancipation is not just to be attained through the liberatory promises of the gospel but also through a re-reading of scripture that acknowledges the common humanity of all of the Church's people and that affirms the cultural specificity of African-Americans. Consistent with characteristics theorized by Black liberation theologians, the two Judys' ministry is grounded in a connection with African-American community history, including the central elements of African religions, and aspirations for socio-political freedom and cultural liberation. In accordance with their commitment to feminist the*logy they also place particular emphasis on valuing Black women's lives and on recognizing women's contributions to survival and improvements

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[155] Gustavo Gutiérrez identified three dimensions of liberation: '(1) liberation from all forms of social, political, and economic oppression; (2) rejection by the poor of their suffering as a mandate of God, the development of an understanding of their poverty as rooted in social, historical, and human causes, and acceptance of their responsibility to act as agents of change; and (3) liberation from sin and death, as a gift from Jesus Christ' (Goizueta, 2005: 705). Black liberation theology and its overarching theme of freedom mirror these three dimensions and draw their roots from a survival tradition amongst slaves and the long history of racial oppression endured by African-Americans (Loue, 2014).

within the African-American community (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; Eugene, 1995; Cannon, 1995).

Apart from this the*logical inclusivity, the two Judys also make a conscious effort to engage a visual culture for the spiritual benefit and racial uplift of their congregants.[156] In the past, the physical presence of such segregation signs as 'Whites Only' and 'No Negroes,' as displayed in Catholic Churches, gave race 'a graphic body' and semiotically demarcated Catholic Churches as a site of racial exclusion and separation (Abel, 2010a). By contrast, scholars such as Hutchinson (1997); Loue (2014); and Pinder (2016) have observed the intricate ways in which themes of liberation, revelation and power are reflected in African-American art and imagery, and the two Judys have created a spiritual space that honours these ideals.

This Afrocentric iconography utilizes representational imagery to establish the racial inclusivity of this community. Radiating from the central image that shows a Black Christ with outstretched hands are several other paintings, pieces of decorative art and sculptures in which Jesus is also depicted as African-American. The construct of a Black God or Black Jesus has been a popular idea within African-American liberation theology and it is ideologically rooted in the survival tradition (Washington, 1984). It has been noted that 'the color of God could only assume importance in a society in which color played a major part in the determination of human capacity, human privilege and human value' (Lincoln, 1974: 148). Within this social context, many commentators have argued that African-Americans

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[156] Swidler argues that culture is composed of the 'symbolic vehicles of meaning, including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms and ceremonies, as well as informal cultural practices such as language, gossip, stories and rituals of daily life' (Swidler 1986: 273). These components constitute the 'tool kit,' or cultural repertoire, of individuals and groups and they are organized to create particular 'strategies of action' and identification (Swidler, 1986).

cannot and should not be forced to identify with whitewashed and exclusionary imagery of the divine (see for example, Lincoln, 1974; and Loue, 2014).[157]

The portrayal of Jesus as African-American within the artwork and visual imagery of the Good Shepherd House Church has both political and theological implications for this community. This artistic representation involves an ideological recalibration in which African-American experience is taken from the margins and placed at the centre of this community's imaginary and praxis. By placing a Black racial identity at the centre of its sacred space, the congregation also affirms its own worth and value as African-American. As a reflection of African-American the*logy, the image of a Black Christ offers hope and emancipation for the members of the community who have faced discrimination within the highly racialized American society.

This visual representation of the divine is supported by the inclusion of artwork and imagery that depicts historical African-American figures and cultural symbols. Inside the House Church the Pan-African colours of red, black, and green are prominent, and the incorporation of African-inspired textiles and patterns 'creates an environment that recognizes and promotes Black culture' (Pinder, 2016: 45). Most saliently, there is a large painting of Martin Luther King Jnr. on one of the main walls of the House Church. The inclusion of a painting of this seminal figure in the African-American Civil Rights Movement reflects the social justice principles of the community. King stands as a symbol and as an exemplar of the inclusion and egalitarian principles upon which this community is based and he holds an almost deific status within it. Whilst praying, the community would regularly invoke the

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[157] For as Bishop Henry McNeil Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church expounds: 'We have as much right biblically and otherwise to believe that God is a Negro, as you buckra or white people have to believe that God is a fine looking, symmetrical and ornamented white man…. Every race of people since time began who have attempted to describe their God by words, or by paintings, or by carvings, or by any other form or figure, have conveyed the idea that the God who made them and shaped their destinies was symbolized in themselves' (quoted in Wilmore, 1983: 125).

spirit of Martin Luther King and ask for his intercessions, rather than appealing to the litany of Catholic saints who are usually called upon in canonical Masses.

This revisionism in light of a more ethnically diverse perspective serves to make the liturgy more relevant for the predominantly Black congregation and provides a conduit to connect their liberating view of faith to the promise of emancipation contained within Martin Luther King's vision for American society. The reclamation and assertion of a Black presence is crucial as it reconciles the gap between 'the written and somatic racial signs' (Abel, 2010b: 108) of the ministry performed at the Good Shepherd community.

This homage to Black history also associates the two Judys with a civil rights legacy and legitimizes them as Black activists within the Good Shepherd congregation and in the wider Fort Myers community. The two Judys' visual empathy 'blackens their whiteness' (Pinder, 2016: 108) making them what Elder Gary calls 'an honorary Black sister' (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14). The inclusion of such Afrocentric and historically informed imagery and iconography within the Good Shepherd House Church in turn forges strong connections between faith and cultural identity, and it allows the African-American members of the community to take ownership of their Catholicism.

6.3.3 Affirmation of African-American Culture Through Ritual

In a further effort to affirm the cultural identity of their congregation the two Judys and the Good Shepherd community have made a conscious attempt to integrate aspects of Black folk religious practice into their liturgies and ritual practices.[158] Although Christianity remains the normative framework for this Church, the liturgy recognizes and practices the variety of

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[158] Within the context of organized religion, this movement has been propelled by the belief that 'African-Americans should have a specific rite that reflected their culture and history' (Sharps, 1997: 31). Cogdell DjeDje (1986) argues that other ethnic groups, such as Latin Americans, have been adapting their cultural traditions into the liturgy for some time, but African-Americans have been denied or have not taken advantage of this opportunity in the Catholic Church.

African-American religious experience. Their liturgy retains the traditional liturgical structure of a Catholic Mass but specific features have been incorporated in order to enhance the experience for the African-American congregants. In this way the two Judys, in consultation with their community, have developed new attitudes, values, cultural identities and performative ways in which Black Catholics can express themselves.

For example, the two Judys adjusted the form and content of their sermons to incorporate a distinct 'Black preaching style and Black vernacular speech' (Abel, 2010b: 22). They adopted many stylistic elements common to Black models of preaching, including varying their intonation, volume and pitch in order to create emphasis and convey the gospel message with the fervour that their congregation is accustomed to in Black Churches (see, for example, Bailey and Wiersbe; Dillard, 1970; and Spears, 1999). Most notably, the two Judys have adopted the question-answer model of preaching, which is prominent within Black Protestant Churches.

In this model, the preacher provides a brief reflection of the gospel and then poses questions to which the congregation responds. This exchange epitomized the behavioural and semantic agency that characterizes the communicative conduct of sermons within African-American Churches (see, for example, Mitchell, 1990). The community thrived on this pattern of preaching, as in their minds it presented a culturally acceptable way of participating in a Mass and of showing devotion.

African-American culture was also affirmed and celebrated within the Good Shepherd liturgies through the community's use of gospel singing and gospel-style worship. Because of its roots and its development in Black culture, the gospel-music tradition is recognized as a potent symbol of Black identity and as a 'significant manifestation of black creativity and

spiritual depth' (Cogdell DjeDje, 1986: 223).[159] However, as a corollary of the policy of segregation within American Churches, prior to 1978 no gospel music or any songs from the Black musical experience were performed in mainline Christian services, and this tradition has continued to this day within Catholic Masses (Cogdell Djedje, 1986). [160] The Good Shepherd's adoption of gospel forms within American Roman Catholicism, which is traditionally a bastion of liturgical conservatism, has been precipitated by a variety of factors, most of which are extra-musical (Blacking, 1977): namely, the community's use of gospel style singing, music and worship seeks to embody and affirm Black cultural identity.[161]

Elements of gospel music and gospel-style worship suffuse the Good Shepherd Mass and uniquely integrate aspects of African-American culture with Catholic rites and practices. For example, after the washing of the feet the congregation instinctively erupted into a soulful rendition of 'peace is flowing like a river, flowing out through you and me, peace is flowing like a river, peace will set the captives free' (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14). These songs are consonant with the core elements of African-American theology and they also contain allusions to the quest for emancipation and freedom, which have been powerful motifs within African-American consciousness. Moments of communal worship, such as this episode, were very moving and highly spiritual and the African gospel style of these hymns obviously had significant resonance for the predominantly African-American community.

Consistent with Black gospel patterns of worship, these songs were performed in a free, highly expressive manner, with handclapping, rhythmical swaying, vocal interjections and

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[159] Gospel music can be traced to the early 17th century, with roots in the Black oral tradition, as well as the vestiges of Black slavery and the quest for emancipation (Banfield, 2010 and Levine, 2007). The gospel tradition has a strong connection with the Pentecostal Church in America and seeks to draw upon 'Black values, experiences, and beliefs for its communication of religion' (Burnim, 1991: 68).

[160] See also, Blacking, 1977; Brown, 1977; Norvel, 1971, 1977; and Rivers 1971, 1978, 1979.

[161] Cogdell DjeDje insists on the political significance of this adoption of Black gospel music, arguing that 'because of the historical development of gospel in Pentecostal Churches and its association with Black folk traditions, when religious groups such as Black Catholics decide to use the style, they are also making a social statement' (1986: 223).

other physical gestures. The hymns and chants were all performed *A capella*, with layered

harmonies that created a highly poignant ambience within the small House Church. At times

the congregants would also ring bells or shake tambourines, adding momentum and intensity

to the rhythm of the songs. Many of the other characteristics that make Black gospel music

and worship distinctive, such as the 'treatment of timbre, range, text interpolation and

improvisation' (Boyer, 1979: 23) were also present within the Good Shepherd liturgies, and

these elements of the gospel style differed drastically from the western European aesthetic

found in mainstream Catholic Churches (Jackson, 2004).

The gospel hymns inspired a joyful and infectious display of exuberant devotion in which the

community was galvanized around the powerful medium of song.[162] Elder Gary shared with

me that when he sings a gospel hymn, he 'feels this overwhelming connection to [his] roots:

to [his] great great grandfather locked up in chains working the fields who would sing these

songs and to [his] mama and papa who would sing these songs,' because 'this is [his] culture

and [his] history and when [he] sings it with the other people in this Church, they become

[his] family too, [they] are all connected' (Fieldwork Notes, 17/04/14).

Whilst Judy Lee and Judy B have strongly encouraged the integration of such aspects of

Black culture into their liturgies, within the context of a liturgy most of the gospel inclusions

have been spontaneously performed and celebrated by the Black members of the community.

Within this space of inclusivity and liturgical agency, the community members were given

the opportunity for personal expression and for the performance of aspects of their cultural

identity.[163] The adoption of the gospel style of music and devotion is just one small factor in

the whole process of differentiation and reform being enacted at the Good Shepherd

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[162] As such, Cogdell DjeDje argues that 'the aesthetic value of the service is based on the amount and level of interaction and communication that result,' and 'when everyone fully responds and participates in the service, it is regarded as a meaningful experience to all, and a sense of community is felt' (1986: 232).

[163] Judy Lee and Judy B explained that 'this is their Church, and this is their way of expressing their connection to the Church and to each other, we can all benefit from such a beautiful way to celebrate the faith' (Beaumont, Interview, 17/04/14).

community but it is a meaningful way in which patterns of racialization, built on exclusion

and silencing are being overturned and in which Black culture is being proudly affirmed.

6.4. Privileging One Form of Oppression Over Another?
However, an apparent incongruity arises when the intersectional and liberationist aims of this

inclusive community are juxtaposed against its suppression of homosexuality. It is clear from

the above discussion that the Good Shepherd applies a model of ministry that addresses the

intersection of a variety of forms of oppression on the basis of gender, socioeconomic status

and race. That community strives to be inclusive and describes itself as 'a rainbow

community of all races, ages, cultures, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status' on its

official website (Good Shepherd Community, 2015). It is also necessary to emphasize that

the female ordination movement and the RCWP organization each has a comprehensively

inclusive stance towards LGBTIQ individuals and issues, as shall be further explored in the

following chapter.

But, in practice, the two Judys have adopted a more unbalanced approach to their acceptance

of homosexuality. In a seemingly paradoxical way, Judy Lee and Judy B acknowledged to me

in their interview that they are a lesbian couple, yet they are unwilling to divulge their

relationship to their community and they do not see the affirmation of homosexuality as a

priority for the Good Shepherd community. Judy Lee explained that she and Judy B are 'not

public about [their] sexuality, because in this community the people would not tolerate a gay

priest and they'd have to grow in love before they could accept it' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14).

In an indication of the way in which her own personal identity is sacrificed to meet the needs

of her community, Judy Lee concluded that 'being out as an openly gay woman and for [her]

to be accepted as fully who [she is] is of a less good than for [her] to serve these people; [she]

couldn't do both' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14). The two Judys were not reproachful of other women priests who were open about their sexuality, such as Victoria Rue, but reasoned that it is easier for these women who minister to more liberal-minded congregations in more progressive regions of the country 'to be true to whoever [they] are and to be open about [their] sexuality, without fear of upsetting or breaking the norms of their community' (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14).

The primary factor in their decision to conceal their sexuality is the conservatism of African-American Churches towards LGBTIQ issues and inclusivity.[164] Traditionally, Black Churches and Black Churchgoers have condemned homosexuality as a sin and a social transgression, justifying their position with biblical literalism and a concern with protecting the African-American family (Harris, 2008; Powell, 1938).[165] [166] Patricia Hill Collins (2004) examines the broader issue of sexuality within African-American culture and argues that discomfort among Black Church leaders on this issue largely stems from their uneasiness with human sexuality in general.[167] As a result, many pastors and religious leaders of predominantly African-American congregations have been noted to refuse to address the issue of homosexuality for fear that members of their parish may be offended and may leave

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[164] Today all seven of the historically African-American Protestant denominations, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated (NBC), the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC) and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), still view homosexuality as 'an abomination' and do not perceive it to be an acceptable 'lifestyle' (Griffin, 2006: 263). See also, Harris, 2008; Winston James and Moore, 2006.

[165] According to Powell (1938) within the African-American community homosexuality was an alarming social trend that threatened the institution of the family, with men leaving their wives and children for other men and women choosing to engage in relationships with other women and forego marriage and childrearing. Leaders of the Black Church were especially wary of homosexuality as a destabilizing force given the strong network of kinship relations and the centrality of the family within African-American culture.

[166] Amidst the AIDs crisis of the 1980s and the disproportionately high rate of infection amongst the African-American population, the Black Church's disavowal of homosexuality was intensified and became tied to moralistic notions of the aberrance of 'gay lifestyles' (Constantine- Simms, 2001). Harris (2008) explains that in the early and mid-1980s, people who were infected with the AIDS virus were met with scorn and disapproval at the 'lifestyle' which religious leaders believed led to individuals becoming infected.

[167] Patricia Hill Collins draws upon prevailing Black gender ideology, sexual stereotypes about Black women and men and Black heterosexist norms to argue that homophobia within African-American communities and Churches is a not a fear of homosexuality *per se*, but is a repudiation of all 'deviant' forms of sexuality and an attempt by Church leaders to regain control over the Black body by emphasizing notions of decency and 'respectability' (see also Douglas, 1999; Dyson, 2001; and West, 1997).

the Church (see, for example, Comstock, 2001).[168] Judy Lee and Judy B have recognized this tendency within the Black Church and have resolved to obscure their sexuality from the view of their predominantly African-American community in order to create a more accommodating space for their worship.

Whilst this community is able to accept race, gender and poverty as aspects of oppression that can be alleviated through affirmation and empowerment, homosexuality remains a form of difference that they are still unable to accept. The degree to which the two Judys are forced to conceal their sexuality raises questions of the degree to which the Church's heteronormative attitudes have been unwittingly internalized and reproduced within this otherwise inclusive community. One must also ask whether the two Judys are unwittingly perpetuating the same silencing and suppression of homosexuality and LGBTIQ identities within the Good Shepherd community as is commonplace within the institutional Catholic Church.

Although their motives are altruistic and self-sacrifising, their unwillingness to actively stamp out actively the subordination of homosexuals through their leadership sets a precedent for their community and for their community's stance towards LGBTIQ inclusivity. More broadly, as will be discussed in the Conclusion, this paradox raises questions as to the ultimate success of the intersectional approach adopted by the female ordination movement in its contestation of kyriarchy within the Catholic Church.

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[168] For example, an article in *The New York Times* reported that for many pastors of Black congregations accepting lesbians and gays within their congregations led to a direct drop in the attendance of heterosexual congregants (Banerjee, 2007). According to this article, at one Black Church in Atlanta the membership halved from 6, 000 to 3,000 people after the pastor voiced his support of homosexuals.

Chapter 7: The Liberation of Human Sexuality— Mary Magdalene Apostolic Catholic Community

The pastoral team of MMACC identifies its mission as a contestation of heterosexism within the Church and within wider society. Heterosexism is defined by Herek as 'an ideological system that denies, denigrates and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual form of behaviour, identity, relationship, or community' by 'rendering homosexuality invisible and, when this fails, by trivializing, repressing, or stigmatizing it' (1990: 317). Within academia and within wider patterns of social discourse, religion is commonly considered the most heterosexist of institutions and consequently there is an assumption that all faith communities are homophobic and are antithetical to the needs of the LGBTIQ community (see for example, Collins, 2000; Gross, 2008; and Kantor, 2009). However, scholars such as Jordan have also noted that 'the last forty years have seen both the flowering of LGBT affirming Catholic theologies and the intensification of official repression' (2014: 41). LGBTIQ Catholics are subsequently caught in a precarious state of disempowered empowerment, as the Church they turn to for spiritual guidance is also the Church that enforces systemic forms of homophobia and heterosexism.

Conventional perspectives built upon an avoidance of religion in LGBTIQ research require a more nuanced understanding that acknowledges the 'gap between institutional stance and grassroots experience' (Alison, 2007: 64) and the existence of accepting faith communities that offer their LGBTIQ members a space to perform and strengthen their sexual and spiritual identities.[169] The intersection of LGBTIQ identities and religious commitment has constituted a lively wellspring of emerging religious movements and reformist religious

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[169] For further information on the growing tolerance in Christian Churches, see Geest, 2007; Thomson, 2006; and White, 2015.

communities (see, for example, Yip, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2005 and 2007b) [170] and

MMACC positions its aims and strategies within the context of this spiritual creativity.

Indeed, the contributions of scholars such as Keenan (2016) and Yip (2008) illustrate the

potential of spirituality to enrich the sexual identities of LGBTIQ individuals and to empower

them to seek social justice within and outside faith communities. This insight provides the

theoretical basis for an understanding of the work of the MMACC community. The pastoral

team of MMACC envisions this Church as a place where people of all gendered and sexual

orientations are able to worship together. It does not intend MMACC to be a 'gay Church'

per se, but rather it has emphasized the affirmation of LGBTIQ identities as an imperative of

its ministry and it has acknowledged the inherent connection between spirituality and

sexuality.

7.1 History of MMACC
Anxiously waiting outside my hostel in San Diego's bustling Gaslamp district I saw a vibrant

pink vintage convertible Mustang draw closer to me with the sounds of Blondie's iconic

anthem 'Call Me' blaring from its pulsating speakers. The driver, Pastor Nancy Corran,

pulled up to the kerb and greeted me with a beaming smile and an embracing hug. This

arrival was not the approach that I expected to receive from the priest of a Catholic Church,

but Nancy Corran is no ordinary priest and her parish of MMACC is no ordinary Church.

MMACC, led by the pastoral team of Jane Via, Rod Stephens and Nancy Corran, was

founded in 2005 and it is the longest-running and largest community of this study. MMACC

was founded by woman priest Jane Via and laicized priest Rod Stephens as the result of the

perceived need for a more inclusive and progressive approach to Catholic worship in the

conservative city of San Diego. Many of the respondents explained that due to its history as a

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[170] See also Cherry and Sherwood, 1995; Falcone, 2014; Rodriguez and Oullette, 1999, 2000; Thumma, 1991; Whisman, 1996; and White, 2008.

military and naval base and the embeddedness of the Catholic archdiocese in this region, San Diego held quite traditionalist social views, especially with regard to sexuality.

Jane struggled with the illiberalism and dogmatism of the Church and moved to several different parishes hoping to find a more open-minded approach to ministry but was repeatedly met with 'priests who practised hate and exclusion, rather than love and acceptance and who drew joy from punishing people on the basis of their sexuality' (Via, Interview, 4th April, 2014). The ultimate tipping point for Jane, who had served as a public prosecutor in child sexual abuse cases for seven years, came during a sermon where the priest condemned homosexuals and said that being in a same-sex relationship was equivalent to paedophilia, molestation and other acts of child sex abuse. Jane was outraged by these comments explaining that 'to assume a position of authority, to stand on the altar, your words become anointed and to preach such vitriolic words of hate in that holy place is just outrageous' (Via, Interview, 04/04/14). The extent of her anger and her disillusionment was so great that Jane resolved never to attend a canonical Catholic Mass again and instead she pursued alternative forms of religious communities, such as the Immaculate Heart of Mary Community (IHM).[171]

During this time of exile, Jane read a newspaper article about the excommunication of the Danube Seven and the legacy of the biblical figure of Mary Magdalene, and her mind was opened up to the prospect of female ministry as a way of reinvigorating the Catholic Church. Through one of her colleagues at U.S.D., who was fortuitously translating one of the Danube Seven's manuscripts at this time, Jane was able to connect with these women and began the road to ordination. Although she was raised in the Presbyterian tradition, from a young age Jane felt an innate connection to the mystery of the Catholic faith and she felt that her destiny

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[171] IHM is a non-canonical Catholic group, formed by insights from eco-feminist and justice spiritualties, whose mission is to advocate for the marginalized and to work for social and economic justice, peace and integrity (IHM, 2016).

lay in this religious tradition. Jane held an intense love for Catholic liturgy, trained extensively in theological and religious studies, and strongly felt that her purpose in life was to reform the Church from within.

After extensive preparation Jane was ordained as a deacon on the Danube River in 2004 in complete secrecy under the pseudonym of Gillian Farley so as to prevent any repercussions for her son who was in his final year at a prominent Catholic school. After her ordination to the diaconate Jane continued her involvement in the IHM community and developed a close connection with former priest Rod Stephens who had been recently laicized because of his homosexuality. The two felt an immediate connection and quickly discovered that they shared similar the*logies and an aspiration for Church reform built on the paradigm of the discipleship of equals. Rod enthusiastically encouraged Jane to claim that vision and to use her ordination as the foundation for social action and collective mobilization in the Church. Jane was already proficient in Catholic the*logy but Rod, who had served as a Diocesan priest for over thirty years, committed himself to educating Jane in liturgy and helping her to build the MMACC parish community.

Together they arranged to rent a Methodist church in the Mission Hills area, circulated information about their intentions through their various social networks and held their first Mass on November 27, 2005 together with over one hundred enthusiastic people. A community quickly developed and in 2006 Jane was ordained as a woman priest in front of over two hundred and fifty supporters of female ordination. Jane named the community MMACC as homage to Mary Magdalene and other biblical women like her who shone as an example for the greater involvement of women in the Church. In an interesting turn of events Rod, who had been laicized by the Roman Catholic Church, was then ordained as a woman priest by RCWP in honour of his support of both MMACC and the cause of female ordination more broadly.

Once the community had established itself Rod limited his involvement in MMACC, preaching only once a fortnight, and Jane found herself overwhelmed with the responsibilities of balancing full-time employment with the full-time management of the parish whilst also battling cancer. Jane enlisted the help of Nancy Corran, who had been a regular attendee of the MMACC Masses, to assist with homilies. Nancy had a rigorous background in theological and divinity studies, having studied at Oxford and at the Graduate Theological Union ecumenical seminary, and she brought a fresh and informed perspective to preaching. Nancy thrived within MMACC and as a result of her service she was called forth by her community to be ordained as their priest in July, 2010. As was discussed in Chapter Four, Nancy's ordination represented a significant break with the canonical model of ordination and demonstrates MMACC's commitment to resistance and active reform.

With Jane, Rod and Nancy sharing the pastoral and preaching duties, MMACC grew and began to attract visibility and criticism within the conservative San Diego archdiocese. Each week before and after their Mass, congregants of MMACC were met by a picket line of ardent Roman Catholics who hurled violent verbal abuses towards the community and who waved placards with messages such as 'You're Not Part of Our Church,' 'Face it, You're Protestant!' and 'Women and Gays Belong in the Back of the Church.' These protestors even began filming each person who would arrive at the Mass and passed this footage onto their Catholic employers in a threatening attempt to dissuade people from attending MMACC liturgies.

Whilst the members of MMACC were deeply hurt by these attacks they chose to respond with Christian kindness and compassion, serving tea and cakes to the protestors each week and singing hymns to drown out the picketers' chants of 'Women priests, no way; you're going to hell with the gays!' MMACC also received support from the community of the Methodist church in which they gathered, with these parishioners coming each week and

linking arms to form a shield for MMACC members as they entered and left the church building. MMACC was very thankful for this assistance and it developed a strong bond with the Methodist community.

However, this alliance was compromised when MMACC began to perform same-sex marriages and the Methodist community forbade MMACC from conducting these ceremonies within their sacred space. After much deliberation and open consultation, the MMACC community decided that it could no longer worship in a space that 'was once sacrosanct, but that had been tainted by such outright hatred and discrimination' (Espin, Interview, 06/04/14). The MMACC community subsequently relocated to Gethsemane Lutheran Church, a sacred space that was less impressive than their original Mission Hills location but that allowed them to realize the full breadth of their ministerial goals.

This period in the early history of the MMACC community presaged its concern for overturning injustice and it galvanized the community's commitment to LGBTIQ inclusivity. Thus there was an inherently political dimension to MMACC's decision to move, as its dedication to the pursuit of equality and inclusivity was realized through communal action and a refusal to tolerate and perpetuate such forms of inequality. This episode was a turning point in this community, as the people of MMACC realized the extent of homophobia within Christian America and became aware of the importance of combating such forms of oppression within their own community.

This act of dissonance drew support from the LGBTIQ community in San Diego and it attracted many gay Christians to join MMACC and to partake in its affirming brand of Catholic worship. MMACC currently comprises around one hundred and twenty people and it is a sexually diverse congregation, with those who identify as lesbian, gay, transgendered, gender-fluid and queer worshipping alongside heterosexual individuals. This community was

certainly more sexually diverse than either MMOJ or Good Shepherd and it also had a greater representation of males than the other two case studies. The congregation is evenly divided on gender lines, and Jane saw this parity as an indication that women priests can successfully minister to and be accepted by men as well as women. At the time of this study, Jane had announced her retirement and after a democratic vote the parish elected to employ Nancy as a full-time pastor and parish administrator. This transition will no doubt pose certain challenges for MMACC but Jane and the parish council were hopeful for the stability and continuity that Nancy's employment would offer the community.

7.2 Sexual Repression as an Axis of Oppression

'By marginalizing LGBTIQ persons, the Catholic Church tells these people that they are inferior in God's eyes. Homosexuals are deprecated beyond measure in the Church but they are part of the same human race and they deserve the same rights as everyone else'

- Nancy.

Christianity has a long history of heteronormativity and homophobia and the Roman Catholic Church is perhaps the staunchest denomination in terms of its condemnation of homosexuality and deviant forms of sexual expression (see, for example, Jacobitz, 2014).[172] The issue of LGBTIQ justice has been a politically charged and highly contentious issue in American society and conservative political and religious leaders within this milieu have promulgated a social agenda that is premised upon an aversion to homosexuality. Whilst the past decade has witnessed progressive legal reform and socio-cultural reform in the area of sexual equality, the speed and extent of this progress in international secular spheres has not

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[172] While a few Christian denominations, such as the United Church of Christ and the Quakers, view homosexuality more positively, the majority of mainstream Christian denominations do not share this progressive worldview (see, Ellison, 1993; Mahaffy, 1996; Siker, 1994). For example, in one key study Melton (1991) observed that 72% of Christian religious organizations condemned homosexuals and homosexuality as an abomination. More recently, a 2016 study found that 61 per cent of white evangelical Protestants, 55 per cent of Mormons and 53 per cent of Jehovah's Witnesses signalled that they oppose the legalization of same-sex marriage (Public Religion Research Institute, 2016).

been matched in the American political or religious spheres (Crockett and Voas, 2003; Yip, 2008).[173]

Pope Francis is certainly the most tolerant Pope concerning LGBTIQ issues, as evidenced in his 2013 public statement that 'if a person is gay and seeks out the Lord and is willing, who am I to judge that person?....I am paraphrasing by heart the Catechism of the Catholic Church where it says that these people should be treated with delicacy and not be marginalized' (quoted in Pope Francis, 2016: 63) and his attempt during the 2014 Synod to have the Vatican consider homosexuals as equal members of the Church. However, this liberalism and acceptance in the realm of sexuality has not been realized in the canonical Catholic Church and magisterial teaching against homosexuality is now more fully articulated than in previous periods with more stringent controls being imposed over the participation of LGBTIQ individuals in Churches, seminaries, parishes and Catholic offices (Jordan, 2014).

The Catholic Church's denunciation of homosexuality is rooted in scriptural literalism, and on the basis of Biblical passages from Genesis 19: 1-28; Leviticus, 18: 22, 20:13; Romans, 1:26, 27; I Corinthians, 6: 9; and I Timothy, 1: 10, Catholic doctrine has perceived homosexuality to be a 'sinful perversion,' 'unnatural' and an 'abomination in the eyes of God' (Greenberg and Bystryn, 1982; Clark et al., 1990; and Keysor, 1979). This position was extended in 1986, when the CDF issued the 'Letter on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons' that contained the Church's most definitive position on homosexuality. In this declaration, the CDF invented a new moral category, 'the objectively disordered' inclination, asserting that 'although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is

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[173] In the international context, a series of joint statements delivered at the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council between 2006 and 2011 have condemned violence, harassment, discrimination, exclusion, stigmatization and prejudice based on sexual orientation and gender identity as human rights violations. Although the United States is a Member State of the UN, it was only in 2011 that the United States supported and signed the UN 'Joint Statement on Ending Acts of Violence and Related Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity'.

more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an *objective disorder'* (CDF, 1986). As a result, the Vatican has traditionally issued official statements that pathologize LGBTIQ people, such as the banning of 'active homosexuals' and 'supporters of gay culture' from the priesthood (Yip, 1999).

In accordance with the view that homosexual persons are 'disordered', a view also held by the World Health Organisation and the American Psychological Association until 1990, the Church opposes same-sex marriage since the Catholic matrimonial paradigm holds that only heterosexual couples may be married. This paradigm also restricts sexual acts to the confines of marriage, demarcates sex as permanent, procreative, heterosexual and monogamous in nature, and considers 'homosexual acts' to be 'grave sins' that are 'intrinsically disordered,' 'contrary to the natural law' and not to be tolerated under any circumstances (CDF, 1986).

Consequently, the Church requires those who are attracted to people of the same sex to practise controlled chastity and to abstain from performing sexual acts that transgress the limited canonical model of human sexuality. In so doing the Church makes an inaccurate distinction between ontology and performance, as its theological position separates homosexual practice and sexual acts from lesbian and gay existence. This approach fails to recognize the performative aspects of sexual identity and compels same-sex-loving Catholics to repress their sexual desires, which have been emphasized by the respondents of this study as central to their sense of self.[174]

In expounding the ways in which the Roman Catholic Church oppresses LGBTIQ individuals, the work of eminent social theorist Michel Foucault (1978) becomes salient. Foucault extensively studied the emergence of sexuality as a discursive object and as an innate aspect of human existence and critiqued the ways in which sexuality has been

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[174] For a further discussion of 'being' versus 'doing' homosexual identity see McClintock Fulkerson, 1997; and Siker, 1994.

regulated throughout history. According to Foucault, sexuality was indelibly tied to marriage, and sexualities that were not confined within the marital model (such as the sexuality of children, criminals, the mentally ill and homosexuals) were condemned as belonging to the 'world of perversion' full of sinful desires and deviant behaviours (see also Harris, 2008; McWhorter, 1999). The Roman Catholic Church has employed this system of control in its governance of sex, disciplining bodies and identities that transgress the heteronormative model of sexuality and instilling powerful systems of internalized self-regulation amongst its followers.

Foucault illuminates the central role of power and authority in this repression of sexuality, arguing that by oppressing the body and sexuality of another individual control is enacted over her or him. Jordan supports Foucault's perspective, explaining that the issue of homosexuality in the Catholic Church is inherently related to the 'connections of prohibited desire and Church power' and that 'doctrinal or regulatory homophobia is the mask of a homoerotic power that animates clerical structures of power' (2014: 41). Jordan's allusion to the masculinist homoerotic underpinnings of the Catholic power structure has important implications in the wake of clerical sexual abuse scandals, an idea that will be further explored below. By underscoring the perception that power controls sex, it becomes clear that the Church's system of authority constrains sexuality through domination, submission and subjugation (see Diamond et al., 1990).

Given this institutional denunciation and (self-) repression, many Catholic LGBTIQ individuals and their allies feel justifiable anger towards and severe mistrust of this religious institution.[175] These religious doctrines and magisterial teachings constitute the ideological

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[175] Cherry and Sherwood elaborate on the wider implications of the Church's theological position for LGBTIQ individuals: 'Many of them have been excommunicated because of their homosexuality. Most denominations will baptize but not ordain them, will bury but not marry them. Religious officials have lobbied against equal rights protection in housing and employment, tried to defeat safe-sex education necessary to prevent the spread

backdrop against which Catholics experience and process their homosexuality and as a result, when compared to nonreligious LGBTIQ persons, gay Catholics have been noted to experience a heightened sense of anxiety about the exposure of their sexuality, more intense feelings of alienation and a lower sense of self-esteem (Muparamoto, 2016; Yip, 1999). Dillon (1999) has documented the supreme feelings of disassociation and alienation experienced by women and by gay Catholics, and the ways in which these individuals have been forced to enact change against the Church's oppression of women and of the LGBTIQ community.

The respondents' narratives vocalized the ways in which the Church's stance towards homosexuality has constrained their identity as LGBTIQ Catholics and reflected the dominant themes of intolerance, homophobia, conflict, alienation and perseverance that have been noted in existing literature (see, for example, O'Brien, 2004; Rodriguez and Oullette, 1999, 2000; and Yip, 1999). In particular, the narratives of Betty, Vinka and Rod explore the effects of the heteronormativity and homophobia of the Catholic Church and the ways in which the confluence of sexuality and faith engender feelings of alienation and marginalization.

As a gay man who had encountered homophobia within his daily life, Rod had always felt an innate calling to work for justice for women and justice for the LGBTIQ community within the Catholic Church. In the wake of the revolutionary reforms of Vatican II, Rod thought that the Catholic priesthood would be opened to include women, married priests and LGBTIQ persons, so he entered the seminary and served as a priest in Orange County for thirty-five years. Rod explained that as 'a Catholic priest who is gay, [he] felt a deep duty to use [his]

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of AIDS and contributed to the atmosphere of homophobia that leads to gay bashing and a high suicide rate among lesbian and gay teenagers' (1995: xii).

ministry and [his] role in the Church to open up spaces where gay people can be accepted and where straight people can learn to accept' (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14).

Rod's decision to become a priest was always motivated by his desire to work for change from within the Church, but he was confronted by an institution that refused to acknowledge his sexuality and that encouraged its priests to perpetuate the peripheralization of homosexuality in thought and in practice. The Church has always held an outwardly hostile response to the prospect of homosexual priests and this position was codified in 2005 when the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education issued an official instruction refusing admission into the seminary or ordination for 'those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called "gay culture"' (quoted in Jordan, 2014: 48).

According to Rod, however, this institutional position was constantly flouted and he was joined by many other gay priests and bishops who were welcomed into the clerical ranks as long as they remained closeted. Rod witnessed the psychological and emotional effects that this forced repression of sexual identity had on himself and on some of his fellow clergymen and supported the view that 'being gay and a member of the clergy is marginal, constraining, unaffirmed and in some quarters dangerous' (Kennan, 2016: 64). Rod, for example, had been living with his partner for many years and his superiors tolerated this arrangement as long as he did not disclose his sexuality to his congregation or bring his partner onto Church property.

Scholars such as Cozzens (2000, 2014) have confirmed this trend, speculating that between 30 and 50% of all priests identify as gay and observing that the ongoing sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church has exposed the disproportionately high percentage of homosexual

priests and seminarians compared with the general population (see, for example, McBrien, 1987).[176]

Jordan (2014) has argued that the forced silencing of homosexuality within the priesthood is rooted in the homoeroticism of modern clerical power. In describing clerical power as 'homoerotic' Jordan does not mean to imply anything about the sexual acts or fantasies of the clergy, but rather he seeks to define the nature of the energy and charge that has suffused the all-male priesthood. Jordan explains that:

> The reason that there is so little progress in official Catholic debates about homosexuality is that a fantasy of male- male desire is a motive force in prevailing systems of clerical power. The fantasy sees its fulfilment not in sexual relations but in the rewarding of absolute (male) obedience with uncontested (male) authority …Precisely because Christian tradition overwhelmingly associates same-sex lust with men and because a fantasy of male-male power motivates certain forms of clerical power, there can be no permission of same-sex love within the clergy or within the Church (2014: 53). [177]

Rod suggested that the Church has a 'vested interest' in the silencing of clerical homosexuality because 'as long as it maintains a culture where homosexuality is considered shameful and sinful there will be young, devout Catholic men who are ashamed of their sexuality and who think that suppressing their sexual desires in the celibate priesthood is the best way for them to avoid sin' (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14). Rod was troubled by the hypocrisy of this duality of public institutionalized homophobia and private homosexuality,

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[176] Within this observation there is ambiguity and a tension between the repressed 'homoerotic' community of the priesthood and the sexual abuse of boys. Of course, girls have also been abused by Roman Catholic clergy, but from anecdotal and historical evidence the public scandal has been greater when it is boys who have been abused, as if the abuse of girls were somehow more 'normal'. This normalization of the abuse of females is rooted in both the patriarchal devaluation of women in the Church and the heterosexist and homophobic tendencies of Catholic Christianity.

[177] Parallels can be drawn between Jordan's coupling of absolute (male) obedience with uncontested (male) authority and the pederasts of Ancient Greece. Characteristic of the Archaic and Classical periods, pederasty in Ancient Greece was a 'was a socially acknowledged erotic relationship between an adult male (the *erastes*) and a younger male (the *erōmenos*) usually in his teens' (Nissinen, 2004: 57). A modern line of analysis building on the contributions of Foucault and Halperin argues that the *erōmenos* did not reciprocate the love and desire of the *erastes*, and that the relationship was 'factored on a sexual domination of the younger by the older, a politics of penetration held to be true of all adult male Athenians' relations with their social inferiors — boys, women and slaves' (Keuls, 1993: 37). Consequently, pederasty as a conceptual tool conveys the ways in which power differentials that can be involved in masculinized sexual relationships and the ways in which this asymmetry can foster exploitation and abuse.

and also he struggled deeply with being alienated from his sexual identity. Eventually Rod began to see that the Church would not reform its policy towards LGBTIQ inclusivity and he felt that he could not continue to live a duplicitous life. Rod explained that 'when [he] came out it was with both fear and righteous passion for the liberation of [himself], but also for the liberation of other gay men and women who felt they had to hide who they were in the Church' (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14).

However, when he came out to his congregation and to his friends in the Church, Rod was met with callousness and ostracism and he was ultimately laicized by the Church hierarchy as a punishment for his contravention of Catholic doctrine. Rod explained that 'people who used to see [him] as a gifted pastor, a holy man, a compassionate counsellor and an anointed spiritualist, disavowed every positive aspect of [his] being and now only saw [him] in terms of [his] immorality as a gay man' (Stephens, 09/04/14). He had to negotiate these feelings of marginalization and denunciation and he emphasized that this experience is common for gay clergy within the Church.

Rod also believed that his experiences of castigation were intensified by the false connection drawn between clerical sexual abuse and homosexuality. From 2002, in an effort to divert attention away from paedophile priests, the Catholic hierarchy began to attribute the sexual abuse scandal to homosexuals and homosexuality within the priesthood (see, Nieves, 2002).[178] The assumption that all paedophile priests were gay, and *vice versa*, had an irreversible impact on people's perceptions of Rod. According to Rod, this process of 'naming, blaming and shaming' had negative effects on the public's conception of homosexuals in general and gay priests in particular and it deepened his experiences of homophobic persecution and stigmatization.

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[178] For example, in an official statement defending clerical sexual abuse, the Pope's spokesperson stated that 'if you want to know the cause of these troubles, either it's that we let in too many gay men or that the gay liberation movement is corrupting priests' (quoted in Rodriguez, 2009: 6).

In a similar way to Rod, Betty, who was raised in the Catholic Church, constantly felt 'as though [she] didn't belong, that [she] was never accepted by the Church or by its people and that [she] was an outsider who was hated and reviled, simply because of who [she] loved' (Poppins, Interview, 08/04/14). With regard to these inherent tensions between Christianity and homosexuality, Levy and Reeves have argued that generally 'individuals deal with these conflicts by 1) rejecting their sexual identity; 2) rejecting their Christian identity; 3) integrating these two identities; 4) compartmentalizing; or 5) living with the conflict' (2011: 54). Betty adopted each of these strategies at different stages in her spiritual journey as she attempted to reconcile her sexual identity with her membership in a heterosexist religious institution.

Despite these internalized tactics of identity management, homophobia featured strongly in the spiritual biography of Betty as she constantly felt condemned and discriminated against within the Church as a result of the stigma attached to being a lesbian (see Edgar, 1994; Goffman, 1963; and Gusfield, 1967).[179] Although Betty had chosen a Catholic community that claimed to be more progressive, she was still repeatedly reminded by the priest and her fellow parishioners that her sexual orientation was a sin and that 'God does not love or want people who are gay' (Poppins, Interview, 08/04/14).

Betty felt as though the priest personally targeted her in his preaching and every week she endured sermons in which he vilified LGBTIQ individuals with hateful rhetoric and imagery, disparaging them with vulgar labels and slurs, such as 'fag,' 'dyke,' 'tranny' and 'sodomite' (Poppins, Interview, 08/04/14). She even recalled a particular sermon in which the priest shouted from the pulpit that people who had contracted AIDS deserved to die and they were

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[179] A great deal of scholarly material has built upon Goffman's work on stigma to explore the stigmatization of LGBTIQ persons within Christianity. In his model of 'stigmas of individual character', Goffman referred to convicts, drug and alcohol abusers, the unemployed, mentally ill and homosexuals among others. He explained that these 'blemishes of individual character' were not necessary visible to others, unless they were disclosed or exposed and because of their latency, these forms of stigma often received the harshest and cruellest reception.

going to hell whilst the congregation nodded their heads in approval and muttered things such as 'that's what they get for being gay!' During this exchange, the woman seated in front of Betty turned around, gripped her on the thigh, politely smiled and then whispered 'see, dear, you better stop it with this lesbian nonsense, or you'll end up dead with AIDS and on your way to meet Lucifer!' (Poppins, Interview, 08/04/14). Betty was understandably appalled by the bigotry and intolerance performed by this congregation and she was horrified by its lack of awareness of and empathy for the LGBTIQ community.

These feelings reached their climax when Betty's parish priest began to use his sermons as a political space to campaign for Proposition 8, a ballot proposition and state constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage in California.[180] Betty recounted a particular sermon in which the priest exhorted his congregants to vote against gay marriage and she viewed this confluence of religious authority and politicized homophobia to be an abuse of the priest's influence over his parish. Betty explained that 'this was such a hate-filled and non-loving statement for the priest to come out with' and that it gave her 'the impression that the Church hated gay people and actively taught its followers that it was right and proper for them to hate gay people too' (Poppins, Interview, 08/04/14).

Many of the other respondents spoke of similar experiences in other parishes to do with their priest's politicization of sermons and active support of Proposition 8 and they explained how these episodes opened their eyes to the institutional homophobia and injustice of the Catholic Church. Betty's experience of homophobia was not confined to her parish and she encountered similar forms of discrimination within her workplace that was attached to the Catholic Church. Betty's experience with homophobia and discrimination within the micropolitics of a Catholic workplace resonates with a more widespread experience for

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[180] For further information on Proposition 8, see Boies and Olson, 2014.

lesbians, especially butch-looking lesbians, as they negotiate heterosexism in the workplace (see for example, Hoel et al., 2014; Irwin, 1999; and Levine and Leonard, 1984).

As a result of these acts of homophobia within her Church and within her workplace, Betty came to feel conflicted about the irreconcilable contradictions between her sexuality and her religious identity. Betty had been socialized in the Catholic tradition and she felt a strong affinity with her faith, but she also identified as a lesbian and she had embraced her sexual identity from a very young age. However, Betty came into contact with many priests and Catholics who vehemently asserted that 'gay' and 'Christian' were mutually exclusive and incongruous identities (see, for example, Yip, 1999). Betty was discomfited by this inner polemic, as she had a deep love for the Church that extolled the unconditional love of God and yet she was distressed by the same Church that castigated homosexuals as perverse and unnatural.[181] This dualistic message created intense feelings of confusion, despair and self-loathing for Betty as she struggled to reconcile her sexual orientation with her religious affiliation.

In this way, Betty's narrative speaks more broadly to the observations within the field that explore the conflictive dilemma faced by LGBTIQ Christians (see, for example, Buchanan et al., 2001; O'Brien, 2004; Spencer, 1994).[182] In particular, Betty gives voice to O'Brien's paradigm of the 'gay predicament,' in which LGBTIQ persons either have to 'reject the religious faith in order to accept their sexual orientation, or else forsake their sexual orientation in order to remain Christian' (2004: 182).

Betty's sense of disorientation was propelled by both extrinsic and intrinsic factors as she witnessed the Church's negative stance towards LGBTIQ issues and internalized these

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[181] See, for example, Perry, 1990; and Piazza, 1994.
[182] For further information on the conflict between sexual and religious identities, see Englund, 1991, Gross, 2008; Levy and Reeves, 2011; Rodriguez and Ouellette, 2000; and Yip, 1999.

Church-sanctioned norms (see Rodriguez, 2009). [183] Betty confided that this conflict has been a great struggle for her, as she 'was taught to hate [herself] and to deny something that is innate to [her] personality and to the essence of who [she] is' (Poppins, Interview, 08/04/14). In conjunction, Rod described several people whom he had encountered within his ministry who were unable to cope with this dualism and who were led to addiction, alcoholism, self-harming or suicide as a result of the 'Church's unhealthy and noxious treatment of homosexuals' (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14).

Vinka had a different experience of her homosexuality in the context of Catholicism, as she repressed her sexual identity as a result of her introjection of the teachings of the Church. Vinka was born into a devout Latino Catholic family as the daughter of a Church deacon and the sister of a seminarian. She grew up with a deferential and almost fearful relationship to the Church and her family structure imposed upon her the necessity of submission to Catholic teaching and authority. Similar to Betty, Vinka routinely witnessed sermons and religious discourse in which LGBTIQ individuals were chastised and she was taught by her family that this official position on homosexuality was inviolable and sacrosanct. It subsequently came as a quite a shock when Vinka, who was already married and had a child, came to the realization that she was a lesbian. Vinka did not recognize her sexual orientation until she was twenty-eight and she reasons that the influence of the social institutions of religion and the family in her socialization forced her to repress unwittingly her sexual desires.

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[183] Researchers studying the Christian religious lives of gays and lesbians have identified several causes of conflict and anxiety between gay and religious identities that are both extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic factors come from outside of the individual and they are more dependent on acceptance by others. Extrinsic causes of identity conflict for homosexuals in the Church have been explored by scholars such as Birken, 1997; Grant and Epp, 1998; Shallenberger (1996); and Yip, 1997b, and they include adherence to anti-gay and heteronormative Christian doctrines and an acceptance of other LGBTIQ people's negative opinions and experiences. By contrast, intrinsic causes come from within the individual and they are generally held as internalized moral ideals. Intrinsic causes have been identified in previous research by Mahaffy, 1996; Ritter and O'Neill, 1989; and Rodriguez and Ouellette, 2000, and focus on a fear of divine retribution and an internal belief that these two identities are incompatible.

Vinka explained that she repressed her sexuality for so many years because she had been indoctrinated into the belief that homosexuality was an aberrant behaviour and she feared stigmatization by her family and by the Church that she loved. Even after she came to the realization that she was a lesbian, she felt that she could not come out as gay and instead she 'led a double life to appease one, [her] family; two, the Church; three, [her] culture; and four, wider society' (Validivia, Interview, 05/04/14). When Vinka made the decision to divulge her sexuality to her family, she was faced with abuse and rejection as her family felt unable to accept her sexuality because of its defiance of Catholic theology.

Vinka was obviously deeply affected by this renunciation of her identity by her family members and she viewed her family situation as a microcosm of wider attitudes about lesbianism in the Church and in American society. Given the central role of the family in the transmission of Catholic belief and practice, many of the other respondents spoke of the reception they faced from their parents and the effects of their family's religious devotedness on their treatment. The families' responses on the issue were diverse, ranging from condemnation to grudging and growing tolerance to occasional full affirmation. However, common to each narrative was the influence of these family structures in the respondents' acknowledgment and acceptance of their own sexual identity.

Peculiar to Vinka's narrative, however, is the intersection of her Latino identity with her family's Catholic faith. Vinka's Mexican culture, which was deeply tied to Catholic ideals, held a prohibitive stance towards homosexuality. Her family was proudly Latino and it also shared this belief in the immorality of lesbian and gay relationships and the indissoluble institution of heterosexual marriage. Vinka's relationship to her sexuality was accordingly mediated and obfuscated by her socialization into these cultural expectations and her social location in the Latino, Catholic community. Her narrative thereby demonstrates how the

intersection of competing and often conflicting identities can produce feelings of uncertainty and precariousness.

Further, both Vinka and Betty's narratives speak to the intersection of gender and sexuality and the ways in which their encounters with homophobia collided with and were intensified by misogyny within the Church. Drawing from the work of Audre Lorde (1984), a number of gay theologians have perceived the prohibitions placed on homosexuality within the Church as rooted in a male-dominated and Western tradition of oppressing women and repressing the erotic (see, for example, Nelson, 1978; Plaskow, 1998). Just as Patricia Hill Collins (2005) argued that Black women experience sexism differently as a result of racialization processes, for lesbians their sexuality and their experiences of homophobia are complicated by their gender and the control of female sexuality. For example, the negative response of Vinka's family's to her sexuality was partly motivated by the idea that she could not fulfil her role as mother as a lesbian woman and that she would be unable to have any more children. Vinka explained that if she was a gay man her family perhaps would not have struggled with her sexuality as much, but because she was a woman they felt that she was 'defying God's will to procreate and make as many of God's children as possible' (Validivia, Interview, 05/04/14).

This traditional demarcation of gender roles in which women are cast primarily as mothers and wives has been a constant throughout Catholic ideology and it has served to create repressive dictates for the regulation of women's sexuality and relationships. Such experiences are unfortunately common for many lesbians, as the social obligation placed upon women to marry and procreate remains significant: it is particularly so in religious and traditionalist communities but far from absent outside them.[184] The heteronormative image of women as chaste, pure and virginal within the Church has also collided with essentialist notions of homosexuals as promiscuous, licentious and uninhibited (see for example,

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[184] See Adrienne Rich's ground-breaking essay 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' (1980).

Seidman, 1998) and has been a source of repression for lesbians' sexual expression. The Church has thus responded to lesbians particularly harshly, motivated by both the eradication of homosexuality and the maintenance of the Church's strict moral standards for women.

Furthermore, Dreyer links the oppression of homosexuals within the Catholic Church to this institution's marginalization and silencing of women and argues that 'homophobia and misogyny are co-conspirators against life in the body of Christ', serving to constrain the autonomy of women within the Church (2014: 58). Whilst there was another pro-LGBTIQ Catholic group called Dignity operating in Los Angeles and San Diego at this time, many of the respondents felt that this coalition failed to meet the specific needs of gay women and that it provided a masculinist and patriarchal approach to Catholic worship. [185] The desire of that community for reform in the Church's views and practices regarding gays and same sex relationships did not extend, in significant part, to reform in the Church's views and practices about women (Via, 2011).

Betty explained that she would go to Dignity expecting complete inclusivity and instead would be met with gender-exclusive language and imagery, 'strong anti-woman undercurrents' and preaching that marginalized the experiences and contributions of women whilst elevating those of gay men (Poppins, Interview, 08/04/14). Betty was also expected to fulfil traditional gender roles within this community, such as cooking and cleaning, and she felt constrained as a result of her sex in an environment that claimed to be emancipatory. She explained that:

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[185] Dignity is a fellowship for gay Roman Catholics that was initiated in the San Diego and Los Angeles area and eventually expanded to include local chapters in other regions across the USA. Dignity shares a denominational loyalty to the Catholic Church and seeks to connect homosexual members of the laity with gay and sympathetic priests who share a commitment to Catholicism. Dignity is not independent of the Catholic Church and instead it defines its mission as a movement working within the institution for reform and for greater tolerance and respect for the LGBTIQ community (Davidson, 1987; Falcone, 2014; Shokeid, 2015; and White, 2008).

> Dignity was committed to the inclusion and celebration of the gay community, but women did not factor into this mission of liberation and yet again women were cast aside and yet again women were made to feel that we were lesser. It was such a compounding of problems, like a house of cards built on feelings of suppression that just kept building up and kept on getting higher and higher and more difficult to overcome (Poppins, Interview, 08/04/14).

The image of the toppling tower of cards provides a powerful motif for conceptualizing the crippling feelings of disempowerment engendered by the convergence of patriarchal and sexual discrimination. This motif also provides a visual representation of the ways in which kyriarchy becomes manifest in a lesbian's life, as various axes of oppression build upon each other to form a more complex experience of domination. Kyriarchy was a lived reality for lesbians within the Church as their experiences of oppression on the basis of their sexuality were intensified by their subjugation on the basis of their sex. This dual consciousness provided a complicated and deeply troubling experience for lesbians in the Church and MMACC sought to mitigate this kyriarchal oppression through the creation of an LGBTIQ affirming Catholic community that stood at the confluence of feminist and queer approaches to the*logy.

7.3 Sexual Liberation: Towards an Affirmation of Human Sexuality
'Our community is built on love, not hate; inclusion, not exclusion; and the celebration of gay people, rather than the condemnation of them'- Patrick.

Through the insight of LGBTIQ scholars and queer the*logians, a new field of social activities and spiritual engagements among gays and lesbians occupied in a search for their lost roots in major world denominations or in recently established innovative religious congregations has been made salient (see, for example, Griffith, 2005; Shokeid, 2015; and

Thumma and Gray, 2005). [186] As a 'gay-positive Christian Church' MMACC provides a form

of ministry that allows LGBTIQ persons within its community to 'feel a strong sense of who

they are as a valued group without creating boundaries that exclude others' (Rodriguez, 2009:

21). The emergence and strength of queer religious communities, such as MMACC, thereby

attests both to the LGBTIQ community's ongoing struggle for acceptance within religious

traditions and to the ability of a feminist approach to religious communalization to engender

such forms of intersectional inclusivity.

Facilitated and inspired by a long history of queer religious organizing, [187] the pastoral team

of MMACC has created spaces for affirming and performing a variety of queer religious

identities (White, 2008). Relying on an integrated the*logical approach that combines queer

the*logy and feminist the*logy, this community is able to celebrate the religious and sexual

identity of its congregants as equally valid and as mutually constitutive. The intention of this

discussion is not to undermine the feelings of marginalization and oppression experienced by

the respondents, but rather it seeks to explore how this community is able to negotiate the

traditionally constraining aspects of its religious affiliation with a renewed emphasis on

affirmation and approval.

Informed by liberation theology principles and queer theory, queer the*logy provides an

avenue of active resistance against institutional heterosexism and homophobia and other

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[186] Patrick Cheng explains that 'queer' is a re-claimed identity that 'denotes interest in exploring the spectrum of gender, not denoting a particular place on a gender binary' (2011: 6). Kelly Kraus defines 'queer' as 'an umbrella term for anyone with a marginalized sexual orientation or gender identity' (2014: 99). Further, Jennifer Purvis (2012) utilizes these definitions to argue that queer signifies a range of variant genders and non-heterosexual sexualities built upon a posture of resistance, a questioning attitude, and a unique set of subversive techniques and approaches.

[187] White explains that the historical roots of the contemporary flourishing of LGBTIQ religious communities began with the first queer Christian congregation founded in 1946 in Atlanta. The initial contributions of the homophile movement provided the theological and ideological foundations for a later queer religious movement that emphasized 'taking off the mask' and celebrating gay and lesbian identities in a social and religious context that ordered homosexuality to remain hidden and silenced (see, for example, Irle, 1979). In the contemporary era the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) has taken up the mantle of justice for LGBTIQ Christian and offers specific outreach to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender families and communities in a Protestant setting (see for example, Warner, 2005; White, 2008; and Wilcox, 2001.

forms of oppression faced by LGBTIQ persons. As a the*logical methodology, Cheng defines queer the*logy as:

> 1) lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex individuals 'talking about God;' where this theology is done by and for LGBTQI individuals, by focusing on their specific needs; 2) talking about God in purposefully transgressive manners, especially in terms of social and cultural norms regarding gender and sexuality; where it seeks to unearth hidden voices or hidden perspectives that allow theology to be seen in a new light; and 3) talking about God in a way that challenges and deconstructs the natural binary categories of sexual and gender identity (2013: 4).

In conjunction, Isherwood and Althaus-Reid draw upon Latino American liberation theology in their discussion of queer the*logy, arguing that 'just as Gustavo Guttierrez spoke of liberation theology as the irruption of the poor in theology, queer [the*logy] has facilitated the irruption of the ultimate marginalized in Christianity: people and institutional forms of organization at the margins of heteronormativity (gay, lesbians, and transgenders), but also knowledge at the margin of heterosexuality too' (2004:5). Queer the*logy begins with the assumption that gender non-conformity and homosexual desire have been constants throughout human history and it uses this insight to re-examine biblical texts in line with a queer perspective of religion and spirituality. Many theologians and religious scholars have subsequently noted that queer the*logy's greatest asset is its use of metaphor to 'authorize and explain difference rather than make accommodation between past and present' (Roden, 2009: 7).

The pastoral team of MMACC has utilized its extensive the*logical training to reinterpret scriptural texts in a way that views homosexuality in a positive rather than negative light (see, for example, Englund, 1991 and Thumma, 1991).[188] The scriptural texts delivered and discussed at MMACC are a constant allegorical source of affirmation for the condition of homosexuals in American society (Shokeid, 2015). Within their homilies, Jane, Rod and Nancy utilize intertextuality as an approach to apply the message of the scriptures to

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[188] See also, Cornwall, 2011; Hedges, 2011; Rudy, 2007; and Shaw, 2007.

contemporary social issues affecting the LGBTIQ community (such as homophobia, gay bashings and the AIDS epidemic) in order to advance a more progressive and pertinent rendering of Catholic the*logy.

In keeping with the spirit of liberation theology and queer the*logy, the pastoral team makes connections between Jesus and the contemporary condition of homosexuals, both having been ostracized by their societies, and it engages the congregation in a spiritual narrative that is relevant to the experiences of the LGBTIQ community (Shokeid, 2015). The ultimate message of their homilies is to 'live solidarity, and unite [themselves] in the pursuit of equality, to undo the binds of sexist and heterosexist discrimination and the ingraining of social injustice' (Fieldwork Notes, 06/04/14).

Apart from sermons and the*logical discussions, the queer the*logy of MMACC is perhaps most concretely expressed through its hospitality and communal ethic. Walton (2015) argues that hospitality and 'queer welcome' within Christian Churches is embodied by a congregation that acts on a radical commitment to open its doors and its hearts to all people. Rod affirms that 'this intense welcome, opening our doors and allowing those who come in to change us and deepen our understanding of God, is queer indeed' (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14). In this vein, MMACC has built itself upon a collective consciousness and 'people come [there] and join [there] because [they] have this sense of openness and [they] make a concerted effort to visibly and knowingly affirm the uniqueness and worth of each person' (Via, Interview, 04/04/14).

From the moment that one walks into the church grounds and is greeted by the self-described 'wacky welcoming committee,' who receive each person with a beaming smile and generous welcome, one is invited to share in the communal spirit of MMACC. Carol explained that '[they] just have this irrepressible sense of joy whenever [they] gather together and [they] try

to make each and every person feel welcome and feel a part of [their] community, whether it's for one Mass, one year, or one lifetime' (Spong, Interview, 05/04/14). Through this queering of approaches to communalization, the pastoral team of MMACC engenders an ethical worldview built around a cosmology of interconnection, mutual responsibility, and 'radical love' that 'dissolves our existing boundaries, whether they are boundaries that separate us from other people, that separate us from preconceived notions of sexuality and gender identity, or that separate us from God' (Cheng, 2011: 23).

MMACC also recognizes the need for an integrated approach to LGBTIQ inclusivity in Churches that addresses both heterosexism and patriarchy as mutually reinforcing and equally damaging forces of oppression within the Church and society. In this way, their queer the*logy has been integrated with a feminist consciousness in order to redefine its perspective of the*logy and sexuality with specific attention to the ways in which heterosexism is intensified for lesbians because of their sex. Their attention to feminist the*logy and feminist ideology encourages the pastoral team to redefine their priestly functions with an emphasis on attending to the wholeness and interconnectedness of all people (see, Lightsey, 2015).

MMACC's pastoral team also seeks to disrupt binary notions of gender and provides a more expansive recognition of gender fluidity within its liturgical functions in order to accommodate the members of its community who identify as intersex, multi-gender, non-gender, transgender or gender flux. In this way, MMACC is striving to transcend binary conceptions of the gendered God and to move toward a discourse of a queer God that deconstructs culturally and socially constructed essentialist notions of that which is feminine/masculine (Althaus-Reid, 2003; Isherwood and Althaus-Reid, 2004; Moon, 2008). Through this queering of the gendered politics of the Catholic Church, MMACC is able to provide a space for its congregants that is simultaneously gay-positive and gender-neutral.

As a gay-positive Church, MMACC enables its LGBTIQ congregants to accept themselves by creating a safe space in which the flourishing of non-heterosexual identities is prioritized as an imperative of the community. The community of MMACC configures its Church as a physical and metaphysical space in which LGBTIQ congregants are encouraged to feel comfortable in themselves in spite of negative external messages and regardless of any internalized dissatisfaction with their own identity. Nancy explained that MMACC generates a gay-positive environment by 'expressing solidarity with the gay community and gay culture, demanding that LGBTIQ individuals are allowed and encouraged to be who they are, permitting them to be involved in every aspect of the community and seeking justice for the wider gay community' (Corran, Interview, 03/04/14).

Extensive studies have confirmed that involvement in gay-positive Churches enables LGBTIQ persons to alleviate the conflict between their religious affiliation and their sexuality and addresses the specific spiritual needs that are inherent in the gay community (see, for example, Lukenbill, 1998, 2005; Perry, 1990; and Thumma, 1991).[189] The respondents of this study who identified as LGBTIQ confirmed such trends and explained the various ways in which they 'felt an overwhelming sense of validation and support of who [they were]' and concluded that 'equality and inclusivity was a reality, not just a distant utopian dream' (Validivia, Interview, 05/04/14). For example, after the Sunday liturgy, a woman named Joyce confided in me that whilst she had always identified as a lesbian she had only been able to identify as a *proud* lesbian woman since her time at MMACC.

Rod shared a similar sense of renewed pride in his sexuality as a result of his involvement with MMACC, as he finally felt that his sexuality was accepted by his congregation and that he could be true to his own identity. Rod gave a pertinent example of how MMACC is a safe space for him and his partner:

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[189] See also, Piazza, 1994; Rodriguez and Ouellette, 1999, 2000; and White, 1994, 2008.

I am gay, the congregation knows I am gay, they fully accept that I am gay and they celebrate that I am gay. For example, a few years ago, Jane Via with her husband, Phil, and me and my partner, we both celebrated our twenty-fifth anniversaries in the same year, so the people of MMACC held a special Mass for both us and Jane and Phil and we were able to renew our vows to our partners in front of our community and with the support of our community. That was such a big sign of inclusion, not just for me and my partner, but for every gay person there, to be told that your love and your relationships are just as valid as a heterosexual couple! (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14).

In this way, MMACC also sought to create their religious community as a safe space for the celebration and living of non-heterosexual relationships through their performance of same-sex marriages. The community celebrates many same-sex weddings and the pastoral team see this activity as a significant way of breaking down the walls of homophobia and heteronormativity in the Church. For, when 'a same-gender couple stand in front of the church and make a promise to each other and a congregation promises to help them, a very queer and wonderful thing is happening' (Walton, 2015: 59), and a powerful political and theological statement is being made (Wilcox, 2013). Rod shares this view of the queering of Catholic practice and the institution of marriage, arguing that 'by extending the sacrament of marriage to LGBTIQ persons you are saying that their love and their sexual identity is valued and is sacred in the eyes of God' (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14).

By respecting and sanctifying sexual diversity, the pastoral team of MMACC invites the LGBTIQ members of the community to reclaim their sexual identity on the basis that 'if God created gay sexuality, then surely gay sexuality must be good and not something that is evil or sinful' (Poppins, Interview, 08/04/14). The LGBTIQ members of MMACC emphasized that their LGBTIQ orientation was simply who they were and that their sexual identity it also wholly compatible with the core of Catholic belief and thought. For example, Joyce explained that 'the canonical Church always made [her] feel as though God hated [her] because [she] was gay, but now [she realizes] that God made [her] this way and He loves

[her] and [she] is now able to love [herself]' (Fieldwork Notes, 06/04/14). This affirmation of identity encourages the pursuit of wholeness against 'the existential pyschospiritual state of fragmentation, ontological sense of incompleteness …and the realities of rupture' (Baker-Fletcher, 2009: 156) and it invites LGBTIQ persons to reclaim their sense of self-worth and dignity.

Through the diligent guidance of MMACC's pastoral team, these LGBTIQ Catholics have been able to reclaim their space in the Church and to practise a version of Catholicism that 'neither condemns nor simply tolerates homosexuality, but instead embraces homosexuals as having been created in God's image' (Rodriguez, 2009: 26). This approach is revolutionary as LGBTIQ persons are able to become the new reformers of Christianity, transforming it from a religion of shame and guilt into the living embodiment of God's beauty and unconditional love (Chellew-Hodge, 2015). This inversion of canonical approaches to homosexuality has granted MMACC's LGBTIQ persons access to a new way of understanding their sexuality as a central aspect of their own personal meaning systems (Keenan, 2016). Similar to Yip's (1999) observation of same-sex-loving Christians, the members of MMACC have demonstrated agency in the invention and reinvention of spiritual narratives that integrated their sexuality with their religiosity. In turn, the respondents' discussion of how MMACC has provided them with safe space emphasizes the ways in which the institutional and traditional are able to be reformed to provide a platform for the respondents to connect to their sense of self and to gain affirmation for this identity (Keenan, 2016).

Within this gay-positive space, Rod was enabled to serve as an openly gay priest, and his ministry ensured that a commitment to spirituality that was affirming for queer identities was embedded within the liturgical and pastoral functions of MMACC. For Rod, equal representation and visibility was a crucial way in which sexuality was affirmed at MMACC.

To this end, each of the ministries at MMACC included LGBTIQ persons with these individuals fulfilling roles on the various parish committees, singing in the choir, reading as cantors, serving as Eucharistic ministers and acting as guest homilists. This inclusion of LGBTIQ persons in the liturgical functions and governance of MMACC is significant as in the canonical Church these individuals would have had either been forbidden from acting in these capacities or they would have been forced to deny their sexuality in order to participate.

By contrast, at MMACC the gifts of its LGBTIQ congregants are fully embraced and these individuals are able to participate alongside the heterosexual members of the community in a sign of unity and mutuality. In this process of affirmation, the role of the heterosexual members of MMACC as 'straight allies' for the cause was especially important (see, for example, Graham, 2009; and Woog, 1999). Whilst not each member of MMACC identified as LGBTIQ, every member is committed to engaging in 'social solidarity, active welcome and public advocacy on behalf of a relationally just world for all' (Graham, 2009: 117). The straight allies of MMACC feel an innate responsibility to use their relative privilege to push for awareness, equality and the full inclusion of LGBTIQ persons.

To this end, the straight allies of MMACC have joined with the LGBTIQ members of that community to mobilize for political change in the broader San Diego and American climate. As it has embraced queer the*logy, MMACC has also become motivated to agitate for LGBTIQ rights and for justice for the gay community. Each year the MMACC community attends and marches in the San Diego pride parade, which has emerged as a powerful site for religious communities to display their support for the LGBTIQ community. At this event, MMACC members have carried placards emblazoned with powerful statements of support for the gay community and opposition of the homophobic practices of the institutional Church.

Members of MMACC have also banded together and attended many rallies and protests as a communal display of their commitment to contesting heterosexism and homophobia within American society. The 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy within the US military, gay hate-crimes and the ban on same-sex marriage are just some of the issues that members of MMACC have protested against in a display of religiously-inspired political action. MMACC, through its queering of the*logy and its feminist political consciousness has provided both the space and the inspiration for many of its members to engage in the fight for LGBTIQ justice in the wider community.

7.4 The Queering of Catholic Rituals: Performing Acceptance
Through its re-imagination of rituals, MMACC also provides a performative space in which the queer identities of its community members are celebrated and are affirmed by 'Queer Ritual Practice' (Falcone, 2014). Falcone suggests that 'when inspired by God's Word and Spirit, Queer Ritual Practice becomes a form of Rainbow Ministry …a faith-filled, well-calibrated practice that employs courage, witness and teachable moments to build skills for inclusive community' (2014: 118). MMACC's Rainbow Ministry combines insightful preaching, progressive the*logy and open participation in all of the sacramental and liturgical functions of the community. MMACC's rituals can be understood as 'queer' as it welcomes LGBTIQ people, but these rituals are also queer in the sense of being radical and transgressive because 'they spoke uncomfortable insights, because they innovated with traditions and images and because they united all the "wrong" kinds of people' (Falcone, 2014: 118).

MMACC's Queer Ritual Practice draws parallels with Catherine Bell's understanding of ritual as a medium of expression formed by 'a special type of language suited to what is there

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to express, namely internal spiritual-emotional resources tied to our own true identities but frequently unknown and underdeveloped' (1997: 241). Bell explains that, through careful and deliberate planning, the 'ritual expression of these internal dimensions will unleash their healing power for the self and for others' (1997: 241). There are three key moments within MMACC's Queer Ritual Practice that typify its inclusive Rainbow Ministry and the ways in which the healing of its LGBTIQ congregants is encouraged through communal ritualization.

Firstly, throughout their communal rituals, the MMACC pastoral team draws upon popularized imagery and symbolism from the mainstream LGBTIQ movement to affirm its commitment to sexual equality and to create a space in which LGBTIQ persons are represented. Some historical symbols of 'gay culture' include the pink triangle and the Rainbow Flag, which Gorman argues 'encapsulates and concretizes the social processes intrinsic to the constellation of the gay world' (1999: 332). The Rainbow Flag is perhaps the most popular and ubiquitous symbol of pride in LGTBIQ communities, and this symbol is incorporated into MMACC's ritual space in various ways.[190] The Rainbow Flag forms an integral element of MMACC's visual culture, with the linens on the altar, the candles, the hymn books and the tapestries hanging from the walls all featuring the Rainbow motif.

During the Mass, Nancy also wore a stole that featured a vibrant mosaic of rainbow colours. By wearing a Rainbow stole, Nancy made a visible statement of her commitment to equality, tolerance, and the celebration of difference, and she presaged the central project of inclusion within her priestly ministry. Moreover, a large Rainbow Flag was positioned in the front entrance to the sacred space and next to the central statue of Jesus on the cross. This juxtaposition is an active challenge to the Church's rejection of homosexuality on scriptural grounds and it serves as an unambiguous statement of the way in which this community is

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[190] Designed by artist and gay rights activist Gilbert Baker in 1978, the Rainbow Flag consists of six coloured stripes to signify the diversity of the LGBTIQ community. Each colour is symbolic: red represents life and sexuality, orange represents healing, yellow represents sunlight, green represents nature, blue represents serenity/harmony, and violet represents spirit (Hagerty, 2012).

seeking to exalt, enmesh and embody queer and Catholic identities. MMACC's incorporation and appropriation of the Rainbow Flag has been a deliberate and tactical decision, as Churches and religious groups that fly the Rainbow Flag actively proclaim their willingness to welcome people from the LGBTIQ community (Palmer, 2011).

By engaging in the semiotics of representation, MMACC creates a visual culture in which the LGBTIQ cause is placed at the centre of its worship space as is the social justice imperative of this community. There is also something inherently transgressive in MMACC's appropriation of this symbolism in its sacred space. By inviting and prioritizing non-heterosexual cultures and identities, MMACC queers religion and contests the heteronormativity of religious spaces in the canonical Catholic Church (see, for example, Wilcox, 2012).

Second, MMACC builds upon this LGTBIQ iconography to enact a cosmology of interconnection through its reworking of the Catholic 'Kiss of Peace' ritual. This ritual act is a visual and symbolic representation of the unity of the Church and it 'constitutes a profession of the union of the baptized in mutual love' (Marino Malone, 2004: 180). In the canonical Church this ritual is conducted in a highly regimented form, whereby the Priest will say or sing 'The peace of the Lord be with you always,' to which the congregation will respond with 'And with your spirit'. Then, if appropriate, the Priest will add 'Let us offer each other the sign of peace,' and the congregation will turn to the person or persons next to them and shake their hand whilst saying 'Peace be with you'.

In the canonical Church, this ritual is subject to a distinct set of regulations and stipulations and is prescribed as follows: 'It is appropriate that each one give the sign of peace only to those who are nearest and in a sober manner. The Priest may give the sign of peace to the ministers but always remains within the sanctuary, so as not to disturb the celebration'

(Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacrament, 2004). The following additions are considered to be abuses: 'introducing a "song of peace" to accompany the rite; the faithful moving from their places to exchange the sign of peace; the priest leaving the altar to give the sign of peace to some of the faithful; and the availing of the rite to express congratulations, good wishes, or condolences' (Richter, 1990: 139). Consequently, in a canonical setting this ritual act is a static and sterile exercise with little physical contact and a distinct policing of bodies and affection.

By contrast, however, MMACC has queered the Kiss of Peace, contravening each of these dictates and reimagining this ritual as a 'larger than life' explosion of love, mutual respect and acceptance (Vanderway, Interview, 07/04/14). At MMACC, the Kiss of Peace is celebrated as an exuberant and energetic ritual in which each person move around all corners of the Church to share hugs, kisses and meaningful embraces with her or his fellow congregants. This act was a moment of unbridled joy and communal rapture that many compared to a 'pride party,' with even Nancy encouraging her congregation 'to really go for it and think of this as [their] very own Mardi Gras' (Fieldwork Notes, 06/04/14). Ali explained that during the Kiss of Peace 'everyone is hugging everybody, there is so much love and joy shared in those moments and there's always this sense of extending yourself to the stranger, making them feel welcome and a part of the community' (Kirkpatrick, Interview, 08/04/14). The ritual can last for over fifteen minutes, as the congregants make an effort to embrace each person and to issue them with personalized affirmations, such as 'you are welcome here,' 'you are part of me, and I am part of you,' 'you have my love,' and 'we are one' (Fieldwork Notes, 06/04/14).

Those congregants who identify as LGBTIQ find this ritual to be a powerful statement of the community's inclusion of them, remarking that 'everyone is so sincere and you can actually feel that they are happy that you are there and being gay is irrelevant to them, they still want

you to be a part of their community' (Validivia, Interview, 05/04/14). As for the heterosexual members of MMACC, they expressed it to be an important 'invitation to deepness; to deepen [their] spirituality, to deepen [their] connection to others and to deepen their own feeling of inclusion' (Corran, Interview, 03/04/14). It is therefore a sign of communal unity, whilst also respecting the diversity and uniqueness of every person gathered there. In turn, this act of Rainbow Ministry also involved a queering of the divide between what are acceptable and unacceptable forms of physical contact and affection within the Church. Rather than attempting to restrain the bodies of its congregants, MMACC encourages each person to embrace the subjective elements of her or his sexuality, such as passion and warmth, to signify their communal unity and to celebrate human sexuality in all its varied forms.

Third, after the Kiss of Peace, MMACC performs a reshaped and re-created celebration of the Eucharist in which LGBTIQ persons are brought back to the centre of this ritual. The Catholic Church designates the Eucharist as 'the source and summit of the Christian life' (Vatican, 2005) and many theologians and biblical scholars have noted that the Eucharist is the most powerful public act of unity and belief in the Catholic Church (see, for example, McBrien, 1980; and McDonogh, 1993). In reality, however, the canonical Catholic Church has placed restrictions on this critical sacrament, preceding the distribution of communion with a 'statement of Eucharistic inhospitality', which notifies certain individuals that they are ineligible to receive this sacrament (Wilhelmy, Interview, 07/04/14).

In particular, the respondents explained their experiences of being publicly denied communion because they identified as LGBTIQ and because the Church deemed that they were 'not of good moral standing' (Wilhelmy, Interview, 07/04/14).[191] As someone who had been repeatedly refused communion because of her sexual orientation, Betty described this

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[191] Other respondents were also denied the Eucharist because they were divorced, had children out of marriage, were using contraception, or were not baptized in the Catholic Church.

denial as systematic of the stunted sexual ethics of the Catholic Church and typical of the way in which they excluded and disqualified LGBTIQ persons.

At MMACC, however, in a meaningful sign of inclusion each person gathered for the Mass, regardless of sexual orientation or religious affiliation, is empowered and encouraged to receive communion.[192] In contrast to the 'statement of Eucharistic inhospitality,' MMACC's priest proudly declares that 'all are welcome to receive communion, everyone is welcome to share in this, you are all part of our family today' (Fieldwork Notes, 06/04/014). Rod unconsciously made connections between MMACC's inclusive approach to the Eucharist and queer the*logy, arguing that 'it is important that everyone can go up to communion because it is a matter of belief, a matter of justice, a matter of belonging, and a powerful step in shaking up the Church's linear view of human sexuality' (Stephens, Interview, 09/04/14).

Aside from just being able to partake in the Eucharist, each congregant is also empowered to participate in the consecration and performance of this most sacred ritual. In the canonical Church, the Eucharistic gifts are traditionally prepared and blessed solely by the priest, behind an altar, on a raised platform removed and placed apart from the general congregation. At MMACC, however, there are no barriers, physical or symbolic, placed between the congregation and the Eucharist and it is the community gathered that consecrates the Eucharistic Host, not the priest.[193]

The priest's evocation of the community to be involved in preparing the gifts is reflected in the inclusive nomenclature used in the prayers and the involvement of the congregation in the

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[192] In another exercise of inclusion, the communion itself came in a range of incarnations in order to make it accessible to all: for example, there was gluten free bread, wheat free bread, wholegrain bread, as well as non-alcoholic red and white wine. Whilst this may approach appear a trivial or only minor difference its significance should not be overlooked. It attests to the fact that MMACC has sought to incorporate the vision of inclusivity in every aspect of their communal celebration of faith; from their language and hymns, right down to the dietary options available to those receiving the Eucharist.

[193] Many theologians and biblical scholars, such as Gary Macy and Bernard Cooke, have argued that it is appropriate that the community, not the priest alone, say the words of consecration, because Christ's presence only becomes a reality in midst of the assembly and through the collective energy of a faith community.

recitation of crucial aspects of the consecration. The Eucharistic prayers have a communal imperative and focused on 'us' and 'we,' as signifiers of the collective nature of this ritualization. This inclusive nomenclature again serves to reinforce the collective spirit of the mass and to galvanize members of the community, making them feel a part of this seminal ritualistic component of the mass. The respondents typically relish the opportunity to participate in the consecration of the Eucharist and to take ownership of their sacramental role and capacities in this community as equals.

The members of the community are then able to assist Nancy in the distribution of communion. In a break from the patriarchalism and heterosexism of the canonical Church in which only heterosexual men can act as Eucharistic ministers, at MMACC there is a veritable mix of heterosexual and LGBTIQ women and men all involved in serving communion to their peers. In contrast to the canonical practice, these Eucharistic ministers serve the congregation first and take communion themselves only when every member of the community has received the Eucharist. This shift in power relations translates into a conception of parish life at MMACC that is freed of notions of domination or subordination and is instead rooted in collective interdependence and inclusivity.[194]

In order to emphasize the equality and egalitarianism of this community and in an interesting break from Catholic liturgical conventions, the Eucharistic ministers also step aside from the altar and position themselves outside of the church building to distribute communion. This subversion of canonical ritual practice places the Eucharist ministers and the priest on an even footing with the congregation and encourages the community to reflect on the need to take its faith outside the Church in its pursuit of justice and equality. This ritualistic element reinforces MMACC's commitment to protest and political activism and it shows the

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[194] Also, the hymn after communion features the lyrics 'One bread, one body, one lord of love.' This hymn has a powerful inclusionary message. Again, unity, oneness and cohesion are emphasized and are celebrated. By being placed at a crucial part of the mass, this particular hymn also reinforces the inclusionary impetus of the MMACC community.

interconnection between this community's priestly and prophetic functions in its contestation of homophobia and heterosexism.

This ritual was undoubtedly an act of Rainbow Ministry redesigned in order to 'liberate and deliver people from distress, possession, captivity and disintegration' (Falcone, 2014: 122). Nancy saw MMACC's reworking of the Eucharistic ritual as 'a real symbol of our brokenness and our connectedness at the same time' as it reveals both the extent of patriarchy and heterosexism in the canonical Church and the ways in which MMACC is seeking to provide a more inclusive and queer approach to ritual worship (Corran, Interview, 03/04/14).

Through symbolic action and by adopting and adapting its rituals to embrace the liberatory aspects of queer the*logy, MMACC has provided a new field of spiritual engagements for those who have been dismayed by the sexual ethics of the institutional Catholic Church. In this way, MMACC instils in its members the the*logical resources, psychospiritual inspiration, collective action and the language of resistance necessary to produce social change for the LGBTIQ community (see, for example, Harris, 1999). The pastoral team has provided reinterpretations of existing canonical frameworks that allows them to be adapted to meet the specific needs of its LGBTIQ congregants and perhaps to engender more comprehensive change in the wider heterosexist social context.

MMACC's pastoral team, together with the straight allies within the community, provides a support network for LGBTIQ persons and encourages them to utilize their religious engagement as a conduit for self-acceptance and resistance to externally imposed, and largely negative, social characterizations of their own self-worth. MMACC, and the feminist, queer vision of faith contained therein, correspondingly becomes an agent of identity, encouraging LGBTIQ persons to realize their whole selves and to feel included in the fabric of the Church community.

<u>Conclusion: Is the Female Ordination Movement Breaking the Stained Glass Ceiling?</u>

<u>The Female Ordination Movement, Intersectionality, and Ritualization</u>

The experiential accounts of gender-based domination, rejection and exclusion, as revealed by the respondents in this study, affirm the existence and strength of kyriarchal modes of control within the Roman Catholic Church. The narratives that were captured in this study serve as testimony to the power and courage of women priests in confronting these structural injustices and to the creative acts of sacramental reinterpretation performed by women priests to reclaim the spiritual autonomy of those who have been excluded from the canonical Catholic imaginary. Thus, empowerment is a key strategy of the female ordination movement, as women priests feel empowered to claim their sacramental agency, and in turn they inspire their supporters to take ownership of their identity and of their place in the Church.[195] Through the creation of supportive communities united around a shared feminist ethos and a progressive outlook on Catholic spirituality, women priests are moving the Church to honour women's experiences and to claim women's power.

Women's encounters with Catholic Christianity can simultaneously be beset with painful feelings of alienation and filled with opportunities for life-giving renewal (Barr Ebest, 2003; Gervais, 2012; Schneiders, 2004). Women priests and their supporters have drawn upon their collective feelings of powerlessness not only to build solidarity but also to use these experiences as a resource for working towards greater equality in the Church (Baker Miller, 1976). Beyond typologies of tension and integration, the respondents have demonstrated how women are able to negotiate strategically the differences between feminism and faith in order to create more inclusive spiritualties, governance structures and social outreach.

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[195] In integrating the insights of many empowerment researchers, Perkins and Zimmerman define empowerment as: ' … an intentional ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources; or simply a process by which people gain control over their lives, democratic participation in the life of their community, and a critical understanding of their environment' (1995: 570).

It must be acknowledged therefore, as Michele Dillon argues, that 'religion continues to be a significant dimension intertwining individual lives, collective identities, institutional practices, and public culture, and although in some circumstances it has a negative impact (e.g. violence), in other situations it holds an emancipatory charge (e.g. faith-based organizations)' (2003: 14). The female ordination movement's liberatory approach comes not just from a mere recognition of the multi-levelled and intersecting forms of oppression affecting women in the Roman Catholic Church, but more from a considered and strategic attempt to overturn these forms of subjugation in practical terms. Each of the women priests involved in this study is undoubtedly influenced by feminist ideology and praxis, as every aspect of their worship community formation and models of governance are oriented towards engendering equality, egalitarianism and inclusivity.

In this cartography of struggle and reimagination, rituals have emerged as a key tool of resistance, affirmation and renewal. By drawing upon a common ritual repertoire that emphasizes inclusivity and equality, MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC express themselves as part of a larger movement of social-justice oriented spirituality (Zwissler, 2010). Religious ritual acquires sociological significance because it endows individuals and groups with a certain identity, creates group cohesiveness, provides a sense of security, or imparts on the individual or group a defined sense of tradition and history (see, for example, Bell, 1992). Women priests have acknowledged these values inherent to communal ritualization and in their liturgical activities they have prioritized feminist spirituality as a source of inspiration and enrichment. These women value innovation, spontaneity and experimentation in their ritual acts and 'by making room for new ways of imagining a situation, such practices push at the walls of these boundaries, set them in motion, and stretch the range of options within that world' (Griffith, 1997: 212).

The women priests emphasized the centrality of collective rituals as conduits for the reform and reconceptualization of Catholic paradigms and ontologies. Catherine Bell (1992) has critiqued the field of ritual studies for assuming that there is a divergence between thought and action in rituals. By emphasizing creativity and dynamism in their ritualization, women priests and their communities engage in a paradigm shift away from conventional ideas of Catholic rituals as being staid, traditional and constant. Moreover, by modelling their rituals around values of self-worth, mutual support and social change, women priests and their supporters also use ritual as a platform to explore alternatives to the social alienation, discrimination and disconnection that they have encountered within the canonical Catholic Church (see also, Zwissler, 2010).

Through creative ritualization and feminist models of spirituality, women priests have created sacred spaces and solidarities that are empowering for their members. Through their membership in these inclusive communities and through careful acts of negotiation, the respondents have been able to construct their identities and religious practices against the backdrop of Catholic kyriarchy in ways that subvert traditional images and messages. These new spaces and new expressions of being Church have allowed women to move 'from margin to center', as bell hooks (2000b) would argue, and gives women the agency to operate as autonomous protagonists of their own spirituality.

Critiquing the Female Ordination Movement

However, in assessing the intersectional politics of the female ordination movement, two key points of critique emerge and must be addressed. Firstly, critics of the female ordination movement have questioned whether the movement's reliance on apostolic succession as the basis of its ordinations represents an internalization of 'malestream values' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993) and a perpetuation of the patriarchal oppression of women contained therein.

It must be asked whether the female ordination movement is using 'the master's tools' to 'dismantle the master's house' (Lorde, 1984) and whether 'the masculinist hierarchy between theory and practice is being reproduced' (Kelly, Burton, and Regan, 2013: 9) as the result of the female ordination movement's insistence on pursuing ordination through traditionalist Catholic means. If women priests believe that they need to adhere to apostolic succession for the validity of their ordinations, they appear to be privileging the very thing to which they are ideologically opposed, namely male supremacy, and they appear to be using an androcentric construct to fulfil a feminist praxis of liberation.

Given the respondents' censure of the structural make-up of the institutional Catholic Church, as explored in Chapter Five, it does seem antithetical for the movement to seek validation from the Vatican and the Curia. If the movement holds the institutional Church in such low esteem and if it is attempting to institute a new priestly ministry to evade such patterns of ecclesial patriarchy, then it must be asked why their ordinations need to be certified and endorsed by the Catholic Church. By sanctioning apostolic succession as a necessary conduit to ordination, the female ordination movement appears to have been co-opted into the hierarchical power structure that is antithetical to its participatory aims of egalitarianism and equality.

However, it must also be acknowledged that the movement is seeking to gain legitimacy by co-opting and renewing traditional Catholic practices in a political praxis of resistance and subversion. Whilst the movement's utilization of the doctrine of apostolic succession may appear to be contradictory to its aims, Phillips has cautioned against assuming that religious women's choices reflect false consciousness. For, as she affirms, 'resistance takes many and subtle forms, and what looks to an outsider like submission can sometimes be better understood as empowerment or subversion' (2009: 42). It must be understood, therefore, that whilst the female ordination movement is seeking to rupture the traditional associations and

structures upon which Roman Catholicism is built, it is still seeking to do so in a manner that establishes the validity and rectitude of the women's ordinations in continuity with the Catholic tradition.

An important theme running throughout the women's ordinations, and thus the movement as a whole, is that of legitimacy as the women want their ordinations to be valid within the eyes of the Church.[196] Like Gervais and Sjolander, this thesis utilizes the concept of legitimacy in order to 'convey the [women priests'] wider constructions of Church, rather than to claim any originary authenticity in one set of religious practices versus another' (2015: 369). Women priests define the legitimacy of their actions in terms of their faithfulness to both Catholic traditions and Gospel traditions.Apostolic succession has therefore been understood by the respondents as 'important for women priests, so that they can claim the same "R.I.T.E" rite and therefore claim the same "R.I.G.H.T." right' (Corran, Interview, 03/04/14). Thus, the symbol of apostolic succession becomes a bridge between canonical patriarchal visions of Catholicism and the revolutionary imperative of this feminist movement, as women priests take the symbol of ordination and then transform it and reclaim it to use as their own.

By using this vision of apostolic succession as a bridge or as a 'trump card',[197] it is possible to view women priests as a performative resistance movement. In this instance, women priests have resourcefully borrowed the symbols used to defend and entrench male supremacy in the Church in order to usurp power for themselves and to establish the empowerment of women in resistance to the patriarchal constraints of institutional

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[196] The concept of legitimacy is of course an essentially contested one (see for example, Carter, 1996; Gervais and Sjolander, 2015; and Wittberg, 1996). Debates over legitimacy and authenticity have occurred within major religions, including Roman Catholicism. These debates are inherently conflictual in nature as a result of 'the ways in which dominant religious traditions (and those who espouse them) seek to both contest and control innovation and variation within theology and religious practice' (Gervais and Sjolander, 2015: 368).

[197] Woman priest Victoria Rue explained in the *Pink Smoke* documentary (Hart, 2011) that 'apostolic succession has been used as a kind of "playing card" to say that we can use the rules of your game to subvert your system'.Rue explained that 'apostolic succession has been broken many times in history, yet we will use this traditional untruth "card" to play into the tradition's game, and to create something new.'

Catholicism. Bishop Bridget Mary Meehan describes this 'activism from within' (Gervais, 2011) as a contingent aspect of 'breaking the stained glass ceiling' and she accentuates that this process must be done from inside the church walls, not from outside looking in (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14).

Second, whilst the female ordination movement prides itself on accommodating and affirming various axes of difference, the success of the movement's intersectional politics in practice must be assessed. As explored in Chapter Six, whilst LGBTIQ justice is a core focus of the female ordination movement, the two Judys struggled to acknowledge their own sexuality within the socially conservative Good Shepherd community and failed to incorporate this axis of difference within their ministry of inclusion. More broadly, this case study calls into question the egalitarianism of the female ordination movement as a whole.

The case study of the Good Shepherd community provides a salient example of the ways in which a congregation's demography and cultural base influences the nature of the ministry performed by the woman priest for her community. The two Judys emphasized that it was more important for them to disregard and defy this aspect of the charism of the female ordination movement rather than to provide a model of ministry that was not attuned to the cultural needs of their community. The specificity of social context thus stands as a source of variation for the communities of the female ordination movement and it serves as a possible complication for the constancy and stability of this diverse feminist movement.

This apparent contradiction also raises issues about the complexity of intersectionality in practice and the ways in which social context can affect the means whereby a politics of inclusivity is realized. Varying axes of oppression shape an individual's relationship to the social order and to others. The location of individuals within the this matrix of domination is mitigated by the ways in which various oppressions speak to each other, and in turn their

social context creates a hierarchical ordering of oppressions. Within the context of the Good Shepherd community, for example, the two Judys are performing liberation, but they must also manage the inherent tensions between their sexuality and the cultural dictates of their marginalized community. The two Judys are operating within a conflicted space in which gender collides with class and with race and in which sexual orientation appears to complicate this collision process.

In order to accommodate these concerns and to address their community's multilayered and complex articulations of oppression, a negotiation process occurs in which their sexuality is placed at the bottom of the hierarchy and is viewed to be the category of oppression that is least significant to address and that is potentially most difficult to confront within their conservative milieu. This hierarchy of oppression demonstrates that the female ordination movement's intersectional praxis is marked by a privileging of certain forms of oppression and a silencing of others. Whilst the movement is to be applauded for its holistic approach to engendering equality and justice within the Church, it is evident that there are still limitations to the ways in which this intersectional feminist project is realized.

Policy Implications

Having established the oppressive nature of Church structures and their inability to adjust to the needs of contemporary Catholics, the respondents raised important questions surrounding the sustainability of the institutional Church. In Ali's words, 'the Church as it is can't maintain itself forever because the Church is making itself more and more irrelevant and harmful for women, for men and for their children' (Kirkpatrick, Interview, 08/04/14). The respondents thereby posited the reformist female ordination movement as an enlightened counterpoint to the hierarchical rigidity and systemic structural violence of the Catholic

Church. As was emphasized throughout the respondents' narratives, the authority of the Catholic Church in America has been undermined by several crises and, in order to curb the extensive de-institutionalization and secularizing trends of late modern society, this religious institution requires significant changes in its policy and approach. The Catholic Church can, and indeed should, take guidance from the reforms initiated by the female ordination movement in several respects.

Firstly, whilst 'profound conceptual and symbolic shifts have occurred in relation to gender differentiation and sex roles' in late modern society (Farley, 1977: 67), the Catholic Church's conservatism and entrenched patriarchal attitudes stand as impediments to the realization of gender equality. Given the Church's role in the generation and regulation of social norms, the alteration of Catholic policies relating to issues of gender could have wider consequences for the dominant paradigms and practices that constitute late modern gender politics. It is imperative for the Catholic Church to adapt to the contemporary social and moral climate that 'takes for granted the full human dignity of females, and assumes that women and men are radically equal in their humanity' (Patrick, 2013: 56). Within secular society, the admission of women into the traditionally male-dominated hierarchy of the Catholic Church would also engender significant momentum for the overturning of broader patterns of misogyny and sexism. These shifts in Catholic ideology could also open up spaces for the wider inclusion of the LGBTIQ community, ethnic minorities, the socially disenfranchised, and other groups that have hitherto been marginalized as a result of the kyriarchal authoritarianism of institutional Catholicism.

Second, the ordination of women is not just significant for the integration of women into the existing Catholic hierarchy but also for the opportunities for structural reform and spiritual reinvigoration that this shift would offer the contemporary Church. As has been shown through the harrowing example of the clerical sexual abuse scandal, the institutional Church

requires an overhaul of its structures in order to create greater accountability and transparency in governance. These reforms need to be complemented by a more participatory and democratic governance structure in which the laity can be equal stakeholders and participants in the running of its Church.

This democratization of Church structures will only be achieved by changes to the nature of Church hierarchy. In particular, reforms in the bureaucracy of the Curia and the Vatican need to be made in order to ensure that the liberalism of Pope Francis and his vision of liberation the*logy can be realized in tangible ways within the Catholic Church and to preclude the continued clerical authoritarianism and despotism that has pervaded Catholic culture. The women priests of this study have conceptualized their model of ministry as being accompanied by fundamental changes in several key areas, including: the functions of the priest, the role of the laity, the role of language, the way in which the community of the faithful is envisaged and represented, and the decentralization and diffusion of power. It is these kinds of policy changes that ought to be adopted by the institutional Church in order to ensure its survival in the pluralistic and religiously deinstitutionalized milieu of contemporary society.

Future of the Female Ordination Movement

The respondents held a positive outlook for the future of the female ordination movement, whilst also recognizing the limitations and challenges that are affecting the trajectory of this social justice collective. At a micro level, MMOJ, Good Shepherd, and MMACC are each facing specific challenges that are representative of broader threats to the stability and efficacy of the female ordination movement. Firstly, MMOJ has been confronted by its ageing population and its inability to recruit young members to join its congregation. Amidst

the aforementioned high rates of youth abandoning organized religion, the female ordination movement has been unable to curb these trends of disillusionment and detachment amongst the younger generation. As a result, the demographic composition of women-led parishes mirrors their canonical counterparts and consists of older congregants who are gradually having to reduce their contributions to and involvement within their Churches.

In particular, MMOJ, which is located in an area dominated by retirees and retirement villages, has a much older demographic base than Good Shepherd or MMACC and the respondents perceived their ageing population as a threat to the longevity, continuity and viability of their community. For example, Lee, who described the pews of MMOJ as being dominated by 'white hair and age spots' argued that '[this] community is mature in years and realistically [they] have ten years of energy to put into this project before [they] will be run down, so the question is whether [they] can fully establish the community within ten years and whether there will be anyone coming up who will continue to run and worship in this community' (Bryers, Interview, 14/04/14).

MMACC and Good Shepherd had a similar sense of trepidation as their members acknowledged the need to expand their communities and to recruit younger members who are committed to the cause and who will ensure that the female ordination movement can enact generational change. Therefore, given the age demographic of the congregants and given the lack of focus on evangelization or youth outreach, it must be asked whether MMOJ in particular and the female ordination movement in general can achieve stability and permanence or whether that movement will occupy a transitory and ephemeral space in the American religious landscape.

Second, the Good Shepherd community is facing a similar challenge due to the age of the two Judys and the essential nature of their leadership to this congregation. Whilst the work of the

two Judys is nothing short of remarkable, the question of whether this community is self-sufficient or whether it is hinged upon their pastoral and administrative guidance must be raised. It appears that the community is dependent upon the two Judys for both material and spiritual sustenance, and whilst its members are willing to volunteer and contribute to the community's functioning, it seems unlikely that the Good Shepherd would be able to operate if the two Judys were unable to minister. This question is given urgency by the fact that the two Judys are senior citizens and have each faced battles with cancer in the past few years. As their health and energies decline, it must be asked whether the Good Shepherd will also decline. For, as Judy Lee explains:

> It's just so hard to keep up with the demands, because every week there seems to be more work and more people who need our services… Our prayer is that we will have someone to take over and keep our work here going so that we can back out and just be part of the Church rather than doing everything for the Church. What we have created here is too important for this community and too important a social service to just die out. It needs to live on after we decide it's time to go (Lee, Interview, 17/04/14).

It is a great sign of optimism that the Good Shepherd continues to grow and is expanding its community outreach. However, there appears to be no succession plan within this community. It seems improbable that another woman priest will take up this ministry that has become a vocation of passion for the two Judys and consequently the continuance of this community appears to be uncertain and ultimately under threat. This dependence upon the vision and prophetic ministry of women priests must be addressed within the female ordination movement as a whole, and more dynamic and collaborative models of pastoral leadership need to be developed in order to ensure the resiliency and endurance of this reformist feminist movement.

Finally, MMACC is currently undergoing a change in its pastoral team that has foregrounded issues of the strains placed on women priests and the financial difficulties that arise from the

female ordination movement's independence from the institutional Church. At the time of this research Jane Via had retired from her position as Head Pastor and Nancy Corran had been employed in a paid position as the full-time Pastor of the MMACC community. Jane had decided to retire because the duties of acting as a woman priest and as a parish administrator, alongside her responsibilities working in the District Attorney's Office, had become overwhelming. Jane's narrative therein reveals the strain placed upon women priests, who operate primarily on a voluntary basis, and who have to negotiate their pastoral and ministerial duties with employment and family commitments. She acknowledged that some other women priests in the USA have had to close their parishes as they were unable to manage this confluence of responsibilities. Jane was therefore forthright in asserting the need for MMACC to pay its Head Pastor a full-time salary and she campaigned vociferously to ensure this right for Nancy.

However, some members of MMACC were resistant to this measure because of the community's financial situation. Robert, who was a member of the MMACC Board, explained that this community receives no Diocesan or external financial support and instead relies upon donations from the congregation 'to cover the costs of expenditure relating to renting the sacred space, providing wine and bread for the Eucharist, printing newsletters and orders of service, providing candles every week, funding [their] extensive charitable works, as well as other things that are crucial for the work and the ministry that MMACC performs' (Tyrell, Interview, 08/04/14). Robert also explained that the community struggles to support itself financially and that achieving financial sustainability without the assistance of the institutional Church is a challenge that is common to all communities in the female ordination movement. Consequently, these communities must work to build financial self-sufficiency and to develop strategies for ensuring their economic stability.

Ultimately, whilst the respondents recognized these issues and the need for reflexive evaluation, they also stressed that the female ordination movement is still evolving and is still developing many aspects of its structural and administrative functions. It must be acknowledged that in relative terms the female ordination movement is still in its embryonic stage of development and that it is currently encountering difficulties that are typical within any human organization. As long as the female ordination movement retains a critical and introspective approach in this transitional period, it should be able to resolve many of these issues and to fortify its mission for reform within the Church.

The women priests with whom I spoke explained that the biggest shift that will emerge in this transitional period is the transnational expansion of the movement. Critics such as Moon (2008) have critiqued the female ordination movement for being a predominantly white movement that is localized in Europe and North America, but women priests have argued that they have established their structural base in these regions and that they are now able to expand into Asia, Africa and Latin America in the near future. For example, Judy Lee has travelled to Columbia to assist in the formation and cultivation of women priests in this locale. Judy Lee has explained that she 'feels very much that [they] are one church with the women priests in South America' and that 'spreading the word in South America is really important so that this doesn't just become a white American movement' (Interview, 17th April, 2014).

This commitment to a transnational and transracial solidarity of Catholics working for the reform of the institutional Catholic Church will undoubtedly guide the future trajectory of the female ordination movement as it seeks to entrench itself and its mission within the global religious landscape. In future research I would extend the parameters of this present sample to include other women priest led Catholic communities in North America and Europe, as well as the burgeoning movement in Latin America. It would be interesting to examine such

communities in different geographical contexts and to assess the influence of cultural variations on these groups.

Whilst the respondents were realistic in conceding that changes to the Catholic Church's stance on the ordination of women will possibly not change in their own lifetime, they also acknowledged that the work of women priests and their supporters is important for the longitudinal future of the Church. In this way, Michelle used a poignant metaphor to convey that the female ordination movement is 'planting the seeds for equality in the Church, but [they] may never actually see the flowers grow' (Royale, Interview, 16/04/14). Similarly, Bridget Mary explained that '[their] mission is about standing up for women worldwide, about spreading this sense of hope and hopefully changing hearts and minds and planting the seeds of reform' and that 'it won't matter *when* the Vatican wakes up and accepts it, what is truly important is that the groundwork for this change is happening now; justice is rising up as we encourage people to claim equality, partnership, acceptance, love, and their rights within the Church' (Meehan, Interview, 14/04/14).

Many respondents were firm in the belief that the female ordination movement provides a fruitful conduit for the institutional Church to reform itself, arguing that 'if there is hope for the Church it will not be Pope Francis that brings about change, he cannot do it top-down, it will have to be grassroots groups such as the Roman Catholic women priests who will create change from the bottom up' (Milesko, Interview, 12/04/14). This hopeful vision for the future impact of the female ordination movement inspires its members to 'be the change that [they] want to see happen in the Church', as woman priest Katy put it (paraphrasing Ghandi's famous words) and to continue their feminist praxis that will 'revitalize the Church as a vibrant, relevant community of believers who live the Gospel in our contemporary world' (Zatsick, Interview, 12/04/14).

<u>Transformative Effect of Women-Led Communities on their Members and on the Researcher</u>

The transformative and energizing effect of these communities on their members cannot be undervalued, as a renewed and personally fulfilling articulation of their faith has engendered profound feelings of comfort, belonging and empowerment for their members. Ford described the differences between his MMOJ Church and the canonical Church as 'life-giving, rather than life-sapping' and explained that 'being a member of this inclusive community and witnessing women priests has truly set [him] free, because it has allowed [him] to grow as a Catholic, as a man and as an ally to the cause of justice everywhere' (Englerth, Interview, 16/04/14). This sense of the transformative power of the female ordination movement was certainly echoed within my own personal experience. An auto-ethnographic reflection on my encounters with women priests and their communities attests to the metamorphic potential of their feminist models of Catholicism, as well as to the broader transformative effects which that research can have on researchers within the field of religious studies.

Willey is undoubtedly correct in his assertion that 'researching religion in religious groups comes with issues that set them apart from many other subjects of research' (2012: 434). The question that sociologists of religion must ask, is why is it that this domain of social research is so atypical? I would argue that it is because the study of religion touches on an innate desire for spiritual and personal transcendence and that it intersects with existential issues of life, death and purpose. I underestimated the effects that this research would have on my own person, and after an examination of the relevant literature, it has become apparent that social researchers frequently do not realize how permeable are the boundaries which we set around ourselves during the research process (see for example, Ewing, 1994; Hamabata, 1996; Relke, 2006; and Willey, 2010).

Hamabata explains how he was influenced by his research in a most penetrating manner:

One could say that the experience changed me in fundamental ways. But I do not live comfortably with this change… I may have been compelled to write in order to 'exorcize' the 'other me', thereby reconstituting myself in ways somehow more familiar, in ways seemingly more real and authentic... I may have wanted the 'other me' to die when I left the field, but he simply refused to stop existing. He haunts me still. (Hamabata, 1996: 135).

Hamabata (1996) exemplifies the effects of field research on the researcher. The researcher becomes haunted by the faces s/he creates in the field. At times, research can shake the very foundations on which we work and live and the epistemological foundations that define and constitute our essential selves. This fieldwork will continue to affect every aspect of how I do research. It created a new researcher-self that I will take into the field from this point forward. More importantly, it has left me shaken on a personal level and it has irrevocably altered my faith and my identity as a feminist Catholic. I am currently caught in what Grace Davie (2002) defines as 'belief without belonging'. Since the transformative experiences of witnessing and partaking in these inclusive, reformed Catholic communities, I have been unable to return to a canonical Catholic community and I have been ruptured from my identity as a member of the Catholic Church. I felt that I belonged in the inclusive communities of MMOJ, Good Shepherd and MMACC, but since leaving the field I have been 'haunted' (Hamabata, 1996) by the questions of whether I truly belonged and whether it is possible to belong once the research process has been finalized.

More generally, my experience can be related back to the transformative potential of these communities. Their inclusive nature and their uncompromising devotion to the ethos of egalitarianism conjured a spark within me and gave me a space and a place where I felt nourished, welcomed and spiritually satiated. My story is representative of the stories of so many disaffected, marginalized and fallen away Catholics who find it unconscionable to continue to worship in the canonical Church. Further, my sense of enchantment with these parishes attests to the unique and compelling reformative effect that these inclusive communities have on welcoming in those who have experienced exclusion and oppression.

Further, these impacts go beyond the particular case of Roman Catholicism. In many of the world religions, gender-based oppression and concerns to do with religious hierarchies and institutional structures are pervasive and persistent. Likewise, amidst the widespread individualization of religiosity, emerging modes of resistance and opposition to these religious modes of repression are flourishing and gaining in momentum. The communities studied in this thesis provide a fertile example of one such resistance movement: an attempt to subvert and counteract traditional religious institutions and doctrines in a practical way and to provide a space of solidarity for the disenchanted within the context of religious renewal and reform.

In conclusion, the system of kyriarchy presently institutionalized in the Roman Catholic Church continues to ensure that the surbordination of women and other minorities will persist and intensify. For the sake of those individuals who have been marginalized, as well as for the broader sustainaibility of the Catholic institution, that situation must change. Whilst far from being the perfect model, the female ordination movement, as a vehicle of change, provides an alternative, an example, and a catalyst for reform within the Catholic Church. By integrating feminist epistemologies with innovative approaches to the*logy and ritualization, women priests and their supporters offer an enlightened and inspirational means for the facilitation of such advancement within the Church. Crucial to the ongoing efficacy of that process are the confrontation of canonical practices, teachings and traditions, and the application of feminist egalitarian processes to the performance and construction of Church communities. This subversion and transformation of Catholic conventions must continue to expand and develop in order to liberate disaffected Catholics from the systemic oppression of the institutional Catholic Church.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

MMACC

Nancy Corran	03/04/14
Jane Via	04/04/14
Vinka Validivia	05/04/14
Carol Spong	05/04/15
Oliva Espin	06/04/14
Roland Wilhelmy	07/04/14
Ginny Vanderway	07/04/14
Ali Kirkpatrick	08/04/14
Betty Poppins*[198]	08/04/14
Robert Tyrell*	08/04/14
Simone Tyrell*	08/04/14
Beryl Barker*	08/04/14
Beryl Barker*	08/04/14
Rod Stephens	09/04/14

MMOJ

Diana Milesko	12/04/14
Jack Duffy	12/04/14
Katy Zatsick	12/04/14
Pastor Phil Garrison	14/04/14
Bridget Mary Meehan	14/04/14
Lee Bryers	14/04/14
Mary Murray	14/04/14
Mary Al Gagnon	15/04/14
Ivan Royale *	16/04/14
Michelle Royale*	16/04/14
Ford Englerth	16/04/14
Teresa MacEachern	18/04/14
Sonya Briggs*	18/04/14
Jolene Boyle*	18/04/14
Maureen McGill	19/04/14
Sherry Robertson	19/04/14
Marilyn Jenai	19/04/14

Good Shepherd

Judy Lee	17/04/14
Judy Beaumont	17/04/14

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[198] *: those respondents marked with an asterisk indicated that they did not wish to be identified by name in this study and were given pseudonyms.

Appendix B: Thematic Interview Guide

Each interview resembled an open-ended conversation and the respondents directed the focus of the interview. The following themes and questions were used to prompt the respondents during each interview.

Background Information

- How would you describe your spiritual journey?
- Can you please explain how you came to be involved with MMOJ/Good Shepherd/MMACC?
- What consequences does faith have for your life?
- Does religion contribute to your identity?
- How important is the institutional Catholic Church in the regulation of your daily life?
- Do you question the Church?
- How do you feel about the hierarchy currently in place in the Catholic Church?
- How would you describe the place of women in the Catholic Church?
- Do you feel, or have you felt, marginalized from the broader Roman Catholic Community?
- Are there any other minorities in the Catholic Church?

Involvement in The Female Ordination Movement

- How are you involved in this movement?
- How did you feel before you were involved in the movement?

- How would you describe this movement?

- Do you see resistance as an important part of this movement? Is it resisting traditional practices in the Catholic Church?

- What do you think the aim of the women priest movement should be?

- Would you say that this is a movement purely for women and women's rights?

- Is equality a core aspect of what you do at MMACC?

- Is social justice important to the movement?

- Do you struggle with the idea of a woman priest? Was that a shock or something that you had to adjust to?

- Why do you support the idea of women priests?

- How do you think that this movement is perceived by other Catholics or by wider society?

- Do you see any potential negative effects of your involvement with this movement?

- What do you see in the future of this movement?

- Have you been excommunicated? How do you feel about excommunication?

- Can I ask that given your experiences with the Church, and all the reservations you had with the church, why did you want to stay Catholic? Why stay?

Involvement in MMOJ/Good Shepherd/MMACC

- How is your church community (MMOJ, Good Shepherd or MMACC) different from canonical Catholic parishes?

- Are there ways in which MMACC is still 'Roman'?

- What do you see as the goal of MMOJ/Good Shepherd/ MMACC? What does your community offer people?

- I'm especially interested with how MMOJ/Good Shepherd/MMACC has an emphasis not just on including women, but also on other aspects of social equality. Would you agree with that?

- What benefits (e.g. spiritual, emotional, community support) do you receive from your membership in this community?

- What keeps you coming back to MMOJ/Good Shepherd/MMACC?

- Any challenges involved with this community?

Rituals and The*logy

- Has feminist theology influenced you and what you do at MMACC?

- How important is the group dynamic of going to church?

- How are the rituals different at MMOJ/Good Shepherd/MMACC?

- What parts of the Mass do you especially enjoy?

- How do you feel about the inclusive language?