



## Copyright Statement

This copy of the thesis/dissertation has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognize that its copyright rests with its author and that information derived from it may not be published without attribution.

Copyright ownership of theses and dissertations is retained by the author, but the student must grant to TWU royalty-free permission to reproduce and publicly distribute copies of the thesis or dissertation. In circumstances where the research for the thesis or dissertation has been done in conjunction with other policies discussed in The Texas Woman's University Policy on Intellectual Property, those policies will apply with regard to the author.

No further reproduction or distribution of this copy is permitted by electronic transmission or any other means. The user should review the copyright notice on the following scanned image(s) contained in the original work from which this electronic copy was made.

### Section 108: United States Copyright Law

The copyright law of the United States [Title 17, of the United States Code] governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that use may be liable for copyright infringement.

No further reproduction and distribution of this copy is permitted by transmission or any other means.

Texas Woman's University ©2013.

[www.twu.edu](http://www.twu.edu)



CLERGYWOMEN AND GRIEF: LOCAL CHURCH PASTORS  
AND THEIR EXPERIENCES

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE  
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SCIENCES  
COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

BY

SARAH E. HOWE MILLER, B.A., M.DIV.

DENTON, TEXAS

MAY 2013

## DEDICATION

To Amy and Allie without whom life would be interminably boring.  
“I love you forever. I like for always. As long as I’m living, my baby you’ll be.”  
by Robert Munsch

And in memory of  
Randy Bennett and Bill Oswalt  
They loved my kids who loved them back.

“The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.”  
I Thessalonians 5:24 (NRSV)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank Dr. Joyce Armstrong for her diligent work with me to finish this dissertation in spite of my stroke and other circumstances that colluded to put us together in this way. I may have seen myself as a stray searching for a home but Dr. Armstrong always treated me as one of “her” students and for that I am deeply grateful and forever in her debt. Thank you for believing in me.

I want to thank Dr. Brock for timely suggestions that pointed me in directions that were very helpful. I appreciated your feedback and conversations.

Thank you to Dr. Fannin for guidance even when “life intervened” too many times with funerals and family and arthritis that kept me from working. Your support was invaluable.

Dr. Hwang your willingness to step in with such short notice and provide a possible vision beyond the dissertation amazed me. I am so glad Dr. Armstrong brought us together even though the time was brief. Thank you for your wholehearted participation.

I want to thank my churches who have proved over and over how valuable this education is. Thank you for all the ways you have supported me through the years.

I especially want to thank my sister who was not going to let a little thing like a stroke get in the way. Thanks for forcing me to make those phone calls that I thought were useless and to ask the questions anyway. You were right. It could still be done. You are the best sister in the world! I love you, Raylea.

## ABSTRACT

SARAH E. HOWE MILLER

### CLERGYWOMEN AND GRIEF: LOCAL CHURCH PASTORS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES

MAY 2013

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of clergywomen who have had times of personal grief in the midst of professional responsibilities within a local church context specifically as it related to officiating “hard funerals” for non-family members. Using a Narrative approach, the researcher interviewed 11 clergywomen. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed. Three main themes emerged. The predominant theme was *Overarching Responsibility* which included many aspects of officiating and planning funerals, and pastoral care with families. The second theme was *Plans for Processing Grief* which addressed the various ways the clergywomen handled their own grief. The third theme was *Women as Clergy* in which the clergywomen made note of gender differences in ministry. Recommendations for further study by academia, more continuing education of clergy, and raising of awareness for the laity are made. A proposal of a new term, *Numinous Grief*, for clergy who appropriately hold expressions of grief while officiating services or other duties relating to their professional role and, at another time, may appropriately cry with a family.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	v
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	2
Need for Study .....	3
Purpose .....	5
Research Question .....	6
Theoretical Framework .....	6
Family Systems .....	6
Methodological Approach .....	9
Definitions of Terms .....	9
Assumptions .....	12
Delimitations .....	13
The Researcher as Person .....	13
Summary .....	13
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	15
Grief and Bereavement as Experienced by Professionals (Counselors, Social Workers, etc). .....	16
Blurred Boundaries .....	17
Clergy Stress and Burnout .....	18
Clergy Bereavement Training .....	19
Family Systems .....	20
Grief Theories .....	20
Disenfranchised Grief .....	21
Summary .....	21

III.	METHODOLOGY .....	23
	Rationale.....	24
	Population and Sample.....	24
	Sampling Procedures.....	26
	Context of the Study .....	27
	Delimitations .....	28
	Ethical Considerations .....	28
	Data Collection .....	29
	Research Question .....	30
	Interview Questions .....	30
	Analysis and Interpretation of Data .....	31
	Methods of Verifications.....	31
	Researcher as Person.....	33
	Summary .....	34
IV.	ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	35
	Demographics .....	35
	Themes .....	38
	Overarching Responsibility .....	42
	Plans for Processing Grief.....	65
	Women as Clergy.....	68
	Summary .....	71
V.	SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	74
	Summary of the Study.....	74
	Discussion of Findings.....	74
	Recommendations.....	81
	Implications .....	83
	Conclusions .....	84
	Limitations of this Study .....	85
	Summary .....	86
	REFERENCES.....	87
APPENDICES		
	A. Consent Form.....	108
	B. Demographic Information.....	111
	C. Counseling Resources.....	113
	D. IRB Approval Letter.....	115
	E. Recruitment Flyer .....	117
	F. Initial Telephone Call Script .....	119

G. Interview Guide.....	121
H. Follow-up Telephone Script .....	124



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1 Education.....	36
2 Average worship attendance.....	37
3 Christian denominations.....	38
4 Themes .....	39
5 Theme occurrences.....	41

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Over decades, studies of clergy have demonstrated that while clergy may have once enjoyed a relatively stress-free profession, modern clergy experience stress at levels that lead to burnout at an alarming rate (Brown, 1984; Darling, Hill, & McWey, 2004; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Harbaugh & Rogers, 1984; Lee, 1999; Turton & Francis, 2007). Schweitzer (2003) discovered that as long ago as 1979 a change in expectations for clergy made ministry more stressful because more competencies were required. Doolittle (2010) attests, “the clergy represent a unique vocation with a unique set of required emotional demands and job skills” (p. 89). Darling, Hill, and McWey (2004) articulated the stress experienced by clergy saying,

Clergy in U.S. culture stand at the forefront of helping people during troubled times. They are frequently called upon to support individuals in personal crises such as death or illness, cultural crises such as school violence and acts of terrorism, and environmental crises such as hurricanes and floods (p. 261).

While these crises may be confined to “professional” roles, there may also be concurrent personal crises (Darling et al., 2004). These overlapping professional and personal areas of functioning are a part of boundary ambiguity which leads to higher levels of stress (Brown, 1984; Darling et al., 2004; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Harbaugh & Rogers, 1984; Lee, 1999; Purnell, 2004; Turton & Francis, 2007). The problems of clergy stress and

burnout continue to build according to Proeschold-Bell, LeGrand, James, Wallace, Adams, and Toole (2011) who reported, “There is also a growing literature on stress and burnout among clergy” (p. 701).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In order to provide guidance for clergy toward appropriate boundaries, Marie Fourtune suggested that clergy cannot be friends with church members and must not have “dual roles” with church members (Sawchuk, O’Connor, Walsh-Bowers, Ross, & Hatzipantelis, 2007). This recommendation is in direct opposition to the traditional advice given to new pastors to “love your people.” In the midst of ministry, pastors often develop close relationships with church members. There are many times when their areas of functioning overlap like a Venn diagram with church members (Kuhne & Donaldson, 1995). A church member may be the teacher for the pastor’s child. The pastor may be a volunteer coach or PTA member. The pastor may see a church member who is a physician for treatment of a cold. While role ambiguity for a pastor is discouraged when a “pastor as professional” model, like Fourtune, (Sawchuk et al., 2007) is used, role ambiguity is a common occurrence for pastors especially for those in rural or small churches (Kuhne & Donaldson, 1995; Mellow, 2002). “Clergy, unlike other helping professionals, do not adhere to a standard code of ethics that provides or sets guidelines and rules for dual relationships” (Wells, Probst, McKeown, Mitchem, & Whiejong, 2012). According to Friedman (1985) this experience is shared across faith traditions. Friedman writes “It is the thesis of this book that all clergymen and clergywomen,

irrespective of faith, are simultaneously involved in three distinct families whose emotional forces interlock: the families within the congregation, our congregation, and our own” (p. 1). It is the overlap and interaction of these families that provides the foundation for the understanding of Family Systems theory within the church today.

In this unique relationship, pastors who have been in ministry for any length of time will have an occasion when they are called on as a professional for a funeral but will also have personal feelings of grief or bereavement because of the genuine experience of loss of the relationship (Kuhne & Donaldson, 1995). The grief experience may be confined to the pastor but may also have an impact on the pastor’s family.

### **Need for Study**

During the course of ministry, as a part of the multiple family systems at work within the local church, clergy are called on to officiate funerals, some for individuals completely unknown to the clergy, some for individuals casually known, and some for individuals who not only are known well but have become part of the circle of people for whom the clergy care deeply. Among clergy, these funerals are known as “hard funerals” because of the strong emotions evoked by the loss of the relationship; clergy experience grief and bereavement. Other “hard funerals” are those that “hit close to home,” such as a funeral for someone who reminds the clergy of his or her mother, or a funeral for an infant, or a funeral for someone of the same age, etc. “Hard funeral” is a term used colloquially by experienced clergy to describe a funeral that has more emotional content

or a greater theological struggle for the clergy than a typical funeral. As a colleague described it,

A hard funeral is when you must force yourself to play the pastoral role instead of joining those who are in need of care. You must console rather than be consoled. You must speak the words of grace not just to the assembly but to yourself. You are called to be not one of the grieving but one who is charged with their well being. You must be the one who hold up the light of the gospel at a time when the darkness seems all too real (H. Rodrick-Schnaath, personal communication, July 16, 2011).

A retired clergywoman articulated the theological struggle as, "When you as preacher are SO ANGRY at what has happened, you can't find the gospel-place in your OWN mind and heart." (Eileen Conway, personal communication, July 16, 2011.) Grief is one factor that is considered when measuring levels of stress; however, even as concern over the levels of stress for clergy are examined, often there is no discussion of the impact grief plays in the amount of stress for clergy or the related impact of levels of coping by clergy.

The lack of discussion points to a missing awareness of the experience of grief for clergy in the local church. Doka (1989) writes, "There are circumstances, however, in which a person experiences a sense of loss but does not have a socially recognized right, role, or capacity to grieve. In these cases, the grief is disenfranchised. The person suffers a loss but has little or no opportunity to mourn publicly" (p. 3). The nature of the

professional needs during the time of preparation for the funeral and the officiating of the funeral mean that the personal grief experience of the clergy is not recognized.

Frame and Shehan (2004) found that gender has an impact on the performance of ministry tasks which can contribute to blurred boundaries and which can add stress related to professional responsibilities. Clergywomen tend to focus more ministry toward the tasks related to pastoral care which may lead to more emotional overload than for clergymen (Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998; Frame & Shehan, 2004). Naturally, the pastoral duties related to grief and bereavement and the tasks related to preparation for officiating funerals are considered duties of pastoral care. Since the ministry related to the needs of grief and bereavement are pastoral in nature and since gender has an impact on the performance of ministry tasks, for the purpose of this study, only clergywomen will be participants.

### **Purpose**

While many grief and bereavement resources suggest that clergy are helpful to those experiencing loss (Kuhne & Donaldson, 1995; Southall, 1992), there is no discussion of the experience of grief, loss, or bereavement of the clergy that results from a relationship in the local church. This qualitative study is an exploration into the experiences of clergywomen who have had times of personal grief in the midst of professional responsibilities within a local church context, i.e., clergy grief: when the professional is personal. Narrative approach will be used to explore the experience of

clergywomen as explained by the understanding of disenfranchised grief and family systems.

### **Research Question**

The following question will be used in this study. What is the experience of clergywomen who have experienced grief/bereavement at a personal level due to a professional relationship within the local church?

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Family Systems**

Family Systems theory will be used in this study. In the Foreword to *How Your Church Family Works* by Steinke (1993), Friedman discusses the blurred boundaries and interactions of the family systems that occur for clergy in local congregations based on his understanding of Dr. Murray Bowen's theory of family systems. "The family model is not simply a new technique, but a fundamentally new way of thinking about relationships" (Steinke, 1993, ii). "The strength of family systems theory is that it takes into account the congregation as a whole, as a living organism continually affected by every part that comprises the whole" (Minnich-Sadler, 2005, p. 8). "Systems think is basically a way of thinking about life as all of a piece" (Stienke, 1996, p. 3).

For many involved in Christian communities, family language is integral in faith understandings. "Many congregations speak of their membership as brothers and sisters in Christ, and we are frequently urged to regard Christians throughout the world as our sisters and brothers" (Way, 2003, p. 14). This understanding of the church as family is

supported within the Christian tradition. In Christian scripture, particularly within letters written by the apostle Paul, the language of the church as the family of God is common.

For example, Galatians begins

Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— and all the members of God’s family who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: (Galatians 1:1-2, New Revised Standard Version).

In Ephesians, Paul writes

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:3-6).

And, in I Thessalonians,

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and



with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake (I Thessalonians 1:2-5).

In practical, everyday experiences of the church, there is often a focus on families. “Much of congregational ministry occurs around the care of families, especially as they experience transitions and brokenness, issues related to drawing boundaries and embodying inclusiveness, and care of the most vulnerable ones – children and the aged” (Way, 2003, p. 14). The ministries include the rituals associated with birth, marriage, and death, as well as, the more informal support of taking meals to families during times of crisis.

The kinship family and the congregational family are both historical organisms, that is, their dynamics get worked out in everyday existence and there is no simple model that can be applied to any given family. Family systems theory, however, can help us understand the general patterns of how persons live together and it can helpfully inform our ministries. Both kinship and congregational families are emotional systems in which memories and past experiences affect present life together. (Way, 2003, p. 14)

Most pastors who build caring relationships with church members through the everyday professional role of pastor will have blurred boundaries that create a unique relationship (Kuhne & Donaldson, 1995; Sawchuk et al., 2007). Thus, family systems theory provides a lens through which to examine the experience of grief by clergywomen within a local church.

## **Methodological Approach**

Narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research that allows participants to express their story and their experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Schiffrin, 1996). Narrative inquiry pairs well with Family Systems theory because relationships are often expressed by the stories that explain them. Narrative inquiry also allows participants to elaborate on the emotional connections within the family system of the local church while sharing their experiences. Holly and Colyar (2009) write “Narrative inquiry is based on the premise that human beings are essentially raconteurs who experience the world and interact with others through storied lives” (p. 680). In this study, narrative inquiry will allow participants to tell their stories of experiencing grief within the relationships of a local church.

## **Definitions of Terms**

While, “[t]he terms ‘grief’, ‘mourning’ and ‘bereavement’ are often used synonymously”, (Ringdal, Jordhey, Ringdal, & Kassa, 2001, p. 92; see also Blevins, 2008; Copeland, Noble, & Feldstein, 1995; Ellor, 2005; Goldsworthy, 2005; Massey, 2000), it is helpful to have some frame of reference for the ways in which the terms are used independently.

*Bereavement*, as defined by Ringdal, et al., (2001), “refers to the objective situation of an individual having lost a significant person by death. Bereavement is the cause of both grief and mourning” (p. 92). An older operational definition of bereavement used by Lopata (1979) has a similar description: “loss, especially of a loved

one by death” (p. 13). While Gerber, Wiener, Kutscher, Battin, Arkin, and Golberg (1979) state that “Bereavement is the postscript to the event of death” (p. 9). Corr, Nabe, and Corr (2003) specify three essential elements in bereavement: “(1) a relationship with some person or thing that is valued; (2) the loss – ending, termination, separation – of that relationship; and (3) a survivor deprived of the valued person or thing by the loss” (p. 209).

*Family systems* is the overlap and interaction of the three distinct families whose emotional forces interlock: the families within the congregation, the local church or congregation, and family of the clergyperson (Friedman, 1985). In his book *Generation to Generation*, Friedman writes “It is the thesis of this book that all clergymen and clergywomen, irrespective of faith, are simultaneously involved in three distinct families whose emotional forces interlock: the families within the congregation, our congregation, and our own” (Friedman, 1985, p. 1).

*Grief*, according to Ringdal et al., (2001),

is a normal affective response to overwhelming loss, characteristically the death of a loved person such as spouse, parent, child, which does not require therapeutic intervention if it runs an uncomplicated course. Grief includes a number of psychological, cognitive and somatic reactions that the bereaved individual usually, but not always, expresses. It has been defined as an emotional syndrome. While some responses may be more symptomatic of grief than others, no single response is essential to the syndrome. (p. 92)

Corr, et al. (2003) further elaborated on the concept of grief by including specific descriptions of the “physical, psychological (affective/cognitive), and behavioral dimensions represented by: physical sensations, feelings, thoughts or cognitions, behaviors, social difficulties, and spiritual searching” (p. 211). Corr, et al. (2003) discussed the depth of meaning of grief by emphasizing that “grief can be associated with increased risk of illness or morbidity in bereaved persons” (p. 211).

*Disenfranchised grief* is the term used when “The person suffers a loss but has little or no opportunity to mourn publicly” (Doka, 1989, p. 3).

*Hard funeral* is a term used colloquially by experienced clergy to describe a funeral that has more emotional content for the clergy than a typical funeral. As aptly described by a Lutheran clergy colleague of the researcher, “A hard funeral is when you must force yourself to play the pastoral role instead of joining those who are in need of care. You must console rather than be consoled. You must speak the words of grace not just to the assembly but to yourself. You are called to be not one of the grieving but one who is charged with their well being. You must be the one who holds up the light of the gospel at a time when the darkness seems all too real” (Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath, personal communication, July, 16, 2011). There is often a numinous quality to hard funerals that is also paradoxical as the clergy are simultaneously very aware of the Pastoral role they hold as the representative of the divine and acutely aware of how limited they are as humans.

*Loss* is experienced in more than one way with death being “the primary loss – the termination of the attachment or relationship; secondary losses are those that follow from a primary loss” (Corr, et al., 2003, p. 208).

*Mourning* “has been reserved for the observable expression of grief” (Ringdal et al., 2001, p. 92). Corr, et al. (2003) defined mourning as “the processes of coping with loss and grief, and thus the attempt to manage those experiences or learn to live with them by incorporating them into ongoing living” (p. 217).

*Resilience* has been defined as “the ability to recover quickly from disruptions in functioning that result from stress appraisals and to return to the previous level of functioning” (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008, p. 445).

*Stress* is “a transaction between the person and the environment, whereby individuals appraise environmental demands as outweighing their abilities to meet those demands” (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008, p. 445).

*Thriving* is evidenced by “individuals who step up do whatever it takes to meet the challenge and grow to an even higher level of functioning and well-being than previously experienced” (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008, p. 447).

### **Assumptions**

The following assumptions will be made.

1. Participants will volunteer to be a part of the study.
2. Participants will respond openly and honestly about their experiences of grief as it relates to officiating a hard funeral.

3. The researcher will be aware that as a participant-observer, she will both impact the study and be impacted by it.
4. The researcher will be aware of her own preconceived ideas and interpretations and will consciously attempt to bracket those biases.

### **Delimitations**

The following delimitations will be applied to this study.

1. Participants will be ordained Christian clergywomen.
2. Participants will have officiated more than 15 funerals for church members for whom they were pastor.
3. Participants will have officiated at least one funeral that was a hard funeral due to their own experience of grief related to the funeral.

### **The Researcher as Person**

The researcher is a member of the population that will be studied. She is an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church who has officiated more than 15 funerals and more than one hard funeral. She has knowledge of some of the potential research participants. While there may be an advantage from an insider's perspective, this perspective may cause researcher bias and presuppositions about which she will be aware as stated above.

### **Summary**

While grief and bereavement are recognized as a source of stress and there is concern for the growing levels of stress experienced by clergy as a part of their

professional roles, there are no studies that examine the influence of grief and bereavement on female clergy as experienced as a part of their professional roles. Funerals are an obvious ministry of all clergy but an often overlooked source of stress as well as a source of disenfranchised grief. This qualitative study will be an exploration into the experiences of clergywomen who have had times of personal grief in the midst of professional responsibilities within a local church context.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This qualitative study is an exploration into the experiences of clergywomen who have had times of personal grief in the midst of professional responsibilities within a local church context, i.e., clergy grief: when the professional is personal. The strategy of inquiry for this study will be a narrative approach in order to allow for the expression of the experience of the clergywomen in the study. Although many grief and bereavement resources suggest that clergy are helpful to those experiencing loss (Kuhne & Donaldson, 1995; Southall, 1992), there is no discussion of the experience of grief, loss, or bereavement of the clergy that results from a relationship in the local church. This experience was articulated by one retired clergy in a group of clergy discussing funerals by saying, “The only bad thing about a long pastorate is you bury too many of your friends” (A. R. Sowell, personal communication, June 30, 2008). While the clergy in that group understood the expressed sentiment, in a society where grief is invisible, the related grief and bereavement experiences of clergy are also invisible, which is an aspect of disenfranchised grief (Doka, 1989). Johnson (2004) supported this understanding of invisibility of grief and bereavement stating, “In North America, death and grief are not spoken about readily or easily” (p. 435). In the review of literature, there will be an examination of articles addressing other professionals who have experienced grief and bereavement within a professional relationship, such as, nurses, in order to have a



comparison for clergy who experience grief within a professional relationship. There have also been articles published related to professionals within the hospice context, however, there are no published studies related to pastors within the local church.

### **Grief and Bereavement as Experienced by Professionals (Counselors, Social Workers, etc.)**

As much as it is assumed that clergy will officiate funerals, it is often overlooked that clergy will grieve for those for whom they are officiating funerals. There are other professionals who experience grief related to the death of someone in their care while they are at work such as social workers in hospital Intensive Care Units and Labor and Delivery Nurses. Puterbaugh (2005) found that therapists who regularly provide bereavement counseling can experience burnout and compassion fatigue, and yet, there is little research available in this area, particularly for those who are clergy. Similarly, McCormick (2007) found that social workers in a hospital intensive care unit often did not receive adequate education related to palliative care and bereavement. In another study, Deffenbaugh (2008) found that professional counselors did not perceive their grief counseling competencies to be strong unless they had completed two or more courses on grief.

Although the connection may not be as readily obvious as the connection between clergy and counselors or social workers, there is also an important situational connection between the experiences of clergy and labor and delivery nurses. Hodgson, Segal, Weidinger, and Linde (2004) state, “‘Being there’ is a concept that is at the heart of

therapeutic relationships” (p. 48). Labor and delivery nurses have a similar experience to clergy, in that, they experience grief and bereavement due to their professional role and, at the same time, are affected at a personal level when an infant dies and the nurses continue to provide care for the mother (Burgner, 2007).

### **Blurred Boundaries**

By its very nature, the practice of ministry has blurred boundaries, involving relationships that begin due to a professional position in a church and continue in personal relationships within the community, especially for those clergy who serve in rural settings (Southall, 1992; Mellow, 2002; Weaver, Flannelly, Garbarino, Figley & Flannelly, 2003). “Unlike other helping professionals, clergy do not have a code of ethics prohibiting dual relationships” (Bleiberg & Skufca, 2005, p. 3). In addition to clearly professional pastoral care visits to hospitals or bereavement visits, the stands of a football game or a trip to the grocery store can become an occasion for pastoral care (Mellow, 2002; Weaver et al., 2003).

In the Care-Giver role, ministers act as people-helpers through counseling, crisis intervention, hospital visitation and other acts of mercy when emotional, spiritual, or other forms of personal needs arise. This working role puts special demands on the pastor since he must maintain the managerial leadership of the organization while fulfilling a care-giver role in the organization. The interpersonal implications of being both aware of, and involved in, the personal lives of church

members creates a professional demand that normal managers of organizations never face (Kuhne & Donaldson, 1995, p. 159).

While there are some shared experiences with other care-giving professions like Social Work or Nursing, the nature of pastoral care differs from Social Work or nursing care due to the continued relationship of pastors with church members and their families while social workers and nurses discontinue their relationship with clients and their families after death (Kuhne & Donaldson, 1995; Hodgson, Segal, Weidinger, & Linde, 2004). Other care-giving professions are more likely to have a specific duration of time and are more likely to have the professional “one-way” boundaries expected in professional relationships (Mellow, 2002; Weaver et al., 2003; Hodgson et al., 2004).

Due to the nature of the blurred boundaries of ministry, the social support network of clergy and their families is often composed of church members. When clergy families move or there is conflict within the church, the clergy experience the additional loss of their support network (Frame, 1998). Blurred boundaries may also create an ethical and moral context in which power and gender differentials are ignored or minimized which may foster inappropriate clergy-congregant relationships (Sawchuk et al., 2007).

### **Clergy Stress and Burnout**

The regular occurrence of blurred boundaries can contribute to increased stress for clergy. “Although this blurring of boundaries may not be obvious at all times, this formulation is frequently at the root of burnout” (Grosch & Olsen, 2000, p. 621). The experience of blurred boundaries is a contributing factor for stress related to issues of

intrusiveness (Darling et al., 2004). Because of the unique position of clergy and their families within a congregation, Family Stress Theory can be used to help understand the cumulative effects of various stressors for the clergy and their families (Darling et al., 2004).

[Ongoing] stress can cause the body's natural adaptive powers to fail, resulting in personality changes, health problems, and even death. Stress need not be the result of major events, but can be the result of just ordinary, everyday, and even insignificant occurrences which, over a period of time, can accumulate and subsequently erupt, causing inordinate concern and involving large expenditures of nervous energy. (Turton & Francis, 2007, p. 62)

Ongoing stress can lead to burnout. "Burnout is a response to chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings, especially when they are troubled or having problems" (Ross, Greenfield, & Bennett, 1999, p. 724). Clergy burnout has become so prevalent that it is under examination even at the seminary level with entering clergy (Harbaugh & Rogers, 1984).

### **Clergy Bereavement Training**

While clergy are often among those first notified of a death, the formal bereavement training received through seminary education is often minimal, or worse, non-existent (Massey, 2000; Lloyd-Williams, Wright, Cobb, & Shiels, 2004; Lloyd-Williams, Cobb, & Taylor, 2006). This trend of minimal or non-existent bereavement training has apparently remained unchanged since the recommendations of Hurst (1979).

In addition to the poor training for clergy in the area of normal grief and bereavement, Massey (2000) found that clergy need greater awareness and training for disenfranchised grief and other grief complications.

### **Family Systems**

While there are many theories of family systems, the understanding of Bowen's family systems theory as presented by Edwin Friedman in the book *Generation to Generation* and further adapted by Peter Steinke in the books *Healthy Congregations* and *How Your Church Family Works* are the basic texts and guidelines for the discussion of family systems within the church today (Way, 2003; Minnich-Sadler, 2005). Because so many churches have families and multiple generations of families in addition to functioning as extended families, an understanding of family systems is helpful for clergy (Sawin, 1981; Friedman, 1985; Christano, 1996).

### **Grief Theories**

Although Kubler-Ross's understanding of grief is the most commonly known, there are other theories of grief including those of Virginia Satir, John Bowlby, and William Worden (Goldsworthy, 2005; Blevins, 2008). Kubler-Ross (1969) described the reaction to death with five stages: a) denial, b) anger, c) bargaining, d) depression, and, e) acceptance. Virginia Satir developed six stages of change: a) status quo, b) introduction of a foreign element, c) chaos, d) integration, e) practice, and, f) new status quo (Blevins, 2008). There are four phases of grief according to Bowlby: a) numbing, b) yearning and searching, c) disorganization and despair, and, d) reorganization (Goldsworthy, 2005).

Worden explains the grieving process as four tasks of mourning: a) accept the reality of the loss, b) working through the pain of grief, c) adjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing, d) emotionally relocating the deceased and moving on with life (Wolfelt, 1992; Worden, 2002; Blevins, 2008).

### **Disenfranchised Grief**

Dick (1989) addresses the disenfranchised grief that arises within a professional relationship with AIDS workers using their own stories to describe their own bereavement and feelings of isolation. Her concluding sentence reads, “That responsibility should include the public acknowledgment of their contributions to society and the private offer of our love and devotion to their humanity” (Dick, 1989, p. 65). The isolation and experience of disenfranchised grief is also experienced by nurses and dying patients as well as hospice workers (Lev, 1989; Rosen, 1989).

### **Summary**

As appropriate for a narrative inquiry to research, interviews of clergywomen will be conducted in order to explore the research question: What is the experience of clergywomen who have experienced grief/bereavement at a personal level due to a professional relationship within the local church? The responses of the clergywomen interviewed will provide insight and further understanding for those who care about the well-being of clergy in the local church.

There are valuable insights to be gained from the studies of counselors, social workers, and labor and delivery nurses for the affect of grief and bereavement that is

experienced within a professional relationship. While the relationships are not identical to the professional relationships of clergy, there is an understanding that can help build the foundation for exploration of the experiences of clergy who experience grief and bereavement due to a professional relationship. The published grief and bereavement experiences of these other professionals will serve as a means for triangulation of the grief and bereavement experiences of clergy.

Of the models of grief examined for this project, Worden's model of grief seems to provide the best fit. Although the experience of grief and bereavement by the clergy is personal, it may not always have the depth of emotion that is expressed in the other models of grief. However, Worden's model of grief provides a way to talk about the affect of grief and bereavement for a range of the experience of grief and bereavement.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

In order to explore the impact of grief and bereavement on clergywomen within the professional relationship of the local church, this study used a qualitative design. The strategy of inquiry for this study is narrative in order to allow for the expression of the experience of the clergywomen in the study. The qualitative design is particularly suited for a study that examines the experiences of clergywomen who, during the performance of their profession as pastors of a local church, experience grief and bereavement on a personal level. This experience was articulated by one retired clergy in a group of clergy discussing funerals by saying, “The only bad thing about a long pastorate is you bury too many of your friends” (A. R. Sowell, personal communication, June 30, 2008). While the clergy in that group understood the expressed sentiment, in a society where grief is invisible, the related grief and bereavement experiences of clergy are also invisible, which is an aspect of disenfranchised grief (Doka, 1989). Johnson (2004) supported this understanding of invisibility of grief and bereavement stating, “In North America, death and grief are not spoken about readily or easily” (p. 435).

In such situations where invisibility is operative, qualitative research is particularly useful. “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 4). Qualitative research allows the participants to



share their experiences in a way that is more self-directed than strictly formulaic. The questions were open-ended with allowance for individual answers instead of closed-ended questions with forced choices for answers.

### **Rationale**

In order to provide better support for clergy coping with various sources of stress, it was helpful to examine a reoccurring source of stress for clergy, namely, funerals and the impact of grief and bereavement related to those deaths. In a society that often ignores death, dying, grief and bereavement, this study was one avenue for bringing to the table discussions of death, dying, grief, and bereavement while simultaneously revealing a regular occurrence in the experience of clergy who are serving a local church. This study provides judicatory leaders (those who oversee local churches in churches with a hierarchical system of polity), local churches, and others who care about clergy with information regarding the levels of stress and coping as related to grief and bereavement that are experienced due to the professional relationships of clergy with laity who have died. Mellow (2002) found that the blurred boundaries of clergy in professional roles create a unique role. This study sheds light on this experience of blurred boundaries in which the clergy experience grief and bereavement due to their relationship with church members which will also increase awareness of their disenfranchised grief.

### **Population and Sample**

After receiving approval for research, eight to ten participants were sought using social media which lends itself to snowball sampling. The researcher is a clergywoman

and has many contacts that are either active within a local church or also clergy so she posted this status: “Dear Friends, I have finally received permission to move forward with research for my dissertation research for a PhD in Family Studies on the topic of Clergywomen and grief. If you are a clergywoman who has officiated 15 or more funerals for people not related to you and have served 5 or more years in a local church setting (can be more than one church) and are interested, send me a message so I can send the recruitment flyer and contact information to you. Or if you are willing to pass on the flyer or information to other clergywomen let me know so I can send that to you. Thank you for helping me with this project! Sarah.”

At the time of recruitment, the researcher was a Full Elder of the Central Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church which had almost 300 fulltime active Elders in the greater Fort Worth area, she was a Board Member of RevGalBlogPals which had approximately 400 international, ecumenical members, and she was a former member of Arlington Ministerial Alliance (which had disbanded) which had about 40 regular members where she still maintained contact with clergy of other denominations.

All clergywomen who responded were instructed to call if there were any questions (no one called) or send their name and mailing address via personal message. There were 30 clergywomen who responded within 24 hours volunteering to participate. The researcher sent consent forms (Appendix A), demographic information forms (Appendix B), counseling resources (Appendix C), with a self-addressed stamped

envelope to those who were too far for an in person interview. Those who lived within a 90 minute drive were contacted for face-to-face interviews. Since IRB approval (Appendix D) was for a sample size of eight to ten, the researcher limited those in Texas to five. Those who lived beyond a 90 minute drive were interviewed by phone. All interviews were audio recorded and participants were aware of the recording as it occurred. The clergywomen who returned the consent forms, met the criteria, and were available for interviews became the participants. There was an addition of a Church of England clergywoman whose consent form was delayed. After consultation with the major professor, the researcher made arrangements to interview her by phone for additional diversity.

### **Sampling Procedures**

The participants of this study were 11 clergywomen who had served a cumulative of five or more years in a local church setting as pastor and who had officiated 15 or more funerals for non-family members. The researcher has personal relationships from close friendships to acquaintanceships with clergy in multiple Christian denominations across the United States, Canada, England, Scotland, and Australia. The recruitment flyer (Appendix E) was sent via email and Facebook personal message to clergy who are known to the researcher. Additionally, those who received the recruitment flyer were also asked to use their social networks to access and recruit participants. The initial phone call script (Appendix F) was available for anyone who called as a potential participant for the study.

## **Context of the Study**

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), there are two waves of decision making for the gathering of data: the site and the participants. For this study, the decision making regarding the participants takes precedence over the actual site in which the conversations take place. In order to provide participants with the greatest comfort possible, each participant chose the place for the interview. The option for a phone interview was offered in order to facilitate the inclusion of participants who were not available for a face-to-face interview due to geographic location and limited funds for travel while facilitating diversity of denominational affiliation. Since the research is focused on the experiences of the clergy, the data are not dependent on a particular place or context. The comfort level of the participants dictated the place for the interview or a phone interview was utilized when distance prohibited a face-to-face meeting.

In addition to the consent form (Appendix A), an audio recorder, pen and paper were brought to the interview. The consent form (Appendix A) was signed and a copy was given to the participant or was retained if it had been returned by mail prior to a phone interview. Demographic data (Appendix B) were gathered to gain information about participant's education, ordination, church experience, age, and denomination. A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix G) was used to obtain information about the participant's grief experiences. Each was specifically instructed: "Tell me about a "hard funeral" you have officiated for a church member."

Participants were asked to respond while the interviews were audio recorded. The audio recordings were transcribed and analyzed for themes. The results were reported using a narrative format. Each participant received a referral list for counseling (Appendix C) after the interview or in the mail prior to the interview with the consent forms. At the completion of the interview, participants were asked if they may be contacted by the researcher in a few days to allow participants to add information, if necessary (Appendix H). This follow-up question was also asked on the demographic form (Appendix B).

### **Delimitations**

The participants were clergy who have served in a local church setting for a cumulative, minimum of five years and have officiated more than fifteen funerals for individuals who were not part of the clergy person's family. The participants were solicited from different Christian denominations and different geographic locations.

### **Ethical Considerations**

To ensure the protection of the participants in this research, the study was conducted in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Texas Woman's University (Appendix D). Approval of this study was requested and obtained prior to initiation of data collection. There are two ethical considerations for this study: a) the informed consent of the participants; and, b) protecting the identity of the participants. Prior to the interview, each participant received, signed, and returned an informed consent form that detailed the benefits and

risks of participating in the study (Appendix A). The participants were informed of the ability to end participation at any time without consequence.

In order to protect the identity of participants, participant names were replaced with researcher assigned codes and identifying details regarding location were removed. Numeric codes were developed based on date and participant and were assigned to each participant beginning with number MMDD01. Coding proceeded consecutively. Only the researcher had access to identifying information. Participant names appeared only on the consent form which was stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office. Code numbers, audio files, interview transcripts, and field notes were placed in locked cabinet, accessible to the researcher only. Confidentiality was protected at all times and no identifying information was included in the presentation of data.

### **Data Collection**

Rossmann and Rallis (2003) stated, "Standardized open-ended interviews are tightly prefigured, having fixed questions that are asked of all participants in a particular order. Because of the nature of the questions, however, participants respond freely" (p. 182). Following this advice, the interviews were conducted following the interview questions and were audio-recorded in order to provide a means through which the interviews were transcribed. The data were gathered from the transcribed interviews and the researcher's observational notes regarding facial expressions or other body language that was not captured by an audio recording for the face-to-face interviews.

### **Research Question**

In order to examine the experiences of the clergy participants, the research question probed for the ways in which grief and bereavement are a part of clergy life in a local church setting as the clergy interact with parishioners on a regular basis. Over time, clergy in a local church setting establish relationships that include emotional connections with parishioners. When there is a death among the parishioners, the clergy are contacted in professional role but, as they perform their professional duties, will naturally experience grief and bereavement for those with whom there is an emotional connection.

In order to illuminate the grief and bereavement issues confronting pastors, the following research question was addressed by the present research:

What is the experience of clergywomen who have experienced grief/bereavement at a personal level due to a professional relationship within the local church?

### **Interview Questions**

The questions that were asked during the interviews that helped illuminate the issues of grief and bereavement experienced by clergy during a professional relationship were:

Tell me about a “hard funeral” you have officiated for a church member. (Pause)

Prompts as needed

How did you cope with your personal experience of grief?

Were any of your family members affected by grief when this person died?

m-hmm

smiling

nodding

I see.

I understand.

How so?

What more could you say about that?

Let me see if I understand what you are saying.

What else comes to mind?

Anything else?

### **Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

The themes of the study emerged from the data through the analysis and interpretation. Since the particular topic was focused on the grief and bereavement of clergy, attention was paid to appropriate theories of grief and bereavement that supported the experiences of the clergy in the study (Kearney & Hyle, 2006). Since the focus was on the experiences of the clergy from their own stories, the analysis was narrative inquiry. The reported behaviors of the clergy in response to the grief and bereavement and resulting themes were examined in relationship to the behaviors reported in the grief theories of Worden (2002), Wolfelt (1992), and Kubler-Ross (1969).

### **Methods of Verification**

As recommended by Creswell (2009), the verification strategies of triangulation and clarification of bias were used to help add rigor and authenticity. The experiences of other professionals, such as hospice counselors and neo-natal nurses, who regularly



encounter death through their professional roles, were compared with the clergy for grief and bereavement experiences for triangulation through published experiences as found in the Literature Review section. The grief experiences of other professionals provided a comparison for the grief experiences of clergy in professional roles. Additionally, a former hospice social worker who is currently a United Methodist clergywoman examined sample transcripts and the identified themes for her perception of fit.

The grief experiences of the participants were analyzed through word analysis, key-words-in-context, chunks of text: coding, and finding themes. Qualitative data are often in narrative form (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). This study used a narrative approach with open ended questions which produced free-flowing texts for each participant. Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggest that no analysis will “do it all” (p. 261) but several may be used for exploring data or making comparisons. The responses of the participants were analyzed and compared with each other using word counts, key-words-in-context, chunks of text: coding, and finding themes.

Clarification of bias was important for the researcher. Because the researcher is a clergyperson who has served in a local church setting for more than the minimum of five years and has officiated more than fifteen funerals for individuals who were not part of the researcher’s family, the researcher has an emic perspective and thus clarified her bias through self-reflection and reflexivity (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). While arguing for strength in shared stories, experience, and collaboration within academic disciplines in order for research to “make sense in the context of lived experiences” (Bochner, 2005,

p. 54). Bochner (2005) also encouraged awareness of feelings and physical sensations by the researcher. The researcher knew some of the research participants. So while the emic perspective added depth to the conversation, the researcher was alert to the intrusion of her own experience and danger of projecting her story onto others.

The transcripts were read several times in order to organize and sort the data. Significant statements were highlighted and color coded as themes emerged from the transcripts of the grief experiences of clergy within the local church setting. The patterns and themes that emerged from the data follow presented in narrative format in Chapter 4.

### **Researcher as Person**

One of the opportunities afforded through Qualitative research is the ability for the human investigator as participant/observer to be the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data. By asking participants to tell their stories through narrative inquiry, the researcher sought understanding from an emic view as one who was within the culture being observed and one who qualified to be a participant with more than five years cumulative experience in a local church setting as a pastor and having officiated more than 15 funerals for church members. While the commonality can lead to greater understanding, there can also exist the potential for bias or shortcomings. The researcher worked to maintain an awareness of her own biases, and to both acknowledge and bracket preconceived notions.

## **Summary**

This qualitative study examined the experiences of clergy through structured interviews using narrative inquiry. According to Creswell (2009), “Qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly prefigured” (p. 181). Thus, the themes emerged from the data as they were analyzed. Data were collected from 11 clergywomen who have served a cumulative, minimum of 5 years in a local church and officiated at least 15 funerals for non-family members. The results were reported using a narrative format which included excerpts from the participant’s responses while maintaining confidentiality.

## CHAPTER IV

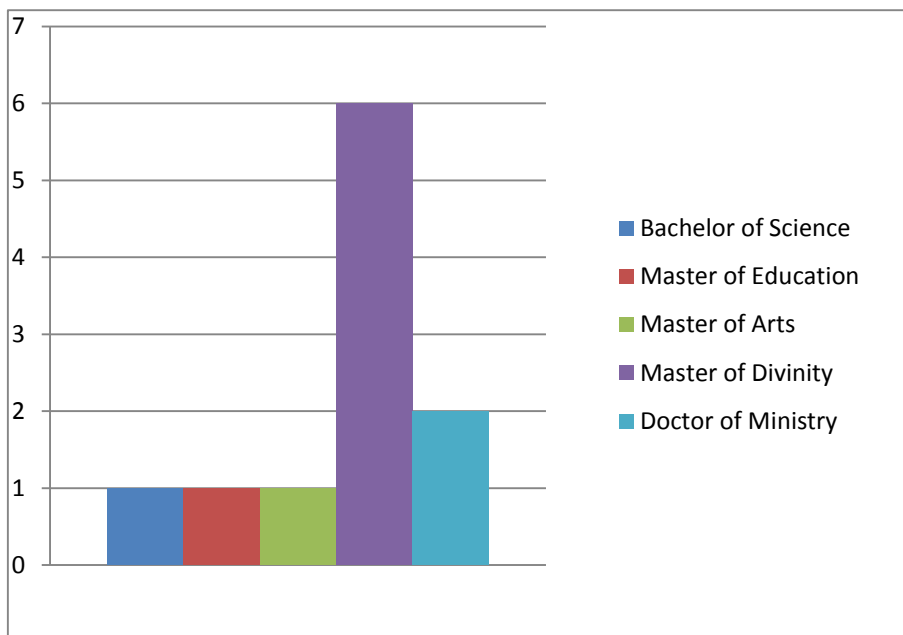
### ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to examine the experience of clergywomen who have experienced grief/bereavement at a personal level due to a professional relationship within the local church. In this chapter, the sample is described and the themes that emerged from the data are discussed. Eleven clergywomen volunteered to share their experiences officiating funerals for individuals who were not family members and the grief/bereavement related to officiating funerals as a part of being a local church pastor. Five interviews were conducted in Texas face-to-face. Six interviews were conducted by phone for volunteers who lived in Idaho, California, North Dakota, New York, Indiana, and England. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Confidentiality was assured through numeric coding of each participant's recording, transcript, and demographic information. This chapter presents the results of this qualitative research study, the demographics of the sample, and the emerging themes.

#### **Demographics**

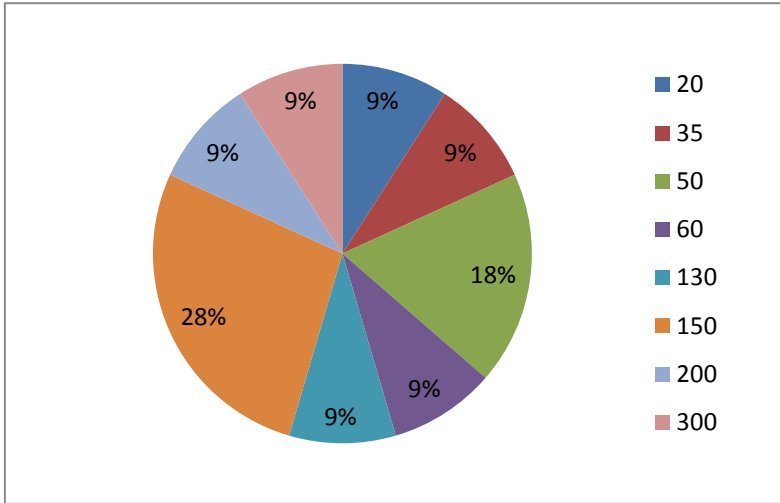
The sample size ( $N=11$ ) consisted of 100% female clergywomen whose ages ranged from 43 to 67 with a mean of 54. The cumulative years in ministry for the clergywomen covered a spectrum from 8 years to 30 years with a mean of 15 years. One clergywoman lived in England, one each lived in Idaho, California, North Dakota, New York, Indiana, and five participants lived in Texas. All of the clergywomen were

Caucasian and one was also Native American. The highest level of education obtained by two of the clergywomen was a Doctor of Ministry, by six was a Master of Divinity, by one was a Master of Education, by one was a Master of Arts, and by one was a Bachelor of Science (Figure 1).



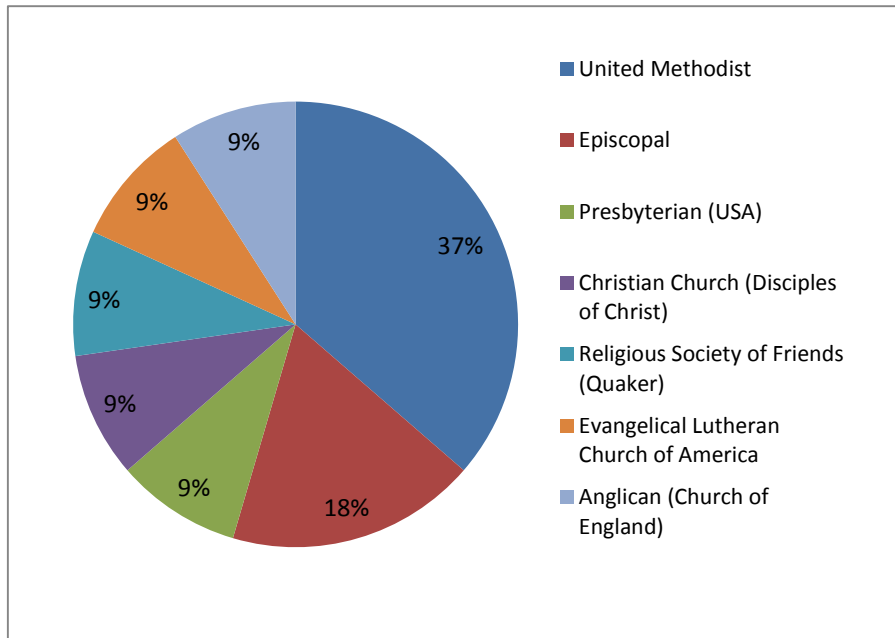
**Figure 1: Education**

Five clergywomen served local churches in rural settings, five served churches in suburban settings, and one served a church in an urban setting. The churches the clergywomen served as pastors ranged in average worship attendance on Sunday morning from the smallest church which had 20 to the largest with 300. The average worship attendance mean was 118 and had a mode of 150 with three occurrences (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Average Worship Attendance**

The Christian denominations were represented by four United Methodists Elders, one Presbyterian Church (USA) Minister of Word and Sacrament, one Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Minister in good standing, one Religious Society of Friends (Quaker) recorded minister, two Episcopalian Priests, one Evangelical Lutheran Church of America rostered Priest, and one Anglican (Church of England) Priest (Figure 3).



**Figure 3 Christian Denominations**

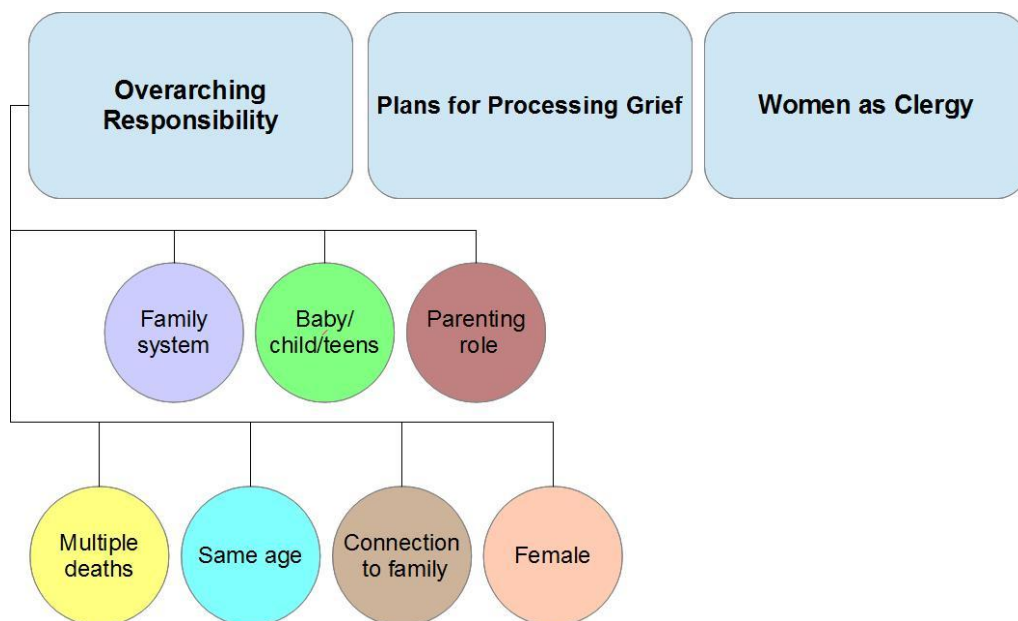
### **Themes**

The transcripts of the interviews of the eleven clergywomen were read several times. As their stories were read, the first theme of *Overarching Responsibility* emerged very quickly as pastor after pastor shared her understanding of providing appropriate care for her parishioner, church members, and sometimes her family, and at the same time tending to her own grief as she prepared and officiated for funerals. As other themes emerged, different color highlighters were used to track each potential theme in the transcripts. As potential themes were explored and connected to the literature review, they were included or excluded from further study due to lack of support.

All of the clergywomen who were interviewed shared stories of more than one hard funeral for which she officiated. As those stories were re-read, the other major

themes of *Plans for Processing Grief* and of *Women as Clergy* emerged as well. For some time the themes and subthemes were all considered on equal footing until considerations of relationships to one another and to the literature helped to sort them into the three major themes and the subthemes under the major theme of *Overarching Responsibility*.

In the repeated readings, the subthemes that nestled under the umbrella of *Overarching Responsibility* gradually appeared including, family system, baby/child/teens, parenting role, multiple deaths, same age, connection to family, and female. The major themes and the subthemes are illustrated in Figure 4.



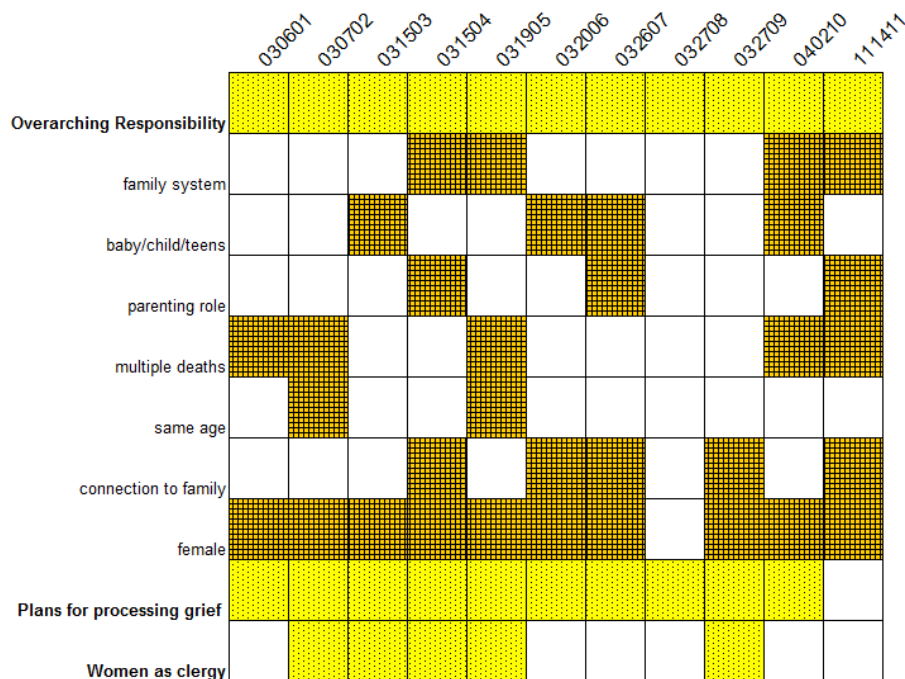
**Figure 4: Themes**

As the subthemes were considered, some were excluded because they did not connect back to the review of literature. For example, the subtheme of “first” was considered for some time due to its appearance in almost every clergywoman’s interview.



However, it could not be connected to any of the published literature in a meaningful way and was excluded as a subtheme. The subtheme of the family system is very easy to see in rural churches or churches with memberships that have active multi-generational families and the clergywoman is another extended family member. The subtheme of baby/child/teen is readily thought of when considering hard funerals. Due to 040210 relating the story of working with the group of developmentally challenged people and subsequent funeral, they were included in this category. Whenever there were grieving young people, the clergywomen who were officiating had a strong desire to “mother” them or to comfort them in more than a strictly pastoral role which give rise to the subtheme of parenting role. The subtheme of multiple deaths was shared by several clergywomen and connects to the literature related to burnout and compassion fatigue (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). When officiating a funeral for someone the same age, the clergywoman can be caught off guard by the poignancy of the funeral making it harder than expected which is attested to by some in the study. As a pastor who has a unique role with blurred boundaries and dual relationships, there are times when a hard funeral is hard because of a connection to the family in addition to the professional relationship. The clergywomen related stories of particular people who were especially close which gave rise to the subtheme of connection to the family. The last subtheme emerged due to an abundance of occurrences and their relationships to the clergywomen. All except 032708 related at least one story of a hard funeral about a woman and several clergywomen told about more than one woman who was close to her making the funeral

hard. Perhaps the clergywomen found kindred spirits in their lay women as they ministered side by side leading to a depth of love and appreciation for one another that grows with shared history and then leads to hard funerals (Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998; Frame & Shehan, 2004). The occurrences of the themes and subthemes as referenced in this document is represented in Figure 5.



**Figure 5: Theme occurrences**

### Overarching Responsibility

The theme of *Overarching Responsibility* was prevalent in the experiences related by the clergywomen. On the one hand, it is what enables the clergywomen to embody the office of pastor and perform the duties at hand and, on the other, it may very well be what lends itself toward disenfranchised grief because the role of pastor has been fulfilled very

well and the need for grief is not fully realized by others. *Overarching Responsibility* was the theme that emerged as the clergywomen talked about taking responsibility for the pastoral role of the funeral, being with the family during the death of the parishioner, and working with the church family all at the same time.

*Overarching Responsibility* is about having a calling to re-present God as faithfully as possible sometimes in the face of deeply profound grief. According to Hurst (1979)

this is best done in the “universal in which the clergyman, as a specially appointed and ordained representative of God and of his faith group, is perceived as an instrument or medium for the transmission of divine goodness, strength, and wholeness to those with whom he relates. ... For me, God seeks to communicate himself and his concern by every person, think, and act that is open to him. The ordained representatives of the religious faith groups would do well, therefore, to conceive of themselves as open, “sacramental” media of that divine grace to dying and bereaved persons. (p. 168)

As one clergywoman told it in her own words 031503, “I felt like I’m I was trying to get a handle on my responsibility I felt a responsibility to this young couple to give them words of hope and comfort.

I felt a responsibility to God because I knew or I sensed that this young couple was at a crossroads that that that they could either be angry at God for the rest of their lives or they could be so broken that they would reach out again to the church. Probably

wouldn't be my church, didn't anticipate that it would be my church but any church or the church of their childhood. Um I felt a responsibility to the grandmother who was a woman that I actually worked with because at that time I was a part-time local pastor and I still worked for the government and that was my connection to the family was her grandchild had died and they didn't have a church and they didn't have a clergy person to officiate the funeral and so I felt a responsibility to her.”

Another clergywoman echoed the sentiments expressed about holding on to her personal grief during funerals saying, 030702: “Well I pay a lot of attention to them [personal experiences of grief]. Um, I am, I am aware that I have a role here and that's actually to hold the grief of my congregants. It's a part of what I do for them is to give them a safe place to, to experience it and also to give them a place where they can find some joy and so there are times, part of what I do is actually pick up their grief for them ... I feel very strongly that we don't do shoddy worship here and so all of that effort has to go in behind the scene while I'm holding on to my own sadness. It's a, it's a very complicated thing for me to do a funeral.”

Spending time with the family and holding on to their personal grief is a common thread expressed by the clergywomen who participated in the study as expressed by 031503 “But I couldn't I couldn't fall apart because I felt responsible for her husband first of all who was falling apart, but I also felt that I needed to follow her lead. And I was heartbroken because I this woman was so special, so special to me, so special in that church. And since I felt it was a little unfair we didn't have that much time together but I

had to set that aside because I had responsibilities. And she had taught me a lot about responsibility in general. I felt that I needed to control my emotions because I cared so much about her.”

032708 put it this way, “It was like, okay you’ve got to—got to [sniffing] dry your eyes for a few minutes and let’s put it ... get it together. You’ve got to realize that you have a ... you have a thing—a thing happening. I don’t like to call it a job, but you have a ... a thing that you have to accomplish right now. And then ... and then you can, you know, tap back to your emotions a little bit later.”

031504 said, “You know I definitely, I would say and I really try to keep things like that from, I don’t want anything to interfere with the family’s ability to grieve and do their thing.”

But it is not always easy. As 031504 goes on to say, “But there are times when, when it’s a baby and you’ve worried about your own babies or you know when it’s a young person or when, when like the woman who committed suicide and you’ve had struggles in your own life as a young, a very young teenager with thoughts of suicide or someone in your family struggles with a mental illness as someone does in my family and it just hits really close to home, you know and it’s not just that you’re grieving. It professionally, it stirs up something in your spirit.”

032709 affirms this saying, “Sometimes I think our training teaches us to be too impersonal and what people really need, often times, is somebody to grieve with the family.” and goes on to say, 032709, “I [clearing throat]. I think you have to ... or I had to

compartmentalize it. Um, but I cried during, you know ... I think ... I think one of the things that--that I had to come to grips with early was that I would even be crying in funerals, because I'm human. And that didn't make me less professional. That made me more human. Um, which is what I think Jesus was all about - was so that people could see that God loves us as humans. Um, but yeah. But I ... you know, you can't just break down and--and sob and lose control. I do that privately and you know, I talk with friends."

There were three clergywomen who articulated instances when they went against their own standards and cried during particular funerals.

031503 "Well, during her service, of course, the church was packed. And Martha always sat in the same spot. ... And so that was that that's the only time I remember that I actually did cry during the funeral service but God gave me the presence of mind to work it into my remarks. ... I just I just don't cry or I try not to. But sometimes it's just unavoidable. ... you are still a person you still have feelings even in your professional capacity. Yes and I absolutely, I would not argue with that at all. But I would say when is it healthier not to exhibit those personal feelings?"

031905 "I've done a few before Ellen's but this, hers was the only one that I've done as a pastor that, um, where I cried. I couldn't, you know, I got through it but I was...I was teary, um, and, you know, my congregation sees that I ...it's not the first time that's happened but, um, they, you know. You know, I had that kind of moment of pastor

guilt. Like by what a pastor feels like. I hope the families of everybody else who has died don't feel that I didn't love their parents because I didn't cry during the funeral."

111411 "And as we've done this journey together, she decided, no, she really wanted to have a service in church first and she didn't want her husband and her family to go to the crematorium, because she thought they would find that really hard. So, they were going to stay and have the wake in the church hall, but she finally allowed me to go with her. So we have the service and we decided we were going to make it a celebration and we were going to finish up with "Thine Be the Glory." And I said well I can sing it but I can't sing it without crying, um, and the church was absolutely packed."

There are times when the relationship between the parishioner and clergywoman grows deeper because of the extra time spent in pastoral care with the parishioner during the time leading up to the funeral. Most of the Mainline Christian denominations have a Book of Worship to help guide their clergy for the planning and officiating of the funeral as the clergywoman fulfills the pastoral role. 032607 "I remember, um, talking with a... another mentor about this, um, this funeral, and, um, she advised me just to step into the role of pastor... just to assume the mantle, and, um, I found that to be very useful and good advice, and I have relied on that, um, several other times. Um, but, um, I was able to, um, officiate in a way that was, um, helpful I think to the family, and to the faith community. Um, I didn't, um, become overly, um, emotional during the service, um, and I felt good about that, because I really wanted to serve in a... in a pastoral way. [...]

Researcher: Well, tell me a little bit about what you mean by “step into the role of pastor.” 032607: Well, ...there is a... a role that I have been, um, given by God, and am supported in by the Spirit, and, um, uh, there’s a way of not setting aside my grief, but using my emotional, um, connection to, um, to provide ministry. Um... to celebrate the life of the person who has, um, died, and also to, um, to help the... the faith community.

Um, and, um, I think it’s a... it’s pretty clear to me as I begin any funeral, as I step up to the pulpit, or the platform, or the... the, um, the dais, that I am stepping into a role that, um, is, um, just intertwined with my sense of my ministry, and, um, it’s something that... that, um, I understand is, um, the Holy Spirit working through me in... in a way that, um, helps others deal with the grief, and, uh, the recognition that a life, um, has ended here on earth, and, um, also helping people, um, understand the, um, the hope of eternity, and, um... I, uh, I just, I... I can say the words inside myself as I do that every time, and it just... it really... it puts me in a place where, where I understand, um, what I need to be doing, and I also understand where the... the ability to do it is coming from.”

In another case the ritual, and role of pastor, was what enabled the clergywoman to carry on through the funeral service when she did not feel she had the resources to carry on due to this particular funeral being a large, state funeral and toward the end of several funerals in a row so the clergywoman herself was depleted. She shared, “111411 “Nobody ever thought she was anybody remarkable and suddenly the church was - was stuffed with, you know, with 500 people, um, and using the word was a crutch was the



only thing that could get one through at that point, um, not, I think, because of it being too early, um, she had been so poorly for so long, um. We had prayed the rite with her again and again thinking she was going home and she hadn't got around to it. She hadn't got around to it.

So when she finally did there was a measure of relief, but the service was extraordinarily difficult. And I think it had to do with carrying the weight of people's expectations and what suddenly a very public space while at the same time trying to carry the grief of your congregation who'd known this lady from, well in this case, they had known her for better than 50 years. Um, so, that - that would be another one that was particularly difficult. Um, on the whole, most of my congregation who die or are of age to die, um, both Iris and Valerie were really, but, but we were not ready for the one and we were exhausted from the other."

Officiating funerals well is a way in which the Role of Pastor is claimed. 031905 puts it this way, "in my first year of ministry I had 14 funerals. Um, and so by the end of it I was, by the end of that year I was their pastor." Another clergywoman related this story about Office of Pastor and tears during a funeral, 032006 "I do not want to cry at funerals as a pastor, my belief is if I cry at a funeral, um, then I'm taking the focus off of them and off of the message and on to me. ... I try to be the strong compassionate presence in the midst of that because that's what I'm bringing specifically from my pastoral office. And even if they're friends or people I love it's my pastoral office that's being called on at that moment...."

When someone is dying there can be a pull to be in two places at the same time as told by 030601, “And one Sunday morning she had not been well and I had been up to see her and I was in the middle of the service when the ah the ah siren for the EMT unit went off and somebody had their their scanner on their belt and you know got the buzz and in small towns that’s the way it was ‘cause everybody’s a volunteer. And so by the time we heard the ambulance go down through town we knew that more than likely that was Sheila. And I had a hard time getting through that service um because I couldn’t, I didn’t want to um not pay attention to what I was doing in celebrating and and ah and doing, and doing the Eucharist for the parish but everybody in the parish in the parish was on edge. Everybody who was sitting there in church that day was on edge because they knew something was going on.

And so as soon as the service was over, I flew off to the hospital which was in the next little town over and sure enough by the time I got there she had already died. And um and that I was not able to be with her uh and of course I was still a new enough priest that you know you kinda feel like (gasp) I haven’t done my duty I wasn’t there. And more than likely she wouldn’t have wanted me to be there anyway knowing Sheila she was a very private person and it uh I wasn’t weepy I was being the professional.”

Sometimes the clergywoman, in the Role of Pastor, is guiding families toward what she knows they need in a funeral service to help their grief process in a Christian setting. 031905 articulates this delicate path, “I think it’s a hard, um, a hard line to walk with families who think what they wanted is to be a roast for the person who died ,um,

when in fact that's not my pastoral experience that that's what they need. ... to find a way to make a funeral personal but not private so that, um, you know, so that the Gospel is proclaimed as well as the person is remembered.”

For most, if not all, of the clergywomen who participated officiating funerals is a sacred privilege that allows them to walk on a holy ground with the families and even, or especially, with the hard funerals, they would not trade officiating those funerals for anything because they know there is a grace that is given, a hope that is bestowed through the work that is done in the service itself that makes it holy. 040210 speaks of that sacred privilege in this way, “I love, love doing funerals and memorial services. It is right up there with serving at the table. (Laughter) It’s one of my very favorite things about being the pastor at a church. ... Even though it hurts, I still love every moment of it. I don’t necessarily love it when I’m have to grieve, because of who the person is. But being able to look at the family and know that they feel just a hair better than they did before the service began, or before the week of me spending most of my time with them began, it is such a blessing. I just... It is wonderful. I am so, so glad that I have this calling to serve a congregation so that I can be part of that.”

**Family system.** As the pastor of a church the clergywomen are included in the family system. This is particularly true in rural churches or in churches that have multi-generational families in their active membership (Sawin, 1981; Friedman, 1985; Christiano, 1996). The clergywomen become a member of the extended family and are grieving even as they are providing professional pastoral care. This subtheme arose from

their stories showing that they are part of the family system as they shared about hard funerals. 111411 tells her story of the parishioner and priest ministering to each other, “And many years ago, she had a mastectomy, she had advanced breast cancer and this is like 30 years ago; she’s in her 80s by this stage. Um, and had really thought there was nothing, nothing, you know, no risk at all, um, but she said, ‘my cancer’s back now and it’s all fine, Katie. They give me regular therapy and it’s not going to be a problem.’”

Um, so we’re ready at this point, we’re not quite sure who’s ministering to whom, but here she is. So, I had a chat, we had to pray, I went home and the line was ‘I’ll see you in church on Sunday.’ So Sunday came and no Valerie, um, and life over took me a bit. The priest in charge of a parish of 9,000 and 3 schools and things like that, so things really did get done. Um, and about 10 days after that she phoned up and she said, ‘Katie, can you come see me, I’m a bit scared.’”

031905 relates how close she becomes to her church member, “I’ve done a few before Ellen’s but this, hers was the only one that I’ve done as a pastor that, um, where I cried. I couldn’t, you know, I got through it but I was...I was teary.”

040210 recounts, “Yeah, he was doing a lot. And he was in the Bible study. You know, he was the person ... He was my go to guy. ... When I was trying to write my message, when I was even getting the prayers together, it--it was hard, because he was so important to me. ... But this one ... this one was really difficult, because not only was he somebody important to the congregation and to me, and I loved his family and all of that,

but this was somebody I dealt with almost every day. Um, I could talk to him about almost anything. He was a pillar - not just of the congregation, but also of my ministry.”

031504 speaks about the relationships that happen particularly in rural settings where many people are related to each other saying, “ Hmmm. Most of the funerals I have done have been for elderly people and I have served in two rural small congregations as the senior pastor. And those folks are just close, you know, and a lot of them are related. At one church I served 60% of the people in worship on Sunday mornings were related to one another. And you see all their family dysfunction that, but you also get caught up in their family love. It’s very easy to feel that you’re definitely a part of who they are. Um and um, I think those have been difficult too for me because I form a bond with people. Personally I don’t see how people do ministry without forming bonds -- a personal relationship. And so every funeral I’ve done has had some kind of attachment I guess and in a sense I have grieved every time.”

**Baby/child/teens.** It comes as no surprise that funerals for babies, children, teens, or developmentally challenged individuals are hard funerals. The few clergywomen who had officiated these difficult services shared the stories and the expected subtheme arose under the major theme of *Overarching Responsibility*. The literature for social workers, labor and delivery nurses, and counselors shows a situational connection of similarity for these types of grief and bereavement both of feeling inadequately educated and personally affected (Hodgson, et al., 2004; Burgner, 2007). 031503 related, “Oh yeah, oh yeah, the very first funeral that I ever did period was a still born baby. ... And I was

absolutely terrified because as a mother I could feel the grief and the hurt of these young parents. But I absolutely knew that this wasn't about me this was about them and their child and they were this young couple was not I wouldn't say that they were unchurched but they were they had fallen away from the church in which they had grown up and so I felt like I'm I was trying to get a handle on my responsibility I felt a responsibility to this young couple to give them words of hope and comfort.”

Another clergywoman 032006 tells her story saying, “Um, probably the hardest funeral that I've ever done, or one of the hardest that I've ever done, I just did, um, this last January. Um, it was for the unborn child, um, who died in utero at seven and a half months for, um, a couple who are actually the guardians of my children if I die.”

040210 explains that when there are older brothers and sisters waiting for the baby it is especially poignant. “One of the really difficult ones, a family, a fairly large that just started coming. And the wife was pregnant and everybody was happy and they had five more kids, and they lost the baby. And because the baby was far enough along, they chose to have a funeral for the baby, you know, who was stillborn. Umm, that was really... That was really difficult.”

032607 shared, “Um... I did a funeral for, um, a young... a very... a [teenager] who had had a brain aneurysm. And, um, actually she was related to one of the funeral directors, and, um, that funeral director asked me to officiate. And, um, I remember feeling pretty, um, ill-equipped and empty ... this young woman had had a... one brain aneurysm and was recovering from that one, and then died as the result of a second one.

And I remember saying that I have... it was my conviction that God did not intend for this to happen, and that God joined us also in our grief and, um, anger . . . I remember when we interred that young woman, there were several kids who had a really hard time leaving the grave site, and, um... you know, I think if I had any regrets, or wishing that I could have done more, it probably would have been for them, and, um... because, um, the... the grieving that they were doing there, um, was particularly poignant.”

040210 related the story of a service when she was involved with a group of developmentally disabled. “We have a group of developmentally challenged folks who come to congregate to the church, twice a week, to clean and have lunch. . . . But a lovely girl, really. Just wanted to hug everyone, all the time. She died in the middle of the night. And they came to me and they said, “Look, we don’t know anybody. Can you do her service?” I said, “Of course.” And they brought everybody who knew her. Everybody who knew her from the home that she lived in, because she didn’t have family. . . . And we left one of the spaces where anybody who wanted to come up and talk, can. . . . And as each one came up, I was crying. I was sitting there listening to all of this love and crying, because it was so beautiful. It was hard, but it was wonderful.”

**Parenting role.** The clergywomen who officiated funerals that had children who were mourning brought forth the mothering instinct giving rise to the subtheme of the parenting role. Even if the pastor did not know the young people who were bereaved prior to the funeral, the desire to comfort them was very strong. 031504 tells about

officiating a service because she was known through her son's school "Yeah! [nervous laughter] And my kids were in high school, my son in high school, and I was the president of the band parent association and she was in band with him. So they called on me because they had no church home and that young woman, too, she was a 16 year old also and she was just ... it was awful. I mean her mother was in prison, well in jail, she wasn't in prison yet she hadn't been to trial but they were, she had been arrested and now her dad is dead and she had loving supportive grandparents who were not Christians, so [nervous laughter] that was an interesting balance, too!

To have people who have no belief in an afterlife at all and people who were clinging to that hope, you know, in the faith setting. I think those with the teenagers were the most difficult for me as far as the actual doing the funeral because it's hard. They cry. And I just want to hug them 'cause I'm a momma and I want to tell them that everything is going to be okay but it's going to be a long hard process. It's not going to be something you can fix in an hour or 45 minutes or an hour long worship service."

032607 also connected to the grieving parents as she was officiating. "And then, I guess... I did a funeral for a... an infant that was born with a heart de... defect, and, um, um... again, the questions about "Why?" and, you know, "Whose fault was it?" and... and, uh, you know, "How can we go on?" Kind of the existential questions around death, um, have a particularly, um, hard edge to them when you're talking about infants, and, um...



I remember mom and dad were not married and they were very young, and I, um, I remember just wanting to make sure that anything that they would ever remember about this, that they would remember that I did not, um, judge or criticize them in any way, um... but, that as a mother, um, myself, that I joined them in their grief and, um, was hopeful that the love of God would help us all heal, um, from that. Um...”

111411 says, “I guess the other one always is that having lost a quite a few babies, um, through miscarriage. This is an area where - where there’s quite a bit of poverty filled and a lot of, of young moms who aren’t going to have the best nutrition and don’t have the best antenatal care and a lot of, of tired, tired women, um, under a very difficult pregnancies. So, we have - we have our fair share of baby funerals, um, which oddly enough don’t - don’t grieve me for my children but they - there is something about the other mother’s sadness of miscarriage whenever you have one of these little white coffins in there and you - yeah. My children didn’t get that, you know?”

**Multiple deaths.** When there have been multiple deaths and funerals in a short amount of time or without a long enough break between funerals, there is a cumulative effect of grief that can make a funeral hard that under other circumstances may not be considered hard. The cumulative effect of grief upon grief was exponentially wearying (Ross, Greenfield, & Bennett, 1999; Turton & Francis, 2007). There was not a particular number but there was a sense from the stories that it had been “too much” and gave rise to the subtheme of multiple deaths. 030601 states, “I’m going to preface this with, early in my career I had one year in which I had basically a funeral every other week in a tiny

parish. I had been there maybe two years. It wasn't just one funeral. It was the collective weight of all of those funerals that finally got to me. And I finally came to the place where I couldn't do another one. And I had to have someone else come in and do a funeral that it was of a person I didn't know anyway but I was just wiped out with the collective group. And didn't have the support network that I needed to deal with the loss of people I loved."

Multiple deaths in a rural setting affect the pastor and the whole church since many will be related to the one who has died (Way, 2003; Minnich-Sadler, 2005). So the cumulative effect is compounded. 030702 says, "Yes. Um, the year that Nina, my secretary, died that started in December, that particular year, uh, we had 11 deaths right after that in the congregation. Just the most...the congregation even for a somewhat rural church is a fairly young congregation but these were the- these were the people that went way back in this church."

031905 tells about not fully realizing the weight of the funerals she had officiated in her church until she had a comparison of her church with other larger churches in the area. She said, "in my first year of ministry I had 14 funerals ...every year our Presbytery...which is, you know, kind of our regional body...at a meeting ... They'll read all of the people who have died in the previous year and so they read, you know...we're not the biggest church in the Presbytery We're probably the third or fourth registers in the Presbytery and, um, they read ...one person from this church, two people from that church, nobody from this one, three people from this church, one person from

that church, and 14 people from mine. ... You know, these churches that have 500 members had done one funeral and I had done 14 in a 200-member church.”

040210 speaks of the burnout that comes with cumulative grief saying, “I had a hard five months. Um, like two years ago December, beginning in December um, a wonderful, dear, lovely woman in the congregation passed away um, in mid December of um, two years ago ... at 12 so it was like 10, 11, 9, whatever two years ago. Um, and at the same time my brother was in [another state] dying of um, ... cancer. So I was grieving and fearful about my brother, grieving over the loss of this dear, lovely [inaudible 00:06:03] lady in my congregation, um who everybody adored, and just everybody. ... I had three more members of my congregation pass. The mother of one of our members, who was a member at some other church passed. ... About three days or four days after that funeral my ... some of my congregational leaders came to me and told that it would be really nice if I took sabbatical beginning [the first of the month]

Because I was ... I was completely empty and worn out and exhausted and just could not function anymore. ... Um, I slept for most of [the first month of the sabbatical] that summer.”

111411 speaks to the cumulative effect of officiating even when there is no emotional weight attached to the funeral relating her situation, “one of the things about being a Church of England being a priest is that you’re responsible for everybody ... I ended up taking 22 funerals in a 28 day period. The majority of those were for people who lived in - in my parish but were not members of my church. So, if you like,

straightforward funerals but the humanistic effect was quite intense and while this was going on and one of our church members was taking a very long time, bless her heart, to die.”

**Same age.** There are times when the clergywomen were struck with the poignancy of a funeral because the person who died was the same age as the clergywoman. The subtheme emerged because of the stories told about the way in which the clergywomen were struck by this particular occurrence. Without any other connection, 031905 was called to officiate a funeral for someone of her own age that she did not know. The funeral hit close to home for her. 031905 tells how it affected her, “The one that, um, that kind of threw me for a bigger loop than I was expecting was one that I didn't know the person who died. Um, I was...there's a funeral home here that called me and when they need a non-scary Protestant funeral, um, the one that won't have an altar call, you know. Um, and so they, um...I got called in to do a funeral for a guy who was almost exactly my age, um, which I think at the time was 40 and he had died of cancer. Um, his family all came in from out of town. He worked for ... one of the companies here in town so he was here but not a...this wasn't where he was from. Um, and so just doing a funeral for somebody who was exactly my age, uh, was a little off-putting.”

030702 had a similar experience except she did know the person. She says, “That's a- that's very easy to come up with answers for that. The, the most, the hardest one for me was done in December of 2009. I hired a new church secretary in November

of 2008 and shortly after hiring her, she discovered she had terminal liver cancer. She was a good friend, my age. We had a lot of things in common and I was the first one who found out about the cancer.”

**Connection to family.** The longer a pastor is at a particular church the more shared history there is between the congregation members and the pastor which also gives more opportunity for blurred boundaries. When the clergywoman has a connection to the family that is particularly close, the funeral is more likely to be a hard funeral. The blurred boundaries of personal friend or family member and professional role of pastor make the grief harder to handle. The stories of those close friends or family members gave rise to the subtheme of connection to the family. 032607 tells about officiating for a family member, “The other funerals that I remember as being particularly challenging are, um, ones that I’ve officiated at that were, um, family members or children, um. I was asked to, um, officiate at the funeral of my first cousin, um, who was the oldest of that generation of, um, people in my, um... my family on my mother’s side. Um, somebody that I had a pretty close relationship with throughout my life. Um, and, um, I think, um... I remember, um, finishing the service and walking into the back and... and waiting for my... my aunt and uncle to... to come down to the back... and, um, we just... we just all cried together. And I felt that was an... an emotional release.”

032006 relates the story of a funeral for very close friends, “Um, probably the hardest funeral that I’ve ever done, or one of the hardest that I’ve ever done, I just did, um, this last January. Um, it was for the unborn child, um, who died in utero at seven

and a half months for, um, a couple who are actually the guardians of my children if I die.”

032709 tells about a young man that had been her son’s baby sitter, “Okay, okay. Umm, one of the hardest funerals I did, was for a 23-year-old young man who was electrocuted. Um, his grandmother was in my church. His parents were in my home church, we’re friends and this young man was my son’s babysitter and so um, they wanted me to do the service.”

111411 discovered at the funeral there was a relationship and says, “We discovered that her step grandson turned out to be my middle son’s best friend from two schools back. They probably very stranger sight of these things and with all the confusion of doing my last funeral when he was sort of 14 turning up as a young man with a beard and a girlfriend at his step grandmother’s funeral finding his friend’s mom whom he didn’t know was a vicar, standing there in the front and it was a wonderful, wonderful service but when we got to that hymn, it was extraordinarily difficult not to cry. I think that’s probably my, my story on that.”

031504 tells about family funerals, “You know, I did both of my grandmothers’ funerals, my maternal and paternal grandmothers. And uh I did not like doing that because I could not grieve. I could not allow myself to grieve until after it was all over. Because I didn’t want to lose it you know when it’s someone who is *that* close to you.”

**Female.** As the transcripts were read, it was noted that most of the funerals described as hard funerals were for women rather than for men. Out of the eleven

clergywomen who participated in the study only one did not share a hard funeral about a woman. The subtheme of female arose from the number of stories shared and the connections drawn with family systems (Minnich-Sadler, 2005). Some of these funerals also appear in other categories. They are self explanatory.

031503 “Her name was Judi Copeland. She was very wise. She had a knack for being able to look at a situation and sum it up. She could conduct meetings openly and honestly and fairly and still control them which I just absolutely loved.”

031503 “There was one funeral service that I did that I got a little choked up on and it was a, it was an elderly lady at the little church ... which was the appointment prior to this one.”

031503 “I just had a funeral here at the church in January. And this woman she was a very colorful person. She was the CEO of a trucking company so she worked in a male dominated field. And she held her own. And she was incredibly generous person incredibly!”

031905: “Probably the hardest was for a woman named Ellen who I met when I first got to the church in 2008.”

032607: “Um, I would say, um, actually the first funeral I ever, um, officiated, um, was probably one of the more difficult. Um... it was challenging because it was my first one. It was also, um, for a person who, um, I had, um, a good relationship with in the faith community. Um, I had visited with her, um, throughout the, um... the process of, um, the progress of her, um, illness, which contributed to her death, um. And, um, I... I

remember being not only, um, not only grieving, but also being pretty scared, um, (laughs) about the whole thing. Um... this woman actually was, um, a local elected official, and so I knew that the, um, the funeral would be huge.”

032607: “Um, well, with regard to folks in the faith community, ... this woman was a pillar of the church in every sense of... of that phrase. Um, she, um, was a single woman who lived with her sister, who was also single, and, um, until that sister died, and, um, she was very dear to many people in... in our, uh, meeting, and also very dear to me.”

032709: “One was for a woman who had become sort of like a surrogate mother/grandmother for me. Um, and I was with her through much of the last of her life ... Um, in the hospital with her during her last days. So, yeah it was ... It was hard and yet it’s always easier when ... when you have a person with strong faith who knows that this is not the end, and that um ... You know, they--they pull a strength from God that--that other people don’t have. So, it was easier in that sense ... She’s worrying about me, while I’m worrying about her.”

032709: “Another one, a woman was um ... When I first arrived at the church you know, she’d just found out she was ill um, with liver cancer. Well, people don’t normally live a long time with liver cancer, and she lived for four years. We spent many times in her house talking about, you know, planning for her funeral and what would happen when she died and all that sort of thing. And that--that was hard as well and she was a dear woman. She loved me and I loved her.”



030702: "That's a- that's very easy to come up with answers for that. The, the most, the hardest one for me was done in December of 2009. I hired a new church secretary in November of 2008 and shortly after hiring her, she discovered she had terminal liver cancer."

111411: "Okay, I will tell you about Valerie. Now, Valerie was a lovely lady who was a part of the congregation when I arrived in my current church and has been here four and a half years. And she was a newcomer just before me, so we kind of found our way around together. And about six months in, Valerie disappeared and somebody said, "oh, she's in the hospital." So, I choose to drive to the hospital and she says my cancer's back."

031504: "Okay. Um I think one of the hardest funerals I officiated was a woman who was um an active member of a church that I was the senior pastor of and she developed a form of cancer that is generally curable easily with medication not even any kind of radiation or chemotherapy or anything like that but her body happened to be biologically unsuited for that particular therapy and it wouldn't work for her."

031504: "I did a funeral one time for a woman, I didn't know her, um that may have been the most difficult in terms of preparation. Ah, she committed suicide.."

031504 "I did one funeral for a woman who, I was just talking to my husband about this last night how odd, she ah had a stroke and she was in her mid-eighties and her husband was at home."

### **Plans for processing grief**

The second major theme that emerged was the ways in which the clergywomen processed their personal grief or did not process their personal grief. Some were able to articulate a specific plan that they regularly follow in order to process their grief. Others had a less specific plan and some were unsure about a plan for handling grief or had not had time to process their grief which could make a funeral a hard funeral.

030601 tells about not handling her grief well, “Well that first that that second year of my ministry, I didn’t handle it well because I just stuffed it. Because I, I had lost my father and I had while I was in seminary and I didn’t have time to grieve. So I think that what happened to me in my second year of ministry was that that grief came out uh when I was faced with all of that. Uh and because the relationship with my father was not good it came out as anger and so I didn’t handle it real well.”

While 032708 has a flexible approach to process her grief, “I usually plan on some downtime some, quiet time, after the funeral. Um, so that I can--can take care of that emotion. And usually it’s--it’s solitude time, it’s quiet time at the lake or a ... a getaway to my spiritual director or just--just taking a day off that doesn’t--doesn’t require business that I can kind of deal with the grief and the loss of a friend. And it’s usually, um, it’s done more in solitude than--than anything else. I live at a small inland lake [...] now. And that’s the ... And this is a place I used to always just escape to. So when -- when I can, I come up here and sit at the water and pray and play guitar and kind of let myself grieve that way.”

031503 recalls in earlier years of ministry when the grief swept over her when she had not planned to process it, “As I recall after it was over, I mean after the funeral was over, after everything was done, at that time and still, am writing a monthly column for the church newsletter. And it’s an “ah” column and it’s a play on my initials. But its three “a”s and four “h”s three letters in Amy and four letters in Howe. And I was writing a column shortly thereafter about hope in the face of loss and I was talking about Judi. And I recall that I started to get weepy teary eyed and I had to stop typing because my eyes were filled with tears. And I don’t recall sobbing or just breaking down but even now thinking about the emotions are right there below the surface and so remembering the pain and the loss even after all these years because that was probably fifteen years ago I still get a little emotional. I don’t know if that’s a sign of grief that was not dealt with I don’t feel that way. I feel it’s more a sign of the depth of what she meant to me.”

And, now when she is more intentional about handling her grief, 031503 says, “And then we do the graveside and then I come back to the church. Or I come back home. And I’m emotionally done. I don’t do work. If I come back to the church it’s not to do work. I don’t do work at home. I’ll I find some way to decompress.

I’ll oftentimes and this is, this is as my children have gotten older I will call them and I’ll say, “I need dinner companions. Are you available?” Well that means I have to drive to where they are because they work full time and they have other responsibilities. But they’re usually always up for a free meal if mom’s buying [laughter]. So I’ll just, and I don’t tell them why and I don’t really need to. I don’t and that’s what’s so fascinating to

me about that process is that they just kind of have a sixth sense and sometimes they'll say to me, "Well what'd you do today?" "Oh I had a big funeral." "Oh I'm sorry." and that's all they'll say. They don't need to say anything else. And I don't need to say anything else. They don't ask anything else. It's, it's the ministry of presence."

032006 also has flexible plans, "I have sobbed while writing the sermons as a way of just kind of a cathartic relief. And I have, I, I...and after [...] the funeral or burial, then I sat in my car and sobbed."

031905 clearly had grieved for the woman she described but was unclear about a specific plan to process her grief, "I'm not really sure if I dealt with it other than that [crying during the funeral, still talking about her, not forgetting her]."

031504 has a very specific plan that she shared, "Um, I practice several different spiritual disciplines routinely and I think being grounded in those is very helpful to me in the sense that the routine itself is a comfort. You know after you do it over and over like a ritual. And so I turn always to my disciplines."

032607 answered, "Um... think for me, um, it's important to give myself space to grieve. ... And I think I've learned over time that if I have a... a... a particularly difficult or emotional funeral, that I really, really need to take that time, and, um, be with people who understand what I do, and where I'm safe in, uh, showing my grief."

032709 shared, "Um, I'm ... I'm good at crying. ... And ... and of course ... I mean you always find comfort in knowing that--that we don't know what's next. Um, and

so I can only imagine that it's better than we can even fathom. And I know that God is waiting there for those people. I think God is waiting there for everybody."

040210 said, "I allow myself to--to feel the pain when ... when it's appropriate. ... when I'm praying - those are times when I can recognize the pain, recognize the grief, recognize the loss and--and let myself move through it, move forward with it. Um, I can't ignore it, because it won't go away. It'll get worse and I choose not to obsess over it either, um, because that ... that's not helpful."

030702 changes her plan depending on the situation and admitted she is still holding some grief now saying, "Um, I've just, I have yet been able to cry. I can't, I just can't quite go over that edge. I'm very aware of how much I miss him but what's going on with the mother's grief process is so overwhelming right now that I am not yet permitting myself to give into my own. I'm still holding her and so until she, I would guess it's going to take at least six more months before she's got any stability in her life, mine's going to just sit on the back burner because she actually is my priority right now but I'm very aware that I have not yet been able to grieve for Greg. These things are not easy for me."

### **Women as Clergy**

The third theme that arose came from comments related to attributes that pertained specifically to clergywomen, such as, reflections that clergywomen are more caring when providing bereavement care. A similar observation was made that clergywomen provided better, more caring pastoral care during the process of dying,

death, and funerals. There was also mention of exposure of preaching and leadership of clergywomen to the community through funerals which could make those funerals hard due to community scrutiny because not all of those communities or funeral directors are accepting of clergywomen.

031905 related how the community scrutiny actually helped her as pastor because she does funerals well and her reputation as a good pastor spread through the community. “Well there were, um, you know, I was the first female head of staff here. They'd had a female associate for a couple of years back in the 80s but she didn't last very long and having kind of heard some stories I understand why. Um, so I'm really the first female pastor for a lot of these people and I'm also young, um, relatively. Only in the church world am I considered young but I'll take it. Um, and so, um, to, um, you know, to stand in the pulpit in the midst of that kind of congregational grief and pain. Um, I think helps my pastoral authority in their eyes.”

While 031503, who lives in a different state still experiences the drawbacks of prejudice against clergywomen, says, “So there were a wide variety of people at her funeral which is not unusual in and of itself. Every funeral I've done has had a wide variety of people and but it's interesting to me because a lot of people, especially in a small town like this one, and its and they're like why is that woman up there? ... I can always tell the people who are non-Methodist that have responded to my leadership or my preaching of the service because they'll shake my hand and they'll say something.

... I mean I pretty much know and the ones who can't get past their distrust or their misunderstanding of women ministers when they do the pass-by they won't look at me and they won't shake my hand. And this last funeral that was quite large I remember thinking that it was sad how people's preconceived notions will prevent them from some measure of comfort that God will offer them even if it's just for a brief moment in their grieving. I remember thinking that is very sad, very sad. Because I happen to think that women do a better job of funerals than men. I just feel that that's one of our strengths and I think it probably has to do with nurturing and comfort. And we don't have a monopoly on that but I think that some people just believe that women, that because we're women, we're more in touch, more in touch [air quotes] "in touch" with that side of ourselves that we do a better job. And I think we do."

030702, who is also in a rural setting, remarked, "And I am fortunate. I -that's probably...I would just say any, and clergy person who does a funeral and remains untouched is probably not doing a very good job and that's coming from my own - guys may not do this, but I cannot imagine doing a funeral and being untouched by their grief."

032709 concurs saying, "And I think--think women are probably better at that than men. And we're just better, I think. We--we allow ourselves more um, emotion and allow it to be visible to others."

031504 speaks from personal experience regarding a family funeral, "But it was in a Baptist church too and I thought "oh this man [the pastor] is gonna have a hard time." I had met him a couple of times before and I could tell that he did not think that I'd

be [inaudible] out and I had some trepidation about that. But he was very gracious and allowed me in his own church to stand up and be a pastoral presence which I thought was remarkable. And I did my Methodist thing you know, I got up and I said this man [the father-in-law] who had not been in church ever unless he was pulled there by his wife for some activity that her grandkids were doing or in or something “he was Jesus” he acted more like Jesus than a lot of people that sit in the pews every Sunday so I got my, I spoke for the family. But I did the opening part of the service where we have some very lovely prayers and traditions that are the Methodist way that are gracious and open. Then I went and sat down by my husband. [laughter] And I was his wife the rest of the time.”

### **Summary**

The strongest and most evident theme that emerged from the experiences of the eleven clergywomen is the “*Overarching Responsibility*” that undergirds so much of what pastors do in the face of death and grief. It is interesting to note that even though women are assumed to be more nurturing and emotional there is still an expectation that a clergywoman will not mourn publicly while in the role of pastor. According to the definition, whether it is because a clergywoman cannot mourn publicly while leading the service or whether it is because a clergywoman chooses to “be strong” while with the family, holding back the expression of grief due to the office of pastor is considered disenfranchised grief. The *Overarching Responsibility* theme is articulated clearly by most and more subtly by few but evident in all the interviews. “*Overarching Responsibility*” includes the very fact that clergy feel a deep obligation “to hold it



together” for the sake of the family or their church which might seem to lead to disenfranchised grief but it also includes several subthemes found in the experiences of clergywomen as they relate their stories of hard funerals. The clergywomen who officiated services for babies, children, or teens recalled those as hard funerals. Mourning teens drew out the mothering side of the nurturing desire of some clergywomen as their hearts broke for the grieving young people. The cumulative effect of multiple deaths, or perhaps better stated grief on grief, weighs heavily especially for clergy. There is a particular poignancy to the funeral when the deceased is someone the same age as the clergy. When there is a special familial connection to the bereaved family, in addition to the church connection, the funeral may also be more emotionally difficult. In the stories that were told by the clergywomen about hard funerals, it was noted that many of them were about women, more so than about men. All of these subthemes had their own particular and additional tug on the already wrenched heart fell under the major theme of *Overarching Responsibility*.

There were two other major themes that emerged from the narratives. The second major theme was coping with grief. One clergywoman specifically mentioned the spiritual disciplines that she uses regularly as a part of her daily routine that she also uses to help her cope with her grief. Others were more flexible about acknowledging that they needed to take time to grieve, often that meant spending time alone or with specific friends or family members, but they did not have a defined routine for coping with their

grief. Some had no plan at all or recognized that early in their ministry having no plan had been detrimental.

And, the third major theme was *Women as Clergy*. This theme came up spontaneously in five of the eleven interviews as the clergywomen related their experiences of officiating hard funerals. The clergywomen commented on their experiences of specifically being a woman in ministry within a funeral setting.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of clergywomen who have had times of personal grief in the midst of professional responsibilities within a local church context. Eleven clergywomen who had officiated fifteen or more funerals for non-family members participated in semi-structured interviews. Five were conducted face to face and six were conducted by phone. All were recorded and transcribed from the recordings. Each participant began the interview by responding to the prompt: “Tell me about a hard funeral you officiated for a church member.”

For this study, Narrative inquiry and Family Systems theory were paired because relationships are often expressed by the stories that explain them. Narrative inquiry also allowed the clergywomen to elaborate on the emotional connections within the family system of the local church while sharing their experiences.

#### **Discussion of Findings**

This study was guided by the exploration of the experiences of clergywomen who had times of personal grief in the midst of professional responsibilities within a local church context. There were three major themes that emerged from the interviews. The

first theme that emerged from the interviews was the theme of *Overarching Responsibility* as a pastor. The second theme was the theme of *Plans for Processing Grief*. And the third theme was the theme of *Women as Clergy*.

The findings of this study that arose from the theme of *Overarching Responsibility* confirmed what was discussed in the literature which focused on grief and bereavement as experienced by professionals showing that those who provide grief and bereavement care experience grief themselves but often have little training (Hodgson et al, 2004; Burgner, 2007; McCormick 2007).

The blurred boundaries and the family systems clergy experience in the practice of ministry often go hand in hand experienced at the same time. 031504 describes it well when she says, “Most of the funerals I have done have been for elderly people and I have served in two rural small congregations as the senior pastor. And those folks are just close, you know, and a lot of them are related. At one church I served 60% of the people in worship on Sunday mornings were related to one another. And you see all their family dysfunction that, but you also get caught up in their family love. It’s very easy to feel that you’re definitely a part of who they are. Um and um, I think those have been difficult too for me because I form a bond with people. Personally I don’t see how people do ministry without forming bonds -- a personal relationship. And so every funeral I’ve done has had some kind of attachment I guess and in a sense I have grieved every time.” This is also supported in the literature (Friedman, 1985; Kuhne & Donaldson, 1995; Mellow, 2002, Weaver et al., 2003).

When the clergywomen find themselves holding on to their grief instead of expressing it due to leading the funeral service or because of their “professional role,” according to traditional understandings it seems they are experiencing disenfranchised grief. Disenfranchised grief is the term typically used when “The person suffers a loss but has little or no opportunity to mourn publicly” (Doka, 1989, p. 3). All of the clergywomen who participated shared stories of holding on to their own grief in some way in order to officiate a funeral or help the family grieve. Most of the clergywomen shared more than one story of holding on to her grief because as 030601 put it “I wasn’t weepy I was being the professional.” Regardless of the reason for holding on to their grief or the rationale given, the behavior technically fits the definition for disenfranchised grief. However, when understood in light of the definition of the role of religious professional, it is appropriate behavior for the religious professional to hold expressions of their grief when they are officiating, or even, at times, providing care for those who are bereaved. Hurst (1979) provides a well articulated position regarding the pastoral identity for clergy when he writes,

the clergyman [sic], as a specially appointed and ordained representative of God and of his [sic] faith group, is perceived as an instrument or medium for the transmission of divine goodness, strength, and wholeness to those with whom he [sic] relates. All that the clergyman [sic] says or does is to be perceived as having that potential. Many parishioners still have some ideas, or vague notions, concerning the relationship of the clergy to the divine, so that the clergyman’s

[sic] own clear, constructive adaption of it can clarify and enhance the parishioner's sense of God's immediacy and concern for his present well-being. ... For me, God seeks to communicate himself and his concern by every person, thing, and act that is open to him. The ordained representatives of the religious faith groups would do well, therefore, to conceive of themselves as open, "sacramental" media of that divine grace to dying and bereaved persons. (p. 168)

With this most appropriate understanding of the role of religious professionals as they officiate the funeral, the clergywomen, as a rule, hold their expressions of grief until a later time because to sob, lose control, or break down from the pulpit during the service is inappropriate and could very well be considered manipulative of the congregation gathered there. 032708 tells about her understanding of being a pastor and her experience of grief by relating this situation, "And then, I got--got the call that um, Dan had passed away. And I still had his--his voice on my answering machine um, kind of haunting me. So, that funeral was--was kind of hard, because it took us ... it took us all by surprise. ... it was hard for the parish, because he was one of the ... patriarchs of the church and also--also a friend. ... he loved music, and--and so as we were ... singing the songs we knew he loved and sharing in the message of um ... It was hard to get through the message on that one and--and not um, not choke up. ... when it is a dear friend, there are tears, you know. I--I don't hold them back, but it ... but I don't become a blithering idiot, either, you know, in that sense." This particular story with the three stories related earlier from other

clergywomen who mentioned tears during services they officiated for people with whom they had deep connections and expressed emotion, speak to the fact that clergy are indeed human with emotion and feeling. 032709 also speaks to the emotions of hard funerals saying, "Sometimes I think our training teaches us to be too impersonal and what people really need, often times, is somebody to grieve with the family. They want you to care. I think the people that I've grown closest to in life, have been the families of the people that I truly, truly grieved. Um, and I think in some ways that you know so often we're set apart as--as the God person. We're the representative of God. Well, those people need to know that God is sitting near speaking with them as well. And so, I--I think that I've ... I've become comfortable with the fact that it's okay to cry and still be a professional. Um, there's not ...there's not that rigid boundary. And I think--think women are probably better at that than men. And we're just better, I think. We--we allow ourselves more um, emotion and allow it to be visible to others. There has often been times before a funeral that I have to, you know, have to find a trusted friend and then go into a closet and cry with them and do this." She has identified the same understanding of the Role of Pastor that Hurst (1979) offered that brings forth the representational nature of ministry without negating the human vessel for the "sacramental media" (p. 168) and at the same time is mindful of the inappropriateness of directing attention toward the clergywoman's grief during the funeral so that it is the primary focus. When the Role of Pastor is considered in its fullness, the definition of disenfranchised grief does not quite fit in an appropriate way because there is an intentional choice being made due to the professional role of the

religious professional that is unique. Therefore, the researcher proposes the term Numinous Grief which would be a better choice to reflect the sacred or holy nature of the grief and the religious professional who appropriately holds her personal grief at some points and expresses it at others specifically as it pertains to relationships that have arisen from a local church setting or a professional relationship.

When the clergywomen experience a funeral as a hard funeral because of the closeness of the relationship to the one who died or their family, there are blurred boundaries and the family systems model of the church is an apt description because when one part of the family is affected the whole family feels it. Finally, when there is grief on grief, the cumulative effect of funeral after funeral takes a toll on the clergywoman, affecting everything else she does or attempts to do as a pastor which can lead to compassion fatigue, stress, or burnout.

Within the findings of *Overarching Responsibility* falls the category of clergy bereavement training. Just as other professionals such as social workers and labor and delivery nurses are affected at a personal level when an infant dies and they continue to provide care for the mother (Hodgson, et al., 2004; Burgner, 2007), so too, clergy continue to provide care for surviving family members even as they are affected at a personal level. The literature for social workers and clergy point to a lack of bereavement training (Massey, 2000; Lloyd-Williams et al, 2004; Puterbaugh, 2005; Lloyd-Williams, Cobb, & Taylor, 2006; McCormick, 2007, Deffenbaugh, 2008) which is supported by the experience of 031905 who says, “I don't know that seminary really prepares you for...or



at least mine didn't....you know, for that...for how to help people corporately. ... Um, [It] has been something I think I've had to figure out on my own.”

The second theme that emerged from the interviews revealed that the clergywomen had an awareness of their need to grieve even though they were given little or no training for leading funerals or for their own grief work in seminary. So even though only one had a definite plan for grief work on a regular basis, there were responses that were flexible about what would be done in order to cope with personal grief. It was rare, however, that any of the clergywomen would cry during the funeral service itself, which could be seen as reinforcing disenfranchised grief but which is better understood as appropriate Numinous Grief. Even though the grieving was not done publically and was delayed, the clergywomen who had some kind of plan for coping with grief did grieve. When they did grieve, their process of grief seemed to most closely fit with the grief theory of Worden (2002). which is: a) accept the reality of the loss, b) working through the pain of grief, c) adjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing, and d) emotionally relocating the deceased and moving on with life. This also fits with an appropriate application of the new term Numinous Grief which recognizes the grief that is particular to the relationships that arise from the local church setting reflecting the family system and the professional role.

The last theme that emerged was *Women as Clergy*. Frame and Shehan (2004) found that gender affects leadership style and has an impact on the performance of ministry tasks. Several of the clergywomen commented on their role in officiating

funerals. 031503 states, “I happen to think that women do a better job of funerals than men. I just feel that that’s one of our strengths and I think it probably has to do with nurturing and comfort. And we don’t have a monopoly on that but I think that some people just believe that women, that because we’re women, we’re more in touch, more in touch [air quotes] “in touch” with that side of ourselves that we do a better job. And I think we do.” 030702, agreed, “I would just say any, and clergy person who does a funeral and remains untouched is probably not doing a very good job and that's coming from my own - guys may not do this, but I cannot imagine doing a funeral and being untouched by their grief.” 032709 concurs saying, “And I think--think women are probably better at that than men. And we’re just better, I think. We--we allow ourselves more um, emotion and allow it to be visible to others.”

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that a new term be coined in order to better distinguish the appropriate expressions of grief for those who are in trusted roles to mediate the sacred during the times of grief and bereavement that properly reflects the professional relationship and affect of hard funerals. While disenfranchised grief may fit in its technical definition, it falls short because of the nature of the Office and Role of Pastor when the public display of grief is not appropriate and yet is still claimed in a different way. Therefore, the researcher proposes that the term Numinous Grief be used for Clergywomen who are officiating hard funerals. The excellent articulation of the Role of Pastor provided by Hurst (1979) provides a way of

seeing the numinous tasks of the clergy who utilize their unique dual relationships in order to be more effective and, at the same time, to grieve more deeply due to the relationships that have been established by those very relationships (Wells et al., 2012). A further recommendation is that larger quantitative and qualitative studies would be conducted with other religious professionals to examine the appropriateness of fit for the term Numinous Grief as they are engaged in ways similar to the clergywomen who have officiated hard funerals.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that clergywomen engage in continuing education that will further their understanding of grief and bereavement in order to provide better emotional stamina and support for themselves and the congregations they serve. It is also recommended that judicatories require more grief and bereavement awareness and training for incoming ministers because the call for training has been ignored for at least three decades as evidenced by the literature review. Only when it is required for ordination will the seminaries add it to the curriculum even though it is common knowledge that the ministers being trained will be officiating funerals and working with bereaved families on a regular basis. This training should specifically include attention to funerals that are known to be hard, such as, funerals for babies, children, suicides, and murders with attention to pastoral care for families of those affected by those kinds of grief and loss.

An additional recommendation is that laity awareness of Numinous Grief be raised through workshops so that churches can help support the clergy for whom they

care and the mutual ministry of the Body of Christ can be strengthened. As the clergy appropriately do not share their grief during the funeral service, there are times when they inappropriately do not share their grief and show up at finance meetings without anyone knowing about the grief they carry. Training for the laity that helps them to know to ask about funerals or grief of their pastor also gives the pastor permission to talk about her grief. Sometimes having someone to ask, “How are you doing?” can make a difference. There may be occasions when an informed group of laity will say, “Pastor, we don’t need you at this meeting. Go home,” helping the clergywoman to take care of her grief in a better way. This recommendation also allows the family system of the church to work in a better way to strengthen one of its vital members.

### **Implications**

The results of this study showed that the clergywomen who participated did have significant grief experiences as related to hard funerals in a local church setting. While they experienced sometimes profound personal grief, they also had strong role identification as the Pastor and so set aside their personal grief as much as possible to be the Pastor as appropriate to the tasks at hand. This shows that Numinous Grief is a needed term to express a regular part of clergy life.

The results also showed that some of the clergywomen had intentionally developed a specific plan to cope with their personal experiences of grief. Some others did not have a specific plan to cope with their personal experiences of grief but did have plans for time away and support people to contact. The results revealed that no plan for

coping with grief was detrimental for clergywomen. Because of the nature of the church as a Family System, the church will also be negatively affected by any clergy who do not have a plan to cope with their grief.

Counselors with grief training can be helpful to clergy to help them further their grief training. Counselors could also help clergy form support networks for times when there have been too many deaths or particularly hard funerals such as a suicide or murder victim.

The Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) as a Lifespan educator could provide helpful training to the church and community. As Baby Boomers age, more and more funerals will be taking place. Grief education and support will be needed by their survivors.

Judicatories need to be more vigilant about requiring grief and bereavement training for ordination. There also needs to be more support readily available for local church pastors. Many pastors are asked how many baptisms have been officiated but they are not asked how many funerals have been officiated.

### **Conclusions**

Based on this study, the conclusions are that the clergywomen experienced profound grief in their role as local church pastors. Their grief experiences followed Worden's (2002) four tasks of grief better than the other models of grief. The definition of disenfranchised grief does not fit as well as it might have seemed at first glance. After

much consideration, the proposal of the new term Numinous Grief is made to describe the grief experienced by clergy in their role as local church pastors.

### **Limitations of this Study**

This study examined the experiences of a small number of Caucasian (including one with Native American background) mainline Christian clergywomen. Further study of all faith leaders is needed. The response to participate in this study was overwhelming. Only ten participants were needed and thirty qualified applicants had submitted addresses to receive consent forms in twenty-four hours. Three weeks later clergywomen were still inquiring about the possibility of participation. The study could have been much larger with very little effort for recruitment of participation for clergywomen.

Another limitation is that only mainline denominations are represented with the exception of the Society of Friends (Quaker) and Church of England. Many denominations that are not mainline do not ordain women therefore clergywomen are underrepresented in those Christian denominations. However, there are some Christian denominations such as the Assembly of God that are not considered mainline Christian denominations that do ordain women that are not included in this study. A study that has a broader scope of Christian denominations represented is needed.

Because the recruitment was solicited from those who were willing to volunteer to participate, it is possible that these clergywomen have a high capacity for being present with others who are grieving and are secure in their abilities to officiate funerals well. Those who are uncomfortable with grief or who are less secure in their abilities to

officiate funerals may have been less likely to volunteer to participate in the study even if they qualified according to the criteria of years in service and number of funerals officiated.

### **Summary**

The findings of this Qualitative study are three major themes of *Overarching Responsibility*, *Plan for Coping with Grief*, and *Women as Clergy*. The first recommendation is that the term Numinous Grief be used for Clergywomen who are officiating funerals. It is further recommended that larger studies with other religious professionals be conducted to establish a fit for the term Numinous Grief due to the unique role clergy have. It is recommended that clergywomen engage in continuing education related to grief and bereavement. It is recommended that judicatories require adequate grief and bereavement training for ordination. The final recommendation is that the laity awareness of Numinous Grief be raised through any and all appropriate means available so the laity and clergy are better able to be in ministry together.

## REFERENCES

- Abrams, D., Albury, S., Crandall, L., Doka, K. J., & Harris, R. (2005). The Florida clergy end-of-life education enhancement project: A description and evaluation. *American Journal of Hospice & Palliative Medicine*, 22(3), 181-187.
- Adams, S. A. (2001). *Teaching the mourning song*. (Available from the author, 1 Arrowhead Cir, Lake Dallas, TX 75065).
- Akai, A. (2006) *Continuing education of ministers: Toward a greater understanding of protestant women clergy learning experiences*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, United States – Wisconsin). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses database: Full Text. (UMI Number 3234596).
- Anders, R. L. (1979). Follow-up nursing care for the terminal patient's family. In I. Gerber, A. Wiener, A. H. Kutscher, D. Battin, A. Arkin, & I. K. Goldberg, (Eds.). *Perspectives on bereavement* (pp. 232-237). New York: Arno Press.
- Bleiberg, J. R., & Skufca, L. (2005). Clergy dual relationships, boundaries, and attachment. *Pastoral Psychology*, 54(1), 3-22.
- Blevins, S. (2008). A personal journey through the grief and healing process with Virginia Satir, Dr. E. Kubler-Ross, and J. William Worden. *Satir Journal*, 2(2), 89-105.
- Bochner, A. P. (2005). Surviving autoethnography. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 28, 51-58.



- Bradfield, C. D., & Myers, R. A. (1980). Clergy and funeral directors: An exploration in role conflict. *Review of Religious Research*, 21(3), 343-350.
- Braid, D. (1996). Personal narrative and experiential meaning. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 109(431), 5-30.
- Bayne, T., & Pacherie, E. (2007). Narrators and comparators: the architecture of agentive self-awareness. *Synthese*, 159, 475-491. doi 10.1007/s11229-007-9239-9
- Brown, P. (2003). Qualitative methods in environmental health research. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 111(14), 1789-1798.
- Brown, S. R. (1984). Caring for the pastoral care deliverer. *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 38(2), 81-82.
- Brunette-Hill, S., & Finke, R. (1999). A time for every purpose: Updating and extending blizzard's survey on clergy time allocation. *Review of Religious Research*, 41(1), 48-64.
- Bryan, R. A. (2006). Thranatos: Poetic reflections on three deaths in the hospital. *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 60(1-2), 143-146.
- Burgner, K. L. (2006). *The effects of perinatal loss on the labor and delivery nurse*. (M.S.N. dissertation, University of Nevada, Reno, United States – Nevada). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses database: Full Text. (UMI Number: 1438918)
- Busier, H. L., Clark, K. A., Esch, R. A., Glesne, C., Pigeon, Y., & Tarule, J. M. (1997). Intimacy in research. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 165-170.

- Carson, A. M. (2001). That's another story: Narrative methods and ethical practice. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 27(3), 198-202.
- Cassidy, K. (2001). Enhancing your experiential program with narrative theory. *The Journal of Experiential Education*, 24(1), 22-26.
- Christiano, K. J. (1986). Church as a family surrogate: Another look at family ties, anomie, and church involvement. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, (25)3, 339-354.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Murphy, M. S. (2009). Comments on Coulter and Smith relational ontological commitments in narrative research. *Educational Researcher*, 38(8), 598-602. doi 10.3102/0012189X09353940
- Clergy end-of-life education program: A guide for clergy to provide support and guidance to families at the end of life.* (August, 2005). Florida Clergy End-of-Life Education Project and Odyssey Healthcare Foundation.
- Colao-Vitolo, N. (2006) *Coping and bereaved psychologists: Impact on the psychotherapy process.* (Doctoral dissertation, California Institute of Integral Studies, United States – California). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses database: Full Text. (UMI Number 3218517).
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14.
- Copeland, C., Noble, S., & Feldstein, S. (1995). *Bereavement: A universal process of growth through readjustment.* ERIC Accession number ED391994.

- Coulter, C. A. (2009). Response to comments: Finding the narrative in narrative research. *Educational Researcher*, 38(8), 608-611. doi. 10.3102/0012189X09254124
- Coulter, C., Michael, C., & Poynor, L. (2007). Storytelling as pedagogy: An unexpected outcome of narrative inquiry. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 37(2), 103-122.
- Corr, C. A., Nabe, C. M., & Corr, D. M. (2003). *Death and dying, life and living*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Cresswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Currier, J. M., Holland, J. M., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2006). Sense-making, grief, and the experience of violent loss: Toward a meditational model. *Death Studies*, 30, 403-428.
- Darling, C. A., Hill, W. H., & McWey, L. M. (2004). Understanding stress and quality of life for clergy and clergy spouses. *Stress and Health*, 20, 261-277.
- Deffenbaugh, A. M. (2008). *Self-perceived grief counseling competencies of licensed professional counselors*. (Doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, United States – Ohio). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses database: Full Text. (UMI Number: 3300111).
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). Introduction. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. (2<sup>nd</sup>.), (pp. 1-46). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Dick, L. C. (1989). An investigation of the disenfranchised grief of two health care professionals caring for persons with AIDS. In K. J. Doka (Ed.), *Disenfranchised grief: Recognizing hidden sorrow*. (55-65). New York: Lexington Books.
- Doka, K. J. (Ed.) (1989). *Disenfranchised grief: Recognizing hidden sorrow*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Doka, K. J. (1997). *Living with Grief: When illness is prolonged*. Bristol, PA: Hospice Foundation of America.
- Doka, K. J. (Ed.) (2002). *Disenfranchised grief: New directions, challenges, and strategies for practice*. Champaign, Illinois: Research Press.
- Dominick, S. A., Irvine, A. B., Beauchamp, N., Seeley, J. R., Nolen-Hoeksema, S., Doka, K. J., & Bonanno, G. A. (2009). An internet tool to normalize grief. *Omega*, 60(1), 71-87.
- Doolittle, B. R. (2010). The impact of behaviors upon burnout among parish-based clergy. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 49(1), 88-95.
- Ellor, J. W. (2005). The caregiver's journey part 5, grieving: Ongoing loss and the Alzheimer's patient. *Clergy Journal*, 82(2), 33-34.
- Fanestil, J. (2007). Graveside hope. *Christian Century*, 124(5), 24-27.
- Few, A. L., Stephens, D. P., & Rouse-Arnett, M. (2003). Sister-to-sister talk: Transcending boundaries and challenges in qualitative research with black women. *Family Relations*, 52(3), 205-215.

- Firth, J. (2007). Physician heal thyself: A final diagnosis. *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 61(3), 263-264.
- Flannelly, K. J., Roberts, S. B., & Weaver, A. J. (2005). Correlates of compassion fatigue and burnout in chaplains and other clergy who responded to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in New York City. *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 59(3), 213-224.
- Florian, V., Mikulincer, M., & Bucholtz, I. (1995). Effects of adult attachment style on the perception and search for social support. *The Journal of Psychology*, 129(6), 665-676.
- Friedman, E. H. (1985). *Generation to generation: Family process in church and synagogue*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Folkerth, E. (2008, Dec. 03). As if we're s'posed to know (A tribute to Kathleen Baskin-Ball). *When EF talks: Eric Folkerth on Music, Religion, Politics and Life*. Retrieved December 5, 2008 from <http://www.ericfolkerth.com/wheneftalks/files/inmemoryofkathleen.html>.
- Frame, M. W. (1998). Relocation and well-being in United Methodist clergy and their spouses: What pastoral counselors need to know. *Pastoral Psychology*, 46(6), 415-430.
- Frame, M. W., & Shehan, C. L. (1994). Work and well-being in the two-person career: Relocation stress and coping among clergy husbands and wives. *Family Relations*, 43, 196-205.

- Frame, M. W., & Shehan, C. L. (2004). Care for the caregiver: Clues for the pastoral care of clergywomen. *Pastoral Psychology, 52*(5), 369-380.
- Franzosi, R. (1998). Narrative analysis – Or why (and how) sociologists should be interested in narrative. *Annual Review of Sociology, 24*, 517-554.
- Fulton, R. L. (1961). The clergyman and the funeral director: A study in role conflict. *Social Forces, 39*(4), 317-323.
- Gerber, I., Wiener, A., Kutscher, A. H., Battin, D., Arkin, A., & Golberg, I. K. (Eds.). (1979). *Perspectives on bereavement*. New York: Arno Press.
- Gifford, B. J., & Cleary, B. B. (1990). Supporting the bereaved: For CE credit. *The American Journal of Nursing, 90*(2), 48-55.
- Giladi, A. (1993). “The child was small ... not so the grief for him”: Sources, structure, and content of Al-Sakhawi’s consolation treatise for bereaved parents. *Poetics Today, 14*(2), 367-386.
- Gilbert, R. M. (1992). *Extraordinary relationships: A new way of thinking about human interactions*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Glebe, D. J. (1992). Pastoral care with the dying and bereaved. In *Spiritual, ethical and pastoral aspects of death and bereavement*. Cox, G. R., & Fundis, R. J. (Eds.). Amityville, New York: Baywood Publishing.
- Goetz, J. P., & LeCompte, M. D. (1981). Ethnographic research and the problem of data reduction. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 12*(1), 51-70.

- Golden, J., Piedmont, R. L., Ciarrocchi, J. W., & Rodgerson, T. (2004). Spirituality and burnout: An incremental validity study. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 32(2), 115-125.
- Goldsworthy, K. K. (2005). Grief and loss theory in social work practice: All changes involve loss, just as all losses require change. *Australian Social Work*, 58(2), 167-178.
- Gould, J. B. (1994). "A picture is worth a thousand words": A strategy for grief education. *Death Studies*, 18(1), 65-74.
- Graham, L. K. (2007). The value of observing an autopsy in clergy and pastoral care education. *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 61(4), 365-378.
- Grollman, E. (2003). John D. Morgan, Ph.D.: The consummate professional. *Illness, Crisis, & Loss*, 11(3), 213-216.
- Grosch, W. N., & Olsen, D. C. (2000). Clergy burnout: An integrative approach. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 56, 619-632.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (1998). Narrative practice and the coherence of personal stories. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 39(1), 163-187.
- Gudmundsdottir, S. (1996). The teller, the tale, and the one being told: The narrative nature of the research interview. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 26(3), 293-306.
- Hahn, J. A. (2001). Ministry in ICU. *Journal of Christian Nursing*, 18(2), 31-32.
- Harbaugh, G. L., & Rogers, E. (1984). Pastoral burnout: A view from the seminary. *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 38(2), 99-106.

- Hauerwas, S., & Willimon, W. (1990). The limits of care: Burnout as an ecclesial issue. *Word & World, 10*(3), 247-253.
- Helsel, P. B. (2008). In memoriam: The disenfranchised grief of chaplains and the recovery of memory. *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling, 62*(4), 337-342.
- Henning, J. A. (2005). *Becoming a therapist with ill, dying, and bereaved clients: A relational constructivist view*. (Doctoral dissertation, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, United States – Illinois). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses database: Full Text. (UMI Number 3215580).
- Hills, P., Francis, L. J., & Rutledge, C. J. F. (2004). The factor structure of a measure of burnout specific to clergy, and its trial application with respect to some individual personal differences. *Review of Religious Research, 46*(1), 27-42.
- Hittle, J. M. (1995). Dealing with death: Grieving together. *The American Journal of Nursing, 95*(7), 55-57.
- Hodgson, N. A., Segal, S., Weidinger, M., & Linde, M. B. (2004). Being there: Contributions of the nurse, social workers, and chaplain during and after a death. *Generations, 28*(2), 47-52.
- Holley, K. A., & Colyar, J. (2009). Rethinking texts: Narrative and the construction of qualitative research. *Educational Researcher, 38*(9), 680-686.
- doi.10.3102/0013189X09351979



- Horrocks, S. L. (2006). *A compendium of measurement instruments assessing grief, bereavement, and loss*. (Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, United States -- New York). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses database: Full Text. (UMI Number: 3213647).
- Hoshmand, L.T. (2005). Narratology, cultural psychology, and counseling research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 178-186.
- Hundley, M. E. (1993). *Awaken to good mourning*. Plano, Texas: Awaken Publications.
- Hurst, D. M. (1979). Problems which confront the minister. In A. Wiener, A. Arkin, & I. K. Goldberg, with L. G. Kutscher (Eds.), *Perspectives on bereavement*. (158-169). New York: Arno Press.
- Iosso, C. (1996). Looking at our Presbyterian church as a family system. *Network News, 16*(4), 14.
- Jacobsen, S. (2006). Fuji story. *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling, 60*(1-2), 141-142.
- Jernigan, H. L. (1984). Immanence and transcendence in pastoral care: Some basic considerations. *The Journal of Pastoral Care, 38*(2), 120-132.
- Johnson, K. (2004). Grief in North America, a death-denying society. *International Journal of Palliative Nursing, 10*(2), 435.
- Kalish, R. A., & Dunn, L. (1976). Death and dying: A survey of credit offerings in theological schools and some possible implications. *Review of Religious Research, 17*(2), 134-140.

- Kearney, K. S., & Hyle, A. E. (2006). A look through the Kubler-Ross theoretical lens. In *Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research* V. A. Anfara, Jr., & N. T. Mertz, (Eds.), (109-128). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kemery, E. R. (2006). Clergy role stress and satisfaction: Role ambiguity isn't always bad. *Pastoral Psychology, 54*, 561-570. doi.10.1007/s11089-006-0024-3
- Klass, D. (1988). John Bowlby's model of grief and the problem of identification. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying, 18*(1), 13-32.
- Krause, N., Ellison, C. G., & Wulff, K. M. (1998). Church-based emotional support, negative interaction, and psychological well-being: Findings from a national sample of Presbyterians. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 37*(4), 725-741.
- Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York: Scribner.
- Kuhne, G. W., & Donaldson, J. F. (1995). Balancing ministry and management: An exploratory study of pastoral work activities. *Review of Religious Research, 37*(2), 147-163.
- Lankes, C. L. (2000). A pastor's perspective: Getting through the grief. *Journal of Christian Nursing, 17*(4), 10-11.
- Lawbaugh, W. M. (2005). Existential, theological, and psychological concepts of death: A personal retrospective. *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling, 59*(1-2), 17-27.

- Lee, C. (1995). Rethinking boundary ambiguity from an ecological perspective: Stress in Protestant clergy families. *Family Process, 34*(1), 75-86.
- Lee, C. (1999). Specifying intrusive demands and their outcomes in congregational ministry: A report on the ministry demands inventory. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 38*(4), 477-489.
- Leming, M. R. (1974). Religion and bereavement: Counsel for the physician, advice for the bereaved, thoughts for the clergyman. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 13*(2), 258.
- Lenhardt, A. (1997). Grieving disenfranchised losses: Background and strategies for counselors. *Journal of Humanistic Education and Development, 35*(4), 208-16.
- Lev, E. (1989). A nurse's perspective on disenfranchised grief. In K.J. Doka, (Ed.), *Disenfranchised grief. Recognizing hidden sorrow* (pp. 287-299). New York: Lexington Books.
- Lloyd-Williams, M., Wright, M., Cobb, M., & Shiels, C. (2004). A prospective study of the roles, responsibilities and stresses of chaplains working within a hospice. *Palliative Medicine, 18*(7), 638-645.
- Lloyd-Williams, M., Cobb, M., & Taylor, F. (2006). How well trained are clergy in care of the dying patient and bereavement support? *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management, 32*(1), 44-51.

- Lopata, H. Z. (1979). Grief work and identity reconstruction. In I. Gerber, A. Wiener, A. H. Kutscher, D. Battin, A. Arkin, & I. K. Goldberg, (Eds.), *Perspectives on bereavement* (pp. 12-25). New York: Arno Press.
- Mann, K. (2007). "And you'll be there, too." *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 61(3), 265-266.
- Marrone, R. (1999). Dying, mourning, and spirituality: A psychological perspective. *Death Studies*, 23(6), 495-519.
- Massey, D. L. (2000). Theological and biblical interpretations of current movements and emerging paradigms within bereavement studies. *Pastoral Psychology*, 48(6), 469-486.
- McCormick, A. J. (2007) *Training social workers in palliative care: Evaluation of a self-efficacy model*. (Doctoral dissertation, Portland State University, United States – Oregon). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses database: Full Text. (UMI Number: 3274099).
- McKelvey, R. S. (2006). *When a child dies: How pediatric physicians and nurses cope*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- McWilliams, F. C. (2007). Ada's gift. *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 61(4), 389-390.
- Mellow, M. (2002). A bulwark in a busy world: The meaning of family for rural clergy. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 31(6), 706-728.

- Miles, A. (1993). Caring for the family left behind. *The American Journal of Nursing*, 93(12), 34-36.
- Miles, A. (2003). From the table. *Clergy Journal*, 79(8), 21-22.
- Minnich-Sadler, K. (2005). The language of family systems theory: Why it doesn't always work. *The Clergy Journal*, 81(8), 6-9.
- Modell-Hirsch, S. (1979). Some effects of unexpected, unwilled dissolution of marriage caused by the adult male's death. In I. Gerber, A. Wiener, A. H. Kutscher, D. Battin, A. Arkin, & I. K. Goldberg, (Eds.), *Perspectives on bereavement* (pp. 131-139). New York: Arno Press.
- Monahan, S. C. (1999). Role ambiguity among protestant clergy: Consequences of the activated laity. *Review of Religious Research*, 41(1), 80-95.
- Moran, M., Flannelly, K. J., Weaver, A. J., Overvold, J. A., Hess, W., & Wilson, J. C. (2005). A study of pastoral care, referral, and consultation practices among clergy in four settings in the New York City area. *Pastoral Psychology*, 53(3), 255-266.
- Moos, N. L. (1995). An integrative model of grief. *Death Studies*, 19(4), 337-64.
- Nauss, A. (1983). Seven profiles of effective ministers. *Review of Religious Research*, 24(4), 334-346.
- Norrick, N. R. (1997). Twice-told tales: Collaborative narration of familiar stories. *Language in Society*, 26(2), 199-220.
- Oates, W. E. (1986). Stress perception and management in the pastor's life and work. *Review & Expositor*, 83(4), 573-585.

- Olsen, D. C., & Grosch, W. N. (1991). Clergy burnout: A self psychology and systems perspective. *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 55(3), 297-304.
- Pargament, K. I., Olsen, H., Reilly, B., Falgout, K., Ensing, D., & Van Haitzma, K. (1992). God help me (II): The relationship of religious orientations to religious coping with negative life events. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 31(4), 504-513.
- Parker, P. D., & Martin, A. J. (2011). Clergy motivation and occupational well-being: exploring a quadripolar model and its role in predicting burnout and engagement. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 50(1), 656-674.
- Parker-Pope, T. (April 21, 2009). Well; What are friends for? A longer life. *The New York Times*. Retrieved April 28, 2009 from <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9406EFD8103FF93>
- Pass, O. M. (2000). Peace from within: Teaching texts that comfort and heal. *The English Journal*, 89(5), 90-94.
- Pentland, B. T. (1999). Building process theory with narrative: From description to explanation. *The Academy of Management Review*, 24(4), 711-724.
- Proeschold-Bell, R. J., LeGrand, S., James, J., Wallace, A., Adams, C., & Toole, D. (2011). A theoretical model of the holistic health of United Methodist clergy. *Journal of Religion and Health* 50(1), 700-720.
- Purnell, D. (2004). Pastoral ministry and the fleshly body. *Pastoral Psychology*, 53(1), 81-85.

- Puterbaugh, D. T. (2006). *Bereavement counseling: The therapist's experience*. (Doctoral dissertation, Capella University, United States – Minnesota, 2006). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses database: Full Text. (UMI Number: 3196722).
- Richardson, R. W. (2005). *Becoming a healthier pastor: Family Systems Theory and the pastor's own family*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Rigney, A. (1992). The point of stories: On narrative communication and its cognitive functions. *Poetics Today*, 13(2), 263-283.
- Ringdal, G. I., Jordhey, M. S., Ringdal, K., & Kaasa, S. (2001). The first year of grief and bereavement in close family members to individuals who have died of cancer. *Palliative Medicine*, 15, 91-105.
- Robbins, M. & Francis, L. (2010). Work-related psychological health and psychological type among Church of England clergywomen. *Review of Religious Research*, 52(1), 57-71.
- Rosen, E. J. (1989). Hospice work with AIDS-related disenfranchised grief. In K. J. Doka, (Ed.), *Disenfranchised grief. Recognizing hidden sorrow* (pp. 301-311). New York: Lexington Books.
- Ross, M. W., Greenfield, S. A., & Bennett, L. (1999). Predictors of dropout and burnout in AIDS volunteers: A longitudinal study. *AIDS Care*, 11(6), 723-731.
- Rossman, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (2003). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Rowatt, G. W. (2001). Stress and satisfaction in ministry families. *Review and Expositor*, 98, 523-543.
- Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Data management and analysis methods. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. (2nd ed.), (pp. 259-309). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sawchuk, D., O'Connor, T. S., Walsh-Bowers, R., Ross, C., & Hatzipantelis, M. (2007). Exploring power and gender issues emergent in an institutional workshop on preventing clergy sexual misconduct. *Pastoral Psychology*, 54, 499-511.
- Sawin, M. M. (1981). Family life education in religious institutions: Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant. *Family Relations*, 30(4), 527-535.
- Schade, J. J., & Schade, K. A. (1996). Parishioners' expectations following a death. *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 50(3), 275-279.
- Schiffrin, D. (1996). Narrative as self-portrait: Sociolinguistic constructions of identity. *Language in Society*, 25, 167-203.
- Schweitzer, C. L. S. (2003). The vocation of ministry: Grief, groans, and grace. *Pastoral Psychology*, 52(1-2), 69-80.
- Scriver, M. S. (2006). Reflections of CPE experiences after two decades. *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling Supplement*, 60(5), 445-454.
- Skoglund, A. G. (2006). Do not forget about your volunteers: A qualitative analysis of factors influencing volunteer turnover. *Health & Social Work*, 31(3), 217-220.



- Sorensen, D. A. (2008). Current view: The public pastor: Blessing or burden? *Clergy Journal*, 84(8), 46-47.
- Steinhardt, M., & Dolbier, C. (2008). Evaluation of a resilience intervention to enhance coping strategies and protective factors and decrease symptomatology. *Journal of American College Health*, 56(4), 445-453.
- Steinke, P. L. (1993). *How your church family works: Understanding congregations as emotional systems*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute.
- Steinke, P. L. (1996). *Healthy congregations: A systems approach*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute.
- Stephenson, J. S. (1981). The family therapist and death: A profile. *Family Relations*, 30(3), 459-462.
- Stone, H. W. (1996). Grief ministry in transition. *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 50(3), 269-273.
- Suri, H., & Clarke, D. (2009). Advancements in research synthesis methods: From a methodologically inclusive perspective. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 395-430. doi 10.3102/0034654308326349
- Taylor, B. B. (1996, March 13). Can these bones live? *The Christian Century*. Retrieved November 29, 2008 from [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1058/is\\_n9\\_v113/ai\\_18118936](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1058/is_n9_v113/ai_18118936)

- Tedlock, B. (1991). From participant observation to the observation of participation: The emergence of narrative ethnography. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 47(1), 69-94.
- Temple, P. C., & Wylie, C. R. (1972). Grief work in the student pastor's learning. *Journal of Pastoral Care*, 26(2), 122-124
- Tramonte, M. R. (1998). *Linking support systems for students and families: Helping disenfranchised mourners grieve a death* ERIC Accession Number: ED422543; Notes: Paper presented at the National Association of School Psychologists Annual National Convention (30th, Orlando, FL, April 14-18, 1998).
- Turton, D. W., & Francis, L. J. (2007). The relationship between attitude toward prayer and professional burnout among Anglican parochial clergy in England: Are praying clergy healthier clergy? *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 10(1), 61-74.
- Walsh, F. (2002). A family resilience framework: Innovative practice applications. *Family Relations*, 51(2), 130-137.
- Watson, C. (2007). Picturing validity: Autoethnography and the representation of self? *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(3), 526-544.
- Watson, L. A. P. (2007). "I already knew": The experience of a chaplain. *Journal of Trauma Nursing*, 14(2), 98-99.
- Way, P. (2003). Family systems: Insights for congregational care. *The Clergy Journal*, 79(10), 14-15.

- Weaver, A. J., Flannelly, L. T., Garbarino, J., Figley, C. R., & Flannelly, K. J. (2003). A systematic review of research on religion and spirituality in the journal of traumatic stress: 1990-1999. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 6(3), 215-228.
- Wedemeyer, N. V., & Grotevant, H. D. (1982). Mapping the family system: A technique for teaching family systems theory concepts. *Family Relations*, 31(2), 185-193.
- Wells, C. R., Probst, J., McKeown, R., Mitchem, S., & Whiejong, H. (2012). The relationship between work-related stress and boundary-related stress within the clerical profession. *Journal of Religious Health*, 51, 215-230.
- Wells, P. J. (1993). Preparing for sudden death: Social work in the emergency room. *Social Work*, 38(3), 339-342.
- Williams, M. L., Cobb, M., Shiels, C., & Taylor, F. (2006). How well trained are clergy in care of the dying patient and bereavement support? *Journal of Pain & Symptom Management*, 32(1), 44-51.
- Williams, M. L., Wright, M., Cobb, M., & Shiels, C. (2004). A prospective study of the roles, responsibilities and stresses of chaplains working within a hospice. *Palliative Medicine*, 18, 638-645.
- Wolfelt, A. D. (1992). *Understanding grief: Helping yourself heal*. Levittown, PA: Accelerated Development Inc.
- Worden, J. W. (2002). *Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner* (3rd ed.). New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Zikmund, B. B., Lummis, A. T., & Chang, P. M. Y. (1998). *Clergywomen: An uphill calling*. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press.

APPENDIX A

Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY  
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Clergywomen and grief: When the professional is personal

Investigator: Sarah Howe Miller, B.A., M.Div. (817) XXX-XXXX

Advisor: Ron Fannin, Ph.D (940) 898-XXXX

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study to be conducted by Sarah Howe Miller, B.A., M.Div., at Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. The purpose of this research will be to explore the experiences of clergywomen who have experienced grief that results from a relationship in a professional context.

Research Procedures

You are being asked to participate in a face-to-face interview at a location that is convenient for you or a phone interview if distance precludes a face-to-face interview. The researcher will conduct all interviews. The interviews will be audiotaped to provide a transcription of the information discussed and to assure the accuracy of the reporting of that information. The maximum total time commitment for this study is estimated to be approximately 1-2 hours. Your interview will be transcribed and assigned a code number to assure confidentiality.

Potential Risks

Potential risks related to your participation in the study include fatigue and emotional discomfort during the interview. To avoid fatigue, you may take a break (or breaks) during the interview as needed. If you experience emotional discomfort regarding the interview questions, you may stop answering any of the questions at any time. The investigator will provide you with a referral list of names and phone numbers that you may use if you want to discuss this discomfort with a professional.

Another possible risk to you as a result of your participation in this study is release of confidential information. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The interview will take place in a private location agreed upon by you and the researcher. A code number, rather than your real name, will be used on the audiotape and transcription. Only the investigator and her advisor will have access to the tapes. The recordings, hard copies of the transcriptions, and electronic files containing the transcription text files will be stored in a locked file in the investigator's office. Consent forms will be kept in a separate locked file. The tapes and transcription files will be destroyed within 5 years of the completion of the study. It is anticipated that the results of this study will be published in the investigator's dissertation as well as in other research publications. However, no names will be included in any publication.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefit

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential and you may discontinue your participation in the study at any time without penalty. The only direct benefit of this study to you is that the completion of the study a summary of the results will be mailed to you upon request.

Your participation will contribute to a better understanding of clergywomen and grief experienced due to professional relationships developed in a local church setting and to the overall body of literature on clergywomen and grief.

Questions Regarding the Study

If you have questions about this research study you may ask the researchers. Their phone numbers are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or in the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at (940) 898-3378 or via email at [IRB@twu.edu](mailto:IRB@twu.edu). You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If you would like to receive a summary of the results of this study, please provide an address to which this summary should be sent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B

Demographic Information



## Demographic Information

Please complete the following information.

1. Current age \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender \_\_\_\_\_
3. Country in which you reside \_\_\_\_\_
4. Where do you currently serve in ministry or are you retired \_\_\_\_\_

Answer the two below if not retired and currently serving a local church.

5. What is the setting of your local church ministry (urban/rural/etc)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the average worship attendance of the congregation you currently serve? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Cumulative years of ministry served in a local church setting \_\_\_\_\_
8. Number of funerals officiated for non-family members \_\_\_\_\_
9. Christian Denomination in which you are ordained \_\_\_\_\_
10. Current ordination status within your denomination \_\_\_\_\_
11. Highest level of education completed \_\_\_\_\_
12. Race/Ethnicity (check all that apply)  
 African American     Asian American     Caucasian     Native American  
 Hispanic     Other \_\_\_\_\_
13. May I call you within the next week to see if you have questions of if you have additional information to share?  
 Yes    Phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
 No

APPENDIX C  
Counseling Resources

## Counseling Resources

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

112 South Alfred Street

Alexandria, VA 22314-3016

703-838-9808

<http://www.aamft.org>

American Counseling Association

5999 Stevenson Avenue

Alexandria, VA 22304

800-347-6647

<http://counseling.org>

AAMFT Therapist Locator

At [www.aamft.org](http://www.aamft.org)

Counseling and Family Therapy Clinic

Texas Woman's University

114 Human Development Building (HDB)

Denton, Texas 76204

940-898-2620

Pastoral Care and Education Center

4525 Lemmon Avenue, Suite 200

Dallas, Texas 75219

214-526-4525

APPENDIX H

IRB Approval Letter



**Institutional Review Board**  
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619  
940-898-3378 FAX 940-898-4416  
e-mail: IRB@twu.edu

February 17, 2012

Ms. Sarah E. Howe Miller

Dear Ms. Howe Miller:

*Re: Christian Clergywomen and Grief: Local Church Pastors and Their Experiences (Protocol #: 16900)*

The above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and appears to meet our requirements for the protection of individuals' rights.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt PRIOR to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp and a copy of the annual/final report are enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. The signed consent forms and final report must be filed with the Institutional Review Board at the completion of the study.

This approval is valid one year from February 17, 2012. Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any unanticipated incidents. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rhonda Buckley, Co-Chair  
Institutional Review Board - Denton

enc.

cc. Dr. Larry LeFlore, Department of Family Sciences  
Dr. Ron Fannin, Department of Family Sciences  
Graduate School

APPENDIX E  
Recruitment Flyer

## Are you a clergywoman who has officiated more than 15 funerals?

If you are a clergywoman who has officiated more than 15 funerals while serving in a local church setting (can be more than one church) for people who were not related to you, you are invited to participate in a Texas Woman's University dissertation research project being conducted by Sarah Howe Miller. The purpose of the study is to

Explore the experiences of clergywomen who have had times of personal grief in the midst of professional responsibilities, i.e., clergy grief: when the professional is personal.

All interviews will be conducted by me in a place that is convenient for you or over the phone when the distance is too great to accommodate an in person interview. Your time commitment will be 1-2 hours. Interview material will be used in the dissertation. However, your name and any identifying information will remain confidential.

Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you would like more information on the study, please contact Sarah Howe Miller at (817) XXX-XXXX. You may also contact my advisor, Ron Fannin, Ph.D., at (940) 898-XXXX or email him at [RFannin@mail.twu.edu](mailto:RFannin@mail.twu.edu)

APPENDIX F

Initial Telephone Call Script



“Hello, my name is Sarah Howe Miller. Thank you for responding to my flyer. I am a doctoral student in Family Studies at Texas Woman’s University where I am completing this research project as a part of my degree. Not a lot is known about clergywomen and grief experienced due to professional relationships in a local church setting, so I’ve chosen this topic to study.”

“The purpose of my research is to explore the experiences of clergywomen who have had times of personal grief due to the caring relationship shared with church members in the midst of professional responsibilities like when a church member dies. If you agree to participate, I will interview you at a place and a time that is convenient for you. If distance precludes a face to face interview, I will interview you over the phone at a time that is convenient for you at my expense. The interview will last approximately 1-2 hours. When we meet, I’ll have consent forms for you to sign, collect some background information and then audiotape our conversation so that I’ll be sure to be accurate describing your experiences. If the interview must be a phone interview, the consent forms will be mailed to you with a stamped return envelope.

Here’s what I’ll be asking. 1) Tell me your definition of a “hard funeral.” 2) Tell me about one or more funerals you officiated for a church member. I’ll use a code number to protect your confidentiality and I’ll be the only one to know your name. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty to you.”

“What questions do you have, so far?” (All questions will be answered by the researcher.) “Would you like your story to be part of the study?” (If the potential participant says yes, arrangements for the interview will be made.) “Thank you for your time. I look forward to talking with you on the date [restate date] and at the time [restate time] we’ve agreed upon.” (if potential participant says no, she will be asked if she knows of anyone who might be willing to be a part of the study.) “Thank you for taking the time to talk with me.”

APPENDIX G  
Interview Guide

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant's Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

“Thank you for agreeing to be a part of my study.” (Pause) “The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of clergywomen who have experienced grief as a result of caring relationships established in a local church setting. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. Do you have any questions about the study?” (Pause)

“You may take as many breaks as you need. I'll audiotape our conversation to make sure it is accurate.” (Pause)

“Before we begin, I'll give you the consent form to read and then sign.”

(Each participant will be given the consent form to read and sign.)

“Do you have any questions about the consent form?” (Pause) “If you notice, there is a space at the bottom of the consent form that asks for your mailing address if you'd like a summary of the study results. Please initial on pages 1 and 2, and sign and date on page 3. Here's a copy for you to keep.”

(Researcher will give a copy of the signed consent form to the participants and keep one for herself). “I'm turning on the recorder now.” (Recorder now on)

“I'll begin by asking you some questions to gather background information. If anything I say or ask is unclear, please let me know. If you are uncomfortable answering any of my questions, please let me know that, too.”

(Questions will be answered by researcher). (The researcher will obtain demographic information that the participant is willing to provide. Upon completion, the researcher will begin with the interview questions).

“We’re finished with the background information. We’ll now move on to the research question. I encourage you to speak freely and openly and to elaborate as much as you are comfortable.”

First, let’s begin with, “How would you define a hard funeral?” (Pause)

Tell me about some “hard funerals” you have officiated for a church member.

(Pause)

Prompts as needed

How did you cope with your personal experience of grief?

Were any of your family members affected by grief when this person died?

m-hmm

smiling

nodding

I see.

I understand.

How so?

What more could you say about that?

Let me see if I understand what you are saying.

What else comes to mind?

Anything else?

“We’re finished with the interview now. I’ll be calling in a few days to see if you’d like to add more information. If you’ve asked for summary results from this study, a copy will be sent to the address you’ve given me. Thank you for your time and for the information you’ve given.”

APPENDIX G

Follow-up Telephone Script

## Follow-up Telephone Script

“Hello, this is Sarah Howe Miller. How are you? I am calling today to follow up with you about our interview and to ask if you have questions or if you would like to add more information to the interview. (Participant will be given time to respond.)

(If there are questions, researcher will respond to them. If there are no questions the researcher will say), “Thank you very much for participating in my research study. If you requested a summary of the study results, you will receive them in the mail at the address you provided during the interview. Again, thank you so much for your time and for your participation.”