

TAKE AUTHORITY TO PREACH THE WORD OF GOD:
STRATIFIED SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG CLERGY
IN A UNITED METHODIST ANNUAL CONFERENCE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Division of Religion of
Drew University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree,
Doctor of Philosophy

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April 2016

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the relationships between ordained and unordained pastors in the context of one United Methodist annual conference—the Tennessee Annual Conference—to describe the sources of social stratification between these groups. The United Methodist Church has two primary categories of clergy serving as lead pastors in its congregations: ordained elders and licensed local pastors. While members of both classifications of clergy leadership serve pastoral roles in congregational settings, their relationships with the wider structures of the denomination differ considerably. These differences relate to the rights, privileges, and responsibilities in their annual conferences (the geographic and administrative bodies into which United Methodists are divided), with elders holding privileged positions in their ability to make decisions for larger church structures, their higher levels of salary, and their guarantee of a church position from year to year. Additionally, local pastors and elders often view their roles and approach their work differently at points, due to differing theological outlooks as well as the ways that the two groups' educational experiences differ.

Because of these structural, educational, and attitudinal distinctions, the United Methodist Church has a de facto two-tiered structure for its pastors, with unequal power dynamics between them. There exists an inherent (if not consciously acknowledged) competition for positions of power among these various clergypersons. In this dissertation, the sociological work of Pierre Bourdieu provides a framework for analyzing the ways in which this competition for privileged positions in the religious field of an annual conference takes place. Bourdieu's conception of capital allows for discussion of the goods being pursued in this field (ordination, pastoral positions with greater pay and

church memberships, etc.), while his concept of habitus describes the inherent dispositions that differ between these groups of clergy.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although all shortcomings in this project are mine alone, I am extremely grateful for the help of all those without whose help I would not have been able to see it through to completion. During my time at Drew University, I have been able to draw from a wide range of scholarly voices that have enriched my perspective. First and foremost, I thank Dr. Laurel Kearns, my advisor, who has been my primary guide in studying the American religious landscape, as well as my most consistent source of encouragement when my energy was lacking. I thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Jody Caldwell and Dr. Traci West, whose critiques and observations have made this a better work throughout. I also honor the memory of Dr. Karen McCarthy Brown, my first advisor at Drew, and Dr. Otto Maduro, who introduced me to Pierre Bourdieu and whose intellectual rigor I continue to seek to emulate. Finally, I thank the staffs of the Drew University Methodist Library and the General Commission on Archives and History at Drew for their brainstorming conversations and their assistance in finding United Methodist resources that have been of help—Dr. Dale Patterson, Mark Shenise, and Dr. Chris Anderson.

I offer my thanks for the members and leadership of the Tennessee Conference United Methodist Church for supporting my study among them—Bishop Bill McAlilly, district superintendents Cathie Leimenstoll and LeNoir Culbertson, and Bryan Brooks and Tommy Ward in their capacities as leaders of the Board of Ordained Ministry. I also thank the members of the Walnut Grove, Huntland, and Hillsboro United Methodist Churches, who patiently gave me the flexibility to write a dissertation while also serving as their pastor.

Finally, I thank my family, particularly my parents, Walter and Charlene Haynes, my most consistent supporters throughout my life, without whom I would not have been able to accomplish anything, and whom I love dearly.

INTRODUCTION

When asked a simple question—“Tell me how you became a pastor?”—a number of United Methodist pastors in Middle Tennessee gave me a variety of answers. The responses were varied, but each person told their version of a call story—how it was that they felt drawn by God to be in church leadership, by means that were internal or external, direct or implied, clear or opaque. One recurring theme involved whether or not they also felt drawn to prepare for their work by attending a theological school. One pastor with fifteen years of church leadership experience remembered:

I really feel like God was saying, you're not ready yet, but I need you. You trust me, and I'll take care of the details. You just do what I'm asking you to do. That's what I feel like, and that's what I did. And I still feel that way. I still sometimes feel all my peers were always more educated than me. The people I hung out with always had degrees and I didn't. ... But I just didn't feel called to the seminary route.

Another told me that seminary was itself a central part of how she discerned her calling into pastoral ministry:

I think one of the best things for me, while I loved the intensity of just delving into the studies of the scriptures and church history and theology, but also the things that happened outside. It was almost a discovery of God in the gaps, when you're sitting with people and struggling with something and realize that if you just wait a while in a conversation, somehow the holy comes. I think that was one of the best things about seminary for me was the gaining of spiritual patience for an ambiguity. And being able to live there with a sense of both hope that God does come, and also that humility of realizing that you don't have to have it all, you don't have to have every answer to every thing to be in ministry, because there is this experience of living in community and living together in conversation in which the holy comes.

Yet another shared that while seminary was formative, he still doesn't know how to articulate just what the experience means in his ministry:

I loved seminary. I will have to say that I don't know how much of what I experienced in seminary prepared me for pastoring a local church, in terms

of the day to day life of a pastor. Yes, it helped me to know how to exegete a text, and how to do research for sermons and Bible studies, and it helped me to wrestle with deep theological concepts and things like that. But I found myself in the first year of ministry thinking, what did I just spend three years doing, because I don't think I've used much or any of that.

Each of these clergypersons professed a divine calling for the work they do and felt that they were adequately prepared for that work, even though their educational experiences differed quite a bit. They share a common purpose—leadership in United Methodist congregations—but there are differences in their outlooks, as well.

The existence of United Methodist clergy with different forms of theological and practical training is a development with a history as old as the denomination itself. The *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* describes the denomination's ordering of ministry in this way:

Ministry in the Christian church is derived from the ministry of Christ, who calls all persons to receive God's gift of salvation and follow in the way of love and service. ... Within the church community, there are persons whose gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness are affirmed by the community, and who respond to God's call by offering themselves in leadership as set-apart ministers, ordained and licensed (United Methodist Church 2012, 217).

As suggested by the last part of that description, the United Methodist Church has two primary categories of clergy serving as lead pastors in its congregations: ordained elders and licensed local pastors. While members of both classifications of clergy leadership serve pastoral roles in congregational settings, their relationships with the wider structures of the denomination differ considerably. Individuals in both groups are members of their respective annual conferences (the geographic and administrative bodies into which United Methodists in the United States are divided). Although clergy in both categories perform similar work within the congregations they serve (by leading

worship services, providing pastoral care, and organizing the ministries of their churches), there remain distinctions of at least two kinds between these categories. First, numerous differences exist relating to the rights, privileges, and responsibilities in their annual conferences: elders are guaranteed a place to serve from one year to the next, have greater decision-making capabilities in the annual conference, and have higher levels of guaranteed minimum salary.

Second, prior research has suggested that local pastors and elders often view their roles and approach their work differently at points. This divergence is partly due to differing theological outlooks, but it is also affected by the ways that the two groups' educational experiences differ (Carroll and Marler 1995; Finke and Dougherty 2002; Lummis 2002; Perl and Chang 2000). Elders typically have received a formal theological education culminating in the Master of Divinity degree. Local pastors, on the other hand, are not required to receive a theological master's degree, and they most often enroll in an ongoing series of continuing education classes that make up the Course of Study. Seminary students not only learn discrete subject matter for their work (theology, biblical studies, ethics, religious history, etc.), but they also begin to conform (to greater or lesser degrees) to the norms, expectations, and outlooks of their schools (Carroll et al. 1997). Seminary education thus affects the social networks students form that continue past their graduation dates and the ways graduates prioritize their work time and pastoral tasks (Carroll 1971). Studies have suggested that local pastors, on the other hand, are more likely to have stronger social connections within the churches and communities where they reside and to place less emphasis on tasks that would bind their congregations more

tightly to denominational programs and emphases (Blanchard 1981)¹.

Because of these structural, educational, and attitudinal distinctions, the United Methodist Church has a de facto two-tiered structure for its pastors, with unequal power dynamics between them. For example, although there is no formal policy in effect to direct and maintain such distinctions, elders almost exclusively have access to pastoral positions that garner them the highest salaries, the largest congregations, and the most visibility in conference functions. In recent years, local pastors have begun to push to lessen these distinctions, gaining some additional participation for conference-level (and denomination-level) decision making. While local pastors have begun to question many of the assumptions that undergird these distinctions, many elders continue to argue for the necessity of graduate-level education for fully-credentialed clergy, and believe that this education prepares them in a fundamental way for the work of leading their congregations and the wider United Methodist denomination. In this way, there is an inherent (if not consciously acknowledged) competition for positions of power among these various clergypersons.

At the same time that local pastors have been pressing for a greater role in making decisions in the denomination, their numbers have been growing as well. As the data in Table 1 shows, when aggregating the number of elders and local pastors in the United States, the percentage of elders has declined from nearly 85% of that total in 1985 to just under 67% in 2015, with local pastors rising from 15% to 33% (Lewis Center 2015). This

¹ Several studies I cite throughout this project, particularly older works of sociologists Jackson Carroll and Dallas Blanchard, are used primarily for the sake of historical comparison and as a way of considering what in their findings have changed in the intervening decades. I hope this proves useful in the conversation about changing Mainline Protestantism in the United States.

	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Number of Elders	21,378	21,507	20,117	18,576	18,141	17,293	15,019
Percentage Elders	84.9%	84.5%	81.3%	76.9%	73.6%	70.2%	66.8%
Number of Local Pastors	3,804	3,936	4,622	5,571	6,517	7,341	7,464
Percentage Local Pastors	15.1%	15.5%	18.7%	23.1%	26.4%	29.8%	33.2%

distribution is not equally distributed across the country, however. The Tennessee Conference UMC, making up roughly the central third of the state of Tennessee, currently has 52% of its pastors as ordained elders, with 48% being unordained local pastors. As this corps of local pastors continues to grow, they are exerting increased pressure for a more equitable representation in decision making at the regional and denominational levels.

I will argue in this project that the differential backgrounds, academic preparation, and resources available to these distinct groups of United Methodist clergy contributes to a social rift between them, even while official denominational resources claim that all of them are conducting the same work and contribute to the same purpose. Even when it is not always recognized as such, this rift has clear and demonstrable power differentials behind it, and those who hold dominant positions have clear motivation to defend their positions from suggestions of change to the system, even if they do not consciously recognize their complicity in maintaining this stratification of power. Additionally, this divide may unintentionally divert institutional energy away from stated goals of United Methodist leaders, and as such, is a breach that annual conference leadership seeks to repair. To make this argument, I will examine the relationships between categories of pastors within one United Methodist annual conference, the Tennessee Annual Conference, whose large percentage of local pastors may provide a picture of things to

come for other places in the denomination.

Theoretical Perspectives

I will use the conceptual framework of Pierre Bourdieu as the primary theoretical lens for my examination, because the implicit conflict between ordained and unordained clergy within a United Methodist annual conference illuminates Bourdieu's assertions about the nature of power, competition, and distinction within a structured field of relationships. Through what he refers to as a misrecognition of interest, Bourdieu is helpful in finding ways to discuss forms of inherent competition, even when the agents involved would deny that they are engaged in competition. He argues that there are many forms of capital people find worth competing for, both material (financial rewards or their equivalent) and symbolic (those non-material forms of recognition that are especially important in fields of relationships such as religious fields, including United Methodist annual conferences).

These concepts ground my examination of the changing practices of American Methodist clergy training and credentialing, and the inherent purposes those changes have served for those who maintain dominant positions in the religious field of United Methodist annual conferences. Although the methods used to educate and certify pastoral leaders are arbitrary—historically contextualized and inherently changeable—those who benefit from this system have a vested interest in portraying these methods as normal, proper, and necessary. The varying forms of clergy education over the course of American Methodist history reveal the arbitrary and fluid nature of this system, and lend credence to the argument that each form of education that has been undertaken by Methodist leaders has worked to serve specific purposes they held to be of particular

importance. For example, early advocates of the current norm in clergy education—seminaries that grant Master of Divinity degrees—were clear in their twin goals of training more effective clergy while at the same time garnering a higher level of social respectability in the wider society, allowing pastors to stand side by side with physicians and lawyers in the professional sphere. Bourdieu provides a framework by which the stratification that occurs when elders (and not local pastors) benefit most thoroughly from this process of professionalization is exposed as arbitrary and necessarily beneficial to one group to the detriment of another.

Bourdieu also deploys his concept of habitus as a way of highlighting the durable dispositions that lead individuals to behave in predictable ways, even without following explicit rules. This study will consider questions about whether those pastors who have been educated in theological seminaries and trained in the processes that lead to ordination have a somewhat distinct form of ministerial habitus than those pastors without such formative experiences. Additionally, educational stratification (such as that exemplified by these clergy categories) is a primary shaping factor in Bourdieu's conception of larger social stratification (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990).

Research Methods

My research has taken place in the Tennessee Annual Conference of the UMC. This annual conference encompasses the central third of the state of Tennessee and supports 606 congregations with approximately 119,000 church members. The annual conference itself does not provide data that give an overall picture of the racial, gender, and age demographics of its pastors. Some clues can be gleaned from other sources,

however. The Lewis Center for Church Leadership Report on Clergy Age Trends in the United Methodist Church (2015) draws from the denominational General Board of Pension and Health Benefits to give annual reports on one of its primary concerns, the overall aging of United Methodist clergy. Table 2 breaks clergy ages down into three categories for both elders and local pastors, in both the Tennessee Conference and the denomination at large, for the year 2013, which is the year whose statistics I use throughout this study. In the Tennessee Conference, 52% of elders and 48% of local pastors are over age 55, while just 9% of elders and 7% of local pastors are under age 35. This conforms to the overall aging of clergy across the UMC, although the denomination's clergy are even more concentrated in the older age bracket. At the same time, in 2013, the median age for elders in the Tennessee Conference was slightly higher than the denominational average (56 years, compared to 55 years denomination-wide). The median age for local pastors in the UMC was 56, with no figures available for individual annual conferences.

	Tennessee Conference						UMC denomination					
	<35		35-54		55+		<35		35-54		55+	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Elders	19	9.3	79	38.7	106	52.0	962	5.9	6,486	39.8	8,842	54.3
Local Pastors	15	7.4	90	44.3	98	48.3	522	6.8	2,716	35.4	4,433	57.8

Although there are no readily available figures for racial and gender distribution among Tennessee Conference clergy, we may derive some sense of the breakdown by looking at the statistics from respondents to my survey of all conference elders and local pastors. The conference is overwhelmingly white in its racial makeup, with approximately 90% of all clergy respondents to the survey claiming this as their primary racial identity. As I note further in Chapter 5 in an exploration of race among

congregational membership in the Tennessee Conference, this conforms to the overall figures we find from official conference statistics, which tell us that 91.7% of congregations have a predominantly white membership (that is, in which white parishioners comprise over 80% of total congregational membership).

	Elders		Local Pastors	
	#	%	#	%
White	127	90.7	69	89.6
Black	8	5.7	6	7.8
Hispanic	0	0.0	1	1.3
Asian American	3	2.1	1	1.3
Native American	2	1.4	0	0.0
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	140	100.0	77	100.0

Similarly, if we look to survey respondents to give us an approximate breakdown of Tennessee Conference clergy by gender, we find that 73% of elders and 68% of local pastors are men, making 27% of elders and 32% of local pastors women. For these reasons, both gender and race will be a concern I return to when asking how material and symbolic capital accrue to the categories of pastors.

	Elders		Local Pastors	
	#	%	#	%
Male	102	73.3	51	68.0
Female	37	26.6	24	32.0
TOTAL	139	100.0	75	100.0

There are multiple reasons for my choice of the Tennessee Conference. First are the practical concerns: because this is the annual conference in which I am geographically located, it has provided me ample opportunities to observe and collect data within the bounds of this conference. In addition, since this is the conference in which I am myself an ordained clergy member, I have access to resources and personnel here to an extent that would be difficult to duplicate elsewhere.

The Tennessee Conference is also useful for other reasons. As is typical for much of the UMC in the southeastern United States, the ratio of local pastors to elders in middle Tennessee is already much higher than it is for the denomination as a whole. As noted above, as of 2015, the percentage of local pastors within the total of local pastors plus elders is 48% in the Tennessee Conference, compared to just over 33% for the denomination as a whole within the United States. However, that total number of local pastors is rising across the nation, and Tennessee could provide a bellwether for things to come in other areas. Many of the proposals for allowing local pastors more participation in the life of the denomination have come about because of conferences like the Tennessee Conference, where the sheer number of those local pastors makes their voices more insistent. The clear limitation of this focus on one annual conference is that the results do not automatically speak to the state of the entire United Methodist Church. Nevertheless, my hope is that this subject will provide one important voice in the ongoing conversations about the role of clergy leadership and training in American mainline bodies in the current moment, including the unintended consequences brought about when differential types of education are employed by denominations.

My research project is composed of three basic methods. First, I surveyed the local pastors and elders in the Tennessee Annual Conference by emailing all of them for whom working email addresses were publicly available through annual conference journals. This included a total of 409 total clergy. I asked a total of 34 questions in the survey, including both closed and free response questions. These questions asked respondents about demographic factors (race, gender, age, educational background, clergy status as elder or local pastor, length of time in the UMC) as well as a series of

questions designed to measure pastors' theological orientation, particular pastoral practices, opinions regarding current decision-making practices within the annual conference, perceived value of theological education, and perceived degree of fairness with which they have been treated by conference officials. To ensure anonymity, the results of these interviews have been available only to me, kept encrypted and password protected in an electronic form. I sent an initial email with an invitation to participate, followed by two subsequent reminders. At the end of the process, I had received 218 completed responses, a response rate of 53.3%.

Second, I used publicly available conference data on pastors (including their clergy status) and on the churches they serve (including total budgets, memberships, average worship attendance, racial demographics, and pastoral compensation) to locate the categories of pastors within the religious field of the annual conference. This became a means of measuring the various forms of capital available to elders and local pastors in their work among local congregations. In this way, I test some of Bourdieu's theories regarding the efficacy of social and religious capital in navigating the religious field of this annual conference. I have also used publicly available data from annual conference sessions and workshops, as well as documents publicly available on the Tennessee Conference web site.

Third, I conducted a number of longer form interviews with local pastors and elders, including members of the conference's clergy credentialing body (the Board of Ordained Ministry) to further ascertain how these different groups view ministry and the relationships of the various types of pastors with one another and with the churches they serve. There were approximately 40 such interviews in total, chosen from among the

various districts in the Tennessee Conference, clergy who have served rural and urban areas, clergy who have provided various forms of conference leadership over the years, men and women, and various racial backgrounds. Again, I used protocols to ensure anonymity for those interviewed, promising that the information gleaned from these interviews will not be revealed in a way that would identify any individuals. Individuals were allowed at the end of interviews to clarify or retract any statements that they asked I not use.

I took a number of steps to provide protection for those participating in this study throughout the process. Because of the anonymity promised to survey and interview participants as noted above, I will be referring to survey data only in aggregate groups, and using quotations from free response survey questions and interviews in ways that will not identify those who participated. Before beginning this research, I provided a list of proposed survey questions and an outline of research methods to Tennessee Conference officials, including Bishop Bill McAlilly and his cabinet, made up primarily of the district superintendents working with him. Interview participants were informed that they would be asked a series of questions about their views of clergy beliefs and practices, and could decline to answer any question or cease their participation at any time. Similarly, survey participants were informed that they could participate by answering all or part of the questions being asked, and end their participation at any time. Participants were informed that, while risks are minimal because of their participation in this study, conversations among conference leadership that follow from this study may potentially lead to indirect changes for study participants. All participants, whether through survey, interview, or both, were provided with a debriefing form following their participation that

outlined the purpose of the study in examining how clergy training (including education through seminary or the Course of Study) affects the outlook and approach of United Methodist pastors in the Tennessee Conference.

Personal Location

Although I was raised attending Southern Baptist congregations throughout my childhood and teenage years, I became a member of the West End United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tennessee while an undergraduate student at Vanderbilt University. It was there, during my college years, that I began to have conversations with trusted pastors and other leaders that would form the basis of my own call story into pastoral ministry. I subsequently attended the Vanderbilt University Divinity School, culminating in my graduation with a Master of Divinity degree in 1999. That same year, I became a pastor in the Tennessee Conference, eventually becoming a provisional elder in 2001 and an ordained elder in full connection in 2004.

Even though I have been a seminary trained elder (or preparing for that status) for the entirety of my ministerial career, I have also met a great number of local pastors with their own very effective ministries over the years. Although these local pastors do not have a seminary degree or the same level of authority as I do in terms of their participation in annual conference life, I consider many of them friends and trusted colleagues. In recent years, I have also come to know many local pastors more fully as I have assumed a supervisory capacity for some of them; I currently serve as the chair of the Murfreesboro District Committee on Ordained Ministry and a member of the Tennessee Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Over time, many of the taken-for-

granted pieces of received wisdom in our annual conference conformed to my own experiences (or, perhaps, my experiences conformed somewhat to the expectations that I heard voiced by others). I realized that I had become somewhat more theologically and socially liberal during my years at Vanderbilt, and that many of my local pastor colleagues remained considerably more conservative than I did, especially on matters concerning the role of LGBT persons in the life of the UMC. Thus, I began to feel a tension in these relationships: I valued my friendship with many of these local pastors, even as I disagreed with them on a number of issues important to me. I wondered what role seminary education and the formation process that leads to ordination had in shaping the context for our relationships, and why my expectations about my role as a pastor seemed to diverge from theirs on numerous points. This study has allowed me to revisit these questions and ask them within necessary historical and sociological backgrounds.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides necessary historic context for the rest of the study, including the rise of American Methodism from a small sect to the center of the American Protestant mainline, as well as its subsequent numerical decline in the United States alongside other mainline groups. This chapter will also consider the development of clergy leadership in American Methodism, with its eventual adoption of explicit professional norms, including the expectation of formal graduate-level theological education. Chapter 2 gives the theoretical context for this project, outlining the sociological elements of the work of Pierre Bourdieu that are especially helpful here, including habitus, capital, and the misrecognition of interest.

Chapter 3 takes an extended look at ordination as it is practiced in the Tennessee Conference UMC, and includes an argument that ordination itself is the most potent form of symbolic capital at play in this religious field of the Tennessee Conference. Ordination not only separates elders from the laity of the church, but also separates elders from local pastors, and thus becomes the site of contested values between those classes of clergy. Chapter 4 examines how the habitus of elders and local pastors in the Tennessee Conference differs on matters of pastoral practice, views of what is most important about the making of pastoral assignments by the bishop, and whether professional recognition in the community is a matter of importance. Chapter 5 looks at other forms of capital at play in this competitive religious field, including the material capital offered by local congregations, as well as symbolic capital in the form of educational credentials and decision-making opportunities. This chapter also contains an excursus to consider how ministerial capital does not just accrue based on one's clergy status, but is also powerfully affected by the gender and race of the pastors in question. These various categories intersect in complicated ways. The conclusion briefly examines potential ways to begin to reverse the rift between UMC clergy categories, and looks at what the leadership of the Tennessee Conference, in particular, is currently seeking to do within the limitations placed on them by the larger denomination.

CHAPTER 1—HISTORY

Methodist Ascendancy

The United Methodist Church stands as an exemplar of American denominationalism, although Methodists originally found themselves on the margins of American religious life. In the newly independent nation's early decades, Methodists had not yet injected themselves into the historically influential core of American religion, long known as the Protestant Mainline. This Mainline has its roots in the American colonial period, when Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians held privileged positions that allowed them to articulate the moral codes that shaped American public identity of the day. Although the exact composition of the Protestant Mainline is a subject of some disagreement², the most notable characteristic shared by most of these Protestant groups is their historic influence within American society. These denominations have generally been seen as respectable and middle- to upper-class, have employed educated clergy, and have been actively engaged with the larger culture in a church-like posture (as opposed to a sect-like separatist or oppositional stance) (Ammerman 2005, 5). In recent years, the term “mainline” itself has come to seem increasingly antiquated, since the membership of the six largest mainline denominations have come to account for less than ten percent of the American population and less than

² For example, Nancy Ammerman (2005) lists Congregationalists (now part of the United Church of Christ), Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Lutherans as current constituents of the mainline; Robert Wuthnow and John Evans (2002) add the American Baptists to that list; Jackson Carroll and Wade Clark Roof (1993) expand that group to include the Disciples of Christ and the Reformed Church of America, as well as various African American Baptist and Methodist bodies. Roof and William McKinney (1987) take an even more expansive approach, noting that “mainline” has shifted over time from a definition limited to white Protestants to one that would include Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, both white and racial minority.

half of Protestant membership in the United States (Wuthnow and Evans 2002, 5). As a consequence, some scholars of American religion have begun to use terms such as “oldline” as a substitute designation (Roozen 2004).

As the disestablishment of official state churches in the late eighteenth century opened a path for dissenters to bring their own practices to a competitive public marketplace of ideas, those with particularly fervent proselytizing efforts began to take hold and spread their messages. Most effective in winning large numbers of adherents, especially among the lower classes, were Baptists and Methodists. The success of these two particular groups ensured that their insistence on the inalienable liberty of the individual conscience made its way to the core of our common American culture (Bellah 1998; 2000). American Methodists’ rapid growth after the Revolutionary War soon transformed them into a highly influential player in American religious life. Indeed, Nathan Hatch refers to Methodism as “the most powerful religious movement in American history, its growth a central feature in the emergence of the United States as a republic” (1994, 177-8). David Hempton describes how Methodism became the largest American Protestant denomination in the century and a half following its birth as a British movement in the 1730s; he makes the case for the rise of Methodism as the most important religious development since the Protestant Reformation (2005, 2).

The Methodists (among other upstart sects) were able to take advantage of emotional revival meetings to attract and engage new adherents, both in city centers and throughout the expanding frontiers of the West (Handy 1984; Hatch 1989; Butler 1990; Wigger 1998). Methodists (who were officially formed into the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784) deployed itinerating circuit riders to take their message to frontier

outposts where few other religious groups were willing to commit resources. Most of these traveling preachers had no formal education and received very little pay; they were “common folk” speaking passionately in the vernacular of those in their care (Finke and Stark 2005, 76). Until 1800, the Church limited a full-time itinerant’s salary to \$64 a year, at which time it was increased to \$80 a year for an unmarried preacher. This compares to more formally educated Congregationalist ministers who earned an average annual income of \$400 a year in 1800 (Wigger 2001, 88-9). Methodist preachers took their Arminian³ theological message of available-for-all salvation and theatrically “performed the gospel as much as they proclaimed it” (Butler 1990, 240). When preachers delivered their pronouncements, congregations responded in kind with spontaneous vocal outpourings —“the shouts, the groans, the sobs of persons brought together to express their most interior and private thoughts” (Mathews 1993, 19). David Hempton spells out what made early Methodism distinct among its peers: “Spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land, and indeed the world, was the task; outdoor and itinerant preaching, societal association, and connectionalism were the means; individual assurance, communal discipline and national regeneration were the ends” (2005, 14).

The itinerating preachers that made up Methodism’s traveling ministerial leadership from its first generations provided the most distinctive aspect of the movement’s polity. These circuit riders became the most visible aspect of the Methodist

³ Arminianism is the theological school of thought developed by sixteenth-century Dutch preacher Jacobus Arminius, who emphasized God’s desire for all people to experience salvation and the human ability for all to respond to that divine initiative, in contrast to a narrower Calvinist notion of limited predestination. John Wesley and the early Methodists stand in this tradition of Arminian thought (Macquiban 2013, 32-3).

Episcopal Church's connectional (as opposed to congregational) structure, the idea that "every church is part of every other church, and that no one church can live to itself alone" (Dunlap 1993, 415). The annual conferences—geographically-defined judicatory bodies that constitute the denomination—pledged to provide ministerial leadership to each church, and to provide each itinerating pastor a place to serve. Such a system requires that each church and each pastor accept the matchmaking of the bishop, and when pastors have found it untenable to continue accepting those ministerial appointments, withdrawing from the traveling ministry has often been their only viable option. Itinerancy became the norm for preachers; this feature, first adopted simply for its expediency, quickly became a *sine qua non* for the young denomination's structure (Dunlap 1993, 416-8).

Very few of the first- or second-generation Methodist preachers had more than a common school education. The leadership provided by these preachers, fueled by religious fervor without the polish of higher education, resulted in a typical sermon that was "audience-centered, vernacular, and extemporaneous" rather than "a read discourse with a stiff theological spine" (Hatch 1994, 187). Early Methodists seemed unconcerned about their preachers' lack of formal schooling; early editions of the *Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* instructed: "Gaining knowledge is a good thing, but saving souls is a better. . . . If you can do but one, let your studies alone. We ought to throw by all the libraries in the world, rather than be guilty of the loss of one soul" (Methodist Episcopal Church 1798, 99). Indeed, the cultural immediacy between Methodist circuit riders and their audiences was seen as an asset that seminary training might potentially strip away (Finke and Dougherty 2002, 104; Cherry 1995, 19-20). For

some, such implicit anti-intellectualism solidified into open antagonism toward the very idea of formal theological education. Noted Methodist itinerant revivalist Peter Cartwright held little esteem for the seminary graduates he encountered, observing that preachers trained in theological schools were as pale as “lettuce growing under the shade of a peach tree,” their preaching as awkward as “a gosling that had got the straddles by wading in the dew” (McCulloh 1980, 20). Cartwright also feared that seminary education would remove the most gifted clergy from itinerant ministry and destroy that most distinctive Methodist system of traveling ministry: “Multiply colleges, universities, seminaries and academies; multiply our agencies, and editorships, and fill them all with our best and most efficient preachers and you localize the ministry and secularize them, too; then farewell to itinerancy” (Finke and Dougherty 2002, 104).

Although the salaries earned by these traveling preachers often barely covered their expenses, and even though the travel on horseback along ministry circuits was extremely physically demanding and governed by an exhausting pace, there were sufficient rewards to recruit a blossoming corps of itinerants. In addition to the perceived spiritual incentives and hope of heavenly rewards, there were immediate social benefits as well. For men (and men only for many decades) who often held only the most basic levels of literacy, there was an allure in being socially recognized as a minister. Although Methodists preachers could be the objects of scorn, they were still able to draw sizable audiences, often larger than those commanded by local Congregationalist or Episcopalian ministers. There were few other ways by which unlettered men could receive such instant recognition (Wigger 2001, 99).

This itinerant form of ministry also exemplified a tension in American Methodism that has existed in various forms throughout its history, the tension between the movement's hierarchical and egalitarian impulses. On the one hand, the denomination has always had a strong central governance structure, with bishops retaining sole discretion to make pastoral appointments to the various circuits and carrying considerable sway in directing denominational programs and projects. Bishop Francis Asbury, one of the first two bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, epitomized this authoritarian tendency in American Methodism from his elevation to the episcopacy in 1784. Many historians have portrayed him as an unyielding autocrat, although historian John Wigger (2009) has defended him somewhat by pointing out his willingness to suffer the privations of itinerant ministry alongside his traveling preachers. Despite this ability of bishops to exert firm central authority, Methodists at the local level were quite democratic in spirit from the beginning of the movement, exemplifying shared leadership between ministers and laity in their various societies, paralleling the political spirit of the emerging nation (Hatch 1989). This combination was described by William B. Lawrence as an inheritance both of a more hierarchical "Catholic-Anglican-Tory" ordering of ministry alongside a more egalitarian "Democratic-Jacksonian" understanding of church governance (Lawrence 1999b, 158). Methodist Bishop F. Gerald Ensley has summarized the situation in this way: "While the Methodist system may have been Hamiltonian in its ideals of authority and efficiency, the personnel who made it go were Jeffersonian in their sympathies and willingness to sacrifice for the people" (Dunlap 1993, 423). Uneducated itinerant ministers stood at the crossroads of these competing impulses, representing the

bishops' authority to their circuits while also preaching the gospel as one of the common people.

Struggling for Respectability

The generally democratic impulse of the new church allowed Methodists to gain considerable numbers of converts among socially marginalized groups, in particular. In its early years, Methodists maintained a significantly more open policy than many other denominations toward women and African Americans in its membership and leadership. Even though Methodism's early firm stance against slavery gave way over time to a watered-down accommodation, it still was able to open opportunities for African Americans and create one of the few sanctioned social spaces for mutual support and affirmation (Hempton 2001, 60; 2005, 24-25). Female evangelists and exhorters in the hundreds found official and unofficial ways to proclaim the gospel through the early nineteenth century, before Methodism began to pursue middle-class respectability in the 1830s and 1840s in ways that made women's leadership problematic for denominational leadership (Brekus 2001).

The Methodist Episcopal Church was able to capitalize on this combination of democratically-oriented theology, flexible and movable leadership, and emotionally compelling worship by increasing its membership at a staggering rate during its first few decades of existence. There were only 65 Methodist societies throughout the colonies in 1776, containing only 2 percent of the total church membership in America; by 1850, there were over 13,000 churches with a membership of over 2.6 million—the largest denomination in the United States, a size almost half again as large as any other

Protestant group, accounting for over a third of all American church members (Wigger 1998, 3; Finke and Stark 2005, 57). By 1860, American Methodists owned nearly twenty thousand buildings valued at more than \$33 million, nearly twenty percent of the value of all American churches. By 1831, the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, a weekly Methodist newspaper, had the largest circulation of any weekly paper in the nation (Wigger 2009, 402).

With this growing membership and wealth came a growing pursuit of respectability and acceptance into the social mainstream of American culture. Whereas higher-class Reformed critics viewed early Methodism in the eighteenth century as “a movement of the uneducated, the overexcited, and the unwashed” (Carwardine 2001, 326), Methodists began to shed their unsophisticated image in the nineteenth century as they gained the trappings of prosperity and social distinction. Methodists became wealthier overall, built more ornate churches with organs and steeples, and began to expand their educational and publishing concerns. Increasing social prestige meant that by the 1850s, Methodists could be found in governor’s mansions, the United States Senate, and the Supreme Court (Carwardine 1993, 171-2). Methodism had become, in the words of historian Nathan Hatch, “a powerful symbol of social mobility, a beacon of aspiring respectability” (1994, 180).

Sociologists describe such a shift as a movement from a sect-like orientation to one that is more church-like, where “the church-type group embraces the society in which it lives, while the sect-type group sets itself apart from the larger society” (McGuire 2008, 150). This shift entails a lowering of strict expectations of belief and behavior, along with a greater acceptance of and identification with the larger society. Roof and McKinney

(1987, 109) point out that this shift was common among many American sects, partly a function of how long they have existed and had been assimilating; Nazarenes, Adventists, and various Pentecostal groups lagged about a century behind the Methodists in their origins and have taken that extra time to enter the realm of respectability. Although they continued to build membership throughout the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, Methodists' rate of growth began to slow during this same period that they were losing their sect-like characteristics, and other groups soon began to surpass the Methodists in membership (Finke and Stark 2005, 160).

At the same time, as the itinerant ministry was reformed with the changing conditions of American society, some began to push for a more formalized process of ministerial education as a marker of greater social prestige. From the beginning, uneducated preachers had been expected to engage in personal study, centered primarily around the Bible, John Wesley's *Sermons*, his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, and his *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament* (McCulloh 1980, 3). At the very least, this minimal level of study ignited in some preachers the desire to learn to read for themselves for the first time. The 1816 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church took up the issue of reforming itinerant ministry. In that year, the Committee on Ways and Means recommended higher (though still quite low) salaries, dedicated parsonages, provision for the support of retired preachers, and (most notably for this discussion) the creation of a course of study for traveling ministers (Norwood 1974, 138). This course of study was approved in 1816, and consisted of a series of standard texts to be read, along with a series of examinations. After spending four years in the course of study, a preacher could be recommended for ordination and "full

connection” relationship with his Methodist conference. The system developed to the point that, by the 1880s, the course of study also involved one- to two-week summer sessions and weekend seminars as options for preachers to gather for study and mutual support. This course of study provided the greatest level of education possible for working Methodist ministers of their day, most of whom would never go to seminary (Patterson 1985, 68-73).

This push for greater ministerial training was part of a more general Methodist focus on higher education through the mid-nineteenth century. John Wigger (2009) ties this emphasis to the Methodists’ participation in the emerging American middle class, which led them to become college builders. Between 1830 and 1860, Methodists founded more than two hundred schools and colleges, adding to their own political influence and middle-class self-confidence (402). With regard to ministerial training in particular, advocates of seminary education for ministers began to contend that Methodism would become out of touch with an increasingly educated laity if they did not also begin to produce a more educated, professional clergy. These proponents feared that an uneducated preacher would be ignored by an educated church membership, and would begin to see members defect to the better-educated Episcopalians, Congregationalists, etc. (Cherry 1995, 20-1).

To train pastors to thrive in this world of increasing social mobility, Methodists began to establish their own theological seminaries, both before and after the split into northern and southern church bodies in the mid-1840s. The Newbury Biblical Institute was established in New Hampshire in 1839, and eventually found its way to Boston University in 1871 as that university’s school of theology. Others soon followed: Garrett

Biblical Institute was formed in 1855; Drew Theological School in 1866; and Vanderbilt University's Biblical Department in 1875 (although it split from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1914) (Cherry 1995, 22).

In addition to their immediate goal of educating clergy, nearly all of the Protestant colleges and seminaries of the mid- to late-nineteenth century, including those founded by the Methodists, were also designed to influence American civilization, shaping it to Protestant standards. Although early Methodists had been relatively uninterested in directly engaging the political process (Bishop Francis Asbury quipped, "What have we to do with it in this country? Our kingdom is not of this world"), that disengagement had begun to shrink by the middle third of the nineteenth century (Carwardine 2001, 311). The 1830s and 1840s brought a more deliberate use of the language of Christian republicanism for Methodists. This came about partly because of an increasing doubt about the power of simple moral persuasion to cure social ills related to alcohol, sabbath keeping, and dueling; political power might be a necessary means to the end of moral rectitude. Other issues also pressed for a more activist solution, including fears over Roman Catholic immigration, struggles over the nature of territorial expansion, and slavery. Women's organizations notably began to make their interests heard in the political arena surrounding these issues (Carwardine 2001, 311-317).

Historian Russell Richey (1993) sums up in four propositions the widespread Methodist self-understanding about their role in American society from the nineteenth century well into the twentieth:

- (1) Methodism was/is a child of providence.
- (2) Providence especially fitted Methodism and the Methodist connection for American society.
- (3) Methodist response to and stewardship of that providential calling had benefitted both church and nation, blessing the church with great numbers

and the nation with troops of true believers in the American system. (4) The purposes and ultimately the health—spiritual and physical—of Methodism are bound up in this linked mission of nation and church (480).

With their mainline Protestant partners, Methodists saw their growing educational infrastructure as a primary tool for social change. William Rainey Harper, the first president of the University of Chicago (beginning in 1891) and a leading educational reformer of his day, saw education holding a unique leadership role in advancing American civilization, and he saw Protestant Christianity as an important partner in this goal. He saw the university as “the prophet of this democracy and, as well, its priest and philosopher; ... in other words, the university is the Messiah of the democracy, its to-be-expected deliverer” (Cherry 1995, 2). Anticipating Robert Bellah’s famous “civil religion” thesis by over 70 years, Harper stated: “Is democracy a religion? No. Has democracy a religion? Yes; a religion with its god, its altar, and its temple, with its code of ethics and its creed. The god of the religion is the whole of humanity; its altar is the home; its temple is the nation; its creed is human equality; and its system of ethics is the righteous defense of individualism” (Cherry 1995, 2; cf. Bellah 1967). Harper believed that Protestant Christianity, particularly the forms practiced in the United States, were the climax of human religious development as the guardian of individual liberty, both religious and political; educational institutions could help eliminate ignorance and prejudice, which Harper saw as the main obstacles of both faith and democracy (Cherry 1995, 3). Theological schools in particular had an important role to play in that progressive climb toward an American Protestant utopia. Historian Conrad Cherry (1995) reports: “Each and every one of [the Methodist divinity schools] was founded on the conviction that the minister, in order to function effectively in modern America, needed

to master a graduate-level specialty, acquire skills as a professional, and learn to move easily within the high culture available to middle-class Americans” (23).

This push for graduate-level education for clergy continued into the early twentieth century, becoming the new norm by which mainline clergy (including the Methodists) were measured. By 1926, across the largest Protestant denominations, the more educated clergy began to gravitate to urban pulpits, and those urban clergy became the de facto leaders in their denominations, presumably because of greater access to financial resources, media outlets, and opportunities for social outreach (Holifield 2007, 146-173). For these reasons, reformers were quick to latch onto these signs of success to argue that ministerial education was the key to healthier, more vibrant churches. In their sweeping 1934 study of Protestant ministers in the United States, educational psychologist Mark A. May and theologian William Adams Brown argued that seminary-trained pastors were more successful than their less-educated counterparts, since educated ministers “attracted more members, raised higher budgets, constructed more buildings, ... stimulated more benevolent giving ... took more initiative in denominational and community activities, established more extensive programs of fellowship and social service, and adapted their work more successfully to the communities in which they served” (Holifield 2007, 231). Their recommendation: make seminaries better, partially by raising admissions requirements, and better ministers (and by extension, better churches) would result.

This is not to say, however, that this move toward rigorous seminary education was accepted universally. As more Protestant clergy began to be trained in seminaries, the gap between those with seminary degrees and those without began to be mirrored by

a schism between those who saw the ministry as a profession (with clergy who were educated at the graduate level to be publicly visible Christian reformers) and those who continued to see ministry primarily as a vocation (that is, as a calling from God for which God alone could prepare a person). Episcopal Bishop Gregory Bedell stated in 1880 what was true for many Protestants, including Methodists: “A minister who is merely a theologian stands little chance.” Rather, the Christian ministry was “a divinely appointed order ... perpetuated by divine regulation” (Holifield 2007, 112). Even as calls for seminary training as the new standard for Methodist clergy began to mount, populists continued to voice skepticism that formal education for ministers would only detract from the heartfelt religion brought about by emotionally-driven biblical sermons. Southern Methodist revivalist Sam Jones bragged that he had “never attended a theological ‘cemetery,’ ... studied ‘hermaletics’ or ‘exegetics,’” but claimed that his unlettered ways allowed him to see “700,000 people turned from the error of their ways” under his ministrations (172).

Nevertheless, the general trend toward greater denominational investment in formal education for pastors continued in American Methodism well into the twentieth century. A 1956 study of the ordained ministry that dealt primarily with the Methodist Church’s support for theological education led to the establishment of two new Methodist seminaries, the Methodist Theological School in Ohio and the Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, making them the most recent of the Methodist schools of theology to be established (McCulloh 1980). One bishop summed up the optimistic mood of that year’s General Conference that approved the building of the schools by saying: “As we promote our theological education, we promote the church and we bring the

Kingdom of God a little nearer to realization on earth. ... If we support this program and then go on to bigger programs, generations yet unborn will rise up and call this General Conference blessed” (Heitzenrater 1993, 433).

Regional Schism—The Specter of Slavery

Even as nineteenth-century Methodists saw themselves as preeminently American in their desire to further the cause of freedom and democracy, they were just as prone as the nation at large to one of the great hypocrisies of American democracy in their division over the question of slavery. Some early Methodist leaders attempted to take a hard stance against the institution, but soon found accommodation to be an easier course to follow. As early as the 1780s, Bishop Francis Asbury denounced the evils of slavery (“I have yet been impressed with a deep concern, for bringing about the freedom of slaves in America ... I am strongly persuaded that if the Methodists will not yield on this point and emancipate their slaves, God will depart from them” (Richey et al. 2010, 30-1), but went on to adopt an attenuated policy of reform rather than outright abolition. In part, he spiritualized the question, condescending to those who “are more intent on promoting the freedom of their bodies, than the freedom of their souls; without which they must be the vassals of Satan in eternal fire” (Lyerly 1998, 141). As some leaders tried to make bold statements against slaveholding, Methodist slave owners responded by simply disallowing slaves under their watch to attend Methodist services, fearing potential revolts as a result. Such tactics led many preachers to conclude that any efforts to end slavery altogether would be ill-informed and strategically ineffective (141). By 1804, sections in the Methodist *Discipline* condemning slavery were omitted from versions

printed for southern churches; by 1816, those sections were omitted altogether (Richey et al. 2010, 88). By the 1830s, while northern churches had become racially segregated and limited the full ministerial standing of African American pastors, southern Methodists went further and chose to construct elaborate biblical justifications of slavery as a response to emerging abolitionist movements. The annual conference report of the South Carolina Missionary Society exemplifies this tendency:

We believe that the Holy Scriptures, so far from giving any countenance to this [abolitionist] delusion, do unequivocally authorize the relation of master and slave: 1. By holding masters and their slaves alike, as believers, brethren beloved. 2. By enjoining on each the duties proper to the other. 3. By grounding their obligations for the fulfillment of these duties, as of all others, on their relation to God. Masters could never have had their duties enforced by the consideration, "*your master who is in heaven,*" if barely being a master involved in itself any thing immoral. ... We hold that a Christian slave must be submissive, faithful, and obedient, for reasons of the same authority with those which oblige husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, to fulfil [sic] the duties of these relations (Richey et al. 2000, 240-1, emphasis in original).

As a whole, then, southern white Methodists chose to stand with their fellow regional citizens not merely as passive bystanders in the slavery debates, but as active supporters of the institution of slavery, both within the civil society and within church governance structures. Slavery thus became one of the multiple loci at which power struggles within the denomination played out for the first century of American Methodism, with the economic and racial worldviews of southern Methodists shaping what Morris Davis has termed "an ecclesiastically Christianized racialism, or an ecclesiastically racialized Christianity, that embodied in its very structures a theology of the church based on the assumption of white supremacy" (Davis 2013, 290). This white supremacy continues to have implications in the present, as I will return to primarily in the chapter on capital, by

examining the differing levels of resources available to churches depending on the racial backgrounds of their memberships.

Tensions rose to the breaking point in advance of the 1844 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the quadrennial decision-making body for the denomination. It had become known publicly that Bishop James O. Andrew had become the first slaveholding bishop, by marrying a woman from a slave-owning family. Andrew embodied the conflicting Methodist views on the subject by claiming to stand against the potential brutalities of slavery while also arguing that slaveholding was not sinful because it did not specifically break any biblical injunctions. In his writings, he went as far as to support the usage of slavery as a method to evangelize the slaves. Although he used language of spiritual equality between enslaved and free people, the practical effect of such distinctions was minimal. “The negro is a man . . . he has an immortal spirit; and the God who gave him immortality, has adapted the Gospel to his condition, and intends it shall be preached to him” (as quoted in Carney 2011, 5).

An investigating committee of the General Conference made a motion to request the bishop’s suspension until he freed his slaves. After prolonged legal wrangling over whether the General Conference even had the constitutional prerogative to pass such judgment on a bishop, lack of unity carried the day and a plan of separation between northern and southern branches of the church was drawn up. The newly named Methodist Episcopal Church, South was born from the schism.

The legacy of the regional split left lasting impacts on the southern branch of Methodism in at least two key ways. One involves the education of black Methodist clergy. In the antebellum period, black Methodists (both those who stayed within the

Methodist Episcopal Church and those who had already left their denomination of origin to form separate Methodist denominations for African Americans) mirrored their white counterparts in emphasizing apprenticeship for their clergy over formal academic training. But as denominations began to invest in seminaries, they also opened segregated schools for black ministerial students, the school of theology at Wilberforce University in Ohio being the first such Methodist institution in 1856. This process accelerated with the freedmen's education movement following the Civil War, with over 4,000 schools at all levels eventually being built throughout the South. From their earliest days, seminaries for African American students (including Gammon Theological Seminary, founded in 1872 in Atlanta as the theology department of Clark University) linked theological studies with practical training in economics, politics, and community organizing in order to advance the causes of economic and political emancipation (Foster et al. 2006, 207-14).

The other influence of the split, perhaps more subtle in effect, involves how white southern Methodist pastors came to reconcile their role as clergy with the expectations of the larger society regarding their southern manhood. Charity Carney (2011) has outlined how white southern Methodist ministers in the nineteenth century stood in an uneasy tension with the honor codes that shaped the southern patriarchy of their day. On the one hand, these clergy developed an increasingly proslavery sentiment over the early decades of the 1800s that led them to break away from the northern church, a clear accommodation to southern mores. Conversely, Methodist pastors were still prohibited by church law from participating in many of the markers of contemporary southern manhood—drinking alcoholic beverages, fighting, dueling, dancing, or engaging in

“frivolous” gaming or idle conversation. Such restrictions kept these men (for there still were no women among their company) from fully being accepted by their fellow southern men, even as it fostered fraternity among their clergy brethren.

The tension among men in the Methodist connection paralleled that of larger male society, but ministers replaced violence and the competition for wealth with strict discipline and ecclesiastical infighting. They found patriarchal strength in the pulpit and the Conference, proving themselves to their congregations and fellow clergymen. The more honor they could bring to their God, the more honor they brought to themselves. . . . Perhaps because of this calculation, the concept of honor meant something very different for Methodist ministers than for average southern men. They may not have faced their enemy on a dueling field, but they would certainly face a much more brutal enemy in the afterlife if they did not fulfill their duties (Carney 2011, 36-7).

Over time, the ecclesial schism over questions of slavery and church polity was structurally reversed by the 1939 reunification of the northern and southern branches of Methodism (along with the Methodist Protestant Church, whose membership had pushed for greater participation of laity in denominational decision making) into The Methodist Church. At the same time, a new bureaucratic layer of racial segregation was added in this merger with the introduction of the Central Jurisdiction, a denominational structure that ensured that no black pastors or bishops would ever hold positions of authority over white Methodist congregations, clergy, or individuals (Richey et al. 2010, 388-98). As I will outline below, this structural segregation between black and white Methodists continued as an official practice of the denomination for the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, and questions of racial discrimination continue to shape the development of the United Methodist Church. Race continues to be a central ideological category that has shaped American Methodist history in countless ways, separating along racial categories efforts ranging from educational endeavors to missions outreach, both

domestically and internationally (Davis 2013). For this project, I will return in later chapters to considerations of how power dynamics in the religious fields of United Methodist annual conferences still exist along racial stratifications, from questions of how racial minority clergy are often still kept from serving as pastors to predominantly white congregations, to examinations of how minority congregations remain deprived of sufficient resources to do their work.

Methodism in Decline—Secularization or Rational Choice?

Just as the nineteenth century was a period of vigorous American Methodist growth in membership and influence, the twentieth century proved to usher in a significant cooling of that growth. By the second half of the twentieth century, slowed growth had given way to significant declines in membership and participation for American Methodists and their fellow Mainline Protestant denominations. A host of potential explanations have been proposed under the general sociological heading of secularization, the perception that religion in general continues to grow less influential in the public arena, in private spheres, or both.

Of the multiple facets of secularization theory that have been used to study American religiosity, the decline of membership and attendance among congregations is among the easiest metrics to quantify. As a whole, U.S mainline Protestant denominations had continued to grow in terms of absolute membership until the 1960s, when their subsequent decline began to contrast more sharply with more conservative groups that continued to grow. In terms of percentage of the total population, mainline groups began to decline earlier, and rates of growth had begun to slow much earlier still.

David Hempton (2005) points out that American Methodists, in particular, began declining in terms of absolute number of members in the 1970s and in terms of proportion of all Americans in the 1950s; however, their rapid gains as a percentage of the total population had cooled by the 1860s. Finke's and Stark's analysis traces this decline in terms of proportion of the population back to the nineteenth century; by measuring adherents (defined more loosely than official membership), they claim that adherence rates dropped from 11.4 percent of the population in 1890 to 10.1 percent in 1926, 9.8 percent in 1951, and 7.4 percent in 1980 (2005, 157).⁴ Through the mid-twentieth century, Methodists also held onto an ever-decreasing level of young members. In Roof and McKinney's study during the 1980s, for example, Methodists made up 16 percent of all Americans in their 80s but only 7.7 percent of those in their 20s.⁵ They expected this decline in membership to continue (Roof and McKinney 1987, 233-4). Wuthnow and Evans point out that this rate of decline lessened somewhat during the 1990s from the 1965-1990 period; among United Methodists the average annual decline in membership was -0.782 percent for the earlier period and -0.629 percent for the latter. (For the mainline as a whole, the slowing decline was somewhat more pronounced: -0.783 percent shifting to -0.463 percent) (2002, 6-8). Even so, in the 1991-96 period, the

⁴ The methods used by Finke and Stark are not universally accepted, however. For instance, historian George Marsden (1993) calls their focus on proportional market share "transparently a statistical trick" that minimizes the importance of increasing Catholic immigration in the late nineteenth century, even as the membership of the northern Methodist Episcopal Church grew from one million to three million members in the period from 1860 to 1900 (450-1). Whether a greater emphasis should be placed on absolute membership numbers, percentage of the population as a whole, or other metrics entirely remains a contested issue.

⁵ This is also, in part a reflection of the population in the 1980s, with those in their 20s still a part of the baby boom, and those living until their 80s a more limited population.

United Methodist Church closed 1,025 churches and opened only 210 in the United States, an attrition ratio of five to one (Hempton 2005, 184). Since 2000, US membership decline for the UMC has begun to accelerate once again, with total membership shrinking from 8,340,954 in 2000 to 7,391,911 in 2013, the most recent year for which membership data are available (Association of Religion Data Archives 2014; General Council on Finance and Administration 2015). This represents an average annual percentage decline of -0.924 percent.

Alongside the numerical losses, another noteworthy concern for Methodists and other mainline groups has been a growing sense that they are no longer as culturally influential as they once were. Although more difficult to measure empirically, this movement has been noted by religious historians such as Robert Handy (1984), who has identified a “second disestablishment” of American Christianity, taking place from roughly 1920 to 1940, as a prime driver of this loss of influence. This period followed nineteenth century efforts by a wide array of Protestants to solidify America as a Christian nation, not by legal coercion, but through voluntary persuasion. Throughout that century, American culture as a whole became a carrier for religious symbols and values in the guise of Christian civilization. In the wake of World War I, however, a general pessimism among Americans regarding the ability of the nation to be a positive cultural influence in the world bled over into the mood of the churches, which had previously taken for granted that the United States was basically a Protestant nation progressing toward God’s kingdom on earth. This basic premise that had prompted Protestant endeavors in missions and domestic reform was called into question under the weight of greater urbanization, higher cultural and religious pluralism, and intellectual

modernism. The 1920s brought a decline in missionary giving and personnel, as well as a general “spiritual depression” (Handy 1984, 174). Education and other civic functions that had previously been performed by churches were increasingly being overtaken by the expanding functions of the state. Mainline churches were withdrawing into their own differentiated social sphere, more and more distinct from the purposes of the nation as a whole. An additional heightened phase of demarcation occurred during the 1960s countercultural movement, as other religious players (most notably Roman Catholics, resurgent conservative evangelicals, and the self-consciously secular nonreligious) began to demand more attention and acceptability in American life; mainline Protestants found themselves once again no longer as firmly in the center of public life as they once were, drifting instead toward the margins (Carroll and Roof 1993, 23).

The dual priorities of maintaining their spiritual zeal and civilizing the nation through the triumph of a Christian America that the Methodists had honed over the course of the nineteenth century proved difficult for them to put aside during this second disestablishment period. This linked mission still proved operative during the 1916 negotiations toward reunion between the northern and southern branches of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This reunion was seen (partly) as an attempt to cement their perceived place at the center of American Christian civilization and to garner additional clout:

It was part of the public argument—not a guarded back-room secret—that a merger would greatly increase the political and cultural influence of American Methodism. And attending to the national public perception outside the Methodist churches of divided regional Methodisms in a nation just recovering from the acrimony of Reconstruction was critical to arguments for the necessity of a merger (Davis 2008, 129).

So great was this yearning for influence in American society, the eventual reunification between northern and southern Methodists came at the cost of formal racial segregation,

with the introduction of the Central Jurisdiction to contain all African American congregations and ministries in the United States. Morris Davis argues that the discourse on Christian civilization of the Joint Commission on Unification carried inherently racialized messages: “The Joint Commission clearly conveyed two things: that racial integration was not necessary for the Christian nation of the United States to maintain its claim to moral authority, and that the further progress of American Christian civilization was impossible without the separation of the races” (2008, 131). This separation was not benign for black Methodists; the conversations leading to the reunification of north and south rested on a clear foundation of white supremacy. Delegates from the southern church expressed concern both about the possibility that black clergy and bishops exercise leadership over white churches, as well as that they might have a voice in a united church’s General Conference to make decisions at the denominational level. Southern Methodists thus fought against both possibilities by openly arguing that African Americans comprised an inferior race who would do harm to a united denomination. One white southern delegate argued:

There is no principle of sound philosophy and no revelation of religion that would compel an advanced race, such as we represent, to put themselves under the domination, under the fear of the domination, or even fear of the balance of power in the hands of a backward race two thousand years behind ourselves in the achievement of civilization (Nickell 2014, 29).

Unfortunately for those who held ambitions of cultural Christian influence through a national Methodist unification, these racial ideologies were among the factors delaying the eventual merger that finally resulted from these unification talks until 1939, when the efficacy of promoting American Christian civilization was seeming much less potent.

Because of this intertwined mission that tied their identity so closely together with the identity of the American nation, Handy's second disestablishment hit Methodists particularly hard, forcing leaders to question their deeply held mission and purpose and their failure to provide an equally energizing substitute. Russell Richey uses this turn of events to suggest that many of the difficulties currently being faced by Methodists in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are not exclusively the responsibility of contemporary leaders; they are at least partially the result of nineteenth-century leaders building a foundation on an unsustainable set of priorities. "When the promises of the First Amendment and the realities of pluralism exposed the fault line in Christian America, Methodists and perhaps also other mainline denominations suffered structural damage" (Richey 1993, 481).

It is worth noting that, while some see this decline in numbers and influence among mainline denominations as evidence of the widespread secularization of the nation as a whole, other scholars interpret the data quite differently. In an influential paper that offered a "new paradigm" for understanding the shifts in American religious participation, Stephen Warner (1993) suggests as a starting point that increasing religious pluralism, rather than placing strains on religious belief and practice that lead inevitably to large-scale secularization in its various manifestations, would lead instead to religious thriving on the macro/societal level. Warner, influenced by the arguments of Rodney Stark and his co-authors, notes that the older paradigm (exemplified by Peter Berger's early advocacy of religion as a unified societal "sacred canopy" for which pluralism would be an undermining force) was developed to account for European religious experience. The new paradigm takes for its starting point the American experience of

religion that is based in an open market, inherently pluralistic, structurally flexible, and empowering for subjugated minorities. In an environment where religious groups are relatively unrestricted in their ability to adapt to market conditions and provide religious goods and services that people want to consume, religion as a whole will thrive, even as some groups wither and die.

Rodney Stark and Roger Finke have developed a version of this proposal known as “rational choice theory” that helps to explain both Methodism’s early flourishing in the early days of the American republic and its subsequent cooling. They trace the beginning of Methodist decline in adherence rates to the late nineteenth century, as Catholic adherents outnumbered the Methodists by 1890, and Baptists did so by 1906 (2005 [1992], 158). They trace the cause directly to Methodists’ greater accommodation to the larger American culture:

It is during this time period ... that the Methodists made strong efforts to abandon their sectarian origins. ... The same underlying processes that transformed the Puritan sect into the Congregational Church subsequently transformed the upstart Methodists into the Methodist Episcopal Church. When successful sects are transformed into churches, that is, when their tension with the surrounding culture is greatly reduced, they soon cease to grow and eventually begin to decline (2005, 158-160).

This shift, they claim, involved the adoption of “New School” theological perspectives and an appeal to wealthier members through increasingly upper-class styles of dress and music. This was also the period that saw seminary training of clergy becoming the norm for Methodists, partly occasioned by the desire of wealthier congregations to be social equals of Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians. Educated clergy began to command control of denominational functions, leading to a de-emphasis of the otherworldly themes of revivals in favor of newer theological innovations, as well as

move away from the stricter codes of morality and conduct. Finke's and Stark's prediction when such shifts happen is that sect formation begins to occur when individuals loyal to older forms of strongly supernatural belief leave to form their own highly strict offshoots. Finke and Stark trace the formation of the Free Methodist Church in 1860 to just such a confrontation in western New York state over pew rentals, the use of organs and professional musicians, and other trappings that some saw as antithetical to the gospel (2005, 161-6). The Holiness movement of the late nineteenth century also fostered stricter offshoots from mainstream Methodism, with the formation of denominations including the Church of the Nazarene and the Pentecostal Holiness Church.

Mainline denominations have also been affected by the decrease over the twentieth century in strong affiliation and loyalty to denominational identities by church members. Denominational labels have come to provide less and less identity for many Christians as the traditional social stratifications between denominations have receded, particularly since World War II. Those divisions identified by H. Richard Niebuhr in *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*—class, race, and region—have become less critical. Regional divisions over slavery between North and South were largely overcome by denominational mergers (1939 for Methodists; 1983 for Presbyterians; 1988 for Lutherans). Educational levels, while still differentiated somewhat, are now more similar across denominations than they were several decades ago, easing class tensions somewhat. Race, of course, remains a real distinction between historically white-majority and historically black denominations. Still, more people over time have begun to switch membership between denominations, or to attend services at churches in a tradition other

than their own, or to intermarry across denominational lines. The primary division Robert Wuthnow identifies currently is not along denominational demarcations, but between liberals and conservatives (1988, 83-88; 1993).⁶

Wuthnow has depicted the twentieth century as a time when fractures *between* denominations (based on cultural, geographical, and theological differences) have largely eased and been replaced by tensions *within* denominations. These intra-denominational distinctions often play out as battles of liberal vs. conservative ideologies, particularly around issues of homosexuality and reproductive rights, but those ideological differences are also supported by educational differences among both laity and clergy, a “cultural cleavage ... that fell largely along educational lines and that cut through most of the established religious organizations. Whereas ethnic and regional divisions had once been the chief basis along which religious communities had divided, educational levels now became an increasingly important mode of religious differentiation” (Wuthnow 1988, 162-3). This cleavage has morphed into what Martin Marty has referred to as “private” Protestantism (with an emphasis on individual salvation and otherworldly reward) vs. “public” Protestantism (which focuses more on social salvation and this-worldly ethical concerns) (Carroll et al. 1997, 256). Pastors, no less than the laity they lead, are caught up in these differentiations, and educational considerations can also serve as predictors of where they find themselves in this cleavage.

⁶ Carroll and Roof (1993) claim that Wuthnow’s emphasis on a liberal/conservative divide is exaggerated, and argue for continued importance of traditional denominational forms. However, Wuthnow himself agrees that denominations are not simply relics of the past and will continue to remain influential, in some form, for the foreseeable future (1993, 10).

Wuthnow predicts that, as these denominational boundaries become more permeable, American Christian identities will become both more global (as connection with other Christians around the world is emphasized) while remaining particularly local (as individuals continue to claim identity largely through denominationally-affiliated congregations). Any remaining denominational identity will mean local identities, as individuals and families join congregations where they feel a connection with the pastor, the other members, the programs, etc. Such local connections create stronger loyalties today than do denominational loyalties writ large. Stephen Warner labels this centrifugal tendency as “de facto congregationalism”—“an institutionalized bias of American religious life toward affectively significant associations under local and lay control” (Warner 1993, 1066). De facto congregationalism implies that, however the polity is defined by the centralized authority of the denomination, “the local religious community is in fact constituted by those who assemble together ... rather than by the geographic units into which higher church authorities divide their constituents, which is what ‘parishes’ historically are” (1067).

This ongoing tension defined by Warner between central denominational control of religious life and local autonomy has its own particular flavor for American Methodists. The various levels of “conference” in Methodism, and particularly the geographically defined “annual conference,” have always had a primary role in directing the ministries of the denomination. In language that dates back to 1939, the United Methodist Church’s *Book of Discipline* states that “The annual conference is the basic body in the Church,” retaining final decision-making authority on clergy credentialing, approval of denominational constitutional amendments, and other matters not specifically

assigned to the denominational General Conference (United Methodist Church 2012, 33). These judicatory bodies are still important for United Methodists in sending pastors to serve in their various congregations and organizing significant common ministry work. Even so, more recently, the UMC added language to the *Book of Discipline* beginning in 1996 to acknowledge a more generous interpretation of the importance of local implementations of church life, noting for the first time that

the mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. ... It is primarily at the level of the local church that the church encounters the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to personally know Jesus Christ and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God (United Methodist Church 1996, 114).

Such statements, existing side by side in the denomination's formal governing document, show the tension between centralized authority and local autonomy in the UMC, attempting to maintain a formally connectional polity even as "de facto congregationalism" plays a greater role in the decisions shaping the future of the denomination.

Centralized denominational control over Methodist identity and practice has taken different forms throughout the denomination's history, ranging from the force of Bishop Francis Asbury's personality in the late eighteenth century to more routinized institutional forms in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Historian William McGuire King has traced two phases of bureaucratic denominational consolidation in the Methodist Episcopal Church: from 1865 to 1872, the M.E.C. began to take responsibility at the top levels for benevolent and missions work that had previously been voluntarily conducted at more local levels, and from 1908 to 1920, as the M.E.C. General

Conference assumed full executive responsibility for denominational operations, complementing the legislative oversight they had enacted previously. Although such centralization of power has widely been seen as alienating for individuals, King argues that it also functioned in the M.E.C. to strengthen a common denominational identity in which both clergy and laity could share (1993, 343-54). It is this denominational identity that allows General Conferences to facilitate differing outlooks from diverse constituencies, even while seeking demonstrations of unity, particularly through the hearing of those who may have less power at their local level (including persons of color, women, and LGBT persons), in a way that actually protects a more robust form of democratic deliberation, even at these centralized denominational gatherings (Nickell 2014, 165).

More recently, though, there has been significant pushback against ongoing bureaucratic practices that are seen to hamper Methodist growth and well-being. James Rutland Wood (2005) traces how proposed changes to top-level denominational structures in the United Methodist Church between 1996 and 2000 can be read as reactions against ossified bureaucracy. One bishop reported that he thought both liberals and conservatives in church leadership “saw the mission of the church being thwarted by the way in which the church is structured at this time. It is as if our more bureaucratized way of being is hindering the Spirit” (537).

In Robert Wuthnow’s (1994) estimation, the arc in American religious life that began with a softening of denominational identity and an increase of tension between liberal and conservative points of view has culminated in an ever-heightening sense of individualism among mainline Christians in the second half of the twentieth century. This

has frequently been stated as a cause for concern for religious leaders and others who fear that it is leading to an inability to maintain deeply shared social structures that allow the effective weathering of change. Wuthnow notes that this retreat from the public arena into increasingly private behavior is rooted in both “pull factors” into private pursuits (consumerism, familial and romantic intimacy as a bolstering force for self-esteem, expressive individualism) and “push factors” away from public engagement (increases in the scale of government and corporate control of public life, the greater role of bureaucrats in deciding public policy without significant public input) (14-15). The specifically religious implications of this individualism are often posited as a dichotomy between spirituality and religion. For Wuthnow (2005), spirituality is characterized as “an individual’s relationship to the sacred,” while religion involves “organizations, clergy, doctrines, and traditions” (128).

Roof and McKinney (1984) trace the roots of our current climate of individualism to some of the same impulses that fed the initial rapid growth of Methodism: religious voluntarism, specifically Arminianism, with its “emphasis on free will, grace, and unlimited hope for conversion of all persons [which reinforce] the value placed upon personal achievement ... dominant in the secular culture” (43). These values became especially prevalent in the 1960s, with the rise of the youth-fueled counterculture. The expressive individualism that came to dominate this movement sought to repudiate both the nation’s biblical tradition (that celebrated the freedom to serve God faithfully) and utilitarian individualism (that focused on the freedom to pursue one’s own interests without hindrance). “The counterculture of the 1960s ... begins its conception of reality with the individual, not as an agent rationally pursuing her own self-interest, but as a

personality that experiences, knows, and simply *is*. ... Self-awareness is the touchstone, not self-preservation and all the achievements that follow from it” (Tipton 1982, 13-14).

This host of social changes in United States society has diminished denominational distinctiveness for mainline denominations, including United Methodists, and has intensified an inward gaze as Methodist leaders seek to come to grips with the internal strains over belief, practice, and structure. This process has been characterized as “noisy, visible, occasionally disorderly and uncivil struggle over the fundamental identity of the church” over issues such as biblical authority and the mission of the church (Wood 2005, 539-50). These shifts occurred contemporaneously with a change in the way new clergy were being trained for full-time ministry, with a new professional model being adopted as the norm, a process to which I now turn.

Education as Professionalization

Narratives of secularization have also been invoked to account for the process of professionalization in America in the early twentieth century, the proliferation of occupational groups whose members struggled to be considered professional persons in the public eye. Brooks Holifield outlines the commonly accepted characteristics that define “professions” in the modern sense: “vocational groups set apart by a specialized higher education, dedicated to service on behalf of clients, governed by an ethical code, and motivated by ideals of public welfare rather than exclusively by the aim of profit” (Holifield 2007, 6). Dean Hoge and his collaborators also point out that professionals “claim authority over their clients and over subordinate occupational groups,” and that “the general public is obligated to recognize the occupational group as a profession”

(Hoge, Shields and Griffin 1995, 208). The flourishing of such professions may be described in part as a secularizing force as the clergy subsequently lose influence in American public life as they cede functions over which they formerly had sole authority to other professionals (e.g., counselors, psychiatrists, social workers). The primary attempts to counter this loss involved cultivating respect for ministers (including Methodist clergy) by portraying the ministry as a true profession alongside the numerous others that were being established at the time, one with claims to public professional legitimacy.

This process of professionalization began to solidify during the previously-discussed second disestablishment period between 1920 and 1940, as a greater number of functions that had earlier been performed by churches and their ordained leaders began to be taken over by the state or by other specialized professions (Handy 1984, 159-84). Holifield argues that “the increasing differentiation of the professions meant that the ministry began to seem unlike other professions at precisely the moment when professionals were striving to become more specialized, scientific, state-certified, and monopolistic over delimited domains of expertise” (Holifield 2007, 219). This secularization argument depends on a description of (post-)modern life in which fewer people live under the protection of a “sacred canopy” (Berger 1967) in which supernatural explanations provide meaning and structure for living and for which clergy are the primary custodians. Institutions that previously submitted to the oversight of clergy were now beginning to operate under independent guidelines, and markets and nation-states came to function with purely secular norms.

In his attempt to broaden the discussion of professionalization of clergy beyond the contested categories of twentieth-century American secularization, Holifield looks back to the education afforded to early Protestant clergy in sixteenth century Europe, whose insistence on proper interpretation of Scripture was thought to require thorough academic preparation. This education allows the expression of clerical authority of a rational-legal type, following the work of Max Weber. Such authority is less dependent on the personal charisma of an individual clergyperson or the spiritual graces of a ministerial office, but rests instead on the knowledge and skills gained through specialized forms of clerical training (Holifield 2007, 2). It is this rational form of authority that is shared among all modern professions by virtue of their various forms of specialized education, and into which proponents of ministerial professionalization sought to tap.

This movement toward professionalization of the clergy did not occur automatically or without opposition. Some argued that ministry did not adequately fit the standard sociological definition of a profession, since ministers primarily served churches rather than society at large, and that their parishioners could not be considered clients in the same way that doctors and lawyers retained clients. Theologically, many continued to worry that a professional model neglected a sense of vocation implied in ordination. Seminaries found themselves caught between dueling sets of expectations, with some arguing that the schools did too little to prepare students for the practical, day-to-day work of ministers in their increasingly varied ministry settings, while others complained that academic standards were still too low (Holifield 2007, 327-30). Still others have found themselves under fire for a seeming lack of preparation in the spiritual disciplines

of ministry or an accompanying deep grounding in denominational identity, all of this raising unanswered questions for seminaries about “how was it all to be put together—the new fields with the classic theological disciplines, the more book-based with the practical, content with skills, the service oriented with the revivalistic, the theoretical with the experiential, the academic with the spiritual, the theological with the formational, knowledge and vital piety?” (Richey 2014, 60).

Crossing into the first decade of the twenty-first century, the debate continues about how to reconcile views of ministry as a profession with continued calls to emphasize ministry as a vocation. The professional ideal has spread even to lay workers in the United Methodist Church, which now provides professional certification in specialized areas of ministry to those willing to take graduate level courses and place themselves under the supervision of annual conference officials (GBHEM 2014a). Even so, echoing arguments that have made the same point for a century, bishop William Willimon has written: “Ministry is not merely a profession, not only because one cannot pay pastors to do many of the things they routinely do, but also because ministry is a vocation. Ministers are more than those who are credentialed and validated by the approval of their fellow members of their profession. Ministers must be called” (Willimon 2000, 33). The divide between more and less educated pastors also remains largely unchanged. While the level of education among United Methodist clergy stands remains high when compared to previous generations, many pastors still serve without benefit of a seminary education (Lewis Center 2015). United Methodist “local pastors” (who are not ordained and do not have a theological degree) serve 25 percent of United Methodist congregations, and in some areas of the South and Midwest, the total

percentage of pastors without a seminary degree rises to 50 percent (Holifield 2007, 331). These local pastors serve in a limbo when viewed against this professional model—they are considered clergy (though with restrictions), do not typically have the graduate education typically considered necessary for professional credentialing, and lack the ability to supervise and review the actions of their clergy peers. I now turn to a historical overview of the distinction between those Methodist clergy who can be considered fully “professional” and those who cannot.

Categories of Ministry

At the very beginning of the Methodist movement in the United States, under the supervision of hand-picked leaders sent by John Wesley from England, all Methodist preachers were lay preachers and not ordained clergymen. This accords with Methodism’s self-perception at the time as a reform movement within the Church of England, with no separate ecclesial structure or clergy leadership of its own. This changed in 1784 with Wesley’s decision in the wake of the Revolutionary War to condone a separate Methodist Episcopal Church with its own ordained clergy. From that point on, a distinction has existed between those ministers who were full members of an annual conference and those who were authorized to preach only in a particular location (Norwood 1974, 133-41). In the former category were the elders, those who were expected to travel where they were sent by the bishop, and who were entitled to a

guaranteed ongoing appointment in return.⁷ It was this group of circuit riders “in full connection” who constituted the decision-making body within the annual conference—not the local preachers, and (in that era) not the laity. These traveling preachers engaged in itineracy, often preaching at stations along their appointed circuit only four times a year, and then frequently being sent to an entirely new circuit after a year’s time. It is these full members of annual conferences who are the template on which Methodist ministry was built in those early years, and whose needs and qualifications have been most fully considered as reform movements have adapted the various forms of ministry over the years. Even so, theirs is not the only story to be told.

“Local preachers” filled in the gaps, serving in those locations not (yet) being served by the itinerating preachers and filling in during the long absences in between circuit riders’ visits. Some of these local preachers were preparing for the obligations of itinerant ministry, while others would never attain that rank. At various points of Methodist history, these local preachers were considered laity, and at other times they were an auxiliary class of clergy. At times, they were authorized to administer the sacraments in the churches they served, even though the perceived impropriety of laypersons presiding at the sacraments was precisely the event that led John Wesley to approve the ordination of Methodist clergy outside the structures of the Church of England.

In 1796, the quadrennial General Conference of the new Methodist Episcopal Church began to provide guidance for this local preaching position by requiring that a

⁷ Before becoming a separate order for specialized ministries of word and service in 1996, deacons were also part of this itinerant preaching ministry, and in nearly all cases, a stepping stone toward ordination as an elder.

local preacher be granted a license to preach only after he had been recommended by the local society of which he was a member, and examined by the quarterly conference of the circuit. After four years of supervised ministry, he would be eligible to be ordained as a deacon; after an additional four years of service, this might lead to ordination as a non-itinerating “local elder” under a procedure approved in 1812. But even as larger reform efforts swirled through the denomination in the 1820s concerning clergy rights (with attempts to directly elect the “presiding elders” who served as mid-level supervisors under the bishops) and laity rights (attempting to achieve direct lay representation at conferences), efforts to raise the standing of local preachers went nowhere, perhaps precisely because of their liminal status as neither fish nor fowl, neither clergy nor laity (Norwood 1974, 133-4). Although the most iconic image of Methodist ministry from that era involves an itinerant circuit rider on horseback, local preachers played a tremendous role in sustaining the Methodist societies in those early generations. By 1812, there were 700 Methodist itinerants in America, compared to 2,000 local preachers. That number of local preachers had grown to 8,500 in 1854 (Norwood 1974, 134).

Prior to the 1968 merger that formed the United Methodist Church, the pattern of “local ministry” was spelled out as an adjunct to (and a derivation from) the “traveling ministry” of itinerating elders. The 1964 Methodist Book of Discipline (the final one before the merger) defined a “local preacher” to be “a lay member of The Methodist Church who has been granted a license to preach. ... He continues to be a lay member of a local church. His license to preach must be renewed each year ... unless he has been ordained” (Methodist Church 1964, 141). A further category of local ministry, the “approved supply pastor,” was constituted by those local preachers who were engaged in

theological education, most often through the denomination's Course of Study. These were additionally allowed "to administer the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper and, if the laws of the state permit, to perform the marriage ceremony within the bounds of the charge to which he is assigned" (Methodist Church 1964, 147). Hence, although these approved supply pastors were to do the same primary work as ordained elders, they were denied equivalent status and social standing within their Methodist conferences, the status of being recognized as ordained clergy.

After the 1968 merger between the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church into the new United Methodist Church, the previous Methodist categories for local ministers were merged into a new category whose name highlighted the distinction between them and their ordained clergy colleagues—"lay pastors." These lay pastors had the authority to preach in the churches to which they were assigned, but they were denied the ability to preside over the sacraments of baptism and communion, even while they were engaged in the Course of Study (United Methodist Church 1968, 126). As before, these lay pastors were subject to annual review and approval by a district Committee on the Ministry, without whose approval they could no longer serve as pastors (124-5). Additionally, lay pastors were prohibited from being elected as delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences, the decision-making bodies for the denomination whose clergy membership was to be comprised of "full connection" traveling preachers (22).

Beginning in 1976, a slow but steady process began that would offer these unordained clergy greater privileges and flexibility in their ministry. In that year, their status was largely reinstated to match the rights they had known prior to the 1968 merger.

This came with a minor name change for this group—“local pastor”—that remains unchanged to the present. “A local pastor is ... authorized to perform all the duties of a pastor ... including the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion as well as the service of marriage, ... burial, confirmation, and membership reception, while assigned to a particular charge ... subject to annual renewal” (United Methodist Church 1976, 170). Starting in 1984, local pastors serving full-time appointments were allowed to “serve on any board, commission, or committee except the Board of Ordained Ministry and Board of Trustees” (United Methodist Church 1984, 197)—that is, any decision-making body except those making decisions on clergy relations (including the admission of new clergy into full conference relationships) or conference property. In 1988, full-time local pastors’ membership was vested in the annual conference instead of in a local church, giving them for the first time the ability to be identified as clergy instead of laity (United Methodist Church 1988, 219). Their participation in annual conference business was clarified (and limited) somewhat in 1992, when they were permitted “to vote on all matters except [denominational] constitutional amendments, election of delegates to General, Jurisdictional, or Central Conferences, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy” (United Methodist Church 1992, 208). In 1996, these changes were extended to part-time local pastors, as well, as their membership was moved from their local churches into the annual conference and their status as clergy affirmed (United Methodist Church 1996, 217).

Beginning in 2000, the prohibition against local pastors serving on the conference Board of Ordained Ministry was loosened, if only in a partial and symbolic way, when an allowance was made for local pastors who have completed the Course of Study to serve

on the Board with voice but no vote (United Methodist Church 2000, 386). In 2008, these local pastor Board members were granted both voice and vote, allowing them for the first time to have direct input into matters of ordination and clergy membership in annual conferences (United Methodist Church 2008, 427). In addition, certain local pastors were granted the right to vote for clergy delegates to the quadrennial General and Jurisdictional Conferences; specifically, those “local pastors who have completed course of study or an M.Div. degree and have served a minimum of two consecutive years under appointment immediately preceding the election” (United Methodist Church 2008, 35).

A related ministry category is that of “associate member” of the annual conference, a classification that tends to have few members and was even phased out for a brief time in 1996 before being reintroduced in 2004. Local pastors may be designated associate members if they are at least 40 years of age, have been full-time local pastors for at least four years, have completed their Course of Study and work toward a bachelor’s degree, and be examined by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry. The primary privilege of associate membership is a guarantee of ongoing appointment by the bishop without the necessity of annual review and approval by the relevant committees. Many restrictions on associate members remain unchanged from local pastors, however, including prohibitions against voting on denominational constitutional amendments and conference relations of clergy, and an inability to serve as delegates to Jurisdictional or General Conferences (United Methodist Church 2012, 235-6).

Despite some initial moves to reduce some of the disparity of responsibilities and privileges between elders and local pastors in recent years, significant distinctions remain. These differences are important not only because of the specific restrictions

placed on local pastors as noted above, but also because of the symbolic weight these restrictions carry. In several important senses, local pastors are not seen as professionals in the full sense that elders have been seeking to achieve. Local pastors typically have not completed the graduate education culminating in a master's (or doctoral) degree that is typically required for certification in most modern professions. Because they are still (by and large) barred from serving on the credentialing bodies that review and approve the conference relations of new clergy, they do not participate in the self-oversight and self-constituting processes that are characteristic of professional bodies. The continuing proscription against local pastors serving as delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences means that they will not have direct input into the decisions that shape the future of the denomination as a whole. And because local pastors remain unordained, they are not set apart by the primary symbolic act that serves as a rite of initiation into the body of professional clergy leadership in United Methodist conferences. It is this clergy-but-not-fully liminal status that drives and maintains the ongoing social divide between the classes of United Methodist clergy.

Before turning to a more thorough discussion of these social demarcations between categories of United Methodist clergy, I will first consider in the following chapter how the sociological framework of Pierre Bourdieu might be brought to bear on these questions.

CHAPTER 2—PIERRE BOURDIEU

Already one of the towering figures in European sociology during the second half of the twentieth century, Pierre Bourdieu's work has been increasingly noted in American sociological output as well in recent years. His influence in the sociology of religion has been growing in recent years, despite the relatively lesser emphasis he placed on the study of contemporary religion in his work. In part, this is due to the fact that he shared the anti-religious bias common among many French intellectuals of his day. He also saw the power of religion in pre-modern societies as having waned significantly during their transition to modernity, with religion's power of consecration—in the sense of the legitimation of social difference—having been largely ceded to the state (Dianteuil 2003; Engler 2003). Most often, Bourdieu treats religious topics in passing, as part of the cultural setting in which he does his work and from which he draws occasional examples. When he does consider religion explicitly, Bourdieu's overwhelming focus on Catholicism, understandable as it is in his French context within which it formed a near monopoly, requires us to translate some of his emphases when working within a North American context, where religious pluralism and competition are the norm (Dianteuil 2003, 535).

For this project, Bourdieu provides a robust theoretical framework to examine the structured social relationships among actors in a United Methodist annual conference. Although he did not dwell on religious institutions as a primary focus of his work, his conceptual developments allow for a deep analysis of the (largely unacknowledged) struggle for social standing among these religious professionals, as well as the educational mechanisms by which social capital is transferred to new generations of those

professionals. In this chapter, I turn to an overview of those parts of Bourdieu's work that are used in later chapters.

Key Concepts in Bourdieu's Work

Capital/Power

Bourdieu's work seeks to explain how the practices of individuals and groups are affected by accumulated power, as well as how that power is acquired and preserved by some groups over the course of generations through the reproduction of structured social relationships. Much of his work on education (in all its various forms) is concerned with how these social relations of power are reproduced over time—how cultural transmission occurs, and how various forms are valued over others, to the benefit of some people over others (Reed-Danahay 2005, 38). Both the education that takes place in schools (from primary to university) and that which takes place in the earliest formative years at home (which Bourdieu sees as the most important of all) teaches individuals not only the matter of discrete subject areas (mathematics, science, history and the like), but also how to continue being who they already are, by virtue of birth, social class, religion, etc.

This accumulated power, for Bourdieu, is measured as *capital*, and is central to his intellectual project: "A general science of the economy of practices ... must endeavor to grasp capital and profit in all their forms and to establish the laws whereby the different types of capital (or power, which amounts to the same thing) change into one another" (Bourdieu 1986, 242-43). Bourdieu's definition of capital at its most general level parallels Karl Marx; capital is "nothing other than labor-time (in the widest sense)" (1986, 253).

Bourdieu eschews any simplistic division that would separate strictly economic concerns from non-economic concerns in any fundamental ontological sense. Although it is useful to talk about different forms of accumulated power, some of which is measured materially and some of which is not, Bourdieu sees both as important in examining the objective relationships which shape human practices. All such practices, even those which purport to be “non-economic” and disinterested are, in fact, “economic practices directed towards the maximizing of material or symbolic profit” (Bourdieu 1977, 183). One way of naming this differentiation of capital into specifically “economic” and “non-economic” forms is to distinguish between material capital and symbolic capital. Material capital involves the accumulation of resources that are physical, while symbolic capital is concerned with resources that are cultural, intellectual, artistic, etc. Religious capital is a subset of symbolic capital for Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1986, 243).

These forms are able to be transformed one into the other, but only at a cost; this conversion is necessary because each form is only maximally effective within certain fields—e.g., economic capital is necessary when purchasing real estate, while cultural capital is most effective in making one’s ideas heard in the various fields of cultural production. So while symbolic capital, for instance, may be viewed as “a ‘credit’ which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees ‘economic’ profits,” economic capital in its naked, unconverted form cannot effect its desired ends by itself: “the economic capital that cultural undertakings generally require cannot secure the specific profits produced by the field ... unless it is reconverted into symbolic capital” (Bourdieu 1980, 262). While Bourdieu holds that economic capital is at the root of the other forms, those others still maintain a specific efficacy in certain fields of conduct that

material capital only indirectly effect.

Capital is powerful in shaping social practices and structures over time because of its ability to persist as accumulated labor, appropriated for the purposes of certain groups or individuals at the expense of others. “Capital ... contains a tendency to persist in its being, [and] is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible” (Bourdieu 1986, 241). Its accumulation by some more than by others keeps the “games of society” from being merely a succession of spontaneous interactions between equals.

Interest/Misrecognition of Interest

Minimally, by his use of the term *interest*, Bourdieu means a “principle of sufficient reason” that explains human activity, the rationality proper to any particular undertaking (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 26). But as David Swartz points out, the shades of meaning inherent in the term go far beyond this basic meaning. Bourdieu attempted to correct reductive uses of Marxist thought that consign cultural and social connections to superstructure, thereby leaving open the possibility of idealistic (and therefore disinterested) interpretations of culture. Against this view, he holds that all human activity—both material and symbolic—is interested, which is to say that this activity is always in pursuit of goals, purposes, or profits, whether or not they are strictly economic in nature (Swartz 1997, 72).

This wide-reaching nature of interest is important in Bourdieu’s work for unmasking the motivations of various kinds of activities that usually are perceived to be disinterested—that is, pursued without concern for any sort of material or symbolic

purposes by the agent in question. Bourdieu goes to great pains to demonstrate that, even where there is no economic or material gain to be achieved, practices can still be aimed at the achievement of symbolic capital. “The most ‘anti-economic’ and most visibly ‘disinterested’ behaviors, which in an ‘economic’ universe would be those most ruthlessly condemned, contain a form of economic rationality” (Bourdieu 1980, 261). That these attempts to acquire symbolic capital are not acknowledged as such, even by the social agent performing the action, is the result of *misrecognition*—a usually unconscious euphemization process that recasts activities (that might otherwise be thought of as self-serving or inappropriate) as worthy of respect, selfless, and natural. Symbolic capital, in particular, is effective at being “unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition” (Bourdieu 1986, 245).

In a religious field such as a United Methodist annual conference, many religious leaders inside that field would argue that their actions are not guided by economic concerns in pursuit of material or symbolic gain, that their work truly is disinterested in the sense of being only about the pursuit of (material, emotional, and spiritual) well-being of others. Bourdieu would disagree: players in this field are stratified based on capital that is both material (smaller vs. larger salaries; varying participation in denominational pensions; relative sizes of churches in terms of both budgets and membership) and symbolic (elders who participate in conference decision-making more fully than local pastors, and whose ordination permits them greater flexibility in their ministerial work). This stratification creates interest, even when such interest goes unrecognized as selfless, and the stratified system as natural or seemingly eternal.

Agents pursue their various interests by means of the (more or less conscious) *strategies* in which they engage, both individually and collectively. For groups in dominant social positions, these strategies are typically geared toward the maintenance of the social order; for those who are dominated, strategies will include the pursuit of capital to allow advancement in structured social relationships. Bourdieu uses the language of strategies as a replacement for the notion of “rules,” which he notes is too ambiguous a term to be helpful in this context. Strategy implies for Bourdieu “a practical sense of things, or, if one prefers, what athletes call a feel for the game” (Bourdieu and Lamaison 1986, 111). This feel for the social game is made up of embodied, flexible, on-the-fly tactics in which agents engage, typically on a pre-conscious level, and adjust continuously based on feedback received from those with whom they interact: “This practical knowledge ... functions like a self-regulating device programmed to redefine courses of action in accordance with information received” (Bourdieu 1977, 10-11). These embodied dispositional strategies are distinct from any mechanical model of pre-programmed responses based on rules. Bourdieu compares these strategies to those seen in dogfights, to the tussling of children, and to boxing—all of which are competitive, and which require instantaneous responses based on the accumulated history of previous encounters (14).

This rule/strategy distinction provides one of Bourdieu’s primary arguments regarding the inadequacy of a purely intellectualized theoretical rule-based model for describing social behavior. Practical activity requires a practical logic to guide it, and it is impossible to describe this practical logic simply by reference to an abstract set of principles. When social scientists create conceptual diagrams or systems of rules to

describe the lived experience of practical logic, those abstractions obscure the fact that “the driving force of the whole mechanism is not some abstract principle, ... still less the set of *rules* which can be derived from it, but the ... disposition inculcated in the earliest years of life and constantly reinforced by calls to order from the group” (1977, 14-5).

Habitus

Bourdieu gives a name to this inculcated, embodied, flexible disposition that has become one of his most important and widely cited concepts: the *habitus*. His own reflection on his work led him to comment in one of his published interviews: “I can say that this is the starting point for all my thinking: how can behaviors be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?” (Bourdieu and Lamaison 1986, 114). His work searches for explanations about how social action can appear in such coordinated forms while also emerging from reasoning human actors who pursue strategies that usually make no conscious recourse to systems of rules to regulate their behavior. Habitus is the primary concept that helps to explain this regularity-within-freedom.

Bourdieu developed this notion within his 20th century French intellectual field that was so shaped by the oppositional interplay between Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jean-Paul Sartre. Bourdieu’s habitus stood in partial tension with the structuralism epitomized by Lévi-Strauss, to which Bourdieu wanted to add a measure of agency without giving way to a full voluntarism as seen in Sartrean existentialism: “refusing to recognize anything resembling durable dispositions or probable eventualities, Sartre makes each action a kind of antecedent-less confrontation between the subject and the world” (Bourdieu 1990, 42). He was also influenced by others who had used the term in slightly

differing ways before him, from Norbert Elias (who saw habitus as a more psychological drive that determined tastes) and Marcel Mauss (who used the term primarily to refer to bodily postures as an expression of practical reason) (Reed-Danahay 2005, 104-105).

Bourdieu's formulation of habitus has grown and shifted somewhat over time, although by the early 1970s, most of the essential features of the concept were in place.

Outline of a Theory of Practice (first published in French in 1972) contains a widely-cited formulation of the habitus:

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor (1977, 72).

He goes on in *Outline* to emphasize the embodied nature of this habitus by discussing his choice of the word "disposition," which "designates a *way of being*, a *habitual state* (especially of the body) and, in particular, a *predisposition*, *tendency*, *propensity*, or *inclination*" (214, n. 1).

Bourdieu's description of the habitus as both "durable" and "transposable" is ubiquitous, emphasizing his contention that this disposition is long-lasting and not easily relinquished, and is also able to affect behavior in multiple fields of activity: material *and* symbolic, public *and* private, familial *and* vocational *and* recreational. The habitus is both a structured structure—affected by the objective relations in which it was shaped during a person's early life—as well as a structuring structure—capable of organizing the

ongoing perceptions, beliefs, and actions of an individual. In this way, reproduction of (material *and* symbolic) relational forms takes place across generations. Bourdieu also takes care to emphasize the flexibility of the habitus to fend off criticism that his work is simply rigid objectivism in disguise; he notes that it is nuanced enough to allow agents “to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations” (1977, 72). The habitus also remains mostly beyond the scope of conscious, rational calculation; its embodied principles are “placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and . . . cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and, therefore, more precious, than the values given body” (94).

In her study of the Methodist Church in Britain, Roberta Topham has adopted habitus as a conceptual tool to identify the core values and dispositions embodied by English Methodist laity, and how this habitus is built upon and modified into a distinctly ministerial habitus through the various stages of training those pastors undergo: “at theological college, student ministers are . . . developing a set of dispositions for reacting appropriately, as church officials regard it, to the myriad practical situations that they will encounter in the course of their work as ministers” (2000, 133). Similar work has been done (particularly by Jackson Carroll and his collaborators) to trace the cultural and dispositional development that is enacted by U.S. seminaries in their training of ministerial candidates. Such development does not completely supplant the dispositions that seminary students bring with them to their studies; rather, a secondary habitus acquired as the result of formation through higher education is the result of active, ongoing negotiation between a student’s existing values and the cultural norms of the school (Reed-Danahay 2005, 47). Carroll suggests that these cultural negotiations have

the character of a contest:

Most students' views, values and, it appears, habits *are* reshaped by the ideas and behaviors the school promotes, but students do not entirely surrender the commitments, opinions, and tastes that they came with. Their goals, outlook, language, and manners when they leave are a melding—often painfully forged in intense engagements with each other and with those who represent the school—of what they brought with them and what the school has insistently set before them (Carroll et al. 1997, 222).

Because United Methodist elders and local pastors undergo different forms of theological training (through either seminary or Course of Study) in increasingly varied settings (via extended campus residency, occasional continuing education classes, or online interaction), it stands to reason that the ways in which future ministers' secondary habitus is formed varies considerably, and would lead to differing types of commitments and outlooks.

Field/Doxa

Habitus, by itself, does not provide a complete picture of Bourdieu's conception of structured social relationships; it must be paired with the concept of *field*, a spatial metaphor that portrays the objective relationships between positions that are differentiated with respect to the various forms of capital. "Fields may be thought of as structured spaces that are organized around specific types of capital or combinations of capital" (Swartz 1997, 117). The English "field" here translates the French *champ*, which overlaps with only certain meanings of its English translation. *Champ* is primarily a spatial notion, and can be used to denote agricultural fields or battlefields. Additionally, by way of metaphor, *champ* may describe a force field in the study of physics (Reed-Danahay 2005, 133). These images capture aspects of what Bourdieu seeks to describe

with his field metaphor: fields are places of action in which struggles take place. One of Bourdieu's paradigmatic definitions of field states the idea this way:

In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.) (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97).

He goes on to note that, in differentiated societies, any number of fields may coexist simultaneously. These fields are relatively autonomous, indicating that the forms of capital within each of them are not immediately interchangeable with one another, with each field following its own specific logic unique to it: "while the artistic field has constituted itself by rejecting or reversing the law of material profit, the economic field has emerged, historically, through the creation of a universe within which, as we commonly say, 'business is business'" (97-98). A person's position in any given field, then, is determined by how much of that particular form of capital he or she possesses. Although fields deal with varying forms of capital, all fields are homologous, sharing common structuring forms with each other and with the overarching "field of power," a kind of meta-field that "operates as an organizing principle of differentiation and struggle throughout *all* fields" (Swartz 1997, 136).

It is necessary to conceive of fields as open, fluid structures whose composition and boundaries, while relatively stable, are never totally fixed over time. In part, this is because the type of capital in the field is always itself a matter of contention. The competition for distinction in any field will affect some persons (by virtue of the "field

effect” it induces on those in its purview) more than others. In this way, the limits of a field at any given time are marked by the decline of influence that the field has in the lives of people outside its reach. The fluidity of fields arises as a result of the continuous competition for capital inherent in each of those fields.

As a space of potential and active forces, the field is also a *field of struggles* aimed at preserving or transforming the configuration of these forces. Furthermore, the field as a structure of objective relations between positions of force undergirds and guides the strategies whereby the occupants of these positions seek, individually or collectively, to safeguard or improve their position and to impose the principle of hierarchization most favorable to their own products. The strategies of agents depend on their position in the field, that is, in the distribution of the specific capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 101).

In Bourdieu’s framework, capital is a static concept (the power an agent accumulates), while the field is a dynamic one (in which an agent uses capital to seek better positions relative to others).

Bourdieu returns to the metaphor of games to describe competition within fields, while allowing that the metaphor may only be stretched so far: “We can indeed, with caution, compare a field to a game (*jeu*) although, unlike the latter, a field is not the product of a deliberate act of creation, and it follows rules or, better, regularities, that are not explicit and codified” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98). Like a game, fields have stakes that will be decided as the result of competition, an investment in the game, and an implicit, unstated agreement that the game is worth playing at all. This pre-conscious agreement over the worth of the game is at the heart of what Bourdieu terms *doxa*.

Doxa, at its root, is a “naturalized arbitrariness”—those shared taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of reality that remain unexamined for lack of any competing alternative beliefs. Even when a society has orthodox and heterodox beliefs in

a given area, doxa lies behind them both as the shared assumptions about reality that no one thinks to question—what Jacques Berlinerblau describes as “what agents immediately know but do not know that they know” (2001, 346). Over time, disputes over the truth of these hidden meanings may bring them slowly to light for open challenge: “The truth of doxa is only ever fully revealed when negatively constituted by the constitution of a field of opinion, the locus of the confrontation of competing discourses” (Bourdieu 1977, 168). To return to the game metaphor, even when rivals bitterly contest the legitimacy of one another’s positions, they share the worth of the game, the underlying unquestioned sense that the contest is worth having at all.

If this doxa were ever to come into question, it could provide for a radical reshaping of the fields of competition between dominant and dominated. While it remains unrecognized, the doxa of a field essentially serves the interest of the dominant in that field: “Doxa is a particular point of view, the point of view of the dominant, which presents and imposes itself as a universal point of view” (Bourdieu 1998, 57). Bourdieu notes that while it is in the best interests of the dominant classes to maintain the social stability of the fields by protecting the unquestioned status of the doxa, the dominated classes have an interest in exposing this arbitrariness. To do so, however, requires sufficient capital to reject “the definition of the real that is imposed on them through logical structures reproducing the social structures ... and to lift the (institutionalized or internalized) censorships which it implies” (1977, 169). If this were to happen, unquestioned doxa would begin to move into the realm of orthodoxy, where it could be challenged and debated with new forms of heterodoxy.

Throughout the history of American Methodism, various taken-for-granted social

realities have become questioned over time as more interested parties have gained sufficient standing to move them from the realm of unquestioned doxa to historically-situated (and therefore changeable) orthodoxy, to (in some cases) one possible position among several to be chosen. While early American Methodism held that only conferences consisting of fully itinerating clergy (who were nearly always heterosexual white men) could make decisions on behalf of the entire Methodist connectional structure, members of the annual conferences eventually incorporated lay representatives, women, and an increasing number of racial minorities into their ranks. Although current calls for openly lesbian/gay/transgendered clergy are firmly in the realm of heterodoxy, the levels of vigorous public debate and increasingly strident action in the form of ecclesial disobedience signal that issue's movement from the realm of unquestioned doxa (Nickell 2014). While ordained clergy in "full connection" relationships with their annual conferences continue to be the accepted model for membership in decision making bodies, unordained local pastors have slowly been making inroads for themselves by challenging that piece of Methodist orthodoxy, slowly collecting religious capital for themselves in this religious field.

Symbolic Violence/Domination

Although Bourdieu sees the cultural forms and behaviors espoused by groups as socially constructed and arbitrary that does not mean that they are free from social consequences. The bulk of his work can be read as an attempt to uncover the various material and symbolic relations that allow dominant groups to enforce their arbitrary interests at the expense of dominated groups. This process by which arbitrary social

relations are transformed into legitimate, socially accepted, natural-seeming relations is given the name *symbolic violence* by Bourdieu. This process typically takes place in a manner that is unconscious and misrecognized simply as the way things are. Bourdieu's project is to expose this process as arbitrary, unmasking what appear to be necessary and universal principles as being, in reality, based in the social power relations from which they arise. He sees the inequalities of social existence as being reproduced alongside the cultural reproduction that takes place in all processes of education (in the widest sense of education, in all its forms). In other words, cultural capital is not distributed equally through all groups or classes in a society, and when that capital is reproduced across generations, this unequal distribution of capital is reproduced in addition to the specific cultural forms (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 4-11). This theme of inequality is developed particularly in Bourdieu's work on intellectual capital in educational institutions. The interest of intellectuals is masked through the work of symbolic violence, being made to appear universal and disinterested. It is this dynamic of cultural transmission through educational processes that will prove central to my later examination of theological education of clergy (either through seminary or the Course of Study), and how those processes transmit various kinds of accumulated capital to those who undergo such training in ways that are unequal and which serve the interests of those who already hold significant religious capital.

Because this symbolic violence does its work in unconscious and misrecognized ways, the domination it effects can usually occur without recourse to brute force or physical coercion. Because both dominant and dominated see the state of social affairs as the proper way that things ought to be, they do not seek to question or challenge that

system. This allows domination to continue unchecked even in societies where there is a strong taboo against crude physical or economic coercion: “The harder it is to exercise direct domination, and the more it is disapproved of, the more likely it is that gentle, disguised forms of domination will be seen as the only possible way of exercising domination and exploitation” (Bourdieu 1990, 128).

A rather controversial corollary of this viewpoint is that dominated classes participate in their own exploitation by internalizing and failing to question the arbitrary social status they are accorded. “Dominated agents ... tend to attribute to themselves what the distribution attributes to them, ... condemning themselves to what is in any case their lot” (Bourdieu 1984, 470-71). As an example, Bourdieu outlines in *Masculine Domination* how it is that women still find themselves the subject of symbolic violence even after decades of activism and the changes in women’s legal status. He defines symbolic violence here as “a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims” (Bourdieu 2001, 1). He sees masculine domination as the most exemplary form of this symbolic violence, and highlights how women’s internalization of their own domination can take both bodily and cognitive forms: “the dominated, often unwittingly, sometimes unwillingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting the limits imposed, often take the form of *bodily emotions*—shame, humiliation, timidity, anxiety, guilt—or *passions and sentiments*—love, admiration, respect” (2001, 38).⁸

⁸ Some scholars claim Bourdieu goes too far here in de-emphasizing agents’ subjectivity to an unwarranted degree. Deborah Reed-Danahay challenges the notion that those in dominated social positions play a part in their own domination. She focuses on the forms of small-scale resistance that they mount against their dominators: “It is, in many ways, odd that Bourdieu should downplay those forms of everyday resistance that would have been so evident to him, being raised in a peasant milieu” (Reed-Danahay 2005, 59-60).

Bourdieu's Work on Religion

Although Bourdieu developed the bulk of his theoretical apparatus to address social structures outside of the religious realm, it is straightforward enough to apply his concepts to religious communities as one form of organization among many.

Nevertheless, in those places where he specifically addresses religious life, it is helpful to see what particular insights may be gleaned from them. I lift up two of Bourdieu's works that deal primarily with religion and that offer a quite thorough outline of the social relations at play in the religious field.

In the first of these, "Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber's Sociology of Religion," Bourdieu both borrows extensively from classical sociologist Max Weber and develops several critiques of his theoretical work on religion. Weber locates religious competition among the struggles between priests, prophets, and laity. For Weber, the source of religious power is different for priests (institutional power) and prophets (inherent charisma that draws laity to form a congregation of followers). Bourdieu holds that Weber's theory of charisma and prophecy is important but flawed, as Weber overlooks the objective relations between the positions occupied by the various social actors, and he overly privileges the charismatic leader as "the specifically creative revolutionary force of history" (Bourdieu 1987, 119). Bourdieu specifically rejects what he sees as Weber's "naïve representation of charisma as a mysterious quality inherent in a person or as a gift of nature" (1987, 129). Observing the objective relations within the religious field is necessary to understand the nature and source of religious power; it cannot be gleaned by looking only at the qualities of particular actors themselves, apart from the field positions they occupy.

Bourdieu develops a particular notion of interest within this field of action, *religious interest*, which “causes lay people to expect religious specialists to carry out ‘magical or religious actions,’ actions that are fundamentally ‘this-worldly’ and practical and are accomplished, as Weber has it, ‘that it may go well with thee ... and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth’” (Bourdieu 1987, 122). The processes of ethicalization and systematization described by Weber are driven both by the religious interests of leaders (both priests and prophets) and by the changing conditions of the laity, who demand more systematic religious forms to better regulate their everyday behavior. In the competition between priests and prophets, the religious message that ultimately wins out is the one best matched to the existing religious interest (among other types of interest) of a group, explaining and legitimating group members’ position in the social order. “The quasi-miraculous harmony between the content of the religious message that ultimately wins out and the most strictly temporal of the interests of its privileged addressees—namely, their political interests—constitutes an essential condition of its success” (1987, 124).

The religious field, then, achieves its structure through the competition between priest (representing the church and tradition) and prophet (representing innovation and charismatic heterodoxy) over “the *monopoly of the legitimate exercise of the power to modify, in a deep and lasting fashion, the practice and world-view of lay people*, by imposing on and inculcating in them a particular *religious habitus*” (Bourdieu 1987, 126, italics in original). At any given moment, *religious legitimacy* is “the state of the specifically religious power relations at that moment; that is, it is the result of past struggles for the monopoly of the accepted exercise of religious power” (1987, 127). Just

as an individual's accumulated history is reflected in her/his habitus, the accumulated history of the religious field can be seen in the current state of religious legitimacy: who controls the power to modify the laity's behavior, and who seeks to wrest that control for themselves.

Because my study focuses primarily on the relationships among ordained elders and unordained local pastors, both of whom are considered clergy (although of differing types) in United Methodist polity, Bourdieu's usage of Weber's distinction between priest and prophet will not be the primary locus of differentiation I employ as an apparatus for studying an annual conference as a religious field. However, a broader question—"How do the different categories of clergy employ religious power among the laity differently in their strategies of pursuing religious capital for themselves?"—stands at the heart of my examination.

Bourdieu's second major theoretical work on religion, "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field," revisits and expands on these themes in sketching the outline of the forces composing a specifically religious field of competition. He begins by asserting that religion (like all human meaning) is mediated by language—both a form of communication and a form of knowledge. Elsewhere, Bourdieu asserts the power of "legitimate language" and the limitless forms of deviation from that dominant form to both express and propagate social differentiations; these hierarchical linguistic forms "reproduce, in the symbolic order of differential deviations, the system of social differences" (Bourdieu 1991b, 54). As a symbolic system, religion's structure is found from the application of principles of division into antagonistic classes, a symbolic division that carries over into social and political consequences, predisposed to serve

functions of inclusion and exclusion. By linking Karl Marx's concern with class structures with Émile Durkheim's observations about the social origin of thought and apprehension, Bourdieu draws a strong correspondence between social structures and mental structures that are linked by the structure of symbolic systems. In particular, the symbolic system we call religion "contributes to the (hidden) imposition of the principles of structuration of the perception and thinking of the world ... insofar as it imposes a system of practices and representations whose structure, objectively founded on a principle of political division, presents itself as the natural-supernatural structure of the cosmos" (Bourdieu 1991a, 5).

The religious field developed historically as a relatively autonomous field as the division of labor in society grew more pronounced.⁹ The resultant division between religious specialists (priests and prophets) and the laity provides the central organizing principle for the religious field. *Religious capital* emerged as a "*deliberately organized corpus* of secret (and therefore rare) knowledge" from which the laity were dispossessed—a dispossession the laity misrecognize as legitimate and proper (Bourdieu 1991a, 9). In this way, religion performs its primary ideological function in absolutizing the relative and legitimating the arbitrary; this legitimating function provides justifications for the laity of their social positions, because "theodicies are always *sociodicies*" (16). The political interests of religious specialists also go misrecognized as religious interests through processes of euphemization. Priests inculcate in the laity a religious habitus which compels them to pursue the religious capital that they provide;

⁹ This relative autonomy of the religious field is cited by Otto Maduro (1977) as being one of the most important contributions Bourdieu offers to the sociologists of religion who are influenced by Marx.

priests also perform actions of symbolic violence to portray heterodox prophets as heretics in order to maintain their “monopoly over the administration of the goods of salvation”—those goods which constitute religious capital, possession of which is seen as necessary for proper religious standing in a tradition (1991a, 22). Bourdieu again emphasizes the function religion serves in social conservation: “The church contributes to the maintenance of political order, that is, to the symbolic reinforcement of the divisions of this order, in and by fulfilling its proper function, which is to contribute to the maintenance of the symbolic order” (1991a, 31).

The religious capital amassed by clergy can be demonstrated in a number of ways—unique vestments, forms of address, titles, and responsibilities that can be performed only by the clergy (Carroll 1992, 290). One of the most important markers of religious capital is the performance of various rites of passage that educated clergy experience in order to be recognized as legitimate leaders of their communities. Bourdieu notes that rites of passage actually serve more potently as “rites of institution,” not so much separating those who have undergone the rite from those who have yet to undergo it (e.g., ordained pastors vs. seminary students preparing for ordination) as separating those who have undergone the rite from those who will never undergo it (ordained pastors from laity or from permanently unordained local pastors). Bourdieu argues that “every rite leads towards the consecration or legitimization of an arbitrary boundary, that is to say, it attempts to misrepresent the arbitrariness and present the boundary as legitimate and natural”—in this case, the arbitrary boundary between clergy and laity that is made to appear sacred and proper by the act of ordination (Bourdieu 1992, 80-81). Roberta Topham argues that even the act of enrolling in a theological school itself can be

seen as a lengthy rite of passage/institution, as those students are often viewed quite differently by church members and by those in ecclesial structures, providing greater opportunities for them and legitimating those opportunities simply by virtue of their graduation (Topham 2000, 134).

Conclusion

The work of Pierre Bourdieu will allow a launching point to consider the ways in which the differentiated types of pastors in the Tennessee Conference United Methodist Church—ordained and unordained, formally theologically educated and uneducated—relate to one another, to the churches they serve as pastors, and to the structures of the annual conference itself. Through the work I have done in survey and interviews, I seek to show that the typical habitus between elders and local pastors differs in places, leading them to place differing emphasis on the tasks they perform and rate as important. Each category of pastor additionally has varying amounts of capital available to them for their work, in the form of credentials, church membership, and financial resources. First, though, I will turn to the rite of ordination itself as that act which separates these categories of clergy from one another, and seek to demonstrate that it is itself the most visible and powerful form of symbolic capital that differentiates these classes of clergy.

CHAPTER 3—ORDINATION AND THE FIELD OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

There are multiple characteristics that separate United Methodist elders from local pastors, including methods of theological education, attitudes and preferences regarding their work, and differing resources and opportunities available to them for their work. I will be examining these in more details in the following chapters, paying particular attention to the ways they inflect the pastoral work being done in the Tennessee Conference. However, there is one symbolic identifier that is absolute in differentiating between these categories of clergy leaders: ordination. United Methodist bishop William Willimon argues that ordination is important enough that we must look to that rite to answer questions about the nature of leadership in the UMC: “Who are pastors? What are they for? Those questions are answered when the church makes its leaders—the Service of Ordination. In these rites, the church says and shows what it believes about its clergy” (Willimon 2002, 30).

It is crucial to note, however, that ordination is only conducted for a portion of those recognized as clergy leadership. According to the denomination’s Book of Discipline that governs the life of the United Methodist Church, “those whose leadership in service includes preaching and teaching the Word of God, administration of the sacraments, ordering the Church for its mission and service, and administration of the discipline of the Church are ordained as elders,” while “all persons not ordained as elders who are appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor shall have a license for pastoral ministry” and be categorized as a full-time local pastor, part-time local pastor, or student serving as a local pastor (United Methodist Church 2012, 218, 229). The job description largely remains the same; the ordination and

concomitant “full connection” membership in the annual conference are the primary differentiations.

Ordination shapes the field of structured relationships in the Tennessee Conference (and in every United Methodist annual conference). Ordination as an elder is a prerequisite for those who achieve the high positions of leadership of bishop and district superintendent in a conference. Although not mandated by the denomination’s Book of Discipline, the de facto reality in the Tennessee Conference reserves other key positions of conference leadership (e.g., the Director of Connectional Ministries, the Director of Ministerial Concerns) for ordained clergy, not for laity or local pastors. It is ordained elders and not local pastors who serve as pastors of the largest congregations in the Tennessee Conference. To the extent that Bourdieu’s conception of fields of social endeavor hold true for a United Methodist annual conference, this particular type of religious field is powerfully shaped by ordination, a practice which has long created a distinction between clergy and laity, and more recently in United Methodism created a distinction between elders and local pastors by promoting the former to more powerful positions in the field of the annual conference.

In this chapter I will address the question: what difference does ordination make? I will lay out an argument about why ordination itself serves as a particularly potent form of symbolic capital, indeed, the preeminent form of symbolic capital for United Methodist clergy. Even though United Methodist theological and ecclesiastical understandings of ordination have grown increasingly complex to the point of occasional contradiction over the last century, elders retain more opportunities in the religious field of their annual conference when compared to their local pastor colleagues and the laity,

simply by virtue of their ordination. I begin with a brief overview of how ordination is practiced in the Tennessee Conference, followed by discussions of how the meanings behind this service have developed over the course of two and a half centuries of American Methodism.

Ordination Services in the Tennessee Conference

The sessions of the Tennessee Annual Conference UMC are most frequently held in the facilities of the Brentwood United Methodist Church in Brentwood, Tennessee, an affluent suburb to the south of Nashville. This congregation is one of the few that is large enough to hold the nearly 1,300 lay and clergy members who gather each June to do the business of the conference. In addition to the receiving of reports from the various groups and ministries within middle Tennessee, the voting on procedural matters requiring approval, and the teaching sessions by the bishop or other invited guest leaders, there are times set aside each day for worship. One of these worship services occurs at 7 PM one evening, and is set aside for the ordination of new clergy leadership for the conference (Tennessee Conference United Methodist Church 2014b).

In fact, the ordination service for the Tennessee Conference involves more than ordination. The working title for the 2014 service, printed inside its worship bulletin, is “The Service of Worship for the Commissioning of Deaconesses, the Presentation of Licenses for Pastoral Ministry, the Commissioning of Provisional Members, the Ordination of Deacons, and the Ordination of Elders.” This prolix title reflects the multiple aims of the service to recognize several of the various categories of clergy and lay leadership in our United Methodist polity. In seeking to recognize these new leaders

across many categories, the Tennessee Conference not only makes its ordination service quite lengthy when compared to an average service of worship (over two hours is the norm for ordination), but it also goes against the recommendations of the UMC's General Board of Discipleship, which maintains the official denominational liturgies for ordination services. The General Board's guidelines strongly suggest that separate services be held for ordination, for the commissioning of provisional elders and deacons, for the licensing of local pastors, and for the recognition of other lay offices such as deaconesses. The guidelines also urge the celebration of Holy Communion as a part of the service of ordination, with one or more of the newly ordained clergy assisting the presiding bishop in celebrating the sacrament, thereby highlighting the historic connection between ordination and sacramental authority. This is also an area where the Tennessee Conference deviates from the recommended liturgy, falling into a concern noted by the General Board: "If the number of ordinands is large, the pressure not to celebrate the sacrament may be strong. The bishop and other planners will have to struggle to balance human attentiveness and endurance with ecclesial and sacramental integrity" (General Board of Discipleship 2012, 15). Whether or not leaders or ordinands see it as an issue of integrity, this is not a eucharistic service.

The 2014 service began with an organ prelude, followed by the reading of Jeremiah 1:4-10 by a conference leader, a passage with resonance for an ordination service ("The Lord's word came to me: 'Before I created you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I set you apart; I made you a prophet to the nations. ... I'm putting my words in your mouth'"). This reading was followed by a procession from the back of

the sanctuary to the chancel at the front, led by a crucifer¹⁰ carrying a cross and two acolytes who lit candles on the altar table. Clergy persons also carried in bread and wine (symbolic of the Holy Communion that will only be referred to but not celebrated), along other symbols of clergy leadership (a Bible and a pitcher, symbol of the service ministry of deacons). The bishop then entered, followed by all the clergy of the annual conference who wished to be part of the processional. All clergy, the approximately 200 attending this service, enter wearing black robes and stoles (if they are ordained and eligible to wear the stole). The black robes are also a departure from official denominational suggestions. Instead of the white albs that are more typical elsewhere in the UMC, black pulpit robes (styled after academic gowns) are more typical in Tennessee. The bishop and others with leadership responsibilities in the service ascended to the chancel area at the front of the sanctuary, while the other processing clergy filled the pews at the front of the center section of the sanctuary. The processional hymn used in recent years is “Lift High the Cross,” whose tune and lyrics are among the more triumphalist of the songs in the United Methodist Hymnal (“Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim, ’til all the world adore his sacred name. Come, Christians follow this triumphant sign; the hosts of God in unity combine.”), and sounds especially so following the ending of the Jeremiah reading just used (“This very day I appoint you over nations and empires, to dig up and pull down, to destroy and demolish, to build and plant”). The mood, from the beginning of the service, is exultant.

¹⁰ The crucifer is a person designated to carry a processional cross, mounted on a staff several feet long, to and from the central worship area at the opening and closing of formal worship services.

Once the processional was completed, the bishop then led a responsive greeting and prayer that stated the purpose of the occasion: “We come together to praise God, to hear the Holy Word, and to seek for ourselves and others the power, presence, and direction of the Holy Spirit.” He then engaged in an action whose heading in the order of worship reads, “Recognition of Common Ministry and Reaffirmation of Baptism.” As a deacon poured water from a pitcher into the baptismal font, the bishop stated,

Ministry is the work of God, done by the people of God. Through baptism all Christians are made part of the priesthood of all believers, the church, Christ’s body, made visible in the world. We all share in Christ’s ministry of love and service for the redemption of the human family and the whole of creation. Therefore, in celebration of our common ministry, I call upon all of God’s people gathered here: Remember your baptism and be thankful.

As the bishop scooped water from the font and let it fall back into the bowl, the congregation responded: “We remember our baptism and affirm our common ministry.” This baptismal remembrance is placed intentionally near the beginning of the ordination service, the purpose of which I will return to below.

The service retained elements that are meant to represent the idea that ordination is an act of the whole church, not simply an undertaking of the bishops who will lay hands on the ordinands’ heads. To present the candidates who will be ordained as elders and deacons (or licensed as a first time local pastor, or commissioned as a deaconess), the annual conference lay leader stood with the chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry—one layperson, one ordained elder—and introduced the candidates:

On behalf of the laity of local congregations who have examined and approved these candidates, and on behalf of the Board of Ordained Ministry of this Annual Conference, which has recommended these persons, and this Annual Conference, which has approved them, we present these persons to be commissioned as deaconesses, these persons to be licensed as first time local pastors, these persons to be commissioned

for the work of deacons, these persons to be commissioned for the work of elders, these persons to be ordained deacons, these persons to be ordained elders.

This lengthy recitation of the multiple categories of trained United Methodist leadership stands as a reminder both of the confusing array of ministry options available to persons who wish to serve in a leadership capacity among UM churches, as well as the attempt to unify all of these leaders in a common expression of servant leadership through this credentialing worship service. Once all candidates have been introduced by name under their various categories of ministry, the gathered congregation was invited to respond by the bishop (“We ask you, people of God, to declare your assent to the licensing, commissioning and ordination of these persons. Do you trust that they are worthy, by God’s grace, to be licensed, commissioned, or ordained?”) with their agreement (“We do! thanks be to God!”).

This introduction followed the official ordinal set out by the denomination for use at all ordination services in annual conferences, with two exceptions: in the official denominational resource, neither deaconesses nor local pastors have provisions to recognize them at the same service where ordination occurs. As envisioned at the denominational level, the ordination service is structured to set apart those who are being ordained (or those commissioned as provisional elders and deacons who will one day be ordained) from the rest of the church as clergy leaders in full connection (or those commissioned who will one day enter that full connection relationship) from those laity who are not and most likely will never be set apart in such a way. In this sense, ordination is designed to serve as what Bourdieu calls a rite of institution more than as a rite of passage, solidifying the arbitrary boundary between laity and clergy (Bourdieu 1992, 80-

81). The General Board of Discipleship recommends setting aside other times during annual conference sessions for the recognition of local pastors, deaconesses, and others who act as various kinds of leaders in the church.

After this introductory period, there followed elements that are standard for a United Methodist worship service in the Tennessee Conference: a choral anthem, the reading of scripture, a sermon on the theme of ordination, the Apostles' Creed, the Gloria Patri,¹¹ the taking of an offering, and the singing of the doxology. It was then that each category of ministry candidate was called to the chancel area at the front of the sanctuary for recognition and other ritual actions performed by the bishop and assistants. I want to focus here on the recognition of local pastors and the ordaining of elders, so I will pass over the other categories of ministry.

When the time came for the presentation of licenses to first-time local pastors, they were called forward and the bishop addressed them: "These persons have completed the requirements for the license as a local pastor and are recommended by the district committees on ordained ministry. We have inquired diligently concerning them and have found them to be fit for this sacred vocation. Do you believe you are moved by the Holy Spirit to serve as a local pastor?" The local pastors answered, "I do." The bishop continued, "Will you strive to live a life in keeping with what you preach?" The local pastors answered, "I will." The bishop concluded: "You are hereby authorized to serve as local pastors in the congregations to which you are appointed. Take care that you perform these duties faithfully, the Lord being your helper." These words ritually accomplish one

¹¹ The Gloria Patri is a short hymn used in liturgies of United Methodist congregations, among others, whose lyrics state: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen."

of the functions that the recognition of local pastors shares in common with the ordination of elders: the public authorization to conduct the work of a pastor, including pastoral care, administration, preaching, and the overseeing of the sacraments of baptism and communion. However, for local pastors this authority is specifically circumscribed to be performed “in the congregations to which you are appointed,” a limitation that is not similarly placed on elders.

After questioning the local pastors, the bishop presented them each with a pastoral license, a certificate that serves as a tangible authorization for their work. After the bishop called their names one at a time and presented them with their license for ministry, the local pastors knelt at the chancel rail and the bishop led the congregation in a prayer for them as a group: “Almighty God, whose Word is truth, in the keeping of which is eternal life: We thank you for these persons, whom we set aside in your name as local pastors. Prepare them in body, mind, and spirit for their tasks, and continue them in your grace, that they may increase and bless your Church through their labors; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” Notably absent are two key elements that are historically part of the ordination of elders: the laying of the bishop’s hands on the pastors’ heads while praying for them individually, and a specific invocation of the Holy Spirit to empower them for their pastoral work.

Before the ordination of elders and deacons (and the commissioning of provisional elders and deacons), the bishop conducted a general examination of these candidates regarding their beliefs and commitments. The bishop’s words at the beginning of this section of the service contain the most direct (if quite brief) description of ordination in this service itself: “Commissioning and ordination are gifts from God to the

Church and are exercised in covenant with the whole Church and within the covenant of the office and order”—the respective order of elder and order of deacon to which those ordained will belong. This wording is another place where the practice of the Tennessee Conference deviates from the official denominational ordinal, which refers solely to ordination (and not commissioning) as “a gift from God to the church,” and which makes clearer through context that those ordained will live in a covenant together with their fellow ordained clergy persons. This also represents a differentiation from the practice for local pastors—although there is an optional “Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members” to which they can belong, local pastors are not automatically bound to an order as a peer group for mutual oversight and accountability. This mutual accountability of elders is reinforced by the last question asked of them by the bishop in this general examination section of the ordination service: “Will you be loyal to The United Methodist Church, accepting its order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline, defending it against all doctrines contrary to God’s Holy Word, and *committing yourself to be accountable with those serving with you*, and to the bishop and those who are appointed to supervise your ministry?” (emphasis added). Local pastors’ accountability to the larger church rests not with a peer group, but primarily in the oversight of a district committee of ordained ministry, which is made up primarily of ordained elders and deacons, with some additional lay members.

When it comes time for the specific examination of elders, the bishop gave an extended explication of the responsibilities of elders, one which has no analogue in the previous examination of local pastors.

An elder is called to share in the ministry of Christ and of the whole church: to preach and teach the Word of God and faithfully administer the

sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion; to lead the people of God in worship and prayer; to lead persons to faith in Jesus Christ; to exercise pastoral supervision, order the life of the congregation, counsel the troubled, and declare the forgiveness of sin; to lead the people of God in obedience to Christ's mission in the world; to seek justice, peace, and freedom for all people; and to take a responsible place in the government of the Church and in service in and to the community. These are the duties of an elder.

The first question asked of elder candidates was general in nature: "Do you believe that God has called you to the life and work of an elder?" and the answer is simple: "I do so believe." But the remaining questions again drove home the reality that elders' primary oversight and support come from one another as members of a common order: "Will you, for the sake of the church's life and mission, covenant to participate in the order of elders? Will you give yourself to God through the order of elders in order to sustain and build each other up in prayer, study, worship, and service?" The ordinands answered: "I will, with the help of God, and the help of my sisters and brothers in the order of elders." Importantly, in addition to the authorization to preach and conduct sacramental services without restriction on location, elders are specifically empowered "to take a responsible place in the government of the Church." This role in making decisions for the annual conference and denomination at large is curtailed for local pastors.

When it came time to ordain the new elders, each ordinand walked, one at a time, up the steps from the sanctuary floor to the center of the chancel and knelt at a kneeling rail, where she/he was faced by the bishop. In recent years, two or three retired bishops have also been present to assist in the service. All bishops laid their hands on the ordinand's head, the historic physical posture for ordination. Also surrounding the ordinand were the chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry and two other elder mentors of the ordinand's choosing, all of whom placed their hands on the ordinand's shoulders

and back. The officiating bishop then said, “Almighty God, pour upon [ordinand’s name] the Holy Spirit for the office and work of an elder in Christ’s holy church. Amen.” The bishop then addressed the newly ordained elder by saying, “Take authority as an elder to proclaim the Word of God, to administer the Holy Sacraments, and to order the life of the Church, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” At this point, the elder stood and was presented an elder’s stole by one of the mentors standing with her/him.

For elders, the stole is a strip of cloth several inches wide and several feet long, and is worn so that the center is behind the elder’s neck with both ends hanging in front of the shoulders and past the chest and waist. In the guidance given to annual conferences by the UMC’s General Board of Discipleship, the stole remains exclusively a sign of ordination, to be worn only by ordained clergy (General Board of Discipleship 2012, 12). The leadership of the Tennessee Conference follows this advice, asking the unordained local pastors not to wear stoles while conducting worship services in their appointed churches or during other occasions of the annual conference when clergy wear clerical vestments (as during the ordination service itself).

As with other areas of differentiation, stoles have become a contested symbol for many clergy in the Tennessee Conference. One middle-aged, white, male local pastor with five years of pastoral experience, in his response to my survey of conference clergy, pushed against the restrictions placed on local pastors by using the stole as a symbolic marker of authority: “Make LLP [licensed local pastors] full clergy with stoles and ability to answer God’s calling everywhere at a moments notice. Tear down the [wall] that limits LLP. John Wesley said ‘The world is my Parrish’ [sic]. For the LLP, the room is

our Parrish.” One member of the Board of Ordained Ministry, a white man with around a decade of pastoral experience, related to me an event that happened at the 2014 annual conference ordination service. Before the service began, an elder approached the Board member and named a local pastor, saying, “She’s not supposed to be wearing a stole.” The Board member went to the pastor in question who was, in fact, not wearing a stole when he approached her. The Board member then offered to bring the two pastors together for a conversation about the subject, but both declined. Such a confrontation is an example of the informal policing that takes place over this simple garment, granted at ordination, that is seldom worn but invested with a great deal of contested symbolic capital for those who wear it and for those who are instructed not to wear it.

Creating the Clergy/Laity Distinction

A first consideration regarding the meanings behind the act of ordination involves the recognition that the rite is not designed primarily to separate one category of clergy from another. Rather, the chief purpose of ordination is to create clergy leaders as a subset of the baptized membership of the church, known collectively as the laity. It will be helpful to examine how this clergy/laity distinction has been understood in the UMC over its history, and how that perception has shifted significantly from one generation to the next. To begin: what is the rationale for ordination as a means of setting aside a separate cadre of ministers for church leadership at all? United Methodist bishop Jack Tuell has placed modern ordination practices within the framework of a long history of priestly practice. He points to

a need that people have in their religions for some special acts to be performed by the priest, the “man of God” or the “woman of God.” The

Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers has not eliminated this need, and practically all Protestant denominations, in varying degrees, continue to set aside certain acts as “priestly.” These acts are usually those associated with the ministry of Sacrament. Certainly this is true in United Methodism, where the sacramental privileges and responsibilities of the clergy are deeply ingrained (Tuell 2009, 80).

Tuell goes on to note the curiosity in this position, as “the [sacramental] functions of the elder that seem to require the least special training are those that are most jealously guarded.” By way of contrast, even though the act of preaching benefits from the insights of someone with significant training in biblical interpretation and public speaking, pastors are not hesitant to allow laypersons to fill the pulpit from time to time. Similarly, pastors tend to crave the input of church members who are willing to share the burden of church administration. However, even though the tasks of applying water with a trinitarian formula or serving bread and wine would seem easy by comparison, it is these “holy” sacramental acts that have been at the core of disagreements over ministerial conceptions for decades (2009, 79-80).

This expectation that some holy acts would be reserved for those clergy who had been set aside by ordination is not unique to Methodists, of course. The maintenance of holy sacramental acts was noted by Max Weber when he pointed to a magical impulse that leads laity to “incorporate divine power ... by the physical ingestion of some divine substance,” holding to the idea that “through participation in certain mysteries one may directly share the nature of the god and therefore be protected against evil powers (sacramental grace)” (Weber [1922] 1993, 186). Priests who are authorized by virtue of their ordination may dispense such institutional sacramental grace on behalf of the church. Bourdieu adapts this expectation by pointing to the expectations of the laity that religious specialists are available to perform specifically magical/religious actions on

their behalf. This “religious interest” of the laity must be adequately matched with the actions performed by the clergy in order for those actions to meet the felt needs of the laity (Bourdieu 1987, 122). Put another way, United Methodist clergy will continue to look to ordination as a basis for their ability to preside at the sacraments for as long as lay members of United Methodist churches look to those clergy as the primary dispensers of sacramental goods.

In the same vein, theologian Albert Outler has looked to sacramental leadership as the primary driver for American Methodists’ claim of necessity for an ordained ministry. Historically, John Wesley had unequivocally denied ordination to the Methodist lay preachers under his direction in 18th-century England, because the Methodist laity could still receive the sacraments from their local Anglican priests. It was only after the American Revolution that Wesley was moved to make extraordinary provision for American Methodists, ordaining clergy for the American church to allow them access to baptism and the Eucharist. Thus, Albert Outler argues that for Methodists, ordination is uniquely associated with sacramental ministry above other concerns (such as preaching and pastoral care). “This means that John Wesley understood ordination as directly and uniquely correlated with the administration of the sacraments rather than with preaching and nurture. . . . Thus, there is sound theological and historical basis for the preeminence of the sacramental in the United Methodist view of elder ordination” (Outler 1965). From the beginning, then, the justification for an ordained ministry in American Methodism has been a rationale to allow ordained elders (and, for a time, no others) to offer the sacraments to the laity.

This seeming necessity of ordination as an authorization for those who preside at baptism and eucharistic services can also be seen in another former office among American Methodists, that of the “local elder.” Such a designation became necessary when some elders in full connection, those “traveling” clergy who dedicated themselves to full-time itinerant ministry from community to community, found it necessary to “locate,” to cease from the itinerating ministry and confine their pastoral work to the community where they resided. Others were local elders from the start, never taking up the obligations of itinerancy, and often carrying on their ministries while also holding another secular occupation. The practice of ordaining local elders into the ministry of individual Methodist societies had become sufficiently institutionalized by the 1820s that procedures for their supervision began to appear in the *Doctrines and Discipline* that coordinated the work of the denomination (Methodist Episcopal Church 1820, 67-72). Although these local elders were not accorded the “full connection” relationship that brought with it the full decision-making authority in an annual conference, they were ordained for their work of providing sacramental sustenance to hundreds of churches during those periods when itinerating elders were traveling elsewhere on their appointed circuits (Harnish 2000, 125-6; Campbell 2004, 359). This inextricable link between sacramental authority and the ordination that symbolically bestowed it, so crucial for the early generation of American Methodists that it served as their initial catalyst for breaking from the Church of England, eventually began to give way to the pragmatic concerns of providing clergy leadership for all Methodist congregations.

Sacramental Leadership without Ordination—the Local Pastor

Over time, however, the authorization to conduct sacramental services has become decoupled somewhat from ordination, at least as the primary rationale for the rite. This has happened in two separate movements. On the one hand is the move to provide unordained persons sacramental authority. The term “local elder” was phased out of Methodist Church practice in the 1950s, although provisions for ordaining “local preachers” (thus amounting to a similar result) remained until the 1968 merger that resulted in the United Methodist Church. Although the newly-renamed “local pastors” in 1976 were granted the ability to preside at baptisms and communion in the churches they served, this marked the first time that such a provision was made without any possibility for them to be ordained for that work. Although functionally, these unordained local pastors currently fill the same role as ordained local elders had previously, the lack of ordination as an authorizing action puts United Methodists at odds with the practice of many other denominations with whom they are in ecumenical conversations, including every other denomination in the Wesleyan/Methodist tradition (Campbell 2004, 359-60).

If ordination, then, had previously been held to be the *sine qua non* for authorizing United Methodist sacramental ministers, then why have a category of unordained sacramental ministers at all? In other words, why did the shift from ordained local elders to unordained local pastors take place? In part, the answer rests in the current strong coupling of the act of ordination with the concept of “full connection” clergy relationships in American Methodist annual conferences. A technical relational term within the United Methodist Church, “full connection” is open to both elders and deacons in the UMC, although it is how the term applies to elders that I will examine here. An

elder may enter a full connection relationship only after several years of graduate level theological education, doctrinal examination, and practical ministry service in an annual conference. The status allows the elder to be assured of a pastoral appointment from year to year, the ability to vote on all business of the annual conference (including inviting new clergy into full connection or expelling them from the relationship because of chargeable offenses), the ability to serve on any conference board or committee, and the possibility of appointment to serve as a district superintendent or a bishop.

Elders in full connection with an annual conference by virtue of their election and ordination are bound in special covenant with all the ordained elders of the annual conference. . . . Only those shall be elected to full membership who are of unquestionable moral character and genuine piety, sound in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and faithful in the discharge of their duties (United Methodist Church 2012, 257).

Although election to a full connection relationship and ordination tend to take place within a few days of one another at the same annual conference session for any given elder, the question has been raised about which of those actions, exactly, “makes” an elder? That is, does ordination by a bishop or election by one’s peers have primacy in terms of putting an official public imprimatur on an elder? The question was resolved at the 1964 Methodist General Conference by declaring that entrance into a full connection relationship and ordination are “simultaneous ecclesial acts” (Heitzenrater 1993, 434). In current United Methodist practice, therefore, ordination cannot occur without becoming a full connection member of an annual conference, and vice versa.

Because these two concepts have been tied together so tightly, a problem became apparent when the need for pastoral leaders began to outpace the ability of annual conferences to recruit, train, and ordain such clergy. Churches expect a pastor who is able to conduct worship, including the sacraments, and many conferences (including the

Tennessee Conference) do not have enough ordained elders to supply all churches in this way (Tuell 2010, 85-6). Further, local pastors can be a more flexible option for congregations, as there is not the same expectation that all local pastors will serve full time (as is the case with elders, except for exceptional circumstances)¹². Even for full-time local pastors, many annual conferences (the Tennessee Conference included) have lower mandated levels of financial support for local pastors than they do for elders, meaning that a church may support the work of a local pastor for less salary and fewer benefits than would accrue to elders for the same time and work commitments. This has been rationalized by pointing to the greater level of graduate education typically achieved by elders, along with the greater cost of tuition paid by them during their theological schooling. Consequently, some have pointed to local pastors as a way of being more “cost effective” for annual conferences in sending clergy to underserved areas (Moody 2005, 407-10).

When the decision is made to send pastors to serve congregations before they have met the various requirements of full connection membership in the annual conference, ordination is now denied to those local pastors as a sign that they have not yet met all the professional obligations required for them to become full members of the conference. Whereas elders in full connection remain so related to their annual conference for the rest of their lives (barring any circumstance requiring their ministerial

¹² “Full-time service shall be the norm for ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members in the annual conference. Full-time service shall mean that the person’s entire vocational time, as defined by the district superintendent in consultation with the pastor and the committee on pastor-parish relations, is devoted to the work of ministry in the field of labor to which one is appointed by the bishop” (United Methodist Church 2012, 265).

credentials to be removed), local pastors serve in a pastoral capacity only so long as their pastoral license is valid, with the need for renewal of that license each year. “Local pastors approved annually by the district committee on ordained ministry may be licensed by the bishop to perform all the duties of a pastor. . . . The license shall remain valid only so long as the appointment continues” (United Methodist Church 2012, 230). Although “the membership of local pastors . . . is in the annual conference,” their more limited membership allows them “the right to vote on all matters except constitutional amendments, election of delegates to general, jurisdictional, or central conferences, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy” (2012, 231). This separation of ordination from sacramental practice is only half of the picture, however. Local pastors form the body of United Methodist clergy for whom a certain level of authority to baptize and conduct Eucharistic services has been bestowed without ordination. There is now a separate body of clergy who receive the credentialing sign of ordination, but without the traditional authorization to preside at sacramental services.

Ordination without Sacramental Leadership—the Deacon in Full Connection

More recently, a separate order of ordained clergy has been established for whom their ordination does *not* grant them independent sacramental authority. The clergy order of deacons has its most immediate historic precedent in the former lay office of diaconal minister, initiated in 1976. Diaconal ministers were “consecrated to diaconal ministries of love, justice, and service” (United Methodist Church 1976, 106). These diaconal ministers had specialized forms of ministry that could include “participating with the elder in the leadership of worship, working in a serving-profession in the Church, and

serving the needs of the poor, the sick, or oppressed” (United Methodist Church 1992, 189). Often, diaconal ministers’ work involved such specialties as music ministry, youth ministry, or Christian education work in congregations. In 1996, the United Methodist Church chose to cease consecrating new members into the lay office of diaconal ministry and instead inaugurated a new clergy order of deacon in full connection. Whereas ordination as a deacon in the UMC had previously followed the Catholic and Anglican category of transitional deacon, most often serving as a step toward ordination as a priest/elder, this new Methodist order of deacon would itself always be a terminal order, but would carry with it much of the job description and theological underpinning of diaconal ministry.

Deacons give leadership in the Church’s life: in teaching and proclaiming the Word; in contributing to worship...; in forming and nurturing disciples; in conducting marriages and burying the dead; in embodying the church’s mission to the world; and in leading congregations in interpreting the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world (United Methodist Church 2012, 246).

The most notable addition in this list to the previous job description of diaconal ministers gives a hint for the impetus behind the change: by making deacons ordained clergy, they attained much of the status and privilege of clergy, including the ability to conduct marriages, the right to wear clerical vestments (the robe and stole), and the standing to engage in decision making at annual conferences as “full connection” clergy.

This clergy status, however, also brought some limitations to deacons who could formerly serve as lay diaconal ministers. As clergy, deacons are now required to pledge to live lives of “fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness” (United Methodist Church 2012, 225), a requirement whose true purpose is more bluntly stated elsewhere in the Discipline: “self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates,

ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church” (United Methodist Church 2012, 220). More generally, deacons became more fully accountable to the bishop and the other mechanisms of control in an annual conference than is the case for lay professionals doing church work. In one of the primary works to interpret the work of the current order of deacons in the UMC, Margaret Crain has written: “while the people of God may embody in their work a ministering attitude and a serving and witnessing presence, laity are not accountable to The United Methodist Church in the way that ordained persons are. The representative and leadership nature of the work of those whom the Church has ordained means that the Church must scrutinize all they do” (Crain and Seymour 2001, 17). This is to say that those in positions of supervision and control in annual conferences have more of a vested interest in managing the activities of its ordained leaders than those of its lay members, largely due to the highly visible position that ordained clergy have in presenting a public face to the denomination. Bishops and others charged with this supervision have structures in place to maintain that supervisory function, up to and including church trials that may remove ministerial credentials from those who have transgressed a number of “chargeable offenses,” including such things as “immorality including but not limited to not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in a heterosexual marriage; ... being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; ... crime; ... child abuse; ... sexual abuse; ... or racial or gender discrimination” (United Methodist Church 2012, 776). Although some chargeable offenses might also be addressed through civil or criminal law, the prohibitions regarding homosexuality apply particularly to

clergy, and mark one of the obligations placed on deacons when their transition from the lay diaconal ministry was enacted.

Whatever benefits now accrue to deacons in their ordinations, the unlimited authority to preside at sacramental services is not among them. While deacons are authorized to conduct weddings and funerals, long the prerogative of ordained clergy even though they are not categorized as sacraments in most Protestant denominations, that authorization does not extend to presiding at baptism or the Eucharist. Although this limitation has existed from the implementation of the current form of ordained deacons in 1996, calls for greater sacramental authority for those deacons has also existed for the entirety of that period. Partial accommodations have been made; in 2012, the denomination specified that “a pastor-in-charge or district superintendent may request that the bishop grant local sacramental authority to the deacon to administer the sacraments in the absence of an elder, within a deacon’s primary appointment” (United Methodist Church 2012, 246). However, this provision remains an exception that demonstrates the general rule against sacramental authority for deacons. My conversations with ordained clergy in the Tennessee Conference demonstrate the tension concerning this issue. One long-term female deacon who feels that the lack of sacramental authority for deacons diminishes their status as ordained clergy argued: “I think we have ordination, and then we have ordination with an asterisk beside it, and it feels very hierarchical, and our system always has. I’m uncomfortable with it. But most bishops are coming to understand the role of the deacon, and the opportunities for trained, ordained, examined leadership in churches.” On the other side, a male elder with experience on the conference’s Board of Ordained Ministry observed:

I have this conversation occasionally with some of my deacon friends who have thoughts about communion and how some of them have said it's not fair that somebody who has no theological education, or just has Course of Study, or is a local pastor can do communion and they can't. And for me, the argument always boils down to: this is a job that you said you thought the church wanted you to do as a deacon, and so the church said you're equipped to do it, and you said you want to do it, so you go do it. It's not about status or about whether or not my friend who's a deacon understands the theological background of communion. It's the fact that the church says, for the sake of ordering the life of our body as Christ's body, we need to know our roles and stick to them. I don't mean that in an oppressive sense of "Know your role!" But rather, know your role in a gracious sense, that I'm willing to do this, and I recognize the limits of things.

These roles of the various offices of ministry have shifted over the decades, and show no signs of ceasing to do so in the future. The ability to lead services of baptism and communion continues to be a locus of contention in defining the roles of the different professional ministry categories in the UMC, and a contested part of our heritage of understanding the meaning of ordination in the denomination. In elders, we continue to have ordained clergy with sacramental privileges; in local pastors, we have *unordained* clergy with circumscribed sacramental authority; with deacons, we have ordained clergy with virtually no sacramental leadership abilities. In this way, while the ability to preside at sacramental services was the primary driving justification for providing ordination to American Methodist pastors in the late 1700s, the connection between ordination and the sacraments has become far more tenuous today. This not only fosters an atmosphere of confusion about the nature of ordination in United Methodism, but also raises difficult questions in the denomination's ongoing ecumenical conversations regarding the mutual recognition of ministerial orders with other denominations (Harnish 2000, 146-7).

Who is a Minister? Baptism and the Priesthood of All Believers

This changing scope and meaning of ordination is part of a larger conversation about ministry in Protestant denominations like the United Methodist Church over the past half century. This exchange has tried to define just who it is that should be considered a minister, and what the scope of their operations should be. Although there continue to be a dizzying array of categories of ministers even within the UMC alone, some considered laity and others clergy, there are a few basic principles that have consistently guided these conversations. One is the “priesthood of all believers,” a principle central to the heart of Protestantism since the Reformation. Martin Luther removed ordination from his list of sacraments and argued strenuously that priests, as the ministers of the church to the people of God, were not ontologically changed by their ordination into a distinct class of people. Rather, all Christians are priests by virtue of their baptism, and some are chosen from among their number simply as a matter of expedience. “We are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and the sacraments. . . . And therefore this ‘sacrament’ of ordination, if it is anything at all, is nothing else than a certain rite whereby one is called to the ministry of the church” (Luther [1520] 1990, 248).

In the twentieth century, one of the shifts in emphasis within Protestant discussions of ministry actually originated in the Roman Catholic Church, with teachings that came out of the Second Vatican Council. In the Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), the Council maintained an inherent distinction between clergy and laity, by virtue of the sacrament of ordination. However, the Council also made the laity the plain basis for all of the church’s work (“everywhere on earth they

must bear witness to Christ”), participating in their own general priesthood that is distinct from (but complementary to) that of the ordained priesthood. “Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ” (Vatican Council 1964). In this emerging Catholic view, priests were empowered to serve as sacramental ministers, while laymen and laywomen were called to minister to the world through their faithful witness.

Vatican II influenced all later Protestant conversations about the scope and nature of Christian ministry. Perhaps the most noteworthy example of this influence is contained in the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) document developed by the World Council of Churches in 1982. This ecumenical document (with participation by United Methodist representatives) notes the wide variety of conceptions and names given to lay and ordained ministries within the WCC’s member denominations, but claims that “the churches need to work from the perspective of the calling of the whole people of God.” In its terminology, the paper casts a wide net for ministry and ministers: “The word *ministry* in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the universal Church” (World Council of Churches 1982, 21). When the specific ministries of clergy are described, the paper is careful to use the more specific “ordained ministry” to describe them. As in *Lumen Gentium*, the BEM document portrays the ministries of clergy and laity as complementary and interdependent, with a typical Protestant downplaying of hierarchical authority structures.

If ordination is seen as the doorway to pastoral ministry (particularly of the sacramental variety), baptism has been seen as the entrance to the general ministries of the laity, the mode of initiation into the “royal priesthood” of the church. The UMC’s Book of Discipline states it thus: “Very early in its history, the church came to understand that all of its members were commissioned in baptism to ministries of love, justice, and service within local congregations and the larger communities in which they lived There is thus a general ministry of all baptized Christians” (United Methodist Church 2012, 220). Some Methodist leaders have gone as far as to point to baptism as “an ‘ordaining’ sacrament, by which God’s *laos* (laity) are set apart for their ministry in the world—it identifies them as members of Christ’s Body [and] it authorizes their priestly acts of reconciliation in secular society” (Outler 1970, 103). Often, this portrayal of baptism as a proto-ordination occurs in the midst of arguing for the essential equality of laity and clergy in the life of the church—“The *cleros* [clergy] is not superior to the *laos*, nor yet inferior: their respective offices are both indispensable and mutually interdependent. The laity is the church in the world The clergy are not excluded from this task—they are members of God’s *laos*, too—but they have *distinctive* clerical functions to perform” (104).

This emphasis on the ministry of all Christians, and of baptism as a quasi-ordination into that shared ministry, has found its way into the denomination’s ordination service, and is practiced as such in the services of the Tennessee Conference. “Through baptism all Christians are made part of the priesthood of all believers, the church, Christ’s body, made visible in the world. We all share in Christ’s ministry of love and service for the redemption of the human family and the whole of creation.” When the bishop says

these words at the beginning of the ordination service, they become the foundation for all that comes afterward. This baptismal underpinning for ordination is spelled out clearly in the instructions given for the ordination service by the denomination's General Board of Discipleship: "Acts of ordination and commissioning, as well as consecrating and certifying, are anchored in the sacrament of baptism and the ministry of the baptized. These sign-acts are based on what is already implicit in baptism, and rest upon the essential ministry given to all Christians in baptism" (General Board of Discipleship 2012, 8). Baptism is a prerequisite for ordination, and the ministry of the baptized is portrayed as a more general category encompassing the ministry of the ordained.

The Book of Discipline takes great pains to make this same point, albeit awkwardly at times. In a paragraph titled "The Unity of Ministry in Christ," the Discipline states:

There is but one ministry in Christ, but there are diverse gifts and evidences of God's grace in the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:4-16). The ministry of all Christians is complementary. No ministry is subservient to another. All United Methodists are summoned and sent by Christ to live and work together in mutual interdependence (United Methodist Church 2012, 96).

Thomas Frank observes a "jarring note of tension" in this protest against subservience in ministry: "this sounds more like the protest of laity against clergy (or vice versa?) than a positive statement of the distinctive and essential roles of particular ministries in the community of faith" (Frank 2006, 165). Such a perceived de facto subservience of laity in respect to clergy has been widely noted. Margaret Crain also sounds a warning against a creeping "clerical paradigm" among United Methodist clergy, whose specialized training and set-apart status "creates a hierarchy of ministry where persons are ordered according to function. The congregation hires 'professional' church leaders to fulfill all

of the functions of ministry from teaching, to care, to ritual leadership, and to service.

Laity are bystanders as professionals do ministry” (Crain and Seymour 2001, 132). If the official position of the UMC is an equality of ministry between clergy and laity, that is not the felt reality of many in the denomination.

Richard Heitzenrater has examined the shifting and ambiguous conceptions of ministry within the UMC through the lens of the various ministry studies conducted for the denomination and presented to the quadrennial General Conference. (The fact that the majority of General Conferences over the last six decades have received an official ministry study, some of which contain contradictory descriptions and terminology when compared to earlier versions, serves as *prima facie* evidence of the confused state of affairs the denomination faces regarding the status of its clergy leadership.) In a moment of particular transparency, Heitzenrater opines, “There has been a great deal of waffling back and forth on the matter of the nature and purpose of ordination. . . . The clarity in the earlier reports in distinguishing between clergy and laity on the basis of ordination has now been significantly clouded by the emphasis on general ministry into which one is ‘ordained’ by baptism” (Heitzenrater 1993, 443). Distinctions between clergy and laity remain, although the purposes for those distinctions have become blurred along with the changing meanings that accompany ordination itself.

In contrast to more recent minimizing of differentiations between clergy and laity, the ministry study that came to the 1952 Methodist General Conference took a hard line on that distinction, making the clearest official demarcation in recent generations. It held that only those who had been ordained as elders were to be authorized to conduct the sacraments of baptism and holy communion, and it held out hope that any shortfall in

authorized pastors to conduct sacramental worship in local churches would soon be filled by appropriate recruitment efforts. Later, the 1964 ministry study maintained that the term “minister” should be reserved for those who had entered into the ordained ministry, to avoid confusion about the roles of the laity who are involved in a more general form of ministry in the world. The 1968 General Conference of the newly merged United Methodist Church maintained the link between ordination and sacramental presidency by maintaining that only a minister may preside at baptism and communion, and therefore, all ministers must be ordained. A new (confusingly named) category of “lay pastors” was developed for the united church in 1968, but these unordained pastors were instructed not to preside over sacramental services at that time. Since that time, the UMC has moved through two more generations of language describing just how the ministries of clergy and laity are interrelated.

Representative Ministry vs. General Ministry

Beginning with the ministry study report to the 1976 UMC General Conference, a new way of discussing the clergy/laity distinction emerged in the concepts of “general ministry” and “representative ministry.” In American Methodism, ministry has always existed between poles of authoritarian and democratic tendencies, and with this set of changes, ministry began to swing firmly toward the democratic. In this framing, ordination is portrayed as “that act by which the Church symbolizes a *shared relationship* between those ordained for sacramental and functional leadership and the Church community from which the person being ordained has come” (Heitzenrater 1993, 437). A strenuous argument was again made that these forms of ministry were not to be seen as

competitive, but rather, that “the validity of the mission of the Church is dependent on the viable interaction of the general ministry and the ordained ministry of the Church” (1993, 437). Here again, we see arguments against an implicit clericalism that made the ministry of the laity subservient to that of the clergy.

Within this portrayal of all church members as ministers in this broader sense and ordained ministers as representative ministers, the question is raised: of what or of whom are the clergy representative? Although this question is never definitively and clearly answered by the denomination’s Discipline, it does contain some suggestive clues. Upon adoption of the 1976 ministry study report, ordained ministry in that year’s Book of Discipline was “defined by its intentionally representative character, by its passion for the hallowing of life, and by its concern to link all local ministries with the widest boundaries of the Christian community” (United Methodist Church 1976, 106). First of all, then, ordained clergy were seen to be “representative” of the ministries of the church, reflecting those ministries to the outside world and back to members of the churches themselves. At the same time, ordained ministers are portrayed as representing God and the gospel message to the church and to the world: “the ordained person becomes representative of the entire ministry of Christ in the Church and of the ministry required of the entire Church to the world” (202). It should be noted that this second aspect of representative ministry (in which ordained clergy represent Christ himself) has been pushed further in certain other denominations than it has in United Methodism. For instance, some conservatives in denominations that hold strong sacramentalist orientations argue that a priest’s representation of Christ (particularly at the communion table) implies that the male gender of priests is an important part of their representational

identity (Lehman 2002, 11). While there is a long history in American Methodism of strenuous opposition to the pastoral leadership of women, such opposition has clustered around various other stated concerns (scriptural interpretations, effects on women's participation in the domestic sphere, ingrained notions of gender complementarity), while specific gendered concerns about sacramental representation have not been primary driving forces in this debate for Methodists (Rowe 1993; Nickell 2014, 51-91). For the twenty years beginning with these changes in 1976, this language of ministry as representation was the primary descriptor of the place of the ordained in the life of the church in its Discipline.

Servant Leadership

In the 1996 Discipline, this descriptive language surrounding ministry changed again, as references to representative and general forms of ministry gave way to a new formulation—“servant leadership”—that encompassed both laity and clergy. The impetus behind the change was once again democratic in its orientation, springing from a belief that all Christians, laity and clergy alike, could represent Christ in their activities. By this reasoning, then, “representative ministry” should not be reserved as a descriptor for ordained clergy (Crain and Seymour 2001, 140). In the Discipline's updated language, while “ordained ministers are called by God to a lifetime of servant leadership in specialized ministries among the people of God,” laypersons too “are gifted and called by God to lead the Church. The servant leadership of these persons is essential to the mission and ministry of congregations.” For both clergy and laity, their “callings [to servant leadership] are evidenced by special gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise

of usefulness” (United Methodist Church 1996, 110-1). However, the Discipline fails to specify just how each of these categories live out a sense of servant leadership, how such servant leadership differs significantly between the groups, or exactly what such servant leadership entails.

The language of servant leadership as it is currently used in the Book of Discipline does not find its immediate precedent in ecclesiastical circles at all. To be sure, there are some earlier general hints toward this formulation in the writings of authors such as theologians Harvey Cox and Hans Küng and ethicist Gibson Winter, who discussed Christian ministry in terms of servanthood, an emphasis that lent itself particularly well to those engaged in social outreach ministries (Logan 1982, 10-1; Suchocki 1993, 6). Nevertheless, the current formulation of servant leadership can be traced most directly to the world of business management, rising to prominence through the 1970s works of Robert Greenleaf, who perceived a crisis of leadership in the United States in the wake of Watergate and the Vietnam War (Zaragoza 1999, 42-4).

The servant-leader is servant first It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. ... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served (Greenleaf 1977, 13).

When applied to the church and its leadership, Greenleaf’s work has been used to advocate the advancement of the community’s needs ahead of the individual leader’s desires (Campbell 1988, 100).

This language of servant leadership introduced in 1996 is still the operative Disciplinary language in place today. Its broad application to all lay and clergy members

of the church engaged in any form of ministry is the highest mark yet for the democratization of leadership positions in American Methodism, diminishing further any essential ontological distinction between clergy and laity in the denomination. As we have seen, United Methodists now find themselves in a position where the distinction between clergy and laity cannot simply be described as a difference between the ordained and the unordained, those with sacramental authority and those without, those who are worship leaders and those who are not, those who are paid professionals in churches and those who are not, those who are engaged in “representative ministry” and those in a more “general ministry,” or those who are part of an intentional “servant ministry” and those who are not. One primary question thus remains unanswered by the UMC’s current theological rationales: if all Christians are involved in servant leadership, whether or not they have been ordained by a bishop, to what extent are traditional categories of clergy and laity still relevant in contemporary United Methodist denominational structures? Although comprehensive theological explanations are lacking, partial sociological answers to that question will occupy the next two chapters, in which I will explore the social and practical aspects of clergy work among elders and local pastors.

Ordination as a Rite of the Church

What about the act of ordination itself? What do United Methodists believe happens during this particular service of worship? If annual conferences continue to send unordained pastors into churches to provide leadership there (including sacramental leadership), can ordination truly be considered necessary for the work clergy do? Throughout its history, American Methodism has struggled to hold two views of

ordination that stand in partial tension with one another, one of which views the rite as a divine action that bestows special status on an ordinand by virtue of an outpouring of the spirit of God, and the other which emphasizes the action of the church in choosing, examining, and authorizing pastors for their work. Historian Richard Heitzenrater has described this distinction as a differentiation between “the idea of a supernatural *endowment* bestowed on the candidate by one who performs the ordination ceremony” and, on the other hand, “an ecclesiastical status, granted to one who has demonstrated he [sic] has the spiritual gifts to perform a certain *function* in the church” (Heitzenrater 1993, 431, emphasis in original). Theologian Dennis Campbell notes this tension as well: “Sometimes popular Protestant thinking has reduced ordination to a kind of credentialing. Most Protestant theology, however, has emphasized the reality of ordination as God’s act, through the Holy Spirit, in the church” (1994, 69). Campbell does point to the credentialing aspects of the rite by stressing the performative aspects of ordination: “Ordination literally creates a group of servants for the church. Ordination empowers, commissions, and allows one to preach and teach the Word of God, to administer the sacraments to the people, and to order the life of the church” (67). Although these functional distinctions are no longer as absolute as they once were for United Methodists, there remains in ordination an aspect of setting apart leaders for particular functions in guiding the life of congregations.

Official resources of the denomination have attempted to hold onto both of these views of ordination, the invoking of supernatural endowment alongside the granting of ecclesiastical status. We see this effort in the UMC’s participation in the ecumenical project that produced the World Council of Church’s *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*

document (BEM). By necessity, the document itself is a product of compromise, and the description of ordained ministry that emerged is centrist among Protestant positions:

The laying on of hands is the sign of the gift of the Spirit, rendering visible the fact that the ministry was instituted in the revelations accomplished in Christ ... Ordination denotes an action by God and the community by which the ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their task and are upheld by the acknowledgment and prayers of the congregation (World Council of Churches 1982, 30).

More telling is the United Methodist Council of Bishops' official response to the document, which expressed a level of indecision regarding the nature of ordination:

We agree that the "laying on of hands is a sign of the gift of the Spirit," but we regard any hint of an indelible character of ministerial priesthood with some ambivalence. That ambivalence, in fact, is rooted in our church's thought and practice. ... We believe the ordained ministry is more than a division of function, and consequently agree that ordination is not to be repeated; and yet, we are not willing to claim that in ordination something primarily ontological occurs (Council of Bishops 1986, 196).

The denomination's Book of Discipline itself continues to encompass both of these views of ordination. While portrayed as divine in origin ("Ordination to this ministry is a gift from God to the church. In ordination, the church affirms and continues the apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit") ordination is also specifically cited as the act that functionally authorizes elders for their work ("The responsibilities of elders are derived from the authority given in ordination") (United Methodist Church 2012, 217, 267).

Among those pastors with whom I have spoken with in the Tennessee Conference, the functional role of ordination is more often cited as a justification for ordination than is the supernatural endowment aspect. One white male elder, in reflecting on the role ordination has played in his own sense of preparation for ministry, told me: "ordination is not something that fundamentally changes who we are. Ordination does

designate the role that our church wants us to play, and invites us to play, and charges us to play, but it doesn't fundamentally change who I am." He went on to recount a story told by a former bishop of the Tennessee Conference to a gathering of those who were preparing to be ordained. The story recalled an encounter the bishop had with an ordained elder who had been forced to surrender his ministerial credentials because of an issue of misconduct. The pastor turned in his ordination certificate to the bishop, and as he did so, told him with tears in his eyes: "You know you are taking away my very identity." The bishop responded: "That's not true. Your identity is in your baptism, not in your ordination." The elder recounting this story to me used it to prioritize baptism (as the sacrament that gives an identity to all Christians) over ordination (that sets aside some baptized Christians for particular roles). He compared the role given to him as an ordained elder to the job of mowing the lawn assigned to him by his father when he was a teenager:

When I was a kid, I had authority to cut the grass for my dad. I did that not because I had a birthright to do it, but because my father had designated me as the grass cutter, and had equipped me to be the grass cutter. But in some ways, there's not that much difference in being a minister than having a list of chores that you're responsible for, because the church needs to get them done. For me, ordination, in its purest form, is not about status at all. It's a very functional kind of thing, I guess.

In this way, although ordination in the United Methodist system does bring a host of possible privileges, there is a tendency among many ordained clergy to downplay any status change or benefits brought about by ordination, and instead focus on its accompanying responsibilities. This tendency is an example of Pierre Bourdieu's "misrecognition of interest," whereby the symbolic capital accrued in ordination is understood less as bringing a higher status to the ordained and more as the selfless

accepting of the new responsibilities placed on the clergy person. Thus, functional descriptions of ordination may easily be reduced to the naming of added duties, thereby avoiding the necessity of acknowledging any concomitant rise in social standing.

In extending the functional aspect of ordination somewhat, sociologist Jackson Carroll conceptualizes ordination in a way that recognizes the real social authority it grants while also acknowledging that another sort of authority exists that is useful for pastors. Carroll terms these two forms of authority as “formal authority” and “informal authority” (or, elsewhere, “official authority” and “personal authority”) (Carroll 2006, 54, 151). Formal authority is the authority of office that is granted by the church when it officially sanctions pastors for their work, usually through the act of ordination, after recognizing a divine calling, proper educational credentialing, and adequate preparation for their work (151-2). Informal authority is conferred on pastors by the congregations they serve, based on the trust built up over time by the pastors’ demonstrated skill, care, relational skills, and integrity. Carroll argues that both kinds of authority are important for effective pastoral leadership. Formal authority gives a pastor initial legitimacy in the early days of ministry in a congregation; informal authority leads to a greater acceptance of a pastor once that leader has taken the time to earn congregants’ trust (153-7).

Carroll finds this informal authority to be important enough that he coins the term “second ordination” to describe it (2006, 153). While a pastor’s first ordination allows that clergy person entrée to a congregation and earns a minimum amount of trust in the early days of ministry, it is the second ordination that earns the pastor enough trust to lead over the long term, even if the pastor seeks to go in directions that the church would not otherwise have considered (152-4). Dean Hoge (2009) echoes this idea in noting that

contemporary Protestant ministers perceive less authority flowing from their ordination today than in previous generations; instead, “they need to win personal authority from their flocks through their own actions” (592). Among United Methodist clergy, then, this gives us a way of differentiating between the tools that the different categories of pastoral leaders draw from in performing their tasks. While only elders are fully credentialed and have experienced their first ordination after receiving a graduate theological degree, both elders and local pastors will be able to earn the trust of their parishioners through the second ordination that is developed over the course of their tenures in a congregational setting.

Ordination as Professional Credentialing

As noted previously in the historical overview chapter, one of the characteristics of professions in the modern sense is the ability for members of professional guilds to be self-governing by choosing and approving new members for admission into the professional group, overseeing the education and formation of those members, and providing discipline or expulsion from the group to those members who stray from the ethical guidelines of the profession. In each United Methodist annual conference, much of this work of approval and oversight is provided by the Board of Ordained Ministry (the “BOM”).¹³ The conference-level Board also oversees District Committees on Ordained Ministry (dCOM), one of which exists in each lower-level judicatory body. Thus, each of the Tennessee Conference’s seven districts has its own District Committee on Ordained Ministry for this purpose.

¹³ Although there is no official denominationally sanctioned acronym, the Board of Ordained Ministry in each annual conference is usually denoted the “BOM” in the Tennessee Conference. This is the same body often referred to as the “BoOM” elsewhere.

For those Methodist laity in the Tennessee Conference who seek to enter the ranks of the clergy, the process closely follows the guidelines set forth in the denominational Book of Discipline, with a few added guidelines tailored for this annual conference. After consulting with her or his local church's pastor about their sense of calling, a potential candidate for ministry writes a letter to their District Committee to request entrance into a 6-month Orientation to Ministry program. In the Tennessee Conference, that program involves meeting with a group of fellow inquirers and a pair of mentors, all while completing other requirements such as a physical exam, a psychological evaluation, and a criminal and financial background check. After receiving a formal recommendation from appropriate committees in their own local churches, candidates meet with their District Committees to become "certified candidates" for clergy ministry (Tennessee Conference Office of Ministerial Concerns 2014, 1-5).

At the point when they become certified as candidates, these inquirers may request appointment as a licensed local pastor. Before a first appointment takes place, candidates complete a week-long licensing school held each year by conference leadership which covers a bare minimum of subjects needed to help new pastors adjust to life in that role—preaching, counseling, administration, etc. It is at this point that candidates begin to diverge in their preparation, depending on which track of ministry they undertake. For local pastors, an appointment to serve a congregation may be either part-time or full-time. Local pastors also are required to attend the Course of Study, the series of continuing education classes that are held either in two-week sessions (for full-time local pastors) or over weekends (for part-time pastors). Once an appointment is

received, a local pastor meets annually with his or her district committee for an interview and review of progress in the Course of Study.

For those who are pursuing ordination as an elder, however, it is typically at this point in their process that they will attend a theological school that has been approved by the denomination's University Senate. Candidates for elder's orders are required to earn a Master of Divinity degree, one that typically requires at least three years of full-time study. After completing the seminary degree, a candidate may seek approval as a provisional elder. This approval comes after meeting with the conference's Board of Ordained Ministry for an extensive written and oral doctrinal examination. Once approved, the candidate is commissioned during the annual conference's ordination and commissioning service. This commissioning begins a final three-year residency process, during which the provisional elder typically serves as pastor of a congregation, meets regularly with a mentoring group, and has limited voting rights during annual conference sessions. After one additional round of examination by the Board of Ordained Ministry, the provisional elder may be recommended by the Board for ordination as an elder. During the executive session of the annual conference (made up exclusively of elders and deacons in a full connection relationship) a vote is taken to accept the new elder into full connection, and the candidate is ordained as an elder at the same session of the annual conference.

Because of their power in determining which candidates will be approved for this full connection relationship and subsequently ordained, the Board of Ordained Ministry plays a critical role in the life of the annual conference. Among the leadership and long-term membership of the BOM, there is often a self-conscious sense that the primary

purpose of the board is in the professional credentialing capacity of the group. In one interview, one male elder and former BOM leader reflected on the idea that the Board has an explicitly and unapologetically evaluative function in which some ministerial candidates will not be approved for ordination:

I think we are too nice. I think you have to be darn near awful to not get through our process. I think we approach it with great care, and I think that we do want to make good decisions, but our theology of grace is, for us Methodists, just so much a part of our DNA that often times, we will err on the side of grace. The most grace-filled thing to do in some cases, for the church and for the candidate, is to simply say, “we have no doubt that God may be calling you, but we do have doubts about whether God is calling you to ministry in the United Methodist Church.”

This is a strong statement of one of the basic tenets of modern professional identity: the need to be credentialed and overseen by a guild of one’s professional peers, and the ability of that credentialing body to deny membership to some who do not fulfill the expectations of professional competence. As noted earlier, the supervision of elders occurs primarily through the work of the Board of Ordained Ministry, and thereafter through the peer group of fellow elders and deacons in the annual conference, conforming to the professional model. Local pastors are primarily supervised by their District Committees on Ordained Ministry, made up of few (if any) fellow local pastors; the professional model thereby holds in a lesser sense for them. This oversight, then, helps to place United Methodist elders in the same professional category as doctors and lawyers in the minds of many.

This need for candidates to conform to the expectations of the Board of Ordained Ministry as the gatekeepers for full membership in the annual conference leaves us to grapple with Bourdieu’s understanding of the pivotal role of cultural reproduction in any field of endeavor. Bourdieu holds that in any structured system of relationships (for

example, a field such as a United Methodist annual conference), both material and symbolic cultural forms are reproduced across generations as each cohort welcomes a new one into its company. All the while, each established generation places both overt and covert forms of pressure on neophytes to conform to current ways of acting, speaking, etc. The BOM determines the “proper” ways in which ministerial candidates must describe their theological beliefs and conduct their pastoral duties. Such acceptable methods of professional deportment fall under Bourdieu’s heading of a “cultural arbitrary,” behavior that is deemed necessary because it is accepted as such by those who maintain the socially dominant position (in this case, the BOM) and maintain the pedagogic authority to teach and impose it on those who are seeking entrance into the same social structures. This process of cultural inculcation tends to be durable by creating dispositions in ordinands that will guide their own practices well beyond their period of examination. That durability also ensures that they will expect similar conformity of those who follow behind them as the next generation of clergy leadership. As Bourdieu states this idea:

The specific productivity of [pedagogical work], i.e. the degree to which it manages to inculcate in the legitimate addressees the cultural arbitrary which it is mandated to reproduce, is measured by the degree to which the habitus it produces is durable, i.e. capable of durably generating practices conforming with the principles of the inculcated arbitrary (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 33).

The ministerial habitus, that is, the internalized dispositions ingrained into ordinands as the necessary and proper way to conduct themselves for their work, comes about through the rigorous training and scrutiny they undergo through both their seminary experience and the protracted examinations by the conference BOM. This process, of course, is much more focused and lengthy for candidates for ordination as an elder than it is for

licensed local pastors, a key differentiation for the ministerial habitus each group embodies, the exploration of which will form the basis of the next chapter.

Candidates for ordination often endure a great deal of stress when preparing for their oral interviews with the Board of Ordained Ministry, knowing that their future acceptance into full connection rests in the hands of those who will make decisions on their professional fitness. Some respondents to my survey specifically point to the pressure to conform to the expectations of the BOM (and, by proxy, the expectations of all their clergy colleagues) as a point of conflict for them as they went through the ordination process. One white male elder with a decade of pastoral experience remembers that the pressures to perform in a particular way led to an adversarial tone in his process: “Our ordination process is too long, complicated, and adversarial and sets a poor tone for the covenant that pastors share with one another.” Another white male elder with over 25 years of pastoral experience feels that there is too much pressure for candidates to conform to current mores: “The ‘system’ tends toward GroupThink and has become less supportive of radical voices that call us to gospel accountability. We are no longer recruiting the best and brightest to explore a call to ordained ministry, and at the same time we are making the ordination process longer and more laborious.” Still another elder, a white woman, just ordained within the last five years, is concerned that the steps in the clergy formation process serve no good purpose and end up stifling innovation: “Ordination still has a lot of ‘hoop jumping’ without any hard evidence that this produces better candidates who can innovate for the future.” Cultural reproduction, with the conformity that it requires of those who are brought into current fields of action, necessarily causes chafing among those who find themselves constrained by the process

of induction. It is because of the necessarily coercive nature of the formation process that Bourdieu refers to such a process as symbolic violence, that which masks the arbitrary formation procedures of ordination candidacy to make them seem natural, right, and inevitable (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 5-11).

Laity Participation on the Board of Ordained Ministry

Although it is the executive session of the annual conference (made up only of full connection clergy) who take the final vote about which candidates may join their ranks, the Board of Ordained Ministry that does the actual vetting of candidates is made up partially of laypersons, as well. According to Disciplinary mandates, the Board may be made up of up to one-third laity (United Methodist Church 2012, 458). As of 2013, seven members of the Tennessee Conference BOM are laity out of 55 members total, or 12.7 percent of the total membership (Tennessee Conference 2014, 66-7). There has been recent conversation among conference leadership about expanding the number of laity involved in all areas of conference decision making, including serving on the Board of Ordained Ministry. In particular, a recent conference-wide visioning process makes this as one of their primary recommendations. From August through December of 2012, Tennessee Conference leadership engaged in a self-study process with the assistance of a group known as FACT—a Financial Advisory Consulting Team—staffed by employees of two denominational general agencies of the United Methodist Church. The consultation allowed conference leadership to identify the most pressing current issues in the life of the annual conference. After a series of interviews with members of the Tennessee Conference, FACT leaders identified 19 “critical dilemmas,” issues that, left

unaddressed, would “adversely impact the Church’s mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (Tennessee Conference 2012, 1). Three of these dilemmas had to do with increasing the utilization of laypersons and congregations: “laity feel or are perceived to be ill equipped,” “laity are often not seen as a resource,” and a “chasm is developing between conference leadership, clergy and the laity.” One FACT recommendation, to increase laity participation in the BOM, is meant to begin alleviating this perceived sense of alienation. The idea is borrowed from the North Georgia Annual Conference, which has expanded the size of its BOM to over 60 members, of whom 20% are laypersons. Bishop Lindsey Davis told the laity of that conference: “I figure if you have to listen to our folks preach, you ought to have a chance to help credential them. Now we’ve got the consumers at the table, and we make better decisions with you there” (9-10).

Such a push for greater participation by the laity on Boards of Ordained Ministry is just one facet of a trend that has existed for the entire history of American Methodism. Although democratic in spirit and in the leadership of local congregations, Methodism at its inception reserved participation in its various levels of conferencing—from the regional Annual Conferences to the denomination-wide quadrennial General Conference—to ordained clergy. Early in the nineteenth century, Bishop Francis Asbury staunchly defended the Methodist Episcopal Church’s withholding of direct conference representation from the laity, stating that they could not be trusted to make decisions for the common good:

We have a great respect for trustees [i.e., who might be lay delegates to a Conference]. We consider them as men to whom the connection is greatly obliged. . . . But still they are *located* men. They cannot be expected to act impartially for the whole. They will think it their duty, and perhaps it is

their duty, to prefer the interest of their own congregation to any other” (Outler 1970, 113-4, emphasis in original).

Lay membership in Annual and General Conferences came in fits and starts among the various divided branches of Methodism in the nineteenth century—from the beginning of the breakaway Methodist Protestant Church in 1830, the southern Church in 1870, and the northern Church in 1872 (Richey et al. 2010, 225-9).

The Board of Ordained Ministry, on the other hand, has been a holdout for clergy alone for much longer. The 1988 General Conference for the first time made provision for “lay observers” to be “elected to participate in the work of the board but without vote” (United Methodist Church 1988, 391). Four years later, the 1992 General Conference went further in instructing each annual conference to “elect two lay persons and ... at its discretion elect further lay members, up to one third of the membership of the board. Lay members shall have a vote except on matters prohibited by ¶36, Article 2, in the Constitution” (United Methodist Church 1992, 383). The constitutional Article 2 in question stated that “lay members [of the annual conference] may not vote on matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of ministers” (1992, 383). This restriction was removed for the first time in 2000, updating the denominational constitution to state that “the lay members of the conference board of ordained ministry may vote on matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy, [and] lay members of the district committee on ordained ministry be full participating members of the district committee on ordained ministry with vote” (United Methodist Church 2000, 31-2). In this way, even though the several hundred lay members of the Tennessee Conference are barred by denominational polity from the final direct vote on whether to accept new clergy members into full connection with the annual conference, there are now a number

of voting lay members of the Board which most directly influences that decision ahead of the conference session. If the writers of the FACT report prevail, this number of lay members of the BOM will continue to grow.

This greater participation of (some) laity in making the decisions about which individuals will become full-connection clergy raises one point of ongoing tension about the extent to which pastoral ministry can be fully viewed as a profession in the modern sense. One of the hallmarks of professional identity is the self-regulating (and self-generative) character of a professional guild: “a profession exercises autonomous judgment about who enters it and who remains within it. A profession is self-regulating and controls access to practice. Professionals insist that only they are capable of judging each other” (Campbell 1983, 23). In some sense, this still holds true for United Methodist clergy: only those who have been previously admitted into full membership in the annual conference may take the final vote on who is admitted into their ranks, who will be censured or expelled from their ranks due to misconduct, etc. Even so, that ultimate vote is the culmination of a long process in which laity have an increasing role in recent years.

Even though the number of lay persons making credentialing decisions about laity is small, they represent a legitimate limitation on the professional *bona fides* of UM clergy. As Dean Hoge has noted, American Protestant clergy are employed by (and finally beholden to) their constituents, the lay members of the churches they serve. Pastors must continually garner support from their parishioners if they hope to continue successfully in their roles. “No other profession is subject to approval by a lay constituency in this way—which makes clergy persons somewhat resemble local politicians. In sum, clergy are professionals, but different from most other professionals”

(Hoge 2009, 581). If Bishop Lindsey Davis's earlier assessment of the situation in the North Georgia Conference sounds crass and less delicate than most United Methodists are used to hearing, it nevertheless reveals a truth of the current situation: laity, as the "consumers" of the goods that clergy are providing in local churches are now at the table to decide how adequately those pastors perform their jobs, and their presence makes a difference in how the work of oversight is accomplished.

According to leadership of the Tennessee Conference Board of Ordained Ministry with whom I spoke, the incorporation of laypersons into the evaluative work of the Board has largely happened easily and with recognition of the particular insights they bring. As multiple people told me in separate interviews, lay members of the BOM are particularly quick to raise one particular question regarding candidates for ordination that is often foremost in the minds of church members: "Can you envision this person being your pastor?" One male Board leader also sees this lay participation in the work of credentialing clergy as a matter of partnership in ministry between laity and clergy. He described his recruitment of a lay member of the Board who was reluctant at first to serve in that capacity:

Initially, he was like, "who am I to talk to somebody about their call, or to question that?" To me, this is a place where the church has not done a good job in talking about, one, the priesthood of all believers, that we are all authorized as Christians to have responsibility for ministry. And then two, that the role of clergy is not some special incantation. It's, rather, people who are recognized by the body of the church, the laity of the church, and simply set aside as somebody designated among equals to do that work.

Such partnership between clergy and laity on the BOM has not gone uncontested, however. One long-term clergy member of the Board, a woman who was part of the group during the time laity were introduced, recalls: "I remember hearing great flutter

around the time that lay people were being put on the Board of Ordained Ministry, and there was a lot of flak about that. ‘What do these people know?’ It was unspoken, but I had a sense that ‘They’ll know our secrets then,’ or ‘They don’t need to see this!’”

Another elder spoke to me about his objections to laity on the BOM because of his belief in strengthening the professional identity of clergy:

There was a movement to share the leadership of the church more equitably between clergy and the lay, and I think that was a good idea, but not necessarily in every single facet of the denomination. I’m not sure it was a good idea to share it in terms of the Board of Ministry. If we are a profession—are there lay people who examine doctors for their ability to be doctors? Are there lay people who examine lawyers for their ability to be lawyers? I want lay leadership in a lot of places, but I’m not sure I want lay leadership in the credentialing process.

In this way, we see the democratization of leadership, with its increased participation for the laity, coming into conflict with some high ideals of professionalism that remain for the ordained ministry.

Conclusion

Ordination is primarily a means of dividing clergy from laity—a “rite of institution” in Bourdieu’s framework—and has also developed in United Methodism as a way of dividing some clergy (elders and deacons) from others (local pastors). It began in American Methodism as a way of granting authority to preside at sacraments, but that connection has grown more ambiguous with the development of multiple categories of clergy. Given all of the conflicting (and even contradictory) meanings of ordination regarding the granting of sacramental authority, the partial ongoing blurring of the lines between laity and ordained clergy, and the implicit disagreements over how strictly to

consider ordained ministry as a modern profession, what importance does ordination still carry for those who are ordained, as well as for those pastors who are not ordained?

Although ordination is no longer exclusively tied to the granting of sacramental authority, it still retains an important function in granting certain kinds of ecclesiastical status to elders. From a Bourdieuan standpoint, in the fluid competitions for position within the religious field of an annual conference, ordination serves as a form of capital that, once achieved, allows individuals to obtain more privileged positions within the field. Additionally, through the working of symbolic violence, ordination conveys this authority in a manner that is disguised as natural and inevitable, rather than as one possibility among many. Those who benefit from such distinction are actually (if subconsciously) encouraged to misrecognize their own interest in maintaining the system as it currently exists, instead seeing ordination as (merely) a selfless act of giving oneself for service. Ordination remains the only sanctioning act that authorizes elders to conduct the full range of activities perceived as properly pastoral activities (including baptism and communion, weddings, funerals, and organizing the temporal affairs of local congregations and the annual conference) without restriction on the location or scope of those activities. For those local pastors who do not benefit from the authorization granted in ordination, the more limited scope of their pastoral oversight can remain an ongoing concern. One local pastor noted in his survey response: “Local Pastors are children of a lesser God, unable to perfect us in His calling, suitable to perform a wedding in one location and not others, able to consecrate the elements in one location and not others. The whole of restrictions placed on Local Pastors is idiotic. What would Christ say?”

Additionally, even though recent generations have taken great strides toward the democratization of understandings of ministry by emphasizing the ministry of all baptized Christians into a common servant leadership, there are still multiple points at which the ministry of the ordained (and ordained elders particularly) are perceived as more highly valued by others in the UMC. Many local pastors, in particular, harbor ongoing perceptions of hierarchical relations between elders and themselves. These perceptions may often be subjective and general in nature, but are pervasive enough that a pattern emerges when they are viewed together. For example, a range of local pastors—male and female, from their 30s to their 60s, with a wide variety of tenures as pastors—provided various survey responses about how they understand the distinction between their status and that of elders:

- If your [sic] not an elder you are recognized as below average...not very inclusive and does not show a great deal of connectionism.
- Deacons and elders look down on lp [local pastors].
- There is still a sense among local pastors that they are viewed as “less than” elders in the conference.
- Give local pastors more input based on their experience and success and not their ordination.
- As a Full Time Local Pastor, I feel as if I am nothing more than part of the Equipment that is used to keep our Denomination Operating. If we want a Church United then when are we going to unite? It has even been said from the floor of Conference that Elders are a part of a Fellowship that others can never understand. Is that intentional?”

Ordination remains the symbolic means by which this two-tiered system of ministry is created and sustained, and local pastors often perceive themselves as occupying measurably subordinate positions in the religious field of the Tennessee Conference. To begin measuring the effects of such a differentiation on the work done by these pastors, I will now turn to an exploration of the ways in which local pastors operate from different

assumptions and dispositions (that is, from a somewhat distinct ministerial habitus) than do elders.

CHAPTER 4—HABITUS

The durable dispositions that Bourdieu referred to as habitus are powerful in their ability to shape the behavior of individuals over the course of their lifetimes. The instilling of these dispositions occurs most powerfully in early childhood, but continues as persons move throughout their formal educational experiences and grow to develop “strategies” that help them navigate interactions with others in their chosen fields of endeavor. Based on previous studies of clergy behavior, habitus shapes not only the opinions that pastors have about their jobs and the people they work with in congregations, but also the long-term clergy role prioritizing they perform and the manner in which they perform those role tasks (Carroll 1971; Blanchard 1981; Finke and Dougherty 2002). Habitus also affects the relationships pastors have with their ecclesiastical superiors, and the manner in which they see themselves as part of the larger community of professional people in the world. By examining the areas in which the dispositions, attitudes, professional practices, and relationships to larger church structures are variably similar or distinct between elders and local pastors in the Tennessee Conference UMC, I seek to demonstrate how the habitus of these two groups have been unintentionally shaped in ways that may not lead them to pursue common goals in effective ways.

Theological Orientations

Prior sociological studies among Christian clergy since the mid-twentieth century have established a significant variation among those pastors regarding their performance of and attitudes about the various roles they fill and the activities they perform. Samuel

Blizzard set the template for much of the work that followed him by pioneering the empirical study of ministerial role performance, discerning “practitioner roles” of administrator, organizer, pastor, preacher, priest, and teacher, as well as “integrative roles” and a “master role” that govern how pastors perform their practical tasks (Blizzard 1956; 1958a; 1958b). Those who followed Blizzard have examined the extent to which theological training in various kinds of seminaries (or lack of attendance at a seminary) affects the theological outlook and work role preferences of Protestant clergy. Jackson Carroll (1971) developed a typology of theological schools based on their relative emphases of theoretical and practical concerns, as well as spiritual and secular considerations, and traced how these schools affect the enduring theological orientation of clergy who graduate from these schools. Dallas Blanchard (1981) borrowed this typology and extended Carroll’s study to argue that the type of seminary attended affects both theological orientation and professional role preferences over a number of activities. Carroll and his collaborators (1997) have shown how different types of seminaries prepare students with varying types of cultural toolkits and normative goals to shape their own visions of ministry in the world, and that the greater the amount of time these students spend together on campus during their training, both in and out of classrooms, the more deeply they will internalize these normative messages of the schools they attend. Roger Finke and Kevin Dougherty (2002) make a similar argument about the ways in which the seminary experience helps create a sense of social closure among clergy who attend these schools, separating them somewhat from the distinct cultural forms of the congregations they serve and creating a distinct clergy outlook that differs from the ministry outlook of laity.

In conducting the present study, I chose not to focus exclusively on the seminary education of clergy as a measure of clergy formation. Although seminary education continues to appear as one factor among several for the sake of comparison, I have shifted my focus somewhat to the division between ordained elders and unordained local pastors. The elder/local pastor distinction largely corresponds with the seminary-trained/seminary-untrained distinction. Among respondents to my survey, 138 out of the 140 elders had earned a seminary degree, while 13 out of 78 local pastors had done the same. Examining elders and local pastors will not only permit an exploration of the effects of graduate-level theological training, but also the formation processes within the annual conference itself in preparing these pastors for their work. As I noted in the previous chapter, these formative processes with conference bodies (District Committees of Ordained Ministry, the conference Board of Ordained Ministry) differ significantly for clergy candidates once they choose a track either as an elder candidate or local pastor candidate. In using this distinction to conduct this investigation, I continue to draw from the work that has previously been done on the effects of seminary study on pastoral work and attitudes, while seeking to expand the investigation into the structural effects of denominational categories on the work of UMC elders and local pastors.

One question I asked respondents on my survey of Tennessee Conference clergy is modified from the 1981 Blanchard survey of Alabama-West Florida Conference UMC clergy. It asked how much respondents personally enjoy each of a list of ten activities associated with pastoral work. Based on pre-interview conversations I conducted with clergy members of the Tennessee Conference, these activities still constitute a reasonable overview of the ways in which pastors in the conference spend their professional time as

congregational pastors. In his study, Blanchard concluded that graduates of “graduate school” type seminaries (typically affiliated with universities) were the most liberal theologically among the pastors under examination. Additionally, in response to this set of questions of pastoral role preferences within the church, graduate school pastors tended to prefer serious study and writing and involvement in community outreach and participation in leadership on social issues when compared with other pastors, while placing less value on working with individuals in their congregations. Although graduates of more conservative seminaries were less likely to be involved in social issues, appearing similar to nongraduates in their approach to that task, they still place a greater premium on study than do nongraduates.

For my sample of pastors from the Tennessee Conference, I compared the data from the two categories under examination (elders and local pastors) by conducting a chi-square test for independence between the categories. For all such tests I conduct throughout this study (unless otherwise noted), I begin with a null hypothesis that the attributes under consideration are independent of pastoral category. I choose a significance level (α) of 0.05; therefore, whenever the calculated p-value is less than 0.05, I reject the null hypothesis and determine that there is a statistically significant dependence of the attributes in question with the categories of elder and local pastor. That is, for p-values less than 0.05, there is strong reason to believe that a pastor’s category will have a significant predictive factor for the given question. Values listed for n indicate the sample size (the number of respondents) for each question.

Following Blanchard’s lead, I asked a question of survey respondents regarding their self-assessed theological orientation. The results for both elders and local pastors are

listed in Table 1. Such a question remains important because this self-awareness (and the ways in which it affects the outlook of pastors on a number of divisive issues) has become the greatest dividing line for American Protestants at both local and denominational levels, with United Methodists being no exception. Over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, American clergy (and the churches they serve) have increasingly begun to describe themselves by using the language of theological liberalism or conservatism. United Methodists are part of the “cultural cleavage” Robert Wuthnow describes, one that is affected both by the educational backgrounds of church members and by their ideological identities (Wuthnow 1988, 153-64). The United Methodist Church has experienced this cleavage not only at individual and congregational levels, but at the denominational level as well, with more liberal advocates for social justice in the denomination’s General Board of Church and Society publicly at odds with well-organized groups such as the Good News Movement, who espouse a more conservative literal reading of scripture (Tipton 2007).

Table 1—Theological Orientation, by percentage		
Q14: How would you describe yourself theologically?		
(n=216; p-value=0.000)	Elders	Local Pastors
Very liberal/progressive	18.0	3.9
Somewhat liberal/progressive	32.4	15.6
Moderate	28.8	23.4
Somewhat conservative/traditional	16.5	37.7
Very conservative/traditional	4.3	19.5
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

Through my survey, I wanted to get some sense of what reality lies behind the taken-for-granted wisdom in the Tennessee Conference that a seminary education tends to make a pastor more theologically liberal than the congregations they serve. Even this assertion requires nuance, however. The non-denominational Divinity School of Vanderbilt University is the one remaining theological school approved by the United

Methodist Church for the education of its clergy that sits inside the boundaries of the Tennessee Conference.¹⁴ For geographical reasons among others, Vanderbilt has long been the primary training ground for clergy in the Tennessee Conference. Its reputation (both among its supporters and its detractors) is that of a liberal/progressive seminary in its theological and social commitments, and its current self-description supports this view:

The school affirms its commitment to do all in its power to combat the idolatry of racism and ethnocentrism that remains widespread in our society ... to opposing the sexism that has characterized much of the history of the church and western culture and is still present in our society ... to confronting the homophobia that prevails throughout much of the church and society ... to a program of theological education that is open to and takes account of the religious pluralism in our world (Vanderbilt University 2014).

By way of contrast, the second most attended theological school by seminarians from the Tennessee Conference is Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, approximately 210 miles from Nashville. Asbury is seen as a more conservative or orthodox alternative to Vanderbilt for Tennessee Conference students, as supported by the school's own description of itself:

We, the trustees, administration, faculty, staff and students embrace this global mission as a Wesleyan community which stands within the tradition of Christian orthodoxy and whose life and work is committed to reflecting the truth, beauty and goodness of God's holiness. We aspire to order our communal and personal life according to the truth and love revealed in Scripture and imparted by the Holy Spirit. ... By God's grace, we will nurture redemptive relationships that honor and uphold the dignity of creation, human life, the sanctity of human sexuality, the equality of

¹⁴ The Episcopal School of Theology at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, had previously been approved by the University Senate of the United Methodist Church as a seminary for United Methodist clergy candidates until its approval was removed in 2010.

women and men, the covenant of Christian marriage, and the importance of the family (Asbury Theological Seminary 2014).

Even though Asbury is not an official United Methodist seminary, its self-consciously Wesleyan ethos also attracts students from the Tennessee Conference who see it as a more Wesleyan/Methodist alternative to the non-denominational Vanderbilt.

Even as Vanderbilt and Asbury (as well as the other theological schools where a smaller number of Tennessee Conference seminarians find themselves studying) provide a diversity of theological and social orientations within which to further their theological studies, there is still a strong correlation between clergy status (and the attendant seminary education that serves as a primary differentiator between local pastors and elders) and self-described theological orientation. Half of all elders responding to the survey described themselves as either very liberal or somewhat liberal; slightly less than 21 percent of them described themselves as very or somewhat conservative. Local pastors find themselves arranged on the opposite end of the spectrum: over 57 percent of them describe themselves as very or somewhat conservative, and fewer than 20 percent as very or somewhat liberal.

As a check regarding the correlation of educational level in general when comparing these classes of clergy, Table 1a shows the self-description of theological orientation among local pastors divided into two subclasses: those who have no/some college experience, and those who have a bachelor's degree or higher (so clustered to allow a high enough sample size for valid comparison). Similar levels of both groups describe themselves as somewhat or very liberal (18.5% of those with no college degree; 19.1% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher). Some differences begin to be apparent with those who describe themselves as somewhat or very conservative (70.3%

of those with no college degree; 51.1% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher). It seems, then, that higher education in general makes some amount of difference. At the same time, a chi-square analysis here yields a p-value of 0.247—too high to demonstrate a statistically significant difference between the two subcategories of local pastors across all theological orientations. What may we infer from this? While higher education may predispose local pastors to describe themselves more often as moderate as compared to conservative, in the absence of across-the-board master's level theological degrees and the other formative experiences that prepare pastors for ordination, local pastors still remain more similar to one another than different in regard to theological orientation, even once their educational levels are taken into account.

Q14: How would you describe yourself theologically?	Percentages	
n=77; p-value=0.247	Local Pastors (no/some college experience)	Local Pastors (bachelor's degree or higher)
Very liberal/progressive	3.7	2.1
Somewhat liberal/progressive	14.8	17.0
Moderate	11.1	29.8
Somewhat conservative/traditional	40.7	38.3
Very conservative/traditional	29.6	12.8
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

As in other mainline denominations, the most visible and fiercely contested theological and social issues currently in the Tennessee Conference have to do with the roles for openly LGBT persons in the life of the church, particularly their ongoing exclusion from positions of clergy leadership and the prohibition against the conducting of marriage or union ceremonies for same-sex couples. Previous denominational studies among United Methodists in leadership positions have demonstrated strong correlations between theological orientation and social positions regarding greater inclusion of LGBT

persons in United Methodist church life (Wood 2000, 63-4; Udis-Kessler 2008, 89-91). Conservative theological commitments to the divinely-inspired Bible as the revelation of non-negotiable moral truths lead those who hold such positions to believe that Biblical prohibitions against same-sex sexual practice are God's final, authoritative revelation on the subject. Conversely, those who held more progressive views of ongoing divine revelation are much more likely to accept greater participation of gay and lesbian persons in church leadership and as participants in the marriage rite.

In the Tennessee Conference, disagreements over LGBT issues have provided the seedbed for ongoing public disagreements at annual conference sessions. One particularly visible form of protest by progressives against the exclusion of openly gay clergy has been the wearing of "rainbow stoles" by clergy and lay members of the annual conference during conference sessions for the past several years. These rainbow stoles are styled after the stoles worn by ordained clergy, worn around the neck and hanging over the shoulders, although much shorter in length, hanging only down to the mid-chest area. They are sewn from brightly multi-colored fabrics in order to evoke a rainbow, in solidarity with the wider LGBT rights movement in the United States and its rainbow flag symbol. The rainbow stoles were explained from the floor of the 2012 annual conference by a former co-pastor at Edgehill UMC (one of the pro-LGBT Reconciling Congregations in the Tennessee Conference and a leader of the Reconciling Ministries Network in Tennessee), whose statement read in part:

The stoles you see draped around the necks of many Annual Conference attendees are signs of God's covenantal love. They are reminders of the bow that God set in the clouds as "a sign of the covenant between [God] and every living creature..." (Genesis 9:14). ... We bear witness to you, our Sisters and Brothers, that we have seen God at work in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons. We stand in solidarity with

them and in opposition to our official church position that homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching.” With these stoles we would like to keep before the conference the question of Paul to the church in Jerusalem, “If then God gave them the same gift that God gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who (are we) that (we) could hinder God?” (Tennessee Conference 2012b, 187).

Ongoing divisions on these issues remain, and will be explored later in this chapter in considering support for General Conference positions. For now, it is worth noting the variations in survey responses to a question about difficult aspects of life in the Tennessee Conference. Responses having to deal with LGBT inclusion ranged from concern for greater acceptance (from a white female elder: “Our schizophrenic position on ‘homosexuality’ that does not reflect our theology of God's love and grace for all”) to more effective enforcement of current restrictions (from a white male local pastor: “People refuse to be a part of Methodist churches, because they think the UMC is an advocate for gay marriage and gay rights”) to a general lament about the energy that goes into this conversation at the expense of other needs in the life of the conference (from a white male elder: “The lack of being able to do together because of our wide separation on a couple of issues especially homosexuality. All our energy is going into defending or overriding what is currently believed, not on discipleship or community outreach”).

Such theological diversity (and the social stances informed by that diversity) is one factor among several that has led to a perceived lack of trust in the Tennessee Conference, particularly among clergy leadership. In the Tennessee Conference, this lack of trust is one of the primary dilemmas identified by conference leadership in conjunction with consultation by the General Board of Finance and Administration and General Board of Pension and Health Benefits in their 2012 FACT (Financial Advisory Consulting Team) report. Among the manifestations of distrust uncovered by the FACT

team's consultations is "a lack of trust among clergy, in part due to varied theological differences" (Tennessee Conference 2012a, 8). To begin addressing the lack of trust that arises from theological differences, the team recommends a greater amount of time be set apart at all clergy gatherings for one-on-one conversation among clergy who would be randomly assigned to engage in a conversation about a case study, issue, or idea germane to the life of the conference. This attempt to build relationships across theological divisions is suggested as a means of fostering trust as a means of achieving multiple goals: improved teamwork in working for a common purpose across all churches and structures in the annual conference, greater transparency and accountability in conference decision making, and even financial implications as the conference budget ceases to be a battleground for ideological struggles (Tennessee Conference 2012a, 8-9).

These concerns were also reflected in conversations I had with clergy in the conference. As an example, one white male local pastor noted this lack of trust both across theological categories and across the categories of elder and local pastor. Because of the previously noted strong correlation of elders with liberalism and local pastors with conservatism, these ways of conceptualizing the loci of distrust are sometimes distinguishable but usually related. In attempting to bring clergy together to bridge their divides, this pastor struggles with the terminology of "trust" in conceptualizing this separation:

If there's no reason for us to get together, then I don't think we will. And thus the divides, and a lot of folks are using the word "trust," and I agree with that word but I disagree with that word. I'm starting to pull away from that word. If I say that we have trust issues, you're going to sit there and go, "what the hell doesn't he trust about me?", instead of going, "OK, let's mend that." A great deal of your energy will go into, "What in the world doesn't he trust me about, that sorry son of a" So I'm trying desperately to really come at that a different way. I know it's a trust issue.

But maybe it's just that we don't trust each other because we don't communicate, because we don't have to communicate.

He agrees that meeting together in small groups composed of pastors that might not normally get together is a primary strategy for building relationships, thereby building trust:

But there's got to be a way that we can come together in these small groups to be together—just to be together. Now I don't believe this group of people can come together and all of a sudden talk about how it is with your soul. Because I really don't want you to know how it is with my soul. And vice versa. But there's got to be something—do we come together, and with a bishop- and cabinet-mandated book study? So that we can just meet, and that's all we're going to talk about, because that's all that's on the agenda. Because if you remember in your high school biology class, you didn't like your lab partner, and you had to work with your lab partner, and you at least found one redeeming quality about your lab partner. You made it work.

The primary theme of the FACT report emerges here again: conversation across differences, while potentially slow, difficult, and prone to resistance by all involved, may ultimately be one effective strategy to bring together those with diverging theological and social understandings.

Prioritizing Pastoral Activities

When I asked the pastors of the Tennessee Conference to respond to the same question asked by Blanchard in his study about preferred activities in their pastoral work, some of the results were unexpected when compared to the Blanchard study. (Results are listed in Table 2, in increasing order of p-value; that is, in decreasing likelihood that there is a significant distinction between elders and local pastors for the given activity preference.) For five out of the ten pastoral activities, results showed a less than significant differentiation between the two clergy categories: programming and arranging

Table 2—Enjoyment of Pastoral Activities (by percentage)				
Q20: How much do you personally enjoy the following activities in your current (or most recent) pastoral appointment?	Do not enjoy	Enjoy slightly	Enjoy quite a bit	Enjoy as a favorite activity
HELPING INDIVIDUALS TOWARD EXPERIENCING SALVATION AND PROFESSING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH (n=209; p-value=0.000)				
Elders	1.5	11.9	48.5	38.1
Local Pastors	1.3	1.3	30.7	66.7
LEADING CONFERENCE/DISTRICT ACTIVITIES (n=202; p-value=0.006)				
Elders	13.5	46.6	33.1	6.8
Local Pastors	34.8	34.8	26.1	4.3
VISITATION IN HOMES (n=210; p-value=0.009)				
Elders	8.1	31.9	43.0	17.0
Local Pastors	4.0	17.3	44.0	34.7
GIVING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL ISSUES, INCLUDING OUTREACH AND NEIGHBORHOOD INVOLVEMENT (n=207; p-value=0.036)				
Elders	3.7	29.6	47.4	19.3
Local Pastors	4.2	20.8	37.5	37.5
PERSONAL COUNSELING (n=207; p-value=0.038)				
Elders	5.3	24.4	57.0	13.3
Local Pastors	0.0	16.7	75.0	8.3
PROGRAMMING AND ARRANGING CHURCH GROUP ACTIVITIES (n=200; p-value=0.110)				
Elders	7.0	43.4	42.6	7.0
Local Pastors	4.2	28.2	57.7	9.9
SERIOUS STUDY AND WRITING (n=206; p-value=0.327)				
Elders	2.3	21.1	48.9	27.7
Local Pastors	4.1	19.2	38.4	38.3
CONDUCTING COMMITTEE MEETINGS (n=208; p-value=0.361)				
Elders	17.0	58.5	21.5	3.0
Local Pastors	19.2	53.4	27.4	0.0

TEACHING AND TRAINING ADULTS OR YOUTH (INCLUDING LESSON PREPARATION) (n=208; p-value=0.431)				
Elders	1.5	14.1	45.2	39.2
Local Pastors	0.0	8.2	47.9	43.9
PREACHING (AND PREPARATION) (n=207; p-value=0.584)				
Elders	2.2	8.2	29.1	60.5
Local Pastors	0.0	6.8	28.4	64.8

church group activities, serious study and writing, conducting committee meetings,

teaching and training adults or youth, and preaching. In this way, we already see a distinction from what Blanchard's study would suggest for these pastors, in that there is not a clear distinction between (mostly seminary-trained) elders and (mostly seminary-untrained) local pastors in their penchant for enjoying serious study and writing. Over three quarters of each group (76.6% for elders and 76.7% for local pastors) report enjoying this kind of study either quite a bit or as a favorite activity.

Of the remaining five activity preferences that demonstrate a clearer differentiation between elders and local pastors, four bear out results that would be expected following Blanchard's results. Three of these activities can be described largely as (primarily) individual, one-on-one interactions between pastor and parishioner: helping individuals toward experiencing salvation and professing the Christian faith, personal counseling, and visitation in homes. For both elders and local pastors, a clear majority of respondents claim that they enjoy engendering professions of faith at least "quite a bit," but local pastors displayed a greater fervor for the activity: 66.7% of local pastors say it is a favorite activity in their pastoral work, compared to 38.1% of elders. The picture is slightly different for personal counseling: more elders (13.3%) than local pastors (8.3%) count it as a favorite activity, but if we add in the "enjoy quite a bit" option, local pastors

show a greater number who enjoy counseling at least quite a bit (83.3%) when compared to elders (70.3%). For visiting parishioners in their homes, local pastors again show an edge in enjoying this interaction at least quite a bit (78.7%) when compared to elders (60.0%). Although none of these comparisons can be framed as a “like” vs. “dislike” comparison, there is evidence here that local pastors have been enculturated in such a way as to enjoy performing these one-on-one activities with church members in a stronger way than their elder colleagues. Because local pastors are more likely to serve in smaller membership churches (as will be discussed in the chapter on capital), they may have greater flexibility to spend more of their time engaged in these one-on-one activities with church members than do elders, who are somewhat more likely to serve in larger membership churches.

Another activity which showed a difference between elders and local pastors is in leading annual conference or district activities. 39.9% of elders claim that this leadership is enjoyable either “quite a bit” or “as a favorite activity,” while 30.4% of local pastors claim the same. On the one hand, it may be that elders have been trained in such a way that they place a higher value in leading activities beyond their local churches, placing a greater premium on the connectional nature of United Methodist conferences. Another possibility, though, is that fewer local pastors even have the opportunities for such leadership, either because they are part-time pastors whose full-time work responsibilities preclude as great a commitment to activities outside their appointed congregations, or because they are barred from serving in certain capacities as local pastors (e.g., the conference Board of Ordained Ministry). Seminary connections come into play here as well—the social networks formed during the formative years during seminary education

carry over to time served as clergy, and conference and district activities allow for continued connections for these relationships.

The most surprising finding from this question of enjoyment of local church activities came from the responses regarding giving community leadership in social issues, including outreach and neighborhood involvement. In Blanchard's study, this is one of the hallmark differences between types of seminary education: those who had graduated from more liberal-leaning schools of theology were significantly more likely to report enjoying these community activities than were those who had no seminary experience. This sample from the Tennessee Conference shows the opposite: three quarters of local pastors enjoy community outreach "quite a bit" or "as a favorite activity," compared to two thirds of elders. In hindsight, there is one factor that keeps us from drawing direct comparisons between this study and Blanchard's: this activity is the one part of this question where a clear change in wording from Blanchard's original survey may have unintentionally led to quite different results. Blanchard asked simply about "giving community leadership on crucial social issues," while I asked about "giving community leadership in social issues, including outreach and neighborhood involvement." This change was brought about due to a perceived lack of clarity in my pre-survey conversations. The added words, while perhaps clarifying one type of activity, may have unintentionally combined two concepts that Blanchard had kept separate. While he noted the tendency for graduates of "graduate school" type seminaries to focus more on leadership on social issues, he also noted that pastors with no seminary training at all "will value roles associated with the local area's cultural system and will devalue the importance of seminary education" (1981, 358). This stronger connection of local

pastors to their local communities of service, when compared to the connection that elders feel, is a recurring theme throughout the exploration of this study. For now, I propose that the “outreach and neighborhood involvement” component of this question may have shaped the answers to this question in ways that spoke particularly to the commitments of local pastors in their communities.

Worship leadership

One of the most visible activities in a pastor’s working life is the planning and leadership of worship. All pastors’ decisions about how to conduct worship services are shaped by their own experiences of meaningful worship as members of congregations. Elders additionally have the benefit of being shaped by the courses taken in seminary and their formation processes before ordination, undertaken alongside other provisional elders. Local pastors have less of this type of formal preparation for worship leadership. For this reason, one of my working hypotheses as I was crafting this study was that the worship leadership practices of local pastors might still be informed by their experiences as worshippers in local churches to a greater extent than elders, potentially creating a distinction between the groups in this area of practice. To examine that premise, I asked three survey questions focused on worship practices that are not universal among churches in the Tennessee Conference, and which I suspected might be more prevalent among those who had undergone the formative experiences expected of elders.

One area in which United Methodist pastors in the Tennessee Conference differ is in their method of choosing biblical passages to serve as the basis for sermons. A version of the Revised Common Lectionary serves as a 3-year cycle of Old Testament, psalm,

gospel, and New Testament epistle readings for United Methodists, in partnership with a number of other mainline Protestant denominations, and based on a lectionary developed by the Roman Catholic Church. For this reason, the lectionary serves not only as a tool for guiding worship readings over a wide swath of the Christian Bible over the course of three years, but it also serves as a touchstone of ecumenical connection with other denominations, for those who are concerned with such signs of visible unity among Christian churches. Those who choose not to follow the lectionary may do so because of a stated desire to be open to more spontaneous leadership of God in choosing biblical passages week to week, or because of a move among many preachers to create sermon series over the course of several Sundays that deviate from lectionary passages.

Comparing self-reported lectionary usage among elders and local pastors (Table 3), elders are somewhat more likely to use the lectionary frequently as a basis for their preaching, to a degree that is statistically significant when using a chi-square comparison (p -value=0.033). While 69 percent of elders claim to use the lectionary always or most of the time, less than 53 percent of local pastors do so that often. This may be another indicator that local pastors, as a group, are more concerned with tailoring sermons to the needs of the local congregation as their primary consideration, whereas elders also value

Table 3—Usage of Lectionary for Preaching (by percentage)		
Q15: In your preaching ministry, how often do you follow the lectionary in choosing biblical passages as the basis for your sermons?	Elders	Local Pastors
Always	11.8	12.2
Most of the time	57.4	40.5
Occasionally	26.5	33.8
Never	4.4	13.5
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
(n=210; p-value=0.033)		

coordination with other congregations (both within and beyond the UMC) as an important goal.

Another worship practice where there is quite a bit of variability concerns the wearing of a robe as the basic garment for leading worship. Although directives from conference leaders follow the wider practice of the denomination in urging the wearing of clerical stoles only by ordained clergy, local pastors are still encouraged to wear robes without stoles, even though some of them disregard the direction of leadership and wear stoles on occasions where they believe they will not face active resistance by district or conference leadership.

Here, we see a sharper distinction between elders and local pastors (Table 4). Over 67 percent of elders wear robes to lead worship at least most of the time, compared to just 26 percent of local pastors. As some respondents took time to remind me in their comments regarding this question, there is at least one consideration that I did not take into account in asking this question: the variable practices of churches regarding worship style, and the expectations about pastoral dress in these circumstances. As one elder pointed out: “We have two worship services—one contemporary and casual where I never wear a robe, and one traditional and liturgical where I always wear a robe.” So, even among elders who value this traditional form of vestment that marks them as a

Table 4—Wearing of Robe/Stole for Worship (by percentage)		
Q16: Is it your practice to wear a robe and/or stole to lead worship services in your current (or most recent) appointment?	Elders	Local Pastors
Always	23.5	19.2
Most of the time	44.1	6.8
Occasionally	20.6	31.5
Never	11.8	42.5
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
(n=209; p-value=0.000)		

clergy leader of worship, their context may dictate that their usage of robe and stole is not universal.

Another practice that has experienced significant variability in interpretation and application is the baptism of infants. Throughout the history of American Methodism, the sacramental aspects of the rite (in which infants were baptized as an expected matter of course, in part to convey divine regeneration as a precaution against the stain of original sin) have existed in tension with a more evangelical impulse (which emphasizes the need for individual response to God's grace, with baptism following individuals' mature professions of faith in Christ). Methodists in the southern United States (particularly in more rural areas) have continued to be influenced by both the revivalistic fervor that has interpreted baptism as a human action meant to follow spiritual conversion as well as the official stance of American Methodism that infants are properly candidates for baptism. (Tucker 2001b, 82-117). As a way of synthesizing these opposing impulses, southern Methodists have often interpreted infant baptism as an act of dedication of the child (and his/her parents) to God, rather than as a sacramental act that uniquely confers an aspect of God's grace into the life of the one being baptized. It is important to note, though, that the liturgy of the denomination has never made provision for official infant dedication practices, apart from infant baptism itself. Such dedications, where they occur in

Table 5—Encouragement for Infant Baptism (by percentage)		
Q17: When an infant is born into your congregation(s), do you actively encourage the parents to present her/him for baptism?	Elders	Local Pastors
Always	61.3	54.9
Most of the time	24.8	26.8
Occasionally	10.2	9.9
Never	3.6	8.5
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
(n=208; p-value=0.487)		

congregations of the Tennessee Conference, are usually extemporaneous or borrowed from other denominations that are prevalent in the region (Baptists, Churches of Christ, etc.).

With this in mind, to test the hypothesis that elders who have been trained in seminary worship practices might be more likely to perform infant baptism while local pastors might be more likely to omit the rite altogether, I asked a survey question about pastors' encouragement for new parents in their congregations to have their infants baptized (Table 5). The responses did not bear out this hypothesis, however; there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p\text{-value}=0.487$). 86 percent of elders say that they encourage parents to have their children baptized all or most of the time, compared to 81 percent of local pastors who do the same.

A difference in approach does appear, however, when the question shifts to whether pastors perform some other public act of dedication in those cases where parents choose not to have their children baptized (Table 6). Just over 6 percent of elders perform such acts always or most of the time, while over 27 percent of local pastors do so. Combined with the previous question, this indicates broad agreement among pastors of both categories about the status of infant baptism as the widely accepted primary practice for initiating infants into their faith communities, but a difference in the acceptability of

Q18: If you do not perform a baptism for an infant, are there other public acts of dedication that you perform instead?	Elders	Local Pastors
Always	2.3	12.1
Most of the time	3.8	15.2
Occasionally	35.4	27.3
Never	58.5	45.5
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
(n=196; p-value=0.001)		

infant dedications or similar practices as legitimate alternatives.

The question of infant baptism vs. infant dedication has a particularly strong emotional impact for some pastors (especially local pastors) in the Tennessee Conference. In recent years, district committees on ordained ministry (which have oversight responsibilities for local pastors) have often asked about local pastors' baptismal practices in their churches, to ensure that infant baptism (and not dedications) are being performed, and that re-baptism is not being performed by pastors. This pressure toward re-baptism is particularly strong in the southern US due to the influence of other denominations (Southern Baptist and Churches of Christ being particularly influential in middle Tennessee) for whom adult "believer's baptism" is the only acceptable form of the rite. Therefore, for many United Methodist pastors, there is still considerable pressure to baptize adults after they make a public profession of the Christian faith, even if those adults had previously been baptized as infants. Since 2004, re-baptism is now officially listed among the "unauthorized conduct" for pastors in the UMC's Book of Discipline: "No pastor shall re-baptize. The practice of re-baptism does not conform with God's action in baptism and is not consistent with Wesleyan tradition and the historic teaching of the church" (United Methodist Church 2012, 271). Practically speaking, the possibility of formal charges against pastors on this charge seems far less likely than being charged with the performance of same-sex marriage ceremonies, even though the two prohibitions are listed consecutively in the section of the Book of Discipline that deals with such matters. Even though weddings for same-sex couples have resulted in a number of trials across the denomination (though none to date in the Tennessee Conference) in recent years, concerns that baptismal practice conform to denominational standards have much

more frequently been part of the examination of local pastors by their district committees in this annual conference. These committees have the authority to remove credentials from local pastors who are seen to be insufficiently supportive of United Methodist doctrine and practice in this regard. This increasing pressure for local pastors to conform to denominational expectations was raised in one comment by a white, male local pastor in response to my survey question asking about aspects of the denomination or conference that prove difficult for pastoral leadership: “denominational leadership thumbing their noses at some aspects of the discipline like homosexuality/same sex marriage but enforcing others like re-baptism, infant dedication, or not paying apportionments due to conscientious [sic] objections to how leaders are running things.” This survey finding that local pastors are still slightly more willing to perform dedicatory acts for infants outside the denominationally authorized baptismal practice highlights this as an area where local pastors find ways to protest official standards laid on them from denominational officials, instead prioritizing the felt needs of their local congregations and parishioners.

One point of greater agreement among all pastors comes with the usage of official denominational liturgies to conduct services of holy communion (Table 7). These services of Word and Table are found both in the United Methodist Hymnal and the

Table 7—Usage of Official Communion Liturgies (by percentage)		
Q19: When you conduct a communion service, do you use one of the services of Word and Table from either The United Methodist Hymnal or The United Methodist Book of Worship?	Elders	Local Pastors
Always	49.3	50.7
Most of the time	36.8	29.3
Occasionally	11.8	17.3
Never	2.2	2.7
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
(n=211; p-value=0.586)		

United Methodist Book of Worship and are in widespread usage, although there are multiple reasons pastors may opt for other possibilities, such as the desire for a shorter form than the somewhat verbose official liturgy or a desire for a less structured and more extemporaneous experience. Nevertheless, there was wide agreement between elders and local pastors in their practice (p-value=0.586), and that practice is heavily weighted toward the use of official liturgies. Over 86 percent of elders and 80 percent of local pastors use the communion liturgy all or most of the time for their services.

Overall, then, when comparing the specific worship practices of elders and local pastors, there are certainly areas of wide agreement, particularly in the willingness to perform baptisms for infants and to use official denominational resources for eucharistic services. The differences between the groups of pastors in their preferences for wearing clerical robes or using prescribed biblical texts from the lectionary as the basis for preaching seem to indicate a prioritizing of local congregational customs over cooperative forms that would visibly join their worship with that of other United Methodist congregations or ecumenical partners. The somewhat greater willingness to perform unauthorized dedicatory acts for infants can be seen as an implicit form of protest against denominational expectations that may be perceived as out of touch with local congregational needs.

Important Factors in Preparing for Pastoral Ministry

Because there is ongoing disagreement about the best ways to train clergy for their work, and because elders and local pastors follow different paths toward certification as clergy, I initially hypothesized that the two categories would have

significantly diverging opinions about the relative importance of the different components of pastoral training and formation. To test this hypothesis, I asked a survey question asking pastors to state how important they found each of six different factors in preparation for ministry. Results are listed in Table 8, with practices listed in increasing order of p-value derived from chi-square analysis (that is, in decreasing likelihood that there is a significant difference in responses between elders and local pastors).

Education—Perceptions of Importance

The preparatory factor that yielded the greatest difference between local pastors and elders in this question had to do with the importance of formal theological education, either through seminary or through the Course of Study for local pastors. More than 94% of responding elders describe this experience of formal, graduate-level education as either “quite important” or “critically important,” compared to 65% of local pastors. Other questions in the survey deal with the differences between the two forms of education or their importance in deciding where to appoint pastors. However, in this question, I included both seminary and course of study for consideration together in order to gauge the pastors’ feelings about the importance of formal education in general, no matter which form they chose to pursue. It is striking, then, that even with this broader phrasing of the question, local pastors were so much more likely than elders to consider graduate-level theological education to be “slightly important” or “not important at all.”

In a sense, of course, this is no surprise at all when American Methodist history is taken into account. As noted in the historical overview chapter, Methodists in the United States (along with a number of other evangelical Protestant denominations) have long had

Table 8—Importance of Preparatory Practices (by percentage)				
Q22: How important are the following factors in preparing a person for pastoral ministry?	Not important at all	Slightly important	Quite important	Critically important
FORMAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION THROUGH SEMINARY OR COURSE OF STUDY (n=212; p-value=0.000)				
Elders	0.0	5.9	52.6	41.5
Local Pastors	6.5	28.6	42.9	22.1
PRACTICAL PREPARATION IN A MINISTRY SETTING (INTERNSHIPS, SUPERVISED MINISTRY PLACEMENTS, CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION, ETC.) (n=210; p-value=0.000)				
Elders	1.5	12.0	46.6	39.8
Local Pastors	7.8	28.6	46.8	16.9
AFFIRMATION OF ONE'S CALL THROUGH CHURCH STRUCTURES (PPRC/SPRC, DISTRICT COMMITTEE ON ORDAINED MINISTRY, BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY, ETC.) (n=207; p-value=0.005)				
Elders	0.8	9.2	48.5	41.5
Local Pastors	3.9	22.1	50.6	23.4
A PERSONAL CALLING BY GOD (n=211; p-value=0.047)				
Elders	0.7	1.5	14.1	83.7
Local Pastors	0.0	2.6	2.6	94.7
MENTORING BY MORE EXPERIENCED PASTORS (n=208; p-value=0.105)				
Elders	0.0	9.0	38.3	52.6
Local Pastors	0.0	12.0	50.7	37.3
ON-THE-JOB LEARNING EXPERIENCE AS A PASTOR (n=209; p-value=0.484)				
Elders	0.0	7.5	49.6	42.9
Local Pastors	0.0	11.8	51.3	36.8

a complicated and contested approach to the necessity of formal theological education. In some quarters of the Methodist movement in America, there has long been suspicion of the effects of a seminary education has on Methodist clergy (McCulloh 1980, 20). To some extent, this rises from an anti-intellectual bias held by those who live in rural communities where higher education is less valued, but there have also been some studies that suggest that the legitimate and lasting effects of a seminary education on the dispositions of clergy cause their outlook to be somewhat separated from the perspectives of the churches they serve (Hatch 1989, 35; Finke and Dougherty 2002, 104). Nonetheless, this suspicion of seminary education does not fully explain the reasons why so many local pastors would also distance themselves from the importance of being education through the Course of Study.

Those ordained clergy with seminary degrees were often able to describe with eloquence their views on the importance of this education. One ordained clergywoman told me about a metaphor that she had often used to describe faith development and education's role in that process, saying that all young people begin life wearing their parents' "faith coat": "You can't help it. It's in the church where your parents go, in the broad perspective, most of the time, unless you're one who goes to church to spite your parents. And if you stay in that community, you likely have on your parents' faith coat." She noted that people take off that coat when they leave the church of their upbringing, whether in college or work or military: "those persons take off their parents' faith coat and run around faith naked for a while." Finally, she held that we reassemble a faith coat of our own making that meets our own needs and circumstances, through a process of bricolage: "after a period of time, persons begin to assemble pieces and assemble their

own faith coat. And it fits, and it is theirs. I don't mean that it's constrictive, but it is theirs." Formal education has an important role in assisting this process of constructing one's own faith coat worldview: "Education takes us, forces us, gives us the opportunity to be faith naked for a while. Nothing like seminary or graduate school in theology to make you strip away your parents' faith coat and begin to reconstruct your own. I think that is the definition of maturity, ultimately, is a new, a personal faith coat."

Similarly, a male elder with a seminary degree emphasized to me his view that formal theological education prepares pastors to participate in critical decision making and teaching about the intricacies of our world:

We live in an incredibly complex world, an incredibly complex society, an incredibly complex culture, which means that we need people who are careful and critical and analytical thinkers. And the only way that one can become a careful and critical and analytical thinker is by being exposed to ideas other than their own. And that's education. And I think therefore that those that we put in the pulpits must be able to think critically and constructively, and interpret that thinking through the lens of their theological understandings and through the lens of the biblical witness, to a congregation whose critical thinking may stop when the thirty-minute television program is over.

Both of these pastors saw theological education as being actively involved in changing students' worldviews and dispositions—changing their *habitus*—in a way that would prepare them to take leadership in a wide range of congregational settings. Prolonged exposure to new faith ideas had no equal in terms of its ability to prepare students to think critically and lead capably.

Many local pastors do enjoy their experiences with the Course of Study, of course. One male local pastor without a college degree shared with me that he appreciated the ability to think critically about his faith, and saw his education as a liberating experience:

We people have a problem of being content that we already know what we believe, and nothing's going to change that. Heaven forbid something change that! But when you go and you listen to some other points of view, and all of a sudden it kinda gets to you: "I think that's not what I thought." It just opens up—it's like stepping over a fence, and everything's out in front of you.

He went on to describe how his newfound ability to stand for his beliefs because he had considered them fully has shaped the way he encourages others in his ministry: "If you don't understand what you believe, then you're just kind of at the whim of what everyone else believes, and that stinks. I try to get people to think for themselves, you know, because when you start thinking for yourself, you can ask some really critical questions." Even with his own appreciation of his Course of Study experience, that local pastor acknowledges that many other local pastors do not get the same value from their educational endeavors, and believes that it has to do with their own unwillingness to be shaped by the process. "Course of Study for me was wonderful. But it's what you put into it too. I went with anticipation and expectation of learning something, and I did. I know people that went that said, 'I don't know about y'all, she's trying to change what we think.' And they didn't learn anything. As a result, I wouldn't want to sit under their preaching every Sunday."

There are other concerns raised by local pastors about practical aspects of the Course of Study. For seminary students who commit themselves to a three (or more) year pursuit of a Master of Divinity degree, they must quickly learn to balance their classroom commitments with the other responsibilities of their lives, whether or not they serve a church part-time, have other jobs, care for their families, etc. Because the Course of Study occurs more sporadically, either occupying two weeks during the summer (for full-time local pastors) or weekend classes (for those who serve churches part-time), Course

of Study can feel like the exception, an alteration of their typical weekly schedule. This may explain why it was only local pastors who commented negatively on the specific impositions that their education placed on their lives. When describing the negative aspects of life as a United Methodist pastor, various local pastors responding to my survey noted concerns such as: “expenses involved in Course of Study, especially books required for study” (white male local pastor), “the volume of pre-work assignments of the Course of Study” (black female local pastor), “the amount of studying as a full-time pastor, full time father and husband ... hard to make the time work and fit without the family suffering at times” (white male local pastor), “time constraints on Course of Study while working another job and pastoring at the same time” (white male local pastor), and “time and places offered to do COS” (white female local pastor). One conflated the educational requirements placed on him with the other pastoral responsibilities that he found took up too much of his time: “So many reports, meetings and so much emphasis on education. Where is God in all of this. We need Revival” (white male local pastor). Although it would be difficult to argue that the Course of Study for local pastors involves more coursework, greater expense, more time constraints on ministry or family, or fewer locations available when compared to those who choose to attend seminary, it is nevertheless telling that greater numbers of local pastors note these as significant concerns for them in completing these educational requirements. As such, their negative assessment of their experience yields insight into why fewer local pastors see this educational experience as “quite important” or “critically important” for the training of pastors.

Although I included it as a separate option on my survey, it is not surprising that the question about “Practical Preparation in a Ministry Setting—Internships, Supervised Ministry Placements, Clinical Pastoral Education, Etc.” yielded results that were very similar to the question about formal theological education in general. 86.4% of elders feel that these experiences are “quite important” or “critically important,” compared to 63.7% of local pastors. Because these types of practical experiences are required parts of most modern M.Div. programs, it is likely that those seminary-trained elders who participated in (and had positive assessments of) their theological education also had positive evaluations of this practical component. While local pastors participate in the ministries of the churches from which they emerge before entering professional pastoral ministry under the supervision of that church’s pastor(s), it is more difficult for them to participate in other programs that are part of the seminary experience but not the Course of Study.

Calling (Divine vs. Practical; Internal vs. External)

Two questions in my survey regarding the importance of the nature of “calling” to pastoral ministry combined to show important differences between the categories of pastors. Although pastors’ understanding of the calling to their vocation is shrouded (at least in part) in divine mystery, the concept is necessarily part of ongoing conversations regarding the nature of pastoral education, preparation, and ongoing best practices. For example, in a 2010 study commissioned by the UMC’s General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to identify key characteristics and skills of effective pastoral leadership in local congregations, a deep sense of being called by God into ministry proved to be “a prominent conceptualization of effectiveness” for pastors by enabling “a

willingness to act boldly and to take risks as part of that called ministry” (DeShon 2010, 20). Although these two concerns are related, they can be perceived and examined separately: pastors themselves give witness to how they perceive an “internal” calling by God to perform the work of a pastor, while church officials are part of testing the “external” calling in an attempt to judge potential effectiveness of ministry for the church.

The survey question about pastors’ feelings regarding the importance of such external testing of their calling—“Affirmation of one’s call through church structures (PPRC/SPRC, District Committee on Ordained Ministry, Board of Ordained Ministry, etc.)”—yielded statistically significant differentiation between elders and local pastors. A full 90% of elders hold that this affirmation of calling by the church is either “quite important” or “critically important,” while only 74% of local pastors make the same claim. These church structures, ranging from local congregations (Pastor-Parish or Staff-Parish Relations Committees) to districts (dCOM) to annual conferences (BOM), are the institutional bodies tasked with helping to affirm candidates’ calling to pastoral ministry. To be sure, both elders and local pastors had critiques of the current process mandated by the denomination and implemented by the Tennessee Conference for the examination and oversight of clergy. Several elders made specific comments critical of the ordination process on the survey question asking them about unhelpful aspects of the annual conference. These comments tended to focus either on the length or difficulty of the process (a white male elder: “Our ordination process is too long, complicated, and adversarial and sets a poor tone for the covenant that pastors share with one another”) or whether the process actually yields results in helping candidates become better pastors (a

white male elder: “Ordination still has a lot of ‘hoop jumping’ without any hard evidence that this produces better candidates who can innovate for the future”). The critiques from local pastors tended to focus on the necessity for annual meetings with their district committees (a white male local pastor: “Constant meetings with DCom”). This is compounded by the power differential at play when district committees (made up primarily of ordained elders and deacons) have supervisory responsibility for assessing the work of local pastors, especially when those local pastors often feel “less than” the ordained, as noted previously.

Another survey question asked about the importance of an “internal calling” to support the identity and work of pastors—“a personal calling by God.” Although not quite as marked a difference, there was still statistical significance in the separation between local pastors and elders on how important this side of a pastor’s calling was to prepare them for their work. Where 83.7% of elders characterized this sense of divine calling as “critically important, 94.7% of local pastors did so. Although this does not represent a great enough difference to suggest that one group finds this personal calling important while the other finds it unimportant, it is also telling that in my conversations with clergy, local pastors seemed somewhat more willing to attribute their calling to God in a direct and immediate way. One male local pastor who entered ministry as a second career after struggling for years for a sense of direction recounted his story by saying:

[I was] feeling like there was more, but always coming to the grips of saying, I guess I’m just supposed to do what I do, and be an example, in the workplace, essentially. So I just kept studying, kept trying to be better: better in the Word, better in general. And then, I keep getting the old thoughts coming back again, and resulting with the same thing. And finally, I was driving to work one morning, and as I would drive to work, I caught myself praying for faith, and all of a sudden, it just hit me, and I had to pull over, and it’s like, “God, I’ll do anything you want me to do,

I'll even preach if that's what you want me to do." And I couldn't believe it when the words came out of my mouth. Within a year, I was in a church.

By way of contrast, ordained clergy tended to be somewhat more circumspect in their descriptions of their calling by God. One ordained clergywoman with over three decades of experience pointed to her upbringing in a more conservative denomination with limited opportunities for women in leadership as dampening her initial sense of calling, saying that she felt "drawn to" church work more than being "called by God":

I grew up in a tradition where the only message to me about being in ministry was to marry one. So I taught school, and did church music on the side. I began to realize that I was drawn to—I couldn't put calling words on it at the time because, even though I was United Methodist, considerably close to ten years by then, I couldn't put a call word on it because I still had those voices from my childhood speaking. But I knew I was drawn to working within the church.

One male elder in his second decade of pastoral work specifically pointed to the importance of "external calling" as being more crucial for him than any internal divine prompting:

When I went to my first dCOM meeting myself, just the first initial conversation, I had to tell them my call story. I remember being a little put off that I had to be there in the morning, and a little bit defensive about not having a dramatic call. The dCOM chair said, "Tell us about your call." Halfway being a smart aleck and halfway being defensive, I said, "well, I don't have one." To which she said, "well, this could be a short meeting. Just tell us why you're here, then." I told them that I had never had any deep mountaintop, "I was at summer camp and heard the voice of God" kind of thing. As I told my story, one guy looked up, and instead of saying, "why are you wasting our time?", he said, "oh, you have an external call." In that little cast-off moment there, what he recognized completely changed my view of what it meant to be called, and completely affirmed my own sense of call, that it wasn't about me at that point. It was about what others had seen God preparing in me, or equipping me to do.

While both elders and local pastors place a high premium on a personal "internal" calling by God for their work, the difference in levels of support for seeing this as a critical

preparation for their work may rest in how they balance the internal calling from God with the external calling by the observations of others or by those in supervisory positions in the annual conference.

The final two options in this question about importance of various factors in preparing clergy for their work did not uncover significant differences in responses between elders and local pastors. Both groups responded in high levels at either the “quite important” or “critically important” levels about “mentoring by more experienced pastors” (90.1% for elders and 88.1% for local pastors) and “on-the-job learning experience as a pastor” (92.5% for elders and 90.1% for local pastors). The availability of mentors for support was particularly noted as helpful by those survey respondents who gave feedback about helpful aspects of the annual conference. Several elders noted some aspect of “the mentoring that takes place as a part of the ordination process” (white female elder), and local pastors also commented that they “have received very valuable advice from other pastors including mentors” (white male local pastor). This advice given by more experienced clergy in an individual or small group setting, along with the practical experience gained through on-the-job pastoral work, make up a core of experience that is similar (and similarly highly valued) between both primary groups of pastors.

Factors in Choosing Educational Method

Returning to the question of education, I asked in the survey about what led pastors to choose the form of theological education that they pursued (Table 9). As noted earlier, this is not simply a question of noting which category pastors fall into. There is a

Table 9—Factors in Choosing Educational Method (by percentage)		
Q23: What factors led you to pursue the particular form of theological education that you did, either through seminary or Course of Study? (Check all that apply.)	Seminary	Course of Study
Cost	20.5	35.7
Time commitment	20.5	38.6
Personal or family constraints	28.6	47.1
Conference requirements	53.6	64.3
Recommendations from trusted people in your life	71.4	37.1
(Unable to calculate p-value for questions with more than one valid choice; percentages do not add to 100% because multiple options are available.)		

relatively small number of local pastors who choose to pursue a seminary degree at some point in their professional lives, and there are a significantly smaller number who can serve as a local pastor while attending the Course of Study, and later choose to pursue ordination as an elder.¹⁵ While both options are theoretically open to both categories of pastor, this question about the factors that informed pastors' decisions about their theological education sheds light on how that decision is made. Respondents were able to choose as many options as they wished.

Course of Study graduates were almost twice as likely as seminary graduates to cite cost as a factor (35.7% vs. 20.5%). Choosing the Course of Study for local pastors is certainly a more cost-effective method of education when compared to seminary. The Tennessee Conference Board of Ordained Ministry has chosen to pay the tuition costs for

¹⁵ This alternate route to ordination as an elder requires local pastors to be at least 40 years of age, have earned a bachelor's degree, have completed the five-year Course of Study, and have completed an Advanced Course of Study composed of 32 semester hours of further graduate theological studies, at which point they may be examined by the Board of Ordained Ministry and commissioned as a provisional elder (United Methodist Church 2012, 239-40).

students in the Course of Study (\$250 per course at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, the full-time Course of Study option for the Tennessee Conference) and up to \$150 in related expenses as long as students attend the class and earn a grade of C or better. By way of comparison, the tuition at Vanderbilt University Divinity School is currently \$816 per credit hour, or \$2,448 per 3 hour class, and tuition at Asbury Theological Seminary is currently \$564 per credit hour, or \$1,692 per 3 hour class. The BOM does make Ministerial Education Funds available for seminary students at a rate of \$300 per credit hour, capped at \$7,200 per year and \$21,600 total. Funding theological education is a critical question currently receiving increased attention. A Seminary Indebtedness Task Force implemented by the denomination's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry found in 2014 that the average seminary graduate has accrued an average educational debt of \$49,303, of which \$35,761 is from seminary and \$13,542 remains from undergraduate education (GBHEM 2014b).

A similar pattern emerged for time commitment, with 20.5% of seminary graduates and 38.6% of Course of Study students citing this as a concern. Another of the great benefits of the Course of Study layout is its concentrated nature. For a time commitment of just over two weeks, full-time CoS students earn credit for four classes at a time. Although this typically requires using vacation time from their church positions to do so, full-time local pastors may finish the twenty classes of the Course of Study in five consecutive summers. Weekend classes for part-time local pastors are offered more sporadically and may take students a longer period of time to complete, but they require no vacation time away from their full-time secular work. Compared to a three or more year commitment to earning an M.Div., the Course of Study is certainly a more viable

option for local pastors in terms of time commitment. For those who are pursuing ordination as an elder, however, time commitment comes into play in their rationale for attending seminary. While they may complete an M.Div. degree in three years of full-time study, an alternate method for pursuing ordination—one which requires five years of Course of Study followed by 32 credit hours of Master's level classes in the Advanced Course of Study—takes many more years to complete. For this reason, it is not often used in the Tennessee Conference.

“Personal or family constraints” also elicited a higher affirmative response from those attending Course of Study (47.1%) compared to seminary (28.6%). Another benefit of the Course of Study is the ability for local pastors to drive to Atlanta (for full-time CoS) or Pulaski or Madisonville, Tennessee (for part-time CoS) for a few days at a time to complete their studies. This allows a minimal disruption to family responsibilities when compared to seminary students who may move both themselves and their families to another city for multiple years at a time. When compared with the responses about cost and time commitment, it becomes clear that, for practical considerations about how it will affect their other areas of their lives, the Course of Study is perceived to be more flexible an option to local pastors than seminary does to elders.

“Conference requirements” were cited by 53.6% of seminary graduates and 64.3% of Course of Study students as a factor in their decisions. This is curious, as some form of theological training is a requirement for all pastors, albeit one that may be perceived differently by elders and deacons. In a free-response option to this question, one white male elder noted his choice of seminary was because he “wanted to be Elder,” while a white female local pastor offered that she was “threatened to lose [her] church” if

she did not complete her studies. Because seminary is completed before elders are ordained but local pastors may continue to serve churches for up to twelve years while completing their requirements, the possibility of terminating a local pastor's license to serve churches may be used by dCOMs as a potential punitive measure to coerce them to continue in their program.

Why, then, do many still choose to pursue a seminary education? I will take up this question again in the next chapter of this study by considering the capital that is invested in the attainment of a seminary degree, but for now, it is worthwhile to note that the one factor that was answered affirmatively more often by seminary graduates than by Course of Study students was “recommendations from trusted people in your life” (71.4% for elders and 37.1% for local pastors). Whatever other benefits may be seen in pursuing the Course of Study, it is clear that a minority of local pastors choose it primarily because it was recommended to them as the better choice. Seminary graduates felt far more confident in claiming the influence of others they trusted. This is a form of social pressure that is tied to the reproducing of social structures as they currently exist: pastors who have attended seminary and had a good experience are more likely to encourage other ministerial candidates to attend seminary, as well. This is borne out by comments offered by seminary graduates as free responses to this question; one said simply, “I considered it the norm!” (white male elder), while another cited “Family Heritage—three generations” (white male elder). Norms among existing pastors, whether among families or simply from mentors, can deeply influence choices about education.

It is noteworthy to observe other patterns among the free responses to this question. Seven local pastors and no elders cited age as a factor, a reminder that second-

career pastors are more likely to pursue the local pastor route than to follow the path to ordination. While two local pastors noted that they pursued the Course of Study because of a sense of divine guidance (“divine order,” “Prayer for God's direction”), nine seminary graduates made similar claims (e.g., “God's call and direction,” “Prayer,” “Calling from God”). While eleven seminary graduates cited some specific resources or reputation of their chosen school as factors (e.g., “School reputation,” “I wanted the best education possible to be able to serve God's church,” “Scholarship to study with great scholars”), no local pastors said the same about the Course of Study. Twelve seminary graduates cited a personal desire (e.g., “personal desire to be the best I could be,” “Personal commitment to education”), only one local pastor chose the Course of Study because she “wanted to.” This cluster of responses paints a picture of seminary as the choice that is made for greater distinction in the Bourdieuan sense—because seminary-trained elders have more social capital in annual conferences, their sense of what is “the norm” continues to carry weight in shaping expectations about the higher value of seminary education when compared to the Course of Study.

Adequacy of Educational Choices

This distinction is clarified further by the responses to the survey question: “Do you feel that the Course of Study is as adequate a form of theological education as seminary?” The responses are both clear and unsurprising (Table 10). 28.8% of elders answered in the affirmative, compared to 77.1% of local pastors. Local pastors are invested in justifying as adequate the form of education that they themselves completed, while elders are invested in arguing for the advantages of seminary. It is here that we

Q24: Do you feel that the Course of Study is as adequate a form of theological education as seminary?	Elders	Local Pastors
Yes	28.8	77.1
No	71.2	22.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
(n=188; p-value=0.000)		

revisit Bourdieu’s concepts of interest and symbolic violence. For those who hold the most capital in the annual conference (elders), it is in their interest to argue not only that seminaries provide an enriching educational experiences that trains pastors well for their work, but also that it is the sole best option for training clergy. Symbolic violence works subtly to make the decision to make seminary the normal method for United Methodist clergy to be trained, historically grounded and socially interested as that decision is, into the taken-for-granted “natural” and normal option.

From the conversations I had with seminary-trained clergy, it is clear that many do see the value in providing the Course of Study for local pastors, even if they may perceive it as a lesser option than a seminary degree. One female elder, a former member of both dCOMs and the conference BOM, noted the occasions where she saw the effects of the Course of Study: “I think that there are persons who come through Course of Study, the ones who dive in and beat out those 20 courses because they’re just, ‘wow, this is exciting,’ but who embrace the journey as part of their call to ministry. And I think those persons benefit a great deal.” She noted the practical issues of those local pastors who are able to begin their ministries without having earned undergraduate degrees and aren’t always prepared for the rigors of graduate level classes: “the unevenness of what local pastors bring to the table in terms of just barely a GED sometimes, all the way to a

Ph.D. in something else, and everything in between, persons who are barely literate; I know we're trying to deal with that now."

One male local pastor who entered ministry in his 40s without a bachelor's degree proved to be one of those students who entered the Course of Study with excitement. He described to me his decision to pursue the Course of Study in some of the practical terms discussed earlier: "I knew that 40-something was not too old to go to seminary. I understood that. But I still had kids at home, and I didn't feel—I guess I would say I really didn't necessarily feel called to take the time to go to seminary and do all that. ... It wasn't because I just didn't want to, and it wasn't because I didn't think it would help me. Any education, I'm a firm believer in." He professed excitement about many of his classes and professors and challenging his own preconceived notions, but he also pointed out the importance of the social aspect of the Course of Study:

There were four of us that kinda hung out together, we just kind of gravitated to each other. We kind of thought a lot alike—we didn't see that any one of us was exactly right on everything, but we just kind of saw eye to eye on some things and got along, agreed to disagree in some places, and we studied together a lot. We would sit out on the picnic tables and drill each other before tests about things. ... I think there was an influence from people that we studied together, that we ate lunch together. ... And I would assume that seminary, if somebody lives there all the time, would be the same. You kind of hang out, kind of just bond, I guess you could say, with some of these folks, including the professors.

This combination of formal classroom influence with informal conversation and bonding outside of class time forms the core of what Jackson Carroll and his colleagues discovered happening in both liberal and conservative seminaries as their lasting influence among students. They argue that formation of the habitus of ministerial students occurs in large part in direct proportion to the amount of time that they spend with each other and with professors and administrators at their schools:

[Some students] are so little involved in significant encounters with the culture, especially outside the classroom, that they miss immersion in the rich symbolic, ritual, and conversational life that takes place in chapel, hallways, dorm rooms, dining halls, or student hangouts. One must “be there” to be formed in any significant way by the culture. . . . The impact of the seminary’s culture on a student is in large measure a function of the extent of the student’s exposure to it. One must be there to be formed by it (Carroll et al. 1997, 267-8).

On the one hand, then, because sessions of the Course of Study are quite brief (two weeks for full-time pastors or weekends for part-time pastors) when compared to seminary programs (months and years of continuous contact), we see a built-in argument for the stronger formative power of seminary when compared to the Course of Study. On the other hand, as this pastor reminds us, significant socialization can still take place with local pastors who are engaged with the process and forge strong friendships with a cohort of fellow students who accompany them for each of five successive summer sessions. Significant learning and the formation of personal and professional dispositions takes place both inside and outside of the classroom.

More than any other single factor, it is the various opportunities outside the classroom that seminary graduates mentioned to me as being particularly influential for them in their own studies. One seminary-trained male elder who has had experience in teaching classes for the Course of Study later on in his career felt that this was one of the great arguments for seminary when compared to the Course of Study:

I’ve often said that I learned much more in seminary through the bull sessions around the Coke machine and in the elevator than I learned in the classrooms. And for that reason—this is a throw-in—I’m dead set against online seminary education. I just think the catalysis of being in a group—we just came out of a great lecture, did you agree with what he was saying, did you get what he was saying?—is one of the real strengths of seminary, and I would hate to see that lost. No, I would not say that even full-time Course of Study is a substitute for seminary education.

For the sake of long-term face-to-face conversations, we see here an argument for the higher value of seminary, precisely (and seemingly ironically) because it is a more time-consuming option.

Another male elder who has served on dCOMs and the conference BOM to evaluate pastors also saw the importance of activities outside the classroom:

For me, the residential seminary experience was very important, that sense of community, that sense of learning together, even with people who weren't necessarily at the same place I was vocationally or theologically, still feeling like we were all kind of working at similar things, having the chance to worship together at chapel and put that into practice, what we were seeing and doing in class, twice a week. . . . If I had my druthers, I would say everybody has to go to seminary and has to *go to* seminary. Go be there, go immerse yourself in that setting. Because in some ways it's a real luxury, and I think in some ways, helps to prepare a person who will end up in a local church in a lifetime of ministry, to develop some theological roots, some skills, some ability to think through things in a way that I think you probably can't do, or it's a lot harder to do if you're off site, and only doing things through some intensive courses or online courses, just because if you're doing some of those more convenient kind of seminary experiences, chances are you're doing something else as your main focus. I guess you could use different metaphors—seminary as incubation time, as time for roots to grow, pick your metaphor. But I just don't think there's any way around it. There's no substitute to giving time and energy and focus to learning stuff.

Even while making the argument for full-time immersion in a seminary environment for all clergy, this elder (among several that I interviewed) recognized the somewhat arbitrary distinctions annual conferences make between those pastors with seminary degrees and those without. By noting the historical foundations of our current system, he highlighted the fact that the current norm is not inevitable:

Course of Study is not normative for us. In the years I've been doing this, Course of Study, really, gets talked about as a gap filler. It's not normative; it's not the way that we expect people to go into the ministry. When I was on dCOM, we even had some conversations around that. I remember folks asking, should we be directing these people to seminary, is that our goal? If you look a little bit back at our history, though, Course

of Study *was* normative. That was the way you moved into full connection and all that kind of stuff. . . . That was before we had an established seminary system. We talk about seminary as if it's been around forever, but Candler and SMU are only now 100 years old.

This is an issue because, as Bourdieu notes, structural differentiation is correlated with domination, when those who control the expectations of what is normal do not support options that are outside the norm. This elder continued:

Like it or not, functionally, I think we look down on it, especially the folks who have been to seminary, because it's not normative. It's not the prescribed way. . . . I wonder if raising the status—I can't think of a better term than raising the status of Course of Study. There's a little bit of arrogance, or maybe there's a lot of arrogance. We as a denomination, for the most part, in our structure, have made a value judgment about seminary being better than Course of Study.

Because the Course of Study is viewed by so many as a subpar alternative to seminary for the training of clergy, concerns linger about whether local pastors are automatically viewed as subpar alternatives to elders in doing the work of pastors.

This brings us to the related questions being asked with increasing frequency within the Tennessee Conference, across the United Methodist Church, and throughout mainline Protestant denominations as those churches face increasing pressures to maintain a presence in American religious life: what makes for effectiveness among pastors? How is that effectiveness measured? And how does theological education contribute to that effective leadership? Current denominational efforts to define and promote excellence among clergy focus more on identifying key knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics already displayed by pastors identified as effective, and using those to identify potentially effective new clergy coming into the system and to train other pastors who demonstrate deficiencies (DeShon and Quinn 2007; DeShon 2010). However, these efforts are not (yet) aimed at modifying either the ways in which

theological education is conducted either through seminaries or the Course of Study. Many of the intervention and identification tasks recommended could be conducted regardless of the method of theological education that students undertake. Likewise, in the Tennessee Conference, efforts to promote pastoral effectiveness have taken the form of creating a clear set of standards regarding the performance of pastoral duties, and holding clergy accountable more closely for the performance of those duties. “On the basis of clear standards, accountability can be implemented and consistent supervision is experienced. . . . Standards clarify the task and enhance the probability of effectiveness as morale improves.” (Tennessee Conference 2012a, 15-6). Nowhere is theological education through seminary or Course of Study addressed in terms of encouraging the effectiveness of pastors in their work, however that effectiveness ends up being defined.

This potential disconnect between formal theological training and the effective conducting of pastoral work was noted by several survey respondents and interviewees in my research. There are leaders in the conference who recognize the ambiguous connection between formal theological training and pastoral effectiveness, even if those leaders may continue to advocate for seminary education for ministerial candidates. One female elder, a former dCOM and BOM leader, acknowledged:

I just guess my disclaimer on all of that is, just because you went to seminary doesn't mean you're going to be an effective pastor, and likewise, not going to seminary doesn't guarantee you're going to be an effective pastor. And I've seen effective pastors in both camps, and a part of it is the individual's sense of call, sense of commitment, what they're going to make out of the educational experiences they have. They tend to be lifelong learners, they soak things up all the time, in either seminary or local pastor. So I think there has to be something said about—it is what you make it. Just being in seminary and having a degree doesn't have any direct correlation with being effective. But I think among effective pastors, it has a significant effect.

Another leader with BOM experience, a male elder, noted how the Tennessee Conference has additional seminary course requirements for ordinands when compared to other annual conferences, yet might not be able to point to specific fruits from those requirements:

Tennessee, almost without fail in every instance, is the toughest to get through. We have three years [pastoral experience required after seminary and before ordination] instead of two, we have additional academic requirements, our residency requirements are usually more intense, our Orientation to Ministry is more intense. I've thought, so, is the end result that we have the best pastors in the denomination? Are we producing better pastors than the other conferences? From my perspective, the answer is no. We're producing good pastors, and in some cases, great pastors. But can we say that we're better preachers because we require additional preaching requirements? I don't think we can. Can we say that we're better pastoral care clergy because we require that? I don't think we can. So I think for me, it is a time to reevaluate some of those things. I'm pretty sure that whoever decided that we needed all these additional academic requirements, thought that, well, we need to make sure we have better preachers, so we'll require them to take more preaching classes, and pastoral care classes, and the end result will be that we'll have better pastors and preachers. And I don't think we can say that.

Of course, such pastoral effectiveness, whether defined as better preaching or pastoral care skills, greater sense of commitment, or higher numerical growth of church membership, is not the only possible goal for attending seminary. Elders told me repeatedly that seminary provided a time of tremendous personal formation and a safe environment to ask difficult questions that they had a hard time imagining coming any other way. But to the extent that theological education is explored in the context of current denominational or annual conference conversations about effective leadership in local churches, there are not yet many compelling arguments taking place that seminary provides a superior experience to the Course of Study model of education.

Important Factors in Making Pastoral Appointments

Pastoral effectiveness continues to come into play as bishops and cabinets make decisions about where to appoint pastors to do their work each year. To find out how elders and local pastors may differ in their assessments about which factors are the most important in making these decisions, I adapted another question from Dallas Blanchard's survey of Alabama-West Florida Conference clergy in the 1980s. Listed in Table 11 are the various factors available for survey response, listed in increasing order of p-value derived from chi-square analysis (that is, in decreasing likelihood that there is a significant difference in responses between elders and local pastors).

Just as with other questions that ask about the value of theological education, the greatest disagreement between elders and local pastors regarding factors related to appointing pastors is in their assessment about the importance of seminary. While 63.5% of elders see seminary education as a "quite important" or "critically important" factor for consideration, 72.0% of local pastors characterized it as "slightly important" or "not important at all." This echoes Blanchard's findings (1981) that support for seminary education as a factor for appointment was higher among all types of seminary graduates than among nongraduates.

Local pastors also took the opportunity to express displeasure about how a seminary education could assist elders in achieving and maintaining desirable church appointments, especially when those elders are perceived to lack other gifts and skills necessary to lead those churches effectively. One white male local pastor lamented: "I think the appointment system is good but I feel pastors should be appointed by their ability to lead a church and help it become disciples for Christ, not necessarily by their

Table 11—Importance of Factors in Making Pastoral Appointments (by percentage)				
Q21: How important do you think the following factors should be in making pastoral appointments?	Not important at all	Slightly important	Quite important	Critically important
SEMINARY EDUCATION (n=209; p-value=0.000)				
Elders	3.0	33.6	46.3	17.2
Local Pastors	26.7	45.3	21.3	6.7
SUPPORT FOR GENERAL CONFERENCE POSITIONS AND DECISIONS (n=204; p-value=0.013)				
Elders	16.4	50.0	29.9	3.7
Local Pastors	12.2	36.5	36.5	14.9
PASTOR'S ABILITY TO BUILD STRONG LOCAL CHURCH PROGRAMS (n=207; p-value=0.016)				
Elders	0.0	12.9	60.6	26.5
Local Pastors	4.0	16.0	42.7	37.3
NEW MEMBERS GAINED UNDER PASTOR'S LEADERSHIP (n=207; p-value=0.034)				
Elders	0.7	41.0	46.3	11.9
Local Pastors	6.8	49.3	34.2	9.6
PASTOR'S SALARY (n=207; p-value=0.210)				
Elders	9.0	48.1	39.8	3.0
Local Pastors	10.8	58.1	25.7	5.4
WORSHIP ATTENDANCE UNDER PASTOR'S LEADERSHIP (n=208; p-value=0.214)				
Elders	0.7	28.4	55.2	15.7
Local Pastors	4.1	35.1	44.6	16.2
PASTOR'S ABILITY TO GET SUPPORT FOR APPOINTMENTS (n=206; p-value=0.289)				
Elders	8.2	42.5	43.3	6.0
Local Pastors	8.3	37.5	40.3	13.9

OPINIONS OF PASTOR-PARISH (OR STAFF-PARISH) RELATIONS COMMITTEE (n=207; p-value=0.432)				
Elders	1.5	27.1	61.7	9.8
Local Pastors	2.7	18.9	63.5	14.9
LENGTH OF PASTOR'S SERVICE (n=205; p-value=0.463)				
Elders	8.3	35.3	47.4	9.0
Local Pastors	2.8	40.3	48.6	8.3
PASTOR'S INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY ISSUES AND PROBLEMS (n=205; p-value=0.554)				
Elders	3.8	28.0	55.3	12.9
Local Pastors	4.1	32.9	45.2	17.8

education attainments, but track record. There's no substitute for experience. There's too much backbiting in conference circles over appointments.” Another white male local pastor noted, “I am somewhat filled with apprehension as I sometimes feel we look too much to education and economics.” While the next chapter in my study deals more fully with the ways in which elders reap the benefits of their status through appointments to desirable positions, I note here that local pastors appear to express a widespread concern about the role seminary education plays in undergirding the appointive process as it currently exists in the Tennessee Conference.

The most surprising factor in this question concerned the factor of “support for General Conference positions and decisions.” Blanchard found in 1981 that the highest level of support for promoting the decisions of the denomination’s quadrennial decision-making body came from graduates of the “graduate school” category of seminaries, the most theologically liberal of the seminary graduates. In the current climate of the Tennessee Conference, however, it is not the elders who give the greatest support for

loyalty to denominational positions in decisions regarding appointments. Rather, it is local pastors who more often list this adherence as a “critically important” or “highly important” factor (51.4% for local pastors vs. 33.6% for elders). My reading of this discrepancy comes from Blanchard’s assessment that, in his study, graduate school seminary graduates had a more outward-looking viewpoint, what he calls “secular awareness,” that prioritized community involvement and the social issues often championed in General Conference resolutions (ecological awareness, efforts to fight sexism and racism, support for organized labor, etc.) (Blanchard 1981, 352). Today, on the other hand, most discussion of General Conference positions for Tennessee Conference clergy and laity seems to revolve around one cluster of issues—homosexuality and the place of LGBT persons in our denomination. Even though the UMC’s Book of Discipline affirms that “all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God,” the denomination “does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching” (United Methodist Church 2012, 110-1). As such, it currently maintains its decades-long prohibition against allowing the pastoral leadership of “self-avowed practicing homosexuals,” and continues to prohibit same-sex weddings and unions by its clergy and in its congregations.

These positions are the most hotly contested social and theological positions for General Conference gatherings, and they occupy a great deal of attention for both liberal and conservative clergy who hold strong feelings on either side of them. One self-described progressive white male elder noted on the survey: “The biggest challenge is our denomination's stance on homosexuality and same sex marriage. We have lost (or are

losing) all credibility with young adults and youth by standing on the wrong side of a civil rights debate, and with God, who creates, blesses, and calls into ministry and/or marriage covenants, heterosexual and homosexual alike.” On the other side, a conservative white male local pastor noted: “The UMC needs to take a strong stand with its stance toward homosexuality. Homosexuals are welcome in the church as any sinner is, but if a known drunk or child abuser wouldn't be allowed to work in the church then neither should homosexuals.” In the middle are many clergy who feel that “we need to find a way to love each other and get along even when we disagree about homosexuality” (from a white male clergy describing himself as somewhat conservative). Regardless of one's position regarding the inclusion of LGBT persons in church leadership or support for same-sex marriage rights, “support for General Conference positions” has largely become a surrogate phrase for “support for current denominational restrictions regarding homosexuality” in the minds of many in the UMC. With that shift over the past three decades in mind, the distinction between Blanchard's findings and my own are easier to reconcile.

The only two remaining factors for which there is significant difference between local pastors and elders have less immediate intuitive rationales for those differences. When asked about a “pastor's ability to build strong local church programs,” 37.3% of local pastors named this as a “critical factor” (compared to 26.5% of elders), while 60.6% of elders noted this as a matter that is “quite important” (compared to 42.7% of local pastors). Similarly, 58.2% of elders see “new members gained under pastor's leadership” as either quite or critically important for deciding on appointments, as compared to 43.8% of local pastors. To be sure, these are widely discussed concerns for all pastors and

all congregations in the Tennessee Conference. Additionally, though, these are key points of current conversation at the annual conference level. The 2012 FACT report deals repeatedly with the membership issue, borrowing a concept of from Lovett Weems at the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary, “the ‘death tsunami’ of the United Methodist Church’s core members—in other words, the dying off of older, generous church members who currently represent a large percentage of our total membership. The average age in the United States is 35, whereas in The United Methodist Church it is 57” (Tennessee Conference 2012a, 12-3). Reversing this trend requires active recruiting of new members to modify church demographics, and the FACT report suggests a model for measuring church health that asks as one of its ten questions, “How many years in the last 10 have new members exceeded lost members?” (2012a, 19). To the concern of creating strong church programs, the authors of the FACT report suggest a reunification of programmatic and evangelistic concerns that began to be separated in the UMC in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (2012a, 6-7). The fact that these concerns are becoming a greater part of conversations among conference leadership, to the exclusion of other factors listed in the survey which did not show significant distinction between local pastors and elders (e.g., pastor’s salary, opinions of pastor-parish relations committees, length of pastor’s service) may give a clue about why these factors loom larger in the minds of elders, who have shown in other ways a greater ownership of conference-level conversations and greater trust of the direction leaders are taking the churches in the annual conference.

Ministry as Profession

Recognition of pastoral ministry as a trained and credentialed profession among other modern professions remains a contested designation among United Methodist clergy. Questions 32 and 33 on my survey were designed to help measure the value of professional recognition by Tennessee Conference pastors. As the figures in Tables 12 and 13 show, when clergy were asked directly about the amount of professional respect they perceive and about the importance of such recognition, there is no significantly significant differentiation between elders and local pastors on either point. When asked, “do you feel respected as a professional person in your community, alongside members of other recognized professions (physicians, attorneys, etc.)?”, 86.8% of elders answered affirmatively, as did 88.7% of local pastors. When asked, “Is it important for you to receive such professional recognition and respect from community members outside your church(es)?”, majorities of both elders (52.3%) and local pastors (58.6%) said “no.”

Table 12—Feel Respected as a Professional (by percentage)		
Q32: Do you feel respected as a professional person in your community, alongside members of other recognized professions (physicians, attorneys, etc.)?	Elders	Local Pastors
Yes	86.8	88.7
No	13.2	11.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
(n=200; p-value=0.696)		

Table 13—Importance of Professional Recognition (by percentage)		
Q33: Is it important for you to receive such professional recognition and respect from community members outside your church(es)?	Elders	Local Pastors
Yes	47.7	41.4
No	52.3	58.6
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
(n=198; p-value=0.400)		

In part, this lack of distinction between the categories of pastors indicates a certain degree of commonality of intent for many pastors in the annual conference. While they generally feel a level of respect for the role they fill in their churches and in their communities, this recognition is not a primary driving force for most to enter church ministry, at least not a factor that they acknowledge consciously or publicly. In other responses outside of these two questions, we begin to see a bit more of a distinction in how elders and local pastors approach the issue of professional identity, beginning with some uneasiness about whether professional status is something to be consciously pursued. Local pastors were more ready to express discomfort with the idea that ministry should bring with it an identity of being a professional among other professionals. At the end of the survey, when I gave respondents an opportunity to offer any thoughts about the questions that were asked (or that they wish had been asked), one white female local pastor noted, “the last question about recognition and respect. It doesn't matter to me if I am recognized or not, but to be respected is gratifying. That question was difficult.” Another white female local pastor took that opportunity to speak against professional recognition as a form of self-aggrandizement: “Many of the questions seem to focus on the pastor lifting themselves up as being recognized as a professional even up close to doctors, etc. I don't think that pastors should seek to have that type of an image—considering Christ.” No elders gave similar demurrals.

By way of contrast, some elders found ways of expressing the positive aspects of maintaining a professional identity for pastors. In response to a question asking about the fairness of the appointment-making process each year, one white female elder cited professional identity and standards as a means of dealing with ineffective clergy: “I do

not worry about this. I pray about it. I think basing a pastoral appointment on salary is terribly unfaithful to our call to ministry. I also think appointing ineffective pastors is intolerable. Physicians who cannot do surgery are not allowed the knife. This is a professional call in ministry—it should be treated as such.”

Other elders defended the various means of professional preparation and evaluation performed in the ordination process, specifically as a way of defending professional identity for clergy. One male elder spoke to the need of rigorous graduate-level education as a way of inculcating professional identity in seminarians:

This may be arrogance on my part, but I perceive the ministry as a profession, and I cannot imagine someone learning to be a medical doctor off a computer. I can't imagine anyone learning to be a lawyer by taking courses on the internet. Both of those professions rely fundamentally on sharing, explaining, dealing with one another in the process of learning. And I think that is crucial for ministers, as well. You know, a senior doctor will take a group of students on rounds and say, “read this last report on this page, what's the matter with this patient?” The whole crew talks about it and understands it. It's not a computer saying, “what do you think is wrong with this patient?” The same way with the lawyer, or any other profession for that matter. The greatest learning comes from interaction among the students, and among the students and the teachers.

Another male elder defended both the need for advanced education and the process whereby some candidates for ministry are found lacking and denied clergy membership in the annual conference:

There are reasons we do evaluation, in a similar way that there are reasons that lawyers have tests and evaluations, and doctors have tests and evaluations. I think the modern picture of a pastor, at least in our system, is the professional model that says, “You need to be educated, you need to be credentialed, you need to be tried and tested, and you need to be able to hold up to that, and if you don't, then it would be irresponsible for us as the credentialing body—it wouldn't be fair to you and it certainly wouldn't be fair to the church to turn you loose on them and them loose on you.” And a lot of people, the occasional people who end up not making it out of the process, usually they're disappointed, they're hurt. But I think I

would stand behind the process and say, you know what, if it caught you, it probably was supposed to.

Even if elders and local pastors do not consciously seek professional recognition as a reward for their work, the markers of modern professional identity—particularly formal graduate education and supervision and evaluation by one’s peers—continue to be more actively defended by elders who have both a seminary education and the standing to pass judgment on other clergy coming into their fold.

Another contested expectation when examining the model of pastors as professional people is the nature of the relationships between clergy and congregants in the churches they serve. Because parishioners are not clients who hire and pay for the services of pastors in the way that litigants or medical patients might, the nature of these relationships remains an argument for some against the standard professional model for pastors (Holifield 2007, 327-8). Some continue to argue that the professional model remains theologically weak and practically unsustainable (e.g., Zaragoza 1999). Nevertheless, the professional model for clergy relationships with their congregants continues to dominate discussions in the UMC. The denominational handbook for annual conference Boards of Ordained Ministry points out: “Based on a professional ethics approach, ministers must be more than just model laypersons. . . . Ministry is a sacred trust, and those serving in set-apart ministry must be able to exercise the basic obligations of this trust without harming others, much as physicians are expected to keep the Hippocratic Oath” (GBHEM 2012, 125). A great deal of attention has been given to improper clergy relationships that lead to sexual misconduct perpetrated against parishioners, and the professional model for clergy couches best practices in preventing clergy sexual abuse in terms of maintaining healthy boundaries between pastor and

parishioner. This is often phrased in a manner that encompasses not only sexual relationships but platonic friendships as well:

Professional relationships differ from personal relationships in the degree of reciprocity. Ministerial relationships are asymmetrical: the pastor is there to serve the needs of the parishioner (fiduciary duty), not the other way around. The pastor is expected to provide certain services and expertise and to have the appropriate training and institutional accountability to carry out her duties. The parishioner expects that the pastor has other outlets to satisfy her own needs. Personal relationships, on the other hand, are more mutual and less well-defined. Friendships are built on the expectation of being there for each other. The mutuality of friendship means personal sharing back and forth and mutual support. Sexual intimacy, for example, should be characterized by mutuality and reciprocity. Not so the relationship between pastor and parishioner (GBHEM 2010, 10).

This excerpt from one of the UMC's training manuals on preventing clergy sexual misconduct reflects the current climate among denominational leaders and many pastors in which relationships between pastors and church members should hew much closer to the professional-client model than to the friendship model.

With that in mind, questions 30 and 31 on my survey asked pastors: "Do you have close personal friendships with members of the church(es) you currently serve as pastor?" and "Do you continue to maintain close personal friendships with members of churches you have formerly served as pastor?" Results were quite similar when comparing local pastors with elders (Tables 14 and 15). 66.4% of elders and 67.1% of local pastors claimed close friendships with current church members, while slight majorities—51.6% of elders and 52.9% of local pastors—said they no longer maintained close friendships with former church members. For both groups of clergy, then, the professional model for relationships with parishioners as clients, whatever else that may mean, does not appear to limit significantly the personal bonds formed with those members.

Table 14—Personal Friendships with Current Parishioners (by percentage)		
Q30: Do you have close personal friendships with members of the church(es) you currently serve as pastor?	Elders	Local Pastors
Yes	66.4	67.1
No	33.6	32.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
(n=198; p-value=0.916)		

Table 15—Personal Friendships with Former Parishioners (by percentage)		
Q31: Do you continue to maintain close personal friendships with members of churches you have formerly served as pastor?	Elders	Local Pastors
Yes	48.4	47.1
No	51.6	52.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
(n=192; p-value=0.860)		

Conclusion

Local pastors and elders are both charged with conducting pastoral tasks—leading worship, engaging in pastoral care of congregants, organizing the activities of local churches—and in many ways, their approach to their work is quite similar, regardless of their ministry settings. There are places where differences exist, however, and taken together, the distinctions outlined in this chapter portray an overall difference in habitus that affects the impulses and taken-for-granted assumptions of these clergy. Local pastors are significantly more likely to describe themselves as theologically conservative, while elders are much more likely to see themselves as theologically liberal, even when overall general levels of education are taken into account. While this has implications on specifically theological issues (interpretation of scripture, for instance), it also correlates with stances on heated social issues such as the role and treatment of LGBT persons in the church and in the wider world. These divergent stances contribute to the much-discussed lack of trust between those with differing viewpoints. Although there is no

clear cause-and-effect relationship between clergy status and theological orientation, an ongoing lack of significant time spent in collegial conversation with one another about their work leads to an understanding that there is currently little opportunity for either group to affect the outlook of the other, ensuring that the groups will likely remain at odds with one another for the foreseeable future. To borrow an insight from Jackson Carroll and his collaborators about seminaries, it seems clear that any pastor cannot be greatly influenced by alternative viewpoints unless they spend consistent time being exposed to those viewpoints— “one must ‘be there’ to be formed in any significant way by the culture” (Carroll et al. 1997, 267).

Along with others who have drawn from his work, Bourdieu helps us understand the power of these prolonged interactions in shaping the outlooks of those who enter into pastoral leadership. Bourdieu himself grounds his observations about the interaction between habitus and educational processes in the idea that the ways of thinking and existing that schools seek to instill in their students tend to privilege the cultural capital of the dominant social class (Reed-Danahay 2005, 47). In this way, those who already hold powerful positions in a field of endeavor help decide which skills and modes of functioning neophytes will be required to master; this “feel for the game” translates into a specialized habitus for professionals entering any particular field (Bourdieu 1991b, 176). Others who have followed Bourdieu have given more credence to the creative interplay between the norms of an educational institution and the primary habitus of the students enrolled there, noting that the secondary habitus that results as an outcome of their time at the institutions may be characterized as the outcome of constant, active negotiations between students and institutions (Carroll et al. 1997, 222-50; Topham 2000, 132-4).

Thus, for those who enter seminary and work toward becoming United Methodist elders, their habitus is shaped not only by the early religious experiences in their personal lives, but also by the expectations and norms of the seminaries they attend. For local pastors, they may continue to be shaped much more closely by their experiences in local congregations, without extensive additional training in professional expectations. This yields differing expectations and prioritization of activities between the two groups, at points.

For several typical pastoral activities in a congregation (programming church activities, study and writing, conducting committee meetings, teaching, and preaching), there is wide agreement between elders and local pastors about how they enjoy those practices. Elders had higher levels of professed enjoyment for leading conference and district activities, while local pastors were more likely to express enjoyment for leading persons to professions of faith, visiting in homes, personal counseling, and leading in community activities. These divisions suggest a somewhat higher level of connection between elders and the Tennessee Conference to which they belong as members in full connection, as well as somewhat firmer ties between local pastors and their church members and the communities in which they reside. Although the details differed in places, the overall picture found in the Tennessee Conference correlates in many ways with Blanchard's earlier findings (1981) that those clergy without seminary degrees more clearly mirrored the culture of the local areas in which they serve, while those with degrees and credentials will have a higher valuation of the shared culture that comes with their own leadership experiences in the annual conference itself.

Similarly, elders are somewhat more likely than local pastors to lead worship in ways that connect them not only to other Tennessee Conference clergy and other UMC clergy, but also to other mainline Protestant bodies with whom United Methodists are in ecumenical partnerships. Elders are more likely to use the lectionary as the basis for their sermons, and to wear clerical vestments as they lead worship (at least in services that are deemed “traditional” in style). While both groups of clergy report usage of official United Methodist communion liturgies and regular encouragement of new parents to present their children for baptism, elders are significantly less likely to conduct an infant dedication in opposition to denominational and annual conference policy. We can surmise that, on several points, elders have been more fully inculcated with the manner of conducting worship that is actively encouraged by conference leadership, and that local pastors’ differences in practice (at least in the case of infant dedications) may be tied to a discreet opposition to what they see as improper priorities on the part of conference leaders.

On those points where elders and local pastors differed regarding the importance of various factors in preparing pastors for their work, local pastors were nearly unanimous in their view that a personal calling by God is of critical importance, while elders were somewhat less emphatic on that point. Elders had higher valuations of formal theological education and preparation in supervised ministry settings, as well as the formal examination of calling through church structures. Together, we see a distinction here between local pastors who more highly value an internal divine calling as the most important (and, for many, the only critically important) factor in preparing them for their work, and elders who are more willing to claim other external preparatory factors as also

being critically important. In choosing to pursue education through the Course of Study as opposed to seminary, local pastors more often cite practical concerns (cost, time commitment, personal/family constraints), while elders report choosing to attend seminary more often as a result of personal recommendations from others. Once again, these findings may be related to the lesser amount of collegial interaction that local pastors tend to have with elders. Without significant ongoing exposure to those who have had positive educational experiences or who make up the supervisory bodies to which they are accountable, local pastors have little time to learn to trust the system of education and supervision that is part of annual conference oversight.

Education remains a primary divider on the question of what factors would be considered in making pastoral appointments, with elders valuing seminary education at a much higher rate than do local pastors. Elders also had a higher valuation of building strong congregational programs and gaining new membership to help make decisions about appointments. Both of these are concerns for all churches, but are increasingly part of conference-level conversations about congregational health and clergy effectiveness, conversations that elders may be exposed to at higher rates than local pastors. The only factor in making appointments for which local pastors showed significantly higher levels of support than elders was in a pastor's support for General Conference positions, a consideration that may have largely become a proxy for concerns about changing stances related to sexual minorities.

While answers to direct survey questions show similar responses between elders and local pastors regarding the importance of professional development and recognition, other factors that are related to professional identity (methods of education, oversight by

peers) paint a picture of stronger professional identity for elders than for local pastors. With seminaries struggling to meet shifting challenges to their missions and with an increasing number of local pastors foregoing seminary education and the full path toward full connection membership at all, the professional model for United Methodist ministry will continue to face increasing scrutiny regarding its adequacy. This scrutiny is particularly pressing in terms of the questions about what relationship exists between traditional forms of clergy education and emerging definitions of clergy effectiveness.

What can we learn from all of these factors? Seen together, they suggest that, while both elders and local pastors technically have their church membership vested in the annual conference, it is elders who have a fuller sense of their identity vested in that membership. Their “full connection” membership comes after a more protracted period of seminary education, more in-depth examination, and fuller opportunities to take leadership in the annual conference. Elders more highly value higher education, both as an end in itself and as an important part of a broader professional identity that binds them to each other and credentials them in the eyes of others outside the church. This is not to say that elders do not also form deep connections with those in the congregations they typically serve; in fact, two thirds report close friendships with current parishioners, and nearly half continue those friendships once they have moved on to new appointments. Still, these responses help us see some of the practical ways in which elders have one foot in their local appointments and the other in the annual conference, with all of the divisions of attention and identity that comes with that divided focus. Ideally, local and higher-level mission and purpose would align, but in any cases where the impulses of congregations deviate from guidance given by higher level leadership, elders must

negotiate between those differing aims, with a sense of loyalty to both. Local pastors often seem more ready to choose the perceived needs of their congregations, whenever possible.

CHAPTER 5—CAPITAL

In identifying the resources that are helpful to them as pastors, Tennessee Conference clergy had a great deal of commonality in their answers to survey questions designed to assess which areas of United Methodist structure and programming are beneficial for their work. Many elders and local pastors noted the connectional polity of the United Methodist Church as a benefit in itself. One white female elder cited as helpful: “The Connectional nature of The United Methodist Church that keeps us from feeling isolated. The way we can be part of something larger even when we are small.” A white male local pastor echoed this feeling: “The connectional structure that governs the United Methodist Church is its most helpful aspect. This structure naturally bridges support from other churches and a sense of belonging to the bigger picture of God's Kingdom.” When citing more specific resources for their work, both elders and local pastors named the bishops and district superintendents, fellow clergy, a shared liturgy, denominational boards and agencies, and conference educational programs as particularly supportive assets. All of these qualify as forms of organizational capital for clergy.

At the same time, elders and local pastors, although sharing in a common stated purpose to lead congregations in their ministries, also differ considerably in the amounts of capital they have at their disposal to conduct the work assigned to them. The resources that fall into this conception of capital are wide-ranging: educational, social, and financial. Because the differential levels of access to these forms of capital shape the way these categories of clergy conduct their work, I will identify in this chapter how these forms of capital affect the ways in which elders and local pastors participate in the religious field of the Tennessee Conference.

Education as Capital

In Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, educational processes are not only formative for individuals' enduring dispositions as seen in their habitus, but they also give rise to forms of symbolic capital that allow those with educational degrees to achieve higher status positions in their social fields. In the case of United Methodist annual conferences, the seminary education pursued by those seeking to be ordained as elders not only forms their outlooks and dispositions for the ways in which they will conduct their work, but the Master of Divinity degree itself serves as a form of capital that eases their transition into various forms of leadership in the conference. Finke and Dougherty (2002) point to this as a distinct form of capital available to seminary graduates (and not to laity or non-seminary trained clergy) in the form of relationships and interpersonal attachments with fellow students and alumni/ae. This social capital creates bonding between those who go through seminary together, while simultaneously decreasing social cohesion between seminary graduates and laity in the churches they serve (2002, 105-6).

As we would expect from the academic requirements placed on elders in the United Methodist Church, their formal educational level overall is significantly higher than that for local pastors in the Tennessee Conference. Ordained elders have obtained master's or doctoral degrees at nearly four times the rate as local pastors (Table 1). Historically, pastoral ministry in the United Methodist Church has been an option for those without a great deal of formal education to achieve a level of professional standing in their communities (Patterson 1985, 68-73). Although such recognition began in the era before seminary education was the norm, it continues today for licensed local pastors.

Q4: What is your highest level of formal education?	Elders	Local Pastors
Less than high school graduate	0.0	0.0
High school graduate/GED	0.0	5.4
Some college, trade, or vocational school	0.0	31.1
College degree	0.7	35.1
Master's degree	71.5	25.7
Doctoral degree	27.7	2.7
Other	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

Over a third of those local pastors serving in the Tennessee Conference continue to serve in that capacity without benefit of a bachelor's degree.

This differentiation, however, did not arise in a vacuum. Not only are local pastors much less likely to have earned college or graduate level degrees, but they also come from families in which their parents are much less likely to have done so. When we examine the educational levels of pastors' parents, we see a powerful reminder that educational achievement in one generation is correlated with that of their predecessors. Those parents who have themselves been formed by higher education are much more likely to place a higher value on that experience, and therefore more likely to encourage their children to achieve similar levels of education. Thus, educational capital may be traced through generations of families in the form of both a high valuation placed on educational achievement as well as the financial freedom to choose to pursue college and advanced theological degrees. More than 47 percent of elders come from families where their fathers have a college or more advanced degree, compared to less than 20 percent of local pastors (Table 2). Similar patterns hold true for pastors' mothers, as well (Table 2), with the recognition that educational levels for women across the board still lag behind those for men. Nearly 39 percent of elders have mothers with college or advanced degrees, compared to less than 15 percent of local pastors.

	Q5: What is your father's highest level of formal education?		Q6: What is your mother's highest level of formal education?	
	Elders	Local Pastors	Elders	Local Pastors
Less than high school graduate	13.8	34.7	10.1	18.4
High school graduate/GED	21.7	31.9	26.6	50.0
Some college, trade, or vocational school	16.7	13.9	24.5	17.1
College degree	23.9	13.9	26.6	9.2
Master's degree	14.5	5.6	12.2	5.3
Doctoral degree	9.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Bourdieu's views on education as a means of cultural transmission across generations support these findings: children who come from families where formal higher education is accomplished by parents are more likely to pursue similar higher education for themselves, even apart from economic ability and incentives to do so, because they have been endowed with a desire for this form of education, an appreciation of which is itself a form of cultural capital in Bourdieu's framework. "The academic market tends to sanction and to reproduce the distribution of cultural capital by proportioning academic success to the amount of cultural capital bequeathed by the family. ... [Academic] success is directly dependent on cultural capital and on the inclination to invest in the academic market" (Bourdieu 1996, 76, 84). Such a divide in educational capital in the membership and leadership of Protestant denominations is also tied to the "cultural cleavage" that Robert Wuthnow has depicted erupting as the most recent form of intra-denomination demarcation, one in which tensions between liberal and conservative camps have largely supplanted previous divides between denominations. He observes that educational levels themselves have now become a potent form of religious and social

differentiation (Wuthnow 1988, 162-3). Ongoing work on the effects of higher education on religiosity stands as a reminder against overly simplistic causative models of education on secularization or social liberalism (Uecker et al. 2007; Schwadel 2015), even while supporting correspondence between formal postsecondary education and changed social outlooks. For the purposes of this study, it is important to acknowledge the role of higher education as a form of capital that is valued by conference leadership who themselves tend to have accrued the same educational capital.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that local pastors who lack this form of educational capital are more sensitive to the idea that they may be treated more poorly by conference officials (who themselves overwhelmingly are ordained clergy with seminary degrees) because of this deficiency. In the survey question asking about how fairly they have been treated by conference officials regarding several different factors (Table 3), the one point on which elders and local pastors had significant disagreement about their overall treatment by conference officials had to do with their level of education. While other survey questions established varying levels of support for and valuation of formal educational achievement, this question showed a clear perception of unfair treatment based on differences in educational status. While 87.8% of elders felt they were treated “somewhat fairly” or “very fairly” regarding their educational achievements, only 69.5% of local pastors made the same claim. When local pastors elaborated on this concern, they

Table 3—Perceptions of Fair Treatment—Education (by percentage)				
Q29: How fairly do you feel you have been treated by conference officials with regard to:	Very unfairly	Somewhat unfairly	Somewhat fairly	Very fairly
YOUR LEVEL OF EDUCATION (n=205; p-value=0.003)				
Elders	3.3	8.9	23.6	64.2
Local Pastors	6.9	23.6	30.6	38.9

felt hindered both in terms of appointments open to them as well as the respect shown to them by conference leadership. As one local pastor stated: “there is a stigma between those with advanced degrees and the local pastors, the church leadership only seems to listen to those with advanced degrees and not the local pastors that serve the majority of the base support for the church.”

Pastoral Appointments as Capital

For pastors in the religious field of the Tennessee Annual Conference, capital can also be measured through the type of pastoral appointment each pastor receives. Setting aside special appointments outside a local church for the moment, the “common wisdom” among clergy is that a pastor may typically expect to move from smaller membership churches with lower salaries to larger churches with higher salaries over the course of her/his ministerial career, with the larger churches being seen as the preferable appointments. In addition, since local pastors are viewed as de facto adjuncts to elders in pastoral ministry (although official descriptions almost never describe them in this way), local pastors will often be more restricted in their appointments to smaller membership churches over the course of their careers. One mitigating factor in this trend has to do with the greater flexibility that comes with serving as a local pastor; it is possible for them to serve as part time pastoral leaders while retaining additional jobs outside their churches, a situation that some find preferable for their family situations. Other local pastors, however, would seek full-time positions if they were available, but are required to maintain outside work to support their families because they are not offered full-time work in churches.

Although the survey responses summarized in Table 4 did not contain enough

Table 4—Pastoral Positions of Clergy (by percentage)		
Q11: For your current (or most recent) pastoral appointment, what is your position?	Elders	Local Pastors
Sole pastor of single church	40.7	54.5
Sole pastor of multiple point charge	10.4	33.8
Associate pastor	15.6	6.5
Senior pastor of multiple-pastor church	17.8	1.3
Extension ministry/Conference or District staff/Other	15.6	3.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

granularity to trace an exact hierarchy of pastoral positions ranked by desirability, we can make some general observations about the two pastoral categories regarding the preferability of various positions. “Sole pastor of single church” is the category that encompasses the plurality of pastors in each category; it is also probably the most wide-ranging in terms of the salaries received and the range of church memberships served by the pastors described in this way. “Associate pastor,” similarly, occupies an intermediate ground in the conference, whose salaries tend to be neither the highest nor lowest available, and who are able to work with quite large numbers of parishioners, but with less decision-making capabilities than senior pastors at the same churches.

Thus, the most helpful categories for this observation are the ones at the edges. A “sole pastor of multiple point charge” serves as the one pastor for two or more churches at once; that is, those churches which tend to have small memberships that necessitate working together with other small membership churches for the support of a single pastor. This “charge” structure is a holdover from the days when circuit-riding Methodist preachers would serve a circuit of many churches over a large geographic area, being resident in each of those places for only a few Sundays each year. This allows for a significant alternative to the option of churches maintaining only part-time pastoral positions, if each church were to be served by a distinct pastor. It is not

surprising, then, that just over a tenth of elders surveyed serve a multiple point charge, compared to a full third of responding local pastors. Conversely, while over 17 percent of elders surveyed serve as the senior pastor of a church large enough to employ multiple pastors on staff, only 1.3 percent of local pastors can say the same. Unsurprisingly, these are the positions that tend to garner the highest salaries for pastors in churches, with the greatest status and decision-making capabilities that affect the largest number of people in their spheres of influence. The appointive process used by bishops and their cabinets here have evolved to trust elders who have been seminary educated and shaped by the ordination process to lead the largest churches in the conference.

Another way to view this phenomenon of the desirability of various pastoral positions is by looking at the membership of churches served by elders and local pastors (Table 5). Fully half of local pastors serve churches (or multi-church charges) with membership less than 100, compared to only 10 percent of elders who do so. On the other end of the spectrum, 18 percent of elders serve on the staff of churches with membership greater than 1,000 (either as senior or associate pastors), while only 2.6 percent of local pastors do so. Again, whether or not there are specific, conscious reasons used by bishops in making decisions in this way, elders are significantly more likely than local pastors to

Q12: For your current (or most recent) pastoral appointment, what is the total membership of the church(es) you serve?	Elders	Local Pastors
Less than 100	10.1	50.6
101-200	20.1	32.5
201-500	18.7	10.4
501-750	10.8	2.6
751-1,000	7.9	0.0
Greater than 1,000	18.0	2.6
I do not currently pastor churches.	14.4	1.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

be appointed to churches with greater memberships, giving them greater influence (and greater social capital within their religious field).

Another important (though somewhat less distinct) means of measuring the capital inherent in various pastoral appointments can be derived from noting their geographic setting (Table 6). There are at least two reasons why urban (or suburban) church settings are more advantageous for pastors serving there, as compared to appointments to more rural settings. First are the considerations for a pastor's family: if a church is located in a larger city instead of a rural locale, there will be greater opportunities for that pastor's spouse to have a well-paying career, as well as larger schools with more varied classes and extracurricular activities for the pastor's children. Second: proximity to larger cities is correlated with proximity to those in decision-making positions in the annual conference and its constituent districts. Pastors who are already living and working in these cities will be more likely to attend clergy meetings and workshops (and therefore to be active members of influential committees), to have informal in-person conversations with bishops and district superintendents, etc. In this line of thinking, Nashville is the most desirable urban area in the Tennessee Conference (as the largest city and seat of conference offices), with other cities that house district

Q13: For your current (or most recent) pastoral appointment, what is the setting of the primary church in your current appointment?	Elders	Local Pastors
Rural or open country	14.4	48.1
Town of less than 10,000 residents	15.1	28.6
In or around city of 10,000-49,999 residents	21.6	9.1
In or around city of 50,000-249,999 residents	10.1	3.9
In or around city of 250,000 residents or more	26.6	7.8
I do not currently pastor churches.	12.2	2.6
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

offices serving as a second tier in terms of desirability (Clarksville, Columbia, Cookeville, Pulaski, Murfreesboro, and Hendersonville)¹⁶. It is no accident that district offices tend to be located in cities with population density that is higher than average; six out of the seven district offices for the Tennessee Conference are located among the 14 cities in the boundaries of the Conference with population of 25,000 or greater.

With that in mind, it is noteworthy to observe that local pastors, as a whole, are much more likely to serve churches in rural areas or small towns, while elders are more likely to serve churches in somewhat larger urban areas (at least by Tennessee standards of population). 48 percent of responding local pastors describe their churches as being located in rural or open country; that number rises to over 76 percent if towns of less than 10,000 residents are included. Conversely, over 58 percent of elders serve churches in towns of more than 10,000 residents, with over a quarter of elders serving in towns of over 250,000 people. To the extent that accessibility to the resources provided by urban areas (jobs, schools, and proximity to decision making apparatuses of the conference) are desirable to pastors, elders as a group have significantly higher levels of access than do local pastors.

Itinerancy/Guaranteed Appointment as Capital

One of the key ways in which ordination into full connection relationship affects elders is in their automatic ability to depend on ongoing appointment by the bishop to some position of service, until and unless that elder faces charges of misconduct, a rare occurrence. Local pastors are not afforded the same assurance of ongoing appointment.

¹⁶ Other larger cities in the state of Tennessee, including Memphis, Knoxville, and Chattanooga, are part of other UM annual conferences.

Should the bishop decide not to place them in pastoral positions, there is no further recourse for them to insist on an appointment. Although the phrase “guaranteed appointment” does not appear in the denomination’s Book of Discipline, it is that phrase that is the most common shorthand to describe elders’ expectations based on the responsibilities bishops have to appoint every elder to some place of service: “All elders in full connection who are in good standing in an annual conference shall be continued under appointment by the bishop unless they are granted a sabbatical leave, a medical leave . . . , family leave, a leave of absence, retirement, or have failed to meet the requirements for continued eligibility” (United Methodist Church 2012, 263).

Guarantee of appointment for elders (and not for local pastors) has been vigorously debated at the denominational level. The 2012 General Conference enacted legislation that would have made it easier for bishops to refuse appointments to elders who had been deemed ineffective, pending an administrative review process. However, later that year, the denomination’s Judicial Council reversed that decision and restored the expectation that every elder would receive an appointment by the bishop unless they had already been removed from good standing with the annual conference (Caldwell 2012). In articulating their rationale for rejecting this change, the Judicial Council noted:

Security of appointment has long been a part of the tradition of The United Methodist Church and its predecessor bodies. Security of appointment for clergy in good standing was first articulated by the 1956 General Conference. [...] Equally historic is the method for protecting the rights of ministers who are not under charges, against whom no formal accusations have been brought, and therefore for whom no trial is properly in order. [...] The United Methodist Church has a heritage of concern with the rights of persons. That concern has repeatedly made provision for the protection of the rights of its members and of its ministers. (Judicial Council 2012).

Thus, the clear demarcation between elders and local pastors on this question remains part of UMC polity for now, a form of capital that elders have access to while local pastors do not.

This divide between the categories of pastors on the question of the security of appointment inspires a passionate response in the Tennessee Conference. In my survey of these pastors, I asked two related questions: “For your work as a pastor in the appointments you have served, what are the most helpful aspects of The United Methodist Church as a denomination (or the Tennessee Conference, or your district), including structures, programs, and resources?” and “What are the most difficult aspects of the denomination, conference, or district, including structures, programs, and resources?” Additionally, I also asked, “If you could change the way that decisions are made within our annual conference, how would you do so?” In response to all three questions, from both elders and local pastors, strong opinions were offered by respondents regarding guarantee of appointment. Some elders expressed support and appreciation for the stability offered by guaranteed appointment in the face of occasional opposition from local congregations or hostility from conference leadership. Four elders specifically mention guarantee of appointment as a helpful aspect of the UMC, with one white male elder specifying, “The guaranteed appointment enables the taking of strong stands of conscience.” This is one often-cited benefit of the United Methodist appointive system when compared with other denominations’ congregational polity, where local congregations are free to hire and fire clergy leadership quickly. Such protection follows from the same logic employed by the denomination’s Judicial Council in acting for the absolute rights of pastors who are full members of an annual conference to due process

before having their clergy status terminated. Supporters of guaranteed appointment see it, in part, as a buffer between pastors who choose to preach or teach about controversial social or theological issues and those congregations that might be offended by their pastor's positions. I will return below to a consideration of how security of appointment is an especially important form of symbolic capital for those with historically precarious positions in an annual conference, namely women and racial minority clergy.

Pastoral Effectiveness and Security of Appointment

On the other side of the debate over guarantee of appointment, some survey respondents lamented the seeming restrictions placed on bishops by Disciplinary requirements to appoint elders who are not seen to be effective in their ministerial work. Several elders actually advocated changes to (or elimination of) the system, even though it protects their own interests with guarantee of appointment. Some noted that some subpar leaders benefit from that shield in ways that harm the overall health of the churches in the annual conference: "Not sure the guaranteed appointment process works anymore...I believe the church's decline is, in large part, due to it's inability to get rid of mediocre pastors" (white female elder). Another elder, a white male, was slightly more veiled in his critique, but also pointed to lack of ability to foster the health of the churches some elders serve as a reason for removal from appointment: "Growth of the Kingdom should take precedent over title of the person. Some clergy who continually stall the growth of each church they pastor should seek other ways to serve." Yet another elder, a white woman, seemed to recognize one of the benefits of guaranteed appointment in ensuring places of service for women and for ethnic minority pastors who might face resistance from some congregations; in this viewpoint, a modified system for churches to

call their own pastors would be required to reach further in seeking equitable treatment for all elders: “I’d get rid of guaranteed appointments. I’d let churches pick their own pastors, using a set of minimum standards. They would need to interview a variety of candidates...both genders, different races, backgrounds, etc. It won’t be perfect, but good pastors will be sought out and bad ones will be weeded out. Smaller churches will benefit also.”

Not surprisingly, local pastors were much freer in expressing their frustration at this provision that protects elders in a way that is not provided for local pastors. For example:

- “Sometimes we must deal with incompetency and people who are in charge due to their promised appointment due to being an ordained elder. Some have become complacent and no longer feel called to do their job” (white female local pastor).
- “When [an] elder pastor ‘messes up.’ Just moving them to another appointment—shouldn’t the new church know about what has just happened. Why reward bad behavior just because a person is an elder in the church” (racial minority female local pastor).
- “In regards to our local churches we need to make appointments on the gifts of our pastors rather than on years of experience and salaries. Our denomination is hemorrhaging members and we are filling our churches with many ineffective pastors. We tend to move the same problem from church to church” (white male local pastor).

In addition to having less appreciation and more critiques of this guaranteed appointment system that does not protect them, the responses of local pastors are quicker than elders to focus on “gifts” and “abilities” of pastors as criteria for making appointments. They do so in a way that positions these criteria in partial opposition to ordination status, educational level, years of experience, and salaries. This suggests that local pastors in the Tennessee Conference tend to emphasize those criteria that they themselves have equal opportunity to excel in (personal attributes such as gifts and

abilities) rather than those criteria that are earned or bestowed only on full-connection elders (graduate level education, ordination). In other words, these local pastors are voicing support for a different form of capital, one that is closer to Max Weber's description of charisma, with its focus on the inherent qualities of individual leaders. They simultaneously downplay the importance of the bureaucratic structures of leadership granted by external sources in a Weberian sense. Such differential emphasis on distinct types of capital constitute a means by which local pastors employ strategies to secure more beneficial positions for themselves within the shifting field of the annual conference.

Church Metrics as Capital

In addition to examining the type of pastoral appointment received by local pastors vs. elders (senior pastor, associate pastor, pastor of a multi-church charge, etc.), the geographic locale of the churches being served by these clergy, and the security of ongoing appointment, it is possible to assess other aspects of the desirability of pastoral appointments to churches by examining the public data available in conference journals. For this study, I used data from the 2013 Journal of the Tennessee Annual Conference that contains metrics for the churches in the conference, and correlated that data with the type of pastor (elder or local pastor) serving those churches for the conference year beginning July 2013.¹⁷ One transformation was performed to provide a better comparison between the two groups. Because local pastors are much more likely than elders to serve part-time appointments to church ministries, making direct comparisons between the two

¹⁷ This journal for 2013 is the most recent available at the time I began to tabulate data for this study, and corresponds to the timing of my survey of clergy who were under appointment during that year.

groups on raw quantifiable data would be difficult and potentially misleading. However, a strategy exists to help equalize the two groups for the sake of comparison. All clergy under appointment are categorized as full-time, three-quarter time, half-time, or one-quarter time in their pastoral work, which (theoretically) sets guidelines for the number of hours each week they are expected to be engaged that work. It also sets expectations for the amount of salary provided for that work; only full-time clergy fall under the conference's minimum salary guidelines, with the salaries of part-time appointments being scaled down based on the level of appointment they serve. The following comparisons in this section, then, are pro-rated based on the level of full- or part-time service of pastors. For example, when computing average pastoral compensation for elders, the total sum of elders' salaries across the Tennessee Conference was divided by the sum of elders' positions (either full- or part-time) in the conference, yielding an adjusted average salary for a full-time elder position. This average will be compared with a similar computation for local pastors.

According to a number of metrics, the average congregation served by an elder is quite a bit larger than the average congregation served by a local pastor, even after

	Elders	Local Pastors
Total professing members at close of this year	523.19	212.22
Average attendance at all weekly worship services	197.37	104.35
Received this year on Profession of Christian Faith	7.63	3.16
Number of persons baptized this year (0-12)	4.16	1.12
Number of persons baptized this year (13 and older)	2.73	1.62
Market value of church-owned land, buildings and equipment	3,601,909.42	1,044,440.38
Market value of all other church-owned assets	353,223.16	73,901.32
Total Local Church operating expenses	280,911.35	75,421.03
Total amount paid in base compensation to the pastor (not including housing/utilities allowance)	42,989.82	28,774.38

adjusting to compare full-time pastoral positions in each category (Table 7). To begin, the average professing membership (those who have been baptized and taken membership vows, excluding baptized children who do not yet profess faith for themselves) in churches pastored by elders is over twice (523.19 members) that of churches pastored by local pastors (212.22 members). Although local pastors actually serve more individual congregations (303) than do elders (231) in the annual conference, it becomes clear that many churches served by local pastors are the smallest membership churches in the area, since elders are pastoral leaders to over three and a half times as many individual church members (90,773) than are local pastors (25,360). Average attendance tells a similar story—when adjusted to compare average full-time positions, elders serve churches with nearly twice the average worship attendance (197.37) as those churches served by local pastors (104.35). Aggregate totals across the annual conference show that over two and a half times as many worshipers attend services led by elders (34,244) per full-time pastoral position when compared to those led by local pastors (12,470).

Measures of membership growth in churches also demonstrate similar disparities between pastoral categories. Adjusted for full-time pastoral positions, elders in 2013 received into their churches over twice as many new members on profession of Christian faith (7.63)—as compared to other forms of membership transfer from other congregations—than did local pastors (3.16). Baptisms for children ran at a nearly four to one ratio for elders (4.16) to local pastors (1.12), while baptisms for teenagers and adults were nearly two to one in ratio for elders (2.73) to local pastors (1.62).¹⁸ This, too,

¹⁸ Baptisms are recorded in these two categories—ages 0 to 12 and ages 13 and over—in the statistics reported by each congregation in their year-end reports. In part, this

is a measure of capital for these churches more so than a direct measure of pastoral capabilities or leadership skills. Churches that already have a higher membership and worship attendance are positioned better to take in even more new members through baptism and profession of faith. This is not to make a deterministic argument that small churches stay small while large churches continue to grow larger indefinitely. However, when local pastors (on average) find themselves appointed to churches with fewer initial resources in terms of membership, attendance, or growth in their surrounding communities, they face an uphill battle to meet the needs of their parishioners and communities and to continue to draw new membership.

Another way to measure this contrast between the sizes of churches served by elders and local pastors is to examine the financial resources available to both sets of congregations. After adjusting pastoral positions to compare full-time positions, the reported average market value of church-owned land, buildings, and equipment in churches served by elders is nearly three and a half times that in churches served by local pastors (\$3,601,909 vs. \$1,044,440). Building size and church location (urban vs. rural) both play into this discrepancy. Among congregations pastored by elders, 128 of them report a value of land, buildings, and equipment of one million dollars or more; 29 churches helmed by local pastors report the same. Reported market value for all other church-owned assets is nearly five times greater in churches served by elders (\$353,223) than in churches served by local pastors (\$73,901).

differentiation recognizes the differences in rationale and theological emphasis between infant baptism and adult baptism, where baptized infants will be nurtured so that they may profess the Christian faith for themselves at a later date.

Annual financial resources available in local churches also follow the same pattern set out in other categories. Total reported annual church operating expenses for churches led by elders, when adjusted to compare full-time positions, averaged nearly four times as much as for churches led by local pastors (\$280,911 vs. \$75,421). Again, this serves as a measure of the differential amount of capital available to churches—those who already have secure amounts of funding are better suited not only to pay their own expenses, but also to reach out to their communities. Liquid assets, facilities, and visible and accessible geographic locations all serve as potent forms of material capital for the work of local churches, and elders in the Tennessee Conference are far more likely to have access to this form of capital than are their local pastor colleagues.

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits

Of most direct import to the pastors themselves among church financial resources is the amount paid in base salary to the pastors.¹⁹ Adjusting to compare full-time positions, average base salary for elders (\$42,990) is one and a half times that for local pastors (\$28,774). The Tennessee Conference sets minimum salary levels for full-time pastors, with differences based on the pastor's conference relationship. In 2013, for full-connection elders serving in a full-time capacity, the minimum mandated salary was \$36,942; for full-time local pastors, the minimum salary was \$32,234. (These figures include not only the "base salary" listed elsewhere, but also a housing and utilities allowance that receives certain tax benefits from the IRS.) When comparing these

¹⁹ Base salary does not include rental value of a parsonage or a housing allowance, or other benefits such as health insurance and pension. These figures also do not include salaries paid to associate pastors in the annual conference, due to a lack of granularity in how these numbers are reported in the annual conference journal.

minimum mandated salaries to the average received by pastors in both categories, the average compensation for local pastors hews close to the minimum mandated amount, once housing allowances are taken into account, while the average salary for elders begins to rise notably above the minimum guaranteed.

Beyond salary compensation, differences exist among clergy in the Tennessee Conference regarding the support received in the form of health insurance and pension benefits. These differences are not directly tied to clergy status as elders or local pastors, but rather, to whether or not the pastors are serving full-time in their pastoral capacity. However, while elders are virtually always under full-time pastoral appointment (unless they are on leave or receiving other special arrangements), local pastors may serve under either full-time or part-time appointment to local churches, depending on the availability of positions and their own commitments to other outside work. All clergy under full-time appointment in the Tennessee Conference are eligible for participation in the health plan of the annual conference, and will have their individual premiums paid by the annual conference, an annual value of \$8,640 in 2013. Part-time clergy (that is, in nearly every case, part-time local pastors) must rely on health insurance provided through secular jobs or through their own individual initiative. Health and pension benefits for clergy are funded through the annual conference's system of "apportionments," funds that local churches pay to support a host of ministries beyond the congregational level. Currently, health care and pension support for pastors form the two most significant budget categories for the Tennessee Conference, money for which comes from the local church apportionment receipts.

In their responses to my survey of Tennessee Conference clergy, a number of pastors noted that these forms of support beyond base salary are an important form of security for them. In offering observations about the helpful aspects of the UMC and Tennessee Conference, several elders noted that pension and health insurance benefits help provide the ability to sustain full time leadership for local churches, without those pastors needing additional work to acquire health care or retirement funds. Even so, a greater number of respondents noted that the cost of these benefits (and the need to encourage local churches to pay their apportionments in full to ensure their continued availability to pastors) place a strain on congregational budgets. In describing difficult aspects of the denomination and annual conference, one white male elder observed, “Apportionment levels put our churches at a competitive disadvantage relative to other denominations,” while another white female elder said, “One of the local churches I serve expresses frustration because they feel disconnected from the church universal. They do not understand apportionments, and why we have to do things in a ‘United Methodist’ way.” One white male local pastor offered similar thoughts: “The level of assigned apportionments in some cases seems out of line with a local church's situation. Persuading members in the local church that the FULL amount of apportionments is a fair expectation in light of the benefits received at the local level is a challenge.” One white male elder noted that it is particularly difficult to ask smaller churches to pay into a system that benefits their own pastor less than it does other clergy:

It is unjust for small churches with part time pastors to have to pay into clergy pension and clergy health insurance if their pastor is not allowed to receive those benefits. For example, if you are a part time retired pastor, or student pastor, or serving a conference agency as your other appointment, then you can get health insurance. But if you serve another ministry or have a secular part time job in addition to your part time

church, you cannot get conference health insurance, but your church still has to pay into it—benefiting larger churches! [...] And the conference health insurance committee and conference finance committee seem to have no motivation to address this injustice.

One white male local pastor offered a different suggestion to equalize benefits that would also lower costs for financially strapped churches in the annual conference: “How about looking at having all pastors not only serve a church but have an outside job that would provide insurance for them this would lower the cost on the church and allow the pastors to maintain real world experiences.” Such a radical reorganization of clergy benefits has not been part of conference conversations to date.

Excursus: The Interplay of Gender and Race with Pastoral Status

Women, Ordination, and the Making of Pastoral Appointments

Pastoral status is not the only factor with strong correlation to the types and amount of capital available to Tennessee Conference clergy. This picture would remain incomplete if we did not take a brief look, as well, at how gender and race play a part in the unequal distribution of symbolic and material capital among churches and their pastors. In particular, women and people of color are a reminder that the various forms of symbolic capital (including, most powerfully in this religious field, ordination) are not equally potent for all pastors in helping them pursue their goals and achieve more desirable positions within the religious field of the annual conference.

To begin: female pastors are still far less likely than their male counterparts to head the largest churches with larger pastoral staffs in the Tennessee Conference. When broken down by gender (Table 8), women are far more likely across the board to be appointed to associate pastor positions (25.0% of female elders are associate pastors,

Q11: For your current (or most recent) pastoral appointment, what is your position?	Elders		Local Pastors	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Sole pastor of single church	41.7	40.8	57.7	52.0
Sole pastor of multiple point charge	8.3	11.2	15.4	44.0
Associate pastor	25.0	12.2	11.5	4.0
Senior pastor of multiple-pastor church	5.6	21.4	3.8	0.0
Extension ministry/Conference or District staff/Other	19.4	14.2	11.5	0.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

compared to 12.2% of male elders; 11.5% of female local pastors are associate pastors, compared to 4.0% of male local pastors). By way of contrast, 5.6% of female elders are senior pastors of multi-pastor churches, compared to 21.4% of male elders. (Only one local pastor in total claimed to hold such an appointed position.) Even with the decades' worth of pastoral experience held by women in the Tennessee Conference, this remains one area of ongoing inequity in leadership positions held by women.

In conversations I had with women pastors in the Tennessee Conference, several expressed the concern that the imbalances in pastoral leadership between men and women could have been even more lopsided were it not due to the symbolic capital conferred on female elders by virtue of their ordination (and the assurance of appointment as a pastor so implied). To set the context: the United Methodist Church's General Conference approved full clergy rights for women in 1956, a debate that had centered for decades on the specific issue of whether or not women elders, once ordained, would be guaranteed an appointment as pastor of a congregation, or whether there would

be fabricated a more limited “local ordination” that would allow congregations to veto any appointment of a woman to serve as their pastor (Nickell 2014, 69-77). In the end, women were admitted into full connection relationship in annual conferences, guaranteeing them a place to serve once they were ordained. That accomplishment at the denominational level did not immediately mean equitable treatment in all annual conferences, however. As an example, the Tennessee Conference ordained its first female elder in 1973, the Rev. Faith Cornwall. Even though Rev. Cornwall was a full clergy member of the conference, her primary appointment for most of her ministerial career was not in a congregation at all, but as the chaplain at the Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute. She did serve one appointment as a pastor of local churches, serving a two-point charge of rural congregations for several years (Tennessee Conference 2014, 50).

Sociologists have tracked a partial shift in the meanings of ordination as that act has become more widely available to women in mainline Protestant denominations. While ordination as a response to the call of God on a person’s life has remained the primary motivation for pursuing this form of ministry, female clergy have been more likely than their male counterparts to claim the additional emphasis of ordination as the seeking of authority in the church, particularly in the pursuit of a structural position from which to seek gender (and other forms of) equality (Chaves 1997a, 64-83; Zikmund et al. 1998, 107; Lehman 2002, 8-10). One female elder who spoke with me has been an ordained elder for over 30 years, and ranks as one of the early women in full connection in the Tennessee Conference. She saw a clear connection between her ordination as an elder and the ability it conferred on her to be in ministry in churches that might have

professed they were not yet ready to welcome her as their pastor. She says of her ordination:

It was extremely important to me. I think, being female, the whole experience of having a bishop say, “Take thou authority” was incredibly important to me, that this was not just my wild hair, that this truly was something that came out of community to confirm a journey that I had felt in my own heart. But to have my own heart journey suddenly become affirmed and confirmed by community, *did* give me authority in a culture that wasn’t quite ready to give me authority. And that really was something that was important to me, I think, in terms of my sense of pastoral identity.

Another ordained woman made much the same point to me: “The words that I remember from every ordination service I’ve been to are those words, ‘Take thou authority.’ And I don’t think of authority in the oppressive kind of way, but authority/responsibility. It really is my job to use what I’ve got, and *use* it, not sit on it.” This flows directly from more functional views of ordination as authorization to conduct the tasks of “Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service” to which elders are ordained. Whatever internal sense of divine calling these women feel that led to their pursuit of ministerial vocations, it was the external, community-affirmed call to ministry that was embodied in their ordinations. This second woman went on to note that it is only in polities such as United Methodism’s, where pastors are sent by a central authority rather than called by local congregations, that authorization through ordination has its strongest impact for women in ministry:

I think the thing that was most important was that sense of communal affirmation and that motion of being sent, which is just incredibly important to me to be in ministry. And I guess, through the years, seeing so many women [in other denominations] who wait for a church to call them and it doesn’t happen. And for me to have this experience of, one, being confirmed by my church, and secondly, being sent by the structure of the church, is just an incredibly important part of my life.

Ordination is a communal act on behalf of an entire ecclesial structure, but the symbolic capital it confers is strengthened greatly when bishops are willing to add their own imprimaturs by working to let these women do the work that they have prepared to do.

Such importance of the ordination process among female mainline Protestant clergy has been extensively explored by social scientists. Mark Chaves notes that the symbolic importance of ordination for Protestant women is not reducible to the pragmatic functioning of women as church leaders. In other words, while there are still denominations with more restrictive rules against women's ordination where women nevertheless serve similar leadership functions without that formal recognition, ordination still carries its own importance as a powerful symbolic acknowledgement of support for the norm of formal gender equality (1997a, 29-36; 1997b, 92-5). In a study based on data collected in 2001, Jackson Carroll found that female clergy were significantly more likely than male clergy to cite ordination as being of particular value in their pastoral leadership. Women also highly valued seminary education in enabling their effective leadership, while they did not differ significantly from men in their valuation of having a personal call from God or their ability to win their church members' trust. Because women pastors have encountered (and in many cases, continue to encounter) great resistance to their leadership in congregations, it makes sense that they highly value the marks of formal authority (ordination and seminary education) that allow them to establish their leadership long enough to form a more personal authority to lead (Carroll 2006, 156-7).

Ordination is not always perceived as an unequivocal good for women clergy, however. One woman completing my survey, who had not yet completed the ordination process to become an elder, noted that the process itself can be fraught with difficulties.

Being a woman is insane—not only are we discriminated against, people are angry that we're angry about that. And there are women who have been angry for a long time who think we should have to put up with whatever they had to put up with—and that doesn't just apply to gender—the whole ordination process is people revisiting their own trauma on others.

In this way, we see that the ordination process, as it performs its function of reproducing culture (as Bourdieu would remind us) by instilling certain values and dispositions in those who place themselves into its structure, can do so at the expense of their individuality, and may be colored by the norms of the dominant group, in this instance men. Thus, groups who do not “fit” the norm by virtue of how they “look” different, often experience the ordination process as more difficult and discriminating.

Perceptions of Fairness in Race and Gender

When asked how fairly they feel they have been treated by conference officials with regard to various factors, there is significant overall alignment between elders and local pastors in two key areas. On the question of race, 94.4% of elders and 94.5% of local pastors as a whole report being treated either “somewhat fairly” or “very fairly.” In part, of course, this is unsurprising, given the demographics of clergy in the Tennessee Conference; among survey respondents, 90.7% of elders and 89.6% of local pastors identify as white. When offered the chance to list “other” factors in a free response format, several elders (although no local pastors) noted that they recognized their own personal white privilege, and stated a concern that some of their racial minority

colleagues might not be treated as fairly as they have been. One white male elder acknowledged the distinction between personal disagreements with conference leadership and systemic discrimination:

Generally, race and gender have gone in my favor and I'd be a fool to contend otherwise. I have fallen afoul of a DS or elders in power because of politics, but this sad truth mirrors society at large. . . . I still see tinges of racism and sexism at play among our leaders, and a double helping of homophobia.

Similar dynamics appear in the question about fair treatment based on gender: 88.8% of elders and 90.4% of local pastors report being treated either “somewhat fairly” or “very fairly” in this regard. Among survey respondents, 73% of elders were men, while 68% of local pastors were men. This indicates that, while personal perceptions of discrimination against women are not universal among clergywomen in the Tennessee Conference, there is still progress to be made in this area.

In addition to the concerns about the ordination and appointive process as it relates to women (as discussed earlier), one other area in which female clergy may bear a higher proportion of difficulties when compared to male pastors is in the area of family relationships. Even while not directly citing an instance of unfairness, one white female elder gave the following observation in response to the question about whether she had been treated unfairly in any way not directly asked about in my survey: “I wasn't willing to move as my husband is the bread winner and my children were in great schools. I wasn't going to jeopardize that. Those were my choices which probably prevented me from getting certain appointments. I didn't mind. Overall, I felt the DS and cabinet worked hard to make my situation workable.” This illustrates an argument made previously by Paula Nesbitt: marriage and family correlate positively with career

advancement for male Protestant clergy, while the opposite is true for clergywomen. “The two most important resources for male clergy attainment have been shown to be their gender attribution and their having a wife—resources to which women clergy categorically cannot have access” (1995, 412). Even when they are a part of the decision-making process with the bishop and District Superintendent, women clergy who are wives and mothers are still often called on to make sacrifices in ways that their male counterparts are not.

It is not enough, of course, simply to see these numbers as an aggregate where white and male clergy so dominate the numbers of total pastors in the Tennessee Conference. The responses regarding fair treatment look quite different when we examine the perceptions of those who are at risk of feeling racism and sexism themselves. Table 9 lists the responses, by percentage, of racial minority clergy on the question of fairness regarding treatment based on their race. The primary caveat on this particular table is that, due to the limited number of racial minority clergy responding to the survey, the result on this question cannot be considered statistically significant to the same degree as other questions throughout the study. Even so, we see that racial minority clergy are more likely to report being treated “very unfairly” or “somewhat unfairly” when compared to the overall population of pastors. Based on other responses, the primary avenue that this unfair treatment takes is related to the making of appointments. One African American

Q29a: How fairly do you feel you have been treated by conference officials with regard to your race?	Very unfairly	Somewhat unfairly	Somewhat fairly	Very fairly
Racial Minority Elders	0.0	36.4	36.4	27.3
Racial Minority Local Pastors	14.3	0.0	57.1	28.6

woman who serves as a local pastor noted: “Females and African Americans continue to be overlooked and appointed to 2 & 3 point charges. We could make more cross-racial appointments but the conference is not doing anything in advance to prepare the laity or pastors for this stage of ministry.”

Frustrations such as these do not arise *ex nihilo*; they have a history. The creation of the racially segregated Central Jurisdiction was a central and publicly acknowledged part of the plan of union that reunited southern and northern branches of Methodism in 1939 and lasted formally until the 1968 merger that created the United Methodist Church. This Central Jurisdiction was a separate (and only hypothetically equal) ecclesial body that had African American bishops as the heads of African American annual conferences that consisted of African American churches. This created an unwieldy structure in which all predominantly black churches across the United States (and extending even to the west African nation of Liberia) were part of the same jurisdiction, while having much less direct connection to the white congregations across town (Richey et al. 2010, 388-91). This experiment in segregation was born out of southern white Methodist leaders’ insistence that black clergy never have authority over white churches, and black bishops never have authority over white churches. This formalized racial segregation thus stands as an important counterpoint to my argument in this project about the power of ordination as a potent form of symbolic capital for elders. The existence of the Central Jurisdiction is a reminder that ordination as an elder has not conveyed the same authority to all elders, always and everywhere. Through 1968, when the Central Jurisdiction was formally abolished, racial segregation and the curtailing of black pastoral authority was openly defended as right and proper, part of the divinely bestowed social order. In this way, it

stands as a prime example of Bourdieu's misrecognition of interest, in which the social structures that benefitted white clergy were justified as having no direct benefit for them at all.

The formal abolishment of the Central Jurisdiction did not eliminate racial disparities, however; it simply masked them with a veneer of racial equality and arguably made ongoing disparities more difficult to discuss. In the responses of racial minority pastors of the Tennessee Conference in this project, there is a clear taken-for-granted assumption that white pastors will nearly always serve white churches and black pastors will nearly always serve black churches. (That there are so few truly multi-racial congregations in existence in the Tennessee Conference makes it astonishingly easy continue to speak of white and black churches, alongside those few that are predominantly Asian American and Latino in membership.) This ongoing assumption about the necessity of racial segregation between church membership and pastoral leadership shows that racial segregation still exists as a powerful social reality, even when formal structural barriers are no longer the primary instrument of maintaining these distinctions. As Bourdieu argues, symbolic violence does its work most effectively when it does not have to make recourse to physical threats or overt structural systems, but rather is a "softer" (and more insidious) form of coercion that is informally policed as a perceived matter of apparently uncoordinated local preferences. Symbolic violence maintains these forms of hierarchy without calling attention to them. The United Methodist Church's segregationist history has lasting power today in places, particularly in the South. Assumptions about proper places of service based on race continue to act as

restrictions of the power conferred at ordination for racial minority elders, restrictions that are no less powerful for being informal.

Table 10—Perceptions of Fair Treatment regarding Gender among Female Clergy (by percentage)				
Q29b: How fairly do you feel you have been treated by conference officials with regard to your gender?	Very unfairly	Somewhat unfairly	Somewhat fairly	Very fairly
Female Elders	9.7	22.6	45.2	22.6
Female Local Pastors	0.0	20.8	25.0	54.2

When we look at the question of fairness regarding gender among female respondents, the results in Table 10 suggest that, while female elders are more likely than female local pastors to report unfair treatment by conference officials based on their gender, both categories are notably more likely to observe such treatment than the population at large with men included in the sample. Again, appointment to local church positions appears to be the form that the disparity often takes. One white female elder noted: “Some appointments appear to be punishments. Some are random. Some appointments are inappropriate/unwise for females sent to rural cultures who cannot accept them.” In additions to such concerns that there are too many churches that have not yet been adequately prepared to accept a woman’s pastoral leadership, another white female elder noted the continuing struggle for women to be named as senior pastor of our largest congregations: “I have witnessed power plays that work, and also when there were 7 tall steeple churches open in one year, not one was given to a woman.” Whether resistance comes from those churches themselves, the appointive cabinet, the existence of an “old boys” network, or both, limitations from the “stained glass ceiling” are still a concern for women in the Tennessee Conference. Gender itself can be conceptualized as a form of capital in the shifting power structures of the Tennessee Conference as a field,

one that is particularly problematic as long as male clergy remain more privileged than their female colleagues.

Race and Church Resources

One more consideration that bears investigation is the disparities in material capital that are exhibited when the racial makeup of churches is taken into consideration. Although no publicly available records are available regarding the racial identification of clergy in the Tennessee Conference, data is recorded each year about the racial categorization of local church membership. So, while it is not possible to measure directly the effect of a pastor's race on the likelihood that they will be appointed to a church with greater resources for ministry, it is possible to measure how the racial makeup of a congregation's membership correlates with the level of resources at their disposal. It is worth noting that in the Tennessee Conference, despite ongoing conversation about the importance of congregations' openness to the appointment of clergy leaders regardless of racial identification, such cross-racial appointments remain quite rare. The 2012 report of the Tennessee Conference Commission on Religion and Race notes that, of the 461 churches in the annual conference that responded to their survey that year, only 15 reported having a senior pastor who was under cross-racial appointment when compared to the makeup of the congregation. Also telling were responses to a question about whether churches would be open to receiving a pastor under a cross-racial appointment: of the 461 respondents, 33 reported such openness, 287 said they would not be open to such an appointment, and 141 did not respond at all (Tennessee Conference 2012b, 280-1). Although remaining an ideal for many conference

leaders, the possibility for more fluid pastoral appointments across racial categories remains a difficult prospect for the foreseeable future. Again, the very fact that it remains a taken-for-granted reality among congregations and conference leaders that black pastors will serve (for the most part) only in predominantly black churches remains a troubling and highly visible reminder of the stratifications and power dynamics that continue to be enforced within this religious field.

When the previous comparisons of resources available to congregations between those churches led by elders and those led by local pastors are broken down further to examine the racial background of church members, it becomes clear that there are further significant correlations between these subgroups. To make these comparisons, I used the typology employed by Michael Emerson in his study of multiracial congregations, where majority white congregations are those with over 80% of their membership identifying as white and majority black congregations are those with over 80% of their membership identifying as African American/black (Emerson and Woo 2006, 137-8).²⁰ As above, for this comparison, pastoral positions were adjusted to compare full-time positions with one another across categories.

Comparing raw numbers (Table 11) demonstrates that the Tennessee Conference is still very much a predominantly white annual conference, with over ten times as many majority white churches as majority black churches headed both by elders (211 white vs.

²⁰ Only one congregation in the Tennessee Conference qualifies as truly multiracial in Emerson's typology, what he refers to as a MAC/"Mixed American Culture" congregation, where there are at least 20% of both white and black members in a single church. There is also one church in the Tennessee Conference with a majority Hispanic/Latino membership, and one with majority Asian membership. Because of their small sample size, all of these were excluded from this comparison.

	Elders		Local Pastors	
	Majority white churches	Majority black churches	Majority white churches	Majority black churches
Number of congregations	211	19	270	24
Total professing members at close of year	543.91	256.60	219.78	188.21
Average attendance at all weekly worship services	202.16	107.74	106.17	99.08
Received this year on Profession of Christian Faith	7.85	5.02	3.24	3.18
Number of persons baptized this year (0-12)	4.33	1.45	1.14	1.33
Number of persons baptized this year (13 and older)	2.68	3.49	1.69	1.13
Market value of land, buildings, equipment	\$3,712,664.27	\$1,840,042.81	\$1,080,646.27	\$887,893.33
Market value of all other assets	\$369,143.36	\$80,376.51	\$72,790.11	\$111,105.64
Total Operating Expenses	\$292,186.79	\$124,261.45	\$76,924.32	\$75,247.18
Total amount paid in base compensation to pastor	\$43,988.99	\$29,404.51	\$29,812.64	\$22,238.56

19 black) and local pastors (270 white vs. 24 black). Aggregate membership numbers across the annual conference are even more striking: there are 112,171 white individual United Methodist church members in the Tennessee Conference, compared with just 5,442 African American individual members. The split remains striking even after

adjustments are made to account for the high number of part-time pastors that serve many of the majority black churches in the conference. For churches led by elders, majority white churches had twice the professing membership (543 vs. 256), average attendance (202 vs. 107), and annual operating expenses (\$292,187 vs. \$124,261) as majority black churches. Perhaps it is not surprising, based on size and operating expenses—even if it is startling—that the pastoral compensation for full-time positions was 1.5 times higher for elders serving majority white churches (\$43,988) than for elders serving majority black churches (\$29,404).

The churches served by local pastors tell a more nuanced story. By some comparisons, these churches are not nearly as far apart according to some of the same metrics used for elders: here, the total professing membership is only 16.7% higher for white majority churches (219.78) than for black majority churches (188.21). Average attendance for the white churches (106.17) and black churches (99.08) was also much closer, as were the annual operating expenses (\$76,924 vs. \$75,247). For all these similarities, then, it is particularly striking that the local pastors serving majority white congregations (who are overwhelmingly white themselves) earn fully a third more in base compensation (\$29,813) than do their local pastor colleagues who are serving majority black churches (\$22,239).

In all these ways, being an African American local pastor can mean having a dual set of challenges—both clergy status and racial minority status serve as predictors that such pastors will have lower levels of symbolic and material capital in the forms of church membership, facilities, and operating funds to do the work they have been called to do. That they do this work without the security of appointments that elders are assured

of, all the while being less convinced of ongoing fair treatment by conference officials because of their race, adds the perception of insult to injury for some of these clergy. To put it another way, the capital that accrues to elders according to ordination status and full conference membership is unequally realized along racial lines. White elders benefit a great deal more from this form of capital than do African American pastors in the Tennessee Conference. When viewing the shifting power positions individuals hold in this religious field, it is not enough simply to note the stratifications that occur along lines of ordination category. Race continues to complicate the picture in persistent and troubling ways.

Conclusion

United Methodist elders and local pastors share many duties; both groups are charged with leading services of worship, conducting marriages and funerals, and receiving new members into the churches they serve. At the same time, the capital they have available to assist them in this work vary widely, and this variation correlates strongly with their conference relationship categories. Elders in the Tennessee Conference are much more likely than local pastors to have attained educational capital in the form of advanced theological degrees, but additionally, they come from families where their parents are much more likely to have attained post-secondary degrees, as well. This raises important questions for how this denomination encourages educational achievement for its future leadership. American Methodists have long invested its resources in educational pursuits for its members, but the benefits of those investments remain quite unequally realized, even among its congregational leadership. This unequal

participation in higher education may exacerbate other preexisting social divides in the denomination, but may also leave those without academic credentials with the perception that they do not have as strong a voice in decision making processes of larger church structures.

The congregations that clergy serve as pastors also differ considerably in terms of the symbolic and material capital available to these leaders, correlated strongly with those pastors' conference relationship categories. When compared to unordained local pastors, ordained elders are more likely to serve as senior pastors of churches with a multi-person pastoral staff, less likely to serve multiple small churches at once, and more likely to serve churches in larger urban and suburban population centers. Elders serve churches with larger memberships, larger average worship attendance, more baptisms and new incoming members each year, more valuable church facilities and equipment, higher pastoral salaries, and greater pension and insurance support. This disparity of salaries is magnified when race is taken into account; churches with predominantly African American church memberships (who are more likely to be served by African American pastors) are also more likely to pay lower salaries than their counterpart churches with predominantly white memberships (usually served by white pastors). Finally, as a category, elders receive the benefit of "guaranteed appointment" to a position of service, a security that local pastors are not afforded. Historically, this security of appointment has been especially important for clergy who are women and racial minorities as a means of ensuring a place of service amid unwelcoming churches, and current members of the Tennessee Conference point out that this security is still a valuable protection today for those elders who receive it.

For Bourdieu, capital, such as the forms outlined in this chapter, does not exist in isolation. In its various forms, capital allows individuals to be in constant competition with one another for privileged positions relative to each other within the field. In the example of a United Methodist annual conference, those shifting positions may be measured by acquisition of relative amounts of these forms of capital—educational credentials, decision-making positions, financial remuneration, geographic proximity to prized resources, and human resources in the form of active church membership. As clergy persons are reappointed each year by the bishop to their various places of pastoral service, their positions in the field of the annual conference are constantly in flux. Some forms of capital used by these pastors may be obtained in greater measure over time to allow them to pursue strategies for their own advancement (education, full connection relationship, etc.). Other forms are immutable (race, gender), and raise serious justice issues for conference leadership. Bourdieu contends that competition within the field exists even when it is misrecognized as disinterested participation for the common good, and the structures of the field, while currently serving the interests of those who occupy dominant positions in the field, are always up for challenge by those who seek to move from subordinate positions.

With this widely varying distribution of forms of capital among clergy within this field, what questions are raised for judicatory bodies such as the Tennessee Conference, where over half of the houses of worship in its boundaries are served by pastors who do not have the financial or educational resources that the last century of American Methodism has grown to expect as the norm for its church leaders? For now, we are left

with frustrations of local pastors who feel that that are sometimes asked to do too much with too little, as expressed in these survey responses:

- [I work] as a “part time” local pastor serving 40 to 60 hours in ministry weekly, serving an appointment in a community an hour drive from my home. [Part time] local pastor compensation doesn’t justify the cost of relocation (white female local pastor).
- Expectations [are difficult] for part time pastors to function as if they were financially supported, compensated, [and] with benefits and expense reimbursement equivalent to full time pastors (black female local pastor).
- Being so far away from most everything in the conference is a problem, without a real solution. I am as far out as our conference goes. I sometimes feel isolated because of the small town I am appointed to (white male local pastor).

These concerns do not exist in isolation, and it is to the effects of these concerns in conjunction with the rest of the annual conference that I now turn for some concluding thoughts.

CONCLUSION

Examining the official publications of the United Methodist Church might leave a reader with the impression that elders and local pastors share their leadership of congregations in an equitable and collegial manner. In its guidelines for the preliminary orientation to ministry for all new ministerial candidates, the denomination's Book of Discipline emphasizes this partnership in ministry: "Collegiality in ministry and commonalities and distinctions among the categories of ministry (deacon, elder, local pastor) will be emphasized to facilitate understanding and appreciation of the gifts contributed through team ministry" (United Methodist Church 2012, 227). Both elders and local pastors share similar duties while working in the contexts of their appointed congregations:

Elders are authorized to preach and teach the Word, to provide pastoral care and counsel, to administer the sacraments, and to order the life of the church for service in mission and ministry as pastors, superintendents, and bishops. . . . Licensed pastors share with the elders the responsibilities and duties of a pastor for this fourfold ministry, within the context of their appointment (United Methodist Church 2012, 267).

In fact, there is a great deal that elders and local pastors share in common in United Methodist polity and practice. This commonality and aspirational cooperative spirit, however, is only part of the story.

As I have outlined throughout this study of clergy in the Tennessee Conference UMC, there are a number of ways in which these clergy leaders differ in their preparation, their dispositions, and the resources they have at their disposal to do their work. Elders (and not local pastors) have been set aside by the ecclesial act of ordination, which continues to carry great symbolic significance in addition to the increased autonomy and corporate decision-making capabilities that come alongside the full-

connection relationship to the annual conference. Based on my research, elders in this annual conference tend to describe themselves as more theologically liberal and find themselves drawn to activities beyond the local church (at the district and annual conference levels), while local pastors see themselves as more theologically conservative and more thoroughly grounded in activities that tie them to their local churches and communities. Because of this theological divide, many of the disagreements between the groups over annual conference and denominational policies tend to take on a particularly ideological tone. Although there is much agreement across clergy categories about the enjoyment pastors derive from their work, elders were more likely to enjoy those activities that connect them to larger church structures (including ecumenical cooperation with other denominations), while local pastors prefer those that allow them personal interactions with the members of the congregations they serve. Elders are more invested in their identities as professionals, with the greater formal education and mutual oversight that identity implies. As such, it is elders that we see defending formal theological education and the vetting work performed by church structures in credentialing pastors; local pastors were significantly less supportive of those requirements.

Although distribution of resources varies considerably across the Tennessee Conference, elders as a group find themselves much better able to take advantage of their educational capital (in the form of graduate level education) and the increased symbolic and material capital of the churches they serve to occupy more favorable positions in the religious field of the annual conference. Pierre Bourdieu's conception of capital illuminates how the acquisition of symbolic capital (in the form of ordination) assists elders in acquiring further forms of symbolic and material capital to help them achieve

more privileged places in the religious field of the annual conference. These acquired forms of capital may include higher salaries, larger church memberships, higher church budgets, and more advantageous geographic locations for their pastoral appointments. Pastoral status is not the only form of capital that has strong predictive power here, however. It is also necessary to consider the ongoing roles of race and gender in the annual conference setting. Although ordination continues to serve women and racial minority clergy well in helping them find entrance into the annual conference, it is still not yet as powerful a form of symbolic capital as it is for white, male clergy. Class dominance works in multiple intersecting manners, and cannot be reduced to a single causative factor.

There are historic and practical reasons why local pastors exist as an adjunct class of clergy in United Methodist polity. What began as a form of ministry rooted in the earliest history of the Methodist movement, where exhorters and class leaders would lead communal worship as a complement to the work of Anglican parish clergy, local preachers in the American Methodist movement eventually took on full responsibility for providing leadership and pastoral care for congregations of people in those circumstances when there were not enough ordained clergy to meet the needs of their expanding churches. What was initially justified as an exceptional circumstance, allowing unordained (and initially formally uneducated) local pastors to assume full pastoral responsibility in United Methodist congregations is beginning to grow into a new *de facto* (if not *de jure*) norm. In the thirty years from 1985 to 2015, the percentage of local pastors (as a ratio of local pastors plus elders) in the United Methodist Church across the United States has grown from 15.1% to 33.2%, according to statistics from the General

Board of Pensions and Health Benefits (Lewis Center 2015). The Tennessee Conference has a much higher percentage already, with its percentage of local pastors currently sitting at 48.0%.

This brings me back to a question from the beginning of this project: with such a marked differentiation between the Tennessee Conference and other locations within the denomination regarding the number of local pastors being deployed, where does this study fit into the larger picture, and how might it be instructive for other settings? To be sure, each region of the country and each United Methodist annual conference has its own dynamics, history, demographics, and theological and social orientations. It would be a mistake to apply any lessons learned in Tennessee too blithely to the rest of the denomination. At the same time, the number of local pastors continues to grow throughout the denomination, and all annual conferences will be forced to reckon with the ramifications of this polity that trains its pastors in this particular method. Additionally, United Methodism continues to maintain its “connectional” polity in which every level of church structure is bound to every other part, and each region continues to inform the others. This is especially true of the Southeastern Jurisdiction, of which the Tennessee Conference is a part, whose greater number of clergy among United States jurisdictions gives it somewhat greater sway in the life of the denomination.

Even though local pastors make up nearly half the clergy in the Tennessee Conference, that numerical parity has not brought with it a parity of opportunity, and frustrations persist. Many local pastors chafe at the two-tiered system of which they are a part. Bourdieu’s work would remind us that this is no accident. Even though these unordained clergy overwhelmingly profess that their motivation for their work is

grounded in a divine calling instead of any direct gain for themselves, Bourdieu would insist that there is no such thing as a disinterested act. As “players” in the religious field of this annual conference, both elders and local pastors find themselves in a competition for scarce capital that is both material (larger salaries, larger congregations with greater social and financial resources) as well as symbolic (acknowledgement as fully-credentialed clergy). Bourdieu insists that this competition is no less real for the fact that it usually goes unrecognized and misunderstood by those who engage in it. The frustrations expressed by local pastors, as those who occupy the subordinate positions in this field, may be read as evidence of this veiled competition, as they employ (more or less conscious) strategies in their pursuit of capital for the purpose of advancement in this field (Bourdieu and Lamaison 1986, 111).

In their survey responses, several local pastors proposed structural changes regarding their liminal status within the decision-making apparatus of the conference and denomination, a distinction that is especially important in the year of a General Conference when controversies around sexual orientation have reached a fever pitch:

- Seek constitutional changes allowing Full-Time local pastors who meet the current requirements to vote for delegates [to General Conference and] to also vote on constitutional amendments.
- Let everyone vote instead of using the United Methodist "caste system.”
- All Pastors serving a UMC should have a say [and] vote and not be made to leave any room when a vote is taken, to insure they do not vote. I'm a pastor; tell me not to vote and I will not vote. Local Part-time Pastors are still full time pastors serving a full time God with a full time congregation.
- Part time local pastors and full time local pastors would get to vote on delegates [to General Conference]. I even believe they should be able to be delegates.

Questions remain for annual conference leaders and denominational policy makers: with the growing number of local pastors assuming responsibility for the care of individuals in

United Methodist congregations, are there ways to minimize these frustrations while still upholding historic Methodist emphases of education and social engagement for its leaders? And as the number of unordained local pastors grows, is it possible to instill cohesive denominational identity to a greater degree among local pastors to avoid what could be a creeping “de facto congregationalism” (Warner 1993) that erodes common United Methodist identity over time?

Retaining (and Adapting) the Professional Model

As we have seen, the predominant professional model of ordained ministry that has emerged over the past century across mainline Protestant denominations is undergirded by graduate level education, a common standard of professional ethics, and a self-sustaining system of oversight and credentialing. There seems little likelihood of significant change to this model in the foreseeable future, as there is broad support for the various components of this model among those I heard from in the Tennessee Conference. While some elders did note the potential hazards involved in working through the ordination process with the Board of Ordained Ministry (“the whole ordination process is people revisiting their own trauma on others”), others applaud the “support and accountability” provided by the Board of Ordained Ministry and District Committees on Ordained Ministry. While elders recognize the challenges facing seminary students today, particularly as debt loads for seminary graduates continue to rise (GBHEM 2015), the elders I spoke with were universal in their defense of the seminary model of education for clergy. One elder summed up his experience by saying:

I loved seminary. I loved everything about it. I loved the classes; I loved the learning. It was a rich, rich time in my life, a time of tremendous

growth, personally and professionally even, as my sense of vocation began to come more into focus. So I wouldn't trade anything for that experience. ... I loved it for the learning, I loved it for the safe place to really wrestle with issues of faith, because I was raised in a different denomination where, any time you had one of the more difficult questions, you were simply told that you just have to have faith, you just have to trust God, and so to be in a place where you could really wrestle with those things and live in the uncomfortableness of those questions was just rich for me. I wouldn't take anything for it.

Another elder calls those who feel called into pastoral ministry to rise to the challenges of a seminary education, regardless of the difficulties involved:

[Education is] changing, especially as we move to make seminary more accessible and more convenient. Which in some ways is ironic, especially for people who are going to seminary in response to a call, particularly if you look at models of biblical call, which are almost always inconvenient, from Abraham forward. Sell everything you have, give up everything, and move from your kinsmen and your own land, and go where I send you. So the idea of putting things online and making seminary tailored to people's experience, while I understand the necessity and the pragmatic side of that, on the other hand, I wonder how it prepares people from a mindset point of view, to go into itinerant ministry, potentially, or at the very least, ministry as a vocation that has a fairly high quotient of self-sacrifice required.

Even where local pastors do not fully benefit from this professionalization to the same extent as do elders, they offer some positive thoughts about these processes. For example, even as some local pastors feel that they are required to meet with their district committees on ordained ministry too frequently, another specifically notes that “[the dCOM] has been an awesome source of support and guidance.” While some local pastors lament the costs and time commitments related to attending the Course of Study, others describe it as “very helpful” and “excellent.”

Because elders (as those who continue to occupy the bulk of decision making positions in the denomination) continue to find great value in the professional model of ministry and all it entails, it is likely that the process for credentialing our full-connection

clergy will remain substantially as it is for the foreseeable future. Convictions on the part of annual conference leadership regarding the necessary forms of clergy training and credentialing can be seen as falling into Bourdieu's conception of habitus—durable, yet arbitrary, dispositions that affect assumptions about the proper functioning of church structures. As those who benefit most from the system, elders (in particular) have a vested interest in the maintenance of these structures. Among those I have worked with, before the annual conference makes a lifelong commitment to ordain a person into full-connection relationship with the conference, there is still a felt need for high-quality theological education, for doctrinal and practical examinations of candidates for ministry, and for a period of provisional membership in the conference in order to provide for accountable, supervised practice of ministry. This general mood in the Tennessee Conference appears to be matched by the denomination at large, where those who are charged with changing policies for the UMC as a whole seem unlikely to bring significant change to our current credentialing processes for clergy.

This observation about the forces that mitigate against wholesale change in the ordination process highlights one area in the life of the United Methodist Church in which the denomination has not completely given itself over to the democratizing forces that have shaped it significantly over its history. We have seen that over the course of its lifetime as a denomination, the UMC has opened up its decision making procedures to lay persons, has affirmed a general form of ministry for all baptized church members, and has most recently affirmed that all members of the church are involved in servant leadership, clergy and laity alike. However, it has resisted any forces that would move it completely to a congregational polity and disband its centralized “connectional”

structure. The worldwide quadrennial General Conference is still the only group that can make changes for the denomination as a whole, and matters of ordination policy continue to be under the purview of this central body. This centralized locus of authority is one reason that questions about the ordination of openly LGBT persons continue to be so heated at General Conference, since it is the only context in which wholesale policy changes can be made. This authority is also the reason that annual conferences such as the Tennessee Conference, with its high number of local pastors, cannot act unilaterally to change methods of clergy credentialing, even if the drive existed to do so. Bourdieu's structuring of fields of endeavor also helps to complicate the dynamic relationship between democratizing influences and central authority within United Methodist structures. While the denomination has opened up decision-making capabilities to more and more people over time, it can also be demonstrated that the UMC's centralized structure has itself helped to safeguard the participation of some who might otherwise be further marginalized (racial minority members, women, LGBT persons, etc.). In other words, when democratic processes are measured by the availability of a plurality of points of view, these centralized safeguards are themselves a form of democratizing influence. In this way, the fields of United Methodist annual conferences allows marginalized voices to have a participatory role in guiding the future of the denomination as they use their capital to maintain or advance their relative standings in the field. We can see, then, that the ongoing dialectic between egalitarian and authoritarian impulses persists in American Methodism in multiple and complex ways.

Moving into the Future—General Conference 2016 and Beyond

As the United Methodist Church once again prepares for its quadrennial denominational General Conference, slated to meet next in Portland, Oregon in May 2016, many of the same issues that have taken up considerable time and emotion for debate in the past appear poised to do the same this year. Debates over the role of LGBT persons in the life of the denomination (Hahn and Gilbert, 2016), a proposed reduction in size of denominational boards and agencies (Hahn 2016), and a proposed move that would require the denominational General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits to divest from fossil fuel companies (Astle 2016). As those who are the clergy leaders of the UMC's congregations, elders and local pastors are concerned with all of these issues, and particularly on the questions of human sexuality that break down along liberal/conservative lines, elders and local pastors quite often find themselves on opposite sides of these debates.

Even though reports on these issues take up more space in denominational media, important proposals for changes in the way the denomination recruits, trains, and supervises clergy leadership are coming to the floor of the General Conference as well. The denomination's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) received a mandate from the previous General Conference of 2012 to study (in part) "the nature and grounding of the elder; ... Course of Study and education for local pastors; ... [and the] education of clergy in terms of seminary reform, relevant curriculum, global theological education, funding, and debt of seminary graduates" (GBHEM 2016, 1). Although proposals around these issues are not likely to receive as much attention as other hot-button issues, their ramifications may be equally consequential, to the extent

that they help shape expectations and performance of clergy leaders of congregations in a time of rapid social change.

The proposals coming from GBHEM in 2016 are quite traditional in their way. They affirm the historic linkage between ordination as an elder/priest and the authority to preside at sacramental services, lamenting that “while the missional urgency for ministry has extended the responsibility for celebrating the sacraments to local pastors, the exception has increasingly become the rule” (GBHEM 2016, 7). Their acknowledgement of a limited ongoing role for local pastors in presiding at the sacraments affirms the status quo rather than offering any changes in status: “Similarly [to elders]—but in more circumscribed ways—local pastors . . . are being called to preside at the celebration of the sacraments within their designated settings” (2016, 10). Of the various changes being suggested by GBHEM, none would change the status, rights, or responsibilities of local pastors in their congregations or at the annual conference level.

Such a conservative stance seems less than proactive, given the growing percentage of United Methodist clergy ranks being filled by local pastors. One further proposal in GBHEM’s report to General Conference would have the consequence (perhaps unintended) of reducing the number of local pastors (and lay people acting as supply pastors) in the denomination by reducing the need for them. The report suggests:

The Commission studied [...] very small congregations and heard many stories of congregations with 15 or fewer active members. We gratefully give witness to the important role that many such congregations have had historically in their communities. We recognize the reasons for their decline are many and various. Nonetheless, we join with others in the growing concern over the amount of energy and resources spent to deploy clergy and laity to very small, single-generation churches. . . . The Commission strongly encourages conferences to share and adopt best practices that enable congregations to finish their work well and “pass the baton” to other congregations, new church starts, or community ministries

where resources might be used most effectively for future disciple-making.

While there are many arguments to be made about closing small membership churches that draw on conference resources that might arguably be more effectively used elsewhere, this remains a long-term prospect, given the resistance that many small churches display to such closures. A significant number of local pastors will remain in leadership positions in United Methodist congregations for the foreseeable future. In the Tennessee Conference, for instance, if all congregations with 15 or fewer average weekly attendance were shut down immediately, that would only account for 52 of the 300 congregations currently being served by local pastors. These unordained clergy will be part of the structure of United Methodist annual conferences (particularly in those like the Tennessee Conference) for a long time to come. With that in mind, are there ways to address the concerns that so many of them voice?

Rethinking Ordination

While the theological and social meanings underlying the act of ordination in the United Methodist Church remain contested and seemingly contradictory at times, the rite remains a powerful credentialing act and form of symbolic capital. As I explored previously, the UMC as a denomination attempts to hold two views of ordination simultaneously: one which holds that ordination is a supernatural endowment fundamentally changing the character and status of the ordinand, and the other which emphasizes ordination as the granting of an ecclesiastical job description (Heitzenrater 1993, 431; Campbell 1994, 69). In the Tennessee Conference, it has been the latter functional status that has been most often cited as the ongoing rationale for the act. Even

though its power as a credentialing act is usually taken for granted, some conference leaders have expressed a willingness to question the ways in which ordination has traditionally been seen as the primary differentiation between clergy and the members of the congregations they lead. One leader with several years' experience at shepherding candidates through the ordination process emphasized the commonality of experiences across clergy categories and questioned how ordination continues to fit into the process:

In our Discipline, it says that ordination is for certain persons being set aside whose gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness in ministry are affirmed by the church. Isn't that what we do with local pastors? Isn't that what we do with certified lay ministers, and certified lay speakers? We're saying, "we're setting you aside, you've got gifts, you've got evidence of God's grace in your life, and we believe that you are going to be useful in the life of the church, in some sort of special, set apart way."

This raises several possibilities for rethinking whether and how ordination might continue to be useful as a form of capital for Methodist leaders.

On one end of the spectrum is the possibility of reemphasizing the historic understanding of ordination that would limit sacramental leadership (and other forms of pastoral work) to elders only. This might find support from those in the UMC who seek a return to a presumed simpler organization of ministry that was given birth in the 1784 establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, a break that was prompted in large part by the assumption that ordained elders were the only ones theologically authorized to provide full pastoral leadership to American Methodists. This view takes the supernatural endowment view of ordination to its logical extreme. As I have noted, however, this view of ordination appears to be the minority position in the Tennessee Conference, as well as the wider denomination over the past several decades. This hesitation appears from the UM Council of Bishops in the 1980s who openly shared

their “ambivalence ... that in ordination something primarily ontological occurs” (Council of Bishops 1986, 196) to the present Book of Discipline that goes as far as to affirm that “in ordination, the church affirms and continues the apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit,” but claims no special permanent status for those so set aside (United Methodist Church 2012, 217). Additionally, annual conferences face the practical obstacle of finding enough elders to provide sacramental and pastoral leadership with fewer and fewer clergy candidates choosing to pursue the path of ordination as elder.

On the other end is a different sort of radical proposal: to abolish ordination altogether and with it the entire clergy/laity distinction. This is the option that would take most seriously the more democratic impulses sprinkled throughout American Methodist history. It would take at face value all current UMC affirmations about all Christians being in ministry together, authorized by their common baptism. This would carry to its logical extreme larger trends affecting clergy authority across mainline Protestant denominations in the United States, as noted by Dean Hoge:

An attack on clerical authority has been present in Western nations for 300 years, and it continues today. In Protestantism it has been strong since the Reformation, so that Protestant ministers today are perceived to possess limited authority solely by virtue of their ordination. Instead, they need to win personal authority from their flocks through their own actions. ... If laity accord less and less authority to clergy, how does this change ministry? How does it change the role of the clergy? Is there still a role for a clergy if it has little authority? Probably, with a more educated and autonomous laity in the future, demands and expectations put on clergy will be higher than in the past, and clergy will be less able to fall back on institutionalized status for influence (“Do not forget, I am an ordained minister”) (Hoge 2009, 592).

Such an elimination of distinction between all categories of clergy and laity would remove any substantive distinctions and allow the hiring of church leaders based solely

on the perceived needs of each congregation. Although interesting as a thought experiment, there are no widespread calls for such a revolutionary equalizing solution to the problems inherent in a hierarchical model of ministry in the UMC.

What lies in between these endpoints is a more moderate path that would expand pastoral authority for all those who are serving in that capacity: reclaim the office of local elder from a previous period in Methodist history. As noted earlier, this office was in use for over a century in American Methodism, beginning in the 1820s, and allowed those whose work and family circumstances did not allow them to be itinerating elders in full connection the ability to lead worship (including sacramental services) in their local congregations (Harnish 2000, 125-6; Campbell 2004, 359). Karen Westerfield Tucker, scholar of worship in the Methodist tradition, outlines what such a process might look like in current practice:

The denomination could ordain as elder anyone who is assigned to pastor a local congregation, whether or not the individual has completed the stipulated educational requirements. Conference membership could then be linked with educational achievement. Many times in the past, this proposal has been offered—and rejected. But it does have the advantage of firmly connecting ordination with sacramental presidency, and word with sacrament. It is honest about the ministry that every local pastor should be engaged in and equipped to do. And, on the level of ecumenical discussions, such a policy would considerably reduce the critique against current United Methodist polity often levied by other Christian communions (Tucker 2001a, 97-8).²¹

In a posting on his blog in the fall of 2015, Taylor Burton-Edwards, the current director of worship resources at the UMC's General Board of Discipleship, offers this same

²¹ This critique centers around concerns that, in denominations with a strong sacramental theology, their historic practice has been to ordain clergy as the necessary authorization to preside at sacramental services of baptism and Eucharist. The UMC's partial deviation from that practice has proven to be a stumbling block in conversations toward mutual recognition of clergy ministries with other denominations (Harnish 2000, 146-7).

suggestion, while still remaining pessimistic about the current chances for its adoption. In answering a question about the problem of meeting the sacramental worship needs of smaller congregations, he writes:

There is another solution for this—but one that is not yet politically likely to happen. We could return to the practice of ordaining local pastors, not simply licensing them. We used to have local elders—ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament. So this is a return to our heritage. . . . Maybe this is something that would be considered acceptable by the time we get to [General Conference] 2020. It's clear we're not there yet (Burton-Edwards 2015).

While this is an option that is part of ongoing denominational conversations, it is not yet in a position to be enacted.

Among the further proposals coming from the denomination's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry for the 2016 General Conference is one that, while not going as far as this recommendation to reinstate the ordained office of local elder, would begin to lay groundwork toward that end. This proposal substantially echoes one that was previously offered by GBHEM in 2012, but ultimately rejected by that year's General Conference (GBHEM 2011, 9-10). This recommendation would decouple the tight connection between ordination and full connection relationship to the annual conference by allowing candidates for elder (and deacon) to be ordained after completing their educational and other initial requirements, while reserving full membership in the annual conference for a time after they had served in a pastoral capacity for at least two years of supervised "residency." The stated rationale behind this year's proposal retains a sense of the supernatural endowment theological view of ordination ("Ordination is a lifelong relationship with God and the Church, effected by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit"), while retaining the functional approach ("The *authorization to perform ministerial*

functions depends upon conference relationship. This authorization begins with ordination and provisional membership”) (GBHEM 2016, 10, emphasis in original). It remains to be seen whether this change has a better chance of adoption this year than it did four years ago, but if it is implemented, then it could serve as the basis for future changes that eventually allow the ordination of local elders as a recognition of the pastoral and sacramental work that they do, even if they may not ever have the expectation of entering into full connection relationship with the annual conference.

This would be only a partial solution to the concerns raised by local pastors in the Tennessee Conference, of course. The full connection relationship itself, along with the privileges it brings, remains a contested and important form of capital in its own way. If the possibility of entering into full conference membership is not opened to local pastors, then voting rights on some matters (election of delegates to General Conference, adoption of amendments to the denominational constitution, voting on matter of clergy relationships to the annual conference) would remain unchanged. Presumably, the minimum guaranteed salaries would remain at a lower level for local pastors than for elders in full connection. This economic motivation should not be understated; as long as local pastors are viewed as less expensive alternatives for deployment to small and rural congregations, social parity with elders will be difficult for them to achieve. The push for greater local pastor participation in conference decision making processes would likely continue. But as I have argued throughout this project, ordination itself is a particularly potent marker of social capital for United Methodists. Ordaining (and not simply licensing) local pastors for their work could help ameliorate the perceived gap noted by local pastors in earlier chapters. Bourdieu would maintain that ordination’s status as a

powerful form of capital would result in full connection clergy (and the annual conference structures they represent) continuing to oppose any changes in ordination processes that would dilute its power as a means of social differentiation. When elders have privileged positions in this field of the annual conference, any change to that privilege will not happen easily or automatically.

Improving Educational and Socializing Opportunities

In attempting to meet the needs of the growing number of local pastors in the UMC, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry cites in its recommendations to General Conference a need for greater flexibility for those local pastors who will receive their further education through the Course of Study. The Board makes no concrete recommendations beyond a request that the GBHEM work with Methodist colleges to provide for new undergraduate programs that fulfill Course of Study requirements and culminate in a bachelor's degree (2016, 14).

Support for ongoing education of UM local pastors will be critical if the denomination hopes to develop clergy leaders who maintain a strong sense of Methodist identity beyond meeting the needs of the congregations they serve. As I have noted, this identity comes not only through the mastery of traditional academic subject areas such as Methodist history, polity, and theology, but also through the social cohesion that is formed when students gather for extended periods of time inside the classroom and beyond. This is why Jackson Carroll and his collaborators note the importance of “being there” in one's educational pursuits—a student must be present to be formed in any significant way by the culture and fellow students of a school (Carroll et al. 1997, 251-

68). Although seminary is a particularly powerful form of habitus formation for its students, it is possible for Course of Study students to be shaped by the culture of their programs, as well. As one elder with experience working with local pastors enrolled in the Course of Study said to me:

Having had relationships with a lot of local pastors through the years, one of the things that they talk about when the classes are over, ... especially the ones who are full-time [local pastors and have] been at the Course of Study in Atlanta, is, "I'm really going to miss those people. I'm really going to miss those conversations." ... That was still a formative experience for them, and was the thing that probably meant the most, was those relationships that came out of a shared experience.

Continued encouragement for local pastors to further their education, both in terms of the material they study and the relationships they form with fellow local pastors, should pay dividends in terms of overall cohesion among clergy.

The relational side of that equation need not stop with formal higher educational processes, however. Continued, intentional attempts to bring pastors together for conversation and fellowship, across the various categories of clergy, may improve the perceived disconnect between elders and local pastors, as well as helping to strengthen a common identity beyond local congregations. Such interactions are already happening to a degree, of course, and several survey respondents cite these gatherings as helpful aspects of the annual conference for their work. One elder noted: "A sense of collegiality among clergy ... happens through district meetings, annual conference, etc. As a big tent, the UMC forces us to be in relationship across theological lines in a way that most of us would not pursue on our own." Similarly, a local pastor gave an indication for a practical outcome of these gatherings: "I feel that the organization of the districts and how they operate helps the ministers to get to know how to serve their community better.

Organizational meetings and getting together with other ministers in the area help to coordinate their efforts and make all programs more affective [sic].”

The current bishop of the Tennessee Conference, Bill McAlilly, has prioritized regular gatherings among clergy of all types as a method of building trust, collaboration, and common purpose. He has used the biblical concept of covenant to ask clergy to think about how they share a common purpose, and has called for times to gather for the work of building a covenant statement of living into that purpose. After several rounds of drafting, the opening of that covenant statement of purpose reads:

We have a sacred calling as United Methodist clergy. By virtue of our baptism and ordination or licensing, we have entered into a covenantal relationship in a community of clergy (active and retired Elders, Deacons, Associate Members, Provisional Members, Local Pastors). Our mutual covenant seeks to create a community marked by and lived into with respect, honesty, integrity, compassion, and encouragement. In all interactions with one another, we seek to offer mutual support and care as friends in ministry (Tennessee Conference 2015).

At a gathering in March 2015 to further develop these relationships, Bishop McAlilly commented on why this section of the document is important in dealing with ongoing tensions between the various clergy categories in the Tennessee Conference:

We do unintended harm sometimes [with] the distinctions we make between Elders, Deacons, and Local Pastors ... and all of the ways we divide ourselves. I am mindful that when we get to Annual Conference this year it will be more profound because it is an election year [for General Conference delegates]. Nobody signed up for those distinctions, other than we follow different paths, we got here in different ways. Our life experience either allowed us to do life in one way or another. And sometimes our labels do not help us, frankly. I think most Deacons are very clear about their call to be a Deacon. And most Elders are clear about their call to be Elders. And many Local Pastors that I know understand that they are Local Pastors because that is how life unfolded for them in respect to their call. So we have to work, always work to break down those barriers (Tennessee Conference 2015).

In a sense, McAlilly's explanation of pastors' varying "life experience" overlooks a great many possible reasons that some pastors would choose not to pursue ordination as an elder (viewing theological school as unnecessary or a bad financial investment, seeing seminary as detrimental to their faith, feeling that they are too advanced in age). The bishop here also runs the risk of seeing elders and deacons as those who are able to articulate clearly a divine calling, whereas local pastors simply have their path "unfold" for them. Nevertheless, the overall message here captures something of the spirit of this annual conference and of this denomination regarding its various classes of clergy leadership: pastors have too long felt divided, and many feel consistently undervalued. Now is the time, according to the bishop, to break down barriers, to rethink the usefulness of labels, and to reconsider how to work for the same goals together. While there are no quick solutions to these problems of division and lack of trust, significant time spent together across differences of clergy status, class, and ideology provides a hopeful possibility for change. "Being there" with others brings people together.

At the same time, those seeking to ameliorate the social stratification among pastors should maintain a tempered sense of optimism at these prospects for change. Vested interests among those with privileged positions in the field of the Tennessee Conference are real; habitus is enduring as an embodiment of the sense of the way things should be; the field of the annual conference is deeply stratified as a starting point. Nevertheless, change remains a possibility. In her study of how opposition to the denominational leadership of marginalized groups has taken place throughout American Methodist history, Jane Ellen Nickell has mapped the processes by which African Americans and women have risen to positions of leadership in the denomination. She also

examines current opposition to openly LGBT persons following a similar path to leadership. She notes that any potential changes never occur automatically or without great opposition:

The changes in authority structures explored here were intentional . . . , as groups and individuals with marginal interest or influence have sought an equal share of social capital. The democratic nature of the Methodist General Conference allows for a participatory decision-making process, but one that is drawn out and difficult, because of the way ingrained power relationships resist change. Once those power shifts do occur, members of a newly empowered group may use their capital to argue either for the leadership of other groups, or against others' advancement, so as to not jeopardize their own newly-gained status. . . . The pace of change may seem slow to those who are working for greater inclusion, yet the church's diverse leadership today occurred because the white men who comprised General Conferences one hundred years ago were persuaded to allow other voices into that arena. That persuasion came from forces within the church, as well as from external social change movements. Had those delegates acted solely in their own interest, change would not have occurred, and the church would still be led by white men (Nickell 2010, 175-6).

Similar changes in the power-sharing structures of the United Methodist Church may take hold in coming years, between categories of clergy as well as between clergy and laity. Such changes will require the continuing exposure of the arbitrary nature of current power relationships, as well as the commitment of those currently with power to reshape the field of UMC annual conferences.

For the Tennessee Conference and for the United Methodist Church as a whole, there are no easy answers to these questions about how best to provide leadership for their congregations in a way that is ultimately supportive of those who have chosen to become pastoral leaders in the denomination. There are those who seek to remove the obstacles that separate the various classes of leaders and prevent them from doing their work as effectively as they might otherwise do. For them, these attempts to create an

atmosphere for rebuilding trust, if combined with the distribution of social and material resources with greater equality, appear to provide hope for their work moving forward.

APPENDIX—SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSE DATA

Q1: What is your gender?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=214					
Female	37	24	61	26.62	32.00
Male	102	51	153	73.38	68.00
TOTAL	139	75	214	100.00	100.00

Q2: What is your age?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=217					
Under 20	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
21-25	0	1	1	0.0	1.3
26-34	15	7	22	10.7	9.1
35-44	21	6	27	15.0	7.8
45-54	27	16	43	19.3	20.8
55-64	52	27	79	37.1	35.1
65-74	19	19	38	13.6	24.7
75 or older	6	1	7	4.3	1.3
TOTAL	140	77	217	100.0	100.0

Q3: What is your primary racial/ethnic background?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=217					
White	127	69	196	90.7	89.6
Black	8	6	14	5.7	7.8
Hispanic	0	1	1	0.0	1.3
Asian American	3	1	4	2.1	1.3
Native American	2	0	2	1.4	0.0
Other	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	140	77	217	100.0	100.0

Q4: What is your highest level of formal education?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=211					
Less than high school graduate	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
High school graduate/GED	0	4	4	0.0	5.4
Some college, trade, or vocational school	0	23	23	0.0	31.1
College degree	1	26	27	0.7	35.1
Master's degree	98	19	117	71.5	25.7
Doctoral degree	38	2	40	27.7	2.7
Other	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	137	74	211	100.0	100.0

Q5: What is your father's highest level of formal education?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=210					
Less than high school graduate	19	25	44	13.8	34.7
High school graduate/GED	30	23	53	21.7	31.9
Some college, trade, or vocational school	23	10	33	16.7	13.9
College degree	33	10	43	23.9	13.9
Master's degree	20	4	24	14.5	5.6
Doctoral degree	13	0	13	9.4	0.0
Other	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	138	72	210	100.0	100.0

Q6: What is your mother's highest level of formal education?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=215					
Less than high school graduate	14	14	28	10.1	18.4
High school graduate/GED	37	38	75	26.6	50.0
Some college, trade, or vocational school	34	13	47	24.5	17.1
College degree	37	7	44	26.6	9.2
Master's degree	17	4	21	12.2	5.3
Doctoral degree	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Other	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	139	76	215	100.0	100.0

Q7: What theological degree(s), if any, have you earned? (Choose all that apply.)	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=207					
B.D.	4	4	8	2.9	5.7
M.Div.	131	8	139	95.6	11.4
M.A.	12	1	13	8.8	1.4
M.T.S.	4	0	4	2.9	0.0
Completed UMC Course of Study	2	27	29	1.5	38.6
None at this time	1	31	32	0.7	44.3
Other	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	137	70	207	112.4	101.4
NOTE: Percentages do not add to 100% because multiple options are available.					

Q8: How many years have you been a member of the United Methodist Church?	NOTE: While most responses to this free-response question were numerical, enough resulted in non-quantifiable data (“Since my first breath,” “As long as I can remember,” “Lifelong”) that results from this question were not tabulated in a way that provided for categorical comparisons.
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Q9: How many years have you been a pastor in the United Methodist Church?	NOTE: Similarly to question 8, while most responses to this free-response question were numerical, enough resulted in non-quantifiable data that results from this question were not tabulated in a way that provided for categorical comparisons.
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Q10: Are you currently:	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=218					
an elder (or provisional / probationary elder)?	140	0	140	100.0	0.0
a local pastor or associate member?	0	78	78	0.0	100.0
a supply pastor?	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Other	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	140	78	218	100.0	100.0

Q11: For your current (or most recent) pastoral appointment, what is your position?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=212					
Sole pastor of single church	55	42	97	40.7	54.5
Sole pastor of multiple point charge	14	26	40	10.4	33.8
Associate pastor	21	5	26	15.6	6.5
Senior pastor of multiple-pastor church	24	1	25	17.8	1.3
Extension ministry/Conference or District staff/Other	21	3	24	15.6	3.9
TOTAL	135	77	212	100.0	100.0

Q12: For your current (or most recent) pastoral appointment, what is the total membership of the church(es) you serve?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=216					
Less than 100	14	39	53	10.1	50.6
101-200	28	25	53	20.1	32.5
201-500	26	8	34	18.7	10.4
501-750	15	2	17	10.8	2.6
751-1,000	11	0	11	7.9	0.0
Greater than 1,000	25	2	27	18.0	2.6
I do not currently pastor churches.	20	1	21	14.4	1.3
TOTAL	139	77	216	100.0	100.0

Q13: For your current (or most recent) pastoral appointment, what is the setting of the primary church in your current appointment?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=216					
Rural or open country	20	37	57	14.4	48.1
Town of less than 10,000 residents	21	22	43	15.1	28.6
In or around city of 10,000-49,999 residents	30	7	37	21.6	9.1
In or around city of 50,000-249,999 residents	14	3	17	10.1	3.9
In or around city of 250,000 residents or more	37	6	43	26.6	7.8
I do not currently pastor churches.	17	2	19	12.2	2.6
TOTAL	139	77	216	100.0	100.0

Q14: How would you describe yourself theologically?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=216					
Very liberal/progressive	25	3	28	18.0	3.9
Somewhat liberal/progressive	45	12	57	32.4	15.6
Moderate	40	18	58	28.8	23.4
Somewhat conservative/traditional	23	29	52	16.5	37.7
Very conservative/traditional	6	15	21	4.3	19.5
TOTAL	139	77	216	100.0	100.0

Q15: In your preaching ministry, how often do you follow the lectionary in choosing biblical passages as the basis for your sermons?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=210					
Always	16	9	25	11.8	12.2
Most of the time	78	30	108	57.4	40.5
Occasionally	36	25	61	26.5	33.8
Never	6	10	16	4.4	13.5
TOTAL	136	74	210	100.0	100.0

Q16: Is it your practice to wear a robe and/or stole to lead worship services in your current (or most recent) appointment?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=209					
Always	32	14	46	23.5	19.2
Most of the time	60	5	65	44.1	6.8
Occasionally	28	23	51	20.6	31.5
Never	16	31	47	11.8	42.5
TOTAL	136	73	209	100.0	100.0

Q17: When an infant is born into your congregation(s), do you actively encourage the parents to present her/him for baptism?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=208					
Always	84	39	123	61.3	54.9
Most of the time	34	19	53	24.8	26.8
Occasionally	14	7	21	10.2	9.9
Never	5	6	11	3.6	8.5
TOTAL	137	71	208	100.0	100.0

Q18: If you do not perform a baptism for an infant, are there other public acts of dedication that you perform instead?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=196					
Always	3	8	11	2.3	12.1
Most of the time	5	10	15	3.8	15.2
Occasionally	46	18	64	35.4	27.3
Never	76	30	106	58.5	45.5
TOTAL	130	66	196	100.0	100.0

Q19: When you conduct a communion service, do you use one of the services of Word and Table from either The United Methodist Hymnal or The United Methodist Book of Worship?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=211					
Always	67	38	105	49.3	50.7
Most of the time	50	22	72	36.8	29.3
Occasionally	16	13	29	11.8	17.3
Never	3	2	5	2.2	2.7
TOTAL	136	75	211	100.0	100.0

Q20: How much do you personally enjoy the following activities in your current (or most recent) pastoral appointment?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
CONDUCTING COMMITTEE MEETINGS					
Do not enjoy	23	14	37	17.0	19.2
Enjoy slightly	79	39	118	58.5	53.4
Enjoy quite a bit	29	20	49	21.5	27.4
Enjoy as a favorite activity	4	0	4	3.0	0.0
TOTAL	135	73	208	100.0	100.0
PERSONAL COUNSELING					
Do not enjoy	7	0	7	5.2	0.0
Enjoy slightly	33	12	45	24.4	16.7
Enjoy quite a bit	77	54	131	57.0	75.0
Enjoy as a favorite activity	18	6	24	13.3	8.3
TOTAL	135	72	207	100.0	100.0
SERIOUS STUDY AND WRITING					
Do not enjoy	3	3	6	2.3	4.1
Enjoy slightly	28	14	42	21.1	19.2
Enjoy quite a bit	65	28	93	48.9	38.4
Enjoy as a favorite activity	37	28	65	27.8	38.4
TOTAL	133	73	206	100.0	100.0
PROGRAMMING AND ARRANGING CHURCH GROUP ACTIVITIES					
Do not enjoy	9	3	12	7.0	4.2
Enjoy slightly	56	20	76	43.4	28.2
Enjoy quite a bit	55	41	96	42.6	57.7
Enjoy as a favorite activity	9	7	16	7.0	9.9
TOTAL	129	71	200	100.0	100.0

HELPING INDIVIDUALS TOWARD EXPERIENCING SALVATION AND PROFESSING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH					
Do not enjoy	2	1	3	1.5	1.3
Enjoy slightly	16	1	17	11.9	1.3
Enjoy quite a bit	65	23	88	48.5	30.7
Enjoy as a favorite activity	51	50	101	38.1	66.7
TOTAL	134	75	209	100.0	100.0
PREACHING (AND PREPARATION)					
Do not enjoy	3	0	3	2.2	0.0
Enjoy slightly	11	5	16	8.2	6.8
Enjoy quite a bit	39	21	60	29.1	28.4
Enjoy as a favorite activity	81	48	129	60.4	64.9
TOTAL	134	74	208	100.0	100.0
LEADING CONFERENCE/DISTRICT ACTIVITIES					
Do not enjoy	18	24	42	13.5	34.8
Enjoy slightly	62	24	86	46.6	34.8
Enjoy quite a bit	44	18	62	33.1	26.1
Enjoy as a favorite activity	9	3	12	6.8	4.3
TOTAL	133	69	202	100.0	100.0
VISITATION IN HOMES					
Do not enjoy	11	3	14	8.1	4.0
Enjoy slightly	43	13	56	31.9	17.3
Enjoy quite a bit	58	33	91	43.0	44.0
Enjoy as a favorite activity	23	26	49	17.0	34.7
TOTAL	135	75	210	100.0	100.0
TEACHING AND TRAINING ADULTS OR YOUTH (INCLUDING LESSON PREPARATION)					
Do not enjoy	2	0	2	1.5	0.0
Enjoy slightly	19	6	25	14.1	8.2
Enjoy quite a bit	61	35	96	45.2	47.9
Enjoy as a favorite activity	53	32	85	39.3	43.8
TOTAL	135	73	208	100.0	100.0

GIVING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL ISSUES, INCLUDING OUTREACH AND NEIGHBORHOOD INVOLVEMENT					
Do not enjoy	5	3	8	3.7	4.2
Enjoy slightly	40	15	55	29.6	20.8
Enjoy quite a bit	64	27	91	47.4	37.5
Enjoy as a favorite activity	26	27	53	19.3	37.5
TOTAL	135	72	207	100.0	100.0

Q21: How important do you think the following factors should be in making pastoral appointments?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
PASTOR'S SALARY					
Not important at all	12	8	20	9.0	10.8
Slightly important	64	43	107	48.1	58.1
Quite important	53	19	72	39.8	25.7
Critically important	4	4	8	3.0	5.4
TOTAL	133	74	207	100.0	100.0
LENGTH OF PASTOR'S SERVICE					
Not important at all	11	2	13	8.3	2.8
Slightly important	47	29	76	35.3	40.3
Quite important	63	35	98	47.4	48.6
Critically important	12	6	18	9.0	8.3
TOTAL	133	72	205	100.0	100.0
NEW MEMBERS GAINED UNDER PASTOR'S LEADERSHIP					
Not important at all	1	5	6	0.7	6.8
Slightly important	55	36	91	41.0	49.3
Quite important	62	25	87	46.3	34.2
Critically important	16	7	23	11.9	9.6
TOTAL	134	73	207	100.0	100.0
WORSHIP ATTENDANCE UNDER PASTOR'S LEADERSHIP					
Not important at all	1	3	4	0.7	4.1
Slightly important	38	26	64	28.4	35.1
Quite important	74	33	107	55.2	44.6
Critically important	21	12	33	15.7	16.2
TOTAL	134	74	208	100.0	100.0

SEMINARY EDUCATION					
Not important at all	4	20	24	3.0	26.7
Slightly important	45	34	79	33.6	45.3
Quite important	62	16	78	46.3	21.3
Critically important	23	5	28	17.2	6.7
TOTAL	134	75	209	100.0	100.0
PASTOR'S INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY ISSUES AND PROBLEMS					
Not important at all	5	3	8	3.8	4.1
Slightly important	37	24	61	28.0	32.9
Quite important	73	33	106	55.3	45.2
Critically important	17	13	30	12.9	17.8
TOTAL	132	73	205	100.0	100.0
OPINIONS OF PASTOR-PARISH (OR STAFF- PARISH) RELATIONS COMMITTEE					
Not important at all	2	2	4	1.5	2.7
Slightly important	36	14	50	27.1	18.9
Quite important	82	47	129	61.7	63.5
Critically important	13	11	24	9.8	14.9
TOTAL	133	74	207	100.0	100.0
SUPPORT FOR GENERAL CONFERENCE POSITIONS AND DECISIONS					
Not important at all	22	9	31	16.4	12.2
Slightly important	67	27	94	50.0	36.5
Quite important	40	27	67	29.9	36.5
Critically important	5	11	16	3.7	14.9
TOTAL	134	74	208	100.0	100.0

PASTOR'S ABILITY TO GET SUPPORT FOR APPORTIONMENTS					
Not important at all	11	6	17	8.2	8.3
Slightly important	57	27	84	42.5	37.5
Quite important	58	29	87	43.3	40.3
Critically important	8	10	18	6.0	13.9
TOTAL	134	72	206	100.0	100.0
PASTOR'S ABILITY TO BUILD STRONG LOCAL CHURCH PROGRAMS					
Not important at all	0	3	3	0.0	4.0
Slightly important	17	12	29	12.9	16.0
Quite important	80	32	112	60.6	42.7
Critically important	35	28	63	26.5	37.3
TOTAL	132	75	207	100.0	100.0

Q22: How important are the following factors in preparing a person for pastoral ministry?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
A PERSONAL CALLING BY GOD					
Not important at all	1	0	1	0.7	0.0
Slightly important	2	2	4	1.5	2.6
Quite important	19	2	21	14.1	2.6
Critically important	113	72	185	83.7	94.7
TOTAL	135	76	211	100.0	100.0
FORMAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION THROUGH SEMINARY/COURSE OF STUDY					
Not important at all	0	5	5	0.0	6.5
Slightly important	8	22	30	5.9	28.6
Quite important	71	33	104	52.6	42.9
Critically important	56	17	73	41.5	22.1
TOTAL	135	77	212	100.0	100.0
AFFIRMATION OF ONE'S CALL THROUGH CHURCH STRUCTURES (PPRC/SPRC, DISTRICT COMMITTEE ON ORDAINED MINISTRY, BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY, ETC.)					
Not important at all	1	3	4	0.8	3.9
Slightly important	12	17	29	9.2	22.1
Quite important	63	39	102	48.5	50.6
Critically important	54	18	72	41.5	23.4
TOTAL	130	77	207	100.0	100.0
PRACTICAL PREPARATION IN A MINISTRY SETTING (INTERNSHIPS, SUPERVISED MINISTRY PLACEMENTS, CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION, ETC.)					
Not important at all	2	6	8	1.5	7.8
Slightly important	16	22	38	12.0	28.6
Quite important	62	36	98	46.6	46.8
Critically important	53	13	66	39.8	16.9
TOTAL	133	77	210	100.0	100.0

ON-THE-JOB LEARNING EXPERIENCE AS A PASTOR					
Not important at all	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Slightly important	10	9	19	7.5	11.8
Quite important	66	39	105	49.6	51.3
Critically important	57	28	85	42.9	36.8
TOTAL	133	76	209	100.0	100.0
MENTORING BY MORE EXPERIENCED PASTORS					
Not important at all	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Slightly important	12	9	21	9.0	12.0
Quite important	51	38	89	38.3	50.7
Critically important	70	28	98	52.6	37.3
TOTAL	133	75	208	100.0	100.0

Q23: What factors led you to pursue the particular form of theological education that you did, either through seminary or Course of Study? (Check all that apply.)	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
Cost	23	25	48	20.5	35.7
Time commitment	23	27	50	20.5	38.6
Personal or family constraints	32	33	65	28.6	47.1
Recommendations from trusted people in your life	80	26	106	71.4	37.1
Conference requirements	60	45	105	53.6	64.3
Other					
TOTAL	112	70	182	194.6	222.9

Q24: Do you feel that the Course of Study is as adequate a form of theological education as seminary?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=188					
Yes	34	54	88	28.8	77.1
No	84	16	100	71.2	22.9
TOTAL	118	70	188	100.0	100.0

Q25: For your work as a pastor in the appointments you have served, what are the most helpful aspects of The United Methodist Church as a denomination (or the Tennessee Conference, or your district), including structures, programs, and resources?	Free Response Question

Q26: What are the most difficult aspects of the denomination, conference, or district, including structures, programs, and resources?	Free Response Question

Q27: If you could change the way that decisions are made within our annual conference, how would you do so?	Free Response Question
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Q28: In your experience, is the appointment-making process a fair one? Why or why not? (Answer in the comment field.)	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=178					
Yes	70	39	109	59.3	65.0
No	48	21	69	40.7	35.0
TOTAL	118	60	178	100.0	100.0

Q29: How fairly do you feel you have been treated by conference officials with regard to:	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
YOUR RACE?					
Very unfairly	1	2	3	0.8	2.8
Somewhat unfairly	6	2	8	4.8	2.8
Somewhat fairly	25	13	38	19.8	18.1
Very fairly	94	55	149	74.6	76.4
TOTAL	126	72	198	100.0	100.0
YOUR GENDER?					
Very unfairly	3	1	4	2.4	1.4
Somewhat unfairly	11	6	17	8.7	8.2
Somewhat fairly	40	16	56	31.7	21.9
Very fairly	72	50	122	57.1	68.5
TOTAL	126	73	199	100.0	100.0

YOUR LEVEL OF EDUCATION?					
Very unfairly	4	5	9	3.3	6.9
Somewhat unfairly	11	17	28	8.9	23.6
Somewhat fairly	29	22	51	23.6	30.6
Very fairly	79	28	107	64.2	38.9
TOTAL	123	72	195	100.0	100.0
OTHER FACTORS (PLEASE NAME BELOW)?					
Very unfairly	10	7	17	16.1	28.0
Somewhat unfairly	8	5	13	12.9	20.0
Somewhat fairly	19	3	22	30.6	12.0
Very fairly	25	10	35	40.3	40.0
TOTAL	62	25	87	100.0	100.0

Q30: Do you have close personal friendships with members of the church(es) you currently serve as pastor?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=198					
Yes	85	47	132	66.4	67.1
No	43	23	66	33.6	32.9
TOTAL	128	70	198	100.0	100.0

Q31: Do you continue to maintain close personal friendships with members of churches you have formerly served as pastor?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=192					
Yes	60	32	92	48.4	47.1
No	64	36	100	51.6	52.9
TOTAL	124	68	192	100.0	100.0

Q32: Do you feel respected as a professional person in your community, alongside members of other recognized professions (physicians, attorneys, etc.)?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=200					
Yes	112	63	175	86.8	88.7
No	17	8	25	13.2	11.3
TOTAL	129	71	200	100.0	100.0

Q33: Is it important for you to receive such professional recognition and respect from community members outside your church(es)?	Number of respondents			Percentages	
	Elders	Local Pastors	TOTAL	Elders	Local Pastors
n=198					
Yes	61	29	90	47.7	41.4
No	67	41	108	52.3	58.6
TOTAL	128	70	198	100.0	100.0

Q34: Are there any questions that you feel should have been asked, or any other information you would like to give?	Free Response Question				

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