Graduate Research Theses & Dissertations   Graduate Research & Artistry

2016

A study of boundary spanning : pastors' perceptions of their role as boundary spanners in the ELCA

Rachel Carrie Berry

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF BOUNDARY SPANNING: PASTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE AS
BOUNDARY SPANNERS IN THE ELCA

Rachel Carrie Berry, M.A.
Department of Communication
Northern Illinois University, 2016
Kathleen Valde, Director

This project examined pastors' roles as boundary spanners regarding information received from the synodical expression in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Twenty-six pastors from the Northern Illinois Synod of the ELCA were interviewed and transcriptions were analyzed using the constant comparative method of inductive analysis. Two research questions were posed to explore boundary spanning from a pastor's perspective. The results echoed the literature on boundary spanning responsibilities and challenges, expanding the boundary spanning research field into the realm of religious organizations and leadership. Implications of this research and further areas of study are provided.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
DEKALB, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2016

A STUDY OF BOUNDARY SPANNING: PASTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF

THEIR ROLE AS BOUNDARY SPANNERS IN THE ELCA

BY

RACHEL CARRIE BERRY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Thesis Director:
Kathleen Valde

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with all my heart that I recognize and thank my thesis adviser, Dr. Kathleen Valde, who has had much patience and grace throughout all phases of this paper. Her insight, care, tireless reading and attention to detail, and belief in this project has been instrumental in bringing this study to fruition. Thank you for the tireless hours you have spent continuing to keep me on track. Secondly, I would like to acknowledge and thank Northern Illinois Synod Staff, Bishop Wollersheim, and the twenty-six pastors who gave of their time and insight to this project. Your thoughts and perceptions are invaluable to the church and I thank you for the rewarding and difficult work you do in your call to ministry. Finally, I thank the love of my life, Andy. You have been a constant inspiring presence listening, encouraging, and cheering me on throughout this project. Your own insight and experiences as a pastor and your shared passion for this topic, as well as the ELCA, has been an invaluable motivation for me. I could not have done this without you Love.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to Andy and all other pastors I have met along this journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

vii

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The August 2009 Churchwide Assembly approval of the human sexuality social

statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* challenged the way the Evangelical Lutheran Church

of America (ELCA) framed its understanding of identity, mission, and relationships within the

church. After many years of study and conversation throughout the ELCA on the topic of human

sexuality, severe and polarizing voices bubbled up around the church as a result of the

statement's language, recognition, and inclusion of lifelong, monogamous, same-sex committed

relationships for church leaders in lay and pastoral roles. Because of this decision, identities

within and across the ELCA were, and continue to be, challenged on individual and collective

levels. The social statement recognized that the members across the ELCA did not have

consensus on this topic, but called for mutual respect for the conscience-bound beliefs of each

neighbor (ELCA, *Human Sexuality,* 2009).

To respond to the conflict, confusion, and emotions stemming from the passing of the

2009 social statement, the ELCA developed the Living into the Future Together (LIFT) Task

Force in November of 2009, charged with designing a study to evaluate the ELCA's identity and

mission that is formed through the relationships among its many parts and expressions. The task

force's charter stated:

> The purpose of the study . . . is to recognize the evolving societal and economic changes
> of the twenty years since the formation of this church and to evaluate the organization,
> governance and interrelationships among this church's expressions in the light of those

changes. The intended result of the Ecology Study's work is a report and recommendations that will position this church for the future and explore new possibilities for participating in God's mission. *(*ELCA, *Living into the Future,* 2011, p. 4)

The report of data and recommendations was distributed at the August 2011, Churchwide Assembly in Orlando, Florida, entitled *Living into the Future Together: Renewing the Ecology of the ELCA.* Two questions guided the LIFT study: "*What is God calling this church to be and do in the future?"* and, "*What changes are in order to help us respond most faithfully?"* (p. 4).

After evaluating interrelationships across the church, the LIFT task force suggested that relationships needed to be strengthened across all church expressions. Congregations were called to mutual accountability and mission with the greater church, and synods were recommended as facilitators of planning and partnership, and "common reminders that our common life is larger than the local congregation" (p. 8). The churchwide expression of the ELCA was called to "build the capacity of synods, which are best positioned to work directly with congregations in planning and carrying out God's mission" (p. 10).

This research study was inspired and motivated by the LIFT task force's recommendations regarding communication, collaboration and networks across all expressions of the ELCA. The task force recognized that the goal and immediate necessity in strengthening identity and mission is understanding the church as a "group of networks" (p. 7) in relationship and partnership with one another. The churchwide expression of the ELCA was charged with further study and discernment on the interconnectedness of the church and how to best foster ways congregations, synods and churchwide can better work in common mission throughout the church for the ministry of the world.

With the LIFT task force's commission to better understand and strengthen the interrelationships of this church, this study will focus on the relationship between the congregational and synodical expressions of the ELCA. One of the key elements linking these two expressions in the church are pastors. The use of organizational systems theory will be used to frame and study pastors' roles as boundary spanners within the ELCA between the congregational and synodical expressions. Boundary spanning theories highlight individuals' communication roles between systems of an organization (Aldrich & Herker, 1977); people who boundary span negotiate communication channels by receiving, organizing, and disseminating information between and throughout the various systems they represent.

Pastors are leaders in the church who represent a direct communication link between the congregational expression of the church and the synodical and churchwide organization, and are best positioned to boundary span due to their knowledge of the theological and missional understanding of the ELCA, and have great amounts of autonomy and influence in congregations. It is because of pastors' central and influential roles in the church that this study will investigate pastors' perceptions of the role they have in the communication of information between the church's synodical expression and the congregations in which pastors serve.

Studying pastor's perceptions of boundary spanning, although a narrow focus when looking at the whole context of the church, could provide a powerful insight in the ELCA's interrelationships and communication. First, this study will give voice to pastors' honest understandings of the boundary spanning role they experience in their calls to ministry. Second, studying pastors' perceptions of boundary spanning in the ELCA could illuminate strengths, weaknesses or assumptions inherent in the communication channels of this church, which could

guide and contribute to future considerations pertaining to how information is communicated within the ELCA and the responsibilities the church expects of its boundary spanning individuals.

Review of Literature

Historically, organizational communication research has omitted religious organizations from studies (Garber & Johnson, 2001) for a variety of reasons ranging from a religious organization's status as a type of nonprofit to writing the organizations off as too complex. However, within the last decade, more scholars are advocating for scholarly organizational communication research on religious organizations (Silva & Sias, 2010; McNamee, 2011). This is a needed step, yet most often new scholarly research trends are focusing on *spirituality* in the workforce (Molloy & Heath, 2014) instead of concentrating on general communication practices in religious organizations.

Most recent studies on church organizations have focused on on-line communication in congregations (Waters, et al., 2011; Choeng et. al., 2011) and congregational attitudes and feedback (Garner and Wargo, 2009). Research on pastors has often focused on rhetoric and delivery (Stewart, 1980, Carrell, 2009), clergy uncertainty in religious organizations (Forward, 1999), clergy stress (Berry, Francis, Rolph & Rolph, 2012; Soroka, 1993; Wells, 2013a; Wells, 2013b; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012), pastoral burnout (Lewis, Turton & Francis, 2007; Randall, 2013) and pastoral leadership (Bailey, 1980).

There has not been any research that has considered pastors' specific boundary spanning roles in church organizations, which is unfortunate because pastors play an important and

influential role in congregational and denominational life. This study will look at systems theory and organizational boundary spanning research to provide a framework for understanding pastors' roles and responsibilities as boundary spanners in the church.

<u>Organizational Systems Theory</u>

A systems theory approach to organizations is commonly explained as a framework that views organizations as inherently complex and composed of multiple components, or systems, that make up the whole. Each system then has boundaries, distinguishing, defining, and differentiating them from each other. A boundary is defined as "the demarcation line or region between one system and another, that protects the members of the system from extrasystemic influences and that regulates the flow of information, material, and people into or out of the system" (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978, p. 41). Tushman and Scanlan (1981) explain that boundaries are created through interaction between a system's symbolic language, habits, and reality constructs that help the system interpret their own social identity(s).

The identity(s) a system holds can affect a system's permeability, or "the degree to which an organization is open or receptive to inputs" (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981, p. 41). Openness can be on a rheostat and is defined as the extent to which a system interacts with, or is permeable to its environment (Lederman, 1976; Manev & Stevenson, 2001). High permeability is associated with organizations that are open to external influences and information. On the other end of the spectrum, organizations low in permeability have generally been understood in systems theory as closed systems, wanting little to no interaction with an environment viewed as outside their

system and identity, even though they may still be affected by that environment (Lederman, 1976).

Because organizations are inherently complex, they may have systems that possess varying degrees of permeability. The oldest perceptions of systems theory viewed organizations as automatically closed or open, with closed systems possessing internal chaos due to isolation, and open systems thriving due to the exchange of information with others outside (Lederman, 1976). However, new systems theory approaches presume that "all living systems are structurally and cognitively open but [may be] operationally closed to their environment" (Gunaratne, 2008, p. 176). A systems theory approach views the organization as interdependent systems, with varying degrees of openness to outside influence from other, internal systems, and/or external systems from other organizations. Leifer and Huber (1977) claim openness of a system's boundaries allows for richer connection between systems.

The way an organization manages these systems is through various avenues of communication networks and channels, communicators, and communication acts which help to form, maintain, and define the organization (Rogers, 1976). Boundary spanning is one way that systems maintain interdependence, health and effectiveness (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978) across the various systems in an organization.

Boundary Spanning Theory

The literature on boundary spanning primarily emerged around the 1970s as systems theory was becoming more popular (Ashmos & Huber, 1987). Boundary spanners function as

exchange agents, or communication links between different systems of an organization (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Liefer & Huber, 1977). Levina and Vaast (2005) define boundary spanners as "vital individuals who facilitate the sharing of expertise by linking two or more groups of people separated by location, hierarchy, or function" (p. 338). The purpose of boundary spanners in organizations is to cultivate and maintain organizational relationships and identities, often preparing and advocating for partnership, change and growth across systems (Leifer & Huber, 1977). Leifer and Delbecq (1978) explain that boundary spanners are "responsible for changing attitudes, perceptions, and values of organizational members" (p. 41) through their ability to calm uncertainty, and communicate organizational philosophies, information, and shared identity. Depending upon the organizational context, boundary spanners' roles may differ substantially due to organizational context and interrelationships (Keller & Holland, 1975). Leifer and Delbecq (1978) explain that boundary spanners' activities change based on the complexity and fluctuation of an organization, the type of information systems need for decision making, conflicts between systems, and organizational performance and goal discrepancies. Boundary spanning activities also can be heavily regulated by the organization or unregulated, allowing boundary spanners greater decision-making power (Leifer and Delbecq, 1978). Through these varying organizational demands, boundary spanners play a large role in maintaining the legitimacy, or valuableness, of an organization through the information they provide (Aldrich & Herker, 1977) and the relationships they maintain both inside and outside of their organizational boundaries (Johnson & Chang, 2000).

Early research on boundary spanning outlined the functional roles of boundary spanners. Research commonly outlines two general functions performed by boundary spanners: obtaining

information from outside systems and disseminating this information to internal users (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981; Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Johnson & Chang, 2000). When boundary spanners obtain information, a process of evaluation and reframing is involved before disseminating to internal members. This first function is often referred to as *filtering* in boundary spanning literature. Aldrich and Herker (1977) depict boundary spanners as "filters" and "facilitators," selectively acting on the most relevant information for their system, filtering information before summarizing, and facilitating and disseminating it to various organizational members. Filtering becomes necessary because not all information that enters an environment is of equal importance or relevance; Aldrich and Herker (1977) suggest that the "expertise of boundary role occupants in summarizing and interpreting information may be as important to organizational success as expertise in determining who gets what information" (p. 219), for boundary spanners have great influence over what a system hears, comes to believe, and identifies with. Research suggests the balancing across and between both external and internal organizational systems establishes boundary spanners' influence within peer and system groups (Johnson & Chang, 2000). The ability to interpret and summarize information for groups of people places great responsibility on the shoulders of boundary spanners and studies have shown that the amount and nature of boundary spanning activity used will determine whether, or how the organization will adapt to changes in the environment (Liefer & Delbecq, 1978; Keller & Holland, 1975).

More recent research on boundary spanner roles have focused on boundary spanner skills and competencies needed to effectively enact these role in organizations (Williams, 2002; Canary & Lakey, 2006; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981) as well as the challenges that boundary spanners experience in this organizational role.

Boundary Spanning Skills and Competencies

The abilities, skills, or traits most commonly associated with effective boundary spanners are an important element to understanding what it takes for boundary spanners' to carry out their role in and between organizational systems. Generally, boundary spanners are characterized by their ability to influence and engage others (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981; Williams, 2002). Williams (2002) categorizes these abilities as boundary spanning competencies, which are characteristics of a person such as traits, skills, or knowledge that boundary spanners draw upon to effectively carry out boundary spanning activities. Williams (2002) splits these into four categories of boundary spanning competencies that contribute to more effective and healthy organizational behavior: 1) the ability to build sustainable relationships through communication, listening, empathizing and conflict resolution, 2) the ability to manage, influence and negotiate between organizational systems while considering the political and personal dynamics present, 3) the ability to manage the complex interdependencies of organizations to foster collaboration, and 4) the ability to manage the ambiguous roles, expectations, values and motivations organizations and organizational members possess. The skills needed to effectively boundary span are diverse and complex and span the breadth and width of organizational structure(s), climate(s) and culture(s). Caldwell and O'Reilly III (1982) state,

> The success of a boundary spanner is . . . likely to be influenced by the degree to which individuals can accurately perceive and adapt to a variety of social situations. In short, if an individual is sensitive to and can respond to a variety of possibly divergent social cues, that individual should be more successful in conveying information across organizational boundaries and thus be a more effective performer. (p. 124)

In the face of such complexities, effective boundary spanners cultivate a variety of skill sets and these skills sets are often assessed and evaluated by both the organization(s) and system(s) boundary spanners link (Sleep, Bharadwai & Lam, 2013). Boundary spanners are often expected to meet goals set by the organization as well as meet customer and colleague expectations and satisfaction (Sleep, et al.,2013; Williams, 2002), which can lead to pressure and conflict (Keller & Holland, 1975). Agnihotri, Trainor, Krush, and Krishnakumar (2014) argue that in the face of such complexities, boundary spanners' most important skill is resiliency, or the ability to positively adapt or bounce back, in the face of such a demanding role.

The most competent and resilient boundary spanners, while better able to adapt to divergent social cues, still deal with multiple challenges within their communicational role. The next section highlights literature focusing on boundary spanning challenges in organizations.

Challenges in Boundary Spanning

Literature advocates that boundary spanning roles are inherently difficult and challenging due to a wide variety of factors. First, boundary spanners often experience conflict within their role. Because boundaries are constructed by internal interaction, they are usually vague and ambiguous (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978) and communication across boundaries can be difficult (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981; Carlile, 2002). One such challenge boundary spanners face is conflicting expectations between systems; members from each system convey their expectations as to how to act, what values should be expressed, and what interests should be represented (Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Keller & Holland, 1975), which creates potential conflict between

systems that place pressures on boundary spanners (Keller & Holland, 1975; Bettencourt &

Brown, 2003). Keller and Holland (1975) state,

> When the organizations which are spanned have goals that are in conflict, the boundary-spanner can experience strong role pressures and tensions due to the conflicting expectations for performance . . . [and] conflicting and misunderstood expectations. . . are often sent to the boundary spanner, . . . resulting in strong conflict role pressures and tensions. (p. 389-391)

Commonly, boundary spanners are not an intermediary between two persons, but between groups

of individuals, sharing membership in a system, but possessing individual values. Role conflict

becomes even more severe when expectations are located in separate organizational systems,

sharing little similarity in expectations (Friedman & Podolny, 1992). At times systems will have

very different expectations and goals than one another, placing emotional and psychological

challenges on the boundary spanner such as role stress and even burnout (Singh, Goolsby &

Rhoads, 1994).

Levina and Vaast (2005) claim "multiple roles of boundary spanners often come into

conflict, thereby leading to stress and burnout. Moreover, it is often hard to find individuals

willing to perform these roles as they are expected to be both sensitive to social cues and

competent in multiple domains" (p. 338). Bettencourt and Brown (2003) studied the effects of

stress and role ambiguity on boundary spanners in the service industry, finding that role conflict

and ambiguity lead to psychological withdrawals from a boundary spanner's job and negatively

impacted job satisfaction and organizational commitment, often following with reduced

performance. Role conflict was also studied by Friedman and Podolny (1992), who found that

role conflict had dysfunctional effects on boundary spanning individuals as well as their

relationship to others, with boundary spanners often experiencing stress "due to difficulty of

satisfying both parties, the suspicions shown to them by both sides, and the inherent ambiguity of their role" (p. 28).

Another challenge associated with boundary spanning is filtering. The large amount of potentially relevant data can be burdening to boundary spanners, especially since they are the main "defense against information overload" in an organizational system (Aldrich & Herker, 1977, p. 218). The functional roles (obtaining and disseminating) boundary spanners enact place pressure on the individuals, especially when information that is expected to be disseminated is not relevant to their specific system, or could be potentially contentious information. Aldrich and Herker (1977) point out that policies and information that are not relevant, or are contentious, "pose a dilemma for the conscientious boundary spanner" (p. 220). Boundary-spanners must make the choice to delay information, try to integrate it, or (if they have the option) choose to disregard it entirely. Carlile (2002) points out that boundary spanners' functional role may be to filter across boundaries if the only goal is translation, yet most boundary spanners often face many more boundary conflicts when information is contentious and challenging to a system's or individuals' identities.

Systems and boundary spanning theory are apt frameworks for studying the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and pastors' communication roles and boundary spanning responsibilities in the church. The following sections explain the structure of the ELCA and pastors' roles within the church to show how systems theory and boundary spanning intersect in this context.

Expressions of the ELCA

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is one of the largest mainline church denominations in the United States with about 4 million members, spread across 9,261 congregations throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands (ELCA, *About,* 2016). In 1988, three Lutheran churches, The American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), merged and formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Trexler, 1991). This merger created a complex structure that serves to organize the various parts of the church organization. Geographically, the United States is broken into 9 regions. These 9 regions contain 65 different synods. Within these synods are clusters of congregations. According to the ELCA website, synods can range from 30 to 300 congregations in size.

As described earlier, a systems approach to studying organizations focuses on the different systems, or networks of an organization and how they interact in relationship with one another (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Lederman, 1976; Roger, 1976). The structure of the ELCA can be broken down into a patchwork of interdependent systems. In the ELCA these systems are often referred to as *expressions* which denotes the three main parts within the church organization: congregations, synods, and churchwide. The word *expressions* is linguistically used in the church to organize and draw boundary lines between these systems to better explain the organizational workings, organize its mission and leadership structure, and build "wholeness" within and across the various systems.

Congregations

Congregations are composed of lay and pastoral members who participate in the ministry of Christ on a local, synodical, and global level. As the ELCA website states, "ELCA congregations are centers for evangelical mission, where people of faith celebrate, learn and connect with one another and others around the world through service and weekly worship" (ELCA, *Congregations*, para 1). Congregations' leadership structures often contain pastors (or designated synodical leadership if a church cannot support a pastor), council members, staff members, and various committee structures. Congregations support pastors financially and run as fairly independent centers for ministry and mission within their communities, but also pool resources with neighboring congregations to work for synodical and churchwide missions.

Synods

Synods are the regional centers where a conglomerate of congregations work together for greater mission building. Each synod has a designated synod office location(s), elected Bishop, and synodical staff members. Synods "unite the work of congregations within their areas, serve as regional support, and guide pastoral and other staff candidates" (ELCA, *Synods*, para 2) and according to the ELCA constitution, synods are called to "nurture the life and mission of its people" (Article 8.13, p. 54) and "strengthen interdependent relationships among congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization" (Article 10.21, p. 82).

<u>Churchwide</u>

      Based out of Chicago, Illinois, the churchwide structure of the ELCA supports the role of the synod and works as the center for national and global ministries and justice work. Churchwide is guided by the Churchwide Assembly (a gathering of lay and clergy from across the 65 synods every three years), their elected officers and council members, and an elected presiding bishop. According to the ELCA website, "The work God calls [the ELCA] to do in the world is never done alone or in isolation, and the churchwide organization plays a key role in developing and supporting a culture of interdependence, diversity, and common mission across all expressions of the ELCA and its partners" (ELCA, *Churchwide Organization*, para 3). ELCA partners in the United States and around the world are supported by the joining together of all expressions of the ELCA. *God's Work. Our Hands* is the mission statement of the church.

      These three expressions of the church combine to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and give a general framework of the church. The church intentionally chooses the word *expressions* to denote the fact that the ELCA is not a hierarchical church -- it is a group of systems from the whole national and global organization to every individual congregation, interdependently working together to share a common mission; all three expressions share mutual responsibility to carry out God's mission (Further explanation of the polity structure of the ELCA can be found in Appendix A).

      Each expression has different forms of ordained and/or rostered leadership (Pastors, AiMs, Diaconal Ministers, Deaconesses, Bishops, Presiding Bishop) who help guide and grow

members across the nation in Christ's faith and mission in life and lay leadership (lay leaders are

church members who serve in council, committee, staff roles, etc.). The ELCA website states,

> Each expression has its particular functions but all three together share a common mission of doing God's work in the world and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. Together, they ensure a solid foundation of leadership, active involvement in communities, opportunities for dialogue and diverse perspectives, creative partnerships, and support for members and ministries of the ELCA. (ELCA, *Churchwide Organization*, para 1)

The reaction to the 2009 social statement highlighted the differences and conflicting

views across the various expressions of the church. Further study through the LIFT task force

research raised concerns over the connectedness of the church body. As a result, the ELCA LIFT

task force study disclosed concern about the strength and mutual identity of the interrelationships

of the church. Boundary spanning can become one of the ways to analyze the relationships

within the ELCA. Aldrich and Herker (1977) explain the importance of boundary spanning in

organizations for their survival,

> . . . complex organizations have a tendency to move toward an internal state of compatibility and compromise between units and individuals within the organization, with a resultant isolation from important external influences. This trend can jeopardize the effectiveness and perhaps the survival of the organization, unless the organization is effectively linked to the environment through active boundary personnel. (p. 219)

While survival is a dramatic word, the ELCA called for evaluations of organizational

relationships to better fulfill the needs of its members and better serve God's mission into the

future generations. It is hoped this present study can help foster a greater awareness of the

boundary spanning roles in the ELCA and the strength they give to the health of the whole

church.

The actions of boundary spanners connect the systems in an organization across

boundaries. The ELCA has diverse and interdependent leadership spanning across its three

expressions, from pastors, rostered-nonordained leaders, bishops and lay leaders in both congregations and synods, to the numerous lay and pastoral leaders working for the Churchwide organization and partner organizations across the nation and globe.

Among these leaders, pastors play an essential role in the communication and connection of the expressions across the church. As of September 2015, pastors make up a population of 16,435 ordained clergy in the ELCA across 9,261 congregations (ELCA, *ELCA Facts*, 2016). Pastors are at the critical intersection of the church, serving and connecting directly with almost four million members of the ELCA. The following section will lay out pastors' responsibilities in the ELCA as they relate to boundary spanning theory.

Pastoral Boundary Spanning Expectations in the ELCA

Pastors are one of the most prominent, noticeable, and influential boundary spanner groups in the ELCA. On a routine basis pastors are in some form of contact with synodical and churchwide information. Through mailings, emails, and pastoral clergy groups, pastors are exposed to and frequently in communication with the various ELCA expressions. Pastors work even closer with the congregation(s) to which they have been called, educating congregants, organizing ministries and preaching the gospel. As explained earlier, boundary spanners link multiple groups of people separated by location or function (Levina & Vaast, 2005) and maintain or cultivate relationships across systems (Leifer & Huber, 1977).

The ELCA relies on pastors to educate, cultivate and advocate for the interrelationships and mutual responsibility of God's mission in which congregations share with the rest of the

church expressions. To help guide pastors' understanding of their call to ministry to the congregation and wider church, and to the essential role that they play in linking the congregation with the wider church, the ELCA presents expectations and guidelines for candidates entering seminaries and for ordained clergy. These guidelines are presented in a document entitled *Vision and Expectations.*

The document first makes it clear that this is not a mandate for what a pastor should say or do, but instead lays out visions and expectations that the ELCA highly encourages of their ordained ministers regarding their collaboration with the whole church. The ELCA does not heavily regulate a pastor's ministry decisions, but appeals to a standard of ministry outlined in the quote below.

> This document should not be understood as judicial standard, neither is it intended to suggest unrealistic or impossible expectations for those who serve on the roster of ordained ministers . . . [this is] a statement of expectations and hopes for the shape of ordained ministry. (ELCA, *Vision and Expectations*, p. 4)

The *Vision and Expectations* document continues to outline the ELCA's expectation of ordained ministers reminding pastors that their call is to "give leadership to the congregations and other ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" (p. 4), to remember their call is from God and not for the exercising of "domination or coercive power . . . [or] a right of the individual" (p. 6), to understand that the faith of the church is catholic (p. 7), to participate in ecumenical and collegial activities (p. 8, 11), and to recognize that a pastor's identity is centered in all expressions of the church and pastors are accountable to the church:

> Pastoral identity carries with it expectations and accountabilities that are determined by the whole church and not simply by a given congregation, synod, institution, or agency served by the ordained minister. . . The ordained minister must be a member of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. There the ordained minister is an integral part of a community of faith in which mutual support is given and

in which care, forgiveness, and healing occur. The ordained minister supports not only the work of the congregation, but also the synodical and churchwide ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This church expects its ordained ministers to work in a collegial relationship with one another and to share in mutual accountability with those in positions of leadership and oversight in this church. (p. 10-11)

Vision and Expectations is not the only document which lays out expectations of ordained ministers regarding their roles as boundary spanners across church expressions. The Constitution of the ELCA (also included in constitutions of ELCA synods and congregations) outlines the expectation that, in addition to a pastor's call to word and sacrament,

Each ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation . . . impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; [and] endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the Churchwide organization and synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. (Article 7.31.12b, p. 28)

These expectations of pastors in the ELCA to educate congregations on the interrelationship of the ELCA expressions, intersects with the literature on what boundary spanners are and the responsibilities they possess in organizations. Without boundary spanners in organizations, connecting systems and people to information, an organization's ability to operate is threatened (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). Without pastors educating congregations and lifting up congregations' interrelationships and partnership with the whole church, the church as a whole and the mission in which they share suffers. Pastors are called to be representatives and communicators of the church, helping to be a crucial link to the expressions of the wider church into the congregations in which they serve.

Pastoral Boundary Spanning Challenges

Considering pastors have never been studied specifically within a boundary spanning framework, potential challenges pastors may face as boundary spanners can only be speculated upon; however, it could be a well educated guess that pastors may face similar challenges to what boundary spanning research have discovered. Pastors may also feel these boundary spanning challenges more acutely due to the vast role demands of the clergy profession. As introduced earlier, boundary spanners have been documented to experience challenges with role vagueness and ambiguity (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978, Bettencourt & Brown, 2003) as well as filtering and disseminating of massive amounts of information (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). In addition, conflict relating to diverging goals and expectations between systems (Keller & Holland, 1975), the psychological elements of emotional exhaustion (Bettencourt & Brown, 2003; Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Agnihotri et al., 2014), and stress and burnout (Singh, et al., 1994; Levina & Vaast, 2005) add to the complex challenges boundary spanners experience.

Research on pastoral challenges in ministry overwhelmingly focuses on the psychological effects of stress (Wells, Probst, McKeown, Mitchem & Whiejong, 2012; Wells, 2013; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012), shame (Binau, 2006) and burnout (Miner, 2007; Barnard & Curry, 2012; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lewis, Turton & Francis, 2007; Pector, 2005). Often studies on pastoral stress and burnout link these psychological manifestations to various demands of the profession such as, role conflict and ambiguity (Grosch & Olsen, 2012; Kay, 2000), work-related responsibility and pressures (Soroka, 1993), work-family boundary conflicts (Wells, 2013), and administrative tasks (McMinn, Lish, Trice, Root, Gilber & Yap, 2005; Binau, 2006).

Clergy Administrative Challenges

The clergy profession is often stated to be a highly stressful occupation (McMinn et al., 2005) and scholarship has demonstrated time and again the challenges of stress in the clergy profession (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). Much of this stress is linked to occupational demands of clergy (Berry, Francis, Rolph & Rolph, 2012). Miles and Proeschold-Bell (2012) depict the occupational demands and pressures of the pastoral profession, stating, "Pastors often must serve simultaneously in numerous roles as mentor, care giver, preacher, leader, figurehead, disturbance handler, negotiator, administrator, manager, counselor, social worker, spiritual director, teacher, and leader in the local community" (p. 200). Performing these vastly different roles can cause role conflicts, emotional exhaustion, and stress because it requires of pastors to embrace and be proficient in a number of different relational and administrative communication skills sets and competencies.

Soroka (1993) defines stressors in the clergy occupation as "any situation in which environmental demands tax or exceed the resources of the person" (p. 4). Occupational demands on clergy from administrative pressures and responsibilities (McMinn et al., 2005; Binau, 2006) to time and task demands (Soroka, 1993; Berry, Francis, Rolph & Rolph, 2012) tend to overwhelm pastors. Binau (2006) points out that while administrative, or *organizing* duties, help structure the body of Christ, often they bog pastors down, becoming mechanical and shame inducing. These stressors and feelings of shame contribute to stress in a pastor's ministry and personal life and have the potential to lead to pastoral burnout. Binau states,

> Because administrative tasks frequently leave persons in ministry with a sense of having too much responsibility and not enough power to effect change, their capacity to trigger

shame is enormous. . . The popular name for this condition is burnout. . . For most persons in ministry today the sheer *bulk* of administrative ministry is daunting . . . more often than we would like, [we] feel overwhelmed and insufficient in the face of so many details to manage. (p. 101)

Clergy Relational Challenges

In addition to administrative challenges and stressors pastors' experience, pastors also face challenges relating to ministry relationships. Just as role conflict between systems is a common challenges in boundary spanning literature (Aldrich & Herker, 1977), relational conflicts between congregational and denominational expectations of the pastor has been well documented (McMinn et al., 2005; Soroka, 1993; Wells, 2013b; Han & Lee, 2004; Berry et al., 2012). Unrealistic expectations of oneself and one's congregation and denomination were cited as a common stressor in clergy ministry (McMinn et al., 2005; Faucett, Corwyn & Poling, 2013) as well as criticism from church members (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012; Han & Lee, 2004). Soroka (1993) stated that priests' felt more stress when there was relational conflict such as a lack of communication or little interest in the relationships between the parish and the diocese. Han and Lee (2004) found that negative expectations or criticism of the pastor was negatively associated with pastoral well-being and positively associated with symptoms of stress in clergy. Berry et al. (2012) poled pastors' perceptions of stress causers, finding that pastors' top four stressors were work overload (too much work and administrative work), conflict negotiation, pressures of expectations, and lack of support from the congregation and/or denomination.

Denominational and congregational clergy support and relationship becomes an important aspect in clergy stressors. Wells (2013a) states, "The expectations that parishioners and

communities have for clergy place great demands upon their resources of time and energy" (p.

103). Denominational and congregational support's effects on pastoral emotional health and

wellbeing was studied by Wells (2013b), who found that clergy who reported being supported

"very often" by their congregations and by their denomination had higher, or healthier emotional

health scores than those clergy who reported "fairly often" or "once in a while." Wells, Probst,

McKeown, Mitchem, and Whiejong (2012) argue that the personal demands on pastors and the

potential for conflict due to the complex roles and responsibilities pastors have has grown.

Clergy find themselves experiencing unique stressors from interpersonal relationships (Miner,

2007), varied expectations (Han & Lee, 2004), educational roles, and administrative duties

(Binau, 2006). Wells (2013a) states,

> The clergy profession has not been exempt from the increasing levels of demand and stress characterized by the modern workplace . . . the nature of the profession and the dynamics of congregational life make it especially difficult for clergy . . . As a result, the potential for negative emotional and physical health outcomes within the clerical profession is increasing as the level of stress within the profession increases. Therefore, it is imperative that ministers and congregations determine ways of mediating the negative health outcomes associated with the increasing levels of stress and job demand. (p. 112)

Clergy Psychological Challenges

The combination of administrative and relational stressors pastors experience in the

parish can have negative effects on clergy health and wellbeing, and has presented an increasing

problem for pastors in denominations around the world (Lewis, Turton, & Francis, 2007).

Randall (2013) warns that the compounding of these chronic stressors can lead to burnout in

clergy, a "wearing out" or "exhaustion through excessive demands on energy, strength, and

resources" (p. 334). Grosch and Olsen (2000) state that burnout is the combined interplay of systematic work-place stress and individual psychological factors that together produce burnout. Miner (2007) defines burnout as "a psychological condition that results from chronic stress" (p. 9). Barnard and Curry (2012) would further define burnout as "high emotional exhaustion in ministry and low satisfaction in ministry" (p. 150). Often burnout is a compilation of stressors linked to the open-ended and ambiguous nature of ministry, interpersonal and relational conflicts, and pressures of multiple expectations (Miner, 2007). Barnard and Curry (2012) state, "pastors experience burnout when their expectations and sense of calling erode into disillusionment as they feel that their work is never done and doubt if their efforts have any results" (p. 150). Bettencourt and Brown (2003) stress, that effects of stress and burnout on boundary spanners cause withdrawls from social interaction, low job satisfaction and performance, and lowered organizational commitment. Similarly, pastors who experience burnout exhibit behaviors of exhaustion, withdrawl from people, and lower feelings of personal accomplishment (Miner, 2007; Barnard & Curry, 2012), which negatively impact the pastor and can negatively impact the environments in which the pastor serves.

Pastoral research focuses heavily on the administrative, relational and psychological challenges inherent in the clerical profession. Many of these same topics from stress, to burnout, administrative filtering and role conflicts also appear in the boundary spanning literature. Further research on pastors as boundary spanners within the ELCA must be done to document the challenges pastors experience within their profession that are directly related to their boundary roles. The following section will introduce this study's research questions.

Research Questions

The ELCA is an organization with a diverse amount of systems (i.e. congregations, synods, churchwide, and partnerships) who construct their own identities through interaction with their environments (different environments could be more permeable than others). Pastors function as one type of boundary spanner within the organization, who interpret, tailor and disseminate messages to the congregation(s) or environments in which they serve. Research shows boundary spanners have an incredible impact on organizations (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Liefer & Delbecq, 1978), yet no research has specifically studied pastors as boundary spanners or has collected perceptions pastors hold regarding boundary spanning in the church. Thus, the following research questions are proposed.

RQ1: What are pastors' perceptions of their role as boundary spanners regarding information from the synodical expression of the ELCA to the congregations in which they serve?

Based on boundary spanning literature, persons in the role of boundary spanner often experience challenges which have the potential of creating emotional and psychological effects (Bettencourt & Brown, 2003; Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Levina & Vaast, 2005) on the boundary spanner, and impact the effectiveness of the boundary spanner's role (Williams, 2002). Studying pastors' perceptions of their role as boundary spanners also must take into account pastors' challenging experiences in, and as a direct result of, the boundary spanner role. Thus, research question two is proposed:

RQ2: What challenges do pastors experience in their role as boundary spanners between the congregational and synodical expressions of the ELCA?

Closing

Studying boundary spanner theory in the ELCA, specifically within pastors' roles in the church, allows for a rich perspective on how information regarding organizational identity and interrelationships is shared and communicated within the ELCA. Pastors' perceptions on their role and challenges as boundary spanners are an important resource for the ELCA to examine, for they hold a piece of the puzzle that could help the whole church understand how and in what ways relationships are formed between congregations and synods in the mutual ministry of the whole church.

Preview of Chapters

The following chapters will cover the methodology used for this study, the resultant themes which emerge from the collected data, and finally a discussion of what the results mean. Chapter two will discuss the design, procedures, participants, and the comparative method of data analysis used in this study. Chapter three will include the results of the data analysis in terms of their relationship to the research questions. The fourth chapter will end the study by discussing the implication of the results in terms of how they connect to the existing literature. Possible limitations of the study and future research opportunities that have come to light during the analysis process will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

This study is a qualitative research design, focused on pastors' perceptions of their role in the communication of information coming from the synodical expression of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to the congregations in which pastors serve. The main purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how pastors respond to, understand, and think about their boundary spanning role in the church. This will be achieved by considering the boundary spanning role pastors embody when communicating information within the church and by examining the challenges pastors experience while embodying this role. This may further shed light on the current pathways of communication in the church and lead to pertinent questions that, as a church, the ELCA may consider for the betterment of their organization, leadership, and members.

Participants

<u>Demographics</u>

Twenty-six pastors participated in this study. Participants ranged in age from 27 to 75 (M=54.15). All participants were Caucasian. The ELCA ordains men and women, so the study

included male and female participants. Nineteen participants were male (73%) and 7 participants (26%) female. Years of ordained ministry ranged from 1.25 to 49 years (M=22.1). Ten participants (38%) had previous careers with 16 participants (62%) "pipe-lining" into seminary directly from undergraduate education. The number of calls pastors served ranged from 1 to 9 calls (M=3.61). Twenty-three of the pastors, at the time of the interviews, served single-point parishes (one congregation who employs a pastor), one pastor served a multi-point parish (two or more individual congregations who share employment of a pastor), and two retired pastors were in transition between interim calls. The twenty-six pastors represented a total of 24 different congregations within the central region of the Northern Illinois Synod (one pastor had 2 churches, 2 pastors interviewed served at the same church, and 2 pastors were in between calls). At the time the interviews were conducted, of the twenty-four churches, 4 had one half-time pastor on staff, 14 had one full-time pastor on staff, 2 had one full-time pastor and a half-time visitation pastor, 1 had one full-time pastor and an intern, and 3 had multiple full-time pastors on staff.

<div align="center">Recruitment</div>

Participants were recruited through the Northern Illinois Synod of the ELCA. To gain the synod's approval and support to conduct this study, the Bishop of Northern Illinois Synod was contacted via email and he agreed to set up a meeting on the morning of October 26th, 2011, to discuss the proposal of researching perspectives of pastors' within the Northern Illinois Synod on the topic of dissemination of synodical communications. Approval was granted and the Bishop

agreed to help with recruiting measures by sending out an IRB approved introductory email of the researcher and study to the pastors of the central conference of the Northern Illinois Synod (See Appendix B).

Participants were recruited from the central conference, and later for purposes of a larger interview population, from the southern conference of the Northern Illinois Synod. The recruitment process was conducted predominantly through phone calls, with a few participants recruited via email (see Appendix C) and at a conference meeting. The recruitment goal was to conduct 25 to 30 interviews; thirty-two pastors were contacted with twenty-six agreeing to participate in interviews with a total of 25 completed interviews (two participants interviewed together). Recruitment and interviews took place from December of 2011 through March of 2012.

This study is grounded, inspired, and centered on communication in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Research was conducted within the Northern Illinois Synod of the ELCA because Northern Illinois University falls within this region and created easier avenues for recruitment and data collection. Because this study focused on pastors' roles in communicating synodical information to congregations in which each pastor served, participants needed to be ordained ELCA pastors who were currently serving in full or part-time parish ministry calls or in interim ministry calls within Northern Illinois Synod. Retired and part-time pastors who continued to do interim work or half-time parish calls were included within this study to increase recruitment sample size and saturation of data, but other forms of rostered leaders (i.e. rostered non-ordained, ordained non-parish, etc.) were excluded for purposes of sample control and comparison.

Design

For this research study, a qualitative interviewing method was chosen over other forms of data collection (i.e. surveys, focus groups, or phone interviews), for it allows the researcher to probe deeply into participants' responses (Baxter & Babbie, 2004), eliciting more depth than other methodological formats. Essentially, qualitative interviewing allows the researcher more flexibility to ask general questions, listen and interpret what is being stated by the interviewee, and frame the next questions to probe deeper into answers participants have given (Baxter & Babbie, 2004). The ability to ask follow-up questions to probe for more specific responses is what makes this methodology more appropriate for this research study.

Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study to gain an in-depth understanding of pastors' perspectives of their role in the communication of information from synod to congregation. Face-to-face interviewing was chosen for this study because it enables the researcher to more easily collect answers to questions (Reinard, 2008) and also allows the researcher to audio-record the interview. The semi-structured interview format was chosen because it provides a greater depth of information than other forms of interviewing, allowing the interviewer to ask flexible questions that gain insight into individuals' perceptions regarding an area of study in rich detail (Baxter & Babbie, 2004). The goal of this particular study is to understand pastor's perceptions of their role as boundary spanners; semi-structured, qualitative interviewing allows pastors to share personal experiences, feelings, and perceptions relating to this topic that can be probed by the interviewer in great detail.

The interview protocol (or written guide) chosen for this study was an open-ended, semi-

structured format with heavy use of probes to encourage deeper, more detailed sharing, allowing participants' freedom to express themselves. Stewart and Cash Jr. (2008) describe open-ended questions as "expansive [questions], often specifying only a topic, and allow the respondent considerable freedom in determining the amount and kind of information to provide" (p. 51). The semi-structured interview protocol format contains sections and lists of general, open-ended questions that allow the researcher consistent replication between interviews and allow the participant freedom of expression to answer. This gives the interviewer the ability to adapt the order of questions, based on how the conversation is flowing, and structure probes to gain additional details about situations, narratives, and feelings. An interviewer has an interview protocol for two reasons: 1) to make sure the interviewer covers all the topics he/she hopes to cover, and 2) to give some structure to the interview which will hopefully make the interviewee feel more comfortable.

The protocol for this study was designed to address the two research questions proposed in this study. Topic areas within the interview included questions inviting pastors to share their perceptions of synodical information (what information is received, how often, what forms), perceptions of their roles and responsibilities regarding communication, and perceptions on congregational response and interest and expectations regarding synodical communication. These categories formed the framework of the interview protocol.

After the protocol questions were written, they were organized in such a way as to create a safe environment, conducive to building trust and mutual participation between the parties. Stewart and Cash Jr. (2008) describe the beginning of an interview as a two-step process of building rapport and orienting, or preparing interviewees to willingly continue through the

interview. If successful, this encourages participation and willingness to share. Thus, this interview protocol first started with a brief introduction of the topic and an overview of discussion points, assurances of privacy, and encouraged interviewees to ask questions. Following this, participants completed an IRB approved consent form before the interview proceeded. After the preview and signing of the consent form, the protocol was structured with general demographic and synodical communication questions and then moved into more personal questions about each pastor's role in communication, congregational receptiveness, and finally perceived expectations of the synod and congregation; the interview ended with pastors' general wrap-up thoughts about their responsibilities surrounding the topic (see Appendix D).

Procedures

Data collection began after IRB approval was received. Interview data was collected at locations most convenient and comfortable for the interviewed pastors. Most pastors requested the interview happen at the churches in which they served, other interviews were conducted at a local coffee shop, and a couple interviews were conducted at the pastors' home residences or a place of work other than the church. Data was collected in face-to-face interviews that were audio-recorded in a digital format for later transcription (this allows more accuracy in the analysis of data they contributed). When recruited via phone or e-mail, potential interview participants were given an explanation of the study and were asked if they would be willing to participate in a 60-75 minute recorded interview. Once a pastor agreed to participate and met for the interview, the researcher re-explained the purpose of the study at the beginning of the

interview. After describing the study and interview format, participants were provided an IRB approved informed consent form (see Appendix E), which they were asked to read and sign. Participants were each given a copy of the consent form in case they later had questions and would want to contact the researcher.

After consent was given, the researcher explained the structure of the interview, answered any pre-interview questions, turned on the audio-recorder, and proceeded to begin the interview. First, the participant was asked to provide basic demographic information regarding their background in ministry (i.e. age, ethnic identification, number of calls served, number of congregations served, possible careers prior to ministry, number of pastors on staff, single or multi-point parish, etc.) Secondly, they were asked to describe how the synod communicates information to the congregation and other related questions. Next, participants were asked about the role they play in communicating information from the synod office to the congregation, which included questions pertaining to how they deduce relevance and importance, challenges they face, and how important their communication role is within the local and wider church. Following pastors specific roles, participants were asked to share how receptive or interested the congregation in which they serve was regarding information coming from the synod office and how they motivate their congregations to care about the information. Finally, reflection questions pertaining to expectations and tension wrapped up the interview.

Data Analysis

Data Set

The data set consists of twenty-five interviews conducted with twenty-six pastors (one interview had two participants) for a total of 24 hours and 41 minutes of audio recording. The length of interviews ranged between 38 minutes and 23 seconds to 86 minutes and 24 seconds. The average length of the interviews conducted was 61 minutes and 24 seconds. To transcribe the interviews, Express Scribe software was used. It was common to transcribe 15-20 minutes of a transcription per hour, which produced 334 single-spaced, size 12 font, pages of transcription, for a total of 15,289 lines. Every word stated by the interviewer and participants were recorded in the transcriptions.

Twenty-five interviews appeared to be sufficient to reach the point of saturation. Saturation in qualitative research is considered the point at which little to no new information is presented in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that once saturation of data is apparent, "what has been missed will probably have little modifying effect" (p. 112) on the analysis of data. Because of the complex nature of qualitative research, data saturation is essential to exploring the results for the proposed research questions.

Analysis of Data

The interview transcriptions were analyzed using the constant comparison method of inductive analysis, a process of data analysis which uses a series of stages designed to categorize and integrate interview data, thereby narrowing the scope of emerging information into manageable categories (Strauss, 1987). Glaser and Strauss (1967) described this method as a continuously growing, transformative process of development where stages blend into the next until the completion of the project. These stages are labeled open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Strauss (1987) identifies the first stage in this process as open coding, where an entire transcription is scanned and pieces of text are sorted and assigned to as many categories (groupings of conceptually similar actions, events, or incidents) as possible. As coding continues, data may emerge that create new categories or strengthen existing ones. Lindlof (1995) describes codes as, "shorthand devices to label, separate, compile, and organize data" (p. 220). During this stage memo writing on the margin of transcription pages becomes an important part of this research in order to catalog and provide a reference point for what the researcher was thinking at the time in which the incidents were being analyzed (Lindlof, 1995).

As coding progresses, the incidents in each category start to generate unique properties and patterns specific to that category. Strauss (1987) refers to this coding stage as axial coding. As properties emerge, relationships become more apparent and subcategories are identified within the larger category. Eventually, the core categories, or strongest, most prominent dimension of the analysis will be identified.

Finally, the last phase in the constant comparative coding process is the selective coding stage which tries to clarify the categories into the prominent, or core categories of the study (Strauss, 1987). Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe this stage as developing the explanation of each category's properties and outlining how each incident falls into the proposed properties, resulting in a unified understanding of the category.

As described above, the constant comparative method was used to analyze each of the twenty-five interviews conducted with pastors. The first step in this analysis process was to read over each interview transcript. Category labels were marked in the margins of the transcript (i.e. PTR, or pastors thoughts on role, was one category label used) and longer memos were documented near sections of text that stood out as different, interesting, or commonly reoccurring themes. This would be considered the open coding process. The axial coding process started when the review of transcripts was complete and units of text were copied and pasted out of the transcription and combined into category logs. The texts in each category log were compared to each other and charted into similar themes. Instances of similarity were combined and outlying units of text, or text that did not seem relevant to the goal of the study was removed. Just as each category became more cohesive and properties were being defined, another phase of the axial coding process was comparing whole categories to one another to find the core categories of the study.

To describe the coding process more specifically, the research questions for this study were designed to gain an understanding of pastors' thoughts and perceptions of their boundary spanning role in the ELCA. The first research question asked, "What are pastors' perceptions of their roles as boundary spanners regarding information from the synodical expression of the

ELCA to the congregations in which they serve?" To answer RQ1, special attention was directed in the open coding stage toward any texts that hinted at pastors' explanation, thoughts or feelings on the topic of communication roles. These texts were sorted into loose categories and given short-hand labels: 1) Pastors' Thoughts on Roles (PTR), 2) Pastors' Role in Communication (PRC), 3) How Pastors Decide What to Communicate (HPMD), and 4) Synodical and Congregational Expectations (SE & CE) were some of the largest categories.

The second research question asked, "What challenges do pastors' experience in their role as boundary spanners between the congregational and synodical expressions of the ELCA?" As with RQ1, special attention was paid during the open coding phase to any text in the interview transcriptions that referenced challenges or challenging experiences related to pastors' boundary spanning roles. These texts were placed into a category labeled *Challenges in the Role of Communicator* (CRC).

These categories were loosely built during the open coding stage and then were sorted and charted into similar category properties during the axial coding phase. For RQ1, the category *Pastors' Role in Communication (PRC)* started shifting into subcategories of filtering and gatekeeping responsibilities and the category *Pastors' Thoughts on Role (PTR)* started morphing into subcategories relating to perceptions of power, influence, roles, expectations and responsibilities. For RQ2, the category *Challenges in the Role of Communicator (CRC)* started delineating into subcategories relating to time, energy, filtering, gatekeeping, and congregational challenges. During the selective coding phase, categories which did not pertain to the ones mentioned above, were then removed and special attention was given to clarifying the properties of the remaining categories. For RQ1, three core categories emerged from the data around the

central theme of responsibility. For RQ2, four prominent challenges emerged from the data. These results will be discussed in the following chapter.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methods used to explore the research questions proposed in the literature review. The rationale for this study was provided and in depth information about population sample and recruitment were explained. The interview design and procedures gave an idea of the types of data collected and finally the stages of data analysis, using the constant comparative method, were outlined. The next chapter will again present this study's research questions and explore the results of the data analysis in great depth. The final chapter will discuss the research findings and present further questions and avenues for study.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

This study seeks to present pastors' perspectives on their roles as boundary spanners in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). It has been the goal of this study to ask pastors to voice their perceptions, thoughts, and opinions about the roles and challenges they experience as boundary spanners. Two research questions were proposed for this study: RQ1 asked what pastors' perceptions are about the boundary spanning role they have in the church; RQ2 asked what challenges pastors' experience within the role of boundary spanner. After analysis of the interviews using the constant comparison method, the findings relating to each question will be discussed below.

Pastors' Perceptions of Their Boundary Spanning Role

The first research question guiding this study was: *"What are pastors' perceptions of their role as boundary spanners regarding information from the synodical expression of the ELCA to the congregations in which they serve?"* From this question, three core categories emerged centering around the theme of responsibility. Responsibility, for purposes of this study, is defined as a duty, task and/or role that a person feels he or she is expected or morally accountable to fulfill. These three core categories relate to 1) Pastors' perceptions of their boundary spanning responsibilities, 2) Pastors' reflection on the importance of upholding these

 responsibilities, and 3) Pastors' perceptions on what influences or shapes their understanding of

responsibility.

<div align="center">Pastors' Boundary Spanning Responsibilities</div>

The first core category to emerge from the data was pastors' perception of what their

responsibilities are as boundary spanners. During the interview, pastors were asked the question,

"What role do you play in the communication of information from the synod to your

congregation?" As Aldrich and Herker (1977) state, boundary spanner responsibilities often

include filtering and disseminating information from one system to another within an

organization. Pastors' responses indicated that their role and responsibility is to connect the

synod and the congregation. Pastor 012 used the word "link" to refer to his role responsibilities

and explained what this role does for the congregation:

> I think as pastor of this church my role is disseminating information from the synod and
> to the people here at this church and to our community – to sort of be a link. Um, so that
> the people know that the local church is part of the synod level and to share both in the
> newsletter, bulletin, electronically that we are part of the ELCA and to pass on
> information about studies that are taking place . . . opportunities to learn about different
> topics. (Lines 188-194)

When discussing this role of connecting, or linking the synod and congregation, the majority of

pastors responded more specifically by explaining their role as being *gatekeepers* and *filters*

regarding the information coming into the church. Filtering is the act of sifting through

information and gatekeeping is the act of deciding what information to throw out or to sit on and

what information will be disseminated. Pastor 020 shared:

I think I feel like the gatekeeper, because a lot. . of the information does come to me first and so you know it is then becomes my job to kind of go, 'yes this is worth forwarding to the newsletter editor, this' you know kind of whatever. Sometimes I do feel like the gatekeeper. . . . what I also recognize is that for many people they see it as my job to be that person. (Lines 319-329)

Pastor 020 suggests that he engages in gatekeeping because there is a lot of information that comes to him and because people expect him to carry out this role. Pastor 019 echoed the need to be a gatekeeper because of the volume of information received from the synod:

We sometime are inundated by just reams of information or volume. A huge amount of it, of information from the synod. Um and part of is it due to the the complexity of the world in which we live and the ways in which we can communicate. . . as gatekeeper there is also uh, uh role of filter. Um, what is particularly relevant to the congregation at this particular time. Trying to keep in mind the goals and the priorities of this sy[nod] and the mission of the synod, and trying to match that with the situ-, the context or the situation in which the congregation finds itself. And then using the information that is communicated to effectively assist the synod in its achievement, uh the achievement of its goals, but at the same time not overwhelming the congregation by the amount of information, or sometimes by the extraneous information. . . I try to serve as a filter or a gatekeeper of communication. I try not to allow my interests or my prejudices to get in the way. It doesn't always work. But I try. (Lines 392-415)

This excerpt suggests that pastors are placed into a role of filter or gatekeeper and that decisions about what information to share should not be based on a pastor's personal interests. Rather, decisions should be based on the "match" between synod goals and the congregation's goals. In addition, pastors 015 stated: "Essentially I'm the filter. The uh convergent point for information that goes to the synod, or comes from the synod and from churchwide . . . I hope I pass that along as best as I can and in the most uh direct way" (Lines 177-181) and pastor 005 shared, "I'm the only pastor, I guess I am kind of the um, filter. Um, a lot of things don't pertain to us, or uh, I make a judgement that they don't they're not important. Um, and pass on the things that are, I guess. And that, that's by my read, and maybe that's not fair." (Lines 58-60). Pastor 011 even referred to her role responsibility as a "clearing house" for information (Line 147).

These responses suggest that pastors view their role as filters and gatekeepers, trying to sort and pass on that information which best connects with their congregations and synod; yet pastors 019, 015 and 005 express at the end of their excerpts indecision as to if their gatekeeping and filtering choices are always the right or best decisions.

<div align="center">

Importance of Upholding Boundary Spanning Responsibilities

</div>

The second core category to emerge from the data, was Pastors' perceptions that upholding their responsibilities as boundary spanners serve an important role to the church. Pastors were asked the question, *"How important is it that pastors' fulfill this role of communicating between synod and congregation?"* Pastors' responses were two-fold. 1) Pastors discussed their power as boundary spanners and the danger of not upholding responsibilities, and 2) Pastors' upholding of responsibilities plays an essential part in expanding a congregation's view of the larger church.

Pastors' Boundary Spanning Power

This subcategory includes comments from pastors that discuss the power pastors have in the role of boundary spanner. Pastor 025 explained that pastors' play a crucial role as boundary spanner to the congregation:

> Well, I think I see myself, I see every pastor in a congregation as a crucial, in a crucial position as gatekeeper of information. I think if the pastor doesn't encourage and distribute information about the church beyond the parish level it probably isn't going to get done very well. Um there are some unusual circumstances where there are some very

active lay people who you know have served in synod capacities, for instance been elected to the synod committees who are conscientious about making sure information about the church at large gets passed on, but I think the parish pastor is absolutely crucial, um in that gatekeeper function. If the pastor doesn't mention anything about it, it's probably not going to get on, passed on. Um, so that's the way I see it for better or for worse. . . if I get news from the synod and I don't pass it on it's probably not going to be mentioned in the congregation. (Lines 153-163)

Pastor 004 also commented that pastors have a tremendous amount of power over what the

congregation knows about the synod:

I would gather just from conversations with people, there have been pastors, predecessors of mine who have not been that communicative about the synod and so I guess that they can only, only know the priorities that I choose to give them. You know, that's a tremendous amount of power that I don't deserve to have, but um, I recognize that it's there. As I said earlier, I'm the gatekeeper. Some of the information doesn't get to them and it should. Some of the information they don't want gets to them. (Lines 510-516)

Both pastor 025 and 004's excerpts suggest pastors have informational power in a parish because

of their gatekeeping responsibilities, which bestows on them great influence and control over

what information is communicated to a parish. Similarly, pastor 002 also discussed the power a

pastor has in the congregation, stating:

The pastor has a lot of power. . . If I were the kind who said, "you know I really don't like what the ELCA did in that decision . . . let's withhold our benevolence." they would do it. They'd probably do it. . . In most congregations, not all, you hear of exceptions, but in most congregations the pastor's attitude makes all the difference in the world. . . It's not that we're dictators, not that we put undue pressure on the congregations like that, but our attitude or our opinion generally makes a big difference. . . It carries a lot of weight . . . whether we want to be or not, anybody in leadership is going to be a role model to some extent . . . we are role models. We are communicators. (Lines 191-218)

Pastor 002's excerpt suggests that a pastor's power comes from their leadership which can

influence a congregation through role modeling behaviors and attitudes. Finally, pastor 003

shared these words on the power pastors have in this position and the key role pastors' have in

upholding boundary spanning responsibilities.

> We're we're one of the key players here. Probably 'the' most, most key player because, I, you know, I'm the one who gets most of the information and people do care about what their pastor thinks about a variety of things too - you know look to me . . . so it's it's critically important. If I'm, If I'm negative about something, I'm probably going to, I'll probably turn the people negative. Not that there aren't other, [with] they're own, you know, voice to speak out, but and they might disagree with me from time to time, but certainly, um, I I'm a key player here. (Lines 502-508)

This quote suggests that the power a pastor has over information and the way in which a pastor communicates things can influence and shape people's perspectives. Essentially, pastor 003 is also pointing to a pastor's role modeling of how congregation members should view information. Pastor 003 continued sharing her previous experiences working as an Assistant to the Bishop, stating:

> What I found in working in the synod office. That, that things will fly in congregations if the pastor is right in there, promoting, but if they're not, it's not going to happen. . . Unless you've got a, you know, a few lay people who are really involved and in touch with what the synod is doing, you know, I over the years I have had. . a few people involved, you know, in in synodical work and that's good, and when they are, then they bring that information back, and the enthusiasm is there, but you know, often times there is nobody serving in those roles, so I am the person that's going to make or break something that comes through. Now I give myself not quite that much power, but I, I think pastors of congregations, are, it's it's key. That. . that . . . that they, that they are in tune with what the larger church is doing and that we promote it. And if we don't, it's, the congregations are going to be very turned in on themselves. (Lines 509-516)

Pastors 003 reiterates her understanding of power and shares her experience witnessing that power carried out in congregations. A point she suggests, which is echoed earlier in pastor 025's excerpt, is that unless a congregation has strong lay leadership who also have access and care for information, the pastor has the most power and influence in a congregation.

Boundary Spanning's Important Connection to Wider Church

This subcategory includes comments from pastors that discuss the importance of pastors' upholding boundary spanning responsibilities for purposes of connecting congregation(s) with the wider church. Pastor 008 shared, "I think it's it's integral that pastors are connected to what's happening" (Line 378). Pastor 013 stated, "I feel like it's you know the pastor's responsibility to say this happened and let's make sure the congregation knows, and so I always try" (Lines 302-303). Pastor 009 even shared, "I think that part of my responsibility is to constantly goad myself and the church to do and be what we're called to be" (Lines 447-448). A pastor has these responsibilities because they greatly impact a congregation's connection to the larger church, as pastor 016 touches on,

> I [feel] it's critical to communicate to the congregation and how we are part of [this church] and how we are engaged in something much bigger . . . Just identifying that, you know we're called to do [this] and so . . . you communicate it in different ways, but . . . if people get a sense that it its coming from the heart of the pastor or the leader . . . it will resonate with them. (Lines 226-234)

Similarly, pastor 013 stated, "I do feel like as pastors we need to make sure people um have ways of understanding how we're all connected. It's really easy for a congregation to just become inward focused" (Lines 292-293). Like pastor 013, pastor 025 clarifies why the connection to the wider church is so vital to a congregation by stating,

> To me it's absolutely crucial that the church does not get into parochialism. And a feeling that that our concern with the gospel of Jesus Christ is for for us here in this place and goes no further. Let's take care of ourselves. That's deadly in the life of the congregation. Um, and so it's just absolutely vital that a congregation has that, that outward look towards mission and ministry and in the community, in Northern Illinois, in the world. Um, otherwise a congregation just wilts and dies. So that's absolutely crucial. [Sighs]. I see that based on my own experience. The more a congregation is engaged and interested and active and involved in mission and ministry beyond itself through synod,

churchwide, ecumenical projects and cooperation, the more vital the lives of that congregation will be. The more it's inward focused, and self-focused and it turns into a survival mode, and a circle the wagons and and fearful um of attack, um fearful of failure, um then that congregation is doomed. So, maybe that's too too black and white, but that's the way I see it. (Lines 178-188)

Pastor 013 and 025 indicate that pastors have a responsibility of connecting their churches to the synod in order to prevent a church from becoming too inward focused. They argue, the danger of turning inward or failure of establishing a connection with the larger church, could result in the death of a congregation. However, pastor 025 suggests the expansion of a congregation's focus could lead to vitality. Finally, pastor 012 speaks of a pastor's responsibility as an opportunity to create oneness in the church:

I think the pastor has a very important role of of being a sense of of Christ to the local church but also as a gift to the greater church and the synod in relationship to uh. . . lifting up and building up the body beyond the local community. So there's an opportunity not to not with just the communication, uh and passing on information, but living up the ministries that we can't do separately that we can do together. Whether it's the ELCA Hunger Appeal, whether it's starting new congregations . . . it's great to know that you're part of a bigger church . . . supporting missionaries . . . disaster relief, um those are great gifts then to see that you're part of this and it helps the local church and our tendency toward um you know everything being about what we want to broaden you know. Our American neuroses of the self get pushed aside when you come to the cross. And that cross stands over the church both locally and synodically and throughout the globe in the sense of the bigger church throughout the world. I think that's an opportunity for the pastor to encourage that sense of oneness of the church. (Lines 488-501)

As pastor 012 states, pastors have a responsibility and opportunity as boundary spanners to connect the wider church and congregation. Pastors throughout the previous excerpts felt that they need to uphold this responsibility for the care and support of the whole church.

Influences on Pastors' Perception of Their Responsibility

The third core category to emerge from the literature in response to RQ1 are elements that influence pastors' perceptions of the importance of their responsibility. Pastors' understanding of their boundary spanning responsibilities seemed to be influenced or shaped by multiple dynamics such as, 1) pastors' understanding of their call, 2) pastors' perception of congregational expectations regarding their role as boundary spanners, and 3) pastors' perception that they are the main connection into the congregation.

Understanding of Call

This subcategory highlights pastors' comments on how their understanding of call influences how they view their boundary spanner responsibilities. In the ELCA, call is usually understood in two different ways. First, a call is a person's inner (or internal) sense and pull from the Holy Spirit to use their gifts and talents for ministry in the church, and second, call can be a specific placement (external) in a congregation as a rostered, ordained minister of the ELCA. The following statements highlight how pastors' perceive their call. Pastor 005 stated,

> Being the rostered leader here, um I came [here] as the ELCA made me available. So, I think I carry my hat. I'm I'm not only a member of [this church], but I'm a member of the clergy of the ELCA, so I perceive that as part of my job to be that communicator, that connection. That's why they called me and that's why the Bishop wants me here. (Lines 232-235)

Pastor 005's comment was closely echoed by pastor 004, who stated:

> I think it's absolutely critical. It is It's part of my letter of call that I will, I don't know how it's phrased in that letter of call, you know, that we are the spokes people to get the word

out about what, what the synods, what the ELCA is doing. I mean part of what I do probably is critically important as anything else I do. That I, That I speak well of the church, that we're a part of the broader church, that we're a part of and what they're doing and what their mission is. You know I hope that shows up in my preaching and my teaching too. So, you know, it's critically important. (Lines 475-480)

While the previous pastors' comments connect their understanding of call and it's relation to boundary spanning, pastor 022 shared his story on how his sense of call and understanding of the responsibilities it brought with it changed over time and informs how he upholds his boundary spanning responsibilities.

I never forget the church. And I I thank God for that only because I went to seminary believing that the church was individual congregations because I grew up in a very large church with a long serving pastor whom I loved and he had nothing at all to do with the larger church. So I grew up knowing nothing and didn't see any reason why I had to. And then out East in the seminaries out there, there was a little more emphasis on the church as a whole, because at the time the national church was in New York . . . but also it might have something to do with the fact that they had discerned the spirit's direction that Jesus really does want us to be one and work together. [Laughs]. So, I learned that there and then in my first pastorate. I couldn't tell you who it was, but it was someone from the synod level or above, presenting and they said one of the ways to encourage people in their mission support is to remind them that their congregation is the LCA or the ELCA on that corner, but when you the pastor or they go serve the ELCA in some capacity that's your congregation being represented or being present there. And I've never forgotten that and that gave me a real sense for being part of the whole church. . . I want very badly for people to see that we're part of a bigger church. (Lines 500-521)

These excerpts suggest that pastors' understanding of their call as ordained ministers in the ELCA is a call from the whole church that is embodied and carried out in specific congregation(s). This understanding of call shapes a pastors' perception of boundary spanning responsibilities, and the duty they are given to connect their congregation(s) to the larger church.

Congregational Trust and Expectations

This subcategory highlights pastors' comments relating to the congregation's expectations and trust that they place on the pastor to communicate information. The majority of pastors discussed the congregation's reliance on them to communicate important information. Some pastors explained a congregation's reliance on them using the word trust; Pastor 014 stated, "I'm the main communicator of like the synod stuff to them. You know, I feel like they trust me to know what's going on and what their best interest is . . . they trust me to tell them information that they need to hear. . . and to be a filter . . . is important to them" (Lines 431-435). Similarly, Pastor 026 stated, "They trust me to let them know what's important" (Line 705).

Other pastors expressed a congregation's reliance on pastors' responsibilities as expectations; these expectations were recognized as both implicit (assumed or inferred) and explicit (clearly understood and laid out) expectations that congregations' have of pastors' boundary spanning responsibilities. Pastors 017 and 013 discussed implicit expectations, each unsure if their congregation had specific expectations, yet assumed their congregations expected them to boundary span. Pastor 017 stated, "I guess they expect you know, whether they realize it or not, they I'm sure they expect me to keep them informed. You know, on what's going on" (Lines 681-682). Pastor 013 shared,

> I don't know if our congregation has a lot of expectations on synod communication. . . I think maybe they probably expect that important things or stuff that they could be involved in, we're going to tell them . . . so I think they expect that we'll get it to them if it's something they should know about. (Lines 512-518)

Pastor 019 laid out more explicit congregational expectations regarding his role as boundary

spanner, not only bringing synodical information into the congregation, but also expectations that

the congregation desires the knowledge and opportunities that he brings to them:

> I think they, well, I believe they expect me to be a filter. Um I believe that they expect me
> to uh, to bring as much information as much challenge, or as many challenges uh, to them
> and information also . . . there's a desire on the part of people to know, to be able to say,
> "My synod does or my synod is." It helps them, number one to just understand what the
> relationship is, number two to know what ministry is available to them or to the
> congregation. And there is a degree of pride in that. . . so they would expect that I would
> provide some information, some facts if you will, but also would continue to offer
> opportunities for them to plug into various aspects of the life of the synod. (Lines 562-
> 585)

Likewise, pastor 004 explained the congregation's explicit expectations of the pastor:

> Well, they fully expect me to be the one to tell them what is important . . . at least on the
> side of the church. Of course, being Americans and being Lutheran they are going to
> decide for themselves what's important. [Laughs]. But, you know they expect me to lay
> out priorities that they may accept or not accept. (Lines 507-510)

The implicit and explicit expectations disclosed in the above excerpts seem to influence pastors'

understanding of their boundary spanning responsibilities by giving the impression that

congregation members depend on and trust pastors to filter out what information the

congregation should be interested in, and what information is worth knowing.

Pastor is Main Connection into a Congregation

This subcategory presents comments from pastors that highlight pastors' perceptions that

the congregation's main connection to the synod or churchwide is through the pastor. Pastor 001

stated, "The primary source of information the congregation has about anything beyond our four

walls is through me. Honestly" (Lines 153-154). Likewise, pastor 014 shared of his

congregation, "Unless [congregation members] went to the synod website and signed up for the newsletter, that would be the only way they would get information from the synod if it wasn't from me" (Lines 211-219). Similarly, pastor 026 stated, "I mean there's no other way that they're going to become connected if I'm not the link between um the synod and them" (Lines 251-252). Pastor 005, when asked if his role as communicator was important, stated "It's it's important because I think this congregation, without a pastor would be less connected and would only use the information they view is important" (Lines 481-482). This same concern that the congregation would be less connected without a pastor was also expressed by pastor 016, who said:

> They [the congregation] aren't particularly invested in the synod, nor the churchwide. So, it is a pastor's responsibility to make sure that those connections are made. Otherwise they do not have an investment . . . if things are going smoothly uh, the congregation, you know isn't particularly concerned about what's happening at the synod level. And that, I think that is my experience at least, so it to, it is important that the pastor always keep that in front of the congregation. (Lines 350-357)

Pastors' comments suggest that they see themselves as the main, or primary, link in their congregations to the wider church, and if they were not present or not communicating, congregations would lose their connection to the synod or wider church.

<center>Summary of Findings</center>

RQ1 asked what pastors' perceptions are regarding the boundary spanning role they have in the church. From this question, three core categories emerged centering around the theme of responsibility. Pastors described their role as boundary spanners as being filters and gatekeepers of information coming into their congregation(s), discussed the power boundary spanning

responsibilities play in influencing congregations' connection with the wider church, and shared perceptions on the influences that shape pastors' understanding of their boundary spanning responsibilities. The following section will introduce findings from RQ2.

Challenges Pastors Experience While Upholding Boundary Spanning Role

The second research question guiding this study was: *"What challenges do pastors' experience in their role as boundary spanners between the congregational and synodical expressions of the ELCA?"* Challenges, for purposes of this study, are defined as anything that makes it difficult to uphold a responsibility. During the interviews, pastors were asked the question, *"What are some of the challenges of being in a role where you pass on information from synod to your congregation?"* The analysis of data identified four prominent challenges. These challenges were 1) time and energy demands, 2) filtering, 3) congregations' local versus global tension, and 4) congregations' perception of synod.

Time and Energy Demands

The first challenge to emerge from the data was the time and energy demands required of pastors' when carrying out their role as boundary spanners in the ELCA. Pastor 004 discussed his struggle with time pressures and its effects on congregational connection:

> I think the biggest challenge is time. Time to read the information and know what. . and and ways to communicate, you know, the information. You know as we talked about earlier, when when there's a lot of pressure on my time, its communication connection is going to be lower. And not as effective. (Lines 280-283)

Pastor 014 also spoke about this challenge using similar words:

> Sometimes even if I think it's important, but I don't have the energy or time to do anything about it it just falls to the way side. You know? And you know that that results in you know um a lower understand of what the synod is doing, you know and that kind of thing, so you know that can be a problem. (Lines 327-331)

Pastor 004 and 014's excerpts seem to focus on the ways in which the challenge of time and energy can negatively affect a congregation. The less time or energy a pastor has to dedicate toward filtering and communicating information, the less connection or knowledge a congregation may have about the synod. Pastor 024 commented, "The problem with mission and ministry is we have a list of fifty different things, so the question is what do you put, go to put your energy and efforts towards? You can't do everything" (Lines 235-237). Pastor 024's excerpt suggests that the challenges of time and energy requires of a pastor to make decisions about what to share and what to put aside. Essentially, this suggests that part of the challenge of boundary spanning is that pastors have to gatekeep; with limited resources of time and energy to share everything, pastors are forced to make choices about what to disseminate. Pastor 013 shared her experience of how time demands, in part due to church restructuring, force her to filter information:

> Well what's interesting about my specific role as pastor right now is because we had to downsize our staff, some of it you know happened just because the pastor took a new call, but some of it was financially driven. I am pretty much responsible for all the youth ministry and then with the interim being part time, like 50% of all the worship leadership and then even more of a lot of the other responsibilities, so I would say just time is a challenge. Um which you know filters into deciding to leave some things out because there just isn't going to be the time to give them focus. And I think some people are comfortable just sending it out anyway and let people do what they want with it, but I really struggle with you know, wanting to be prepared. If someone comes to me and wants to talk about it, and I have no clue because I haven't looked into it other than you know I read through it in a newsletter, so yah time is a big challenge. (Lines 389-398)

Pastor 013's experience suggests that because of time and energy demands, pastors are forced to gatekeep and filter. They may have to make a decision as to how and in what forms they pass on information, which poses a risk to the pastor as to how well informed or prepared pastors are regarding the topics they choose to disseminate. Specifically, pastor 013's comment raises face concerns that if she were to communicate information in which she is not well informed, it could influence congregation members' perceptions of her competence.

Finally, pastors 026 and 001 discuss the effects time and energy demands have on pastors and on congregations. Pastor 026 shared:

> You feel like you can fall short quite frequently . . . it's a lot of responsibility. Um, things that aren't important to me aren't shared. You know so some very important things are or could come through just don't get passed on because I don't, you know either I have too much to, I hate to say I'm busy. I'm choosing not to address everything [laughs]. You know and the things that come through that I choose to address just, no one's going to pick them up. And I feel bad about that. (Lines 350-362)

Pastor 001 disclosed,

> I do think sometimes that I probably. If not lift it up probably would have been something that would have been beneficial to the congregation. But again, that's just the, to me, that's just the um, the limitations of being a solo pastor. I think if there was more than one pastor here then another pastor could, would have other things that would speak to that person who could then lift it up and champion that cause while I'm championing in this one over here and people could just kind of say, that speaks to me or that one does, or lets go be part of that, but I just only have so much time and energy for that segment of my life to champion so many things. You know. With all the rest that I do. (Lines 569-577)

Pastor 026 and Pastor 001's excerpts suggest that the challenge of time and energy demands has an effect on both a pastor and the congregation(s) pastors' serve. Pastor 026 discloses feelings of *falling short* in her boundary spanning responsibilities, which means the congregation misses important opportunities. Likewise, pastor 001 admits she does not always lift up opportunities that could benefit the congregation because of the time and energy limitations she experiences.

Filtering – Pastor as Gatekeeper

The second challenge experienced by pastors as they strive to uphold their boundary

spanning responsibilities is the act of filtering and gatekeeping, which involves reading through

information and deciding what and how information gets passed on to a congregation and what

information does not get passed on to a congregation. In response to this question, pastor 017

shared, "Just the fact you have to filter. [Laughs] . . . you know sometimes that's hard to decide."

(Lines 481-482). Pastor 014 stated "You know sometimes it's like just . . . information overload.

You know how do I like pare this down you know? Um so sometimes it's just too much

information and I don't need to tell them all of that or I don't need to read all that, you know"

(Lines 313-315). These excerpts suggest that part of the challenge of filtering and gatekeeping is

that pastors are overloaded with information, thus they have to figure out how to narrow or pare

down the information coming to them. Pastor 005 discussed his perspective on this challenge,

> I think that this, I don't take it lightly, but I think that idea of deciding what's important,
> what needs to be dealt with right now and what I can put off to the side and deal with
> along the line, and I don't always read that right, but, yah I think that's what I see my
> primary role is. What do I need to communicate to them immediately and what can I just
> bring up whenever it's appropriate? . . . I think that's an ongoing task. (Lines 239-244)

Pastor 005's excerpt explains how he approaches this ongoing role and also discloses that in the

midst of filtering and gatekeeping, he may not always make the right decisions about

information. This concern was echo by other pastors. Pastor 003 shared this statement about the

challenges of filtering and gatekeeping.

> I suppose the challenge is just being overwhelmed with lots of things that come in and
> not knowing exactly what to choose of it all and what to promote and whatever. And I
> mean, sometimes I feel like I'm the gate keeper here and I, I don't want to make the
> wrong decisions, to not, not put the stuff out, but as I said earlier, I think any. . .the things

that come in through the ELCA and the Synod I trust. I mean I, I love this church and I believe in what we're doing, the mission of the ELCA, so those kinds of things, I, I try to get the word out. (Lines 264-269)

Pastor 004 also discussed the challenge of filtering and gatekeeping,

I know I'm a gatekeeper. And, and that's um, you know that that means there are some things. . . there are a lot of worthy causes that I just don't promote because I know we've got our own set of worthy causes. Our core causes, so if we if we dilute the core causes with everything that comes through the door, then I I think we're frustrating people. I'm frustrating people including myself . . . as a gatekeeper there are some things that I say, "good causes, good people, but [our church] can't handle that right now." And I might be wrong. You know, about those things. I'm willing to admit it. (Lines 207-215)

These excerpts suggest that the challenge of filtering and gatekeeping the overwhelming amount of information can leave a pastor wondering about the choices he or she has made. The pastor might wonder if he or she has made the right decisions about which information to pass along and which information to not pass along. Finally, Pastor 011 shared a personal example of one of his experiences with the challenge of filtering:

Just that there's so much to choose from. I mean, yah we're a part of the ELCA and we're part of the Northern Illinois Synod, but you're. . [Laughs] every church office just gets bombarded with gobs of mailings from everything else as well. I mean, when I . . . so this is my only call but I was called first as an associate for the sake of developing [a church]. Um, so while I was still on staff there, one of my team responsibilities was social ministry and so the senior pastor said "Hey take all this stuff and figure out what what is it that we want to participate in as a congregation, or or how do we make all this known to the congregation." And I collected a folder. I mean I had had, you know, probably a five inch stack of of you know support kids in Asia or Africa or you know, build wells here, or do this locally. I mean there's so many different things and it's like as a congregation we have to say, well, we're not going to have five tables in the back of the narthex filled with all these different brochures, so what is it that we want to participate in and how do we get the word out? (Lines 220-232)

Pastor 011's example highlights the challenges pastors experience as boundary spanners. The large amount of information they receive forces pastors into the ongoing role of filter and gatekeeper, which can be overwhelming. When filtering, pastors must make choices about what

information will be disseminated and sometimes those choices may not be the right choices; yet,

the pastor tries to base those decisions on what seems right for the congregation and for the

whole church.

<div align="center">Local versus Global Tensions</div>

The third challenge pastors' experienced while trying to uphold their boundary spanning

responsibilities was to help their congregations understand the purpose and importance of

ministering to their local context while also maintaining a connection to the wider church. Pastor

024 stated,

> Well, I mean the the biggest challenge and role is to help people see that they're part of a large church and they're not just a congregational church. Um, and that's that's the biggest challenge. Uh, and they see it in terms of the different ministries that they support. Uh, Campus ministry, Lutheran Home, LSSI, and other different um World Hunger and other different um organizations, so they see it in that way, but but those are ministries and so it's still a challenge to see them part of a larger church and organizations. (Lines 158-163)

Pastor 002 expressed the congregations' tendencies to keep ministry and funds within the walls

of the congregation,

> The local mentality. And this is universal with all churches, all denominations, uh, you know, ev. . everybody has a hard time thinking outside their own four walls. And to get people to think beyond their own four walls, is a constant challenge. Uh, you'll hear this in your future churches, "Oh, we've got so many needs right here! How can we about, you know, people dying of hunger in Africa! . . .Uh, we've got so many, uh, uh financial needs in our own congregation! You know, how can we think about a Synod." Uh, people have by nature a local mentality, and one of the uh, challenges of leadership is to help them think beyond their own four walls. To synod, to churchwide, to . . . hungry people in Africa. You know, and uh it's a constant challenge to the communicator to do that. (Lines 273-281)

Similarly, pastor 016 expressed the same challenge:

I think the challenge always is is to help the congregation see beyond its its own walls and that that's always a challenge and it's critical that that we do that we we are part of you know of a larger church and I I think it's for our for the congregation's health they have to always see themselves working beyond what they do and the inclination is always to, for the most part to to just do everything, you know keep it in house. You know and you know kind of a token uh, you know effort to do something beyond our own walls. But but it's always kind of "me first" you know, let's take care of ourselves first, uh which granted we we have to do, so I think the challenge is always to help the congregation see beyond the limits, beyond the borders of of you know, even the you know, sometimes beyond the borders of the neighborhood. (Lines 209-217)

Pastor 001 expressed her personal experience with this challenge of supporting the larger church

in regards to congregational benevolence, stating,

Um, well, I guess, just in general uh uh struggle here is to try to get the benevolence giving up. And so trying to explain why that should be our primary priority for us, and and that is hard to get people to get on board with. I mean they know they should give to the benevolence, but you know and so, I try to explain - the synod has no income but ours, the ELCA has no income except for what the synod sends, and look at all the things that the synod and ELCA do because of our dollars, and so we need to, we need to be part of the bigger picture here, but the tendency always is well we need to get a new furnace, we need to make sure we've got enough in our reserves, we need to . . you . . know, whatever it might be. (Lines 400-407)

These excerpts seem to highlight pastors' struggle with helping the congregation navigate the

local versus global tension: how do pastors' help congregations maintain the local church while

at the same time help maintain the wider church, which relies on congregations to help carry out

and support the mission of the church in the world.

While the previous pastors discussed challenges of keeping support "in house," pastor

012 discussed a slightly different slant of this challenge, sharing that his congregation has a

strong connection to churchwide, but because of the strong local urban ministry they have, it

becomes a challenge to remind the congregation that it's not the only expression of the church:

I think having the sense that the local church, the synod, and the national church are all part of one body. Having that sense of identity rooted in the three expressions of the church. Um that's when you see this as a partnership that it's a good thing. Um, I think the

legacy here in this congregation of the national church being a positive thing uh is is a great asset. It's not that the, you know those people down town Rockford you know um are so disconnected from the parish. There's a real positive sense of connection with what the church is doing beyond the walls of the local church. Um I I think the challenge can be at [this] church that we do so much urban social ministry that we should um harness all of our resources and just keep them here because the harvest is plentiful the laborers are few with such great financial and leadership need here. Let's just keep it here because we're doing all of the work here on the front lines and there's some very, there are great ministry activities so it's a reminder that this isn't just the only expression of the church. So I think that can be a challenge as well. (Lines 299-310)

Pastor 012's comment suggest that it can be easy for a congregation to get caught up in a local ministry and forget that the wider church also needs their contributions and participation.

<u>Congregational Perceptions of the Synod</u>

The fourth challenge pastors' described is the challenge of upholding boundary spanning responsibilities when various members of their congregation(s) mistrust or have a negative perception(s) of the synod. Pastor 017 shared his experience with congregational mistrust of the synod in his past and present congregations:

I think that they understand the synod to be a support of the congregations and a way that we connect you know, um the different congregations connect as part of the bigger

Well, my first two congregations were from both rural [communities]. None of the three have been all that interested – I mean to be honest. Haven't been hugely interested in what goes on in the synod. You know to varying degrees they had their own mistrust of the synod, you know. "We only hear from them when they want money" - that kind of thing. And they don't see, you know they they value tradition all three of them. And being Lutheran, but then when it comes to the synod there's a little mistrust. (Lines 114-123)

Pastor 017 suggests that while his congregation(s) values being Lutheran, to them the synod holds little interest, yet engenders perceptions of illusiveness and mistrust. Pastor 014 shared this statement regarding her congregation's perception of the synod,

picture, and I think that they also think of them as you know as a as a like a fiscal support because of the money that we get from them, but I think that there is some people who think that the synod controls everything and so that's one of my struggles is to communicate that no, they don't control everything. And you know there's . . there's some disconnect. (Lines 300-305)

Pastor 009 also shared his personal experience with a congregation's distrust of the synod,

I think that in the past this congregation has had a very negative attitude towards the synod. But that, see this is what's so strange. It was prior to the merger in '87, and and people, you know there was a big conflict and blow up in this congregation back in the late 70s or early 80s. And they felt the synod should have been more proactive and stepped in and helped them out more, well that's, I mean I can appreciate that, you know. But now we're a new church and so there's since my being here I have had to battle a negative, from charter members and older folks, a negative attitude towards synod. And I point out where we're partners. (Lines 147-154)

Pastor 009 also stated later in the interview,

Their perception is their reality, so if they perceive they and us, well and I constantly ride them about that the synod is us. You know. And uh we're in partnership and these are entities that make the church a whole. One can't live without it. I've written about that in our newsletters, saying you know we were, the intention of the ELCA was to create a mutual partnership between congregation, synod, and churchwide. One isn't above the other. They are all equal partners and we partner together in things that make sense for those entities to partner and uh that's been a hard sell. (Lines 178-184)

Pastor 014 and 009's comments suggest that underlying negative perceptions about the synod present a difficult challenge for pastors to argue against and change those misconceptions and beliefs regarding what a synod is and what the synod's role is in connection to the congregation and the wider church. Pastor 005 shared a story about his work to shift the congregation's suspicious views of the synod:

Let's say what we're talking about benevolence to the ELCA and the wants to increase that. Um, the last congregational meeting I felt it was a coo full of people who have always been suspicious of the synod [who] said we should increase our benevolence to the synod and I went WHAT!? So, I felt that's a success. It took 11 years, but they're now not weary or suspicious of this entity. They actually see some good in it. (Lines 135-141)

Pastor 005's reaction to his congregation's changed views and support of the synod suggests that it is difficult work for a pastor to shift a congregation's imbedded mistrust and negative perceptions of the synod.

Summary of Findings

RQ2 asked pastors' what challenges they experience while carrying out their role as boundary spanners. From this question four prominent challenges emerged from the data. Pastors expressed personal challenges due to time and energy limitations and their role as filters and gatekeepers and congregational centered challenges, which included running up against local versus global tensions and negative perceptions of synod.

Conclusion

Research question one results show three categories relating to pastors' perceptions of their responsibilities as boundary spanners in the ELCA. For research question two, the results show that pastors experience four prominent challenges as a result of fulfilling this boundary spanning role in the ELCA. The final section will discuss these findings in comparison to literature on boundary spanning and gatekeeping. The discussion section will conclude with possible implications of these results and suggests for future research.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate from a systems theory perspective the role

pastors have in the connecting of synodical and congregational expressions of the ELCA and to

gain an understanding of what pastors think about their role. To study pastors' boundary spanner

role, two research questions were posed. The first research question asked what pastors'

perceptions are of their role as boundary spanners communicating information from the

synodical expression of the ELCA to the congregations in which pastors' serve. The second

research question sought to understand the challenges pastors experience in this role as boundary

spanners. A qualitative interview study was conducted in order to understand the boundary

spanning role from the perspective of the pastors. The results of this study show that pastors,

while striving to uphold boundary spanning responsibilities to link the congregation with the

synod (and churchwide), more specifically view themselves as, or feel like they are, gatekeepers

regarding information coming from the synodical expression; with these roles also come multiple

challenges. This chapter will discuss the findings for each research question and will establish

their relation to current literature and their implications for the church. This will follow with

discussion of the limitations of this study and suggest areas of future research.

Pastors' Perceptions of Boundary Spanning

The first research question focused on pastor's perceptions of their boundary spanning role, asking pastors to share their thoughts and perspective on the boundary spanning role they play. Research question one asked: what are pastors' perceptions of their role as boundary spanners regarding information from the synodical expression of the ELCA to the congregations in which they serve? The analysis of data identified three core themes relating to their perception of the boundary spanning responsibilities they have between the congregation and synodical expressions of the ELCA: 1) pastors view their boundary spanning responsibility as being filters and gatekeepers of information, 2) pastors acknowledge the importance of boundary spanning due to the power and influence they have as boundary spanners and their critical role in connecting the congregation to the wider church, and 3) pastors shared a variety of influences that shape their understanding of their boundary spanner responsibilities. These themes will each be discussed below.

<u>Boundary Spanners as Gatekeepers</u>

The first theme that emerged from the data was pastors' perceptions that their role as boundary spanners is to be filters or gatekeepers regarding information coming from the synod. Boundary spanning and gatekeeping are different concepts that have much to do with each other. As defined earlier in chapter one, boundary spanning is the process of linking different systems of an organization together (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978). Boundary spanners do this through a series

of "activities, processes and practices" (Williams, 2010, p. 7) that communicate information into organizational systems. In these series of actions, boundary spanners advocate, cultivate, shape and maintain an organization's relationships, identity(s), values, partnerships and more (Ansett, 2005; Leifer & Huber, 1977); they do this by both filtering the information they receive and disseminating, or communicating information or philosophy(s) into the systems they represent (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). *Gatekeeping* is commonly understood in literature as the act of screening and controlling information as it enters into or exits from a system's gate, or boundary (DeIuliis, 2015). A gatekeeper guards a system's boundaries, making decisions on what information can pass through the gate into the system, which includes thoughtful consideration of how information will be used (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001). Thus, gatekeeping is a behavior which, is strongly associated with the filtering actions and decisions (Bouhnik & Giat, 2015) of boundary spanning.

Pastors in this study explained their gatekeeping role by pointing out such things as being the first to receive most information and having to say *yes* or *no* as to what to pass on to their congregation(s) – essentially, as one pastor put it, they are the "clearing house" of information. This correlates with research on gatekeeping. A gatekeeper determines what things or information are to enter into a system with a series decisions about what is included and excluded (DeIuliis, 2015) these decisions are often based on what is relevant to the system or what resonates with the gatekeeper (Bouhnik & Giat, 2015).

<u>The Importance of Upholding Boundary Spanning Responsibilities</u>

The second core theme to emerge from the data relating to RQ1, was pastors'

perspectives on why it is important to uphold boundary spanning responsibilities. Two

subcategories were represented in the data. The first was pastors' acknowledgement and struggle

with the power and influence they possess as gatekeepers regarding information coming into the

congregation. The second included pastors' statements about the critical nature of upholding

boundary spanning responsibilities for the connection and health of the congregation and wider

church.

<u>Boundary Spanners and Power</u>

The first subcategory outlined pastors' acknowledgement and concerns with the power

and influence they have as gatekeepers. Data shows pastors' concern that if the pastor does not

communicate, encourage, or distribute information about the wider church, the congregation's

connection will be limited. Also, pastors commented that if a pastor has a negative attitude and

models such to a congregation, he or she will probably negatively affect a congregation's reality.

Pastor 004 commented "Predecessors of mine have not been that communicative about the synod

and so I guess that they can only, only know the priorities that I choose to give them. You know,

that's a tremendous amount of power that I don't deserve to have" (Lines 511-513). Pastor 003

shared, "If I'm negative about something, I'm probably going to, I'll probably turn the people

negative" (Lines 505-506). Pastors' perspectives of power solidly align with gatekeeping

literature.

DeIuliis (2015) claims that by virtue of making decisions for a system, "gatekeepers exercise power over those on the other side of the gate," (p. 4). In making selections, gatekeepers can shape the social reality of the system in which they gatekeep (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Bouhnik & Giat, 2015). Participating audiences often ascribe gatekeepers' power because, the gatekeeper is often viewed as a leader, and thus they are looked to, to make gatekeeping decisions (Hogg, 2001; Bouhnik & Giat, 2015; Baraldi, 2013). How a gatekeeper carries out their role helps to construct social reality because a system may only hear about information or events which a gatekeeper chooses to communicate (DeIuliis, 2015; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). DeIuliis (2015) points out that gatekeepers are often the most influential members of a community, in key positions to spread a message and model a desired behavior. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) point out that gatekeepers shape the audiences' thoughts about the world and various topics – information that comes through a gate can become part of peoples' social reality, whereas information that is culled, often does not. The data suggests pastors' gatekeeping power has the ability to influence congregations' social realities in positive and negative ways, which can affect how congregations perceive and respond to information coming from the synod as well as how congregations may perceive the larger church in general.

An interesting component that pastors brought up while discussing their power and influence in the congregation was a lay person's power to potentially link a congregation to the wider church if the pastor is not upholding or fulfilling that role. However, the data suggests pastors' have little confidence that there are many lay people who could or would fulfill this role. Example statements that depict such perceptions are from pastor 025, "[T]here are some unusual

circumstances where there are some very active lay people . . . who are conscientious about making sure information about the church at large gets passed on, but I think the parish pastor is absolutely crucial." (Lines 156-159) and this statement from pastor 003:

> [N]ot that there aren't other[s], [with] their own, you know, voice to speak out . . . [But] unless you've got a, you know, a few lay people who are really involved and in touch with what the synod is doing . . . [and] they bring that information back, and the enthusiasm is there, but you know, often times there is nobody serving in those roles, so I am the person that's going to make or break something that comes through. (Lines 506-512)

In gatekeeping literature, Baraldi (2013) points out, a gatekeepers' power is a two way construct between the gatekeeper and the participant(s); each negotiates expectations of the communication, relationship and responsibilities each is to possess, which can over time, become engrained patterns of role responsibilities in a culture. DeIuliis (2015) points out factors such as the political power and its relationship between the gatekeeper and gated, as well as information control or the ability of the gated to obtain information from other avenues, all affect the relationship between gatekeepers and the *gated* and the power a gatekeeper holds. DeIuliis (2015) states, "the relationships among gatekeepers and gated will determine the level of gatekeeping present, with more direct and reciprocal ties [resulting] in less gatekeeping and [the] more indirect and uni-directional ties lead[s] to more gatekeeping" (p. 14). This research suggests that power is a construct that is mediated between the gatekeeper and the system and that perhaps, greater lay involvement in boundary spanning roles could bring more accountability to pastors' power and influence concerns. The responsibilities and expectations surrounding control of information between pastors and lay members needs to be further researched.

Boundary Spanners and Connection to Wider Church

The second subcategory underscored the critical importance of pastors' upholding these boundary spanning responsibilities for the health of the congregation and the church. Pastors' spoke of their responsibilities to connect the congregation to the wider church, such as pastor 009 stating, "I think that part of my responsibility is to constantly goad myself and the church to do and be what we're called to be" (Lines 447-448). Upholding their responsibilities as boundary spanners was seen as important for the health of the congregation. As pastor 013 stated, "It's really easy for a congregation to just become inward focused" (Line 293) and pastor 025 stated, "The more a congregation is engaged and active and involved in mission and ministry beyond itself . . . the more vital the lives of that congregation will be. The more it's inward focused, and self-focused and it turns into survival mode . . . then that congregation is doomed." (Lines 183-188). These pastors' statements suggest that pastors' engagement in boundary spanning and gatekeeping is critical to the survival of congregations.

These comments and perceptions of their responsibility closely echo systems theory literature. As stated in chapter one, systems theory views organizations as a network of interdependent systems that together, make up the whole (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981; Gunaratne, 2008). Applying systems theory to the expressions of the ELCA would denote the congregation and the synod as two different types of systems within the larger organization of the ELCA. These systems each have boundaries to help define themselves and regulate information that comes in and out (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978).

As Tushman and Scanlan (1981) explain, boundaries are created through interaction

between a system's language, habits and reality constructs that combine to create a system's own social identity(s). These identities that systems hold can affect a system's permeability, or a systems openness toward influences and information outside the system (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). The more permeable or open a system is, the more the system interacts with, and is welcome to, the environment beyond its boundaries (Manev & Stevenson, 2001) which creates a rich connection between systems (Leifer & Huber, 1977). Systems with low permeability or that are closed, have very little interaction with environments that are outside their system and identity, even though they may still be affected by the larger environment (Lederman, 1976). Data from this research study suggests that it becomes easy for a congregation to become too closed to the larger church, but the more open a congregation is to ministries and mission outside of their boundaries, the more vital and healthy congregations become; the less permeable and inward focused a congregation becomes can spell death to a congregation.

Pastors play a critical and influential role in increasing a congregation's permeability to information and opportunities for faith formation and mission and ministry from the wider church through their boundary spanning role. Pastors' roles of both gatekeeping and interpreting and communicating information into a congregation greatly influence a congregation's reality (DeIuliis, 2015) and success (Aldrich & Herker, 1977) which means pastors have the power through their communication or gatekeeping choices to help foster openness or increase isolation in a congregation. Leifer & Delbecq (1978) point out that boundary spanning responsibilities can be regulated or unregulated by an organization to various degrees. Pastors' comments suggest that there is a tension to their role as boundary spanners – pastors are called to this role of boundary spanner, which comes with a sense of ethics and duty to uphold responsibilities, yet

there is also a lot of freedom in how pastors enact their role as boundary spanners, which can shape the reality of the congregations in which they serve.

When pastors uphold their boundary spanning responsibilities, they connect the different expressions of the ELCA by bringing in information and encouraging partnership. As pastor 012 stated, "I think the pastor has a very important role of of being a sense of Christ to the local church but also a gift to the greater church and the synod in relationship to . . . lifting up the body beyond the local community . . . that's an opportunity for the pastor to encourage that sense of oneness of the church" (Lines 488-501).

Influences on Understandings of Boundary Spanning Responsibilities

A boundary spanner who brings information into a system and communicates it effectively can strengthen the viability and health of a system or organization (Williams, 2002; Aldrich & Herker, 1977). Pastors in this study described their boundary spanning role as a link between the synod, congregation, and the world, to spread and share information and knowledge between, and to match both the goals of the synod and of the congregation to each other. As pastor 012 stated, boundary spanning is "an opportunity for the pastor to encourage that sense of oneness of the church" (Lines 500-501). This data suggests pastors feel the need to uphold and/or fulfill these boundary spanning responsibilities for a variety of reasons. Three themes emerged from the literature: 1) pastors' understanding of call, 2) the congregations' trust and expectations, and 3) pastors' see themselves as a congregation's main connection to the wider church.

Pastors' Understanding of Call

The first to emerge was that pastors' understanding of their call is not just to a specific congregation(s), but to the whole church. Pastors expressed that their rostered position is as a clergy member in the ELCA, thus they represent multiple expressions of the church when they are called to a congregation(s). As pastor 005 shared, his letter of call may be extended from a congregation, but the letter also states that he is a spokesperson or representative for the whole church. As Leifer & Huber (1977) point out, the purpose of a boundary spanner is to cultivate relationships and identities across organizational systems. Data suggests pastors recognize that their ordination and call to the whole church and to a congregation(s) puts them in the position of boundary spanners within the ELCA.

Congregations' Trust and Expectations

Second, the data suggests that pastors' perceptions of their congregations' trust and expectations of them to communicate pushes them to uphold boundary spanning responsibilities. Results show that pastors perceived that congregations rely on them to bring to their attention any information or ministry opportunities that could be important. Some pastors framed this as a congregation's trust in their role. Other pastors framed this as congregational expectations of their role. Regardless, the common theme disclosed by pastors was that congregations look to pastors to be their boundary spanners and to filter out and communicate to them the information they should know. Baraldi (2013) claims that organizations establish decision-making

expectations between leaders and participants and these expectations can form consistent patterns of behavior for both the decision-making leader(s) and for participants. Williams (2010) suggests that often boundary spanners are seen as *special people* within an organization. This could influence peoples' perceptions of who enacts boundary spanner roles. Data seems to highlight a consistent pattern that congregation members expect their pastors to boundary span and offer opportunities to which they can decide how to respond.

Main Connection to the Wider Church

Finally, the data shows that pastors see themselves as the main connection to the wider church in the congregation. Because of that, it becomes more important that pastors uphold and fulfill boundary spanning responsibilities. Many pastors shared that they are the only link, that unless some members sign up for synod newsletters or have contact outside the congregation, they would have little information or connection to the synod or wider church. Pastor 005 stated, "I think this congregation, without a pastor would be less connected and would only use the information they view is important" (Lines 481-482) and pastor 016 shared, "They [the congregation] aren't particularly invested in the synod, nor the churchwide. So, it is a pastors' responsibility to make sure that those connections are made. Otherwise they do not have an investment" (Lines 350-352). This seems to suggest that pastors' play an important role in not only in connecting a congregation to the wider church, but also challenging congregations to invest and think outside of what they see as important. The underlying concern with this theme, is that there is little perceived boundary spanning conducted by lay members in congregations,

thus it becomes essential that pastors carry out their boundary spanning responsibilities.

Pastors' acknowledge the importance of their role as boundary spanners, for the survival of a congregation depends on its connection to the other expressions (systems) in the church. The results show that pastors' perceive that without their boundary spanning role, congregations would become inward focused. As pastor 025 shared, a feeling of parochialism can lead to congregational death. Pastors' boundary spanning can be the element that fosters an open or closed reality of the church for congregations. Pastor 016 stated, "I [feel] it's critical to communicate to the congregation and how we are part of [this church] and how we are engaged in something much bigger . . . if people get a sense that it's coming from the heart of the pastor or the leader . . . it will resonate with them" (Lines 226-234). Boundary spanners have great influence within system groups (Johnson & Chang, 2000) and can have a great impact on the openness or closed nature of a system (Lederman, 1976; Manev and Stevenson, 2001) which can lead to greater organizational health or death (Aldrich & Herker, 1977).

Challenges of Boundary Spanning

The critical importance of boundary spanning in the church does not, however, mitigate the challenges pastors experience while carrying out this role. Cassidy (2006) warns that while gatekeepers make decisions for the system, they are influenced by forces that can shape, constrain or facilitate the act of gatekeeping. Research question two focused on the challenges pastors experience while carrying out their boundary spanning responsibilities. RQ2 asked what challenges do pastors' experience in their role as boundary spanners between the congregational

and synodical expressions of the ELCA? Through data analysis four challenges were identified. These challenges were pastors' struggle with time and energy demands, filtering, local versus global tension, and congregations' perceptions of synod. Each of these challenges will be discussed below.

<div align="center">Challenge of Time and Energy</div>

One challenge that emerged from the data was the time and energy demands pastors experience in their call. The data suggests that time and energy demands influence the gatekeeping decisions pastors make – pastors' responses suggested that time or energy demands in their pastoral role (not just boundary spanning functions) can lead to less information or ministry opportunities passing through the *gate*, or into the congregation. Pastor 014 stated, "Sometimes even if I think it's important, but I don't have the energy or time to do anything about it, it just falls to the way side . . . that results in you know um a lower understanding of what the synod is doing" (Lines 327-329). As chapter one discussed, pastors have a complex and highly stressful occupation (McMinn et al., 2005) due to the occupational demands ranging from pastoral care roles, to educator or conflict negotiator roles, to administrative roles, and boundary spanning roles (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). The responsibilities pastors hold in each of these roles create time and task demands (Soroka, 1993; Wells, 2013) that often tend to overwhelm pastors (Binau, 2006). Time and energy demands pose challenges to pastors as they strive to carry out their boundary spanning roles. Beneficial information can fall to the way side or is intentionally discarded when pastors' do not have the time or energy resources to dedicate

toward the information, or potentially do not have the time to be well enough informed to feel comfortable passing on information to the congregation, as pastor 013 disclosed. Because of this, pastors expressed concerns that the more time and energy pressures they have, the less connected congregations may be to the synod.

Not only does this challenge affect a congregation, but data also suggested this affects the pastors as well. Binau (2006) points out that often the inability to handle or attend to all the responsibilities the profession has can lead to enormous feelings of shame on the part of a pastor. While pastors acknowledged that there are limitations to what they can accomplish and that they cannot do everything, they also disclosed feelings of "falling short" or potentially "not lifting up" something that would have been beneficial when they are forced to make decisions; decisions that may lessen a congregations' connection to the wider church because of time and energy demands.

<u>Challenge of Filtering</u>

The second challenge to emerge from the data was the challenge of filtering. Aldrich and Herker (1977) maintain that boundary spanners are a system's "defense against information overload," (p. 218) which places large amounts of pressure on the individual(s) who is filtering and disseminating information into a system. The massive amounts of information that pastors receive, and are privy to, on a continual basis (not all coming from the synod office) were found to be a challenge. Pastor 017 stated, "Just the fact you have to filter . . . sometimes it's hard to decide" (Lines 481-482) and pastor 014 admitted, "[I]nformation overload . . . sometimes it's

just too much information and I don't need to tell them all of that" (Lines 313-314). This challenge was a large factor in pastors' feeling the need to be gatekeepers regarding information coming to them. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) define gatekeeping as "the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people each day" (p. 1). The large amount of information forces pastors to filter and make decisions on what to bring to the congregation and what to dismiss.

Pastors' expressed this challenge not only to discuss how difficult it is to make filtering decisions, but also because filtering too much into a congregation can be overwhelming to a congregation. As pastor 004 expressed "I'm a gatekeeper . . . there are a lot of worthy causes that I just don't promote because I know we've got our own set of worthy causes . . . [I]f we dilute the core causes with everything that comes through the door, then I I think we're frustrating people. I'm frustrating people including myself" (Lines 207-213). Macdonald and Williams (1993) claim that information is a necessary part to any organization, yet "no organization could function swamped by a universe of information" (p. 418). It becomes essential that pastors gatekeep as part of their boundary spanning role in order to handle the challenge of mass information flow into the congregation.

While pastors recognize their role as gatekeepers to combat the challenges that massive amounts of information present to them and to a congregation, data from this research also suggests that pastors are not always certain or comfortable with this gatekeeping role. The data shows pastors' concerns or uncertainty over decision-making topics such as fair decision-making or making the "right" choices regarding information (both accepted and dismissed). Pastor 004 stated, "I say 'good causes, good people, but [our church] can't handle that right now.' And I

might be wrong. You know, about those thing" (Lines 214-215), pastor 003 stated, "[S]ometimes I feel like the gatekeeper here and I, I don't want to make the wrong decisions, to not, not put the stuff out" (Lines 266-267), and pastor 005 stated, "I make a judgement that they don't they're not important. Um, and pass on the things that are, I guess. And that, that's by my read, and maybe that's not fair" (Lines 59-60). Each of these statements show pastors' concern for their boundary spanning roles and for striving to make the best decisions for their congregations. Perhaps pastors' struggle over these concerns is an indication of the ethical considerations they must struggle with when striving to carry out this boundary spanning role.

Challenges Resulting from Role Tension

Existing literature suggests that one issue boundary spanners often face is conflicting expectations between systems (Friedman & Podolny, 1992); members from systems convey how their expectations, values, goals or interests should be represented (Keller & Holland, 1975; Sleep et al., 2013) which may cause conflict and role strain on a boundary spanner if the systems a boundary spanner represents are not aligning. As Keller and Holland (1975) stated,

> When the organizations which are spanned have goals that are in conflict, the boundary-spanner can experience strong role pressures and tension due to the conflicting expectations . . . [which] are often sent to the boundary spanner . . . resulting in strong conflict role pressures and tensions. (p. 389-391)

It becomes a boundary spanners' job to figure out how to navigate these different expectations and find ways to strengthen relationships and connect goals between different systems' demands (Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Williams, 2002), which can place emotional and psychological strain on a boundary spanner (Bettencourt & Brown, 2003; Singh, Goolsby & Rhoads, 1994).

Pastors' discussed two different types of challenges they experience as boundary spanning that lead to role tension between the congregation and synodical expressions.

Local versus Global Tension

First, pastors' experienced tension regarding the local versus global mentality in the congregation. Congregations have a local and a global context that can be held in tension when interests or goals for resources or ministry are in perceived competition between what the congregation wants or perceives as important and what churchwide asks and encourages congregations to perceive as important. This tension was expressed in a variety of ways. Pastor 002 discussed this constant challenge as a tendency for a congregation to keep everything in house, stating

> The local mentality . . . everybody has a hard time thinking outside of their own four walls. . . Uh, you'll hear this in your future churches . . . "We've got so many needs right here! How can we [think] about, you know, people dying of hunger . . . we've got so many uh, financial needs in our own congregation!" . . . and the challenge of leadership is to help them think beyond their own four walls. (Lines 273-280)

Pastor 016 echoed this very challenge, stating that "It's always kind of "me first" you know, let's take care of ourselves first, uh which granted we have to do, so I think the challenge is always to help the congregation see beyond the limits, beyond the borders" (Lines 214-216). This "in house" or "me first" type of tension was also expressed within the tension of benevolence giving versus building maintenance as well as the tension of investment in strong local community programming versus adding additional global ministries into a congregation. Pastor 012 stated, "The challenge . . . at this church . . . [is] . . . we do so much urban social ministry that we should

um harness all of our resources and just keep them here because the harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few with great financial and leadership need here" (Lines 305-308). This data suggests that this tension partially stems from congregations' fears of overextending their resources (often financially), which pastor 016 acknowledged that congregations live in this tension of taking care of themselves but not to the detriment of becoming insular.

Pastors become the person advocating for both congregation and churchwide goals. Sleep et al. (2013) state that boundary spanners often are expected to meet goals set by the organization, yet also are expected to meet customer and colleague expectations. Pastors live in this place of representing the larger church and ministering to their congregational context. They minister and lead congregations in community ministries and church maintenance, yet also represent and challenge congregations to participate as the body of Christ on a larger scale. While pastors recognized this as a challenge, little was discussed on how this affects a pastor emotionally or psychologically. Research suggests pastors often experience conflicts between congregational and denominational expectations (McMinn et al., 2005; Soroka, 1993) often in the form of criticism of the pastor and denomination (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012) which can form large amounts of stress in pastors (Han & Lee, 2004; Berry et al., 2012). More research is needed on what pastors' emotional responses are to the tension of their leadership role between the congregation and larger church.

Congregations' Perceptions of Synod

The second challenge pastors' expressed relating to role tension was congregation

members' negative perceptions of the synod. Williams (2002) states that one of the skills boundary spanners need to be effective is to manage the varying values, expectations, motivations and perceptions that organizational members possess in each system boundary spanners represent. Each system is composed of diverse political and personal dynamics that can create a complex situation for boundary spanners to navigate (Williams, 2002). Pastors discussed that boundary spanning becomes challenging when various congregation members have mistrust or negative perceptions of the synod or larger church. Pastor 017 discussed his churches' pride of being "Lutheran," but mistrust of the synod, largely due to their disinterest of the synod and main contact only coming "when they [the synod] want money" (Line 120). Pastor 014 shared that while many people understand that the synod supports their congregation in different ways, some people in her congregation "think that the synod controls everything" (Line 304). Pastor 009 explained that his congregation had a big conflict back in the 70s and 80s where relationship between the congregation and synod were strained (this was prior to the ELCA) which he is still fighting today: "Now we're a new church and so there's since my being here I have to battle a negative, from charter members and older folks, a negative attitude towards the synod. And I point out where we're partners" (012, Lines 152-154). These negative perceptions present a difficult challenge to pastors. Not only is it difficult to change a person's or system's perceptions, but it can lead to conflict between systems (Keller & Holland, 1975) and can place strain on the boundary spanner (Keller & Holland, 1975; Bettencourt & Brown, 2003).

Pastors may experience role conflict and pressure when various members of a congregation possess divergent perceptions or beliefs about the wider church. Aldrich and Herker (1977) state that a boundary spanners' role becomes more pressurized when information they

represent or pass on may be contentious or challenging to the system it is filtering into. This can put stress and strain on a pastor as they try to reshape those negative perceptions, while continuing to uphold their boundary spanning role.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are a few limitations that may have had an effect on the results of this research study. These limitations are split into research design limitations and limitations related to the church. For each of these limitations, suggestions for further research are proposed.

Research Design Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that boundary spanning is often more complex than one person having access to all information (especially in light of today's digitalized mass communication). Boundary spanning literature often makes the case that there are multiple boundary spanners and gatekeepers in organizational systems (Manev & Stevenson, 2001; Bouhnik & Giat, 2015). Not represented in the data are the congregational groups that may also receive various forms of communication from the synod: staff members, church council and committee members, and other interested lay members.

A second limitation of this study was that this research only focused on information coming into a congregation, and not a cyclical relationship between congregation and synod. Boundary spanning happens in multiple ways, through many different channels. By focusing on

the perspective of pastors, this study is able to provide an in-depth understanding of their

boundary spanning roles. However, this is an incomplete view.

In light of these limitations, future research related to pastors' boundary spanning roles,

lay member roles, and synodical roles should be considered. Results of this study highlight

critical insights into the role pastors' have in the communication of information in the church and

their perceptions of their role, responsibility, and challenges they experience as a result of

boundary spanning; research on how pastors decide what to communicate could shed more light

on the intricacies involved in pastoral decision-making during the gatekeeping process.

Additionally, how pastors communicate information as part of their boundary spanning role was

not specifically investigated. In today's changing fields of communication, this research could

provide more valuable information about the strategies and avenues pastors use to disseminate

and communicating information in the process of boundary spanning.

When it comes to lay roles, interview texts suggest very little, or perhaps rare, lay

involvement in the boundary spanning process. It appears lay members do significantly less

boundary spanning than pastors, but may have more participative roles after information has

been filtered and disseminated into the congregation. Future research is needed to explore lay

members' roles as they relate to the boundary spanning process and how that corresponds with,

and potentially helps support pastors' boundary spanning roles. Further, more research should

examine congregational perceptions of boundary spanning and how congregants' respond to or

use the information pastors communicate about the wider church. Finally, the synodical

expression of the ELCA has not been examined regarding this topic and could be useful in

bringing the perceptions of the congregation, pastors, and synod together in mutual

understanding of their shared relationship and identity.

Limitations Related to the Church

Other limitations that may have had an effect on the results of this research study are church-related. The population sample gathered for this research study was in relatively close proximity to the synod office (all congregations were within a sixty mile radius). This may have an impact in several ways: First, the synod office and staff may have greater relationship and/or visibility with congregations and pastors in this area, than farther parts of the synod. Second, data was not consistently collected as to if pastors or congregational members were serving on any synodical committees or had more specific ties to the synod office. There is no way to tell if pastors' perceptions of their role, or even the importance they ascribe to boundary spanning is impacted by the synod's proximity and visibility. The reason why this is important to point out is because the ELCA has very large and very small geographical synods based on the density of Lutheran populations in the United States. The Midwest and parts of the Northeastern United States have relatively small synods because of the density of Lutheran populations. The Geography and proximity of synod offices may impact pastoral and congregational connection – essentially, if you were to do this study in a separate place, answers could differ.

Second, history of the synod-congregation ecclesiological relationship may have an impact on this study, which if replicated somewhere else, could impact results in a different way. Northern Illinois Synod has strong ties to the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), which later merged with two other Lutheran churches to form the ELCA. The LCA and The American

Lutheran Church (ALC) were the two largest churches and had most of the say when it came to merger decisions (Trexler, 1991); during this time, authority structure became a decision-making sticking point. The ecclesiological structure of these two churches were different. When defining the churches, Trexler (1991) stated, "The ALC described itself as a 'union of congregations' while the LCA used 'congregations and ordained ministers'" (p. 4) to describe their church structure. From pastors' responses during interviews, the ALC was commonly known as more congregational in ecclesiological authority and the LCA had greater trust in pastoral authority and larger church ecclesiology. Pastors still claim this has an impact on congregation members' understanding and trust of current church ecclesiology, which has a system of ministry expressions, not authoritarian hierarchies.

Future research, replications, or potential off-shoot areas of this study may consider these limitations when constructing interview protocols or selecting population samples. While these factors may be difficult to ascertain how influential they may be, it is important to keep these factors in mind.

Conclusion

This study provided a look into pastors' roles as boundary spanners in the ELCA and the perceptions they have regarding their roles. As shown by the research, pastors play an indispensable part in linking congregations to the wider church. While pastors' recognize their influence and power as gatekeepers, they feel a need to uphold boundary spanning responsibilities because of their call to the whole church and because of the necessary and

critical role they play as a connection point in the congregation to the wider church, which plays a critical role in the health and vibrancy of a congregation. The importance of pastors' boundary spanning roles in the ELCA needs to be recognized as a crucial part of what connects the expressions of the ELCA and the common mission each share.

REFERENCES

Agnihotri, R., Trainor, K. J., Krush, M. T., and Krishnakumar, S. (2014). Satisfied and productive boundary spanners: A model of resiliency and customer expectations. *Journal of Service Research, 14(2),* 57-74.

Aldrich, H. & Herker, D. (1977). Boundary spanning roles and organizational structure. *The Academy of Management Review, 2,* 217-230.

Ansett, S. (16 September, 2005). Boundary spanner: The gatekeeper of innovation in partnerships. *Accountability Forum 6,* 36-44.

Ashmos, D. P. & Huber, G. P. (1987). The systems paradigm in organization theory: Correcting the record and suggesting the future. *The Academy of Management Review, 12,* 607-621.

Bailey, R. E. (1980). A rhetorical perspective on pastoral leadership. *Religious Communication Today, 3,* 15-18.

Baraldi, C. (2013). Forms of decision making: Gatekeeping and dialogic coordination in CISV organizational meetings. *Journal of Business Communication, 50(4),* 339-361.

Barnard, L. K. & Curry, J. F. (2012). The relationship of clergy burnout to self-compassion and other personality dimensions. *Pastoral Psychol, 61,* 149-163. doi 10.1007/s11089-011-0377-0

Baxter, L. A., & Babbie, E. (2004). *The basics of communication research.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Berry, A., Francis, L. J., Rolph, J. and Rolph, P. (2012). Ministry and stress: Listening to Anglican clergy in wales. *Pastoral Psychol, 61,* 165-178. doi 10.1007/s1108-011-0388-x

Bettencourt, L. A. and Brown, S. W. (2003). Role stressors and customer-oriented boundary-spanning behaviors in service organizations. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 31(4),* 394-408.

Binau, B. A. (2006). Administrative ministry: A link between shame and stress. *Trinity Seminary Review,* 99-106.

Bouhnik, D. and Giat, Y. (2015). Information gatekeepers – aren't we all? *Informing Science: The International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline, 18,* 127-144.

Caldwell, D.F. & O'Reilly III, C.A. (1982). Boundary spanning and individual performance: The impact of self-monitoring. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 67,* 124-127.

Canary, D. J., & Lakey, S. G. (2006). *Managing conflict in a competent manner: A mindful look at events that matter.* In J. G. Oetzel & S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), The Sage handbook of conflict communication: Integrating theory, research and practice (pp. 185-210). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Carlile, P.R. (2002). A pragmatic view of knowledge and boundaries: Boundary objects in new product development. *Organizational Science, 13,* 442-455.

Carrell, L. (2009). Communication training for clergy: Exploring impact on the transformative quality of sermon communication. *Communication Educations, 58(1),* 15-34.

Cassidy, W. P. (2006). Gatekeeping similar for online, print journalists. *Newspaper Research Journal, 27(2),* 8-23.

Cheong, P. H., Huang, S. and Poon, J. P. H. (2011). Religious communication and epistemic authority of leaders in wired faith organizations. *Journal of Communication, 61,* 938-958. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01579.x

DeIuliis, D. (2015). Gatekeeping theory from social fields to social networks. *Communication Research Trends, 34(1),* 4-23.

Evangelical Lutheran church in America. (2016). About. Retrieved from http://www.elca.org./en/About.

Evangelical Church in America.(2016). Churchwide organization. Retrieved from http://www.elca.org/About/Churchwide

Evangelical Church in America. (2016). Congregations. Retrieved from http://www.elca.org/About/Congregations.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. (2016). Constitutions, bylaws and continuing resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Retrieved from http://www.elca.org/constitution

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. (2016). ELCA facts. Retrieved from http://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/ELCA-Facts?_ga=1.65997165.212861168.1453149517

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (2011). Human sexuality: Gift and trust. Retrieved from http://download.elca.org/ELCA% 20Resource%20Repository/SexualitySS.pdf

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, LIFT Task Force. (2011, August). Living into the future together: Renewing the ecology of the ELCA. Retrieved from https://liftelca.wordpress.com.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. (2016). Synods. Retrieved from http://www.elca.org/en/About/Synods

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. (2010). Vision and expectations: Ordained ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Retrieved from http://search.elca.org/Pages/Results.aspx?k=vision+and+expectations

Faucett, J. M., Corwyn, R. F., and Poling, T. H. (2013). Clergy role stress: Interactive effects of role ambiguity and role conflict in intrinsic job satisfaction. *Pastoral Psychol, 62,* 291-304.

Forward, G. L. (1999). Encountering the nonprofit organization: Clergy uncertainty and information seeking during organizational entry. *Journal of Communication and Religion, 22(2),* 190-213.

Friedman, R. A. & Podolny, J. (1992). Differentiation of boundary spanning roles: Labor negotiations and implications for role conflict. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 37,* 28-47.

Garber, D. R. and Johnson, J. A. (2001). Spirituality and healthcare organizations. *Journal of Healthcare Management, 46,* 39-53.

Garner, J. T. and Wargo, M. (2009). Feedback from the pew: A dual-perspective exploration of organizational dissent in churches. *Journal of Communication and Religion, 32,* 375-400.

Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.

Grosch, W. N. & Olsen, D. C. (2000). Clergy burnout: An integrative approach. *Journal of Psychotherapy in Practice/In Session, 56(5),* 619-632.

Gunaratne, S. A. (2008). Understanding systems theory: Transition from equilibrium to entropy. *Asian Journal of Communication, 18,* 175-192.

Han, J. & Lee, C. (2004). Ministry demand and stress among Korean American pastors: A brief report. *Pastoral Psychology, 52(6),* 473-478.

Hogg, M. A. (2001). A social identity of leadership. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 5(3),* 184-200.

Johnson, D. J. & Chang, H. (2000). Internal and external communication, boundary spanning, and innovation adoption: An over-time comparison of three explanations of internal and external innovation communication in a new organizational form. *The Journal of Business Communication, 37(3),* 238-263.

Kay, W. K. (2000). Role conflict and British Pentecostal ministers. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 2,* 119-124.

Keller, R.T. & Holland, W.E. (1975). Boundary-spanning roles in a research and development organization: An empirical investigation. *The Academy of Management Journal, 18,* 388-393.

Lederman, L. C. (1976, March). *Parallel evolution in science: The historical roots and central concepts of general systems theory.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2-45.

Leifer, R. and Delbecq, A. (1978). Organizational/environmental interchanges: A model of boundary spanning activity. *The Academy of Management Review, 3(1),* 40-50.

Leifer, R. & Huber, G.P. (1977). Relations among perceived environmental uncertainty, organization structure, and boundary-spanning behavior. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 22,* 235-247.

Levina, N. & Vaast, E. (2005). The emergence of boundary spanning competence in practice: Implications for implementation and use of information systems. *Management Information Systems Quarterly, 29,* 335-363.

Lewis, C. A., Turton, D. W. and Francis, L.J. (2007). Clergy work-related psychological health, stress, and burnout: An introduction to this special issue of *mental health, religion, and culture. Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 10(1),* 1-8.

Lindlof, T. R. (1995). *Qualitative communication research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Macdonald, S. and Williams, C. (1993). Beyond the boundary: An information perspective on the role of the gatekeeper in the organization. *Journal of Product Innovation Management, 10(5),* 417-427.

Manev, I. M. & Stevenson, W. B. (2001). Balancing ties: Boundary spanning and influence in the organization's extended network of communication. *The Journal of Business Communication, 38(2),* 183-205.

McMinn, M. R., Lish, R.A., Trice, P.D., Root. A.M., Gilbert, N., & Yap, A. (2005). Care for pastors: Learning from clergy and their spouses. *Pastoral Psychol, 53(6),* 563-581. doi: 10.1007/s11089-005-4821-y

McNamee, L. G. (2011). Faith-based organizational communication and its implications for member identity. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 39(4),* 422-440. doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2011.608697

Miles, A. and Proeschold-Bell, R. J. (2012). Overcoming the challenges of pastoral work? Peer support groups and psychological distress among United Methodist church clergy. *Sociology of Religion, 74(2),* 199-226. doi:10.1093/socrel/srs055

Miner, M. H. (2007). Changes in burnout over the first 12 months in ministry: Links with stress and orientation to ministry. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 10(1),* 9-16.

Molloy, K. A. and Heath, R. G. (2014). Bridge discourses and organizational ideologies: Managing spiritual and secular communication in a faith-based, nonprofit organization. *International Journal of Business Communication, 51(4),* 386-408.

Pector, E. A. (2005). Professional burnout: Detection, prevention, and coping. *The Clergy Journal – Ministry Issues,* 19-20.

Randall, K. J. (2013). Clergy burnout: Two different measures. *Pastoral Psychol, 62,* 333-341. doi 10.1007/s11089-012-0506-4

Reinard, J. C. (2008). Introduction to communication research. (4th Ed). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Rogers, D. (1976, March). *General systems theory, modern organizational theory and organizational communication.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 46-60.

Shoemaker, P. J., Eichholz, M., Kim, E. and Wrigley, B. (2001). Individual and routine forces in gatekeeping. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 72(2),* 233-246.

Shoemaker, P. J. and Vos, T. P. (2009). *Gatekeeping theory.* New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Silva, D. and Sias, P. M. (2010). Connection, restructuring, and buffering: How groups link individuals and organizations. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 38(2),* 145-166.

Singh, J., Goolsby, J. R., and Rhoads, G. K. (1994). Behavioral and psychological consequences of boundary spanning burnout for customer service representatives. *Journal of Marketing Research, 31,* 558-569.

Sleep, S., Bharadwai, S., and Lam S. K. (2015). Walking a tightrope: The joint impact of customer service and within-firm boundary spanning activities on perceived customer satisfaction and team performance. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Sciences, 43,* 472-489. doi 10.1007/s11747-014-0395-4.

Soroka, S. (1993). Sources of stress experienced by catholic priests. *Review of Religious Research, 35(1),* 3-18.

Stewart, C. J. (1980). The interview and the clergy: A survey of training experiences and needs. *Religious Communication Today, 3,* 19-22.

Stewart, C. J. and Cash Jr., W. B. (2008). *Interviewing: Principles and practices.* (12th Ed). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Trexler, E. R. (1991). *Anatomy of a merger: People, dynamics, and decisions that shaped the ELCA.* Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress.

Tushman, M.L. & Scanlan, T.J. (1981). Boundary spanning individuals: Their role in information transfer and their antecedents. *Academy of Management Journal, 24,* 289-305.

Waters, R. D., Friedman, C. S., Mills, B., and Zeng, L. (2011). Applying relationship management theory to religious organizations: An assessment of relationship cultivation online. *Journal of Communication and Religion, 34(1),* 88-104.

Wells, C. R. (2013a). The effects of work-related and boundary-related stress on the emotional and physical health status of ordained clergy. *Pastoral Psychol, 62,* 101-114. doi 10.1007 /s11089-012-0455-y

Wells, C. R. (2013b). The moderating effects of congregational and denominational support on the impact of stress on clerical emotion and physical health status. *Pastoral Psychol, 62,* 873-888. doi 10.1007/s11089-013-0522-z

Wells, C. R., Probst, J., McKeown, R., Mitchem, S., &Whiejong, H. (2012). The relationship between work-related stress and boundary-related stress within the clerical profession. *Journal of Religion and Health, 51,* 215-230. doi 10.1007/s10943-011-9501-9

Williams, P. (2002). The competent boundary spanner. *Public Administration, 80,* 103-124.

Williams, P. (2010, February). *Special agents: The nature and role of boundary spanners.* Paper presented as part of the ESRC Research Seminar Series, University of Birmingham, AL.

APPENDIX A

EXPLANATION OF ELCA POLITY

ELCA Polity

The ELCA, as mentioned in chapter one, is structured as three interdependent expressions of the church who work together in common mission. These three expressions are congregations, synods, and churchwide. When the ALC, LCA, and AELC churches had finally committed to forming a new church in 1982, the power structure of the new church presented a difficult challenge to the lay and ordained members elected to the *Committee for a New Lutheran Church* (CNLC). These churches each came to the merging table with a different understanding and experience of church polity (Trexler, 1991). After six years of difficult work, the April 1987 Tri-Church Assembly voted into being the new Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and a new constitution and church polity had been created (Trexler, 1991).

The ELCA is a unique mix of congregational-like polity (power and decision-making lies within the laity of congregations) and episcopal-like polity (power and decision-making lies within ordained and rostered leadership and bishops, but this power is within rostered and ordained ministry). The term *expressions* of the ELCA denotes the congregational polity of the church, which emphasizes the lack of hierarchy within and between the three expressions of the church. These expressions each depend on and share responsibility for one another. Article 8.11 of the constitution states, "This church shall seek to function as people of God through congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, all of which shall be interdependent. Each part, while fully the church, recognizes that it is not the whole church and therefore lives in a partnership relationship with the others" (p. 54).

Congregational-like Polity

A true congregational polity gives power to congregations who act as independent systems of authority. The ELCA has a congregational-like polity, where the laity have power in congregations to make decisions for the church, yet they are not fully independent from other congregations and expressions of the ELCA. This congregation-like polity can be witnessed through each expression of the church by examining their governing structures.

Congregational Expression

"Congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations" (p. 20). Congregations proclaim the Gospel locally and throughout the world and support the collective ministries of the congregational, synodical and churchwide expressions of the ELCA. This includes financial support, often called benevolence. Congregations, by the direction of their lay members, have a lot of autonomy and decision-making power across the church. Article 9.11 of the ELCA constitution explains the role of a congregation stating,

> A congregation is a community of baptized persons whose existence depends on the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments and whose purpose is to worship God, to nurture its members, and to reach out in witness and service to the world. To this end it assembles regularly for worship and nurture, organizes and carries

out ministry to its people and neighborhood, and cooperates with and supports the wider church to strive for the fulfillment of God's mission in the world. (p. 64)

Congregations structure themselves in ways to fulfill their purpose. Congregations, while part of the whole, have decision-making power and ownership of their properties (except those properties owned collectively throughout the expressions), finances (including financial benevolence to synod and churchwide), and governance structure. Governance structure is often comprised of a congregationally elected church council (all volunteer lay members) as well as pastoral or rostered leadership (pastors may or may not be a voting member on church councils depending upon the congregation's constitution). As a congregational polity, congregations are free to make decisions without hierarchical permission. Article 9.31 states, "Congregations of this church shall have authority in all matters that are not assigned by the constitution and bylaws of this church to synods and the churchwide organization" (p. 66).

Synodical Expression

A synod is a geographical territory which cares for the congregations within that territory. Synod gets its meaning from the Greek word *synodos*, which when broken down is comprised of two ideas: *syn* means "together" and *hodos* means "way." These are commonly understood as a gathering or meeting together of congregations. The synodical expression of the ELCA partners with churchwide to:

> [B]ear primary responsibility for the oversight of the life and mission of this church and its territory . . . provide pastoral care for congregations . . . plan for, facilitate, and nurture mission of this church through congregations; Strengthen interdependent relationships among congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, and foster relationships with [partners] . . . [and] interpret the work of this church to congregations and to the public on the territory of the synod. (Article 10.21, p. 82)

A synod's governance structure is comprised of a bishop, assistants to the bishop, a vice president (who must be a lay member), a secretary, and a treasurer along with a synod council which made up of lay and pastoral council members. The bishop, vice president, secretary and council members are each elected during an annual or biennial synod assembly (a treasurer may be elected by the assembly or may be appointed by the synod council). The synod assembly is the "highest legislative authority" (p. 87) comprised of voting members (with at least 60% layperson vote) from each congregation within a synod's territory. During the synod assembly, the voting body makes decisions on mission, financial benevolence (to churchwide and other ministries), resolutions, and more. The elected synod council serves as a "board of directors . . . [who] shall serve as the interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly, except that it may not take any action which is reserved exclusively for the Synod Assembly or which is in conflict with action taken by the Synod Assembly" (Article 10.51, p. 88).

Churchwide Expression

The churchwide expression of the ELCA works interdependently with congregations and synods to support the greater mission of the ELCA (with partners across the nation and globally) and to

serve on behalf of and in support of this church's members, congregations, and synods in proclaiming the Gospel, reaching out in witness and service both globally and throughout the territory of this church . . . [and] shall develop policy, set standards for leadership, establish criteria for this church's endeavors, and coordinate the work of this church. It shall be a means for sharing of resources throughout this church, and shall provide programs and services as determined by this church. (Article 11.11-12, p. 92)

The churchwide governance is similar to congregational and synodical governance. The churchwide expression of the ELCA has a presiding bishop, vice president (who again must be a lay person), secretary, treasurer, a church council, the conference of bishops (65 bishops from across the synods and the presiding bishop who play an advisory role to the church council), and executive directors for each churchwide ministry unit. The vice president, council, and presiding bishop positions are elected at the triennial Churchwide Assembly, which is comprised of nearly 1,000 voting members (lay and clergy) whom are elected by the voting body from each synod's assembly. At the churchwide assembly, social statements, policy, doctrine, officer reports, and financial budgetary spending must be voted on and adopted by a two-thirds majority.

Together the three expressions of the ELCA form an interdependent relationship with each taking responsibility for various parts of ministry that make up the church. The laities' and rostered and ordained leaders' participation in decision-making within each expression of the ELCA and the benevolence they give plays an intricate role in the support of congregations, synods, and churchwide mission and ministry. Likewise, decisions made from laity or rostered and ordained leaders that choose not to participate or give benevolence, affect all the interdependent systems of the church in varied and numerous ways.

As can be seen from various social statements and church decisions throughout the history of the ELCA, tension and conflict within the polity can present itself. Divergent beliefs and perceptions of congregations (or various laity within congregations) and ministry leaders relating to adopted doctrine, policies, decisions, or social statements have created tension and conflict in the church. Thus, it is important to emphasize two things: 1) church decisions made at the churchwide level are voted on and adopted by the voting members who represent each congregation across the 65 synods (not dictated and controlled by hierarchical authority) and 2) because the churchwide and synodical expressions are often the ones disseminating churchwide adoptions and decisions, it can be perceived by congregation members as an authoritarian and hierarchical system.

Episcopal-like Polity

A true episcopal polity structure would ascribe to bishops hierarchical power over the pastors and laity within congregations. The ELCA does not quite fall under a true episcopal structure because of their strong congregational-like polity. However, the episcopal-like polity of the church comes in the form of ordained and rostered leadership. As stated in Article 9.11 of the

ELCA constitution, "a congregation is a community of baptized persons whose existence depends on the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments . . ." (p. 64). The only persons who have the power to administer the sacraments are ordained leaders (ordained into word and sacrament), such as pastors or bishops. Rostered leaders are ordained into word and service (not sacrament), but have a certain amount of power ascribed to them by the church and laity (Due to the length of this appendix, rostered leaders will not be explained – please refer to Article 7.50 for the start of information on rostered leaders). Therefore congregations depend upon ordained leaders to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, thus creating a form of hierarchical power in the church in regard to ordained responsibilities. Yet there are restrictions to the power ordained ministers have in the church, which is described in the constitution regarding the responsibilities of each office.

Office of Ordained Ministry

According to Article 7.21 of the ELCA constitution, "Within the people of God and for the sake of the Gospel ministry entrusted to all believers, God has instituted the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament. To carry out this ministry, the church calls and ordains qualified persons" (p. 27). Persons who are called into word and sacramental ministry are held to high standards of conduct and expectations, both in doctrine and responsibilities to the church (for purposes of this appendix, congregational calls are discussed). Ordained pastors have authority in a congregation over the sacraments and preaching of the gospel as well as these responsibilities addressed in Article 7.31.12:

> Each ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation: 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead; 2) supervise all schools and organizations of the congregation; 3) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; 4) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization and synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; 5) install regularly elected members of the Congregation council; and 6) with the council, administer discipline. (p. 28)

Ordained ministers are ordained to the whole church, but are (if called to a congregation) bestowed a Letter of Call from a congregation. If accepted, the call "expresses a relationship between this church and the person called involving mutual service, support, accountability, supervision, and discipline" (Article 7.44.A13, p. 35). Because of this mutual relationship, termination of a pastoral call can only happen (unless there is some form of misconduct or inability to fulfill the responsibilities of call, in which case the Synodical Bishop and committees step in) with the mutual agreement of both congregation and ordained pastor (Article 7.46). Together the laity of the congregation and the ordained clergy work together to fulfill and uphold the purpose and function of the congregation within the three expressions.

Office of the Synodical Bishop

Bishops are ordained ministers who have been elected by the synod assembly to the office of synodical bishop. According to Article 10.31 of the ELCA constitution, the bishop has

numerous responsibilities. Bishops "Interpret and advocate the mission and theology of the whole church" (p. 86) and serve as each synod's pastor, providing care and pastoral leadership for the synod, congregations, ordained ministers and rostered ministers, preach the gospel and administer the sacraments around the synod, and exercise power over the ordination and rostering of candidates for ministry. In addition to the pastoral role, synodical bishops also oversee the administration of the synod office, synodical governance and synodical assemblies. They coordinate resources available to the synod and its congregations, and they work with and advise agencies, institutions, and ecumenical partners. In the churchwide expression, each bishop sits on the Conference of Bishops (Article 10.90) who support each other in their calls as synodical bishops and play an advisory role to the churchwide council and the presiding bishop. Bishops have authority and power within rostered and ordained leaders and not over the congregational laity (unlike a true episcopal polity).

Office of the Presiding Bishop

The Presiding Bishop must be an ordained minister within the ELCA and is elected by the churchwide assembly. Article 13.21 states, "The presiding bishop shall be an ordained minister of this church who, as its pastor, shall be a teacher of the faith of this church and shall provide leadership for the life and witness of this church" (p. 100). Among the presiding bishop's duties and responsibilities is to be the chief administrator and ecumenical officer of the churchwide organization, work with the governance structures of the churchwide expression, care for and provide leadership to the synodical bishops, supervise the work of churchwide officers and staff, among many other duties. The presiding bishop does not have the power to mandate church policies and doctrine.

Summary

The ELCA depends on the interdependent power and decision-making of the laity and rostered and ordained clergy in a unique mix of congregational and episcopal-like polity. This creates challenges and benefits for the upholding of mission and ministry in the church. As Reverend Herbert Chilstrom, the first Presiding Bishop of the ELCA stated during his election address in 1987,

> I promise to do my very best to respect the traditions that flow into this new church . . . and be the bishop of the whole church. The CNLC and the Transition Team put together a very fine ship that will occasionally need repairs. You have elected me as captain to go on board and begin the journey. I will do my best to respect the traditions that flow into this church and bend every effort to hasten the day when we are one. (Trexler, 1991, p. 236-237).

Twenty-eight years later, the ELCA has continued to grow, repair, and seek what it means to be the ELCA, working together across expressions. Article 3.02 of the constitution states,

> The Church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. Congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations.

This church, therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful. In length, it acknowledges itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations in our day. (p. 20)

*** *This appendix section attempts to summarize the polity of the ELCA in a way that highlights a generalized explanation of the main points of their polity – it is by no means perfect or able to capture the complexities of the ELCA's three expressions (including historical and cultural influences that affect decision-making and usage of power within the expressions) as they work together for common mission.*

APPENDIX B

BISHOP'S INTRODUCTION E-MAIL

Dear Colleagues in the North Conference:

I am writing to introduce Ms. Rachel Anderson. Rachel is a graduate student at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb studying organizational communication with a special interest in the ELCA. For her Master's thesis, Rachel would like to interview pastors in the North Conference on their perceptions of their role as informational boundary spanners between synod and congregation; learning more about the role pastors play in the flow of information communication from synod to congregation.

Some of you may already know Rachel through her fiancé, Andy Berry who was a recent seminary intern at Alpine Lutheran.

Rachel will be contacting you to see if you are willing to participate in her study.

Thank you for considering this.

Have a blessed Thanksgiving.

In Christ,

Bishop Gary Wollersheim

Rev. Dr. Gary M. Wollersheim, bishop
Northern Illinois Synod
103 W. State Street
Rockford, IL 61101
Phone: (815) 964-9934
Fax: (815) 964-2295
Email: bishop@nisynod.org

APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

Recruitment E-mail

Hello Pastor _____.

My name is Rachel Anderson and I am a current MA student at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, studying organizational communication. My passion in studying communication centering on the church context, specifically the ELCA. Thus, my thesis is studying pastors' perceptions of the role they play in communicating information from the synod offices to their congregation. I feel this study has great potential for understanding part of the relationship between synod and congregation and may highlight some strengths and areas for growth our church.

I was wondering if you would be willing to sit down in an interview with me to discuss your perceptions on the role you play in communicating information.

I have included below a synopsis of what the interview would entail.

* *

This study focuses on learning more about the role pastors play in the flow of information communication from synod to congregation. In order to better understand this phenomenon I am asking pastors from the Northern Illinois Synod to participate in 60-75 minute interviews.

As part of this interview, you will be asked to provide basic demographic information about your background in ministry, to talk about how the synod communicates information to your congregation, to talk about your role in communicating information from the synod to your congregation, and to talk about how receptive or interested your congregation is regarding information coming from the synod.

* *

If you would be interested in helping out with this study, please let me know and we can set up a time and location that would work for both of us.

If you have further questions or need more information, please feel free to contact me.

Rachel Anderson

Department of Communication
Northern Illinois University
320-304-3647
randerson9@niu.edu

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol
Pastors' perceptions of the role they play in communication between synod and congregation

Introduction

Thank you for coming to talk with me today. Today we'll be talking about your perceptions of the role pastors play in communication between synod and congregation. Specifically, you will be asked to provide some demographic information, to talk about the ways in which the Synod communicates with your church, the role you play in organizing and disseminating information from the Synod to the congregation, and finally we'll talk about your congregation's receptiveness and interest in information coming from the synod.

The interview should last about 60 to 75 minutes and your responses will be kept confidential. To facilitate confidentiality, I would appreciate if you would use pseudonyms when referring to people or churches during the course of this interview.

Please keep in mind that you may stop the interview at any point and you may refuse to answer any of the questions.

As I am associated with Northern Illinois University, I am required to have you sign a consent form prior to starting the interview. Here is the consent form; it details the information I have just covered. Please take a couple of minutes to read through the consent form and sign then we can start the interview. I'll also give you a copy of the consent form to take with you so that you have contact information in case you have questions about the project after the interview.

Demographic Information

 Age

Ethnic identification

Years as a Pastor

# of calls served

How many congregations have been served through that?

Did you have another career prior to your call to ministry?

# of pastors on staff

Do you serve a single or multi-point parish?

If Retired or Part-time

What have you been doing since retirement?
How does your current position differ from when you served a full-time call in a congregation?
If retired pastor served interim, how do those responsibilities differ from when you had your own congregation?

Synodical Communication

Could you give me an idea of how the synod communicates with your church?

What type of information comes from the synod?

What are the ways the synod communicates with you (e-mail, conferences)?

What of these ways of communicating do you find more effective?
Which, if any, do you find to be less effective?

How often do you put priority on reading this information?

How frequently do you get information passed on to you from the Synod?

In your opinion, does the synod send information too frequently?
OR, not frequent enough?
What would be the ideal frequency for you?

How comfortable do you feel contacting the synod if you have questions or concerns based on specific information or topics?

Does the synod change their way of communicating with you based on how serious the information is?

How much of this information is meant for the congregation?

How much of this information is specifically important to the congregation?

Are there other members, groups, or staff within your church that also receive information from the Synod?

Is it the same, or different information?

How do they use that information within the church?

Do they use the information in the same way you would?

Do you play a part in this information as well?

    If so, what part do you play?
        Who dictates what part you play in with this information?

Pastoral Role

What role do you play in communicating information from the synod to your congregation?

How do you decide what information should get passed on and what doesn't?

    What are some ways or strategies you use to communicate this information?

Do you always feel prepared to communicate information to your congregation?

    If not, why don't you feel prepared?

Do you think you are competent in passing information to the congregation?

What are some of the challenges of being in a role where you pass on information from synod to your congregation?

Why are they challenging?

Please tell me about a time when you encountered challenges in passing information from the synod to your congregation?
What were the challenges?

What strategies did you use to deal with these challenges?

To what extent did these challenges interfere with your ability to communicate the information to your parish?

Please tell me a time when you felt prepared to pass on information from the synod to the congregation?

What made you feel prepared?

Were there specific elements that helped you feel prepared?

What did you do?

Do you feel that what you did was effective?
    If so, why do you think it was effective?
    If no, why do you think it was ineffective?

How did the congregation respond to the information?

    Was this the way you thought they would respond?
        If yes, what made you think they would respond this way?

        If no, what was surprising to you about their response?
        Would you have changed anything in how you passed on the information?

Please tell me about a time when you didn't feel prepared to pass on information from the synod to the congregation?

    Why did you feel you weren't prepared?

    Were there specific elements that made you feel unprepared?

    What did you do?

        Do you feel that what you did was ineffective?
            If so, why do you think it was ineffective?
            If no, why do you think it was effective?

    How did the congregation respond to the information?

        Was this the way you thought they would respond?
            If yes, what made you think they would respond this way?

        If no, what was surprising to you about their response?
        Would you have changed anything in how you passed on the information?

Congregation Reception

How receptive is your congregation of the information from the synod?

    How interested are they in the information you pass on?

    To what extent does their interest vary depending on topic?

        How do you know this?

Do you receive feedback about the information you disseminated?

How does feedback impact the way you disseminate information?

What importance does your congregation place on information from the synod?

How does the information from the synod affect your congregation?

How do you motivate your congregation to care about the information coming from the synod?

Can you give me some examples?

Closing

Have you ever experienced tension between the congregation and synod, or felt caught in between the two parties?

If yes, could you tell me about a time when you felt this?

In your experience, how difficult is it to be in a role that requires you to pass on information between your church and synod?

How important is it that pastors fill this role of communicating between synod and congregation?

What are your synod's expectations for the way pastors pass along information?
What do you think of these expectations?
Do you find these expectations helpful?
Do you find these expectations hard to fulfill?

What are your congregation's expectations for the way you pass along information?
What do you think of these expectations?
Do you find these expectations helpful?
Do you find these expectations hard to fulfill?

Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about pastors' roles in communication between synod and congregation?

Thank you.

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Perceptions of the role pastors' play in communication between synod and congregation

As a research participant, you are being asked to participate in an interview focusing on your perceptions of the role pastors' play in the flow of communication from the synodical levels of the ELCA to your congregation. As part of this interview, you will be asked to provide basic demographic information about your background in ministry, to talk about how the synod communicates information to your congregation, to talk about your role in communicating information from the synod to your congregation, and to talk about how receptive or interested your congregation is regarding information coming from the synod. Overall, the interview should take about 60-75 minutes to complete.

Your participation should help provide a greater understanding of the role pastor's play in disseminating information within the ELCA and highlight the communication challenges pastors' face and the strategies pastors' use to motivate interest in their congregations.

You may choose not to answer questions and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher will keep your responses confidential. Since excerpts from interviews may be used in the reporting of findings, we ask that you use pseudonyms when referring to churches or persons. Consent forms will be kept in a location separate from tapes or audio files and interview transcripts. Tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet and audio files will be stored on password protected computer. Five years after the completion of research, the consent forms and transcripts will be shredded, tapes will be erased and digital audio files will be deleted.

As a research participant, given this description of the study, you understand that:

1. You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.
2. You may choose not to respond to any question you feel you don't want to discuss.
3. The nature of this research project has been explained to you.
4. The purpose of this study will be explained to your satisfaction upon the completion of the interview
5. The researchers will keep your responses confidential
6. Identifying information will be disguised to protect the confidentiality of research participants.
7. You may request a copy of the research report for this study.

If you have any questions concerning your participation in the research, please contact Northern Illinois University Office of Research Compliance at 815-753-8588. Any questions regarding this research may be directed to the primary researcher, Rachel Anderson, 320-304-3647, randerson9@niu.edu or to her advisor, Dr. Kathleen Valde, 815-753-7106, kvalde@niu.edu.

Signature: _____

Print name: _____   Date: _____

I agree that this interview may be audio-recorded.

Signature: _____