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**Jurisdictional Boundaries in the Making:
The Case of Parish Diaconal Work in Finland**

Abstract: Diaconal workers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland have traditionally worked on the borderline between parish work and public welfare services. However, the role of parish diaconal workers in social services and nursing services has diminished as the Finnish welfare state has expanded. In conjunction with this downsizing, the so-called intra-church diaconate process has re-demarcated parish diaconal work.

Andrew Abbott's theory of how professional jurisdictions are negotiated in the societal arenas in which different actors are engaged inspired the analysis in this article. Using Thomas F. Gieryn's concept of boundary work, the jurisdictional settlements that reshape professional parish diaconal work are examined. It is argued that institutional boundary work and disputes over whether the culture of diaconal work is secular or spiritual, serve to renew its cultural jurisdiction.

Keywords: jurisdictional boundaries; religious professions; institutional context of diaconal work; cultural jurisdiction; social jurisdiction; jurisdictional settlements; spiritual and secular work

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Sociologists of professions have seldom studied religious professions, despite evidence that their social organisation reflects not only religious ideas but also their socio-cultural context and the historical boundary work that has shaped their professional jurisdictions. In the Nordic region, the larger national churches are organised territorially (parishes) and have highly developed professional diaconal services and structures (Addy, 2010). In the Nordic context, the word "*diakonia*" refers to a diverse range of parish activities related to the social responsibility of the church. The focus of the present article is on parish diaconal work in the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, where prolonged disputes regarding the professional jurisdiction of parish diaconal workers have characterised church politics. The controversy is rooted in different visions of the relationship between parish diaconal work and the clergy. Traditionally, the position of parish diaconal work was self-evidently subordinated to that of the clergy. Since the 1970s, however, proponents of reform in parish diaconal work in Finnish church politics have challenged the hierarchical boundaries that separate the clergy from other religious professions. Such proponents argue that the hierarchical professional boundaries should be dismantled in favour of what they view as a theologically truer "threefold church office"; an understanding that bishophood, priesthood, and diaconate are different but equal strands of professional religious work within the church.

Received:
11 May 2011

Accepted:
23 October 2011

Following Andrew Abbott's theoretical lead, the cultural and social dimensions of holding a professional jurisdiction are separated. Abbott (1988) argued that to hold cultural jurisdiction is to perform skilled acts and to justify them cognitively. Such practice in itself is not yet adequate for holding jurisdiction over specific tasks, as society must also *recognise* the cognitive structure of a profession in a way that excludes non-professionals from these tasks. This study states that in order to understand profession's claims of social jurisdiction, it is necessary to consider the cultural context and the claims of cultural jurisdiction. Proponents of reform of the diaconate in the Finnish church have sought the recognition of parish diaconal work as something to be equated with clergy, rather than with the voluntary work of lay parishioners. Starting with the sociology of professions, the article argues that claims that diaconal work (and other non-theological religious professions) should be included in the church ministry are potentially radical visions of a *shared* cultural jurisdiction (Abbott, 1988) for the church professions. This controversy challenges the traditionally hierarchical social structure among religious professions, where reformers question whether and to what extent church ministry can be based on hierarchy and differential access to the performance of spiritual tasks.

The present article examines the contested cultural claims of jurisdiction for parish diaconal workers that have been made in connection to negotiations about the social structure of the profession, keeping in mind the connectedness between the cultural jurisdiction of a profession and its social structure (Abbott, 1988). An analytical framework is introduced, elaborating the perspective of boundary work for the study of jurisdictions. The jurisdictional disputes over parish diaconal work within the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church are mapped in the third section. The fourth section introduces the data and the methodology. The implications of the diaconate process for the institutional location and jurisdictional boundaries of the profession of parish diaconal workers are examined in the fifth section. The conclusion considers the implications of the continuous jurisdictional ambiguity that the diaconate process has created for the profession of parish diaconal workers. It also considers the special nature of the cultural work involved in making jurisdictional settlements in the context of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

Analytical Framework

From the perspective of the sociology of professions, a church is a social arena in which the clerical profession, diaconal workers, and other church workers interact as religious professions. Most studies on religious professions have reflected the traditional hierarchical view of the clerical profession as the relevant one in the church context by examining the clergy (Aldridge, 1992; Gilliat-Ray, 2001; McDuff & Mueller, 2000; McDuff, 2001; Nesbitt, 1997). In a rare sociological study concerning diaconal work as a profession, Aldridge (1987; 1992) defined deacons and deaconesses in the Church of England as subordinates to the priests and noted that the office of deacon is considered a pre-stage to priesthood. Accordingly, although diaconal workers are included in the cultural jurisdiction of clergy, their cultural claim of jurisdiction is subordinate to that of priests. Similarly, Rendle's (2002) analysis of the jurisdictional boundaries of the profession of ministry assumed that the clergy dominates the professional system

of the church, rendering examination of the professional boundaries of other religious professions uninteresting.

However, the division of professional labour within the church varies both between churches and times. Therefore, it is necessary to study religious professions with more open sociological frameworks that do not take specific constellations for granted and instead pay attention to the specificities of the jurisdictional settlements in this social arena. The focus of the article is a particular case of parish diaconal work in Finland and examines disputes over its professional jurisdiction. We employ the inter-actionist sociology of work and professions (Hughes, 1958; Abbott, 1988) to conceptualise the studied set of religious professions as a localised system of social arrangements that take shape through the cultural work in which different church actors are engaged. With regard to working with professions in a secular context, Abbott (1988) argued that the cultural control a profession has over its work arises in professional practice and is legitimated by the formal knowledge underpinning the profession that is rooted in fundamental values and beliefs. The social control, achieved through the social structure of the jurisdiction, arises in active claims put forth in the public, legal, and workplace arenas (Abbott, 1988). In the church context, the fundamental values and beliefs are religious and are based on the Bible and the often-divergent interpretations thereof. The classic problem faced by non-clerical professions is that the theory of professions has identified with the position of so-called semi-professions, as the clerical profession has traditionally held a monopoly on interpreting the meanings of religious ideas.

Abbott's theory (1988) further highlighted how the changes in the jurisdiction are made through specific institutional processes undertaken within organisations authorised to redefine the boundaries between professions in a certain domain. Such institutional processes result in jurisdictional settlements that institutionalise different types of symbolic, practical, and institutional boundaries that define and order professions. However, professions do not act as independent units, rather as part of the social world. Abbott (2005) conceptualised the social world in terms of *linked ecologies*, which act as a surround for each other.

To develop this theoretical attention to boundaries into an analytical perspective for the purposes of empirical inquiry, the concept of "boundary work" is applied. American sociologist Thomas F. Gieryn (1983; 1999) first analysed boundary work in the creation of boundaries between what is considered "science" and "non-science". Gieryn argued that science, as such, has no essence and that the meaning of science is socially constructed. In developing Gieryn's work, sociologist Donald Fisher (1990) defined boundary work as "those acts and processes which create, maintain and break down boundaries between knowledge units" (p. 98). Building on Gieryn's (1983; 1999) argument that the analysis of boundary work requires its goals and agents to be highlighted, Fisher (1990) held that although individuals carry out boundary work, it involves institutions and social structures. The concept of boundary work is applied in this article as an analytical tool with which to identify how various actors involved in the studied jurisdictional settlements construct the symbolic, practical, and institutional boundaries of the diaconate and parish diaconal work when defining their future social structure.

The Case of Parish Diaconal Work in Finland

In Lutheran countries, parishes are expected to organize formal support activities, but the different Lutheran countries organize support in different trajectories (Kahl, 2005). In both Germany and Scandinavia, voluntary religious associations – deaconess institutes – emerged in the mid-19th century, but later, diaconal work developed in different directions. In Germany, the deaconess institutes and other voluntary diaconal organizations continue to do church diaconal work (Leis, 2004). While deaconess institutes also flourished in Finland in the 19th century, parish diaconal work supplemented their work already in the 19th century.

The early shaping of the formal professions established for diaconal work in Finnish parishes, those of the deaconess and the deacon, was intertwined with those of nurses and social workers, respectively. In 1972, the role of parishes as providers of health care gave way to secular arrangements provided by the municipalities; by the 1990s, the close association between diaconal work and secular health care had disappeared completely (Pyykkö, 2004). Instead, the work of diaconal workers now closely resembled social work but was organised in the independent context of parish diaconal work. In parallel to the process by which diaconal work gradually became explicitly understood as a parish activity, various stakeholders devoted increasing attention to the professional status of diaconal workers within the church (Pyykkö, 2004; Yeung, 2004). This trend has continued, even though recent cuts in municipal social services have re-established demand for more social-work-oriented diaconal work (Yeung, 2006). For parish diaconal workers, these partially contradictory changes in the role of parish diaconal work have involved conflicting pressures on their professional jurisdiction that church policymaking has failed to reconcile.

All degree programmes offered for diaconal work still include either nursing or social work qualifications; a legacy of the early days of diaconal work. However, in addition to the historical influence of these related secular professional projects (Pyykkö, 2004), an endogenous professional project of parish diaconal work has also occurred in Finland that reflects both societal and theological pressures. Deacons and deaconesses currently undertake bachelor's degrees at a polytechnic, and research on diaconal work independent from theological scholarship is thriving. However, there have been important constraints to efforts to professionalise parish diaconal work. Firstly, according to church rhetoric, the professionals are expected to work on an equal footing with lay volunteers (Pyykkö, 2008). Even though parish diaconal work has been a regular church profession in all parishes for nearly 70 years, the present Church Order (8.11.1991/1055) still defines diaconal work as a duty for the entire parish, including its lay members (Church Order of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church 8.11.1991/1055, 4, Chapter 1§). Secondly, church legislation instructs parish diaconal workers to “care for those who need help the most and who are not helped otherwise”, (Church Order of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church 8.11.1991/1055, 4, Chapter 3§) leaving no room to exclude tasks on professional criteria.

Historical research shows that the vagueness of the professional jurisdiction for parish diaconal work results from gendered cultural ideas about the social status and religious value of different types of tasks that have played a central role for the social order among religious professions. Most importantly, the history of diaconal work strongly established the subordination of diaconal work in the parish setting

as a woman's calling (e.g., Kauppinen-Perttula, 1999). The earliest deaconesses in the 19th century had both spiritual and secular duties, and there is a hierarchical relationship between the secular and the spiritual duties embedded in the dual role of the deaconess (Markkola, 2000). Accordingly, the understanding of deaconesses' roles as subordinates did not come down to gender only, as secular tasks tended to serve as a motivation to exclude diaconal workers from the spiritual sphere, juxtaposing their presence there with that of the laity. Furthermore, early diaconal workers often came from lower social classes than the clergy (Kauppinen-Perttula, 2004), which is likely to have influenced the early jurisdictional settlements.

The position of the office of deaconess/deacon in Finnish Evangelical Lutheran parishes continues to be unclear in terms of its relationship to the clerical profession (PV, 2002). There is an important institutional and symbolic distinction between diaconal workers and the clerical profession. Although diaconal workers are solemnly installed into their profession, as is the case with the clergy, this does not presuppose that a congregation has appointed them to office. This differentiates diaconal workers from pastors and bishops, for whom this *vocatio externa* is required. Another symbolic boundary is also theologically argued. The Finnish Lutheran Church claims that its professional ministry fulfils apostolic succession, which means that the church official committing the solemn instalment of a pastor or a bishop is part of a chain of solemnly installed clergy that goes back to the original bishops, the Apostles themselves. Therefore, unlike diaconal workers, who lack an exclusive mandate for their work, pastors have traditionally held the exclusive symbolic mandate to execute the church's central ceremonies, and they continue to do so (Pyykkö, 2008).

These prolonged disputes over the jurisdiction of parish diaconal work in Finland have taken place in the context of church debates that have questioned the theological foundation of excluding all but the solemnly installed clergy from the professional ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland. The most visible conflicts have concerned the exclusion of women from the clerical profession (KVKV, 1975). This discussion began in Finland in the 1950s after the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sweden made that avenue available to female theologians (Lehtiö, 2002). The traditional exclusion of diaconal workers from the spiritual tasks of the parish, which was first questioned in the 1970s (DVSV, 1975), is related to the question of women's access to spiritual roles. Indeed, the diaconate was proposed in the 1970s as a solution to the vague position of female theologians, but the suggestion did not gain sufficient support in the 1976 Church Council and fell through. However, discussions about reforming the role of the diaconate were kept alive through channels, such as the dioceses, whose task it was to undertake the day-to-day governance of parish activities and employees. The motions from the dioceses concerned the development of diaconia and youth work. Opposition to the proposed reforms, on the other hand, is rooted in a symbolic hierarchical order that is not merely gendered, but remains entrenched in a hierarchy between secular and spiritual tasks, where secular work continues to have lower value than spiritual work, even after differences in the social background of professionals have disappeared.

In the 1990s, jurisdictional disputes concerning the professional boundaries between the clergy and the non-clerical religious professions continued in a new context, which was the result of efforts to integrate protestant churches under the

umbrella of the so-called Porvoo Communion. This communion of 12 mainly northern European Anglican and Lutheran churches was established in 1992 (see Porvoo Communion, 2010). The motivation for the ecumenical discussion was traced to the document “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry” published by the World Council of Churches in 1982. This document states that many churches are uncertain about the status and functions of deacons, and that there are a variety of forms concerning the ministry of deacon (World Council of Churches, 1982). Deacons in the Anglican Church have the authority to perform some sacraments, which leads them to being viewed as part of clergy, despite being subordinate to the priests (Aldridge, 1987). In the Finnish context, in contrast, the concept of diaconate had been used in a narrower sense to refer to a group of religious professions engaged with what is, in theological discussions, termed the “ministry of Service” as opposed to the ministry of Word and Sacrament (see World Council of Churches, 1982). This means that members of the diaconate perform practical tasks that, in addition to having a secular dimension, are interpreted as having a spiritual dimension. There are conflicting views within the Finnish church, not only about what kind of boundary exists between the diaconate and the clergy, but also about which of the religious professions present in the parish should be included in the diaconate (Pyykkö, 2008). The joint statement of the Porvoo Communion proposes a common understanding of diaconal ministry.

Between 1994 and 1997, the so-called Diaconate Committee struggled to formulate the ecumenical idea of the three strands of the professional ministry to fit the context of the Finnish church. The report of the Committee, entitled *Ordained to Serve (Palvelijoiksi vihityt)*, was published in 2002 (PV, 2002). *Ordained to Serve* paved the way for redefinition of the cultural jurisdiction of the diaconate by attaching its symbolic boundaries to those of the jurisdictions belonging to pastors and bishops. After this Committee, the Church Council established a follow-up working group to define the practical boundaries between the different professions (VRT 2004; 2006). The group’s efforts reached a stalemate when they diverged from the view of the Bishops’ Conference on the relationship between the clergy and the diaconate; consequently, a new follow-up work group was set up (DV, 2008). The continued activity bears witness to the established view of several church actors, especially within church administration, that the inter-professional jurisdictional boundaries within the church must be renewed to place religious professions on more equal footing.

Having mapped the disputes regarding the jurisdiction of parish diaconal work in Finland, the focus of the article now shifts to a closer examination of the related boundary work.

Data and Methodology

The documentary data selected for the empirical inquiry (due to space considerations, only the sources cited in the article are listed at the end of the article) comprise the key policy documents of a policy process known as the diaconate process, which have been prepared with the aim of proposing church legislation to the Parliament. The data also include internal policy documents of the church that constitute lower-level regulation of the institutional life of the church. This data, comprising of eight core policy documents, date back to the 1970s (three documents), the 1990s (two documents), and the 2000s (three documents). The

policy process under scrutiny has taken place at a high level of church politics. Two of the reports published in the 1970s concerning this process were produced by a committee established by the Synod, the church's highest governing body (KVKV, 1975; KVKV, 1976), and one by a committee the Church Council set up that is responsible for general administration (DVSV, 1975). In addition, the data include a report by the committee established by the Bishops' Conference (KVK, 1993) after the Porvoo Communion. Further-more, the data comprise comments by a variety of organisations concerning the report that was broadly circulated in church circles to solicit comments from the various stakeholders. Statements addressed to the Synod were sought from the church's general administration (3), the dioceses (8), the deaneries (58), trade unions (15), and educational institutions (7).

The methodological approach of this study relies on social constructionism, which states that reality is constructed on social negotiations (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The data, therefore, are interpreted as political texts, which different policy actors use to gain acceptance for their views and interests. In the analysis of these texts, the idea of new rhetoric by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2003) is used as a starting point for the closer examination of policy argumentation. In the analysis, the main interest is on the symbolic and practical boundary between the spiritual and the secular in parish work. "Spiritual" is used here as a translation of the Finnish term "*hengellinen*", which is used in the documents.

In his study concerning the boundaries between what is considered "science" and "non-science"; Gieryn (1999) noticed that the science was defined through oppositions. In the course of the analysis, *the institutional location and boundaries of parish diaconal work* is first studied by focusing on the oppositions. Secondly, attention is paid on the *cultural jurisdiction of parish diaconal work* by identifying the sections of text in which diaconal work is referred to as spiritual or secular work, and where spiritual work is constructed by oppositions and by giving it certain features. In this policy context, "secular" refers to tasks that are connected to health and social care. The word "spiritual" is not defined in advance since the analysis also focused on the content given to the word in the documents. Finally, the arguments used in these sequences are analysed by focusing on the justifications employed in the constructing of the boundary between spiritual and secular work.

Parish Diaconal Work as Part of the Essence of the Church

In this section we examine the institutional context of diaconal work, keeping in mind the importance of the socio-cultural context of profession to its jurisdiction.

Parish diaconal work is church work and a cultural component of the church essence (DVSV, 1975; KVK, 1993). The office of diaconia is entered through ordination given by the church (PV, 2002). The latest report emphasises the parish-related nature of the office, with its suggestion to change the title of the office to that of a parish deacon (DV, 2008); the Bishops' Conference (2003, p. 3), among others, suggested this.

Parish diaconal work is defined as church work through various kinds of demarcations. Firstly, different actors draw boundaries between Christian organisations. The documents state that Christian modes of work in Finland have been integrated into the church successfully, rather than into Christian organisations (PV, 2002; DE18, 2003; DE21, 2003). The arrangement differs from the German tradition, for

example, in which charity of Christian voluntary organisations working under the name of deaconess institution has been specified as diaconal work (Leis, 2004). In Finland, the office of diaconia and diaconal ordination are institutionally associated with the church; however, concessions are made in relation to the Christian organisations. As is the case for the clergy, individuals called to serve in a missionary organisation or other Christian community could be ordained as deacons or deaconesses (PV, 2002; BC, 2003; DV, 2008); this is “an expression of collaboration between the church and the organisations” (DV, 2008, p. 125). A concession of this nature could be interpreted as applying particularly to the history of diaconal work, in which deaconess institutions following the model of German institutional diaconia also had central significance in Finland in the late 19th century and the start of the 20th century. After World War II, however, they were reduced to a minor role within the church, while parish diaconal work emerged as a central mode of action.

Secondly, the data regard parish diaconal work not only as an individual’s voluntary Christian calling but also as an integral component of the mission of the church (PV, 2002; DE21, 2003).

... the structure of action and culture of Finnish society has not become Europeanised or Americanised to such an extent so as to allow this kind of work to be done extensively within the church on voluntary or non-governmental organisation basis (DI3, 2003, p. 5).

In this way, the church wishes to keep parish diaconal work as part of parish activities. Hence, the mission of the church and the church as a religious organisation influence the definition of diaconal work.

Struggle over Power and Status through Sacralisation of Work

The ambiguity of the position of parish diaconal work is clearly visible in the policy documents, and despite the prolonged discussions within the church, ambiguity remains. On the one hand, the office of the parish deacon has been considered inferior to that of the pastor and the bishop (DVSV, 1975, p. 13), and the status of diaconal ordination also remains unclear (PV, 2002). On the other hand, several policy documents have defined parish diaconal work explicitly as spiritual work (PV, 2002; BC, 2003; DI2, 2003; DE3, 2003). In its narrow definition, spiritual work only includes tasks related explicitly to church rituals. Some policy documents have suggested that parish diaconal workers would be assigned permanent tasks associated with church sacraments that have traditionally been the duty of the pastor (KVK, 1993; YKV, 1997; PV, 2000). Diaconal workers would then move into a jurisdiction that has traditionally belonged to the clergy, either as subordinates or more or less as equals, but in a narrower role (Pyykkö, 2007). The most recent interpretation, expressed in a policy document published in 2007, states that connection to the divine service should not be interpreted narrowly as concrete tasks related to church rituals. Instead, connection to the divine service can be realised in so-called “primary” parish diaconal work, referring to the caritative tasks of parish diaconal workers. Parish diaconal workers could include liturgical tasks in their work profile when they fit in a “natural way with their primary task” (DV, 2007, p. 78).

The perspective of Gieryn's (1983; 1999) notion of boundary work makes it possible to examine the aim of the definition of diaconal work as spiritual work. Firstly, the reports claimed that the spiritual status of the work would result in increased appreciation for diaconal work. As a spiritual worker, a church worker can feel that he or she is being appreciated and is doing the "true work" (VK, 1993, p. 33) of the church. Increased status through divine service is presented as a reason for including the professions in the diaconate while other workers and the laity are reassured that the church will continue to treat everyone equally.

The purpose and result of the reform cannot be the separation of those who are ordained and other workers, or office holders and parishioners from each other, and the placement of the former into a separate 'clerical caste', deserving of a better position among Christians. There is no reason to develop any kind of division between these ... (PV, 2002, p. 35).

The comments of the deaneries are a clear admission that the position of diaconal workers needs to be strengthened. According to the comments, the appreciation should not come through the divine service (DE29, 2003; DE53, 2003).

Secondly, the reports state that as spiritual workers (especially as part of the church office), diaconal workers could be given administrative rights in the church and the opportunity to participate in decision-making in the church and parish. The reform would improve the participatory powers of diaconal workers, since diaconal workers in the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church have not traditionally been part of the decision-making system. Proposals were made to extend the administrative rights of diaconal workers as early as the 1970s (DVSV, 1975), but it was not until the 21st century that the policy documents actually suggested extended administrative rights. The *Ordained to Serve* report (2002) makes clear suggestions for extending the rights of the offices that are intended to be included in the diaconate concerning church decision-making. However, the report entitled *The Office of Deacon* (2007) only suggests minor administrative changes, mainly on practical grounds. The comments given by the deaneries on the *Ordained to Serve* report (2002) support the Committee's proposal by invoking, among other things, justice and worker equality (DE4, 2003; DE5, 2003; DE12, 2003; DE13, 2003; DE9, 2003; DE11, 2003). "It is a professional injustice and an unusual practice that the leaders and central decision makers are defined in the whole church solely from the perspective of one profession and office" (DE12, 2003, p. 4).

Although several documents issued by the church administration have supported the calls for administrative rights (CC, 2003; DI1, 2003; BC, 2003), they also highlight pragmatic problems and concerns about the preservation of theological and administrative expertise in church administration (CC, 2003; BC 2003). The position of the clergy in church decision-making is justified by their theological expertise based on education and, therefore, "special qualifications" to make decisions about church activities. "Education and experience give the clergy special qualifications to manage theological and administrative duties and their contribution to church administration should not be reduced" (BC, 2003, p. 11).

Thirdly, along with tasks related to the divine service, the reports seek to establish flexible arrangements within the internal division of labour in the parishes and a broad job profile for diaconal workers. The current job profile has been

described as being too narrow, and there have been calls to interpret it in a new way culturally. In practice, besides their special duties, all parish workers must have shared duties related to the divine service (DVSV, 1975; YKV, 1997).

In this way, there have been suggestions that the status of spiritual work should call for an extension of the jurisdiction of diaconal work into the divine service, the core of church activities. These comments emphasised the ecclesiastical and spiritual identity of diaconal workers, a certain collective identity of church employees. The tradition of the hierarchical ordering between secular and spiritual tasks in the church prevails (cf. Markkola, 2000). However, there is no consensus regarding what the extension of the jurisdiction would mean in practice. The label of spiritual worker would provide the diaconal workers with a chance to gain more appreciation for their profession within the church, as well as to gain further administrative rights.

Professional Work in Everyday Life

Whereas the above-mentioned reports underline the shared, spiritual tasks of church workers, the deaneries' comments stress the special expertise and special duties (BC, 2003, DE37, 2003; DE15, 2003; DE5, 2003; DE57, 2003; Helsinki University Faculty of Theology, 2003). In a way, the comments oppose the reports in terms of the jurisdiction of the work. Besides ecclesiastical education, Finnish diaconal workers hold profane qualifications in health and social care and have traditionally performed health and social care duties while working for the parishes. Above all, the data draw boundaries between diaconal work and priesthood. "Diaconia should hold on to its strong identity, instead of being profiled as 'assistant priesthood'" (DE29, 2003, p. 3).

First of all, diaconal workers' concentration on the special tasks of their own profession is justified in terms of the content of the work; the deaneries referred to this work as "work in everyday life", where "everyday life" refers to work other than the divine service (DE29, 2003; DE53, 2003; DE36, 2003). In diaconal work, "the parish goes 'into the field'" (DE14, 2003, p. 1). Everyday life is also work done on weekdays. The diaconal workers ask, "Who will take care of the everyday work if we become Sunday workers?" (DE35, comment of diaconal workers, 2003, p. 1). The latest report addressing the diaconate also stresses the importance of "the divine service in everyday life" (DV, 2008, p. 19).

Secondly, the profession's special tasks are emphasised because with the divine service, the autonomy of diaconal workers would be jeopardised (DTL, 2003). "... if the workers' rights to tasks will be extended, the rights should be anchored to ordination – not to the superior's separate decisions or separate authorisations" (DTL, 2003, p. 3).

The comments of the deaneries emphasise the point that for diaconal workers, the new tasks must be considered voluntary service rather than obligations (DE19, 2003; DE40, 2003; DE49, 2003), and superiors should not have the right to "arbitrarily or against agreements assign tasks to the office holders" (DE21, 2003, p. 2). The power to participate in the divine service should lie with the diaconal workers themselves (DE8, 2003). When assigning new tasks to diaconal workers, the worker's personal qualities should be considered (DE40, 2003). "Will we be forced to preach if we have absolutely no aptitude for it?" (DE53, 2003, p. 4).

In particular, representatives of diaconal workers were worried that the price of the position brought by the spiritual status is too high: diaconal workers will lose

their autonomy, while their mission – helping people cope with daily life – will be endangered. The diaconal workers emphasised their special competence and professional identity as health care and social care professionals. The diaconal workers felt that they were already carrying out the mission of the church as professionals in everyday life. The deaneries presented a counter-argument to the reports, stating that appreciation for and administrative rights of the profession should not be derived through spiritualisation. The diaconal workers emphasised the preservation of their professional autonomy, rather than allowing the professional boundary towards the clerical profession to become blurred. Indeed, diaconal workers have described their work as free, creative, and innovative (Juntunen, 2007). Aldridge (1987) described the role of deaconesses in the Church of England as an “anomalous status” (p. 379) determined by the goodwill of ministers. According to Aldridge, this status is a result of historic policy decisions made in the church and arises from structural and ideological frameworks. As Abbott (1988) argued, expertise is institutionalised, and the crucial issue is how societies structure their expertise.

Conclusion

More than 35 years after the first attempts to define it, the social structure of the diaconate and the professions within it remains unsettled. One reason is that a move into a qualitatively new task area requires cultural work (Abbott 1988). Parish diaconal work in Finland is strongly anchored to the church as an organisation, which has an effect on the cultural location of parish diaconal work. Debates about church policy concerning the jurisdiction of diaconal work continue to be characterised by the strong authority of the theological interpretations of the church’s mission. Reflecting the cultural authority, or even the hegemony enjoyed by the theological doctrines of the mission of the church, these doctrines continue to define the boundaries of what is considered spiritual and of what is considered secular in the organisation of the church’s social life. In a study of the doctrinal connections of the notion of *diaconia*, Ryökäs (2006) showed the diversity of the theological grounds for *diaconia* and interpretations thereof. There is no single, shared notion of *diaconia*, which makes it unsurprising that it was difficult to find specific, shared coordinates for diaconal work in the data for this article.

In this article, we have sought to identify the institutional and cultural boundaries of parish diaconal work by drawing on Gieryn’s (1983) notion of boundary work to illustrate the types of boundaries through which the position of diaconal work and boundaries is negotiated. From this viewpoint, diaconal work is constructed rather than being permanent or unequivocal. It is enacted when people debate where to locate it. The analysis suggests that the taken-for-granted core of the jurisdiction of parish diaconal workers is constituted by their tasks in social welfare, while their roles in church rituals and liturgical tasks are debated. Social welfare tasks can be seen either as spiritual or non-spiritual, and cultural boundaries are drawn here. Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, those who emphasise the role of diaconal work as parish work and challenge its traditional position, and perhaps even the traditional hierarchy, emphasise its spiritual dimension, also attaching this spiritual dimension to their secular tasks. By contrast, defenders of the traditional boundaries of parish diaconal work tend to emphasise its complementarity to secular social support and define this core of

diaconal work as secular work. When these definitions are understood as being mutually exclusive, as they give rise to contradictions; in any case, the prolonged conflict has meant that cultural jurisdiction of parish diaconal workers remains ambiguous. The proposed extension of the work role of diaconal workers to include some of the sacraments can be interpreted as enhancing the profession, but some representatives of diaconal workers taking part in the reform process have expressed concern about becoming assistants for the pastors (Pyykkö, 2007). This criticism is related to the fact that a shared cultural jurisdiction for the religious professions would also presuppose immediate practical consequences in terms of working time, the different settings of parish work, work roles, salaries, et cetera. Further criticism is based on a theological argument that identifies parish diaconal work with a specific and unique jurisdiction to assist those individuals who do not receive any assistance from public health and social services. Those who view parish diaconal work primarily as a practical task in the community rather than a spiritual task, argue that this role should not be sacrificed for an intra-parish role (Pyykkö, 2004).

The data placed the spiritual nature of the work and the divine service at the core of church work. The spiritual dimensions of the work were stressed while assuring that all work in the church is equal. Although parish diaconal work has served to fill the gaps left by public services (Grönlund & Hiilamo, 2006), in the discussion about the diaconate, church documents appear to underline the ecclesiastical and spiritual nature of the diaconal work done in the parishes. Diaconal work has diverse audiences both within the church and society. At the level of public opinion, other kinds of church duties are emphasised. Above all, Finns wish the church to concentrate on helping people in difficulty (Kääriäinen et al., 2009).

Diaconal work appears to be righting the imbalance between spiritual and profane, between ecclesiastical and professional expertise, and between ecclesiastical and professional identity. Rather than positioning diaconal work simply as spiritual or profane, it is more important to ask why the desire exists to label diaconal work as spiritual work. Is it possible to work in the church and gain recognition without the status of a spiritual worker? Although the documents show diaconal work as being part of the church's mission, "work in everyday life" is not considered to be as significant as the church's actual spiritual work, and secular workers are not permitted to take part in church decision-making. It is characteristic of strong professions to elevate their mundane work into sacred work (Collins, 1990). Surprisingly, discussions about the spirituality of diaconal work resemble those about whether a specific profession fulfils the criteria for a "true" profession. Sacralisation can help distinguish the ecclesiastical profession from other professions as one of the sacred professions – as part of the church office. The question of whether the diaconal occupation is included in this group will probably be settled in Finland during 2011.

So far, in sociology of professions, social jurisdiction has been emphasised. This study has shown the importance of considering the cultural context in which the profession is seeking its cultural and social jurisdiction.

Abbreviations

BC	Bishops' Conference
CC	Church Council
DE	Deanery
DI	Diocese

The documentary data cited in the article

Church order for Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church 8.11.1991/1055.

DTL: Diakoniatyöntekijöiden Liitto / Union of Diaconal Workers in Finland (2003). *A Comment concerning the Report "Ordained to Serve"* (2002-00692).

DV: *Diakonin virka / Office of Deacon* (2008). Kirkkohallituksen 15.8.2007 asettaman työryhmän mietintö.

DVSV: *Diakonian virka ja siihen vihkiminen / Office of diaconia and diaconal ordination* (1975). Kirkon diakoniatoimikunnan asettaman työryhmän mietintö, Kirkon diakoniatyön keskus.

Helsinki University Faculty of Theology (2003). *A Comment concerning the report "Ordained to Serve"* (2002-00692).

KVK: *Kirkon virkarakenteen kehittäminen / Development of the structure of church offices* (1993). Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon piispainkokouksen 12.2.1992 asettaman työryhmän mietintö, Sarja B 1993:1, Suomen ev.-lut. kirkon keskushallinto.

KVKV: Kahdennenkymmenennen varsinaisen kirkolliskokouksen asettama virkakomitea / Committee on church offices set up by the 20th Church Council (1975). *Osamietinnöt 2 ja 3, kirkolliskokouksen kevätkokouksen 1975 liitteet*, Helsinki.

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PV: *Palvelijoiksi vihityt / Ordained to Serve* (2002). Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon vuonna 2000 asettaman virkarakennekomitean mietintö, Suomen ev.lut. kirkon keskushallinto, Sarja A 2002:1.

VRT: Virkarakenneyöryhmä 2004 / Working group for the structure of church offices 2004 (2006). *Virkarakenneyöryhmä 2004:n esitys jatkotoimenpiteistä*, Kirkkohallituksen 28.9.2004 asettaman työryhmän raportti, Suomen ev.lut. kirkon keskushallinto, Sarja C 2006:6.

YKV: *Yhdessä kirkon virassa / One church office* (1997). Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon vuonna 1994 asettaman diakonaattikomitean mietintö, Sarja A 1997:9, Suomen ev.lut. kirkon keskushallinto.

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