Caring to Know or Knowing to Care?

Knowledge Creation and Care in Deacons’ Professional Practice in the Church of Norway

Dissertation for the Degree Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)

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The Articles of the Thesis

Article 1
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1 Introduction to the Field of Study

The role of deacons and the concept of diakonia are not easily defined. My empirical research on deacons in the Church of Norway (CofN) shed light on how hard it is to define these notions. The following quote from a deacon illustrates how demanding it can be to understand core concepts in the deacons’ work:

The first day in the educational program of diakonia the teacher told us, ‘It is not easy to say what diakonia is, but hopefully we will give you something to relate it to.’ During the last day of the diaconal education, the teacher said, ‘It is not so easy to say what diakonia is, but we hope you have got something to relate diakonia to’ (Sophie, informal interview, 2012).

According to the deacon, unclear notions of diakonia have been a challenge in her work in the CofN, and for many years she had participated in a group of deacons discussing, among others, the question ‘What is diakonia?’ This is one example of how an unclear notion of diakonia might influence deacons’ work in the CofN. Another example of what may influence their work is confusion surrounding tasks and responsibilities. Another deacon told me:

It is really hard. I think those (deacons) who experience the most difficult things are the deacons who experience the most unclear tasks and goals for their work. It is expressed nicely in a welcome speech, nicely in a plan document, but the reality is not like that (William, informal interview, 2012).

This deacon described a discrepancy between what is communicated about diakonia and the reality experienced by deacons. He explained that on the one hand, the deacon is autonomous. She or he is a leader of the congregation’s social work and caring ministry. On the other hand, the deacon may be a person who is asked to do what colleagues do not have the time to do (See Article 2).

I have also encountered confusion in considering the notion of diakonia during my PhD work. In work with students, in the development of diaconal curriculum texts, at international diaconal research seminars and in diaconal research groups, one question arises repeatedly: ‘What is diakonia?’ I think it is time to change the question to get better answers, asking instead ‘How is diakonia?’ The value of reformulating questions is also advocated by Trygve Wyller. Wyller argues that rather than looking at what diakonia is, we should first understand what diakonia ‘does’ (Wyller, 2013a, p. 27). In this thesis, I take the focus on what diakonia ‘does’ a step further and investigate what the deacons do.

My study is an empirical contribution to our knowledge base on what the deacons do. My research concern is how deacons find solutions and create new knowledge in their everyday work (Nonaka et al., 2001; Paavola et al., 2005). Further, I bring the concept of care into knowledge creation. I am interested in the relationship between the process of creating new knowledge and care for three reasons; First, because care is understood as an important aspect of doing diakonia (National Council, 2009, p. 5). Second, because effective knowledge creation depends on how people relate to each other (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 34; 2001b, pp. 18-19). Third, combining knowledge

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1 For more information about deacons, see Chapter 2.0, ‘Deacons in The Church of Norway’.
2 For more information about the concept of diakonia in the Church of Norway, see 2.2.4
3 For more information about the Church of Norway, see Chapter 2.0.
creation and care establishes a communication between the normativity uncovered in the empirical fieldwork and the theoretical framework (see 5.11.4). The present study analyses how deacons’ use and create professional knowledge in their professional practice.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to contribute to an empirical understanding of deacons’ professional knowledge creation processes and care in the CofN, conducted through an ethnographic case study of five deacons. The ethnographic case study allows me to observe deacons’ professional practice. The knowledge creation theories focus on processes of collective problem-solving situations and collaborative creativity (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, pp. 12,127) (Paavola et al., 2012, p. 1) (see 4.4).

The research focus is on deacons’ professional knowledge creation processes, not on their knowledge per se (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 120). The emphasis is on their processes and interactions while seeking solutions to problems and challenges in their everyday work practices. As mentioned, I bring the concept of care into knowledge creation (see 4.6.3-4.6.6); Von Krogh (1998) and Styhre et al. (2002) argue that care is a necessary condition and quality for an organisation to create knowledge. They claim that caring is not something that stands in addition or opposition to knowing, but rather that it propels the relational production of knowledge (Styhre et al., 2002; von Krogh, 1998; von Krogh et al., 2000, 2001a). A mutually helpful relationship may accelerate the communication process and enable people to share and discuss their ideas and concerns more freely (von Krogh, 1998, p. 136).

The overall research question of this study is as follows:

What characterises deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care in the Church of Norway?

The research question is divided into three sub-questions, and I answer each sub-question in its own empirical article. Thus, the study consists of three empirical articles in which I analyse how deacons use knowledge and their knowledge creation and care in their professional practice in the CofN.

In the first article, the sub-question is as follows: What characterises professional knowledge creation and care in the curriculum texts? The analytical emphasis is on how diaconal education, as referred in the first quote, prepares students for knowledge creation and care. I did not investigate education as a system but rather education expressed in curriculum documents. Curriculum documents describe the structure and organisation of what is considered significant knowledge, in my case for future deacons. Implicit in curriculum texts is an idea of what informed deacons should know (H. W. Afdal, 2012, p. 1).

In the second article, I ask the following: What characterises deacons’ professional knowledge creation and the expression of care within the working community of the Church of Norway? The

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4 In 4.6, I outline how I regard the relation between congregations and organisations in this study.
analytical focus is on knowledge creation and care with colleagues in the working community in the CoN. I have chosen this intersection for several reasons, primarily because I was surprised by the challenges that emerged in deacons’ knowledge creation processes and care with colleagues in their working community. Secondly, there is scarcely any empirical research on deacons’ professional knowledge creation with colleagues, nor on how the expression of care among the members of religious communities influences their knowledge creation processes. Thirdly, I wanted to investigate how knowledge creation processes and internal care emerged in a congregational working community within a church that wants to see itself as a ‘serving church’ (National Council, 2009, p. 5) and as an external care provider (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 49) (see 3.4).

In the third article, I ask the following: What characterises the modes of tool-mediated knowledge that are established in the deacons’ interactions with the participants? The analytical attention is on deacons’ knowledge in use and knowledge creation and care in interactions with participants in diaconal activities. Deacons are caring professionals to whom the ‘individual client’s needs are significant’ (Tufte, 2013, p. 3). In the church context, however, they do not speak about clients as they would in some social work contexts; rather, they speak about people who are taking part in various activities. In this thesis, I therefore refer to these people as participants. Deacons often work alone professionally, and few others actually know how deacons work in their professional practice. This article will shed light on how empirical care emerges in the processes of knowledge creation and care with participants for the deacons in my study.

I have highlighted what I regard as key intersections—1) curriculum documents, 2) deacons’ interactions with colleagues in the working community and 3) deacons’ interactions with participants—as these offer both empirically and theoretically valuable insights into deacons’ knowledge creation and care in their professional practice. The relationship between the three selected points of intersection and the overall research question is illustrated in Figure 1.1.
The overall contribution of this thesis is established in the interplay between the three intersections and the respective articles (see discussion 7.0).

Moreover, the phenomena of this study are professional knowledge creation and care. Professional knowledge creation refers to how the deacons, as professionals with a particular knowledge base (Smeby, 2012, p. 56), create knowledge in their everyday work situations (see 1.4 and 4.3). The unit of analysis is the professional knowledge creation and care of five deacons in the CofN. The data material consists of documents, field note observations and transcribed informal and semi-structured qualitative interviews with five deacons in the CofN. The relation between the phenomenon, unit of analysis and data material to be analysed is illustrated in Figure 1.2

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5 Figure 1 is inspired by Hilde Wågsås Afdal (H. W. Afdal, 2012, p. 6).
Figure 1.2: Phenomenon, unit of analysis and material of study

In the method chapter (5.0), I further elaborate the phenomenon, unit of analysis and data material. In the next section, I present the academic context for this study.

1.2 Academic placement

The present study is part of a larger research project on learning and knowledge processes in the CofN: Learning and Knowledge Trajectories in the Church of Norway (LETRA) (Det Teologiske Menighetsfakultetet, 2014). LETRA investigates learning and knowledge trajectories among various groups in the CofN, including pastors⁶, confirmation groups and deacons. Socio-cultural theories are the theoretical framework for the project as a whole and I use such theories to emphasise deacons’ knowledge creation (see 4.1).

I place myself academically within the research field of diakonia because I regard the findings of this thesis as valuable in the current research dialogue in the diaconal field. However, I have thus far not encountered others using socio-cultural theories within the field of diaconal research. In my opinion, there are both pros and cons to using these theories in research within the diaconal field. The two main advantages are that the theories offer specialised analytical tools on knowledge creation, which I have not found in other theories in the diaconal field, and that using socio-cultural theories offers processes of ‘othering’, which allowed me to observe diaconal practice in light of another practice, a practice of socio-cultural reflections (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 142). The theories have helped me identify perspectives I would never have seen using more familiar theories in the field of diakonia (see 3.0) and forced me to constantly reflect about the differences.

⁶ ‘Pastor’ in this thesis refers to the Norwegian word ‘prest’ in the Church of Norway.
In addition to these advantages, there are some challenges, not least is the challenge of communication. Socio-cultural theories are complex and may be unfamiliar for readers within the research field of diakonia. Moreover, some concepts used in the socio-cultural theories may have negative associations in the research field of diakonia, such as the concept of ‘object’. ‘Object’ in the theoretical framework of diakonia may have connotations of reducing people’s freedom and possibilities, ‘objectifying’ them and hindering their ‘status as subjects and agents within God’s project with humankind’ (Nordstokke, 2011a, p. 46). In my study, ‘object’ refers to, among other perspectives, a search for direction, vision and motivation within an activity (see 4.1) (Engeström et al., 2005, p. 427). In spite of the communication challenges, I employ these theories because they provide me with analytical lenses useful for my research focus, and I use examples from diaconal practice as often as possible when explaining the theories.

1.3 **Personal background**

My initial interest in diakonia and deacons started with my nursing education, and it was enhanced in my studies of diakonia, my work with diakonia and development in poor areas in Latin America and, finally, my work as a teacher at a diaconal nursing university college. Collective, creative complex processes and knowledge development in work interested me as a nurse when I worked together with patients, their families and my colleagues. However, I became even more interested in diaconal collective transformative processes when I worked with developmental processes related to children with disabilities, schoolwork, congregational development and micro credit schemes in poverty-stricken areas. I saw how dynamic diakonia can contribute to social development. When I came back to Norway from Latin America, my interest in diakonia, diaconal professional knowledge, collective knowledge development and care continued as I worked as a teacher at the diaconal nursing university college.

1.4 **Clarification of concepts: deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care**

In this section, I give a brief outline of the main concepts of the study: deacons, professional, knowledge creation and care. In Chapter 2, ‘Deacons in the Church of Norway’, and Chapter 4, ‘Theoretical Framework’, the concepts are further discussed.

The deacons referred to in my research question are parish deacons in the CofN. To work as a parish deacon in the CofN, one is required to have a bachelor’s degree or equivalent in healthcare, social work or teacher education. Until 2005, deacons needed only one year of theological studies and one year of diaconal studies in addition to a bachelor’s degree or equivalent. Since 2005, a master’s degree in diakonia and Christian social work has been required (Diakonhjemmet, 2012). The post-

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7 In line with von Krogh et al. (2001a), I use the concepts ‘development’ and ‘creation’ interchangeably.
graduate course includes modules in theology, pastoral care, ethics, leadership, research and practical fieldwork (see 2.4.1 and Article 3).

The term ‘professional’ refers to professions. Although there are conflicting perspectives and definitions of ‘professions’ and ‘professionalism’, there is a consensus that the key characteristic of professions is that they are based on abstract, codified knowledge obtained in a university or a ‘university-like institution’ (Smeby, 2012, p. 49). Further, I draw on Monika Nerland’s (2012) notion of professions because her emphasis on knowledge and tools related to professional practice corresponds with my socio-cultural theoretical framework on knowledge creation (see 4.1). She regards professions as being constituted through their specific ways of engaging with knowledge and the tools provided for professional practice (Nerland, 2012, p. 28). However, the danger of using the concept of ‘professional’ in the research questions is that it can lead to the misassumption that I will discuss whether deacons’ knowledge empirically emerges as professional or not. I do not discuss professions or professionalism per se but deacons’ knowledge creation processes and care solely in relation to their work. The concept professional\textsuperscript{8} appears in this thesis in two empirical sampling criteria. First, as the deacons’ educational requirement based, as mentioned, on ‘abstract, codified knowledge obtained in a university or a university-like institution’ (Smeby, 2012, p. 49). Second, in my study, I use the concept to delimit the tools to those used by the deacons in work situations.\textsuperscript{9}

The concept of knowledge is complex and is used in the research question in relation to knowledge creation processes. However, before explaining the concept of knowledge creation, I briefly explain the underlying notion of knowledge in my study. The theories of knowledge creation that I mainly rely on view knowledge as tool mediated (Paavola et al., 2005, pp. 543-547). The tool-mediated notion of knowledge is based on one of Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) insights. According to Vygotsky, human cognition is constituted by cultural tools (Engeström, 2001, p. 134). The analytical insertion of tools into human action ‘was revolutionary in that the basic unit of analysis know overcame the split between the Cartesian individual and the untouchable societal structure’ (Engeström, 2001, p. 134). Tools, or artefacts, can be both conceptual (language and thoughts) and material (Wertsch, 1998, pp. 30-31). We act and understand through tools (Paavola et al., 2005, p. 545). Thus, knowledge is established in social interactions and within cultural settings (Paavola et al., 2005, p. 547). Therefore, I use the socio-cultural perspective on knowledge, focusing on tool mediation. This perspective provides a focus on deacons’ tools in the interactions with the social world (see 4.1). I regard the tool-mediated approach to knowledge as important when analysing deacons’

\textsuperscript{8} I have written an article about deacons’ professional conditions in the Church of Norway, ‘Diakoners professionsvilkar i Den norske kirke’, which can be translated as ‘Deacons’ professional conditions in the Church of Norway’. In this article, I use, among other theories, theories about professions.

\textsuperscript{9} While one can critically question whether the CofN’s practices count as ‘professional’ because volunteers are working in the staff communities, I argue that the CofN’s practices are professional because people with an education obtained in a university or a university-like institution, such as pastors, church musicians, catechists (church educators) and deacons, work together.
knowledge creation processes because tool mediation emphasises what kinds of tools deacons use and how they use them in their professional practice. Thus, in line with Nerland (2012) and the socio-cultural perspective, I analyse deacons’ professional knowledge as tool-mediated knowledge used in their professional practice.

The concept of knowledge creation has its central basis in theories that emphasise collaborative creativity. This constitutes my theoretical framework, which is mainly based on Engeström’s socio-cultural perspective and activity theory (Engeström, 2001, 2007, 2008; Engeström et al., 2006; Engeström et al., 2010), Hakkarainen et al.’s theory of knowledge creation (Hakkarainen et al., 2004; Paavola et al., 2005) and Nonaka et al.’s theory of organisational knowledge creation (see 4.6) (Nishiguchi et al., 2001; Nonaka et al., 1995).

The knowledge creation metaphor concentrates on processes, practices and social structures that encourage the formation of new knowledge and innovation rather than adapt to the existing culture or assimilate existing knowledge (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 12). Knowledge creation processes emerge through efforts to solve problems and ask questions that may arise either from practical or conceptual problems (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 127).

Thus, the theoretical emphasis is on how new ideas and conceptual and material tools are created in collective processes to find solutions to activity-related disturbances and ambiguities. Unexpected facts or phenomena are often the starting point for knowledge creation (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 128). Other starting points may be gaps, limitations, weaknesses and deficits in the current knowledge and understanding. The processes are often fluid and dynamic rather than stable and fixed, and the theoretical interest is mainly on the processes and not the results (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 132).

As mentioned, deacons’ professional knowledge creation processes and care appear in two intersections in my study: curriculum texts and everyday work. Consequently, I have chosen two adapted approaches to knowledge creation; first, knowledge creation and education, and then, knowledge creation in professional working communities.

Regarding knowledge creation and education, I have chosen to base my work on Hakkarainen et al.’s (2004) theories because first, these theories correspond with the overall socio-cultural framework in my study, and second, they provide analytical perspectives that contribute to exploring how students are prepared for knowledge-creation processes in curriculum texts (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, pp. 197-198) (see 4.5).

Concerning the theories of knowledge creation in workplace communities, I have applied Nonaka et al.’s theories on knowledge creation processes in working communities called ‘SECI process’ (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 18). I have chosen the SECI process as the theoretical framework for four reasons: first, because the emphasis is on knowledge creation in workplace communities. Second, the theories are divided into four dimensions that provide a structure through which one can
understand the dynamic nature of knowledge creation (see 4.6.1). Third, the SECI model can be modified to focus on tool mediation (see 4.6.1). Fourth, the theories on the SECI process embrace the view that effective knowledge creation requires care (Nonaka et al., 2001; von Krogh et al., 2001a, 2001b).

The concept of care is the other main concept in my thesis because of the aforementioned relationship between knowledge creation and care and because deacons are leaders of ‘the caring ministry’ (National Council, 2009). Care, as knowledge, has multiple associations, and one definition cannot cover all the dimensions of care. In my study, I have used care in three different ways: First, care is handled as a theoretical framework in relation to knowledge creation (see 4.6.3-4.6.6), as von Krogh et al. outlines (1998, 2001). Von Krogh has identified five dimensions of care related to knowledge creation: reciprocal trust, active empathy, good access to help and advice, minimal condemnation and a ‘can-do’ spirit (4.6.4) (von Krogh, 1998, pp. 137-138; von Krogh et al., 2001b, pp. 67-73). I do not claim that these dimensions cover every perspective on care. However, I have still chosen to use them because they provide a theoretical notion of care divided into manageable sizes, which proved helpful in analysing deacons’ knowledge creation processes. The second notion of care is one that I call ‘empirical care’, which is understood as the empirical patterns that emerged in what is defined as the caring ministry (see discussion 7.2). Third, I also used some perspectives on care within theories of diakonia (see 2.4.2) to discuss the findings of empirical care (7.2).

In summary, I relate the concept of care in knowledge creation processes to both congregations and curriculum documents. Thus, in this study, care is theoretically linked to knowledge creation processes. In the next section, I outline the research design to describe how I have worked to answer the research question.

### 1.5 Research design

To answer the research question, I conducted fieldwork regarding deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care from the fall of 2011 to the fall of 2012. I used the methods of participant observations and document analysis, and I conducted informal and semi-structured qualitative interviews because this establish a broad material on deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care and allowed for the analysis of how deacons use tools in their work interactions. The research design is illustrated in Figure 1.3.

Further, abduction, as illustrated by the vertical arrows on each side in Figure 1.3, which here is used in the sense of a dynamic interplay between the socio-cultural theories and material during the research process, has played a crucial role in my research process (G. Afdal, 2010, p. 114; Silverman, 2011a, p. 149) (see 5.1.2). The socio-cultural paradigm emphasises collective creative processes, as

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10 I have written, together with Geir Afdal, an article called ‘Deacons’ professional practice as knowledge creation’, in which we discuss the modification of the SECI process as a tool mediated process (Nygaard et al., 2013).
well as the resources and tools used in the interactions (Engeström, 2001, p. 134; Vygotskij et al., 1978, p. 40). The socio-cultural paradigm allows me to analyse deacons’ knowledge creation processes and the knowledge sources in their everyday work lives and in curriculum documents. The use of the socio-cultural paradigm is reflected throughout the entire theoretical framework. As shown in the research design (see Figure 1.3), the socio-cultural paradigm represents theories on three levels: 1) the overall theoretical paradigm; 2) theories that are more specifically oriented towards my empirical material but are not used directly in the fine-tuned analytical work; and 3) theories used in the final analysis of the chosen empirical material represented in the articles.

As mentioned, I have chosen to sample two principal units of material while taking people, materials and contexts into consideration: 1) curricula of deacons’ education in order to analyse how students are prepared for knowledge creation in their future work life (Article 1) (see 5.2.1) and 2) field notes, interviews, pictures and drawings made by the deacons (Articles 2 and 3) (see 5.2.2, 5.4-5.5.2). The sampling process for the deacons and the congregations was conducted in two steps. The first step was characterised by the LETRA project’s overall sampling criteria, which included three relatively large congregations in the Church of Norway that featured several groups of professionals and extensive activity programmes for Church members. The three deacons who were selected for the first sample were educated before 2005, and they did not have master’s degrees. Thus, I conducted a second sampling process by including two deacons with master’s degrees (see 5.5.2).

I conducted a thematic analysis (see 5.7), with an emphasis on the themes of knowledge creation processes and care. The analysis was aided by the sub-questions mentioned in 1.1, and the thematic analysis of the material led to three articles. The overall contribution of this thesis emerges from the discussion of the findings from these three articles (Chapter 7). The arrows between the three articles illustrate the abductive processes that contributed to the overall findings. In the following, I present Figure 1.3.
Main research question:
What characterises deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care in the Church of Norway?

The theoretical paradigm (theory 1):
Knowledge creation (and care) in a socio-cultural theoretical framework

Analytical unit:
Deacons’ professional knowledge creation processes and care in five congregations in the CofN.
Limited to three intersections: 1) curricula, 2) deacons’ interactions with colleagues and 3) deacons’ interactions with participants of diaconal activities

Theory 2:
Engeström (CHAT), Edwards (Relational Agency), Hakkarainen & Paavola (Knowledge Creation), von Krogh (Care in Knowledge Creation)

Method:
Ethnographic case study
Participant observations, collecting documents, informal and semi-structured qualitative interviews

Empirical material:
1. Curriculum documents
2. Field notes, informal and semi-structured interviews

Thematic analysis
Sub-question 1 (Article 1):
What characterises professional knowledge creation and care in the curriculum texts?

Sub-question 2 (Article 2):
What characterises the deacons’ professional knowledge creation and the expression of care within the working community in CofN?

Sub-question 3 (Article 3):
What characterises the modes of tool-mediated knowledge in use that can be established in the deacons’ interaction with the participants?

Theory 3:
Hakkarainen & Paavola, Von Krogh

Article 1:
Caring to know or knowing to care? The relationship between knowledge creation and caring in the theological education of Christian social work professionals

Theory 3:
Nonaka et al., von Krogh

Article 2:
Conflicts and care among colleagues. Deacons’ professional knowledge development in the CofN

Article 3:
‘Modes of deacons’ professional knowledge in use —facilitation of “spaces of possibilities”’

Theory 3:
Engeström
1.6 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is organised into two main parts. The first part consists of an extended abstract and seven chapters. Following Chapter 1 (the introduction), I present the context of deacons’ professional practice in the Church of Norway in Chapter 2 and a research overview in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I elaborate on the theoretical frameworks of knowledge creation and care, as well as how I have used the theories in each article. In Chapter 5, I outline the methodological and analytical approach. In Chapter 6, I present an overview of the three articles. In Chapter 7, I give an overall discussion of the three articles. Finally, the second part consists of three articles.
2 Deacons in the Church of Norway

In this section, I delimit and describe contexts that are relevant to my research focus on deacons’ knowledge creation and care in the CofN. First, I briefly present three categorisations of the concept of diakonia. Second, I sketch the history of deacons in the CofN. Third, I present an important decision regarding the deacons’ present ministry in the CofN from the 2011 General Synod (Kirkemøtet 2011) in order to offer insights into how the CofN formally regards deacons’ ministry. Fourth, I present the three main documents to which deacons are committed: 1) ‘Order of Ministry and Qualification Requirements for Deacons Diocesan Council’ (Den Norske Kirke, 2005), 2) ‘Ethical Guidelines for Deacons in the Church of Norway’ (Diakonforbundet, 1993) and 3) the ‘Church of Norway Plan for Diakonia’ (National Council, 2009), with an emphasis on the concept of diakonia and the theological basis of diakonia.

Broadly speaking, there are three categorisations of the concept of diakonia. First, in the CofN, diakonia refers to the caring ministry of the Church. This notion differs from the second concept of diakonia that is found in the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. Here, the deacon’s role is particularly related to the Mass and is a step in the process of becoming a priest. Third, the notion of diakonia has an administrative characteristic, and it is found in, for instance, Presbyterian churches (Redse, 2014). In Norway, as in all the Nordic countries, larger national Protestant churches are organised territorially in congregations with established professional diaconal structures and services (National Council, 2009; Pyykkö et al., 2011, p. 21).

2.1 Short historical presentation

The diaconal ministry in the CofN has its roots in the last part of the 1800s (Hegstad, 1999, pp. 120-121) and was inspired by diaconal work in Germany (Fanuelsen, 2011, p. 90).11 Diaconal educational institutions were initiated for ‘deaconesses’12, female nursing students. The nursing studies included theological perspectives (Diakonisseshuset13, 1868; Menighetssøsterhjemmet14, 1916; Bergen Diakonisseejmen15,1918). Det norske Diakonhjem was established in 1890 for male deacons (Hegstad, 1999, p. 121).16

The goal of these institutions was to educate deacons and deaconesses for work in hospitals, other health institutions and home nursing. Many of the nurses were affiliated with local congregations, in particular, ‘Menighetssøstrene’, a term that is difficult to translate directly but that can loosely be translated as ‘parish nurses’. These parish nurses often cooperated with pastors in the

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11 I limit myself from going into the German resurgence of diaconal work.
12 ‘Deaconess’ refers to the Norwegian word ‘diakonisser’.
13 Which today is Lovisenberg Diaconal University College; in Norwegian, Lovisenberg Diakonale Høgskole.
14 Which today is Diakonova University College; in Norwegian, Diakonova.
15 Which today is Haraldsplass Deaconess University College; in Norwegian, Haraldsplass Diakonale Høgskole.
16 Which today is Diakonhjemmet University College; in Norwegian, Diakonhjemmet. The curriculum texts that I am analysing stem from Diakonhjemmet University College (see sampling criteria 5.2.1 and Article 1).
Church of Norway and conducted nursing care in the homes within the parish (Hegstad, 1999, pp. 120-121).

The parish nurses were inaugurated (innviet) for they work by the pastors. Starting in 1918, the inauguration was related to parish nurse services as a life calling. The nurses could not be engaged or married when they became inaugurated. They were educated to be ‘the Church of Norway’s servants among the sick and people in need’ (Snøtun et al., 2006, p. 34).

Even though the parish nurses worked in congregations, they were not considered ‘deacons’. Before 1915, ‘deacon’ was an unknown position in the CofN. The leadership at Diakonhjemmet fought for deacon positions in the CofN, and from 1918 to 1922, it increased the number of positions from 18 to 37; however, these were often only part-time positions. Twenty years later, there were only 37 positions. In 1936, the positions were available for deacons as a full-time engagement, but the deacons were bypassed by unemployed theologians (Finnseth, 2005, p. 64). In the 1980s, with the Law on Deacon Ministry\(^\text{19}\), the positions increased (see below).

At Diakonhjemmet, they educated male deacons, and the five-year diaconal education included a combination of nursing, diaconal theology and social work (Finnseth, 2005, p. 104). In 1968, this five-year-long diaconal education gave students the authorisation to be both nurses and social workers, and not just nurses. Moreover, female students were also included.\(^\text{20}\) Further, the student revolts in 1968 generated new ideas of what diakonia was; the deacon was to act more as an

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\(^{17}\) The photo is from the newspaper Dagen Avis (Avis Dagen, 1956).

\(^{18}\) ‘Den norske kirkes tjenere blant syke og trengende’. However, as time passed, fewer nurses wanted to be inaugurated, and in 1967, only five nurses were inaugurated. In 1972, another inauguration practice started. The condition for inauguration was the completion of a programme with 300 hours of diaconal education (Snøtun et al., 2006, pp. 36-37).

\(^{19}\) In Norwegian, Lov om diakontjenesten.

\(^{20}\) Diakonhjemmet had female students from 1906 to 1946 and from 1963 to 1968, but in the early years, their education spanned only one year (Finnseth, 2005, p. 84).
agent of social justice than as a humble, self-effacing figure, doing his quiet work of charity (Finnseth, 2005, p. 20). Until around 1970, Diakonhjemmet had many of the characteristics of a Lutheran version of a monastery (Finnseth, 2005, p. 18). After 1971, students had to study either nursing or social work before completing a one-and-a-half year course on theology and administration (Finnseth, 2005, p. 104).

In the 1960s in particular, the public sector took over the responsibility for health and social work, including home nursing. Due to a lack of church-based labour, several educated deacons and deaconesses worked in the public sector (Stave, 1998, p. 75). Many of the deacons became pioneers in the development of welfare institutions and systems (Finnseth, 2005, p. 18). The role of deacons in parishes changed after the welfare system was instituted. Nursing diminished in importance, while social challenges took on greater emphasis.

In 1985, the ‘Law on Deacon Ministry’ (‘Lov om diakontjeneste’) was enacted. This law was important, as the position of deacon (diakonstilling) became statutory and was legitimised. The law was followed by rules regarding the funding of the position. The ‘Law of the Church of Norway’ (‘Lov for Den norske kirke’) was instituted in 1996, and the ‘Law on Deacon Ministry’ was repealed. The new law weakened the position of deacons because diakonia became one of many tasks for which the Diocesan Council (Bispedømmerådet) was responsible. The short period under the ‘Law on Deacon Ministry’ represented a period in which positions for deacons increased. In 1983, before the law was established, there were 39 deacons in the Church of Norway; in 1999, after the law was instituted, there were 239 parish deacons. A period with such an increase in positions for deacons has not been seen since (Jordheim, 2011, p. 155).

According to Olav Helge Angell, diakonia remains a central task for any Christian congregation despite the extensive public welfare system (Angell, 2005, p. 2). There are three main areas of diaconal work in Norway today: 1) diaconal institutions, such as hospitals, other health and social work institutions and educational institutes; 2) international diaconal work, such as mission, developmental and emergency aid organisations; and 3) diaconal work in parishes (Dietrich, 2009, p. 63). My study and the rest of the presentation focus on diaconal work in parishes.

### 2.2 The parish deacons’ position today

The deacons in the CofN work in the context of growing religious plurality. CofN has belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran branch of Christian church since the 16th century, and has been a state church since then until 2012 (Church of Norway, 2015b). Even though membership in the CofN still is high 74.9 percent of the Norwegian population in 2013/2014 (Den Norske Kirke, 2014a), participation in key church activities is decreasing. Only three percent of the population in Norway participates in services on normal Sundays (Church of Norway, 2015a). However, many people still attend church for

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21 I do not go further into the development of the welfare system in Norway or the church and the welfare systems.
baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals. In particular, funerals and confirmations are rituals with high attendance (Den Norske Kirke, 2014b).

Within the CofN, there are 1260 congregations (2008) (Den Norske Kirke, 2014c), including approximately 1400 pastors, 930 cantors, 550 religious educators, 400 churchwardens, 300 deacons and about 2,000 people who work in graveyards, crematories, administration, preschools, etc. (Den Norske Kirke, 2014b). Empirical research documents that having a deacon in the congregation strengthens the diaconal work in these congregations and the Church of Norway’s cooperation with the public sector (Angell, 2005, p. 13).

2.3 The deacon ministry in the church ministry structure

In order to present insights into how the CofN formally regards the deacons’ ministry, I refer to some of the main topics on the deacons’ ministry determined at the ‘General Synod’ (of the Church of Norway) in 2011 (Kirkemøtet 2011).

The deacon ministry of the CofN is an independent and necessary ministry based on an independent theological basis and is primarily understood as a caritative ministry. The deacon ministry presupposes consecration (vigsling), and the General Synod supports consecrated deacons in liturgical ministries wearing a stole (see picture 2.2) (Den Norske Kirke, 2011, p. 3). The consecration does not provide deacons to be a part of the ‘orders of the ordained ministry’ in the CofN.

Furthermore, according to General Synod the CofN will seek to achieve the goals from ‘Church of Norway plan for diakonia’ (see 2.4.3), and more positions for deacons must be established. In 2015, at least one position for a deacon must exist within all larger geographical sectors (prostier).

Sectors with high geographic distances or high population density should have more positions for deacons. In the future, every congregation must have a position for one deacon or deacon competence available (Den Norske Kirke, 2011, p. 4).

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22 Actual challenges for diaconal actions in Norway are an increase in mental illnesses, a growing number of elderly, challenges arising in a consumer society, diaconal demands caused by migration and a change towards multicultural and multireligious societies (Dietrich, 2009, p. 72). In addition, many of the deacons in my material referred to hidden social challenges, such as isolation, various psychological challenges and substance misuse in high-income groups.

23 The topic of the meeting was entitled, ‘KM 9/11 The deacon ministry in the church ministry structure’, my translation of ‘KM 9/11 Diakontjenesten i kirkens tjenestemønster’ (Den Norske Kirke, 2011).

24 With ‘orders of the ordained ministry’, I refer to ‘embede’ in Norwegian. In many churches, there has been an established diaconate as part of the ordained ministry. In the Lutheran church in Sweden, deacons are recognised as an integral part of the ordained ministry. Other Lutheran churches, as in Norway, reserve the term ‘ordination’ for pastors and use the ‘commissioning’ and/or ‘consecration’ for deacons when they start their official ministry (Jordheim, 2014, p. 189). I do not go into the discussions about the deacons’ placement within the orders of the ordained ministry (embetstruktur) or the Church of Norway’s Lutheran theological understanding of deacons or diakonia. None of the discussions are directly linked to my research focus.

25 The goal of at least one position for deacons in all larger sectors was not achieved by March 2015 according to information I received from the National Church Council.
2.4 Three main documents for deacons’ professional practice in CofN

In the following, I present the three main documents to which the parish deacons are committed.

2.4.1 Order of Ministry and Qualification Requirements

‘Order of Ministry and Qualification Requirements for Deacons’\textsuperscript{27} (Diakonforbundet, 2011) in the CofN emphasises that the deacon is the leader of the diaconal ministry in the congregation, and has the responsibility to recruit, equip and guide volunteers (Paragraph 2). Further, the deacon is committed to the plans and priorities provided for diaconal service in the CofN. The service is carried out in collaboration with staff and volunteers from the Church. Deacons are responsible for their own continuing education and personal renewal, and deacons should exercise their ministry in accordance with the CofN’s arrangements (paragraph 3) (Den Norske Kirke, 2005).

To work as a deacon in the CofN, a master’s degree is required along with 1) at least a three-year vocational education at the college level in health or social care or educational training, or 2) religious education equivalent to a minimum of 30 credits. The Church Council may authorise persons with other academically equivalent and relevant training/practice to be accepted as a deacon (paragraph 4). Paragraphs 5 and 6 refer to the conditions of employment and to how the deacons will be consecrated by the bishop and commit to the promises and directions given in the liturgy of ordination. The deacon is under the supervision of the bishop. Paragraph 7 indicates that when deacons

\textsuperscript{26} Picture 2.2: I have sought permission to use the photo from the deacons depicted. Photographer: Martin Storheim.

\textsuperscript{27} The National Council’s translation of ‘Tjenesteordning og kvalifikasjonskrav for diakoner’,
have liturgical functions, they are under the leadership of the officiating pastors. The deacon’s confidentially is according to current rules (Paragraph 8).

Beginning in the fall of 2014, only one source of Norwegian diaconal education exists; it is led in cooperation with MF Norwegian School of Theology and Diakonhjemmet University College. This programme has, as of the spring of 2015, nine full-time students and 18 part-time students.  

2.4.2 The Professional Ethical Guidelines of Deacons

‘The Professional Ethical Guidelines of Deacons’ (Diakonforbundet, 1993) focuses on the deacons’ ministry and how the diaconal mission is based on the Bible and the CofN’s confessional documents. First, a deacon’s basic commitment is to seek to realise God's will. The Church’s diaconal mission, as expressed in the current plan for diakonia in the CofN, is the framework and starting point for deacons’ ministry. Second, the guidelines highlight how a deacon should respect the people that he or she meets, particularly with regard to gender, disability, social status, sexual orientation, race or political or religious beliefs. Third, the guidelines relate to the deacons’ professional responsibilities: the deacon is professionally and personally liable for his or her service. In the fourth paragraph, the relationship between colleagues is emphasised. The fifth paragraph describes how deacons should see their service as part of the Church's overall operations. The sixth paragraph focuses on deacons’ relationship with society—a deacon should be informed about social structures and development and seek to create good working relationships with various public and private institutions and organisations.

2.4.3 Church of Norway Plan for Diakonia

In the ‘Church of Norway Plan for Diakonia’ (National Council, 2009), the overall diaconal vision is expressed as ‘the love of God for all people and the whole of creation revealed through our life and service’ (National Council, 2009, p. 4). Diakonia is defined as follows:

‘Diakonia is the caring ministry of the Church. It is the Gospel in action and is expressed through loving your neighbour, creating inclusive communities, caring for creation and struggle for justice’ (National Council, 2009, p. 5).

Loving one’s neighbour involves the whole being and is based on reciprocity, equality and respect for the integrity of others. Being an inclusive community is as an important way in which the Church shows care. Care for the created world is seen as part of the God-given mission and involves the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the whole of creation. In particular, emphasis is placed on the fact that human beings are dependent on their many relationships—with God, with their fellow human beings, with themselves and with the rest of creation (National Council, 2009, p. 7). Struggling for justice involves standing alongside others as active participants (National Council, 2009, p. 8).

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28 Information received at The Norwegian School of Theology, 27.1.15.
29 New professional ethical guidelines of deacons were determined by the Norwegian Association of Deacons (Diakonforbundet) in 2014. The new guidelines have some expansions, including references to the United Nations’ human rights and an attachment with Bible quotes (Diakonforbundet, 2014).
According to the plan, diakonia should be the fundamental principle in all aspects of parish life as the Church of Norway views itself as a serving church (National Council, 2009, p. 5) and diakonia is a ‘characteristic of the total mission of the church’ (National Council, 2009, p. 6). All Christians are called to live their daily lives in service of others (National Council, 2009, p. 5). Diakonia has a particular responsibility for helping those nobody else would care for, and a sense of mutuality and respect for the dignity of others is fundamental (National Council, 2009, p. 5). The plan outlines both national guidelines and questions for preparing local diaconal plans.

The theological basis of diakonia, according to the plan, is the Christian view of humankind. This perspective emphasises that we are created in God’s image for fellowship with one another (National Council, 2009, p. 6). Further, the following is expressed:

> The ability to do good has been given all human beings (Romans 2.14). When someone believes in Christ, faith will work through love (Galatians 5.6)… We should love one another as Christ loves us, and care for another (National Council, 2009, p. 7).

Doing good and taking care of fellow human beings are the core values in the theological basis of diakonia. Transforming faith into action is also emphasised:

> To transform faith into action means to ask time and again, ‘Who is my neighbour?’ (Luke 10.29-37; the Parable of the Good Samaritan). It is also to place oneself at the disposal of others, as community and individuals to ask: ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ (Luke 18.41). It means visiting the marginalised, the sick, the hungry, the thirsty and the strangers (Matthew 25.35-46) (National Council, 2009, p. 6).

On this basis, the plan summarises that loving our neighbour involves our whole being and that the Church needs to emphasise that human beings are dependent on their many relationships—passing God, with their fellow human beings, with themselves and with the rest of creation (National Council, 2009, p. 7). In my study, I do not compare the empirical material with the theological understanding of diakonia presented in the plan because I am primarily interested in the knowledge-creation processes and care.
3 Research Overview

Deacons’ knowledge creation and care are more or less an empirically unexplored field. Still, some contributions are relevant for this thesis. First, I present a short introduction to Nordstokke’s theoretical framework of the science diakonia. Second, relevant empirical research on diakonia and deacons is introduced. Third, theories of diakonia emphasising a paradigm shift of care are discussed. Finally, I give an account of the relevant empirical contributions to the study of knowledge creation and care in business organisations.

I searched relevant literature in the following databases, ATLA Religion, ERIC, Norart and BibsysAsk, in 2011 to 2014, and the searches provided a few hits on reviewed articles with the keywords ‘deacon’, ‘diak*’ or ‘diac*’, combined with ‘empir*’, ‘method’, ‘knowledge’, ‘kunnskap’ ‘knowledge creation’, ‘epistem*’, ‘mediat*’, ‘profession*’, ‘profesjon’, ‘artefacts’, ‘artifacts’, ‘social work’, ‘christian social work’ and ‘faith social work’. I have also combined ‘deacon’, ‘diak*’ or ‘diac*’ with ‘knowledge creation and care’, ‘knowledge development and care’ and ‘SECI and care’. In addition, I have also searched in Oria.no in 2014-2015 for the same keywords, with few relevant hits. In addition, I have regularly searched for other words as they appeared relevant in my research process. I have also examined reference lists of relevant articles and books and have been aware of relevant literature at seminars and in debates.

3.1 Theoretical framework of the science of diakonia

I limit the presentation of the theoretical framework of the science of diakonia to Kjell Nordstokke’s contribution (2011, 2014) because his contribution constitutes an important part of the theoretical understanding of diakonia in the Lutheran tradition. In his contributions ‘The Study of Diakonia as an Academic Discipline’ (Nordstokke, 2014b) and ‘Theoretical Framework of the Science of Diakonia’ (Nordstokke, 2011b), Nordstokke argues that two basic axes are necessary for the theoretical framework of diakonia. The first is the praxis\textsuperscript{30}-theory axis, and the second is the epistemological axis between theological and empirical knowledge (Nordstokke, 2011b, p. 35). The science of diakonia’s distinct identity is that the two axes are held together (Nordstokke, 2011b, p. 36). Nordstokke claims that the science of diakonia’s theoretical reflections has to be interdisciplinary due to the complexity of the praxis. Thus, the criteria for critical reflection cannot be limited to the hegemony of one discipline, either social sciences or theology. Instead, the interdisciplinary approach advocates for a discussion between different criterion conditioned by context and consequences (Nordstokke, 2011b, p. 35).

Academically, the diaconal tradition has mainly been dealt with as a theological discipline and, to a large degree, from a theological—normative or systematic—theological perspective (Stifoss-...

\textsuperscript{30} Nordstokke use the term “praxis” for social actions that is planned and goal oriented. In this way, he writes, praxis should not be understood as any kind of practice (Nordstokke, 2011b, p. 29). However, I only use the word praxis when I refer to Nordstokke.
My contribution aims at critically reflecting upon theories in the diaconal field based on the empirical findings of the deacons in my study (see 7.0).

### 3.2 Empirical research on diakonia and deacons in Scandinavia

There is a growing field in empirical research on diakonia in Scandinavia (Angell, 2011b, p. 187). For instance, Engel (2006) conducted empirical research on diakonia in the Church of Sweden and found that the church does not reach people in especially vulnerable or marginalised positions due to a gap between the church’s talk about diakonia and its actions (Engel, 2006, p. 19). A study conducted at Diakonhjemmet University College showed the same tendency in diaconal work in the Church of Norway (Angell et al., 2005; Korslien, 2009, p. 95). These studies focus mainly on diaconal work, with some emphasis on the deacons, while my analytical scope is on deacons. Nevertheless, findings from my study contribute to discussions of diaconal work with empirical analyses of how deacons reach out to people in vulnerable positions.

Little empirical research on deacons has been conducted in countries which have a tradition comparable to the Lutheran tradition in the Church of Norway (Angell, 2011b, p. 187). I regard the Nordic countries as comparable because of the Lutheran tradition and the Nordic welfare systems. Different welfare systems may have a strong impact on how diaconal work is shaped (Leis-Peters, 2014, p. 151). Empirical research on deacons in the Lutheran parish context has focused on deacons’ identity and their experience of work. Researchers in Sweden investigated deacons’ identities and how they experience their work in the Church of Sweden (Lindgren, 2007; Olofsgård, 2003). One of Katarina Olofsgård’s starting points for her research was that all the parish deacon colleagues she talked with expressed frustration about their working situation, and many wanted to return to their work as social workers outside of the church. Further, they felt that the church, as an employer, did not acknowledge its employers’ competence and was not open to including new areas of knowledge, even though it talked about the possibilities of using people’s resources (Olofsgård, 2003, p. 1). One conclusion after Olofsgård’s focus group interviews with the deacons was that they experienced a huge amount of loneliness in their diaconal work because of the lack of deacon colleagues. The lack of deacon colleagues contributed to less socialisation in the profession. Moreover, because of the unclear role of deacons, the expectations of a deacon’s duties are vague and cause frustration. The deacons experienced working in an organisation that did not know what to do with them (Olofsgård, 2003, p. 65). Tomas Lindgren (2007) analysed 43 deacons in the Church of Sweden’s working diary notes and found that they were engaged in eight categories of work: pastoral care, services, educational activities, activities with participants in diaconal work, administrative work, professional development (reading literature and seminars), practical work (cleaning and making coffee) and participation in meetings (Lindgren, 2007, p. 1).

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31 Stifoss-Hanssen refers to the programme description of the PhD programme in ‘Diakonia, values and professional practice’ at Diakonhjemmet University College.
Angell and Kristoffersen studied deacons’ identity and the notion of diakonia in the Church of Norway (Angell, 2011b; Angell et al., 2004), finding that 83% of 127 deacons studied understood diakonia as doing good deeds and helping people develop a relationship with God. Only 17% of participants stated that diakonia was only reflected in good deeds. When asked to whom diaconal activities should be directed, 84% indicated to all people, and 16% indicated to members of the CoF. Furthermore, 93% of the deacons considered ‘help others find personal liberation to faith’ as middle or high priority (Angell, 2011b, p. 196).

Although these researchers have empirically analysed deacons in parish contexts, none have directly approached deacons’ knowledge creation and care in their everyday professional practice. Olav Fanuelsen states that it is natural to ask how the church understands care, since diakonia is defined as the church’s caring ministry, (Fanuelsen, 2009, p. 142). My study contributes to the understanding of what characterises the empirical care in deacons’ caring ministry (7.2). In this thesis, I understand empirical care as patterns that emerge in deacons’ search for participants’ well-being and well-becoming (see 7.1) in the caring ministry.

### 3.3 Paradigm shift in the notion of care

Within theories of diakonia, there has been a paradigm shift in the notion of care from paternalistic charity to autonomy-oriented care assistance and empowerment (Dietrich, 2014, pp. 13, 24). This shift aligns with a fundamental move within different scientific approaches to professional care. Within social work, for instance, the emphasis today is not on offering help but on partnership and empowerment. Further, within international aid, there has been a trend away from offering help to those in need to a greater understanding of partnership between donors and recipients (Dietrich, 2014, p. 14). Within church-based social work (diakonia), the paradigm shift of care has occurred in the understanding of what it means to offer and to receive help. Dietrich refers to Nordstokke when she mentions a ‘new paradigm of diakonia’ (Dietrich, 2014, p. 14). Nordstokke et al. have presented their notion of ‘renewing praxis in light of a renewed theory’ and provided five perspectives in this new paradigm of diakonia in our time (Nordstokke et al., 2011, pp. 46-47): a new role as agent, new authority, new language, new logic and new method (see 7.2). In this study, my contribution is to critically discuss these perspectives in relation to the findings of the parish deacons’ empirical care and knowledge creation. I will later argue that the findings in my study diversify these perspectives.

John Collins also questions the traditional interpretation of the deacon’s role as a servant at the table who provides humble service for the poor (Collins, 1990, p. 194). According to Collins, the Greeks understood the word deacon as a title for someone who was involved in the accomplishment of a task or in the delivery of a gift (Collins, 2002, p. 89). Thus, rather than being humble servants, Collins saw deacons as ‘go-betweens’ given an important message. This applies to an action that is

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32 Fanuelsen argues that the everyday concept of care can disguise (tilsløre) a nuanced and potentially Christian distinctiveness of care (Fanuelsen, 2009, p. 142).
done in the name of another; actions done in the service of God. Further, the concept of go-between expresses a notion of undertaking for another. Thus, the deacons have both a mandate as given an important message and a personal obligation to take responsibility for another (Collins, 1990, p. 194).

In terms of other theories relevant to my study related to the paradigm shift of care, Wyller discusses otherness in relation to diaconal work and emphasises the position of the other (Wyller, 2009, p. 8). When Wyller uses the term otherness, he borrows the concept of ‘heterotopia’ from Foucault’s article ‘Of Other Space’ (heterotopia) (Foucault et al., 1986). Foucault emphasises unfamiliar spaces, arguing that unfamiliar spaces exist in both historical and contemporary contexts. The concept of heterotopia asserts that it is the view of the other space that allows a critical perspective of the ‘first’ room (Wyller, 2006, p. 317; 2009, p. 8). Wyller argues that if the church’s diakonia is to be interesting, it must have a heterotopic practice and theory; in fact, the other space should be the diaconal centre, not well-known spaces (Wyller, 2006, p. 311).

### 3.4 Knowledge creation and care

The focus of this thesis is empirical research on deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care.

Research on professional knowledge creation has been extensively investigated in business organisations (Nishiguchi et al., 2001; Nonaka et al., 2001; Nonaka et al., 1995; Nonaka et al., 2009; von Krogh et al., 2000, 2001a, 2001b; von Krogh et al., 2012). As mentioned, a literature search in the mentioned databases showed that empirical research on how knowledge is created among staff members in religious communities is scarce.

Research has established the importance of care in knowledge creation in professional communities, particularly business management (Styhre et al., 2002; von Krogh, 1998; von Krogh et al., 2000; 2001a, p. 30). Von Krogh (1998, 2001a, 2001b) argues that developing knowledge requires sharing, re-creating and amplifying knowledge through interactions with others and that the effectiveness of these very processes depends on the extent of care experienced within them. However, research on professional learning, which concentrates on various professions such as engineers, nurses, teachers and economist, does not include care as an explicit element in the learning processes (Fenwick et al., 2014; Jensen, 2012; Karseth et al., 2007; Nerland et al., 2007). This differs from von Krogh’s notion of care as relevant for the knowledge creation processes.

As far as I can see, research on how care facilitates knowledge development has not addressed religious communities. However, religious communities, such as congregations, regularly strive to provide care, making them highly appropriate for such analysis. In particular, the church’s diaconal service has been described as ‘the church’s caring ministry’ (National Council, 2009, p. 5).

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33 Foucault did not mention church practices specifically, and Wyller’s contribution involves using the concept in terms of diakonia (Wyller, 2006, p. 310).

34 In this thesis, I use the concepts of knowledge creation and knowledge development interchangeably.
Von Krogh et al. suggested that future research on care in knowledge development should focus on workplaces that are external care providers. They argue that the study of caring professions could make important contributions to theories on knowledge creation and care (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 49). However, the reference is 14 years old, which raises the question of whether the research gap still remains an unexplored field. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, searches in the stated data bases and in addition Google Scholar (2005–2015, peer-reviewed articles) using the referred search terms as ‘knowledge creation care relig*’, ‘knowledge creation care Christian’, ‘knowledge creation care congregations’ and ‘knowledge creation care profession’ showed no relevant results (see Article 2). Thus, von Krogh et al.’s (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 49) call to address the research gap in knowledge creation and care in working communities that provide external care, remains relevant. Diaconal service is therefore a workplace which is appropriate for research on knowledge creation and care.

This study attempts to fill two knowledge gaps within the research of diakonia. First, to contribute to an empirical understanding of the parish deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care related to colleagues and participants (7.1, 7.2, 7.3). Second, the study attempts to understand how care empirically emerges in the everyday and down to earth ministry of the Church of Norway (7.2). The empirical findings of what deacons do may contribute to an understanding of diakonia (cf. introduction and 7.4).

35 Therefore, I contacted von Krogh who confirmed that, to his knowledge, this is still an unexplored, interesting niche.
36 I searched also with the terms ‘development’ and ‘SECI’ instead of ‘creation’ (see 4.6.1)
4 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework in light of my research question. I have placed the theoretical framework within the socio-cultural paradigm. This allows me to analyse deacons’ knowledge creation processes and the knowledge sources in their everyday work lives because in this paradigm, tools in use and interactions are emphasised. The socio-cultural paradigm is reflected throughout the whole theoretical framework. As shown in the research design (1.5), the socio-cultural paradigm represents theories on three levels: 1) the overall theoretical paradigm, 2) theories that are more specifically oriented towards my empirical material but are not used directly in the fine-tuned analytical work and 3) theories used in the final analysis of the chosen empirical material, as represented in the articles.

The theoretical framework will be presented as follows. First, I outline Engeström’s approach to the socio-cultural paradigm and his contribution to activity theory. In Engeström’s activity system, I focus on the main concepts used in this study: ‘agency’ (subject), tool mediation, object of activity and knowledge creation. I briefly outline the historical development of the socio-cultural theory but mainly restrict its presentation to Engeström’s notion of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). This theory allows me to place deacons’ knowledge creation processes in their interaction with knowledge sources in their everyday work communities. Second, I elaborate on relational agency (Edwards, 2010), third, on professions and professional knowledge (Nerland, 2012), fourth, on the concept of ‘knowledge creation’ (Hakkarainen et al., 2004; Paavola et al., 2012; Paavola et al., 2005), fifth, on knowledge creation in education (Hakkarainen et al., 2004), sixth, on knowledge creation in organisations (Nishiguchi et al., 2001; Nonaka et al., 2001; von Krogh et al., 2000, 2001b), and finally, care (von Krogh, 1998; von Krogh et al., 2000, 2001b).

The work of Engeström serves as the theoretical background for my study. I rely on Engeström’s activity theory, but I expand it with the mentioned theories to make it better correspond with my research focus. I explain why I have chosen to expand Engeström with these theories as I present them. Finally, I describe the way that these theories have been used in my three articles.

4.1 Socio-cultural theories: Engeström’s activity theory as a framework for interpretation

In his educational and organisational work with activity theory, Engeström is influenced by Russian theorists Lev Vygotsky and Alexei Leont’ev (G. Afdal, 2010, p. 49; Engeström et al., 2005, p. 18). Vygotsky initiated CHAT in the 1920s, and CHAT was further developed by Leont’ev, a student and colleague of Vygotsky (Engeström, 2001, p. 134).

CHAT is based on Vygotsky’s ground-breaking conception of mediation. He claimed that learning is not a direct relationship between stimulus (S) and response (R) (the dotted line in the triangle to the left in Figure 4.1), or between the learner (subject or agent) and the content (object).
Learning is, however, mediated by tools called artefacts (Engeström, 2001, p. 134; Vygotskij et al., 1978, p. 40). Artefacts can be materials, symbols and conceptual resources, such as language (Wertsch, 1998, pp. 30-31). Thus, the core elements in the socio-cultural learning processes are 1) the subject (the deacons), 2) the mediating artefacts and 3) the object. This trialogical approach to learning is illustrated in Figure 4.1.

![Figure 4.1: Illustration of Vygotsky’s model of tool mediation and of its common reformulation (Engeström, 2001, p. 134)](image)

To understand the socio-cultural notion of learning, I find it easiest to continue with the tools—the mediating artefacts—as they represent the expanding elements in the trialogical approach. The mediating tools represent a theoretical focus in my study because deacons use various kinds of tools in their knowledge creation processes. More specifically, tools are important because deacons’ interactions and creative processes cannot be analysed without taking into consideration the resources used. Language is perhaps the most common tool that deacons use in their everyday work, but they also use tools such as the Bible, coffee, food, candles, lights, books, e-mails and liturgies.

Engeström (2005) writes:

> The insertion of artefacts into human actions was revolutionary in that the basic unit of analysis overcame the split between the Cartesian individual and the untouchable societal structure. The individual could no longer be understood without his or her cultural means; and the society could no longer be understood without the agency of individuals who use and produce artefacts. (Engeström et al., 2005, p. 60)

This means that we have to understand the human being in interaction with cultural artefacts. The subject/agent cannot be analytically separated from its tools but must be understood in the interplay between the agent and the tools. When it comes to analysing deacons’ tools, I agree with Engeström that it is not useful to categorise mediating artefacts into external (or practical) and internal (or cognitive) artefacts. Instead, artefacts can have a multi-level nature and represent a complex mediation (Engeström, 2007, p. 34; 2008, pp. 128-129). The functions and use of the artefacts are in constant motion and transformation as activities unfold. An internal representation can become external, for instance, through speech, gestures and writings, and external processes can be internalised. Splitting these processes is an insufficient basis for understanding different artefacts. Instead, the artefacts need

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Artefact is spelled in American language in the model.
to be differentiated based on the various ways they can be used (Engeström, 2008, p. 128). Some artefacts are typically used in specific ways, but there is nothing inherently fixed in an artefact (Engeström, 2008, p. 129). For instance, a candle can light up a room, be a spiritual symbol or start a fire. The tools mediate and bring conditions for possibilities, and they both constrain and open processes (G. Afdal, 2013, p. 114). Further, the artefacts are products of time and space. This means that learning is culturally and contextually conditioned and is best studied in context. The agent can both be changed by the tools and can change the tools (G. Afdal, 2010, p. 53). For instance, deacons could be influenced by local diaconal plans, but they could also change the plans. The concept of knowledge as tool mediation does not separate knowledge from the process of knowing (G. Afdal, 2014, p. 3). The knowledge cannot be separated from the knower (Alvesson, 2009, p. 1).

Before I explain the concept of ‘object’, I describe the activity system because the notion of object is related to the activity system. The trialogical approach is the core element in the three generations of CHAT. Vygotsky, however, was concerned about the individual’s learning and development. Leont’ev shifted the focus from individual to collective development and from individual actions to collective activity (G. Afdal, 2010, p. 53; Engeström, 2001, p. 134). ‘The concept of activity took the paradigm a huge step forward in that it turned the focus on complex interrelations between the individual subject and his or her community’ (Engeström, 2001, p. 134). Engeström operates with collective activity systems and practices as the unit of analysis. An activity system, according to Engeström, is ‘a complex and relatively enduring “community of practice” that often takes the shape of an institution’ (Engeström et al., 2005, p. 219). The activity system is a model of the original triangle (figure 4.1), expanded with three new factors: rules, community and division of labour (Engeström et al., 2005, p. 61). I analyse deacons’ interactions with participants and colleagues in their work system with a focus on the original triangle and not the whole activity system. My analytical focus is on the mediating tools. In addition, the original triangle still helps me to place the deacons analytically within a community, as the triangle is a part of the activity system (see 4.2). Figure 4.2 illustrates Engeström’s activity system.

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38 The concept ‘context’ is debated within social research (H. W. Afdal et al., 2010, p. 51), and I limit myself from this debate. In this study, I use the concept ‘context’ pragmatically to narrow down a space, time and relations to a manageable ‘wholeness’ (H. W. Afdal et al., 2010, pp. 68-69). However, the linkage between knowledge and context is important in my study, in social science (Flyvbjerg, 2010, p. 9) and particularly in the socio-cultural theories I use (see 1.4 and 4.1).

39 This is in contrast to knowledge understood as a package of content sent between people, as something isolated and outside us and as ‘facts’ (Gustavsson, 2000, p. 13).
In the activity system the object of practice is divided between actions and activities (Engeström et al., 2005, p. 93). There is an important difference between actions and activities (G. Afdal, 2010, p. 53). Actions are characterised by being goal oriented (Engeström et al., 2005, p. 93). Goals are primarily conscious, relatively short-lived and finite aims of individual actions (Engeström et al., 2005, p. 427). An action has a beginning and an end (Engeström et al., 2005, p. 219). There can be different actions depending on the situations. For instance, I observed Deacon Katie at a dinner group in her congregation; people sat drinking coffee, read newspapers, prepared food, knitted and played chess; some sat alone and others were talking. However, activities have a common vision, motivation or direction, and they may involve many actions. Actions and individuals are held together by an overall object—a search for direction. The search may give meaning to the various actions and work as a glue for professional work and discourse. The object is an internally contradictory yet enduring constantly reproducing purpose of an activity system that defines possible goals and actions (Engeström et al., 2005, p. 427). For example, the overall object of the mentioned actions, according to Katie, was experiencing being in an inclusive community. However, the object can also be a ‘runaway object’, an object open to change, and can have unexpected effects (Engeström, 2008, p. 227). The dinner group became a ‘runaway object’ because of an older couple that over months intensively criticised some of the others and changed the community. Finally, Katie had to expel them from the community. Katie had to deal with the dilemma of exclusion to make the community inclusive for the others. This dilemma illustrates the ‘outcome’ as the ongoing and constantly changing result or production of an activity system (G. Afdal, 2010, p. 55).

In this thesis, Engeström and CHAT are used as a theoretical background for understanding knowledge creation as a social and relational process. Even though I use Engeström’s sketch of activity theory, I seldom refer to him in the articles. Instead, I refer to the theorists who expanded his notion because my concern is how the deacons interact, not the congregation or Church of Norway as a whole activity system. In the following, I will elaborate on the theoretical foreground of my study.

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Artefact is spelled in American language in the model.
4.2 Relational agency

I expand Engeström’s approach with Anne Edward’s (2010) concept ‘relational agency’ because she places herself theoretically within CHAT and expands Engeström’s notion of agency. CHAT as approach appears to be based on relatively limited resources for addressing individual agents and their transformations (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 151). Engeström describes object-oriented common practices—as opposed to individual actions—as the unit of analysis for activity theory (Edwards, 2010, p. 159). Relational agency shifts the focus from the system to joint actions and the influence on those who engage in the systems (Edwards, 2005, p. 174). In this study, my primary focus is deacons’ knowledge creation processes and care in their interactions mainly with participants and colleagues and not all the participants in the system (congregation). Nevertheless, the system in which the deacons interact needs to be a part of the picture; this is the reason for using CHAT (Edwards, 2010, p. 5).

I agree with Edwards (2010) when she argues to expand the socio-cultural notion of agency with relational agency. She notes that professionals interact with other practitioners and clients and negotiate tasks relationally (Edwards, 2010, p. 13). The central argument in relational agency is that the resources others bring to challenges can enhance understanding and enrich responses. This calls for additional expertise within professional roles that makes it possible to work with others to expand the understanding of common work problems. The extra expertise for a professional is therefore based on confident engagement with knowledge from one’s own practice and a capacity to recognise and respond to what others might offer.

A prerequisite for the relational exercise of being an expert is to acknowledge that expert knowledge is distributed across systems (Edwards, 2010, p. 13). The distributed knowledge in a system requires experts to work relationally to extend their knowledge:

Experts must now extend their knowledge, not simply to be an extension of what they know in their specialist field, but to consist of building links trying to integrate what they know with what others want to, or should know and do. Bringing together the many different knowledge dimensions involved constitutes specific mixes with other kinds of knowledge, experience and expertise (Nowotny, 2003, p. 155).

Building links between professionals is important for taking advantage of the distributed knowledge in a system or across systems. There is a distinction, however, between being able to work with what is important for others and being able to do what they do (Edwards, 2010, p. 15). In conclusion, the concept of relational agency involves a capacity for working with others to create purposeful responses to complex problems (Edwards, 2010, p. 14). Edwards describes this in a two-stage process that consists of the following:

1) Working with others to expand the ‘object of activity’, or task being worked on, by recognising the motives and the resources that others bring to bear as they too interpret the motives and resources; and

2) Aligning one’s own responses to the newly enhanced interpretations with the responses being made by other professionals while acting on the expanded object (Edwards, 2010, p. 14).
Recognising and working with the motives of others may lead to an expanded understanding of the problems to be solved (Edwards, 2010, p. 15). Hence, being a professional is a complex mission (Jensen, 2012, p. 2). Finally, the use of relational agency allows me to analyse deacons’ interactions with others in a more nuanced way as opposed to simply relying on Engeström’s notion of agency. Moreover, relational agency resonates with the work of Hakkarainen et.al. (2004) on the mutual strengthening of expertise to improve the collective competence of a community (Edwards, 2005, p. 172) (see 4.4 and 4.5).

### 4.3 Professions and professional knowledge

As mentioned in section 1.4, there are conflicting perspectives and definitions of ‘professions’ and ‘professionalism’, but the key characteristic of professions is that they are based on abstract codified knowledge obtained at a university or university-like institution (Smeby, 2012, p. 49). According to the sociology of professions, the purpose of higher education is to train professionals in a particular knowledge base and to socialise them into a professional community with an ethical code (Smeby, 2012, p. 56). In this thesis, I rest on Monika Nerland’s notion of professions as knowledge cultures, because her tool-mediated understanding of professional knowledge corresponds to my theoretical framework:

Professions are constituted through their specific ways of engaging with knowledge. The forms of knowledge in use, the artefacts and tools provided for professional practice, the traditions and methods of knowledge production, and the collective models of knowledge application serve to give communities an integrative power (Nerland, 2012, p. 28).

Thus, deacons’ profession is constituted through specific ways of engaging with knowledge. Regarding integrative power, four perspectives of knowledge are of special interest. First, the way knowledge is produced is constitutive for the knowledge domain. Do the collective ways of knowing rest upon scientific achievements or personal experiences and reflexivity? Knowledge production is interlinked with knowledge verification (Nerland, 2012, p. 28). Hence, the power of diaconal professional knowledge varies in relation to how that knowledge is produced. The second perspective depends on how knowledge is accumulated. Is accumulation seen as a collective and collaborative process or as an individualised matter of gaining rich experiences? Are deacons alone in gaining rich experiences, or is accumulation of diaconal professional knowledge a collective process? Moreover, is knowledge seen as built up within the logic of linearity? Third, how knowledge is distributed within a professional community is a distinguishing aspect of the character of the given tools and infrastructure. The tools provided can be more or less locally bound, have a technical character, be based upon written language and so forth. Fourth, how profession-specific knowledge is applied and the ways of handling the relationship between general knowledge and its application in specific work settings are constitutive aspects of professional knowledge cultures (Nerland, 2012, p. 28).
These dimensions mutually form each other to create a specific knowledge culture (Nerland, 2012, p. 28). It is in the processes of materialisation and articulation that knowledge cultures manifest themselves. Through these processes, knowledge is brought into play, continued and exposed to advancement in the knowledge cultures (Nerland, 2012, p. 29). In conclusion, the constitution of diaconal professional knowledge rests upon how knowledge is produced, accumulated, distributed and applied. Knowledge is understood as tool mediated. Thus, to understand deacons’ professional knowledge creation processes, I analyse their negotiation of tools in their work practice.

4.4 The knowledge creation metaphor

As mentioned in section 1.1, the knowledge creation metaphor focuses on processes of collective problem-solving situations (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, pp. 12,128). The knowledge creation metaphor has its central basis in theories that emphasise collaborative creativity, such as Engeström’s activity theory and, in particular, his theory of expansive learning (Engeström, 2001, 2007, 2008; Engeström et al., 2006; Engeström et al., 2010), and Nonaka et al.’s theory of organisational knowledge creation (Nonaka et al., 1995); (Nishiguchi et al., 2001; Paavola et al., 2012, p. 1). In the following, I will emphasise Hakkarainen and Paavola’s notion of knowledge creation (2004, 2005) because Hakkarainen and Paavola focus particularly on the trialogical approach, which is crucial in my study. Paavola et al. argue that the knowledge metaphor could be called ‘the artefact creation of learning’ (Paavola et al., 2005, p. 546).

The knowledge creation perspective represents the trialogical approach presented in section 4.1 because the weight is not only on individuals, but on the way in which people (agents) collaboratively develop goals or objects through mediating tools (Paavola et al., 2005, p. 539). Hence, the theoretical emphasis is on how new ideas and conceptual and material tools are created in collective processes to find solutions to activity-related disturbances and ambiguity. Members of expert communities are not simply trying to learn something but to solve problems, originate new thoughts and advance communal knowledge (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 245).

All these theories within the knowledge creation metaphor attempt to overcome the dichotomy between the individual and the community. This is done by considering an individual’s activities as embedded in a collective problem-solving situation. Thus, the theories of knowledge creation focus on studying those social practices in which knowledge and processes of knowledge creation are embedded and on examining how persons and their communities act in genuine, practical problem-solving situations. Consequently, social communities are the primary unit for analysing human competence and knowledge creation, and a clear strength of Engeström’s framework is the close connection between the tools and practices of activity systems (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 127).

As mentioned in section 1.4, starting points for knowledge creation may be gaps, limitations, weaknesses and deficits in current knowledge and understanding (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 132).
For instance, Deacon William told me in an informal interview that he once led the Bible study group for foreigners trying to learn Norwegian, and he had chosen a section from the Old Testament about how good God is. One of the members started to cry, explaining that he had been tortured in his home country, was missing his family and struggled with illness. William regarded the participant as potentially depressed and contacted the public health system. In cooperation with the health system over time, the deacon established new knowledge. In addition, he started to reflect on Bible texts in new ways. Thus, the disturbances, tensions, ruptures and contradictions emerging from practical activities can provide significant resources for knowledge advancement (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 132), as well as scientific knowledge from, for instance, the public health system.

The spheres of human activity, material and symbolic, mutually interact and dynamically influence each other and cannot be separated. The knowledge creation metaphor addresses the relationship between symbolic and practical perspectives of learning. Hence, thinking and acting are inseparable dimensions of inquiry; changes in practice involve conceptual changes, and conceptual changes lead to changes in practice. Consequently, knowledge creation is a process of concurrently advancing conceptual understanding and transforming social practices (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 12).

Finally, knowledge creation processes emerge through the effort to solve problems and ask questions that may emerge either from practical or conceptual problems. In the following, I will elaborate on knowledge creation and education. Is it possible to learn to participate in knowledge creation processes? And if it is possible, how can educational institutions equip students to do so?

### 4.5 Knowledge creation and education

I have chosen to expand Engeström’s theory with Hakkarainen et al.‘s (2004) perspectives on knowledge creation and education because they provide a structured theoretical contribution on knowledge creation and education. Hakkarainen et al.’s understanding of knowledge creation, where social communities are the primary units of analysing knowledge creation, is in line with socio-cultural approach and Engeström’s theoretical framework of CHAT (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, pp. 8, 127). Hakkarainen et al. argue that one way of trying to stimulate the development of skills for knowledge creation is to facilitate explorative processes as soon as education begins by teaching ‘students not only to find answers to pre-existing questions but also to set up new questions and search for knowledge that may be new both to them and the teachers’ (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 193). In this section, I present five perspectives on knowledge creation and education which I use when analysing the curriculum texts.

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41 Hakkarainen et al. have elaborated six perspectives. The sixth perspective is engaging in deepening inquiry. In pragmatic problem-solving situations, generating questions and tentative theories must be started before all the essential information is available. Consequently, the process of inquiry often begins with being broad, vague and fuzzy. A critical condition for advancement is that the students focus on improving their ideas by generating
According to Hakkarainen et al. (2004), the starting point in educational knowledge creation is the ‘joint creating of a context for the project in question’ (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 197). The focus is not only on learning from autonomous texts in school, but also on the anchoring of knowledge creation in authentic and complex problems of the external world. Knowledge creation is seen as a process of inquiry where the individual’s initiative is embedded in the fertile social ground of institutional practices (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 197).

The second perspective on educational knowledge creation emphasises engaging in question-driven inquiry. One crucial aspect of knowledge creation is the generation of the students’ own problems and questions in order to guide the inquiry. Without questions made by the students themselves, there cannot be a genuine progression of inquiry. Especially with regard to explanation-seeking questions such as ‘why’ and ‘how’, which engage students in the search for a deeper understanding. A focus on questions that emerge from participants’ own knowledge and gaps in understanding may motivate their own inquiries (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 197).

The third perspective is that of generating working theories. An essential aspect of inquiry and a critical condition for developing a conceptual understanding is the generation of one’s own conjectures, hypotheses, theories or interpretations of the phenomena being investigated. The construction of working theories guides students to systematically use their background knowledge and become aware of their presuppositions. This inquiry includes facilitating explication and externalisation of these intuitive ideas through guiding the participants to, for instance, write about their ideas and take them up as objects of collaborative discussion (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 198).

Critical evaluation is the fourth perspective, which emphasises the strengths and weaknesses of the tentative theories and explanations produced. It is important to focus on constructively evaluating the advancement of the inquiry process itself, rather than only measuring the end result. In combination with the efforts of the teacher, student and group self-assessments play a crucial role in the evaluation process. Critical evaluation is a way of helping students to ‘rise above their earlier achievements by creating a higher level of synthesis of the results of inquiry processes’ (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 198).

Finally, the fifth perspective is searching for new information. Searching for and working with clarifying scientific knowledge is necessary to deepen one’s understanding, and new information may be found in literature sources or by consulting experts. A comparison of the intuitive working theories produced by students and scientific theories tends to make explicit the weaknesses and limitations of collective knowledge (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 198).

In the following section, I elaborate on Nonaka et al.’s (Nonaka et al., 2001) approach to knowledge creation in organisations.

more specific questions and searching for new information (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, pp. 198-199). We do not use the sixth perspective because we cannot observe how the students improve their ideas.
4.6 Knowledge creation in workplaces: the SECI process, ‘ba’ and care

Nonaka et al. (2001) describe the essence of an organisation as a knowledge creation entity. According to Nonaka et al., ‘organizations create and define problems and develop new knowledge to solve the problems by interacting with their environment to reshape the environment and the organizations themselves’ (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 13). I do not use the concept of organisation in this study but refer to congregations as workplaces and as potential knowledge creation entities. Even though I do not discuss whether a congregation is an organisation, I use Nonaka et al.’s (2001) framework of knowledge creation because the theories provide 1) a theoretical approach to analysing knowledge creation in workplaces, and 2) the theories can be placed within the socio-cultural theoretical framework with an emphasis on interactions with the environment and between people (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 19). As mentioned in the introduction, Nonaka et al.’s framework of knowledge creation is divided into four modes of a spiralling process: socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalisation (SECI). I have chosen Nonaka et al.’s framework and not Engeström’s expansive learning (Engeström, 2001) because these four modes provide a structure by which to understand the dynamic nature of knowledge creation. In addition, Nonaka et al.’s theoretical framework of knowledge creation also includes facilitating relationships and dialogues, development of a shared platform of knowledge for the entire organisation, ‘ba’ (see 4.6.2), and care (Nonaka et al., 2001; von Krogh et al., 2001a), which expand Engeström’s theoretical framework of CHAT and expansive learning. In particular, the expansion of ba and care emerged as important because these expansions corresponded with my empirical material. Engeström’s approach appears to provide relatively limited resources to address the role of care in the interactions in the knowledge creation process.

4.6.1 SECI: the process of knowledge creation

The first mode in the SECI process is socialisation, which emphasises the importance of joint activities and physical proximity in capturing knowledge. Joint activities and physical proximity both facilitate shared experiences and the creation of context-specific knowledge (Nonaka et al., 2001, pp. 14-16). For example, knowledge can be acquired through deacons’ home visits or in their meetings with other professionals. Deacons can also gain new knowledge from socialisation with people in diaconal activities such as café gatherings in the congregational building, candle-lighting ceremonies, prayer sessions and pastoral care. What is learned through interactions in the socialisation process may

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42 Organisations can also be understood as a social system that is deliberately constructed to solve special tasks and realize certain goals (“En organisasjon er et sosialt system som er bevisst konstruert for å løse spesielle oppgaver og realisere bestemte mål”) (Thorsvik et al., 2007, p. 13). Jacobsen and Thorsvik are referring here to Etzioni’s book, Moderne organisasjoner (1982).

43 I limit myself from discussing whether a congregation is an organisation and conduct a pragmatic use of Nonaka et al.’s understanding of organisations to analyse knowledge creation in congregations as a workplace and a potential knowledge creation entity.

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initiate new questions, thoughts, ideas and reflections. This mode is also described as empathising with the field (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 18).

The second mode, the *externalisation* process, emphasises dialogue and reflection with other members of the staff. The goal is that knowledge can be shared by others in the staff community, even though the thoughts, ideas, questions, reflections and experiences may be inadequate and inconsistent (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 16). Deacons’ meetings with staff members are opportunities to share challenges, reflections and ideas and to develop conceptions from experiences with other professionals, or, for instance, the critical couple Deacon Katie had to exclude from the dinner group (3.1). This mode is characterised by conceptualising, or creating *shared* concepts (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 18).

The third mode, *combination*, is the convergence of knowledge from socialisation and externalisation to create more complex and systematic explicit knowledge. Knowledge is exchanged and combined through, for example, documents, meetings and conversations via telephone and the internet. In this mode, communication, diffusion and systematisation of knowledge are crucial elements (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 16). The combination mode defines the concept of ‘connecting’, or the transfer of knowledge to others in the congregations (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 18).

Finally, *internalisation* is characterised by learning by doing, or operational knowledge, and this is the process of embodying new knowledge and sharing it within the organisation. Internalised knowledge is used to broaden and expand the existing knowledge of the members in the congregation. The knowledge created in each mode interacts with the others in a continuously escalating process of knowledge creation (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 17).

The SECI process was originally developed to describe the conversion of tacit and explicit knowledge across the four modes, from tacit in the socialisation mode to explicit in the externalisation and combination modes and finally to tacit in the internalisation mode. Figure 4.3 shows Nonaka et al.’s SECI process.
In this study, I use the tool-mediated understanding of knowledge instead because the same tool can mediate various kinds of knowledge, both explicit and tacit (Engeström, 2008, pp. 128-129). Thus, with regard to Engeström’s notion of multi-mediation, I argue that tool-mediated knowledge in every dimension could be both tacit and explicit (Nygaard et al., 2013).45

Instead of referring to tacit knowledge, I refer to knowledge gaps, situations for which professionals seek new solutions, insight or knowledge. Based on my use of the model, Figure 4.4 illustrates the SECI process in which the deacons move between the four modes to seek new solutions.

44 The concepts are presented in American spelling in the model.
45 Together with Geir Afdal, I have written the article, ‘Deacons’ professional practice as knowledge creation’, in which we argue for the tool-mediated understanding of knowledge instead of the tacit and explicit understanding in the SECI model.
The SECI process takes place on a platform through which knowledge can be shared, recreated and amplified through interactions with others (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 27). The four modes facilitate a systematic and structured analytical approach to deacons’ knowledge creation processes. The creative processes in congregations, however, are seldom so structured. Knowledge gaps can emerge in every mode, and they do not start exclusively in the socialisation mode. Nevertheless, I chose to start the theoretical framework in the socialisation mode because in the empirical material, deacons’ socialisation with participants emerges as the main interaction. Engeström has criticised Nonaka et al. for taking the initial existence of a clear problem for granted (Engeström, 2008, p. 124). However, I do not agree that Nonaka et al.’s model (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 18) takes the existence of a clear problem for granted because I believe that the socialisation mode allows one to search for problems—or tasks—that are relevant to a particular context. Moreover, the other modes in the SECI process open up discussion and the development of tasks.

4.6.2 The platform of knowledge creation: ‘ba’

As mentioned in the introduction, effective knowledge creation requires the concentration of knowledge in a particular time and space. This space and time is theorised as ‘ba’, a platform where knowledge is created, shared and exploited. Ba is not necessarily a physical space but a context that harbours meaning. Ba can be physical, such as in an office; virtual, as with email; mental, which includes shared experiences, values and ideas; or a combination of all three. The most important aspect of ba is the interaction between individuals and between an individual and the environment in the

Figure 4.4: The SECI model adjusted to my use of it in this thesis
process of creating knowledge. Thus, ba is the common time and space created through emerging relationships among the individuals and groups who are creating knowledge (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 19). Ba provides a theoretical focus on deacons’ eventual platforms of interaction for knowledge creation with others. While ba can be a useful concept, care can describe the interactions even more profoundly.

4.6.3 Bringing care into knowledge creation
In the notion of care discussed by von Krogh (von Krogh, 1998; von Krogh et al., 2001a, 2001b), I found a more profound and articulated notion of interactions in the knowledge creation process. Von Krogh et al. elaborate on how presence or absence of care will affect the knowledge created in ba (von Krogh et al., 2001a, pp. 38-49); Von Krogh et al. further argue that the mutual exchange of ideas, thoughts and opinions between individuals is based upon the extent of care in the relationship (von Krogh et al., 2001b, p. 73). A mutually beneficial relationship may speed up the communication process and enable people to share and discuss their ideas and concerns more freely, even though the new ideas, thoughts and opinions may be still inadequate, inconsistent and/or insufficient (von Krogh, 1998, p. 136). In contrast, unreliable behaviour, ongoing competition, imbalanced giving and receiving of information and a ‘that’s not my job’ attitude destroy effective sharing of unsure knowledge. Thus, effective knowledge creation focuses in particular on how people relate to each other (von Krogh, 1998, p. 136). In my study, I relate the concept of care to both congregations and educational practices.

4.6.4 Understanding care in knowledge creation
Von Krogh has identified five dimensions of care related to knowledge creation: reciprocal trust, active empathy, good access to help and advice, minimal condemnation and a ‘can-do spirit’ (von Krogh, 1998, p. 137). These dimensions provide a theoretical notion of care that can prove helpful in analysing deacons’ knowledge creation processes.

In interactions with other people, trust or mistrust can be established. In some ways, trust can compensate for the knowledge that may be lacking. You may not know the other person’s motives, interests or personal background, but the interaction can be characterised by the sharing of knowledge because of mutual trust (von Krogh, 1998, p. 137).

The second dimension, active empathy, makes it possible to assess and understand what the other person needs. According to von Krogh (1998), empathy is a proactive attempt to put oneself in another’s shoes, seeking to understand his or her particular situation, interests, skills, future opportunities and challenges through active questioning and acute observations. The emphasis is on dialogue rather than on advocating only for one’s own point of view. However, the real needs of the other can be hidden because of certain ‘feeling rules’ in the organisation (von Krogh, 1998, p. 137). This might include rules such as ‘long-term frustration should not be mentioned to colleagues,’ or ‘conflicting viewpoints are best dealt with by dissembling them’ (von Krogh, 1998, pp. 137-138).
These rules might encourage concealing one’s true motives, feelings or beliefs. Feeling rules may create effective workplaces, but they may also constrain development because learning processes may produce both positive and negative emotions that might need sharing (von Krogh, 1998, p. 138).

The third dimension is access to concrete help. Help has to be directly accessible for those who need it. The fourth dimension is minimal condemnation. Knowledge creation includes experimentation, and rough condemnation can constrain the creative process. Finally, care in organisational relationships is also apparent in the courage and can-do spirit members show each other (von Krogh, 1998, p. 138).

4.6.5 What happens to knowledge creation in high- and low-care organisational relations?

High-level care relationships in an organisation include all five dimensions (von Krogh et al., 2001b, p. 73); (von Krogh et al., 2001a, pp. 30-49). Low-care relationships are those in which there is little propensity to help, colleagues are not accessible to one another, there is little empathy and there is widespread condemnation (von Krogh et al., 2001a, pp. 38-40; 2001b, p. 74). Depending on the extent of care, the knowledge creation processes in an organisation will differ considerably (von Krogh et al., 2001b, p. 73).

High care in knowledge creation processes promotes deeper relationships in which uncertain knowledge is shared more often. The deeper relationships can become a resource in the process of knowledge creation. In contrast, in low-care relationships, only certain knowledge is discussed explicitly, while doubts are kept hidden (von Krogh et al., 2001b, p. 73). The members may try to capture the knowledge instead of sharing it voluntarily because individuals are left to themselves. Further, low-care organisational relationships affect knowledge sharing in two ways. First, a member would have to demonstrate his or her expertise in order to establish his or her value to the organisation. Second, as a consequence, the knowledge must be expressed in a legitimate way; arguments have to be ‘bullet proof’, explicit and consistent. The knowledge made explicit to the others would be the end result of the process, and the challenges in the processes would not be shared with others (von Krogh, 1998, p. 140). In high-care relationships, it is easier to express the emotional aspects of an experience by using a different vocabulary such as ‘my intuition says this will be great’, or ‘my sense is that this will be difficult’ (von Krogh, 1998, p. 142).

Von Krogh’s (1998) notion of high-care and low-care relationships expands upon Engeström’s (2008) concept of contradictions as crucial starting points for the advancement of knowledge (Engeström, 2008, p. 27). Even though contradictions are not seen as conflicts but rather are interpreted as tensions or disturbances that provoke the search for new knowledge, I argue that not every contradiction results in effective knowledge creation, nor do a large number of contradictions necessarily encourage this process. There may be contradictions that are destructive to the collective creative process, such as contradictions that emerge from unreliable behaviours, ongoing competition.
and imbalanced giving and receiving of information. According to von Krogh, in unreliable interactions, people tend to capture knowledge more than share it (von Krogh, 1998, p. 139). Furthermore, I argue that care can both decrease and increase contradictions; it can decrease contradictions by resolving conflicts and possible tensions, and it can increase contradictions by creating a milieu in which the tensions or disturbances for new knowledge are shared and not kept hidden in the collective process.

### 4.6.6 Critical reflections on care

There are some limits to care. First, care is based on each individual’s own understanding of need for help, and this can be difficult for others to grasp. Second, care can be misused as a manipulation strategy (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 48). Gaining a person’s trust makes it is easier to lead that person according to one’s own interests. One example is Kleiven’s development of the ‘power of trust’ phenomenon (tilitsmakht) in his research on the sexual abuse of people in Christian communities in Norway. By gaining trust, pastors and other leaders could establish abusive relationships (Kleiven, 2008). Care can also be misused as ‘over-helping’ others, making them dependent and, at the same time, making them look incompetent (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 48).

To sum up the notion of care in knowledge creation processes, von Krogh (1998, 2001a, 2001b) provides a significant theoretical perspective that I used to expand the socio-cultural approach to knowledge creation. I find the expansion with theories of care valuable because the socio-cultural perspective in Engeström’s (2008) approach appears to provide relatively limited resources for addressing the role of care in the interactions of knowledge creation processes. In Engeström’s framework, contradictions, tensions, ruptures and disturbances constitute the mediating elements of knowledge creation and expansive learning (Engeström, 2008, p. 27). I use von Krogh’s (2001b) notion of care to argue that the extent of care in relationships is also a mediating element in knowledge creation processes.

### 4.7 Summary of theoretical perspectives

To answer the research question, I have established a theoretical framework within the socio-cultural paradigm. Engeström’s (2008) notion of activity theory based on Vygotskian et al.’s (1978) trialogical approach is a crucial theoretical background for understanding deacons’ knowledge creation. Deacons’ knowledge creation processes, as collective creative processes, cannot be understood without examining interactions in communities. As foreground theoretical concepts in this study, I have used relational agency, professional knowledge, tool mediation, knowledge creation in education and work situations, ba and care. In the following, I elaborate on how I have operationalised the theories in light of the research questions for each article.
4.8 Operationalisation of the theories: the theoretical frameworks in each article

How have I used the theories as a theoretical framework in each article? The theories helped me to establish a theoretical framework in which to answer the overall research question, broken down into analytical questions related to each article.

4.8.1 Article 1

As mentioned in 1.1, the research question for Article 1 is as follows: What characterises professional knowledge creation and care in the curriculum texts? To answer the research question, Geir Afdal and I combined the theories of Hakkarainen et al. (2004), focusing on knowledge creation in education, within the meaning of von Krogh’s (1998, 2001a, 2001b) notion of care. First, we elaborated on a theoretical framework that included the perspectives on knowledge creation in education. This enabled us to analyse curriculum documents with a focus on how students were prepared for possible knowledge creation processes. The perspectives provided structured steps for analysing the collaborative processes of knowledge creation in educational documents, and we formed two analytical questions related to these perspectives:

1. Which professional contexts are created?
2. How do the curricula provide the students with question-driven dialogues, as well as their own generation of theories, scientific knowledge and critical evaluations?

Second, von Krogh’s notion of care was used as a theoretical contribution on how care is understood in relation to knowledge creation in the curricula. Care appeared as the overall and primary educational aim in both curricula. We established a theoretical framework for analysing the relationship between knowledge creation and care in the curricula, combining the ideas of Hakkarainen et al. (2004), and von Krogh (1998, 2001a, 2001b). We formed one question reflecting a theoretical combination of knowledge creation and care:

3. How is care used in the curricula, and how is the relationship between care and knowledge creation understood?

4.8.2 Article 2

In Article 2, I asked the following: What characterises the professional knowledge creation of deacons and the expression of care within the working community of the Church of Norway? To answer that question, I established a theoretical framework combining Nonaka et al.’s (2004) of knowledge creation in organisations notion, the SECI model and ba with von Krogh’s notion of care (1998, 2001a, 2001b). First, the four modes in the SECI process provided a structured approach to the empirical process of deacons’ knowledge creation with colleagues. These modes allowed me to analyse both the processes that followed and those that differed from the SECI process. Even though the four modes represent a structured approach to creative processes, they also opened up patterns that
provided empirical variation of the SECI process and expanded the theory. Further, the concept of ba allowed the analysis of the interactions with colleagues, particularly regarding whom, where, when and what characterised these interactions. The five dimensions of care facilitated a structured theoretical approach to a concept that is difficult to define. Even though they cannot say everything about care, they provided a significant perspective on care related to knowledge creation processes with colleagues. More precisely, the theoretical variation of high and low care enabled the creation of a nuanced framework which empirically characterised the relationships in the four modes and in the ba. In other words, the combination of the four modes, ba and care provided both a structured and open theoretical framework for the empirical material. Finally, this theoretical framework allowed me to empirically analyse 1) how deacons create knowledge in their everyday work interactions with colleagues, 2) what characterises the expression of care in the interactions, as seen through the experiences of the deacons and 3) and the relationship between the extent of care in the relationships and the knowledge created.

The analytical questions are as follows:

1. What characterises the SECI processes in deacons’ working community?
2. What characterises the knowledge creation processes and the expression of care in the SECI processes?

4.8.3 Article 3

In Article 3, I asked the following: What characterises the modes of tool-mediated knowledge in use that can be established in the deacons’ interactions with the participants? I created a theoretical framework from Engeström’s trialogical approach (2008), with a particular focus on deacons’ use of tools in their interactions with participants. The trialogical approach is a core concept in the knowledge creation metaphor of Paavola and Hakkarainen, which they argue could be called ‘the artefact creation of learning’ (Paavola et al., 2005, p. 546). This emphasis on artefacts, or tools, allowed me to emphasise deacons’ professional knowledge as being tool mediated (Nerland, 2012, p. 28). More specifically, the trialogical approach enabled me to analyse what kind of tools deacons use and how they use them, what they create and the purpose of their use in their professional practice. Thus, the theories of tool mediation provided an analytical framework of 1) what kind of knowledge resources deacons use in their interactions with participants, 2) what characterises deacons’ use of those tools and their modes of use and 3) what characterises the purpose of the use of these tools in the deacons’ interactions with participants. Von Krogh’s (1998, 2001a,b) concept of care was not addressed in this article, but the theory of tool mediation clarified what characterised both the processes and goals of deacons in the caring ministry. Based on the operationalisation of the theories, the analytical questions in Article 3 are as follows:

1. Which tools are used?
2. What and how do they mediate?
3. What characterises the tool-mediated patterns in the deacons’ interactions with participants?

In essence, the socio-cultural theories of knowledge creation and care helped me establish a theoretical framework with which to answer the overall research questions when broken down into analytical questions in each article. In the next chapter, I outline the methodological approach to answering the research questions.
5 Methodological Reflections

In this chapter, I explain and argue for decisions made regarding the methodology chosen to answer the research questions. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, this study aims to contribute to an extended understanding of deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care. The research process has been an abductive interplay (G. Afdal, 2010, p. 114) (see below) between theory, material and methodology, which have mutually shaped each other. I conducted an ethnographic case study that included the collection of documents, participative observations and informal and semi-structured qualitative interviews to answer my research questions. The structure of this chapter is as follows: First, I describe the research strategy and ethnographic case study I employ. Second, I describe in detail the sampling strategy. Third, I outline my access to the field and my preparation for the fieldwork. Fourth, I outline the process of establishing the material by focusing on my role as a researcher entering the field, and on the field observations, informal interviews and semi-structured qualitative interviews that I conducted. Finally, I describe the preparation for data analysis and reflect on the quality criteria.

5.1 Research strategy: an ethnographic case study

The research strategy that I use in this study is an ethnographic case study. Ethnography is a multi-method approach that is based on direct observations of the phenomenon to be studied (Silverman, 2011b, p. 53) (see 5.1.2). The concept case study refers first and foremost to the choice of what is to be studied (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301). In the following section, I first outline why a case study is a good strategy to answer my research questions and how I understand case studies as research strategy. Second, I explain why and how I understand and use an ethnographical research strategy in this thesis.

5.1.1 The case study

I have chosen a case study research strategy in this project for several reasons. First, case studies may be connected to other research strategies, like ethnography (Fetterman, 2010, p. 1). Second, the use of case studies includes an emphasis on an individual unit’s (a person or community) relation to the environment (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301). According to Flyvbjerg, in the study of human interactions, only context-dependent knowledge appears to exist (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 302). This corresponds to the socio-cultural paradigm of this project (see 4.1). In particular, Flyvbjerg’s approach opens up for analysis how the material and conceptual tools in the social environment are negotiated in the interactions in deacons’ practices. Third, case studies also provide a demarcation of the unit of analysis. In my study, the daily professional work of five deacons’ in the Church of Norway constitutes such a demarcation. Thus, fourth, case studies might comprise detailed, rich and varied material. These deacons’ interactions with people and materials in various social environments over

46 To a large degree, I have used Flyvbjerg’s approach to case studies because his notion of the analytical unit corresponds with a socio-cultural paradigm and my empirical and theoretical interests (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301).
time comprised detailed descriptions of the empirical material (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301). Finally, case studies facilitate the analysis of processes and developments over time (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301).

In my study, the five deacons are perceived as a whole, as one case, not five (Flyvbjerg, 2007, p. 390; Yin, 2014, p. 3). The reason for this is my analytical approach to the material. I do not use a comparative research strategy and am not conducting a comparative study of the five deacons, viewing them as five separate cases. Instead, I approach the material that I obtained on the five deacons as one in-depth study and analyse it for thematic patterns that emerge in the case as a whole (Bryman, 2012, p. 578; Flyvbjerg, 2007, p. 402; 2011, p. 301). Specifically, this case study refers to the hundreds of instances and situations that I have observed in which the deacons are situated. Therefore, I do not use the term ‘case’ when I refer to segments in the data which I analyse (Silverman, 2011b, p. 30). Instead, I refer to these segments as ‘situations’ within the overall case study.

5.1.2 An ethnographical approach

In order to outline why and how ethnography has helped me to understand the complexity of the deacons’ professional knowledge creation, I have established four perspectives: 1) abduction, 2) the multi-method approach, 3) the rich sources of data and 4) giving voice to people in their context.

First, my ethnographic approach can be described as abductive, which implies a dynamic interplay between theories and material during all the different phases and parts of the research process (Silverman, 2011a, p. 149). Both theory and data in the ethnographical method are mutually dependent (Alvesson, 2009, p. 85). The abductive process was important in answering my research questions because throughout the process, I continuously explored the material using theories of knowledge creation and care and revised the theoretical approach as a result of analysing the data. Thus, this ethnographic case study is both theoretically and empirically oriented, as the theories guided the analytical focus and the material expanded the theories (G. Afdal, 2010, p. 114).

Second, the pivotal method for establishing material data in ethnographic research is participant observation (Silverman, 2011b, p. 69). Participant observation allowed me to study the deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care in their daily work situations as they occurred at various sites and over time (Hammersley et al., 2007, p. 3). The method is crucial to effective fieldwork as the researchers can immerse themselves in the lives of the people under study while maintaining a professional distance that allows for adequate observations (Fetterman, 2010, p. 37). However, the ethnographic methodology enabled me to engage in a multi-method approach involving document analysis, observations, interviews and informal interviews and the examination of both conceptual and material artefacts in daily work practices at various sites (Silverman, 2011a, pp. 111,161,229,274). To access material that I could not directly observe in the field, I included documents.

Interviewing is especially useful as a research method for accessing individuals’ attitudes and values, which cannot be observed (Silverman, 2011a, p. 167). A qualitative research interview is often described as a ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Smith, 2009, p. 57). In my study, the purpose is
informed by the research question, and I used semi-structured qualitative interviews to establish the material (see 5.5). Semi-structured interviews are verbal approximations of a questionnaire that includes explicit research goals, emphasising a broad approach to the research questions (Fetterman, 2010, p. 40). The interviews were characterised by my list of questions and the interview guide, but the deacons had flexibility in how to reply. The emphasis was on the deacons’ views (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). I conducted three semi-structured interviews with each deacon: 1) one introductory interview (5.5.1) (see Appendix 5), 2) one emphasising the knowledge resources at the deacons’ office (5.5.2), and 3) a closing semi-structured interview (5.5.3) (Appendix 6). I used also informal interviews (5.5.3), which did not involve a particular order of questions and progressed much as a conversation, following the perspectives of both the deacons and me (Fetterman, 2010, p. 40). However, the informal interviews differed from a conversation because they included a mixture of conversation and questions emerging from my research focus (Fetterman, 2010, p. 41).

Thus, the multi-method approach within an ethnographical case study enabled me to obtain rich incidents in a demarcated material, both regarding the observed interactions of the deacons in their daily work situations at various sites and over time and what could not be directly observed, such as thoughts, values, reflections and documents.

Third, the ethnographic approach allows data to be obtained from a range of sources (5.4) (Hammersley et al., 2007, p. 3). The sources that I used to establish the material for this thesis were field notes, recordings of the informal conversations and semi-structured qualitative interviews—which were transcribed—photos and the deacons’ drawings, which were all related to their daily experiences and my research focus. Moreover, ethnography gives voice to people in their own local context, relying on a thick description of events (Fetterman, 2010, p. 1). Over time, the small-scale approach facilitated thick descriptions and in-depth studies that were relevant to my research focus and that carried the deacons’ voices (Alvesson, 2011, p. 108).

To summarise, the ethnographic case study provides research material in relation to the context (Flyvbjerg, 2007, p. 391) that is relevant to the socio-cultural paradigm, my theoretical focus and the research question. Consequently, the ethnographical case study approach enables me to understand complex social phenomena through rich sources of material (Yin, 2014, p. 4).

### 5.2 Sampling strategies

The overall sampling strategy that I used was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling enabled me to place my research question at the heart of the sampling considerations (Bryman, 2012, p. 416). Furthermore, purposive sampling responds to the ethnographical case study methodology because it concerns not only people but also documents and other types of materials Bryman, 2012 #203@427). In the following, I present the sampling strategy chronologically according to the research questions in my articles.
I have chosen to sample two principal units of material, taking people, materials and contexts in consideration: (a) documents concerning deacon education and curricula to analyse how students may be prepared for knowledge creation processes and care in their future work life (Article 1), and (b) deacons in their daily working contexts (Article 2 and 3).

5.2.1 Sampling strategy for the documents: Article 1

The purpose of document sampling was to identify material that could answer the research question of how diaconal education programmes search to prepare students for the knowledge creation processes and care in their future work lives. As mentioned in the introduction, I consider curriculum texts to be valuable sources of what is considered important professional knowledge. Curriculum texts are sites of negotiations between, for instance, research, church policy and fields of practice. I did not see the curriculum texts as sources for teaching or learning in diaconal education as such, but as one critical site where professional knowledge is constructed.

I chose to compare curriculum texts from two countries, Sweden and Norway. The sampling strategy was information-oriented selection (Flyvbjerg, 2010, p. 79). The purpose was to maximise the utility of information from small samples, such as two curricula (Flyvbjerg, 2010, p. 79). However, comparing the curricula of different countries necessitated a sampling process whereby cultural and conceptual equalities and differences were thoroughly considered (Crossley et al., 2003, p. 41). Thus, it was critical to identify the similarities and differences that could establish an interesting and relevant analysis of how the curricula prepare students for knowledge creation. The Swedish and the Norwegian curricula are similar in that they both provide formal requirements for deacons to work in the church, and yet they differ regarding the role of deacons and the length of the study programme. As mentioned in Section 2.3, together with pastors and bishops, deacons are a part of the orders of the ordained ministry in Sweden (Den Svenska Kyrkan, 1990; Svenska Kyrkan, 2013), which is different from Norway, where deacons are not a part of the orders of the ordained ministry. Moreover, a two-year master’s degree is formally required in Norway, whereas only one year of education is required in Sweden. In fact, variation in the length of the educational programme was considered a possible challenge in making this comparison. However, Norway is thus far the only country to require a master’s degree for work as deacon in the Protestant Church, and a comparison with equivalent curricula is not possible. Although other countries do provide diaconal master’s degrees, these are conducted in cooperation with Norwegian educational institutions and are therefore unsuitable for comparison with the Norwegian curriculum.

The Norwegian curriculum was chosen from Diakonhjemmet University College because of Diakonhjemmet’s crucial role in, first, research on diakonia, second, the distribution of diaconal knowledge through education and seminars and, third, its collaboration with other international diaconal education institutions. Furthermore, we chose to analyse the curriculum from 2012/2013 because this reflects long-standing processes of elaborating curricula within Diakonhjemmet University College. The curriculum 2012/2013 was the last made before the merger with the
5.2.2 Sampling strategy for the deacons and their contexts: Articles 2 and 3

The overall purpose of this sampling strategy was to establish material data that could contribute to answer the research questions related to deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care in their daily work lives. The sampling process was conducted in two steps. The first step was characterised by the LETRA project’s overall sampling criteria, which included three relatively large congregations in the Church of Norway, featuring several groups of professionals and extensive activity programmes for church members. The geographic context of each congregation differed: the first was situated in a large city, the second in an average sized Norwegian town and the third in the countryside. However, the variation in geographic context was not emphasised in my study because all congregations had about the same number and types of professionals. The representation of various professionals and extensive active programmes was what mattered most in relation to my research question, not the geographic context.

The second step was conducted at the end of the period in which the three first deacons were observed. I doubted that the material that I established from the first sampling was sufficient to answer my research question because none of the first three deacons in my sampled material had a master’s degree in diakonia. My feeling was that a master’s degree might influence deacons’ knowledge creation and care. Thus, to ensure purposive sampling and that considerable variety in the resulting sample would be available to answer the research question, I continued the sampling process (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). Though not intended, the first three deacons had between 10-15 years of experience as a deacon in the Church of Norway.

In my second sampling I used the same criteria from the first sampling, but expanded the criteria by including deacons with a master’s degree in diakonia. Nevertheless, I did not use the sample comprising the last two deacons to compare the possible differences in deacons’ knowledge creation and care dependent on the variation in education levels. Instead, the expanded material was established to ensure variation in the data material (Bryman, 2012, p. 419).

In addition, I had to make some pragmatic choices because of the time consuming process of ethnographical work. Thus, I chose the deacon with whom I conducted the pilot interview because I knew that she had completed a master’s degree, and I chose another deacon with a master’s degree.

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47 In the fall of 2014, the diaconal education programme at Ersta Sköndal closed down. Those wanting to be a deacon must first be educated in another field, for instance, as a nurse or social worker, and then can completely the last year of pastoral education with pastors, religious educators and church musicians.
whom I had already met during my participant observations. These deacons had approximately the
same length of work experience in the Church of Norway as the three first deacons. I wanted to reduce
the expanded sampling criteria to concentrate on having a master’s degree but without a significant
variation in work experience in the church.

Finally, I did not include gender as a sampling criterion in this study. My focus is on deacons’
knowledge creation processes and care, but not on possible gender issues in knowledge creation and
care. The final sample included three women and two men.

5.2.3 Presentation of the participants’ educational background
I have chosen to present the deacons educational background and length of work in the Church of
Norway in a table because it is the simplest way to provide an overview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deacons</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Length of work in the Church of Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Social worker&lt;br&gt;Nurse&lt;br&gt;Diakonal education acquired before 2005</td>
<td>10–15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>Theological education&lt;br&gt;Diakonal education acquired before 2005</td>
<td>10–15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Child welfare and international developmental studies.&lt;br&gt;Diakonal education acquired before 2005&lt;br&gt;Master’s degree in Diakonia</td>
<td>10–15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>Social worker&lt;br&gt;Diakonal education acquired before 2005&lt;br&gt;Master’s degree in Diakonia</td>
<td>10–15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>Theological education&lt;br&gt;Diakonal education acquired before 2005</td>
<td>10–15 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.1: The deacons’ educational background and length of work in the Church of Norway

5.3 Establishing the data through fieldwork
In this section, I elaborate on my role as researcher, the establishing of data through field observations
and semi-structured qualitative interviews, and my departure from the field.

However, a few things are worth mentioning with regard to the processes used before I
established the data through fieldwork. I gained access to the field as a member of the LETRA project
visiting various congregations and by presenting the research project and its purpose. I gained formal
access through a written agreement with the congregations. Besides spending a year studying theories
and having group discussions on theories and methodology with other researchers in the LETRA
project, I conducted a pilot interview with a deacon, not only to adjust questions but also to gain some
experience in interviewing (Bryman, 2012, p. 474). This enabled me to adjust questions relating to
deacons’ knowledge resources. Finally, I conducted a one-day mini-pilot fieldwork to gain an impression of what participant observations I might make.

5.3.1 Entering the field: my role as researcher

Ethnography has been criticised as being a highly subjective method in the sense that it is sensitive to the researcher’s attitudes and perceptions (Silverman, 2011b, p. 28). The role of the researcher as a person and his or her integrity is essential to the quality of the scientific knowledge that is produced. In addition, the researcher’s integrity is crucial for the ethical decisions that are made during a qualitative inquiry (Kvale, 2009, p. 74). Below, I outline how my role in terms of ‘proximity and distance’ before I entered the field (Repstad, 2007).

Regarding proximity to the field, I am a nurse and educated as a deacon. I have completed the diaconal education that was required both before and after 2005 (see 1.4). I have worked with international diakonia in slum areas in Ecuador from 2002–2005. After completing my master’s degree, I taught diakonia and created diaconal modules for the curriculum at the diaconal nursing school of Diakonova University College. To illustrate my formal background and composite role as a researcher in the diakonial field, I have created Figure 5.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher in diakonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaconal work experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaconal education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experiences as nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.2: My multi-levelled approach to the field as researcher

Figure 5.2 illustrates my multi-levelled approach to the field as a researcher. To some extent, I think that my proximity to the field could both open and close in establishing the material. I think that my background could contribute to establishing a ba (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 18), understood as a platform of interaction with thedeaons. On the other hand, the same platform of interaction could also be influenced by familiar knowledge that could make me ‘blind’ (Wadel, 1991, p. 19).

Another risk is over-identification (Bryman, 2012, p. 445). Moreover, the deacons could also perceive of me as an expert. Fortunately, regarding the proximity to the field, I have not worked as a deacon in the Church of Norway or in other congregations. Overall, my proximity to the field needed to be balanced using strategies of distance. I used three strategies to obtain a balance over time between proximity and distance.

First, I regarded my role as that of a participant observer, with an emphasis on observation (Bryman, 2012, pp. 440-445). I wanted to focus as little as possible on my participation because I could have disturbed the deacons’ normal work interactions. I attempted to adopt the role of an
apprentice, one who is interested in knowing more about their daily practices (Wadel, 1991, p. 34). I emphasised early that they were the experts in the field, and that I was interested in their views in a broad sense.

Second, I emphasised the approach which, as Kvale argues, is significant to ethical research: a mastering of thick descriptions in relation to context, narratives, examples and communities (Kvale, 2009, pp. 78-79). I argue that thick descriptions can contribute to accentuating the deacons own activities and thoughts. The theories and the multi-approach methods that I used provided thick descriptions about context, narratives, examples of everyday activities and relevant communities. Third, the abductive approach provided me with an analytical distance from the empirical field, helping me to balance my observations with my theoretical focuses. The theoretical focus continuously reminded me of the research question and adjusted what I saw in the material.

To summarise, my proximity to the field needed to be balanced using strategies of distance. I have emphasised my participant observation as a ‘participant-as-observer’ (Bryman, 2012, pp. 440-445), using thick descriptions and an abductive approach.

5.3.2 Establishing data through field observations

I observed the deacons’ in their daily activities from the early morning to the end of their working day. 1) I observed them working alone in their office while they were, for instance, reading e-mails, preparing meetings, writing documents and answering/taking phone calls. 2) I saw the deacons interacting with participants. These activities included, for example, offering pastoral care, conducting prayer meetings, running diaconal cafes that offer cheap food, creating communities for elderly people, interacting with people struggling with various issues in their lives and doing home visits. 3) I observed the deacons interacting with the staff members of the congregation, engaging in small talk, having meetings and breaks and praying with others. 4) The deacons also cooperated with other professions outside the congregations, and I observed meetings with local health service providers and city or municipality administration. 5) Finally, I observed the deacons interacting with other deacons in local groups, in groups with all the deacons in the same city and on a study trip abroad.48

Through the observations, I could see, listen to and sense how the deacons interacted in various sites; the observations allowed me to investigate with whom, where and with what types of conceptual and material tools they engaged in in different contexts. In this manner, I could also observe how the deacons used their tools in their interactions at various sites. In the process of following the deacons’ in their natural professional setting, I established a series of ‘representations of the field’ as field notes, informal interviews, photographs, recordings and memories (Denzin et al., 2005, p. 3). In the following section, I outline how I made the representations and established the material of the deacons’ daily work with an emphasis on my research focus.

48 I also observed deacons working with volunteers, administrating the work of the volunteers and having collaborative meetings with them, but I have limited the focus in this study to the participants and colleagues.
5.4 Representations of the observations of the deacons’ daily work

When making the representations, I used ethnographic resources such as a pen and paper, a laptop, a digital voice recorder and a camera.

5.4.1 Field notes

Field notes were critical in helping my memory, and they formed much of my data. In the following, I describe the types of field notes that I wrote, as well as how and when I wrote them. My process of taking field notes was affected by having a relatively clear research question before I entered the field. However, taking field notes is a sensitive enterprise. Having a laptop or a notebook and pencil in hand involves the risk of making people self-conscious; thus, my presence could influence their activities more than necessary (Bryman, 2012, p. 448). To deal with this risk, I settled on the use of four types of field notes: mental notes, rough notes, and full field notes (Bryman, 2012, p. 450), and I wrote notes of my ‘findings of the day’.

Mental notes refer to observing and memorising without writing anything down. These were particularly useful when it was inappropriate to be seen making notes (Bryman, 2012, p. 450), such as during coffee breaks, prayer sessions or a funeral that I observed. Rough notes were brief notes that I wrote to help me remember events that needed to be written up later (Bryman, 2012, p. 450). For instance, I wrote down short phrases, quotations and key notes when I observed the deacons in their movement between various activities such as from the church to the nursing home for elderly people or public offices. Full field notes were detailed notes that I made as soon as possible (Bryman, 2012, p. 450), normally during the conversation with the deacons in their offices. Some field notes were handwritten, whereas others were written on a laptop.

The type of resource I used depended on the setting, specifically where I was, with whom I was and what my role was at the time (Hammersley et al., 2007, p. 141). Numerous times, I felt that writing by hand was less disruptive than using the laptop, for example, during one-to-one dialogues, when vulnerable people were involved, or when I observed one deacon leading a pastoral care group. I asked the deacons beforehand what type of writing sources they thought that the people we would meet would be comfortable with, and I also asked the people in the situation if the suggested writing resources were acceptable. However, establishing a balance between avoiding disruption and prioritising the time for writing field notes was crucial in establishing material that was as rich as possible while still upholding ethical considerations. On the one hand, without ethical awareness, I would have lost access over time to the field that I was researching. On the other hand, being too sensitive to such considerations could also have hindered my establishing of field notes in valuable situations.

I also wrote down my personal reflections about what I observed (Bryman, 2012, p. 447), and I created a rubric called ‘findings of the day’. The emphasis on these findings forced me to reflect on what I had observed, which could be new, or expand what I had already seen. Moreover, it facilitated
my reflection on the day’s observations in relation to earlier observations and findings across all the deacons’ daily practices and my awareness of the need to verify findings in future observations.

In fact, establishing nuanced field notes was one of the most crucial enterprises of this thesis: without reliable field notes, the thesis would have lost credibility.

5.4.2 Audio recordings, photos and drawings

To establish material that was as rich and as purposeful as possible, I also employed audio recording. I used an audio recorder as often as I could, normally when I was alone with the deacons, interviewing them or conducting informal conversations. Audio recording provided material that was not influenced by the limitations in my ability to write everything down or my selection of what to write down. However, the audio recorder only ‘listens’ to the material. Thus, I also wrote down what I saw and sensed.

5.4.3 Informal interviews

During my observations, I also initiated informal interviews. The questions that I asked were not predetermined, nor were the same questions asked of every deacon. Instead, the questions were adapted to provide a more flexible approach that allowed for reflection on the actual situation as close to the time and place in which it occurred as possible (Fetterman, 2010, p. 40).

Moreover, informal interviews were useful to ask questions about what was not done or said. For example, I observed some challenges that the deacons faced in their daily practices were not mentioned in the interviews; however, through observation, I noted incidents that were relevant to the knowledge creation processes. For example, I observed some staff members discussing what one deacon should do in his absence. They spoke using an informal tone, laughing and talking, and simultaneously deciding on tasks for the deacon. That observation led me to an informal interview asking the deacon about the cooperation with the staff. The question opened a completely new dimension in the field observations, and the deacon told me about numerous challenging experiences (see Article 2).

5.5 Establishing data through semi-structured qualitative interviews

As mentioned in section 5.1.2, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with each deacon. The purpose of all the interviews was to establish the deacons’ perceptions of their professional practice, with emphasis on knowledge creation and care.

More specifically, the purpose of the introductory interview was two-fold: to establish a dialogue where both the deacons and I could ask questions about the project and form an impression of the deacons’ daily work before beginning my observations. The ‘deacons’ office interviews’ were conducted to emphasise both the material and conceptual knowledge tools in their office. The final interview was a retrospective interview (Fetterman, 2010, p. 42). Its purpose was to summarise and communicate my observations to the deacons, reflect on the preliminary findings and conclude the
ethnographic observation period, asking the deacons how they had experienced my observation activities. All the semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed (Bryman, 2012, p. 482).

5.5.1 Introductory semi-structured qualitative interviews

What one plans and what one do may be different things. I attempted to follow Kvale’s criteria for becoming a successful interviewer (Kvale et al., 2009, pp. 177-178). I informed my interviewee in advance about how long the interview would take. I described the structure of the interview and my research interests; however, often, the interviews were more time consuming than I had initially predicted.

To establish rich material, I depended on the deacons to provide detailed answers. To provide detailed answers, I asked open-ended questions that allowed the deacons to interpret the questions and respond how they wanted to (Fetterman, 2010, p. 46) (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). I attempted to limit the questions according to a number of topics so that the conversation would flow adequately (Bryman, 2012, p. 473). The interview guide began with introductory questions (Bryman, 2012, p. 476), then proceeded to specific (Fetterman, 2010, p. 44) and concrete questions using common language such as ‘Could you tell me about what you do during the week?’ I tried to ask questions that were closely connected to practical matters in daily life. My intention was to contribute to dialogues that invited the deacons to describe their daily work without feeling that they were being theoretically or otherwise tested. To ensure that the material that I established was nuanced and detailed, I also asked probing questions (Bryman, 2012, p. 478), which are questions that follow up on what the interviewee has said, such as ‘Could you please give some examples?’ In addition, I used interpreting questions, where I searched to test my understanding of what they told me (Bryman, 2012, p. 478). As mentioned, sometimes I departed significantly from schedules and guides by asking follow-up questions and searching for rich, detailed answers to illuminate the deacons’ viewpoints (Bryman, 2012, p. 470).

I also endeavoured to be sensitive, giving the deacons time to finish speaking and listening to them attentively. I tried to become aware of inconsistencies in their replies, remembering what they said previously. I attempted to be ethically sensitive because I did not want to place undue pressure on the deacons in their everyday practice (Bryman, 2012, p. 479). Furthermore, I endeavoured to acknowledge what they said, saying, for example, ‘That was interesting’, ‘Tell me more about this’, or ‘Exciting’. The interview process became flexible (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). However, I asked all the same questions and used a similar guide interviewing each deacon.

5.5.2 The deacons’ office semi-structured qualitative interview

According to Hammersley and Atkinson, ethnographers can easily ignore the role of material artefacts (Hammersley et al., 2007, p. 133). To prevent this, I sought to be especially aware of the role of material tools. Such tools were emphasised through the theoretical focuses of fieldwork. Thus, in the middle of the observation period, I conducted another type of semi-structured interview, which emphasised the materials in the deacons’ office. I conducted the interviews, which were still
related to my research interests. I asked the deacons to show me the items that they had and used in their office.\textsuperscript{49} For instance, they showed me what types of literature and material tools they used in elderly people’s meetings or singing events for parents and their babies as well as binders, photos, chairs, table, candles, paper documents and computers. I took photos with my mobile phone, which I employed as an additional source to aid my memory.\textsuperscript{50} I used the digital voice recorder when they explained what, how, when and why they used various materials in their offices. The pictures show some examples of the materials in the deacons’ offices.

\textsuperscript{49} I did not use an interview guide because I had only the mentioned question as starting point.

\textsuperscript{50} Regarding the photos, I took also pictures of some places where the deacons worked as a memory aid. I did not take photos of people or private areas.
Figure 5.3: Some examples of the deacons’ tools at their offices. Picture 1: Sleeping bag and warm clothes for people living on the streets and the congregation’s flea market (picture reconstructed). Picture 2: Table, chairs, coffee cups and tissues, normal at all deacons’ offices (picture reconstructed). Picture 3: Romanian – Norwegian dictionary, mobile phone, notebook, picture of Jesus and his disciples (coloured people, not White people) and a candle. Picture 4: Some books; ‘Words in the Bible’, song, psalm and poetry books. Picture 5: Picture for sale at the congregation’s flea market, hammer and tool box for the volunteers, cash box with money from the flea market. The money was used to pay Elena in Article 3. Picture 6: A place for prayer. The deacons have given me permission to use these photos.
In addition, I asked the deacons to draw two maps to answer the following two questions: 1) ‘Could you please draw a map of who and what you experience as contributing to defining and deciding what diakonia is?’ 2) ‘Could you please draw a situation where you perceived that you have learned a lot? With whom and where did you use resources, and which ones? What was special with this situation?’ The drawings provided rich and detailed stories that were chosen as the most relevant stories in the deacons’ view (Bryman, 2012, p. 497). The drawing (Figure 5.4) is one example of the deacons’ answers for question 2 mentioned above. The words are translated into English.

**Figure 5.4: Drawing of one situation in which one deacon perceived that he learned a lot**

The visual material made it easier for me to create specifying and interpreting questions (Bryman, 2012, p. 478), such as ‘Could you say something more about what you mean by this figure?’ The drawing of the maps represented a reconstruction of events because I asked the deacons to recollect how specific series of events had unfolded (Bryman, 2012, p. 495). I used the maps in the coding process, and they gave me valuable indications on what was important to the deacons.

### 5.5.3 Closing semi-structured interviews and when to leave the field

The interview guide (see Appendix 6) was informed by the preliminary findings that emerged from my field observations. The questions were still open ended, specific, probing and specifying, though closely related to concrete observations in the field. Moreover, the questions were related to potential
theoretical analysis interests. Even though I had experienced how long interviews could take, I repeated the mistake of underestimating the time that was necessary to complete them. Sometimes I had to return on another day to finish the interviews.

I decided to leave the field when the same specific pattern of behaviour continued to emerge (Fetterman, 2010, p. 9). I left the field after one year with periods of observations. I had followed the first three deacons for approximately two to three weeks each and the last two deacons for approximate one to two weeks. When observing the last two deacons, I was more experienced and did not use much time observing patterns that I could recognise from the other three deacons.

A web of findings was outlined in my mind before I began to code the material. In my opinion, it was valuable to include an initial analytical process about what I had observed, and I started to abductively try out some of the theories that I had encountered in the first year of my PhD programme. This created a catalyst for the theoretical elaboration of the data (Bryman, 2012, p. 447).

5.6 Preparing the data for analysis

As outlined, the data material for Article 1 is documents and the field notes, documents, pictures, drawings and recordings for Articles 2 and 3. Regarding the curriculum documents, preparation was unnecessary for the analytical process (Hammersley et al., 2007, p. 140). Norwegian speakers find Swedish comprehensible, making translation unnecessary. I uploaded the documents in the qualitative data analysis program ATLAS.ti for coding (Friese, 2012).

The audio-recorded fieldwork material was transcribed by professionals. Almost every recording that I found to be relevant to my research question was transcribed. Using the audio recorder increased the amount of transcribed material (Bryman, 2012, p. 448). Consequently, I have nearly 1,000 pages of data material. However, in an article-based thesis, only small parts of the empirical material can be presented. This challenges the transparency in my study. Therefore, I present my methodological reflections and approaches in as detailed as possible, within the frame of an extended abstract.

5.7 Analytical strategy

The analytical strategy that I have used in this thesis is thematic analysis, which concerns categories, or patterns, that are identified through the fieldwork material (Bryman, 2012, p. 580). An emphasis on repetition is one of the criteria most commonly used for identifying patterns that could be considered a theme. Repetition might refer to recurrence within the same data source, such as one interview, or across the whole case, such as all the interviews and material produced by observations. However, repetition itself is insufficient as a criterion labelling a theme. Most critically, it must be relevant to the research question and interests (Bryman, 2012, p. 580). Thus, looking for patterns that emerge from all the material that is relevant to my research focus has been my principal analytical approach.
Furthermore, coding has been a crucial element in my analytical strategy. In the following section, I describe how the material is analysed in the articles.

5.8 Initial phase of analysing the three articles

To some extent, the analysis of all three articles began when I read about theories in the first year of this study. An analytical repertoire, approach and focus were established through my work with theories in that first year. However, the analytical repertoire was continually questioned, expanded and nuanced in the early analysis of the documents, fieldwork observations and interviews when I began to establish the material. The enrichment of theories was expanded through the numerous recurring cycles between the early analysis of existing data and the need to establish new and, sometimes, superior data. Thus, the theories helped me to begin analysing the data early, which Miles and Huberman recommend (Miles et al., 1994, p. 50). The early analysis helped me change, adjust and enrich the theories that I used.

5.9 Analysis of Article 1: curriculum documents and knowledge creation

The initial phase: The analysis of the curricula began in my first year of my PhD programme and was completed in the last months of the programme. In between, I temporarily stopped my research on Article 1, and I wrote the two next articles. In the first and second year of my doctoral studies, Geir Afdal and I coded four curricula from Diakonhjemmet University College used between 1970 and 2012 using Atlas.ti and on paper, looking for patterns, similarities, differences and transitions concerning how topics shift during the years and reflecting over the missing data and expressions in diaconal education (Bryman, 2012, p. 580). We also read the curricula from the diaconal education programmes in Heidelberg and Ersta Sköndal University College. Various theories were used, but these theories did not contribute to relevant findings in the curricular texts in the manner that we wanted.

When we restarted writing Article 1, the thematic analysis of the material for Articles 2 and 3 had provided me with findings on the patterns of dynamic knowledge in use, knowledge creation processes and care. Hence, the analytical research focus was nuanced.

The systematic phase: After the shift in the research focus, we analysed the curricula again and searched for patterns of knowledge creation and care. We analysed the curriculum from Diakonhjemmet University College 2012/2013 and the curriculum from Ersta Sköndal University College 2013/2014. We coded using Atlas.ti (Friese, 2012) and directly on paper, using the thematic codes from the theoretical framework of the six perspectives of knowledge creation in education (Hakkarainen et al., 2004) (see 4.5) and von Krogh’s (1998, 2001a, 2001b) notion of care (see 4.6.3-4.6.4). However, as mentioned, the choice of theoretical concepts was motivated by the empirical findings from the other two articles.
Even though we used theoretical concepts of knowledge creation and care as codes, we also needed descriptive codes for the curricula that involved little interpretation (Miles et al., 1994, p. 57). The descriptive codes were used to describe metaphors and concerns that were embedded in the curricula, such as theology, church, society, mission, purpose, community and health. Each of us read through the documents, coded, reread the documents, discussed them and coded again until the topics recurred repeatedly (Bryman, 2012, p. 580). We searched for similarities and differences in the documents and for what was not in the data (Bryman, 2012, p. 580). The abductive processes of analysing theoretically inspired and descriptive codes raised the analysis to another phase where new structures and findings emerged. Subsequently, new theories were brought into play to test and expand the perspectives on the findings.

5.10 Analysis of Articles 2 and 3: fieldwork observations and interviews

The initial phase: The early analysis of Article 2 and 3 started, as mentioned, with a theoretical repertoire, as I entered the field. The early analysis was influenced of the abductive research approach. My research focus influenced my observations and the establishing of the data.

During the establishing of the material, I immersed myself in the data. I sent my field notes continually for professional transcription, read and reread them, listened to the audio-recorded interviews and informal interviews and drew maps of my earliest ideas. As mentioned, the time spanning from the first to the last field interview and observations was one year. Hence, the initial analytical phase was long. After all the material was established and transcribed, I began to conduct the structured analysis.

The systematic phase: I uploaded all the material, consisting of approximately 150 documents, to Atlas.ti and coded it using codes that were similar to the terms used in the material, such as care, inclusive community, needs, the others, vulnerabilities and society, and thematic theoretically oriented codes, such as knowledge, knowledge tools, knowledge creation, material tools, interactions, community and object of activities, which encompassed my research interests. The aim of the analysis was to create codes that emerged from the material and that highlighted what mattered for the deacons in their daily work lives and from my theoretical research interests.

Similarly to the analysis of Article 1, I searched for similarities and differences and for repetitions to establish patterns of abstraction (Bryman, 2012, p. 580). Abstraction is a form of identifying patterns between emergent themes, bringing together themes that are alike and developing a superordinate theme (Smith, 2009, p. 96). During the processes of identifying patterns across all documents, I limited the situations to those concerning the knowledge creation processes and care that the deacons employed when interacting with colleagues in the congregation and participants of diaconal activities. I chose to narrow the analytical process to situations that represented the overall patterns that I found. However, again, I had to leave the theoretically oriented codes and code close to
what mattered to the deacons in the chosen situations. Subsequently, I analysed the findings by testing what type of theories could open the material to a detailed level of analysis.

The cyclic recurring processes produced a thematic analysis of the ethnographic focus, the deacons’ experiences and understandings and my research interests. I analysed both the field notes and interviews together. In the articles, I refer to material from the informal and semi-structured interviews. In Article 2, I have specified in the text when the quotes are from informal or semi-structured interviews. Unfortunately, I wrote Article 3 first, and at that time, I did not specify which quotes were from informal or semi-structured interviews. When I refer to my observations, I have specified that the material is based on my observations. Finally, as mentioned in the introduction, in the discussion part of this extended abstract, I searched for connections across the emergent themes in the three articles simultaneously.

5.11 Quality criteria
How can the quality of ethnographic work be evaluated? Below, I elaborate on the limitations of ethnographic research and discuss the concepts of validity, reliability and generalisability, which are related to my study. 51

5.11.1 Validity criteria in qualitative analysis
I agree with Kvale that validation depends on the quality of craftsmanship during an investigation—continually checking, questioning and theoretically interpreting the findings (Kvale, 2009, p. 247). Thus, validation is not a separate state of an investigation but is the quality control that occurs throughout the stages of the entire research process (Kvale, 2009, p. 248). Consequently, I have made an effort to check, question and theoretically interpret the findings and the whole research process. I have presented and discussed all the steps in the research process with colleagues on the LETRA project. During the fieldwork, we continually checked, questioned and discussed our methodological approach to the fieldwork and the preliminary findings. Furthermore, in the process of transcribing, analysing and testing the findings, we provided constructive and critical feedback to each other. In addition, being involved in my colleagues’ research processes led me to become more sensitive to checking and questioning the theoretical interpretations in my own research process.

However, being excessively involved in only one research group can be one sided. Therefore, I made sure to present my work in other research forums, such as empirical and diaconal science groups. Moreover, I showed the deacons quotes from their interviews that I used in the articles. The purpose was to give them the opportunity to check and question whether their quotations were correctly rendered. At first, I used verbatim quotes, but one deacon asked me to reduce the oral aspects

51 The section of qualitative criteria is inspired by Tone Stangeland Kaufman’s thesis ‘A New Old Spirituality? A Qualitative Study of Clergy Spirituality in the Church of Norway’ (Kaufman, 2011).
of the quotations. Consequently, I deleted word such as ‘hm’ and ‘eh’ and attempted to render them in a more fluent, written style (Kvale, 2009, p. 187). All the deacons agreed to the use of quotes.

When I sent Article 2 to the deacons, two of them explained that they were extremely tired at the time of my visit and now would probably have expressed less frustration about the cooperation with the colleagues. Nevertheless, they agreed that the referred quotations were accurate. One deacon wanted to elaborate: ‘The pastors have a strong position and can be important for the diaconal initiative. It is very inspiring when we work well together. And it is hard when we experience the opposite, when one feels that one has to fight to be heard and is not included’ (Sophie, e-mail). The quote illustrates that the everyday work of deacons has high and low points as both inspiring and challenging interactions occur. In other words, the quote and material reflect the complex reality that the work is not only successful or only hard.

5.11.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and trustworthiness of the research findings. It is often treated in relation to whether the findings can be reproduced at other times and by other researchers (Kvale, 2009, p. 245). I do not claim that an exact replication of my material is possible. Instead, I acknowledge the role that I played when establishing the data. I believe that my background and personality have influenced the interactions with the deacons. Another researcher would not have been able to replicate the same type of communication that I had with the deacons. On the other hand, Silverman argues that the research design makes a greater contribution to establishing the data than the researchers themselves (Silverman, 2011b, p. 28). Thus, I suppose it would have been possible to find some of the same patterns as I did, with the same theoretical interests, methods and research question.

5.11.3 Generalisation

Ethnographic methods are criticised because of the assumption that results are impossible to generate from a few cases, sometimes only one (Silverman, 2011b, p. 29). However, both Flyvbjerg and Yin have argued in favour of the generalisation of case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2007, p. 391; Yin, 1981). Nevertheless, I do not claim that this study can be generalised, but I argue for potential generalisability, which might be described in terms of identification and resonance (Swinton, 2006, p. 47).

The data that I established might ‘frequently create] a resonance with people outside of the immediate situation who are experiencing phenomena which are not identical, but hold enough similarity to create potentially transformative resonance’ (Swinton, 2006, p. 47). Thus, I emphasise a reader-based analytical generalisation. Based on contextual descriptions, the reader can judge whether the findings might be generalised to a new situation (Kvale, 2009, p. 263). I suppose that the deacons or the people working with diakonia in the same contexts, as described in this study, might recognise some of the findings.
5.11.4 Personal reflexivity

By personal reflexivity, I refer to how I, as a researcher, have influenced the study and the findings (Alvesson, 2009, p. 8). I have already described my role as a researcher entering the field (see 5.3.1) in terms of distance and proximity. In this section, I pursue this line by adopting a retrospective perspective. However, I include the personal reflectivity, to also express how being in a research group has influenced my study and findings.

**How has my role as a researcher influenced this study?**

Firstly, I do not claim objectivity as a researcher as such. Instead, I speak of reflexive objectivity in the sense of being reflexive about my contribution as researcher to the knowledge production. More specifically, this means striving for objectivity about subjectivity (Kvale, 2009, p. 241).

I have been critically asked whether I present the deacons too positively. The participant observation over time led me to empathically engage with the deacons. In particular, following them to witness the challenges that they faced and the unclear roles that they played, which are often invisible to other colleagues in the working community, influenced my research interests. Being empathically engaged can both be an advantage and a risk. I suppose that observing the deacons’ empathically gave me access to some of the most demanding experiences they had to face. Nevertheless, the risk is ignoring less sympathetic activities (Repstad, 2007, p. 72). However, I agree with Paul Leer-Salvesen when he wrote that he was afraid to discredit the informants. He argues that as long as the informants have actually said what is written about them and the perspectives respond to the research interests, it is acceptable to present the informants with sympathy (Leer-Salvesen, 2009, p. 206).

At the same time, the emphasis on observation, not participation, helped me to keep my distance from the informants. The deacons were curious about my opinions. One said, ‘I am so curious about your thoughts, Marianne, but you don’t say anything.’ Moreover, using the audio recorder as often as possible also created a type of formal distance. Regarding thick descriptions, having the same type of education meant that we spoke the same language. I was familiar with diaconal terminology, which enabled me to be sensitive to relevant follow-up questions. Because I had adopted the abductive approach, I knew that my empathic engagement and interests also had scientific relevance. As mentioned in the introduction, the science of *diakonia* raises challenges regarding some recurring issues: What is *diakonia*, in reality? Moreover, what is the role of a deacon? How can *diakonia* be expressed and developed?

Finally, but not least, my education and experience as a nurse was especially helpful in my observations because I am used to observing patients, combined with reflecting on theories. In addition, I accept the fact that information from the patient is often gained because of the extent of trust that is experienced in the relationship.
How has being a research group member influenced my study?

In the section of validation, I describe, to some extent, how we have worked together as a research group. Much more could be said about the creative and supportive processes. Nevertheless, I limit this section to the aspect that has elicited considerable reflection related to being a research group member which has influenced my study: multiple normativities.

Norms can be seen as guidelines for actions and thoughts (De Jong, 2004, p. 35). Norms can be both explicit and implicit. Implicit normativity is not verbalised or thematised, and it can serve as ‘taken for granted’ assumptions about the matters in question (Henriksen, 2011b, p. 25). Explicit normativity partakes of the easily accessible reservoir of articulated assumptions of what a human being and/or the world is or should be, and it is often used as formative, disciplinary and evaluative (Henriksen, 2011b, p. 25). My description of the normativities relates to how implicit and explicit normativities have shaped and guided the empirical material, and vice versa.

Various normativities emerged in my empirical research field, such as the values of care, dignity and inclusive communities. In my research process, theoretical norms also applied. The theoretical norms in our research project originated from theology, but mainly from pedagogical theories and social sciences. In particular, trying to combine the theoretical normativities that originated from pedagogical theories with my field challenged me. It was challenging because what was emphasised as explicit and implicit guidelines in the theoretical repertoire did not correspond directly with what I experienced as norms in my empirical field, until I became familiar with the theories that combined knowledge creation and care. In other words, the theories that I found most relevant within the socio-cultural paradigm corresponded to the norms from my educational background and the diaconal field.

However, the processes with non-corresponding normativity forced me to reflect on the deacons’ practice in new ways. I used pedagogical theories that are not traditionally used in diaconal science. The theoretical approach led me to become de-familiarised with what I saw, and interesting findings emerged that would never have been found without the theoretical approach (Henriksen, 2011b, p. 26). In other words, I needed a theoretical pluralism (Henriksen, 2011b, p. 26) that included normativities of both distance and proximity to my research field. In addition, the normativity of research ethics (see 5.11.5) that is referred to in the thesis has influenced my research process. However, as far as I know, institutional and political normativities have influenced my research process to a lesser extent (Henriksen, 2011a, p. 12).

To summarise, the numerous explicit and implicit normativities became both challenging and expanding, creating new reflections and possibilities in my study and its findings. The processes and results would never have been the same without the collective knowledge creation processes in the

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52 With social sciences I refer to the scientific studies of human society and social relationships. [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/social-science](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/social-science). Read 19.2.15
research project, with its plural normativities, dialogues, shared visions and contradictions (Engeström, 2008) and care (von Krogh, 1998). Each of the other researchers uniquely contributed to the project’s results.

5.11.5 Ethical perspectives

The study of the LETRA project in the Church of Norway, including my research on the deacons, was referred to the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste, NSD). Permission to conduct the study was received in 2011 (see Appendix 3). In the following section, I outline ethical perspectives as informed consent, anonymity and risk of harm (Bryman, 2012, pp. 135-143).

The staff members in the congregations were informed orally and in writing about the project, and they were asked if they would participate. In addition, each deacon gave informed consent about participating in the project. They were informed about the research interests, that they could withdraw from the project whenever they wanted and that they could read and provide feedback on the quotations I used. Furthermore, I asked the deacons to inform the others who participated in activities about my presence and ask them if they approved of my observing their activities.

Ensuring the anonymity of the material was my first step. When I returned the quotations, the deacons could further elaborate on the anonymity. Some of the situations that were described could have been recognised because of the people who were present in those contexts. Thus, I brought these situations to the deacons’ attention for their consideration. One of them suggested that I expanded the anonymity. The others had no remarks regarding the level of anonymity in the articles.

However, it is critical to balance the methodological need for transparency with the ethical need for anonymity. Especially in my observations, and in addition to conducting interviews, I obtained thick and detailed descriptions on materials, sites, persons and activities. To balance the need of transparency and anonymity, I limited my descriptions to the minimum that was relevant to the analytical findings.

Another critical perspective on ethical considerations is the risk of harm (Bryman, 2012, p. 135). All participants were informed orally beforehand that I might be present and they accepted this. The home visit that I described in Article 3 presented me with an ethical dilemma, and I asked myself whether I should forward my observations to the participant. The home visit was my first fieldwork day in this entire study. One and a half years later, I started the structured analysis of this situation. On the one hand, the visit took place in the participant’s home. On the other hand, the deacon had informed him beforehand that I would be attending and he accepted my presence. Furthermore, a long time had passed since I was there, the research focus was on the deacon and I feared that returning to the participant could introduce a risk of harm in his situation. Due to the anonymity requirements of this research, I cannot elaborate in detail why I feared that returning could cause a risk of harm. Consequently, some of the methodological transparency was lost. Instead, I became particularly aware that I should anonymise this situation.
To summarise, empirical research requires criteria of excellent quality. I have attempted to ensure that these are applied by transparently reflecting on validity, reliability, generalisation, personal reflexivity and ethical perspectives.
6 Presentation of the Articles

This chapter presents a summary of the three articles. Each article represents an autonomous research study on deacons’ professional knowledge creation, but the articles together also represent crucial perspectives in deacons’ professional knowledge creation processes—from educational preparation to work with colleagues and the use of their knowledge in various interactions with participants who are not colleagues, other professionals or volunteers. The findings and the arguments in each article form the background for the discussion in Chapter 7.

6.1 Article 1

Caring to know or knowing to care? The relationship between knowledge creation and caring in the theological education of Christian social work professionals

This article aims to contribute to the understanding of how curricula prepare students for knowledge creation processes and to the understanding of the relation between knowledge creation processes and care. Curriculum texts of professional education are valuable sources of constructions of professional knowledge, and education may be perceived as an initiation into a professional knowledge culture.

The curriculum documents from Diakonhjemmet University College in Norway and Ersta Sköndal University College in Sweden were chosen because these institutions represent long traditions of diaconal education in their countries. Moreover, these institutions carry out research in the diaconal field. Their curricula provide a comparative perspective on the deacons’ professional education programme.

We argue that Scandinavian deacons offer a model case for analysing caring professions because care emerges as a defining and integrative professional characteristic in the curricula. In the Norwegian curriculum, diakonia is referred to as the ‘caring ministry’ of the Church. In Sweden, diaconal education is called the ‘Swedish Church Caritative Education’. In the analysis of the curricula, we ask the following:

What characterizes professional knowledge creation and care in the curriculum texts, and how can the relationship between knowledge creation and care be understood?53

The analytical framework is based on Hakkarainen’s and Paavola’s (Hakkarainen et al., 2004) notion of knowledge creation in education, as well as von Krogh’s (von Krogh, 1998; von Krogh et al., 2000, 2001b) idea of care in knowledge creation processes. The knowledge creation metaphor focuses on processes of collective problem-solving situations. The research focus is on deacons’ professional knowledge creation processes, not on their knowledge per se (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 120). In line with the concepts of Hakkarainen and Paavola, von Krogh (von Krogh, 1998, p. 136) pointed out that knowledge creation takes place in relational and collective practices, and care is a condition for trustworthy, emphatic, helpful and open relations. Our analytical strategy is thematic (Bryman, 2012, p. 578), concentrating on knowledge creation and care as central themes.

53 In Article 1, words are spelled with ‘z’ instead of ‘s’.
The findings indicate that students are prepared for knowledge creation and care with participants but to lesser degree with other professionals. Deacons as care professionals are knowledge workers in the sense that their knowledge and skills influence the quality of care (Nishikawa, 2011). They not only require a certain knowledge base, but they also need to handle knowledge development when adjusting complex practices. This means that learning how to create knowledge with both participants and professionals is necessary for a professional caring education.

6.2 Article 2
Conflicts and care among colleagues: Deacons’ professional knowledge development in the Church of Norway

This article aims to empirically explore what characterises deacons’ professional knowledge creation and how the expression of care among staff members influences knowledge creation in a working community. This article presents the results of an ethnographic field study on five deacons in five Church of Norway congregations from the fall of 2011 to the fall of 2012, focusing on the deacons’ knowledge development in the staff context.

Deacons are leaders of a congregation’s social work and caring ministry, responsible for carrying out the Church’s mission through caring activities (Diakonforbundet, 2011; National Council, 2009). Search in databases mentioned in 3.0, show that research on how care facilitates organisational knowledge development is conducted in business organisations but not in religious communities, such as congregations. However, congregations, which are striving to provide care, may be ideally suited for such an analysis. In particular, the Church’s diaconal service is described as its caring ministry (National Council, 2009). It has been suggested that future research on the concept of care in knowledge development should focus on organisations that provide care (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 49). Therefore, I ask the following question in this article:

*What characterises the deacons’ professional knowledge creation and the expression of care within the working community of the Church of Norway?*

The focus is mainly on the processes of knowledge creation in the interactions between the deacons and other staff, and not specifically on the outcomes. To answer the research question, I draw on Nonaka et al.’s (Nonaka et al., 2001) concept of knowledge creation in organisations. Nonaka et al. refer to ‘organisation’ as a knowledge creation entity. I do not use the concept of organisation in this article but refer to congregations as work places as knowledge creation entities. Furthermore, I employ von Krogh’s notion of care related to Nonaka et al.’s theory of knowledge creation that focuses on how the presence or absence of care can influence knowledge development in working communities (von Krogh et al., 2001b). To develop knowledge, it must be shared, recreated and amplified through interactions with others, and the effectiveness of these processes depends on the extent of care experienced in these interactions (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 30). The thematic analytical strategy focuses on knowledge development and care in the staff context.
The findings indicate two main constraints in deacons’ knowledge development in their working communities. First, interactions among staff members in churches are primarily characterised by low-care exchanges. Second, their knowledge creation is typified by predefined and parallel work processes within their work environment that serve to isolate the individuals from one another. The results show connections among the knowledge created and the extent of care expressed, but also that relational power influences the knowledge created. Therefore, I argue that knowledge creation theories must consider the significance of a community’s power relationships in the knowledge development process. Finally, this article sheds light on processes of knowledge creation and care within religious working communities that strive to provide a care.

6.3 Article 3

*Modes of deacons’ professional knowledge in use—facilitation of the ‘spaces of possibilities’*

This article empirically contributes to the understanding of deacons’ professional knowledge applied in their everyday practice. More precisely, this article aims to analyse what kind of professional knowledge tools deacons use and how they employ these in various encounters with ‘participants’. In this article, participants mean people with whom the parish deacons interact and who are not colleagues, other professionals or volunteers.

To understand the professional knowledge tools of deacons, I conduct a detailed analysis of a particular situation from the empirical data. This case is about Deacon David, who goes on a home visit to talk with a man struggling emotionally. They talk and share Holy Communion; their mutual interaction provides an example of sensitive and difficult tool mediation because of ambiguous communication. Hardly any study has been conducted on what deacons actually do in their daily duties and what kind of knowledge they really need in professional practice. Therefore, I ask the following question in this article:

*What characterises the modes of tool-mediated knowledge in use that can be established in deacons’ interaction with participants?*

Modes are ways of thinking and acting that coexist in time and place (Mol, 2008, p. 9). To answer this research question, I use theories of trialogical knowledge creation processes and tool mediation (Edwards, 2010; Engeström, 2007, 2008; Engeström et al., 1999; Wertsch, 1998). Human actions and knowledge involve trialogical dynamic relations among actors, tools and reality. In this article, the trialogical relation consists of 1) deacons, 2) tools and 3) participants in diaconal activities. Tools can be understood as both material and conceptual resources (Edwards, 2010, p. 101; Wertsch, 1998, pp. 30-31). I conducted a thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012, p. 578), focusing on the tools used in the interactions between the deacons and the participants.

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54 In this article I spell diaconia with c because the journal does.
The findings show that deacons use various tools from different practices, from the inner church life and from social and human sciences\textsuperscript{55} and everyday life. Deacons employ their professional knowledge tools in and among three modes: 1) ‘recognition’ and ‘expansion’, 2) ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ and 3) ‘proximity’ and ‘periphery’. Recognition is understood as the use of tools in interaction with the participants to confirm resources, show acceptance and acknowledge. Within the part challenging or expanding possibilities, or both, tools are used to expand new possibilities and balance the recognition (Petherbridge, 2011, p. 245). ‘Being’ is understood as a way of ‘being present’ in the situation (Jarvis, 2009, pp. 198, 207). ‘Becoming’ is understood as ‘becoming more me’ and ‘becoming who we might be’ (G. Afdal, 2013, p. 103). Periphery refers to social marginalisation, but may also refer to physical distance from the community. The concept of proximity refers to the community or to communities.

The use of hybrid tools in the three modes seems driven by a search for participants’ experiences of well-being or ‘well-becoming’ and an understanding of human beings as relational. In hybridity, ingredients from different contexts are combined into something new and unfamiliar (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 148). These three modes of professional knowledge in use create hybrid spaces that combine different practices.

I argue that deacons’ use of hybrid tools establishing the three modes creates a ‘spaces of possibilities’\textsuperscript{56} between deacons and participants. In this space, the search for participants’ well-being and well-becoming provides the direction for the use of tools.

\textsuperscript{55} With human sciences I refer to a branch of studies which deal with people or their actions, including the social sciences and the humanities. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/human-sciences?q=human+sciences. Read 19.2.15. In Article 2, I have used the concept of social science, but I think human sciences better cover the branch of studies.

\textsuperscript{56} I see that ‘space’ in singular occurs in the article. It should be ‘spaces’.
7 Discussion
In this thesis, I have studied deacons’ professional knowledge creation processes and care. The purpose of this chapter is to answer the overall research question: What characterises deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care in the Church of Norway?

When analysing the three articles, new insights emerged about deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care. Three perspectives discussed in this chapter are particularly worth emphasising: In section 7.1, I outline what characterises the hybrid resources or tools deacons’ use in their processes of knowledge creation and care. In the section 7.2, I discuss how the tools are used, emphasising empirical care as patterns of tool mediation that emerged in the field. In section 7.3, I discuss the outcome of deacons’ knowledge creation and care through interactions with participants and argue that outcomes may fruitfully be conceptualised as the creation of platforms of interactions, which I call spaces of possibilities. In section 7.4, I combine the arguments from the three previous sections in an empirical model. The empirical model illustrates what characterises the processes of deacons’ knowledge creation and care in relation to participants. Finally, in section 7.5, I present the overall argument and main contribution of this thesis based on the previous discussion.

To illustrate the three main findings in sections 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3, I have made a figure (Figure 7.1) based on the triangle of tool mediation (see 4.1). I have done this for two reasons. First, it structures the overall findings in my study within my theoretical framework. Second, the figure visualises the relationship among these three findings.

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57 The discussion excludes interaction with colleagues as I prioritise a more nuanced discussion of knowledge creation and care in interactions with participants, instead of a superficial discussion of both participants and colleagues. The interactions with participants contribute to empirical expansions of established theories in the field of diakonia and illuminate the deacons’ work that is often hidden aspects of expertise for others.

58 With the triangle of tool mediation, I refer in the discussion chapter to the triangle that illustrates the top of Engeström’s activity system (see 4.1): subject, tool-mediation, object, and outcome. Henceforth, this is referred to as a triological systematisation.
In Figure 7.1, the box 7.1 points at the kind of hybrid tools that are used; 7.2 shows how the tools are used emphasising empirical care as patterns of tool mediation emerging in the field. 7.3 focuses on the outcome of deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care as ‘spaces of possibilities’.

The main purpose of this chapter is to contribute the extant fruitful theories in the diaconal field. My contribution is characterised by the nuances and the complexity that exist in the empirical field, and that I have another theoretical framework that is normal in the research field of diakonia (4.0).

**7.1 The use of hybrid resources in deacons’ knowledge creation and care**

In section 7.1, I present some of the findings across the three articles, emphasising 1) hybrid tools and 2) the direction of the use of hybrid tools (see Figure 7.3). As Figure 7.2 illustrates, the focus in this section is on the hybrid tools in deacons’ knowledge creation processes and care.
Figure 7.2: ‘Trialogical systematisation with emphasis on the hybrid tools in deacons’ knowledge creation processes and care

The study demonstrates that the deacons’ knowledge creation and care are influenced by the use of hybrid resources (see pictures 5.5.2). With ‘hybrid tools’, I refer to ingredients from different contexts that can be combined into something new and unfamiliar (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 148). These resources are taken from different contexts, such as explicit religious traditions, from everyday life and from academic disciplines such as theology and human sciences.

In Article 1, the analysis of curricular texts of diaconal education in Norway and Sweden shows that knowledge resources are drawn from two main contexts of professional practices: church and society. Article 2 shows that deacons use resources from both theological and human sciences and practices related to the people’s needs and resources. In Article 3, the negotiation of material and symbolic resources can be illustrated in the picture of the table with the Holy Communion (see Article 3). The tools were both material, symbolic and conceptual, both from the CofN’s traditions and practice, theology and from the human sciences and practices.

The direction of deacons’ use of tools emerges as a search for what is meaningful for the other, the participants’ notion of well-being and an awareness of the love of God. I found a double perspective in the deacons’ search for the participants’ well-being, emerging as a search for both the present well-being and the participants’ future potential. The future potential I call ‘well-becoming’, a concept further outlined in section 7.2.2 and in Article 3. The participants’ pasts were included, depending on what they shared with the deacons. The double perspective of the search for the participants’ well-being and well-becoming can be illustrated in Figure 7.3 as follows:

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59 In this thesis, I do not define ‘well-being’ and acknowledge the challenge of defining this term (Dodge et al., 2012). I mean the content of well-being must rest on each person’s subjective interpretation.
The search for participants’ well-being corresponds with Olav Helge Angell’s empirical research on the aim of deacons in their work. In Angell’s study, all the deacons rated helping people to experience social community, love and caring as ‘middle’ or ‘high priority’ in their work (Angell, 2011a, p. 196). Although the deacons search the participants’ notion of well-being, being a part of the social community and experiencing care emerged as the deacons’ normativity of well-being. However, some exceptions were involved (see Section 7.2.3 and the necessary distance). The deacons in my study are oriented towards the love of God for people (Articles 2 and 3). However, a given tool does not automatically mediate participants’ well-being or well-becoming. Rather, the tools may both open and close possibilities (see 7.3). What mediates well-being or well-becoming depends on a participant’s situation, the needs and resources available and the qualities of the relationship between deacons and participants.

In deacons’ search for participants’ well-being and well-becoming, diverse realities are bridged. A bridge enables movement from one side of a divide to another (Moore, 1998, p. 269). In bridging, deacons do not separate the theological and social dimension. As Deacon Katie said, ‘What we do for people begging on the street is not first and foremost about food, but about who we are as a church.’ More precisely, the repertoire of theological knowledge resources is activated to be in

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60 93% gave also ‘Helping to personal freedom to faith’ middle or high priority (Angell, 2011a, p. 196).
61 I use the concept realities inspired by Moore (1998) and refrain from a further discussion of the concept.
62 To illuminate what characterises deacons’ hybrid tools and their use, I found Mary Elisabeth Mullino Moore’s article ‘Poetry, prophecy, and power’ (1998) helpful. She writes about the power of poetry and describes the poetry’s potential as bridging realities. For instance, it could bridge present realities and unimagined possibilities (Moore, 1998, p. 269). Her way of describing poetry and bridging realities matches the empirical contribution of deacons’ tools mediation.
dialogue with all experiences in human life into which physical, social, mental and faith-based experiences are interwoven.

Furthermore, material resources, such as ‘food’ in the quote above, are regarded as a potentially multileveled mediators (Engeström, 2008, p. 129). This means that one and the same tool can mediate various possibilities, both symbolic and practical. For instance, food mediates both a response to physical needs and a theological understanding that combines the spiritual and material aspects of human life. The multileveled mediation shows that deacons do not necessarily separate the spiritual and material realms.

In search for the participants’ well-being and well-becoming, the deacons use tools from both the theological and human sciences. The ‘and’ can be understood as a bridge where diverse realities meet. The ‘and’ between any two realities brings to light a relationship that is more than the sum of the two (Moore, 1998, p. 270). Depending on the situation, deacons do sometimes use tools mainly from one side of the bridge (for instance, theological or human sciences) or in a dynamic combination.

In section 7.1, I have emphasised the deacons’ hybrid tools and the fact that the deacons’ direction of activity emerges as a search for the participants’ well-being and well-becoming. In the next section, I discuss patterns of how the tools are used.

7.2 What characterises the empirical care in deacons’ caring ministry?

In this section, I discuss the patterns of the deacons’ tool mediation, and I ask what characterises the empirical care in deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care. Of course, I do not know if the participants experienced the deacons’ work as caring. Thus, the concept of empirical care can only say something about the five deacons’ patterns of tool mediation in their interaction with the participants.

The three articles in this thesis demonstrate that care emerges in various forms in deacons’ practice. Article 1 shows that care emerges as an overall goal for diaconal education in curriculum texts but less explicitly as processes to support knowledge creation. Article 2 shows that deacons’ interactions with staff members in churches are often characterised by low care and parallel work processes. Further, the results of the study in Article 2 show connections between the knowledge created and the extent of care expressed in the relations. Article 3 contributes to the empirical understanding of how deacons used hybrid tools to mediate care in interactions with participants. Patterns of deacons’ use of hybrid tools emerged as the aforementioned three modes of tool mediation.

In this section, I will explore these three modes. First, in section 7.2.1, I explore the mode of ‘recognition-challenge/expand possibilities’, the mode of ‘being and becoming’ in section 7.2.2 and the mode of ‘proximity and periphery’ in section 7.2.3. Even though deacons use the modes in combination (Article 3), I will discuss each mode separately because I regard this as the most
systematic way to enter the dynamic field of the modes. Figure 7.4 illustrates the three modes in a trialogical systematisation of the deacons’ knowledge creation and care.

![Diagram of Trialogical Systematisation](image)

**Figure 7.4: Trialogical Systematisation with Emphasis on three modes of tool mediation in deacons’ knowledge creation processes and care in interactions with participants**

The three modes are discussed mainly in terms of Nordstokke and Collin’s contribution ‘Renewing praxis in the light of a renewed theory’ (Nordstokke et al., 2011, pp. 46-47) because I regard this text as recognition-oriented, even though they are not explicitly using the word. Nordstokke et al. focus on giving people confidence in their own resources and value as human beings, which corresponds to my observations of the deacons. As presented in the research overview, Nordstokke et al. emphasis five perspectives: the new role as agent, new authority, new language, new logic and new method (Nordstokke et al., 2011, pp. 46-47). I focus on the new role as agent, new authority and new

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63 Moreover, as mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the perspectives in sections 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3 are related. Thus, even though empirical care also includes the repertoire of hybrid tools and space of possibilities, in this section, I must delimit the emphasis on care to the modes of tool mediation.
64 Henceforth, I refer to this as ‘renewed theory’.
65 The renewed theory is based on reflection of praxis at three distinct historical moments: 1) The 1850s when the diaconal movement reached the Nordic countries. 2) The 1950s, which saw the development of the welfare state in the Nordic countries. 3) Around 2000 as a present period of re-orientation for both church and society.
method. In addition, the third mode is discussed in relation to Wyller’s notion of heterotopic diakonia (Wyller, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2013a). As presented in the research overview, heterotopic diakonia refers to the view of the other space that allows a critical perspective of the first, functioning and normal space (Wyller, 2006, p. 310). Other relevant theories will be presented successively in the text.

7.2.1 The first mode: recognition and challenge/expanding possibilities

In this part, I first outline the mode ‘recognition and challenge/expanding possibilities’ before discussing characteristics of this mode primarily in relation to the ‘renewed theory’ (Nordstokke et al., 2011, pp. 46-47). I discuss first the participants’ role as agents and then the silent need-oriented diakonia.

The mode ‘recognition and challenge/expanding possibilities’

As mentioned in the presentation of Article 3, I understand recognition in a diaconal context as deacons’ use of tools in interaction with participants in order to confirm resources and show acceptance (Article 3). Tools are used to expand new possibilities and balance recognition. Too much or too little recognition can be seen as disrespect. Too much recognition can show ‘compassion that wounds’ (Petherbridge, 2011, p. 245). On the other hand, too little recognition and too many challenges may close off possibilities. Consequently, the dynamics between recognition and challenging can facilitate ‘recognition as the middle between too much and too little’ (Petherbridge, 2011, p. 245).

Participants’ role as agents

The deacons in my data material seek to recognise the participants as agents in their own lives by confirming resources and showing acceptance of their situation. Rather than helpers, the deacons wanted to regard themselves as facilitators, animators and enablers (see drawing 5.5.2 and Article 2 and 3). This corresponds with Nordstokke et al.’s perspective of the ‘new role as agent’ as:

From a role of professional employee, where others are often reduced to being clients, to a role of facilitator, animator and enabler. The intention is to give others, especially those in the periphery, status as subjects and agents who operate within God’s project with humankind…(Nordstokke et al., 2011, p. 46).

The deacons used tools to seek to strengthen participants’ agency by both recognising and expanding possibilities when possible. I use the word ‘seek’ because what they achieved is uncertain. For instance, I do not know how the participants experienced the deacons’ work. Moreover, strengthening the agency of participants is challenging. First because of conflicting interests between maintaining routines and efficiency in deacons’ every day work and giving participants roles as agents (Article 2). Second because expanding one person’s possibilities in the community may influence the whole

(Nordstokke et al., 2011, p. 41). My contribution is to discuss Nordstokke and Collin’s renewed theory based on the empirical findings of the present study.

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community, creating tensions, conflicts and potentially new possibilities (Article 2 and 3), and third because it is not practically possible to recognise, challenge and expand possibilities for all parts.

On the ‘new role as agent’, Nordstokke et al. further write ‘…where others are reduced to being clients…’ (Nordstokke et al., 2011, p. 46). The deacons in my study do not use the concept of clients. They called people by their name, if they knew them. Alternatively, they used the terms ‘participants’ or ‘volunteers’. I understand that Nordstokke et al.’s concern is to emphasis the dignity of people. Nevertheless, I think that the words ‘reduced to being clients’ may give an unintended negative association to those who need to be clients.

Nordstokke et al. refer also to giving ‘others…status as agents that also operate within God’s project of humankind’. Though deacons express the belief that all people were loved by God, independent of their personal beliefs or periphery, the deacons in my study did not use the distinctions within or outside God’s project. The people in the periphery and proximity (see section 7.2.3) were both regarded as agents being within God’s project of humankind, through His love. The deacons sought to act with a ‘together-with’ culture in relationships with the participants.66

However, a ‘together-with’ approach is demanding, because bringing together many perspectives creates mixtures of knowledge, experiences, resources, challenges and possibilities that do not necessarily harmonise within a group or with the communities’ routines (Nowotny, 2003, p. 155) (Article 2). Some of the deacons confronted the tensions with the participants and the working communities, others to a larger degree adapted the role of participants as agents to the existing routines in the congregations.

In summarising the mode of recognition and challenging/expanding possibilities, it is my view that empirical care and knowledge creation in this mode is characterised by the deacons’ overall interactive searching for a role for the participants as influential agents in their own lives and/or the communities. At the same time, giving participants roles as agents is demanding because bringing together the many perspectives does not necessarily harmonise with a group or with the routines of the working community. Finally, I argue that employing words such as ‘reduced’ and ‘within’ in theories of diakonia should be done with caution because the concepts can create unfruitful, marginalising distinctions and positions.

**Silent need-oriented diakonia**

Nordstokke et al. describe one paradigm shift in diaconal theories that reflects the notion of care as moving away from traditions of conceptualising diakonia as humble service and towards expressions of diaconal action as being in solidarity with marginalised and suffering people in the perspective of ‘new authority’:

66 This corresponds with Johannes Degen’s notion of professional practice that is conscious of an ethos of care and acts *together* with the person (Degen, 2003, p. 20).
This role involves ‘breaking out of traditional servility and silent service, giving diaconal work its prophetic task, denouncing injustice, announcing the dignity of the lowly and God’s liberating love incarnated in human reality’ (Nordstokke et al., 2011, p. 47).

Traditional servility refers to the role of the deacon as a servant, often framed within the pietistic tradition of humble service (Nordstokke et al., 2011, p. 42).

What deacons empirically regard as relevant to the other’s situation provides insight into related paradigm shifts of care in diaconal theories. I agree that the concept ‘new authority’ is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the role of deacons, but I do not think the concept sufficiently reflects deacons’ authority in relation to whom. Does it reflect their direct interaction with participants or in activities including communication with relevant organs denouncing injustice for marginalised groups? I do not think the concept completely represents the tasks of deacons today. Deacons relate to participants through various types of interactions; in individual relationships, such as pastoral care, in collective groups (see section 7.3) and on behalf of participants in mentioned activities including communication with some relevant organs (Articles 2 and 3). The findings of my study show that deacons use tools to recognise and challenge participants in a silent way, and some are denouncing injustice in communication with relevant organs (Articles 2 and 3). My claim is that both the silent way and a denouncing injustice approach should be interwoven perspectives. The various types of interactions, I argue, require different approaches.

Moreover, a related paradigm shift of care in diaconal theories is challenged, namely, the search for a need-based orientation to a resource-based orientation (Nordstokke, 2014a, p. 214). The deacons in my study showed an awareness of needs and aimed to emphasise abilities, skills, and resources related to these needs (Article 2 and 3). Starting points for deacons’ actions may include a person’s needs and/or resources. For instance, the woman that begged at the street (Article 2) needed money. The need was the starting point for the deacon’s action, but the deacon also searched for the woman’s abilities and resources to establish a job for her. Within the mode of recognition and challenging/expanding possibilities, both needs and resources are reflected as a part of reality when recognising and searching for new possibilities. Accordingly, it is my opinion that future theories in the diaconal field will profit from including the empirical contrasting elements—both needs and resources.

In summary, my study of the five deacons shows that the following elements characterise empirical care: 1) a silent orientation and denouncing injustice and 2) a need and resource orientation.

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67 The renewed theory refers to the role of ‘go-between’ with authority belonging to the person who has received a mandate to deliver a message (Nordstokke et al., 2011, p. 46) (see research overview, Collins 1990, 2002).

68 The emphasis on resources is a response to previous traditions where participants’ needs and deacons’ humble service were central. Even though I agree that resources should be emphasised, I believe that a combination of needs and resources better reflect the deacons’ complex negotiation.
7.2.2 The second mode: being and becoming in light of a renewed theory of diakonia

In this section, I first briefly sketch the mode ‘being and becoming’. Based on the account of being and becoming, I suggest an additional perspective to Nordstokke et al.’s account of theory and praxis (Nordstokke et al., 2011, pp. 46-47).

The mode ‘being and becoming’

A dual perspective emerges as the overall aim of the deacons’ in their interactions with the participants: well-being and well-becoming (see 7.1). This dual perspective also emerges in their use of hybrid tools (see Article 3) in the mode of being and becoming. As mentioned in section 6.3, being is a way of ‘being present’ in the situation (Jarvis, 2009, pp. 198, 207), while becoming involves ‘becoming more me’ and ‘becoming who we might be’ (G. Afdal, 2013, p. 103), carrying future potential (Jarvis, 2009, pp. 197-198). Further, according to my empirical findings ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ are relational processes: who I am and who I may become cannot be understood isolated from relations to others. Moreover, deacons’ use of tools for ‘becoming’ is distinguished from the use of tools for ‘challenging/expanding possibilities’ because they use tools to ‘challenge/expand possibilities’ both for ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ and for movements between the ‘proximity’ and ‘periphery’.

Expansion of Nordstokke and Collin’s renewed theory

In Nordstokke et al.’s renewed theory (2011a), the time perspective is not made explicit. Nevertheless, I note the implicit coverage of the dual perspective of being and becoming when they discuss the new authority giving diaconal work its prophetic task, announcing God’s liberating love in human reality (Nordstokke et al., 2011, p. 47). However, I argue that a renewed theory on diaconal practice should contain a ‘new time’. New time emphasises that human beings are never static individuals; we are always in developmental processes.

I also regard people’s past as a part of their present being. However, the presence of the past varies in people’s lives. What deacons emphasise depends on the situation and the interactions between the deacons and the participants. The mode of being and becoming can be illustrated by a bridge; one can relate to either sides, or only one, the present (and past) and/or the future. On the other hand, only recognising future potential can be experienced as non-recognition of life as it actually is, while only recognising being can be experienced as both an acknowledgement of life as it is as well as a non-recognition of what can be. As all three modes presented in section 7.2 demonstrate, the modes contain potentially contradictory elements, requiring deacons to constantly negotiate their use of

69 According to Jarvis (2009), becoming is about lifelong learning. Jarvis argues that at different stages in our lives, we have different needs and motivations (Jarvis, 2009, p. 197). I agree with Jarvis that becoming is about lifelong learning, but instead of stages, I prefer to discuss different situations. The complex, unexpected and uncontrollable parts of life do not necessarily follow stages.
hybrid tools related to the participants’ situations and transition between the present and the potential of the future. The constant negotiation of contradictory elements, emerging as knowledge gaps which deacons are unfamiliar, propel the knowledge creation processes (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 134) (see 7.3).

In summary, deacons’ empirical care and knowledge creation processes in interactions with participants relates both to the present and future potential, and I argue that a perspective of ‘new time’ should be explicitly included in renewed theory on diaconal practice.

7.2.3 The third mode: periphery and proximity in light of renewed theory and heterotopic diakonia

In this part, I first briefly sketch the mode ‘periphery and proximity’, and then I discuss caring ministry in terms of inclusion and necessary distance.

The mode ‘periphery and proximity’

As mentioned, periphery may refer to social marginalisation, but it may also refer to the outskirts of a community. Proximity then refers to the core of the community. In this section, I will discuss the ‘importance and impact of including the stranger (“der Fremde”)’ (Wyller, 2013a, p. 40) and siding with the oppressed and marginalised (Wyller, 2013b, p. 1). In the mode of periphery and proximity my analysis focuses on how tools are used to facilitate motion between the periphery and the community.

Caring ministry as a difficult inclusion?

The mode of periphery and proximity describes the mechanism of inclusion as a central part of the deacons’ use of hybrid tools. This mode corresponds with Nordstokke et al.’s (2011a) ‘new methods’: ‘In a time when new mechanisms of exclusion are at work in both church and society, diakonia has a special mandate to identify the mechanism of inclusion…’ (Nordstokke et al., 2011, p. 47).

Deacons emerge as bridge-builders between the periphery and proximity, seeking to get people to relate to each other and to create communities (see 7.3). The deacons in my study were not only concerned about bringing the resources from the community to those in the periphery but also about bringing the resources from those in the periphery to the community (see Article 2 and 3). This concern involves moving periphery to proximity, connecting others into an expanded community and creating transformative practices (Article 2 and 3) where the church communities must relate to and be changed by the others.70

According to Wyller (see research overview) who refers to Foucault (1986), the other space relates to ‘otherness’ as the marginalised persons and unfamiliar contexts and become expansive when

70 According to the deacons, the older generation of pastors argued that diakonia should first and foremost be concerned with the congregation’s own members, such as the elderly. The deacons argued that there had been a paradigm shift in the understanding of diakonia. For these deacons, diakonia was not only to serve the existing members but also to reach marginalised people in the local context. The younger generations of pastors shared this notion with the deacons to a greater extent than the older generation.
it contrasts with the ‘normal’ and functioning space (Wyller, 2006, p. 310; 2009, p. 8). Findings in my study show that the other space contributes to the change process in the ‘normal’ or first space (see Articles 2 and 3). Thus, deacons conduct a heterotopic diakonia and aim at giving priority to the unfamiliar space over the ‘normal’ space. Nevertheless, the findings in my study indicate difficulties with this because social inclusion also depends on the mutual ability to adjust one’s behaviour in groups. Wyller argues that the temptation to seek sameness is one of the crucial issues to discuss within the science of diaconal studies. According to Wyller, there are reasons to be suspicious of the development of sameness (Wyller, 2010, p. 188).

In contrast to Wyller’s critical notion of sameness, the empirical findings in my project show that inclusion of the other or the marginalised is difficult when there is little common understanding, as in, for instance, language. It is my view that without a certain base of sameness, inclusion is difficult because shared platforms of interactions are challenging to establish (see 7.3 discontinuity and sameness). Further, to some extent, the other space should be the centre of the diaconal work, according to Wyller (Wyller, 2006, p. 317). Nevertheless, the deacons in my study had many tasks within both the first and the other spaces; thus, the other space is not always the centre. Wyller further argues that if diakonia is to be heterotopic, it is not enough that the first space talks about the marginalised; people from the other space must be agents in the first space (Wyller, 2006, p. 313).

Findings from my study show that deacons seek to enable the other as agents in the first space, but this is a complex enterprise as they are deacons for and between many spaces (see 7.2.1, 7.3 and Articles 2 and 3). Deacons are in between the familiar and unfamiliar spaces.

To conclude at this point: the mode of ‘periphery and proximity’ includes the inclusion elements in Nordstokke et al.’s new method. I find Wyller’s account of heterotopic diakonia too idealistic because deacons cannot simply prioritise the other space; they have to interact in the betweenness of many spaces. This challenge I find to be under-communicated in diaconal theories.

Caring ministry as necessary distance?

At this stage, I ask how the argument so far may contribute to expanding diaconal theories of inclusion. Periphery and proximity refer to the necessity of negotiating distance. The deacons accepted that people wanted distance from the community or the church (see Article 3). I agree with Martin Buber, who argues that distance makes it possible to create a space in between people, and this space is a condition for relationships (Buber, 1997, pp. 9-10). Herdis Alvsvåg (2014) writes about the space in between as a condition for relationships and dialogues: we are each of us I for me and you for the other (Alvsvåg, 2014, p. 133). This statement implies that it is necessary to respect the other’s borders in relational work. In a relationship between you and me, there is an inner border, a distance, and it must be respected for openness and proximity (Alvsvåg, 2014, p. 139). I regard the fruitful distance—the border between the deacons and participants—as crucial in the mode of periphery and proximity. Necessary distance accepts that change is not necessary (see Article 3).
7.2.4 Summarising the three modes

Initially, in section 7.2, I asked ‘What characterises the empirical care in deacons’ caring ministry?’ As demonstrated, empirical care can be characterised by the three modes. Within each mode there exists a betweenness, a need to bridge complementary elements. Moreover, the deacons combined the contrasts across three modes in a dynamic interplay in interactions with the participants. How the deacons bridged within and between the modes differed depending on the situation. However, it is important to note that I do not claim that every deacon always succeeded in bridging the elements in complex situations. Deacons constantly have to negotiate complex situations, where they risk opening and closing possibilities for participants.

As the modes represent patterns of the studied deacons’ everyday work, I mean that the modes offer a more nuanced view than and expand established theories in the diaconal field. In the next section, I describe the complex negotiations in more detail.

7.3 Spaces of possibilities

In section 7.3, I discuss the outcome of the deacons’ knowledge creation and care in their everyday interactions with participants. Findings across the three articles show that the outcome of these processes is platforms of interactions (Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 19). Article 1 shows that creating inclusive communities emerged as important in the curriculum (the Norwegian curriculum). Article 2 shows that the deacons searched for and prioritised establishing platforms of interactions with participants, and Article 3 shows how the deacons used the hybrid tools and the three modes mentioned in section 7.2 to establish platforms of interactions with participants. I call the platforms of interactions with participants ‘spaces of possibilities’ both in Article 3 and in the discussion.

When analysing across the three articles, five characteristics of the ‘spaces of possibilities’ emerged: The deacons 1) facilitated both individual interactions and communities, 2) opened possibilities, but risked constraining possibilities, 3) became boundary crossers that experienced both discontinuity and sameness in their interactions with the participants, 4) facilitated spaces of hybridity and 5) exhibited hospitality. Figure 7.5 highlights the outcome of deacons’ knowledge creation processes and care in the trialogical systematisation: platforms of interactions and ‘spaces of possibilities’.

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71 As mentioned in section 4.6.2, Nonaka et al. use the concept of a ‘ba’ as platform of knowledge creation. In the discussion, I use the term ‘platforms of interaction’, because the most important aspect of ba is interactions (Nonaka et al., 2001, pp. 18-19). My emphasis is on deacons’ facilitation of these platforms of interactions and how this may enable knowledge creation.
In the two previous sections, I engaged with the work of Nordstokke et al. (2011a) and Wyller (2006, 2009, 2010). However, no single theory from the diaconal field matches these five empirical characteristics. Therefore, I combine perspectives of ‘boundary crossing’ in knowledge creation theories (Akkerman et al., 2011) with relevant research in the research overview (Collins, 1990; Wyller, 2006, 2010; Angell 2014; Engel, 2008) to discuss my contributions.

I present the theories as they appear related to the five characteristics, but some theoretical concepts are appropriate to present as an overall frame. First, as mentioned in the theoretical framework (4.0), with platforms of interactions, I am referring to the theoretical concept of ba (see 4.6.2) (Nonaka et al., 2001, pp. 18-19). Second, I borrow the concept ‘spaces of possibilities’ from Afdal (2013). He theorises ‘spaces of possibilities’ as spaces in which tools and activities enhance participants’ possibilities for experiencing ‘the good life’ (G. Afdal, 2013, pp. 34-35). ‘The good life’ can have different meanings within various traditions and for each individual (G. Afdal, 2013, p. 35). Third, the concept of ‘boundary crossing’ refers to a person’s transitions and interactions across different sites (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 133). The two first characteristics are descriptions rather than empirical contributions to theories, while the three final characteristics provide contributions to diaconal theories.

The first characteristic is that the spaces are characterised by both individual interactions between one deacon and one participant and communities. Deacons seek to establish interactions both through individual relations in pastoral care, including various forms of dialogue, like supportive

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To limit the focus in this section, I use the concept as the outcome of the trialogical process (see Figure 7.5). However, I also regard the hybrid tools (7.1) and the three modes (7.2) as being a part of the ‘spaces of possibilities’ because the tools and how they are used are elements of the processes in ‘spaces of possibilities’.
conversation and everyday small talk, and through planning activities with the participants. At the same time, they aim to establish communities in which participants can interact with each other in various activities. Deacons’ knowledge creation and care are thus characterised by establishing interactions.

The second characteristic is that in the spaces of possibilities that deacons create, they can open possibilities, but they also risk constraining possibilities with the use of tools. Identical use of tools may open possibilities with one participant and constrain possibilities for another. Thus, within the spaces of possibilities, deacons rely on practical wisdom, phronesis. Phronesis, according to Aristotle, can be understood as an insight into what is the best thing to do in a particular situation (Aristoteles et al., 1999, p. 20). To be practical, wise and make good judgments are crucial in deacons’ use of tools. Since deacons can risk constraining possibilities in the interactions with participants, the knowledge creation processes and care are, to a lesser degree, characterised by routines but more to constantly seeking to make good judgments.

Third, I discovered that in creating spaces of possibilities for participants, deacons are boundary crossers that experience both discontinuity and sameness in their interactions with participants. Deacons move across a diverse range of sites, within the church and across organisations, institutions and participants. In theoretical terms, within the field of knowledge creation, deacons’ interactions across these sites can be described in terms of boundary crossing (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 133) (Article 2). My characteristic of deacons as boundary crossers brings empirical contributions to Collins’ theoretical theological research on the deacon’s role as a bridge builder and go-between (Collins, 1990, p. 194). As mentioned in the research overview, Collins questions the traditional interpretation of deacons’ role as humble service for the poor. Rather than humble servants, he sees deacons as ‘go-betweens’ given an important message and a personal obligation to take responsibility for another (Collins, 1990, p. 194). My study contributes to an understanding of how deacons empirically act and interact the ‘go-between’ role. In this section, I focus on ‘spaces of possibilities’, but sections 7.1 and 7.2 describe what kinds of resources are available and how deacons use them as ‘go-betweens’.

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73 These include for instance lunch meetings, dinner groups, congregation-related coffee get-togethers and elderly meetings, ‘baby singing’, dialogues on everyday life and existential questions, Bible study, handcrafts, language education, flea market, service planning, international work or prayer.

74 I limit myself from comparing Collins’ (1990) theological understanding and my empirical findings; I only present my empirical findings. My findings of deacons as ‘go-betweens’ correspond with Jordheim’s (2014) findings in her questionnaire-based empirical study of deacons’ everyday tasks. In Jordheim’s findings, the deacons themselves described their role as ‘go-betweens’. Her material is established from the deacons, deaconesses and diaconal workers at the World Assembly arranged by the Diakonia World Federation in 2013 (Jordheim, 2014, p. 187). I do not further discuss her findings because her study is not based on observations or deacons’ role as a go-between in terms of the knowledge-creation process.
Moreover, section 7.4 provides an empirical model of diaconal work with participants that sheds light on the five deacons’ as empirical ‘go-betweens’ and boundary crossers.

In knowledge creation processes, ‘a boundary can be seen as a socio-cultural difference leading to discontinuity in action and interaction’ (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 133). Discontinuity in action and interaction with the participants emerges as a crucial characteristic deacons’ spaces of possibilities. In these spaces, both deacons and participants negotiate resources and challenges within various contexts. The mingling of these contexts often result in discontinuity as the meetings challenge the established knowledge. This discontinuity facilitates the negotiation of new resources and complex situations, often leading to a need for new solutions. Thus, discontinuity may aid the development of knowledge as deacons enter a territory they are unfamiliar with and in which, to some extent, they are unqualified and thus need to search for new solutions (Suchman, 1994, p. 194; Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 134).

In addition, deacons also search for sameness with participants through boundary crossings. Boundaries simultaneously suggest a sameness and continuity in the sense that within discontinuity, two or more sites are relevant to each other in a particular way (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 133). For instance, the deacons drew on both the everyday tools of participants and the Church’s resources, such as Holy Communion, prayers and the Bible, according to what was most relevant in to a participant’s situation and what was realistic to accomplish (See Article 2 and 3). As ‘go-betweens’, deacons face dilemmas of taking care of both the unfamiliar and familiar.

Fourth, the intersections of diverse sites within the spaces of possibilities constitute a third space that allows for the negotiation of meaning, resulting in an emergent hybridity (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 135) (Article 2 and 3). Hybridity is created when elements from different contexts are combined into something unfamiliar and new (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 148). I observed that actions and interactions across sites affect not only individuals but also social practices as a whole (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 136) (Articles 2 and 3). I agree with Akkerman et al. that the processes involved in re-establishing actions or interactions are resources for learning as they involve multiple perspectives and multiple parties (Akkerman et al., 2011, pp. 136-137). Learning at the boundaries is necessary if communities do not want to lose their dynamism and grow stale (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 136).

My fifth characteristic—one which I regard as underlying all the other aspects of the spaces of possibilities, the three modes and the use of hybrid tools—is deacons’ search for hospitality in the spaces of possibilities. Hospitality is defined as actively welcoming a stranger and a constant reminder to see and hear those members of society who are most easily marginalised, oppressed and rendered invisible (Angell, 2014, pp. 161,162). In the spaces of possibilities, the five deacons sought to include both those easily marginalised and others that belonged to the local congregations. They, in line with

75 Thus, the characteristic of ‘sameness and discontinuity’ combined with the mode of ‘periphery and proximity’ (7.2.3) highlight the challenges inherent in the notion of heterotopic diakonia.
Luke Breterthon (Bretherton, 2006), made a strong case for hospitality as the one authentic way of relating to others.

In my study, the deacons’ emphasis on the marginalised stands in contrast to prior empirical findings regarding diaconal work in the Church of Sweden (Engel, 2008), where the marginalised were not prioritised within diaconal work (Engel, 2008, p. 242), as mentioned in the research overview. Engel points to a dilemma in the Church of Sweden: there is a tension between the rhetoric in internal church documents, which emphasises the marginalised as a target group, and the lack of such preoccupations in practice (Engel, 2008, p. 243). In contrast to Engel, I have not studied the Church of Norway’s diaconal work, but the work of deacons. The deacons in my study seek to create spaces of possibilities that include both the marginalised and others, even though the caring ministry has elements of difficult inclusion (7.2.3). However, it is likely that my findings would have corresponded with Engel’s findings to a larger degree if the focus of the study had been the Church of Norway’s diaconal work.

In sum, I claim that spaces of possibilities, with the mentioned complexity of the five characteristics, are a key outcome in deacons’ knowledge creation processes and care. Together with the perspectives related to hybrid tools (7.1) and the three modes (7.2), I argue that the five characteristics give, in particular, an empirical contribution to Collins’ (1990) theological research on deacons as ‘go-betweens’ and, indirectly, Afdal’s (2013) concept of spaces of possibilities. In addition, with the characteristic of ‘sameness’, I have pointed at dilemmas in Wyller’s (2010) critique of sameness in heterotopic spaces. In the next section, I outline a visualisation, a simplified model of the deacons’ empirical knowledge creation and care, based on the presented perspectives in sections 7.1 to 7.3.

### 7.4 A model of deacons’ empirical knowledge creation and care in interactions with participants

Up to this point, the three main perspectives outlined in the discussion section—hybrid tools, the three modes and spaces of possibilities—have been presented within a trilogical perspective. These three perspectives can also be presented as a simplified diaconal model of deacons’ empirical interaction with participants, similar to that which emerged in Article 3. This model is an illustration of the hybrid tools in the three tool-mediated modes that facilitate spaces of possibilities. The hybrid tools, the three modes and the spaces of possibilities are interrelated and are in constant back-and-forth motion in the search for the participants’ well-being and well-becoming. The simplified model is shown in Figure 7.6.
Figure 7.6: Simplified model of deacons’ empirical knowledge creation and care – the creation of spaces of possibilities

The model in Figure 7.6 is a simplified illustration of how I argue the relationship between the findings across the three articles. The arrows that go in both directions illustrate back and forth
processes, and the arrow in the left side (from ‘spaces of possibilities’ to ‘hybrid tools’) illustrates that in the spaces of possibilities, new hybrid tools may be created, which again can be used in the three modes and can create new spaces of possibilities. In other words, the model illustrates possible ongoing dynamics that can result in unforeseen open-ended processes or the dynamics can be constrained. These processes are not automatic and are always at risk because of a complex, changing reality.

The findings in Article 3 emerged in a similar model based on the observation of the deacons’ specific actions in their interaction with participants. The findings in this article were based on certain situations, and in particular, a detailed analysis of one situation. However, the models in Article 3 and in Figure 7.6 differ. The model in Figure 7.6, based on perspectives across the three articles, illustrates to a greater extent the inter-related, dynamic, back and forth processes (the arrow at the left side). It is possible that if I had to analyse the material in Article 3 once more, I would find these processes, but it did not appear clearly to me when I analysed that material.

Finally, the model can reflect, combine and expand various significant theoretical contributions within various diaconal theories, as shown in the discussion section, including Nordstokke (2011), Wyller (2006, 2009) and Collins (1990, 2002).

7.5 The overall argument

To conclude, what characterises deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care in the Church of Norway? I argue that deacons’ knowledge creation and care are characterised by being boundary crossers between diverse realities. Deacons work at the boundaries, bridging diverse realities within the Church and between the Church and a complex society.

First, as shown in section 7.1, deacons bridge tools from diverse realities; they use tools from theology and Christian faith practices as well as from human and social sciences and people’s everyday lives. In the betweenness of bridging theology and human sciences according to the situation, deacons use both conceptual and material tools.

Second, as discussed in section 7.2, deacons’ use tools in modes of contrasting elements: 1) acknowledge/expand possibilities, 2) being-becoming and 3) periphery and proximity. In this study, the attempt of the five deacons to bridge the elements within one mode was seen as a dynamic negotiation depending on the situation. In particular, the modes of periphery and proximity exemplify the bridging elements of deacons. Deacons aim at bridging various groups together, taking care of both those familiar and those unfamiliar to the communities. Furthermore, the bridging element is not only about mixing people from various sites but facilitating possibilities related to a person’s being and becoming, resources and needs. Thus, deacons also bridge between the modes depending on the situation.
Third, as discussed in section 7.3, deacons are boundary crossers, moving across diverse sites and searching to create spaces of possibilities. As boundary crossers, they can both facilitate and constrain possibilities. They experience discontinuity, sameness and hybridity in different contexts. On the one hand, deacons have a privileged position since they can introduce components of one practice into another, building bridges between different realities. Care encourages deacons to listen and to see situations from another’s perspective. Knowledge creation, then, is characterised by the constant negotiation of diverse realities. On the other hand, being boundary crosser is a difficult position because they are easily seen as peripheral, with the risk of never fully belonging to or being acknowledged as participants in central practices in their everyday work (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 140) (Article 2).

Thus, my empirical material shows that deacons’ knowledge creation and care is characterised by bridging between diverse realities. The power of diakonia lies in this betweenness, and so do the challenges of deacons.
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The Articles of the Thesis

Article 1
Nygaard, Rodriguez Marianne and Afdal, Geir:
Caring to know or knowing to care?
The relationship between knowledge creation and caring in the theological education of Christian social work professionals
(Accepted by the Journal of Adult Theological Education, will be published May 2015)

Article 2
Nygaard, Rodriguez Marianne:
Conflicts and care among colleagues:
Deacons’ professional knowledge development in the Church of Norway
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Article 3
Nygaard, Rodriguez Marianne:
Modes of deacons’ professional knowledge — facilitation of the ‘space of possibilities’
(Published in Diakonia. Journal for the Study of Christian Social Practice, Issue 2, 2014)
Article 1

Caring to know or knowing to care?

The relationship between knowledge creation and caring in the education of theological social work professions

Marianne Rodriguez Nygaard and Geir Afdal

Abstract

The aim of this article is to investigate the relationship between knowledge creation and caring in the education of one of the Scandinavian churches’ care professions: deacons. Care professionals are knowledge workers in the sense that their knowledge and skills influence quality of care. They not only need to have a certain knowledge base, but they also need to handle knowledge development in the context of complex practice. This means that learning how to create knowledge with participants and professionals is necessary to professional caring education. Further, knowledge creation depends on the provision of care in these contexts. Therefore, 1) knowledge creation is important to providing quality care, and 2) care may speed up the knowledge creation processes. In this article, we investigate how the relationship between care and knowledge creation is understood in key educational texts, namely curriculum documents. Findings indicate that care is understood as the purpose of the education, but less as a condition for the creation of knowledge. Also, the curricula prepare students for knowledge creation and care with participants, but not with other professionals.

Keywords
Care, Knowledge Creation, Deacons, Christian Social Worker, Profession, Curriculum
Introduction

In this article, we investigate understandings of and the relationship between professional knowledge creation and caring in the education of caring professionals. We have chosen the profession of theological social work with a focus on Scandinavian Lutheran deacons, who are leaders of the Church’s caring ministry and social work (Kirkerådet, 2008; Redse, 2014). Our interests are both empirical and theoretical. We ask empirically how professional knowing and caring are understood in two curriculum texts. At the same time, our inquiry is conditioned by certain theoretical perspectives in professional 1) knowledge creation, 2) care and 3) the relationship between knowledge creation and care.

First, our perspective on professional knowledge is informed by theories of knowledge creation as a professional learning process (Eraut, 1994, pp. 40-58; Hakkarainen et al., 2004, pp. 197-198) (see the section “Knowledge creation and caring”). Hakkarainen et al. understand knowledge creation as distinguished from two other metaphors of professional learning, namely acquisition and participation (Sfard, 1998). The acquisition metaphor focuses on how the individual learner cognitively acquires knowledge, and then uses this knowledge in practice. Knowledge is understood as substance, as a decontextual ‘package’. The participation metaphor understands professional knowledge not as a package, but as a process, as knowing. Knowing is taking place in social practices, such as in congregations, and therefore situated in specific contexts and distributed between a variety of actors. The knowledge creation metaphor understands professional knowledge neither as a package nor as learning to know in a community, but as a collective process where professionals use different tools in order to continuously create new knowledge (Paavola et al., 2005, pp. 545-548). In a rapidly changing knowledge society, professionals not only use knowledge, but must produce new knowledge themselves. Eraut (Eraut, 1994, p. 57) argues that knowledge creation is a vital mode of professional knowing, and that higher education should “extend its role from that of creator and transmitter of generalizable knowledge to that of enhancing the knowledge creation capacities of individuals and professional communities”.

Second, we are interested in theories of professional care related to knowledge creation. Several authors argue that there is, or should be, a close relationship between knowledge creation and care. Von Krogh (1998) and Styhre et al. (2002) argue that care is a necessary condition and quality in order for an organization to create knowledge. They claim that caring is not something that stands in addition or opposition to knowing, but rather that it propels the relational production of knowledge (von Krogh, 1998; von Krogh et al., 2000, 2001a); (Styhre et al., 2002).

Third, understandings of the relationship between the professional knowledge creation and care of deacons can be investigated through different sources, such as professional practitioners, educators,
policy makers and researchers, as well as textbooks. We have chosen an empirical source in which the understandings among these different groups and actors are negotiated in text, namely in curricula for deacons’ professional education. These curriculum texts are not primarily seen as sources for the teaching of deacons, but as sources wherein the understanding of diakonia is textually integrated. We have chosen curricula from two important Scandinavian diaconal education institutions. The first is the curriculum from the master’s degree programme (2012/2013) at Norway’s Diakonhjemmet University College. The second is the curriculum from a one-year education programme (2013/2014) at Sweden’s Ersta Sköndal University College76. Both educational programmes build on a bachelor’s degree or equivalent in health care, social work or teaching education.

In these curricula, voices from professional practice, research, politics and students are negotiated in one text, which aims to contribute to a culture of diaconal knowledge and competent professionals. The main questions we seek to address in this paper are:

What characterizes professional knowledge creation and care in the curriculum texts, and how can the relationship between knowledge creation and care be understood?

Considerable research has been done on knowledge creation in working communities, mostly in business organizations (Nishiguchi et al., 2001; Nonaka et al., 2001; Nonaka et al., 1995). Some research combines knowledge creation and care in business organizations (Styhre et al., 2002; von Krogh, 1998; von Krogh et al., 2000, 2001a, 2001b). Hakkarainen et al. (2004) emphasize knowledge creation in education, but they do not combine this with the notion of care. Further, significant research has been done on theological education, including emphasis on the relation between the ministry of the Church and the university (Higton, 2013), as well as on learning approaches in theological education institutions (Harkness, 2012) and teaching theology through creative writing (Walton, 2012). However, less research has been done on theological education in relation to the Church’s caring ministry, and to our knowledge, scarcely any research has been done on the relation between knowledge creation and care in the curriculum documents of the Church’s caring ministry.

Following this introduction is a section on key theoretical perspectives. After discussing methodological issues, we provide an account of the context and content of the Norwegian and Swedish diaconal curricula. Then, we present our findings from the curricula analyses, and discuss possible relations between care and knowledge creation.

76 The diaconal programme at Ersta Sköndal University College closed 2014, and merged with the final year of theological education and pastoral training practice.
Knowledge creation and caring

In this theory section, we combine Hakkarainen et al.’s (2004) notion of knowledge creation with von Krogh’s (1998, 2001a, 2001b) notion of care. We first elaborate on the concept of knowledge creation, and then go on to expand on the role of care in knowledge creation.

There are numerous valuable contributions to understandings of professional knowledge. Schön (Schön, 1983) famously argued for the importance of tacit knowledge in professional practices, and how this knowledge can be made explicit by reflection in action. Eraut (1994) also works with a broad conception of knowledge: professional knowledge is not limited to propositional knowledge, but can be personal, tacit, practical, technical and procedural. Wenger (Wenger, 1998) argues that professional knowledge is interwoven into participation in professional practices, and cannot be separated from knowing as action.

Theories of knowledge creation share this broad conception of knowledge, and emphasize the interplay between knowing and knowledge. In contrast to Wenger, knowledge creation theorists argue that professionals use knowledge tools that are external to local practices. Professionals use different kinds of resources and tools in their knowledge creation activities, which are also used in collective processes. One should not therefore delimit the analytical unit to the individual professional, as Schön and, to a lesser extent, Eraut do. People crystallize their knowledge in tools such as scientific theories, plans, models and instruments, as well as everyday tools such as cups, chairs and telephones (Paavola et al., 2005, p. 547). These tools are constitutive of professional knowledge. They are extensions of the body and mind, and represent the collective practices in which the professional works. The analytical focus in theories of knowledge creation is therefore on which tools are in use and in which processes and contexts the tools are used (Paavola et al., 2005, p. 546).

According to Hakkarainen et al. (2004), educational knowledge creation is a six step process, but only the five first steps are used because we cannot observe how students engage in deepening inquiry, improving ideas by generating more questions and searching for additional information (Step 6) (Engeström et al., 1984, p. 199).

The starting point in educational knowledge creation is the construction of a context for the learning project in question. Constructing a learning context ensures that the focus is not only on learning from autonomous texts in school, but also on anchoring knowledge creation in authentic and complex problems of the external world (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 197). A second perspective on educational knowledge creation emphasizes engaging in question-driven inquiry. One crucial aspect of knowledge creation is eliciting students’ own problems and questions in order to guide the inquiry. Without questions generated by the students themselves, there cannot be a genuine process of inquiry. In
particular, explanation-seeking questions, such as “why” and “how”, are important for motivating students towards deeper understanding. A focus on questions that emerge from the participants’ own knowledge and gaps in understanding may motivate their own inquiry (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 198). The third perspective is that of generating working theories. An essential aspect of inquiry and a critical condition for developing conceptual understanding is the generation of one’s own conjectures, hypotheses, theories or interpretations of the phenomena being investigated. The construction of their own working theories may guide students to use their background knowledge systematically, as well as to become aware of their presuppositions (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 198).

**Critical evaluation** is the fourth perspective, which emphasizes the strengths and weaknesses of the tentative theories and explanations produced. It is important to focus on constructively evaluating the advancement of the inquiry process itself, rather than only measuring the result. Students’ and their peers’ self-assessments play a crucial role in the evaluation process, in combination with the efforts of the teacher. A critical evaluation is a way of helping students to “rise above their earlier achievements by creating a higher level of synthesis of the results of inquiry processes” (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 198). The fifth perspective is “searching for new information”. Searching for and working with clarifying scientific knowledge is necessary to deepen understanding, and new information may be provided using literature sources or consulting experts. A comparison of the intuitive working and scientific theories produced by the students tend to make explicit the weaknesses and limitations of collective knowledge (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 198). This means that Hakkarainen et al.’s (2004) knowledge creation perspectives on education emphasize creating contexts, question-driven inquiries, working theories and critical evaluations, as well as searching for new information.

Another dimension to knowledge creation is offered by von Krogh (1998), namely care. Knowledge creation takes place as a relational and collective practice, and care is a condition of trustworthy, emphatic, helpful and open relations:

Constructive and helpful relations speed up the communication process, enable organization members to share theory personal knowledge and to discuss their ideas and concerns freely. Overall, good relations purge a knowledge-creation process of distrust, fear, and dissatisfaction (von Krogh, 1998, p. 136).

Von Krogh distinguishes between low and high care and between individual and social knowledge processes. Von Krogh has identified five dimensions of high care related to knowledge creation: 1) reciprocal trust, 2) active empathy, 3) good access to help and advice, 4) minimal condemnation and 5) a “can-do spirit” (von Krogh, 1998, pp. 137-138). Individual knowledge creation which is characterized by low care results in individuals trying to capture knowledge rather than share it. Social
knowledge creation characterized by high care is optimal; it may result in practices wherein participants dwell on each other’s perspectives.

The consequences of these relationships for professional practice and education are clear. Professionals’ (in this case, the deacons’) knowledge creation depends on care relationships with co-professionals, co-workers and clients. Professional education should not only be directed towards the acquisition of a knowledge base, but also towards socialization into a caring knowledge creation culture. Not only knowledge, but also care should be emphasized, and knowing and caring should be interrelated. Learning how to create knowledge through social relations is necessary. On the other hand, there may be reasons to ask whether, or in which sense, this relationship between knowing and caring, as suggested by von Krogh (1998) and Styhre et al. (Styhre et al., 2002), is valid in caring and theological professions such as diakonia.

**Sampling and analytical strategy**
Comparing curricula from different countries necessitates a sampling process whereby cultural and conceptual equalities and differences are thoroughly considered (Crossley et al., 2003, p. 41). To facilitate this process, it is important to identify the equalities and differences that will result in an interesting and significant analysis of how the curricula prepare students for knowledge creation. Accordingly, we have chosen to compare Swedish and Norwegian curricula, because they are similar in that they both provide formal requirements for deacons to work in the Church, yet they differ with regard to the length of the programme of study. A two-year master’s degree is formally required in Norway, whereas only one year of education is required for the profession in Sweden.

In fact, variation in the length of the educational programme was considered a possible challenge in making this comparison. However, Norway is so far the only country to require a master’s degree for work in the Protestant Church, and a comparison with equivalent curricula that require a master’s degree is not possible. Although other countries do provide diaconal master’s degrees, these are conducted in cooperation with Norwegian educational institutions and are therefore unsuitable for comparison with the Norwegian curriculum (NC).

We analysed the curricula with a qualitative analysis software, Atlas.ti, and also using manual techniques. During the first phase of the analysis, we coded inductively, searching for epistemic concepts used in the curricula for knowledge and care. We then coded the curricula deductively, using concepts from the knowledge creation theory of Hakkarainen et al. (2004) and the care theories of von Krogh (1998, 2001a, 2001b). Operationalizing the theory, we posed the following three questions to the text:
1. Which professional contexts are created?
2. How do the curricula provide the students with question-driven dialogues, as well as their own generation of theories, scientific knowledge and critical evaluations?
3. How is care used in the curricula, and how is the relationship between care and knowledge creation understood?

In sum, the analysis is best described as an abductive, thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012, p. 578). We worked collaboratively when analysing, discussing and writing. We then discussed the text again, reanalysing, rewriting and passing the text back and forth to each other. This collective back-and-forth process challenged our individual interpretations and contributed to the validation of the findings.

**Context and content of the curricula**

Before we proceed to our analyses, we will provide information on the Scandinavian context and two diaconal curricula. About 75% of Norway’s population (Church of Norway, 2015) and 65% of Sweden’s (Svenska Kyrkan) are members of the Protestant Lutheran Folk Church. There are 249 fulltime deacon positions and 1,287 congregations in the Church of Norway (Diakonforbundet, 2009), whereas the Church of Sweden has 1,111 deacon positions (Den Svenska kyrkan) and 1,346 congregations (Svenska Kyrkan, 2015).

In the introductions to both curricula, the purpose of the programme is presented as preparing students for a caring ministry in society and in the Church. Care is framed as the overall and primary educational aim in both curricula. In the Swedish curriculum (SC), diaconal education is called “the Swedish Church Caritative Education”.

The NC consists of 12 modules, taught over two years. These modules can be divided into two categories: 1) research methodology, which includes modules entitled “Qualitative Methods”, “Quantitative Methods”, “Philosophy of Science”, “Science of Diakonia” and the master’s thesis (a total of 42 percent of all modules); 2) a theology- and social science-oriented section, which includes modules entitled “The Theology of Diakonia”, “Bible Studies”, “Diaconal Work” with practical work in congregations, “Pastoral Care”, “Ethics, Diakonia and Professional Practice”, “Leadership in Church and Society”, and electives “Crises in Diaconal Perspective” or “International Diakonia”. Both categories are practice- and theory-oriented. Category 1, research, focuses on understanding theories and writing the thesis, while category 2, theology and social science, emphasizes both theory and applying theory to the practice of working in the Church and society. Further, the majority of the
modules contain at least one dialogue-based approach, and the emphasis is on collective dialogues such as discussions and group dialogues.

In comparison, the SC is composed of eight modules that are taught over one year of education, without a research methodology component. These modules fall within the theology and social science category, including “The Theology of Diakonia”, “Bible Studies”, “Pastoral Care” and courses entitled “Ethics”, “Diaconal Social Work”, “Diaconal Work”, “Religious Education and Leadership” and “Religion and Society”.

**Analysis**

In order to answer our questions above we divide the analysis into two main parts. First, we analyse knowledge creation, emphasizing a) the establishment of contexts and b) question-driven dialogues, as well as the generation of dialogue and critical evaluations (Hakkarainen et al., 2004); second, we analyse care and care in relation to knowledge creation in the texts (von Krogh et al., 2001b).

**Establishing contexts**

Which professional contexts are created? The curricula are constituted by both practice and theory, and prescribe different kinds of practices that enable the students to act and interact in the professional field. Professional context is created through interaction, not only by reading texts. However, context is also created by theory or texts; literature, lectures, discussions and so on enable the students to conceptualize the professional context. Thus, the choices of literature, themes and texts also constitute the professional context.

In both curricula, “practice” is understood partly as practical exercises during study and partly as work practice. “Practical exercises” are, in both curricula, oriented towards pastoral care. In the NC, practical exercises involve “liturgical” and “diaconal work”. Work practice contexts include “diaconal social work” (SC), “leadership” and “diaconal work” in congregations (NC and SC). The work practices represent authentic and complex problems of the external world (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 197) of Church and society. Deacons relate to both Church and society, to national and international communities and to a mixture of Church- and society-related issues:

> The education at Diakonhjemmet University College has traditionally been directed towards church and society. The master’s degree is designed to educate deacons in the congregations, but can also be appropriate for administrative leaders and leaders within health and social work departments. The programme can also be relevant for employees of diaconal organizations and institutions, in missions and social developmental organizations (NC: 4).
This means that education is oriented towards two different sets of professional practices in the external world: society and the Church. There is a distinction, but not a separation, between society and Church. Accordingly, social science knowledge can assist deacons in their interactions with the Church:

The course gives knowledge about the social, theological and socio-political preconditions for diaconal work. The course considers in particular perspectives of vulnerability and gender (“Diaconal Social Work”, SN: 2).

At the end of the course, the student should be able to identify and reflect on different forms of vulnerability, and know about diaconal, social methods of work (“Diaconal Social Work”, SC: 2).

Further, the Church is seen as a contributor not only to a more or less isolated religious community, but also to society at large:

It is a common observation that the Church has played a significant role in society, in handling accidents and critical situations in recent years, and in this module the idea is to draw on these experiences, and reflect on their quality and importance (NC: 22).

This means that deacons are not only social workers in that they contribute to the social good. They are assumed to have specialised knowledge, skills and values from their theological education, which enables them to act responsively in, for instance, critical situations in society.

Dissolving the separation between society and Church has consequences for the construction of a professional context. This context is framed as dynamic and fluid. The context is enacted through the students’ practice-theory interactions; rather than being imposed from authority, it is a field of interaction with professional knowledge. Our analyses do show a slight difference between the two curricula. In the SC, the practical work experience takes place within the Church, though it emphasizes interactions with society. The NC presents work practice in both congregational and institutional contexts.

In sum, active interaction with the professional context is prescribed throughout the curricula. Through practice, this context is created through interaction, and conceptualized through theory. The professional context is furthermore actively shaped through knowledge creation as a set of possible collective problem-solving processes.
**Question-driven dialogues, theory generation and critical evaluation**

The difference between the Swedish and Norwegian curricula becomes more apparent in further analysing how the curricula describe knowledge creation. As mentioned in the methods section, we initially asked how the curricula propose to provide the students with interactions in the form of question-driven dialogues, as well as opportunities to generate their own theories, work with scientific knowledge, and undergo critical evaluations.

*Dialogue-based* teaching approaches, such as discussions, work groups, dialogues and student presentations are frequently prescribed in the NC. Teaching will vary between lectures, discussions, student presentations and group work. All modules contain at least one dialogue-based approach, and the emphasis is on collective dialogues such as group discussions (NC: 10, 15–17, 19–21, 23–24).

In the majority of modules in the NC, students are required to set up questions themselves. *Defining one’s own problems and questions* is emphasized both in pedagogical approaches and in examinations, especially with regard to the essays and the master’s thesis. The student chooses the theme and the questions to be answered, which is then approved by a teacher. The work should contribute new knowledge, critical thinking and systematic evaluations related to empirical and theoretical studies (“Master Thesis”, NC). The students are required to take responsibility for aspects of inquiry, such as goal setting, questioning, explaining and evaluating (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 199). The essays and master’s thesis involve autonomy and *self-regulation* rather than the external regulation of learning processes. In addition, the students are guided to discuss the questions of others. Discussions and group dialogues may provide students with a negotiating role in the project of inquiry. Diversity and “creative chaos” facilitate knowledge advancement to a greater degree than pre-structured and strictly controlled instructions (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 199).

In the SC, the dialogues and discussions are emphasized less; the text does not focus on dialogue-based teaching approaches to the same extent as the Norwegian. Only one of eight modules, “Pastoral Care”, is described as having a dialogue-based teaching approach; the teaching is conducted through lectures, seminars, discussion groups and study visits (Module: Pastoral Care, SC). The dialogue-based approach in “Pastoral Care” may help to generate students’ own questions that are anchored in authentic problems. “Biblical Studies and Ecclesiology” also includes group work. Nevertheless, the majority of the modules have no explicit dialogue-based approach, rather emphasizing lectures and seminars. Three of the modules are described with teaching approaches being only lectures and seminars; teaching is conducted as lectures and seminars (Modules: The Theology of Diaconal Work, Ethics, Religion and Society, SC). Additional lectures and seminars, as well as work practice and field studies, may facilitate dialogues and students’ question-driven inquiries. As we have pointed out, this
is not an analysis of the programme itself, but of how professional knowledge creation and care are constructed in the curricula both explicitly and textually.

Finally, how do the curricula provide theory generation and learning to work with scientific knowledge? In the NC, 50 of 120 study credits are dedicated to scientific work, while the SC has no science-oriented modules. Further, in NC a scientific inquiry-oriented mode of learning is integrated into the entire curriculum. This mode may provide corrections to intuitive working theories and the weaknesses of collective knowledge, converting knowledge into more systematic, complex and explicit forms (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 198; Nonaka et al., 2001, p. 16). Particularly through the master’s thesis, the NC suggests that searching for and working with explanatory scientific knowledge may encourage this systematization of knowledge; the work should contribute to new knowledge, critical thinking and systematic evaluations related to empirical and theoretical studies. The student should then be able to use the insight provided by the subject as a whole (NC: 24). The aim of the thesis work is to contribute to new knowledge through a critical negotiation of the existing knowledge.

How do the curricula provide critical evaluation processes for the students? In the Norwegian plan, critical evaluation is facilitated through the written and oral course requirements, essays, supervision, student presentations and writing workshops in master’s thesis module (NC: 11, 13–19, 21–24). In the two latter examples, students play a crucial role in the evaluation process: the students participate in at least one master’s dissertation seminar, where they will present part of their work and respond to a presentation from a fellow student (“Master thesis”, NC: 24). The SC has a school exam and a home exam as critical evaluations, but it does not provide an explicit evaluation process that includes the students. However, the dialogue groups in both plans may facilitate critical evaluation processes for the students.

This analysis has shown significant differences between the two curricula on issues like question-driven dialogues, theory generation and critical evaluation. The aim here is not to evaluate the documents but to analyse how knowledge creation is constructed. So far we argue that knowledge creation is understood differently in the two curricula. The Swedish curriculum tends to understand professional knowledge as something that is given and the students are to learn and then use in practice. The Norwegian curriculum challenges the students to use existing knowledge and other tools in order to create new knowledge. Before concluding on the relationship between knowledge creation and care, a third question must be answered: how is care used in the curricula, and how is the relationship between care and knowledge creation understood?
How is care used in the curricula?

In the introductions to both curricula, the purpose of the programme is formulated as preparing the students for a caring ministry in society and the Church. Care is framed as a primary educational aim in both curricula. As mentioned, in the SC, diaconal education is called “the Swedish Church Caritative Education”. The Norwegian text identifies the purpose of this type of education as follows:

Crucial to the understanding of diakonia that this curriculum builds on, is that the church has a diaconal assignment that can be described as an assignment of care. This is actualized through the frame of civil society. It is about care for individuals and for marginalized groups. It is also about an assignment that aims to build good fellowships, to enhance compassion in all areas of church and society, instead of being a passive on-looker (NC: 5).

In this passage, the NC elaborates on the key element that is supposed to unite the epistemic and practical heterogeneity of diakonia, namely care as a mission. Diakonia is understood as a mission wherein care is the aim and the direction for the activity, and the deacons’ knowledge and abilities are supposed to create care. In other words, care is the purpose, and knowledge and knowledge creation are the means.

The above quotation further describes the caring mission as being aimed at building communities and promoting compassion in both Church and society. In this way, care is filled with content, as it is in the definition of diakonia (Kirkerådet, 2008) given in the NC:

Diakonia is the caring ministry of the Church. It is the Gospel in action and is expressed through (1) loving your neighbour, (2) creating inclusive communities, (3) caring for creation and (4) struggling for justice.

Thus it is indicated that care is expressed through the four aspects concerning the “neighbour”. In the following, instead of “the neighbour”, we call the lay people with whom deacons relate “participants”.

The introduction refers to “care” as a label, identifying certain professions as “caring”, and including deacons in this tradition. Because of this commitment to care, life professions where clients’ needs are emphasized are required for entry into diaconal education; in general, this refers to a background in healthcare, social work, teaching or the clergy (Tuft, 2013, p. 3). Further, implicit in the introduction part the idea of care as a purpose may be care as an integrative idea, an ideal that holds together the different epistemic bits and pieces in deacons’ education and practice.
Regarding the courses, the SC does not mention the word “care” in the course descriptions at all. In the NC, care is mentioned explicitly in three of 13 courses only, and in these three, it is mostly used in reference to the deacons’ work as a “work of care”. Care is also used here as a label, such as “caring disciplines” and “caring ministry”. Table 1 outlines the citations in the three courses. 77

Table “Concepts of care in course descriptions”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Care as label</th>
<th>Care as more unfolded perspectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible Theology, Bible Interpretation and Transmission (NC: 16)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching content:</td>
<td>‘Care as biblical motive, with emphasis on restoring to health and hospitality’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diaconal Work (with Congregational Work Practice) (NC: 18)</td>
<td>Teaching outcome: ‘Having in-depth knowledge about the Church’s caring ministry’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Having a reflected relation to the context of the care, codetermination and participation’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching content:</td>
<td>‘Diaconal innovation in the Church’s caring ministry’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethic, Diakonia and Professional Practice (NC: 19)</td>
<td>Introduction to the course: ‘...the emphasis is on the ethical aspects within professional caring in general and diakonia in particular’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching outcome:</td>
<td>‘... professional caring and diaconal work’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching content:</td>
<td>‘... ethics of care in relation to professional care and diaconal work’</td>
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There are a few exceptions to this label use of care in the Norwegian text. In the course “Bible Theology, Bible Interpretation and Transmission”, care is treated as a “Biblical motive, with emphasis on restoring to health and hospitality” (NC: 16). In the course “Ethics, Diakonia and Professional Practice”, deacons’ professional practices are related to theories of relational ethics and ethics of care in a potentially dynamic way (NC: 19). In these cases, one can argue that care is put in motion and that care is understood as the mover.

To conclude on this point, we find that in both curricula, care is described as integral and highly important to deacons’ professional work and education. Care is explicitly identified as the purpose of diakonia, and related to the participants.

77 The authors’ translation from Norwegian.
**How is the relationship between care and knowledge creation understood?**

However, care is not mentioned as a condition for knowledge creation, or a necessity in relating to other professionals for creating care. Further, in the NC, care is said to be integrative, but the curricula seldom explicitly integrate care into their different courses and activities. The curricula offer the lecturers and students little assistance in integrating care and knowledge creation processes through the curricula. This means that care is mainly understood as something the deacons should give to participants. Care is mainly emphasized in relation to the participants, but not as a condition of knowledge creation within different professional contexts. Care is not located as a quality in for instance the professional cooperation within a congregation or in the cooperation between the deacon and professionals within the public social services. We also argue that the two curricula are different. In the Swedish curriculum professional knowledge and care are parallel and isolated concepts. In the Norwegian curriculum knowledge is to a large degree understood as creation, which enables care to participants. Neither curricula, however, describes care as a quality of knowledge creation and inter-professional relations.

**Inter-professional caring and knowing: curricula for the future?**

Based on our analyses we will make two arguments in this concluding section. First, the analysis shows that care is emphasized as the main purpose of relating to participants, but is not explicitly mentioned as a condition for knowledge creation, either with participants or with professionals. Thus, differences appear between von Krogh’s understanding of knowledge creation and care on one hand, and those of the two curricula on the other. Von Krogh’s account of care can be understood as a condition or a means of creating knowledge. In the curricula, care is not only a condition, but is the overall aim of the activity.

Here, the curricula point to a key insight. In many professions, care cannot be delimited to a means. The so-called caring professions have called for an expansion of the understanding of care in relation to knowledge creation. Teachers, nurses, social workers and deacons, for instance, use and create knowledge in order to better care for their students. This calls for a theoretical expansion of the relationship between knowledge creation and care as formulated by von Krogh and others, where knowledge creation is seen as a mean or condition for the enactment of care.

Secondly, Von Krogh’s theories, however, may illuminate the limitations of understanding care primarily as an aim or purpose. In order to create care, care is needed as a condition. This is obvious in the case of deacons; for the deacon to create care, he or she is dependent on caring relations with other
Colleagues, volunteers, leaders and others. Caring relationships cannot be taken for granted. If students do not learn how to create care in relation to other professionals in the course of their professional education, their future work practices may be affected. Caring relations should be analysed as integral aspects of professional practice.

Moreover, the lack of inter-professional focus in education programs may constrain the “relational turn in expertise” (Edwards, 2010, p. 13). According to Edwards (2010), the relational turn in expertise focuses on interacting with other professionals and clients to negotiate the interpretation of tasks and ways of accomplishing them. The crucial argument is that the resources that others bring to problems can enhance understandings and, thus, knowledge creation processes (Edwards, 2010, p. 13). The capacity of a relational agency can be described in the following two-stage process: 1) working with others to expand the task at hand by recognizing the motives and resources of others as they interpret them, and 2) aligning one’s own responses to the enhanced interpretations with those of other professionals (Edwards, 2010, p. 14).

Our findings show that there is an emphasis on interacting as relational agents with participants, but to a lesser extent with other professionals. Deacons as care professionals are knowledge workers in the sense that their knowledge and skills influence quality of care (Nishikawa, 2011). They not only require a certain knowledge base, but also need to handle knowledge development when adjusting complex practices. This, we argue, means that learning how to create knowledge with both participants and professionals, is necessary for a professional caring education, including the theological professional educations.

The lack of inter-professional knowledge creation and care in the curricula corresponds to similar challenges found in empirical studies on deacons’ professional practice within congregations (Nygaard, 2014). Findings show that deacons often work in isolation from colleagues, and may have low care relations according to von Krogh. This affects not only the deacons’ knowledge creation processes, but also the professional community as a whole, as well as the Church’s relations with its participants. The collaborative purposive responses to complex problems are challenged.


Nygård, M. R. (2014). *Conflicts and care among staff members - Professional knowledge development in the Church of Norway*. Article


Article 2

Care and conflicts among colleagues:
Deacons’ professional knowledge development in the Church of Norway

Marianne Rodríguez Nygaard

Abstract
How does the expression of care between colleagues influence knowledge development in working communities? This paper presents the results of an ethnographic field study of five deacons in five Church of Norway congregations, focusing on their professional knowledge development with colleagues in the congregational context. The analysis applies theories concerning the relation between knowledge creation and care to highlight how the presence or absence of care can influence knowledge development. Knowledge development refers to formation of new knowledge rather than adaptation of existing knowledge. Findings indicate two main constraints regarding deacons’ knowledge development in their working communities. First, interactions between staff members in the congregations I studied indicate a tendency of low-care exchanges. Second, deacons’ knowledge creation is characterised by pre-defined and parallel work processes within their work environment which isolate the individuals from one another. The results show connections between the knowledge created and the extent of care expressed, as well as how relational power influences the knowledge created. I argue that theories of knowledge creation and care must consider to a greater extent the significance of a community’s power relations in the knowledge development process.

Keywords: Deacons, knowledge-creation, care, power, empirical, congregations, SECI
Abstract in Norwegian


Kunnskapsutvikling handler om å utarbeide ny kunnskap fremfor å tilpasse seg den eksisterende. Funnen indikerer to hovedhindringer i forhold til diakonenes kunnskapsutvikling. For det første, interaksjonene mellom kollegaer i stabsfellesskapet indikerer en tendens til liten grad av omsorg. For det andre er den potensielle kunnskapsutviklingen preget av rutiner og parallele arbeidsprosesser, hvor hver enkelt ofte jobber alene. Funnen indikerer en sammenheng mellom grad av omsorg i arbeidsfellesskapet og hva slags kunnskap som blir utviklet. I tillegg viser materialet at relasjonell makt påvirker hva slags kunnskaps som bli utviklet. Derfor argumenterer jeg for at teorier om kunnskapsutvikling og omsorg vil tjene på å inkludere maktperspektiver.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to explore the knowledge creation of deacons as they interact with other members of their working community in the Church of Norway (CofN) as well as the expression of care among these colleagues. The CofN belongs to the evangelical Lutheran branch of Christian church and was a state church until 2012. About 75 per cent of Norway’s population are baptised members (Church of Norway, 2015b). The average church attendance is approximately 3 per cent of the population per service (Church of Norway, 2015a).

Why is this research focus of interest? To my knowledge, there is no empirical research on deacons’ professional knowledge development in congregations or on how the expression of care among members of professional religious working communities influences their knowledge creation processes. Moreover, I regard deacons to be of special interest because of their interdisciplinary role within the church where they negotiate their theology from a wide range of professional knowledge. Furthermore, extant research on how care facilitates knowledge development has not addressed

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workplaces that strive to be external care providers (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 49), therefore, such a focus may offer important new contributions. However, the reference is 14 years old, which raises the question of whether the research gap still remains an unexplored field. Searches in research databases show that this research field still remains unexplored (see research overview). One of the workplaces appropriate for research on knowledge creation and care, I argue, is the Church’s diaconal work, understood as the ‘Church’s caring ministry’ (National Council, 2009, p. 5). Deacons are leaders of the congregation’s caring ministry (Diakonforbundet, 2003). All the congregations of this study had working communities that included various professions: two or three pastors, one cantor, at least one religious educator and one deacon. In addition, there were administrative and technical staff and volunteers.

My analysis draws on Nonaka’s concept of knowledge creation and Krogh’s notion of care related to Nonaka’s theories of knowledge creation (von Krogh et al., 2001a). The knowledge creation concept concentrates on processes (not knowledge per se), practices and social structures that encourage the formation of new knowledge and innovation, rather than assimilation of existing knowledge (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 12). The concept has been developed to underline collaborative creativity in theories of learning (Paavola et al., 2012, p. 1). For knowledge to be developed, it must be shared, recreated and amplified through interaction with others, and the effectiveness of these processes depends on the extent of care experienced in these interactions (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 30). In this article I ask:

What characterises the deacons’ professional knowledge creation and the expression of care within the working community of the Church of Norway?

To answer the research question, I first present theoretical perspectives on knowledge development and care. Then, I introduce my methodological approach, thematic analysis and finally, the concluding remarks. This article focuses mainly on the processes of knowledge creation and not specifically on the outcomes. The empirical findings indicate processes with low extent of care, but they also expand the theoretical notion of low care by introducing power relations as a suitable concept to characterise some of the empirical findings. Therefore, I argue that knowledge creation theories could benefit from including theories of power relations to a greater extent. 80 I understand power relationships as the possibility to exercise influence, both negative and positive, in relationships. The central question is how power is exercised, and the focus is on processes, not only structure (Flyvbjerg, 2010, pp. 131-132).

80 The word ‘power’ is used (von Krogh et al., 2001a, pp. 39,41,45) but not in relation to an extensive use of the theories of power.
Research overview

Little empirical research has been conducted on deacons in countries that have a diaconal tradition comparable to that of the CofN. Although research on deacons’ professional knowledge creation is lacking, some existing empirical studies are relevant to this article. Researchers in Sweden have investigated deacons’ identities and how they experience their work (Lindgren, 2007; Olofsgård, 2003). Another relevant study is Angell and Kristoffersen’s examination of deacons’ identities and the notion of diakonia in the CofN (Angell, 2011; Angell et al., 2004). These researchers have empirically analysed deacons in parish contexts, but none have directly approached knowledge creation by deacons in everyday practice.

A keyword search for ‘knowledge creation’ in Google Scholar shows that the work of Nonaka et al. is the most relevant, based on the number of hits (Nonaka & Teece, 2001; Nonaka et al., 2000; Nonaka et al., 2009). Further, searches on ‘knowledge creation and care’, ‘knowledge creation and care and relig*’, ‘knowledge creation and care and Christian’, ‘knowledge creation and care and congregation*’ showed no relevant hits. Thus, searches on oria.no and Google Scholar confirm von Krogh et al.’s (G. von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 49) call to address the research gap on knowledge creation and care within working communities that provide external care. Moreover, research has established the importance of care in knowledge creation in professional communities, particularly business management (Costa et al., 2010; Styhre et al., 2002; G. von Krogh, 1998; G. von Krogh et al., 2000; 2001a, p. 30; Georg von Krogh et al., 2012).

Research on deacons in the CofN fills three knowledge gaps. First, it contributes to research on the professional knowledge creation of the deacons themselves; second, it remedies the lack of broad empirical research on knowledge development in communities of religious professionals; and third, it links knowledge creation and care to communities that are supposed to be external, high-care providers.

Theory of knowledge creation – the SECI process, ‘ba’ and care

Nonaka’s theory of knowledge creation and Krogh’s concept of care related to Nonaka’s theory offer a theoretical framework for understanding deacons’ knowledge creation and expression of care in their professional communities (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001; von Krogh et al., 2001b, p. 18). The creation of knowledge includes both facilitating relationships and dialogues and developing a shared platform.

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I also searched with the terms ‘development’ and ‘SECI’ instead of ‘creation’ (see ‘Theory of knowledge creation – the SECI process, ‘ba’ and care').
of knowledge for the entire organisation (von Krogh et al., 2001b, p. 18). Nonaka et al. (2001) state that an organisation is essentially a knowledge creation entity. Organisations identify and define problems and develop new knowledge to solve these problems through interactions with the environment and within the organisations themselves (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 13). I do not use the concept of organisation in this study but instead, refer to congregations as workplaces and potential knowledge creation entities. 82 Although I do not discuss whether a congregation is an organisation, I use the framework of knowledge creation developed by Nonaka et al. (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001) because it 1) provides a theoretical approach to analysing knowledge creation in the workplace, 2) can combine the emphasis on knowledge development and care and is not explicitly focused on other business interests, and 3) can be placed within the socio-cultural theoretical framework while emphasising interactions with the environment and among people.

The process of knowledge creation is itself divided into four modes: Socialisation, Externalisation, Combination and Internalisation (SECI). This division provides a structure for understanding the dynamic nature of knowledge creation. According to Nonaka et al. (2001), knowledge is context-specific, dynamic and relational and is established through dynamic social interactions (2001, p. 14).

SECI: The process of knowledge creation
The first mode in the SECI process is socialisation, which emphasises the importance of joint activities and the capture of knowledge through physical proximity, which facilitate shared experiences and the creation of context-specific knowledge. Certain types of knowledge can only be created and communicated by sharing time and space (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 23). What is learned through interactions in the socialisation process may provide questions, thoughts, ideas and reflections. This mode is also described as empathising with the field (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 18). The second mode, the externalisation process, emphasises dialogues and reflections with other members of the staff. The goal is that knowledge can be shared by others in the staff community, even though the thoughts, ideas, questions, reflections and experiences may be inadequate and inconsistent (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 16). This mode is characterised by conceptualising, or creating shared concepts (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 18).

The third mode, combination, is the convergence of knowledge from the socialisation and externalisation modes to create more complex and systematic explicit knowledge. Combination can take place, for instance, through the production of documents, meetings and conversations via

82 I make pragmatic use of Nonaka’s understanding of organisations in order to analyse knowledge creation in congregations as a workplace and the potential knowledge creation entity.
83 I do not discuss what religious communities are in relation to professional communities. My main focus is professionals within religious communities.
telephone and the internet (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 16). The combination mode defines the concept of connecting, or the transfer of knowledge to others in the congregations (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 18). Combination is the integration of new knowledge into existing organisational knowledge (Lewis, 2010, p. 43). Finally, internalisation is characterised by learning by doing, and it involves the process of embodying new knowledge and sharing it within the organisation. The knowledge created in each mode interacts with the others in a continuously escalating process of knowledge creation (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 17). Figure 1 shows the original SECI model, which is also called the SECI process (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 18).

**Figure 1: The SECI process (source: (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 18))**

The SECI process was originally developed to describe the conversion of tacit and explicit knowledge across the four modes. However, I do not use these concepts as each mode tends to combine both tacit and explicit knowledge (Nygaard et al., 2013). For instance, in the socialisation process, tacit knowledge, as a hunch, and explicit epistemic knowledge, as theology, can provide new questions, thoughts, ideas and reflections. Therefore, instead of referring to explicit and tacit knowledge, I refer to situations in which professionals seek new solutions, insights or knowledge. Figure 2 illustrates the

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84 Instead of using the notions of tacit and explicit knowledge, I rely on Yrjö Engeström’s (Engeström, 2008, pp. 128-129) concept of tool-mediated knowledge. I do not explicitly use the concept of tool-mediated knowledge in this article, but I elaborate on my understanding of it in the SECI model in the article ‘Deacons’ professional practice as knowledge creation’(Nygaard et al., 2013).
modified SECI process developed in this research, where the deacons move (arrows) between the four modes when seeking new solutions.

![Diagram of SECI process](image)

**Figure 2**: A simplified model of the SECI process adjusted to my use of the model

The SECI process, illustrated in figure 2, takes place on a platform on which knowledge can be shared, recreated and amplified through interactions with others (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 27). I use the four modes in the SECI process as analytical concepts.

*The platform of knowledge creation: ba*

Effective knowledge creation requires the concentration of knowledge in a particular time and space. This space is theorised as *ba*, a platform where knowledge is created, shared and exploited. *Ba* is not necessarily a physical space, but it is a context that harbours meaning. *Ba* can be physical, such as an office, virtual, such as email, mental, such as shared experiences, values and ideas, or a combination of all three. The most important aspects of *ba* are the *interaction* between individuals and between an individual and the environment in the process of creating knowledge. Thus, *ba* is the common time and space created through emerging relationships among the individuals and groups creating knowledge (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 19). The concept of *ba* is used to analyse shared platforms of interactions between the deacons and their colleagues.
Bringing care into knowledge creation

One definition cannot cover all dimensions of care. In this article, I use von Krogh’s notion of care because 1) his notion of care is combined with Nonaka’s theories on knowledge creation (von Krogh et al., 2001a), and 2) he has outlined five dimensions of care that provide a useful analytical operationalization.

von Krogh argues that the presence or absence of care affects the development of organisational knowledge (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 30). Therefore, human relationships in a working community should be given adequate attention. According to von Krogh et al. (von Krogh et al., 2001b, pp. 67-73), care has five dimensions: reciprocal trust, active empathy, good access to help and advice, minimal condemnation and a ‘can-do’ spirit. High-level care relationships in an organisation include all five dimensions. Low-level care relationships are those in which there is little propensity to help, colleagues are not accessible to one another, there is little empathy, there is widespread condemnation and everybody puts himself or herself first. High care in knowledge creation promotes deeper relationships in which one shares personal difficulties and ideas more often and becomes a resource in the knowledge creation process. In contrast, in low-care relationships, only certain, established knowledge is discussed explicitly while doubts are kept hidden (von Krogh et al., 2001b, p. 73).

However, care has some overall limitations. First, care is based on an often implicit understanding of a need for help. Second, care can be misused as a strategy of manipulation (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 48). In this analysis, I use von Krogh’s five dimensions of care to investigate how care empirically emerges when colleagues interact.

By deacons’ professional knowledge creation and care in this article, I refer to 1) deacons as professionals because of their specialised and scientific knowledge obtained at university or university college (Smeby, 2012, p. 49), and 2) as a delimitation of deacons’ knowledge creation and care to work situations.

To operationalize the analytical concepts of the SECI process, ba and care, the research question is divided into in two main analytical steps. The first step focuses on the empirical characteristics of the SECI processes:

What characterises the SECI processes in the deacons’ working communities?

In this analysis, two new main empirical patterns of the SECI process emerge, both of which are different from the theoretical ideal SECI process. I call the two new empirical patterns a ‘pre-defined’ and a ‘parallel’ or isolated SECI process. The first analytical question continues with one sub-question:

What characterises the pre-defined and the parallel SECI processes?
In the second step, I am attempting to understand these patterns in the context of how care is enacted in interactions between colleagues, I subsequently ask:

*What characterises the knowledge creation processes and the expression of care in the pre-defined and parallel SECI processes?*

In both the first and second steps of the analysis, the concept of ba is included.

**Methods**

The present study is part of a larger research project on learning and knowledge processes in the CofN, ‘LEarning and knowledge TRAjectories in the Church of Norway’, called LETRA. The sample for the study included relatively large congregations in the CofN. As mentioned, all of the congregations contained working communities from a variety of professions. The five congregations had extensive programmes of activities for church members. I do not regard the geographic variations as crucial in this study, due to the similar representation of professionals and activities in all congregations.

The sampling criteria selected deacons in the CofN with a formal diaconal education. Deacons ordained before 2005 needed a single year of theological studies and one year of diaconal studies in addition to the bachelor’s degree, but not a master’s degree, as required by those ordained after 2005. The deacons I studied had either of these two educational requirements, and they had backgrounds in nursing, social work, child welfare or theological education.

A variety of ethnographic methods were chosen to capture the complexity of the deacons’ knowledge creation. The empirical material analysed in this article was established through ethnographic fieldwork, consisting of observations, informal interviews and three semi-structured qualitative interviews with each of the five deacons during their everyday practice in the CofN from Fall 2011 to Fall 2012 (Kvale et al., 2009, pp. 21,47). Ethnography is a method of the direct observation of social practices and actors in their natural settings to access what people actually do (Silverman, 2011, p. 15ff). I chose to be a participant observer with an emphasis on observation, because I wanted to disturb the deacons’ normal work interactions as little as possible (Bryman, 2012, pp. 440-445). I observed and took notes using my laptop and notebook, and I used the Dictaphone as often as possible, but I did not partake in discussions or work tasks. The Church staff gave informed consent in advance.

85 [http://letra.mf.no/](http://letra.mf.no/) Read 29.1.15

86 Two of the deacons had master’s degrees.
I observed each deacon for a period of one to three weeks during daily activities, from early morning to the end of their working day in a variety of contexts: 1) in interactions with colleagues at staff meetings, during small talk, at other meetings and at Church services; 2) in interactions with participants in diaconal activities, such as pastoral care and Bible groups; 3) in interactions with professionals outside the local Church, at seminars, study trips abroad and collaborative groups of deacons. In the process of following the deacons, I established a series of ‘representations of the field’ as field notes, photographs, recordings, memories and informal interviews (Denzin et al., 2005, p. 3).

The informal interviews were characterised by questions that emerged as relevant in the situation (Hammersley et al., 2007, p. 117). Further, the three semi-structured qualitative interviews with each deacon established their narrative accounts (Silverman, 2011, p. 131). I applied a thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012) with an abductive approach (Afdal, 2010, p. 114) to establish a dynamic interaction between the material and the theoretical focus of my analysis. The material was coded in Atlas.ti (Friese, 2012), employing concepts from my understanding of both the empirical material and theories. The coding process uncovered the two new empirical types of the SECI process identified above. The analysis was then narrowed down to a selection of samples from the two SECI processes to maximise the utility of information from small samples (Flyvbjerg, 2010, p. 79). I looked for deeply involved situations and situations rich in details (Flyvbjerg, 2010, p. 133) that illustrated both SECI processes and the extent of care. Two situations with maximum variation were selected to provide insight into the spectrum of care and knowledge creation (Flyvbjerg, 2010, p. 79). The first situation illustrates the SECI process with the lowest level of care: Deacon William suggested serving hot dogs at a meeting of elderly parishioners that traditionally served sandwiches. The other situation illustrates a higher level of care and knowledge creation: Deacon Katie invited a woman begging in the streets into the Church. Both situations indicate challenges in the deacons’ knowledge development process in their work environments. The deacons have read and approved their quotes, and the material has been made anonymous (Miles et al., 1994).

**Analysis**

What characterises the five deacons’ knowledge creation and expression of care in their work community? The analysis is structured according to the two mentioned analytical steps.

*What characterises the SECI processes in the deacons’ working communities?*

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87 By participants in this article, I refer to people participating in various activities, who are neither professionals nor volunteers.
In the first analytical step, two empirical patterns of the SECI process emerged. The first was a process that pointed to *pre-defined* guidelines and routines in the working communities. This process functioned effectively in the everyday implementation of routines. However, how did the established processes perform when everyday situations became too complex for the pre-defined guidelines? The second was the *parallel* we SECI process that indicated that members of the working community were primarily occupied with their own tasks. In this context, how and with whom did the deacons seek to collaborate when faced with situations that exceeded their own knowledge of how to act? In the following, I explore these two patterns in depth.

*What characterises the pre-defined SECI process?*

During my observation period and the interviews, all five deacons whom I observed expressed that they were exhausted by their experiences with the pre-defined guidelines within the working community.

I observed Deacon David at a staff meeting, which is usually the only meeting where all members of a work community participate during the week. Here, the members share experiences from the past week and discuss tasks for the next. David suggested having a diaconal service, emphasising environmental diakonia with focus on ‘caring for creation’ (National Council, 2009, p. 5), but none of the other members at the staff meeting responded directly, and the pastor said he had to think about it. Afterwards, in our informal interview, David explained this limited interest by the scarce meeting time available. On one hand, routines at staff meetings may facilitate effective interactions that maintain everyday practice; efficiency may be experienced as necessary to complete all the work tasks. On the other hand, routines may facilitate platforms of minimal care and mutual sensitivity (von Krogh et al., 2001b). In particular, externalisation—the dialogue-based mode of sharing new and unsecure thoughts and ideas—is challenged by routines and time constraints.

Deacon Katie told me about a staff meeting where she shared the idea of an ‘open local church’ (‘åpen kirke’). Katie argued that opening the church could enable a freer community and a valuable space for people. According to Katie, her idea was met with concerns, such as: ‘What if the silver gets stolen or if hooligans show up?’ ‘What about the insurance?’ ‘What about fire?’ Katie says that it is hard to do anything because ‘We have so many rules and guidelines. The rules just push down, and hinder new ideas.’

I did not observe this staff meeting, and many of the arguments against Katie’s proposal, such as guidelines, insurance concerns and fire prevention, could be valid. Furthermore, staff meetings may not be the appropriate arena for new ideas. Katie’s interpretation of the guidelines could also be highly subjective. Rather than ‘rules that push down’, others might experience them as necessary guidelines to maintain existing activities. Moreover, the responses could be representative for only the individuals...
expressing them and not for the whole working community. Still, Katie’s story highlights pros and cons for guidelines. The pre-defined SECI process is not necessarily negative, as working communities may need routines to efficiently fulfil tasks. The challenge appears when new ideas are presented.

The ba, where colleagues can talk with one another to turn new ideas and experiences into new concepts, models and plans, could be hindered by routines and time constraints (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, pp. 16, 21). The lack of multifaceted dialogues in the externalisation mode suppresses new ideas and restricts the changing of habits in documents, meetings and conversations in the combination mode (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 16). Consequently, the work community may resist internalisation or the process of embodying new knowledge to test ideas, like an open church. Based on these empirical findings, I propose an alternative SECI process: the pre-defined SECI process, as illustrated Figure 3.

![Figure 3: The pre-defined SECI process, where established habits resist the adaptation of new elements.](image)

Pre-defined guidelines are not only related to activities. Deacon David discusses the pre-defined yet unclear conception of the deacons’ roles in their work community:

> The pastors here haven’t been the ones helping me the most to make clear my role as a deacon... they have held firmly on to an old, traditional way of thinking about diakonia... I have struggled to open up to the fact that diakonia is something else than thirty years

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88 I call the pre-defined process a SECI process, because it empirically illustrates how the deacons negotiate the routines and guidelines in their professional knowledge creation.
that role of comforting and taking care of the elderly (informal interview).

What David calls an ‘old, traditional way of thinking’ about a deacon’s role can be understood as a pre-defined approach. According to David, the resistance to breaking established routines has affected collegial interactions (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001). He continues, disheartened:

One of the frustrations during my twelve years as a deacon ... has been the way I've had to work to become visible. Pastors, church wardens and organists all have defined tasks. But the deacon, what is that? ... Do I always need to tell you that what I do is as important as what you do (informal interview)?

According to David, the combination of a pre-fixed understanding and an invisible and undefined role for the deacon in the staff community hinders the creation of a ba. The lack of a shared ba, where his role is understood and acknowledged, challenges the SECI process in all modes. Deacon Emma expresses the same challenges:

I feel that I have to have a strong case if I am to match the other professions in the staff… and it's like – what can you bring to the table? Where are your skills relevant? I have to express many things myself, make a stand... even if I work in the Church and the Church knows what a deacon works with, I need to express why I do what I do (semi-structured interview).

All five deacons expressed fatigue regarding the deacons’ role, the pre-defined guidelines and lack of acknowledgement. Deacon William explains:

I am struck by the fact that I am not heard more. My tasks and ways of addressing them are pre-defined, and no one ask if it works today... I have to put aside my own professionalism and experience, and try to understand what they want (informal interview).

Finally, Deacon Sophie says, ‘You have to work hard to be heard’, and she concludes on the same note as the other four deacons: ‘The pastors’ understanding of diakonia is significant for the deacons’ role in the Church community’ (informal interview).

In sum, empirical findings show that the deacons’ knowledge creation processes with colleagues, the SECI, can be characterised as pre-defined processes. Routines are both necessary and challenging.

**What characterises the parallel SECI process?**

All five deacons describe a sense of loneliness and a lack of common vision within the work community. This isolation affects knowledge creation because the community does not enter the SECI process as a group. In this section, I analyse how deacons work on their own tasks. First, I observed that deacons mainly work on their individual tasks. Being preoccupied with one’s own tasks can
facilitate effectiveness and allow for concentration and focus, but according to von Krogh et al. the significance of relational interactions emerges when complex challenges require new knowledge (von Krogh et al., 2001b). Second, I saw that such isolation drives deacons to work with professionals outside the Church. Working with other professionals may facilitate knowledge development, but the lack of cooperation within the Church hinders context-specific negotiation.

‘In our working community, there are many professions, and one is often occupied with oneself,’ explains Emma. David says, ‘We never sit down and discuss... during a staff meeting’. Katie says, ‘I work alone a lot.’ The quotes are from informal interviews. I also observed that the deacons often conduct their own trajectories, with their own goals, through the SECI modes. The absence of shared, long-term goals (Edwards, 2010, p. 53; Engeström, 2008, p. 133) makes it difficult for deacons to work as team members within the Church staff community. Based on the empirical findings of this article, Figure 4 presents the ‘parallel we’ SECI process as colleagues work alone but in parallel.\(^{89}\)

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**Figure 4: The parallel SECI process, where individuals work on their own tasks.**

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I call the parallel process a SECI process, because it illustrates how individuals empirically, not idealistically, interact when they work in the same organisations.
According to my observations, the parallel, isolated work emerges as the most common process. The deacons also describe these processes in the informal interviews. Sophie says, ‘Now we mostly work in parallel, alongside each other ... you become isolated, with yourself and the task at hand’. Emma expresses what all five deacons say about their role within the wider Church staff: ‘It is quite a lonely job, but that is the reality in Norwegian congregations.’ Without a shared ba, the collective knowledge development is hindered.

However, during her 15 years as a deacon, Sophie has worked with some pastors who, in contrast, encouraged cooperation. She explains: ‘When an accident had occurred, for example, these pastors asked, “What do we do? How do we manage this?”’ These questions invited collective discussion and reflections, along with open-ended solutions. Instead of using pre-defined guidelines, the pastors asked open questions to encourage new solutions through ‘creative chaos’ (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 26), and the problems to be solved were anchored in the local social context (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 197). Together, they created and amplified knowledge, demonstrating that collective processes of knowledge development are possible in the CofN.

In the second step, to deepen my analysis of professional knowledge development, I examine one pre-defined and one parallel process in depth, emphasising the extent of care expressed in the interactions. Both parallel as well as pre-defined SECI patterns can co-occur and interact within the same congregation.

For the former, I analyse William’s interactions within his work community in negotiating ‘the routines of sandwiches’. To analyse the parallel process, I examine Katie’s invitation of a woman begging in the street to come into the church.

What characterises the knowledge creation and expression of care in pre-defined processes?
In this section, I emphasise how deacons’ knowledge creation can be vulnerable in pre-defined processes with a low extent of care and then argue that theories of knowledge creation and care must include power relations.

I observed a meeting for the elderly where Deacon William was in charge. I overheard the administrative leader of the congregation, Ann, talking with two volunteers. She suggested that William could buy food for the confirmation meeting when he buys food for the next meeting for the elderly. One of the volunteers said, ‘That must be a diaconal act’, and they smiled. William approached them, and the leader asked if he could buy food. I heard the question as an instruction. William answered yes.
Later, in William’s office, I was curious about the mentioned situation and asked about the processes of defining what he as a deacon should do. He explained about unclear expectations since he started one year ago. Even though he had ten years of experience being a deacon in another congregation, he felt that he had to just enter a system in the new congregation without using his capacity. When I asked about cooperation within his work community, he said he did not know whether he should laugh or cry, and he referred to a situation where the room they normally used to prepare sandwiches for meetings with the elderly was occupied. William suggested having the meeting in another room, serving hot dogs and ice cream, because that was easier. He tells his version of what could have been just a trifle:

We absolutely have to have those—those sandwiches [William refers to Ann, who argued for sandwiches]. But... it's not possible, but we still need to do it like that. We have always had sandwiches.

According to William, Ann argued that without sandwiches, few would probably turn up, and she suggested cancelling the meeting. Nevertheless, they invited the elderly and served hot dogs in the other room.

How does such a simple idea as serving hot dogs instead of sandwiches illustrate knowledge development in a Church staff community? According to William, the hot dogs represent a new idea, a response to the breaking of a routine (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 26). Such a periodic break can be an opportunity to reconsider existing routines and can enable knowledge creation (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, pp. 26-27). A breakdown of routines, even trivial, can shed light on the extent or absence of care in the interactions in a working community. According to William, enabling and maintaining relationships with the elderly were more important than following the routine of serving sandwiches. However, with little space to experiment, it is almost impossible to introduce new ideas into the SECI process (von Krogh et al., 2001b, p. 74). William’s previous experiences of organising meetings with the elderly in different places were likewise not acknowledged. William recounts:

‘No, that's not possible,’ Ann said.
‘Yes,’ I said, ‘I have done it before, so I think it's possible’.
‘No, they couldn't...’ Ann responded.

In William’s account of events, Ann maintains a pre-defined SECI process, basing her arguments on existing routines. William’s experience was that there was little propensity in this staff community to help and that supporting inquiry was lacking. During our conversation, William was fighting back tears, and I wondered how relevant power relations are when analysing professional knowledge development.

Normally, in low-care situations, one cannot expect that other members of one’s organisation will attend to one’s own knowledge development and task performance (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 38).
However, William felt that he was attentively observed—but not with empathy, trust (von Krogh et al., 2001b, p. 68) or with helpful questions indicating mutual personal interests and willingness to help (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 38). The lack of helpful questions corresponds with my observations of William in interaction with colleagues in other situations.

The concept of ‘routines’ in this context refers to an established power position. According to William, Ann said, ‘We have always had sandwiches’. Here, the phrase ‘we have always’ emerged as a ‘routine’, a conceptual tool for expressing the expertise of ‘knowing how’ to perform diaconal activities (Edwards, 2010). The ‘routine’ was expressed as expert knowledge and a governmental rationality of work (Flyvbjerg, 2010, p. 131). The fixity of a pre-defined SECI process de-legitimised William’s experience, excluding him from real, shared, professional discourse.

Nevertheless, an expanded practice emerged in the internalisation mode. According to William, the overall goals were to establish inclusive communities and to not let the type of food hinder encounters (informal interview). As William stated, ‘Old ladies and old men eat hot dogs and ketchup… and ice-cream—they loved it’. Hot dogs replaced sandwiches and became alternative tools for creating inclusive communities (National Council, 2009, p. 5). William expanded the internalisation mode, opening the pre-defined process to some extent, but he had to do so alone, as a parallel we. However, it is important to stress that this is William’s story, and I did not observe the situation. From Ann’s point of view, this situation might look quite different.

The empirical findings from William’s story indicate that, with little space to experiment and minimal care interactions, introducing new ideas into a pre-defined SECI can be quite difficult. Knowledge creation can be a vulnerable process in pre-defined SECI with low extent of care. The situation presented may be seen as an extreme situation, made more extreme because it arose from the trivial suggestion of serving hot dogs to the elderly. However, low care interactions in both trivial and complex tasks can subjugate and hinder knowledge creation. Moreover, the empirical findings highlight that theories of care do not sufficiently consider the misuse of power. I argue that the concept of care in knowledge creation theories may achieve more nuanced analytical approaches through expansion via theories of power.

*What characterises the knowledge creation and expression of care in parallel processes?*

When I was interviewing Katie, we sat in her small office, surrounded by books, pictures, papers, a Bible, a tool box, a cash box, a hammer, coffee cups, a sleeping bag, plastic flowers, big bags of clothes, a lighted candle, a Romanian-Norwegian dictionary and a sleeping dog. Katie told a story:

It was a hopeless situation. I saw her, Elena, sitting on the bridge I pass over every day for work… I thought, if I give money to her, the money may go to an organised group. Maybe she...
has a lot of money in Romania, and I doubt that all the children in her photo album are hers… Maybe she fakes and is just a part of a large criminal network… And I thought that if I get involved, suddenly I will have every beggar at the door. What will the church staff and congregation say?… But then the other voice came, that says, ‘You can't just pass a beggar, a poor person in the street, this is written about a lot in the Bible. The least you can do is to invite her into the community’ (informal interview).

Katie invited Elena to the church in spite of unknown consequences and feared how her colleagues might react. At that time, around 2011, poor people begging in the street was a relatively new phenomenon in Norway.

Katie chose not to discuss her actions with the Church staff or decision-making committees before inviting Elena in. According to Katie, she avoided the constraints arising from the pre-defined SECI process—constraints she knew existed from her discussions of the open church, what she called the ‘rules that push us down’. Instead, she intentionally conducted a parallel SECI process, where she could work alone without what she regarded as constraints from her work community. She invited Elena to have a cup of coffee in the church. Katie said:

I thought that I would take her in and simply present her as ‘Elena’. I thought it was much easier that people got to meet her, rather than to begin to discuss whether we should take her in or not (informal interview).

The practical needs of life directed the deacon’s actions according to the relational rationality of the care professions (Tufte, 2013, p. 3).

Katie was acting on her own in unfamiliar territory, however, for which she was to some extent unqualified. Her actions challenged her cooperation with others on the Church staff. Katie worked first with volunteers and frequenters of the café and candle-lighting ceremonies in the parish centre. When the volunteers drank coffee and prayed with Elena, they immediately began to engage with her situation, inviting her back and giving her food and other necessities. I observed that Katie had established a socialisation mode and ba of face-to-face interactions with marginalised people unfamiliar to the congregation (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 20).

Further, to get around more pre-defined SECI constraints, Katie adapted her arguments to fit the ‘rules’ she knew from earlier discussions. She claimed to have assumed that permission from the Church staff community was not necessary to invite one person into the parish. Thus, she did not ask before she invited Elena in. In fact, she did not tell the other parishioners that Elena was begging in the street. Katie introduced Elena by her first name, rather than as a problem to be discussed or affected by pre-existing guidelines. Katie thought that, if she presented Elena as a representation of the problem of ‘what to do with people begging on the streets’, constraints on inviting her into the congregation would be imposed. Katie feared that low-care interactions, such as a lack of a ‘can-do’ spirit, would
result in little active empathy for Elena’s situation and thus reduce access to help for practical solutions to social challenges (von Krogh et al., 2001b, pp. 67-72).

Instead, Katie expanded into an externalisation phase with professionals from outside the congregation. She contacted social services, the City Mission, the Salvation Army, organisations working in Romania, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, other deacons with similar challenges and a European diaconal organisation working with the same needs. I observed that she created collaborative groups where members shared knowledge in the form of concepts, reflections and dialogues (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001, p. 16). The extent of their care, expressed as mutually enhanced access to help, active empathy, a ‘can-do’ spirit and little condemnation, expanded their professional knowledge (von Krogh et al., 2001b, pp. 67-73).

These collaborative groups enabled a combination mode of a SECI process external to the Church staff, emphasising communication and systematisation of knowledge, in addition to their shared externalisation mode. Group members learned how to give practical support to poor people, systemise theoretical knowledge and establish working projects in the local congregation and community. Documents were created and shared with others seeking information. Katie held seminars that I attended, and she gave interviews in newspapers and on television. The bishop began to participate, and I heard him support the deacon Katie. They invited other famous professionals from outside the Church to seminars, which I also attended. However, Katie’s entire spiralling process did not really include either the Church’s staff community or outside professionals, since the latter groups do not normally partake in the local congregation’s life. This parallel SECI is a boundary-crossing process between deacons and professionals outside the Church in the externalisation and combination mode, as Figure 5 illustrates. The grey strip indicates interactions with other professionals.
Katie has become a *boundary crosser*, developing dynamic professional knowledge with an emphasis on the ‘clients’ needs’ (Akkerman et al., 2011; Tufte, 2013, p. 3). This role may prove demanding because she must face challenges of negotiation and combine different contexts. On one hand, Katie has attained a valuable position because she can introduce elements of one practice into another. On the other hand, she faces a difficult position because she is easily perceived as peripheral to either side, risking never belonging fully to any one practice (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 134).

Within these shared modes, Katie created powerful tools from seminars and relationships with high-level Church leaders and other professionals, as well as an international communication network through media and documentation. She used the free space of the parallel SECI to enable moral power and achieve good (Kinsella, 2012, p. 133). Katie’s actions confronted the Church’s work community with new practices in unfamiliar situations. Collaboration with Elena began a process of internalisation—the process of incorporating new knowledge into the congregation. I observed Elena working in the congregation, cleaning and preparing for the parish café and serving coffee after
services and seminars. In addition, I observed that pastors and other members had begun facilitating work for her.

In summary, Katie used the parallel SECI strategically to create a relationship with a client and to avoid the pitfalls of pre-defined SECI processes. According to von Krogh’s notion of care, Katie was encouraged by and experienced some extent of care from the staff. However, she still could not enable a ba with high care interactions because of loneliness and sharing few long-term goals with colleagues. One can say that she chose isolation intentionally and hindered a possible ba in the staff, but the parallel work was chosen as a response to the ‘rules that push down’. Katie established a boundary-crossing process, which created space to experiment, and she ultimately facilitated knowledge development. Finally, the material reflects the deacons’ perspectives and would have been different if it had included their colleagues’ reflections.

Concluding remarks

What characterises the deacons’ professional knowledge creation and the expression of care within the working communities? The study’s findings show five perspectives on the deacons’ knowledge creation and care. First, that the five deacons’ knowledge creation takes two alternative pathways from the normative and idealistic view of knowledge creation in the SECI processes: a pre-defined and a parallel SECI process, both of which can co-occur and interact within the same congregation. Both may be effective and necessary ways of working on defined tasks and routines, but they can also present significant constraints when everyday situations become too complex for the established guidelines or for one person to handle alone. When the situation becomes too complex for pre-established guidelines, the boundary crossing process emerges as a variation of the parallel SECI.

Second, according to von Krogh’s conception of care, the congregations I observed displayed a tendency to low-care interactions. With the majority focusing on their own tasks, active empathy, good access to help and advice and a collective ‘can-do’ spirit are constrained. However, not every deacon experienced the same extent of low care. I identified three categories of low care: 1) subjugated, 2) professionally isolated, neither hindered nor helped, and 3) encouraged, but with few shared, practical interactions. In addition to indicating the personal costs of being part of a low-care work community, the findings show that low-care interactions reduce knowledge sharing. More specifically, sharing knowledge in the context of both low care and the pre-defined SECI process is especially demanding, as in William’s situation. A higher performance of care, as Katie experienced, facilitated more space to experiment and establish new ideas and practices. Consequently, my empirical findings support the theoretical claim that high-care relationships improve the quality of knowledge produced, while low-care relationships retard knowledge production (von Krogh et al., 2001a, p. 40). Because one typically
expects congregations to be external high-care providers, these internal low-care interactions are, to some extent, surprising. The Church, as a whole, appears to lose valuable contributions not only from deacons but also from all professionals through reducing the knowledge shared in interactions.

Third, the findings from this study indicate that deacons are creating ba with the rationality of care professions. The situations and needs of the participants in diaconal activities influence the deacons’ work (Tufte, 2013, p. 3). William transformed and expanded a pre-defined SECI into a parallel process in conducting the gathering for the elderly. Katie became a boundary crosser (Akkerman et al., 2011, p. 134), seeking to develop dynamic professional knowledge by emphasising the participant’s need. She created a parallel process to avoid a pre-defined SECI process, allowing her to invite Elena to church. Katie then expanded this parallel process to become a boundary crossing process that included other professionals from outside the Church. The deacons’ expansions and transformations of SECI processes expanded the congregations’ practices, especially in the internalisation and socialisation modes.

Fourth, deacons’ knowledge development is vulnerable to asymmetrical power relationships and low-care interactions. One reason for this vulnerability is the unclear definition of their professional role, without specifically designated tasks. Without a clear negotiation of the deacon’s role from the beginning, their professional knowledge easily becomes diffuse and invisible and therefore more difficult to negotiate with others (Edwards, 2010). The invisibility of knowledge and the common mind-set of taking care for granted make deacons dependent on person-to-person dialogues in their professional communities.

Fifth, the empirical findings illuminate that combining knowledge creation with care is not sufficient in analysing professional knowledge creation. I argue that theories of power will help fill a gap in theories of knowledge creation and care because 1) what looks like care can be misused to gain power; for instance, gaining a person’s trust makes it easier to lead that person according to one’s own interests; and 2) von Krogh’s notion of low care indicates there is little interest in other persons. I believe a person can exercise power by showing much interest in each other in low-care interactions. Consequently, knowledge creation theories (Nonaka, Konno, et al., 2001; von Krogh et al., 2001b) could profit from more explicitly accounting for theories of power relationships, in addition to the effects of variations in caring behaviours. Knowledge and power are intertwined, and power relationships may both produce and restrict knowledge creation (Flyvbjerg, 2010, p. 132).

To summarise, the deacons’ knowledge creation and the expression of care within the working communities are characterised by two alternative pathways from the idealistic theoretical view, low-care interactions, the deacons’ creation of ba with the rationality of care professions, the deacons’
vulnerability to asymmetric power relations, and that theories of power will help to fill a gap in
theories of knowledge creation and care. Few interactions of shared knowledge challenge the working
communities’ collective knowledge development.
Bibliography


Nygaard, M. R., & Afdal, G. (2013). Deacons' professional practice as knowledge creation. *PRISMET, Nr. 2*


The core concerns in diaconia as a research discipline are: What is diaconia? What does, should or could it be? And, consequently, what should deacons do? However, there is scarcely any research on what deacons actually do in their everyday practice and what kind of knowledge they really need in their professional practice. This article contributes to the understanding of deacons’ professional knowledge in their everyday practice. Findings show that deacons use their professional knowledge in and between three modes: (1) ‘recognition’ and ‘expansion,’ (2) ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ and (3) ‘proximity’ and ‘periphery.’ Together the modes facilitate a ‘space of possibilities’ in the search for the well-being of the participants. The analysis of deacons’ professional knowledge draws on a sociocultural perspective where knowledge is understood as tool-based mediation.

**Keywords:** empirical, deacons, professional, knowledge, tool-based mediation

1. Introduction

There are many ideals found within the research and practice of diaconia regarding what diaconia is, should or could be and, consequently, what deacons should do. Many deacons experience tensions between the theoretical standards and the complex reality they experience in their everyday practice. In addition, there is scarcely any research on what deacons actually do and what kind of knowledge they use and need in their everyday practice. Therefore, a valuable approach is to analyze what diaconia actually ‘does,’ instead of only analyzing what diaconia ‘is’ or ‘intends to be.’¹ In this article, I extend the focus on what ‘diaconia does’ to what ‘deacons do.’

This article represents an analysis of deacons’ professional knowledge tools employed in interactions with participants² in various encounters. The article is based on ethnographical fieldwork,³ consisting of participative ob-

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1 Wyller, 2013a, p. 27.
2 The deacons are obviously also participants in the interactions; but by “participants”, in this article, I mean people that the parish deacons are interacting with who are not professionals or volunteers.
3 Fetterman, 2010; Silverman, 2011a, pp. 113 ff.; 2011b, pp. 15 ff.
servation and interviews of five deacons in the Church of Norway from the fall of 2011 to the fall of 2012.4 Ethnography was chosen as the research strategy because it enables the analysis of the complexity of the deacons’ practices and reflections over time and between different sites. Findings show that deacons’ knowledge in interactions with participants is characterized by facilitating ‘spaces of possibilities.’ But what characterizes their use of knowledge tools?

When analyzing deacons’ professional knowledge in interactions with participants, I argue that it is necessary to extend the analytical unit from the individual mind to interactions between the actors, focusing on recourses, i.e., tools that are used in the space between the actors.5 Consequently, what was needed was an epistemological approach that locates knowledge not primarily in the individual mind, but in the interactions that take place between people as well as between people and material and symbolic tools. Therefore, I draw on a sociocultural perspective of knowledge, understood as tool-mediated processes.6

Tools can be understood as both material and conceptual resources. Most tools have symbolic meanings.7 The theory of tool-mediated processes used here is based on Vygotsky’s ground-breaking work on mediation. Human activity is understood in terms of the dynamics between human actors and tools.8 Human actions and knowledge are trialogical dynamic relations between actors, tools and reality.9 In this article, the trialogical relation consists of (1) deacons (2) tools and (3) participants in diaconal activities. This perspective provides an analytical focus on the knowledge through the tools used by the deacons and participants.10 Subsequently, my analytical focus lies on the interactions between the deacons and participants through the use of tools in activities.11

More exactly, the purpose of this article is to analyze what kinds of tools deacons use and how they use them – and not how research on diaconia should or could be applied in practice. The intention is to provide an empirical and a theoretical contribution to deacons’ professional knowledge. In order to do this, I analyze one situation from the empirical material in detail. The situation is representative of how deacons use professional knowledge in

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4 This ethnographic study is a part of the LETRA project. LETRA seeks to describe and critically analyze the process of learning and knowledge development in congregations in the (Lutheran) Church of Norway.
9 Afdal, 2013a; Paavola, 2005, p. 545.
11 Paavola, 2005, p. 545.
my empirical material. It represents important information when we ‘clarify the deeper causes’\(^{12}\) of interactions through the use of tools. The situation is this: A deacon is going on a home visit to see a man who is struggling emotionally. They talk and share Holy Communion, and the interactions between them provide a good example of sensitive and difficult tool-mediation.

The professional knowledge of deacons is more or less an empirical open field. Little research has been done regarding how they use their knowledge in everyday practice. However, Engel\(^{13}\) conducted empirical research on diaconia in the Church of Sweden, and Angell\(^{14}\) as well as Angell and Kristoffersen\(^{15}\) researched deacons’ identity and understanding of diaconia in the Church of Norway. Pyykkö, Henriksen and Wrede\(^{16}\) conducted empirical research on jurisdictions of parish diaconal work in Finland. They have all empirically analyzed deacons in parish contexts, though none of them analyzed directly how deacons use their knowledge in everyday practice. Analyzing the deacons’ knowledge can provide valuable insights into how deacons work, what diaconia ‘does,’ what kind of knowledge is important, how it is used in a complex reality and what the needs are of future research.

Thus, my research question is as follows: ‘What characterizes the modes of tool-mediated knowledge that can be established in the interaction of deacons’ with participants?’

By ‘modes,’ I mean patterns of tool-processes in trialogical dynamic relations, here between the deacon, the participant and the tools.\(^{17}\)

In the next sections, I present theories of tool-mediation, the methodological approach, the situation, and an analysis and the findings from the situation. I argue that deacons have three modes of professional knowledge. Together the modes facilitate a ‘space of possibilities’ in the search of the well-being of the participants. However, deacons may both open and close the ‘space of possibilities’ depending how they use the tools in the respective modes. For validation, I expand the empirical material with two other situations and analyze whether the modes from the first situation emerge in the other situations. Finally, I reflect on the possible implications of the findings for further research on diaconia. I do not focus on the power situation in the asymmetric interactions between the deacons and participants.

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\(^{12}\) Flyvbjerg, 2010, pp. 78–79.
\(^{13}\) Engel, 2006.
\(^{14}\) Angell, 2011.
\(^{15}\) Angell& Kristoffersen, 2004.
\(^{16}\) Pyykkö, 2011.
\(^{17}\) Afdal, 2013a.
2. Theory

What is knowledge? Knowledge is ambiguous, and “extremely meaningful, positive, promising and hard to pin down”\(^\text{18}\). Knowledge can be understood as a package of content sent between people, as something isolated, outside us - as ‘facts’.\(^\text{19}\) However, according to Kvale there has been a shift from defining knowledge as an objective reality to defining it as a social construction of reality, which involves interactions with the social world.\(^\text{20}\) When analyzing knowledge, and contextualized professional knowledge, I argue that it is necessary to extend the analytical unit from knowledge understood as a frozen package of facts to knowledge as the interactions between the actors, focusing on recourses, i.e., tools, used in the space between the actors.\(^\text{21}\)

A sociocultural perspective provides foci on the ‘bits and pieces,’ the tools, in the interactions with the social world.\(^\text{22}\) This builds on Vygotsky’s conception of mediation. He emphasizes that human activity is always mediated activity. Humans do not react directly to the environment, rather the activities are mediated by tools. That is why the interaction is called ‘trialogical’: It concentrates on the interactions through tools.\(^\text{23}\) Tool- mediation emphasizes how tools shape the way human beings interact with reality.\(^\text{24}\)

‘The individual could no longer be understood without his or her cultural means; and the society could no longer be understood without the agency of individuals who use and produce artifacts.’ (Y. Engeström, 1999)

Tools, or artifacts, can be both conceptual and material in nature and have symbolic meanings. One of the most important conceptual tools is the spoken language.\(^\text{25}\) Language is often used in interactions between deacons and participants, and it reveals patterns of knowledge. Nevertheless, material tools, such as the Bible, the Holy Communion, poems etc., are also important in the interactions.

A key insight into sociocultural theory is that tools are neither instrumental nor neutral.\(^\text{26}\) The same tool may have different meanings under different circumstances. Further, tools may facilitate processes of empowering and enabling actions, provide meaning and coping mechanisms, and improve forms of thought and actions; however, they may also limit and con-
The material form and shape of the tool have only limited power to determine its actual use. Therefore, tools can only be understood in use. How tools are used may say something about the potential deacons negotiate the tools with. Through the use of tools, patterns of implicit professional knowledge in practice may emerge. From the perspective of the discipline of diaconia, tool-mediated processes may sound like instrumental processes. However, analyzing tools can allow ‘engagement with, and revelation of, knowledge, its use and its generation’ in nuanced and dynamic interactions in the space between deacons and participants.

What is professional knowledge? The concept of ‘profession’ can be understood in various ways. In this article, I understand professions as knowledge cultures. Hence, professions arise through their particular ways of engaging with knowledge. The forms of knowledge, the tools provided for professional practice, and the traditions and methods for knowledge production give professional communities an integrative power. Here, I analyze the professional knowledge of deacons as tool-mediated knowledge used in their professional practice.

What characterizes a deacon’s dynamics and patterns of tool-mediated professional knowledge in interaction with a participant? I have chosen two analytical foci in order to establish different modes, namely, tools and processes. Tools are understood here as being both conceptual and material; processes are understood as how the tools are used and what they create between the deacon and the participant. To answer the research question, I have three analytical questions:

1. Which tools are used?
2. What and how do they mediate?
3. What characterizes the tool-mediated patterns in the deacon’s interactions with the participants?

3. Methods

The empirical material was established through ethnographical fieldwork consisting of participative observation, semistructured qualitative inter-

28 Y. Engeström, 2007, p. 35.
29 Afdal, 2013a.
32 Jensen, 2012, p. 27.
33 Jensen, 2012, p. 28.
34 In this article, I do not discuss the understanding of deacons’ work as a profession.
views and reflection dialogues with five deacons in the Church of Norway. Ethnography is a method based on direct observation, and I observed the participants as they moved over time about and between the different contexts that form make up the this part of their work.

Before the empirical work started, I determined that the theoretical focus should be on the deacons’ professional tool-mediated knowledge processes. A variety of sampling methods where chosen to observe the complexity in the deacons’ everyday practice and to listen to their reflections.

The strategy of selecting of samples was an information-oriented selection to maximize the utility of information from small samples. The sampling criteria were (1) deacons in the Church of Norway (2) with a formal diaconal education (a Bachelor’s Degree or the equivalent of the Bachelor’s Degree and a Master’s Degree in diaconia, or one 1 year of theological studies and one 1 year of diaconal studies). The deacons I followed had backgrounds in nursing, social work, theological education and Child Welfare Officer and diaconal theological further education. The deacon in the situation of the home visit had been educated both as a nurse and a social worker as well as in diaconal and theological studies.

After the data collection and transcription of the material from the Dictaphone had been completed, I read through all the material (about a 1,000 pages) several times. The analytical focus was to determine motions between both deductive and inductive approaches, in other words, an abductive process between the material and theoretical interests. However, the analytical process had in fact already started in the field, and I tested my initial thoughts on both the material and the theoretical perspectives. I coded in Atlas.ti with codes made from hunches, patterns from the material and theoretical codes. The coded material and the codes were used in a thematic analysis. The aim of the analysis was to contribute to an increased understanding of the modes of deacons’ tool-mediated professional knowledge in use-knowledge.

Patterns of tool-mediated processes emerged, and I chose one situation that was limited in time and place. As mentioned, the situation describes Deacon David on a home visit, who administers Holy Communion to an isolated man, Arne. This situation was selected because it represents a good example of patterns of tool-mediated professional knowledge in use. The purpose was to clarify the deeper patterns in a given practice, and I argue

35 Fetterman, 2010; Silverman, 2011a, pp. 113 ff.; 2011b, pp. 15 ff.
37 Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 79.
39 Friese, 2012.
that it is appropriate to select, as mentioned, one good example for its validity and richness.42

In the analysis, I had to leave out predefined theoretical concepts of tools. I looked deeper into the text with a more open approach to the empirical material, looking for how tools are used and what they create between the deacon and the participant. Finally, the patterns in the use of tools revealed new modes. Language, the Holy Communion and the poem emerged as important tools in the home visit. They all represent crucial dynamics of tool-mediated professional knowledge. I do not claim that the findings are empirically representative for all deacons’ work – only for the deacons I observed.

The home visit was a sensitive situation. We visited a person in a vulnerable position – in his home. As an ethnographic researcher, I become part of the material. This requires ethical reflections about my role as researcher and my influence on the deacons, the participants and the material.43 At the home visit, I was confronted with the dilemma of how to simultaneously observe and ‘participate.’ Even though I view my role as participant-as-observer,44 I released that I could not just observe. On the one hand, I wanted to facilitate an informal situation by being a part of the communication. On the other hand, I did not want to dominate the communication between David and Arne. Therefore, I decided to participate in the small talk and in the Holy Communion. I took part without any tools such as pen, paper, Dictaphone, computer, etc., but I did make notes on the sequence right after. The purpose was to not bring any more ‘disturbing’ tools into the interaction other than myself. Of course, my presence influenced their interaction, and I can only speak about the material with this in mind. The main focus in this article lies on the tool-mediated interactions between the deacon and Arne. Thus, (1) I do not emphasize my own small talk in the material, and (2) I only sketch the deacon’s preparation and evaluation of the visit without analyzing that.

I myself was educated as a deacon, which presents both pros and cons. On the one hand, I easily connected with the deacons in their complex everyday practice. I am aware of the deacons’ implicit use of knowledge and can observe nuanced details. On the other hand, my positive pre-understanding of the field may have made me search for success stories. However, I have been aware of presenting the difficult parts in the interactions between the deacon and the participant, and I have chosen a situation representative for deacons’ knowledge in use.

The man we visited was informed in advance and accepted my presence. He was also informed about the focus on the deacon’s use of professional

42 Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 78.
knowledge. The situation was anonymous, and the deacon has read through the presentation of the situation and has seen the reconstruction of the table (explained below). He confirmed that these documents reflect the incident situation experienced.

4. The first situation – home visit with Holy Communion

I follow the deacon, David, on the home visit to Arne, a man in his late 40s who lives alone. He is struggling emotionally. Arne is interested in the Christian community, but he has trouble getting to church. The deacon has been visiting him once a month for a year and, in the beginning, he asked whether Arne wanted to take Holy Communion. He did, and the deacon prepared the visit at his office by bringing a communion set, non-alcoholic wine, wafers, a Bible, the communion liturgy, a hymnal and a poem the deacon had written.

We arrive, ring the bell, and enter. Arne has left the door open for us. The hallway smells of cigarette smoke; it’s dark and quiet in the apartment. The deacon calls out ‘hello’ and we hear ‘hello’ from the living room. In the living room, Arne is sitting on the floor between the couch and a coffee table. He rests his elbows on the table and is smoking a cigarette. The deacon smiles to at Arne and says ‘Hi, Arne, it’s so good to see you.’ Arne smiles back, but is still sitting on the floor, leaning against the table. The deacon turns to me and says in a friendly voice that ‘Arne likes sitting on the floor.’ Arne remains on the floor, and we are standing about two meters from him in the living room. The curtains are drawn, and there is just a very little daylight in the apartment. The deacon says, ‘There is not much light here, Arne.’ ‘No, I do not look out the window; I look only inwards,’ responds Arne.

Then we move towards Arne and shake his hand. The deacon sits down in a chair on the other side of the table, and I sit between them on a sofa. We sit in the dark, and David chats with Arne. He invites him to the Christmas Eve celebration at the church and a Bible group, but Arne would rather stay at home. Then David says he can pick up Arne with a car and take him to the group. Arne still hesitates. The deacon continues and says that Arne is important for the group with his valuable insights and contributions. Nevertheless, Arne does not want to participate.

After a while, we begin with the Eucharist. The table is crowded with things. The deacon moves aside the cigarettes, candle, ashtray, tablets, Q-tips, and a half-eaten banana. It looks like he has done this before. He prepares the communion, and Arne wipes away the cigarette ash from the table. The deacon pours the wine into the chalice. We gather around the table. They concentrate and Arne is silent, focusing on the liturgy.

After the liturgy, Arne says that the most important thing for him is that they talk about life and faith. Before we go, the deacon gives Arne a poem.
he has written about Maria. ‘I give this poem to my friends, Arne.’ Arne’s face beams. For the first time, he gets up from the floor, goes over to the bookshelf and finds the Bible. ‘I have also written poems,’ he says, as he takes a few poems from his Bible. Arne tells us about his previous girlfriend and how much she liked his poems. He is almost crying. He continues, saying he loves to read the Bible. Arne is more open now and is wondering about the food at the Christmas Eve celebration, how many are going, how the tables will be arranged, etc. The deacon replies that ‘we would be very happy if you come.’ Arne says he will think about it.

After the visit, David says it is hard to include Arne in the community, because Arne often withdraws himself. David continues: ‘Nevertheless, I do not want to stop inviting [him], but at the end of the day, Arne is responsible for his life.’ Finally, I asked David: ‘What do you think is important to know when interacting with Arne?’ David answered: ‘Knowledge about psychology, psychiatry, social work and theology is important. Because I work in the Church, people often expect and ask me to bring them something from the Gospel.’

Arne did not come to the Christmas Eve celebration.
5. Analysis and findings

5.1 Invitation to the community – the use of language tool

When we enter the living room, Arne is sitting on the floor in the dark between the couch and the coffee table in the smoke-filled apartment. David approaches him, friendly, smiling and looking at Arne, saying, ‘Arne, it is so good to see you.’ David uses the language tool to recognize.\footnote{Honneth, 2003, p. 110.} He relates to Arne by focusing on Arne’s importance to him, and his body language corresponds with the words of recognition.

Arne smiles back but remains on the floor. He keeps his distance, and his response communicates an ambiguity. The deacon’s visit probably mediates both recognition and a challenge in to Arne’s isolated life. David turns to me saying ‘Arne likes to sit on the floor.’ Again, David uses the language tool as an acceptance of what could otherwise be considered ‘strange’ in the situation. The deacon expresses acceptance according to ‘what matters’ to Arne.\footnote{Edwards, 2010, p. 15.} There is no need for change, and the language mediates recognition of Arne’s way of being, his particular kind of presence in the situation.\footnote{Jarvis, 2009, pp. 198, 207.}

Arne remains on the floor. The deacon introduces me, and I walk towards Arne, shaking his hand and take a seat next to him. David continues, saying, ‘There is not much light here, Arne.’ Once more, he uses language tools, and is now challenging how Arne makes it so dark in the living room with the curtains drawn. He is talking in a friendly but questioning tone, looking at the windows. The statement with the questioning tone is ambiguous. David points at something trivial, the light in the living room. Simultaneously, it may refer to Arne’s possible socially isolated situation. David’s ambiguous language challenges Arne to respond and be a part of the conversation in despite of the physical distance and his motionlessness. It challenges Arne to be a participative agent in the dialogue and to use his language tools. However, David’s use of tools may also cut off the interaction. He is risking that Arne may interpreting the ambiguity as critique.

Arne responds in a monotone voice, and says ‘No, I do not look out the window; I look only inwards.’ The answer is open to different interpretations and is as ambiguous as David’s question. Presently, he is sitting on the floor, with a huge window behind him and is looking into the dark of the living room. His tone of voice and lack of motion point to possible interpretations of emotional and social difficulties in his life. Arne brings something both trivial and emotional back in to the interaction with David. His response – his few words with the massive and unspoken content – becomes the key
content in the interaction between them. This is a turning point. The deacon sits down in a chair on the other side of the table from where Arne is sitting. He answers Arne’s ambiguous response as an emotional expression, and stops talking about the darkness in the living room. Instead, he asks ‘How are you, Arne?’ Arne says ‘I am not so good, but not that bad either.’ Then, David invites him to the Christmas Eve celebration and a Bible group in the congregation. He extends his use of the language tool, challenges, and expands the possibilities for Arne to become a part of the community instead of just ‘looking inwards,’ sitting in his living room. Here, ‘become’ or ‘becoming’ is understood as ‘being what I might be.’

In other words, David uses language to expand the possibilities of ‘the future potential of being what I might be’ in the community. The language tool may enable actions and change the reality of the situation. Further, David facilitates the possibility of Arne’s ‘becoming’ in the community around what Arne earlier said he is interested in. He invites and opens by referring to, for instance, to the Bible, which he knows is important for Arne; but Arne does not want to participate. The use of language tools to facilitate new possibilities has various options. Arne can both open and close the language as an expanding tool, and he closes the possibilities.

However, David still continues with the language tool, which challenges and gives space for further possibilities. He says he can pick up Arne with a car, take him to the group and stay with him there. In addition to facilitating the transportation, he offers relational support. As a relational agency, he shows a capacity to attune to Arne’s needs. The language tool, besides challenging by facilitating expanded possibilities, also assists with motion between the periphery and proximity to the community in the congregation. David acts on Arne’s marginalized situation. His use of language tools facilitates motion between Arne’s marginalized situation, ‘looking only inwards,’ and a possible inclusion into or proximity to the community. However, Arne still hesitates, and David’s use of language to challenge and expand the possibilities of ‘becoming’ in the proximity of the community does not open up a space in the community where Arne wants to participate.

Nevertheless, the deacon continues, at the risk of pushing too hard. Again, he uses language to recognize. He says that Arne is important to the group with his valuable insights and contributions. Here, David is emphasizing Arne’s resources. Arne is important to the group, not only the group to Arne. David combines language for challenge and recognition with an underlying acceptance of Arne’s way of ‘being.’ Arne is valuable as he is. David uses tools

48 Afdal, 2013b, p. 103.
49 Jarvis, 2009, pp. 197, 198.
to facilitate Arne’s status as an agent in the community.52 Here, a change appears in the use of language tools: he combines language tools to both challenge and recognize.

Still, Arne does not want to participate, and it seems difficult for David to establish a space for interactions and communion with others. David stops suggesting new possibilities and accepts Arne’s answer indicating his wish to maintain distance from the community. The expansive use of tools can enable actions but may also limit and close actions if it is too expansive.53

What kind of tool-mediated dynamics emerge in this sequence? David uses the language tool to both recognize and challenge by expanding possibilities. Here, recognition is used as a response to Arne’s isolated situation as social acceptance or solidarity.54 David uses language for concrete approval and affirmation of Arne’s ‘qualities of significant value to a certain community’.55 Recognition is seen as a driving force of communion formation and for establishing the ‘I in we’.56 However, David also uses tools in a dynamic relationship between recognition and expansion and combines them. Expansion is understood here as using tools in processes of creating and developing new possibilities.57

Further, he uses language in a dynamic motion between and in a combination of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’. ‘Being’ carries a sense of the present, and it is about our human existence at any point throughout the duration of our lives. ‘Becoming’ also carries a sense of time and of the future.58 Becoming is about lifelong learning to fulfill our human potential.59

Finally, he utilizes language to facilitate motion between the periphery and proximity. Here, periphery is understood as being in an isolated situation, and proximity refers to the community in the congregation. A special mandate in diaconia is to identify mechanisms of exclusion in both society and church, and make room for new concepts, language and practices where the situation ‘of the voiceless and disempowered is defended’.60

The dynamic use of tools is not only combined within, for instance, ‘recognition’61 and ‘expansion’,62 or ‘being’ and ‘becoming’,63 or motions between

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52 Høilund, 2007, p. 27.
54 Honneth, 2003, p. 113; Høilund, 2007, p. 27.
55 Høilund, 2007, p. 27; ‘Evner av grundleggende verdi for et konkret fellesskap’.
57 Paavola, 2005, p. 539.
58 Jarvis, 2009, pp. 197, 198.
59 Jarvis, 2009, p. 197.
60 Nordstokke, 2011, p. 47.
63 Jarvis, 2009; 2010, pp. 119–120.
‘periphery’ and ‘proximity’ as ‘siding with the marginalize\(^{64}\) and facilitating ‘mechanism of inclusion,’\(^{65}\) but also across such actions. For example, David uses the language tool to expand the possibilities for ‘becoming’ in the ‘proximity.’ With the ‘dynamically across use’ of tools he may balance, for instance, tools for recognition with tools to expand, both for being and becoming in the proximity or the periphery. The direction of the use of tools seems to be a search for Arne’s ‘well-being’ and ‘well-becoming,’ and the process has various possibilities. The deacon suggests some possibilities, which may open or risk closing interactions. Arne decides what he wants to do. David continues to use language tools, but in the following, I focus on The Holy Communion as a mediating tool.

### 5.2 The Holy Communion as a mediating tool

David suggests starting with the Holy Communion, and he opens his backpack with the communion set. Arne had already lit a candle before we came our arrival, and he now places it in front of us. They are collaborating in preparing the table. The deacon moves Arne’s things on the table towards one end and lets them stay there. With his movement, he creates a new, open space on the table for the Holy Communion. Arne brushes away the ash from the cigarettes with a used paper towel. Still, Arne’s everyday tools are a central part of the table, and they are accepted as a part of the holy space they are creating between them. David includes Arne’s everyday tools as a part of Arne’s ‘being’ in the moment.\(^{66}\) This may mediate recognition of the ‘being’ in the situation – Arne’s everyday life as it is. By recognizing Arne’s tools and materiality in the interaction between them, the deacon mediates an acceptance of Arne’s social and contextual ‘I in the We.’\(^{67}\)

Further, the deacon has brought the Holy Communion from the church to Arne’s home, and this may facilitate proximity to the inner church tradition in Arne’s isolated situation. Arne can belong and participate in a church tradition in the periphery of the community. The deacon goes to the kitchen, preparing the wine in the chalice, and comes back. He asks if I want Holy Communion, and I say yes. He puts the communion set, wine, wafers, the Bible and the book with the communion liturgy on the table. Together, they are creating a new space, which combines Arne’s everyday tools and the inner church traditional tools as the Holy Communion.\(^{68}\) The Holy Communion is

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\(^{64}\) Wyller, 2013b, p. 1.

\(^{65}\) Nordstokke, 2011, p. 47.

\(^{66}\) Jarvis, 2009, p. 198.

\(^{67}\) Honneth, 2012, p. 201.

\(^{68}\) Afdal, 2013b.
loaded with religious meaning, and the atmosphere changes from small talk to a silent concentration around the ritual.

David starts the liturgy. The liturgy defines to some extent the processes of interacting; we are eating the wafers and drinking the wine. The candle is lit. However, the everyday things are still on the table, and Arne is still sitting on the floor. The combination of the Holy Communion and the ‘rough’ life creates a hybrid space. In hybridity, ingredients from different contexts are combined into something new and unfamiliar. It opens a new space that allows negotiation of meaning in ingredients from different contexts – a social and a sacral space.

The deacon uses the possible fluid parts to open up a space towards Arne’s situation and what matters most to him. He asks Arne, and Arne responds with trust, talking about difficult things he wants to pray about. Arne’s well-being is the focus. When the liturgy is finished, Arne says quietly that it has been peaceful and good to be a part of.

With the Holy Communion, David brings new and expansive tools to Arne’s living room. David says he uses the Holy Communion as a response to Arne’s wish to talk about life and faith, but even more as a possibility for acting on life and faith. The Holy Communion emerges as an expansive tool, providing an enhanced practice at home. Further, it lets Arne define his distance or proximity to the community. The deacon’s use of the Holy Communion facilitates both recognition of the ‘being,’ the life as it is, and ‘becoming.’ It facilitates ‘becoming,’ because it opens a space that allows negotiation of meaning in ingredients from different contexts into something new and unfamiliar. The direction of the use of tools seems still to be the search for Arne’s well-being and ‘well-becoming’ oriented around what matters most for him.

What kinds of tool-mediated dynamics emerge here? The deacon brings in material and symbolic tools from the inner church tradition and combines them with tools from everyday life. In other words, he uses hybrid tools and, together with the participant, opens up a hybrid space with ingredients from different contexts. Still, he uses these tools to recognize and expand the possibilities of both ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ in motions between the periphery and proximity. The tools are not used only to talk about life and faith, but to act on life and faith. David facilitates a space where Arne is an agent who also acts ‘within God’s project.’

71 Nordstokke, 2011, p. 46.
5.3 The poem as a mediating tool

Finally, the deacon provides a new tool. He shares his poem and combines it with a stronger recognition of ‘social acceptance’ than was previously expressed. David expresses not only that Arne possesses qualities of ‘significant value to a certain community,’ but that he is recognized as a friend. David says: ‘I give this poem to my friends, Arne.’ The deacon reads the poem. Arne’s face beams, and he rises for the first time. He goes to the bookshelf and finds his own poems in his Bible. He stands and talks about his previous girlfriend and how much she liked the poems. He expresses that his own skills have been valuable to others. He says that this is one of the most beautiful experiences of his life. He is almost crying. Maybe without planning it, David is using a tool that recognizes Arne’s resources and ‘being.’ It gives Arne associations to some of his most positive experiences from the past, and the poems brings some of Arne’s resources from the past in to his present ‘being.’ Arne’s recourses emerge in the interaction.

It opens a dynamic space for ‘being’ and also a possible space for ‘becoming.’ Apparently, poems are a common tool with positive experiences for both of them. The poem creates a turning point in the interaction between them even though we have come to the end of the visit. It creates a turning point regarding Arne’s motivation for ‘becoming’ a part of the community. When David again invites Arne to the Christmas Eve celebration, Arne is more open, asking about practical things such as the food and how many might attend.

However, David did not use the capacity of the poems as tools for expanding Arne’s ‘becoming’ as a part of the community, for instance, by inviting him to read a poem at the Christmas Eve celebration or asking if whether Arne would be interested in having contact with others who share his interest in poems. Apparently, the poems have the potential to express that Arne’s skills are valuable to others. Therefore, it is probable that the poems could have been used to a larger extent as expanding tools which could open new possibilities and provide meaning and a way of coping for Arne.

What kinds of tool-mediated dynamics emerge in the final section? David uses a self-made tool, a material conceptual poem that combines faith and life and says he gives it to friends. This is what Waldenfels calls ‘productive practice,’ that is, practice characterized by not following the rules and thereby producing something new. This opens a way to develop a change.

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72 Høilund, 2007, p. 27.
75 Honneth, 2012, p. 207.
76 Waldenfels, 2006, p. 60.
that is unlike the ‘change connected to the rules and regulations’\textsuperscript{78}. In this productive practice, David uses the poem to recognize Arne’s ‘being’ as a friend. The combination of the use of tools as ‘recognition as a friend’ in the productive practice, and as common tools that express Arne’s previous experience where his skills are valuable to others, may contribute to ‘an unfolding interpersonal relationship.’\textsuperscript{79} Consequently, the use of poems has a huge capacity as expanding tools, even though in this situation they are not used to their full potential.

5.4 Structures of the findings

The deacon uses various tools from different practices, tools from the inner church life, and from the social sciences and from everyday life. The tools are used to recognize, challenge and expand possibilities for ‘being’ and ‘becoming,’ and for motions between the proximity to the community and the periphery. These dynamics of using tools can be systematized in three modes of tool-mediated professional knowledge in use-knowledge:

1. The first mode includes motions between and combinations of recognition and challenging/expanding possibilities.
2. The second mode includes motions between and combinations of facilitating ‘being’ and ‘becoming.’
3. The third mode includes motions between and combinations of ‘proximity’ and ‘periphery.’

The first mode:

Recognition is understood as the use of tools in interaction with the participant to confirm recourses, show acceptance and recognize. Within the part challenging or expanding possibilities, or both, tools are used to expand new possibilities and balance the recognition. Both too much and too little recognition can unintendedly be seen as disrespect.\textsuperscript{80} Too much recognition can reveal a ‘compassion that wounds.’\textsuperscript{81} To only use tools for recognition can undermine new possibilities. On the other hand, too much challenge can close possibilities. Nevertheless, to challenge and expand possibilities can also confirm recourses. Consequently, the dynamics between recognition and challenging or expanding, or both challenging and expanding possibilities, can facilitate ‘recognition as the middle between too much and too little.’\textsuperscript{82} Thus, the deacon needs to manage the different tools related to what

\textsuperscript{78} Wyller, 2010, p. 191.
\textsuperscript{79} Petherbridge, 2011, p. 241.
\textsuperscript{80} Petherbridge, 2011, p. 245.
\textsuperscript{81} Petherbridge, 2011, p. 248.
\textsuperscript{82} Petherbridge, 2011, p. 247.
and how they mediate. It requires sensitivity to the situation because it can both enable and limit actions.

**The second mode:**

‘Being’ is understood as his way of ‘being present’ in the situation. ‘Becoming’ is understood as ‘becoming more me’ and ‘becoming who we might be’ and carries future potential. Further, ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ are understood as relational processes, as who I am and may become in relation to others. The use of tools for ‘becoming’ is distinguished from the use of tools for ‘challenging/expanding possibilities’ because one can use tools to ‘challenge/expand possibilities’ both for ‘being’ and ‘becoming,’ and for motions between the ‘proximity’ and ‘periphery’.

**The third mode:**

*Periphery* refers to social marginalization, but may also refer to physical distance from the community. The concept of *proximity* refers to the community or communities. This mode emphasizes the ‘importance and impact of including the stranger (“der Fremde”)’ and to side with the oppressed and marginalized. Here, tools are used for facilitating motions from the periphery, such as the marginalized situation, towards the community. It may facilitate belonging and/or participating in the community and/or the inner church tradition outside the community as Holy Communion at home.

**‘The space of possibilities’**

The use of hybrid tools in the three modes of a deacon’s professional knowledge in use seems to be driven by a search for the participant’s experience of well-being or ‘well-becoming’ and an understanding of human beings as relational. The deacon’s three modes of professional knowledge in use create hybrid spaces that combine different practices. The three modes in these spaces facilitate a ‘space of possibilities.’

In this empirical material, the ‘space of possibilities’ is characterized by possibilities of being recognized but also as well as challenged and given tools for expanded possibilities. In addition, it facilitates ‘being’ and/or ‘becoming’ in proximity to the community and/or in the periphery with the

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83 Jarvis, 2009, pp. 198, 207.
84 Afdal, 2013b, p. 103.
86 Wyller, 2013a, p. 40.
88 Afdal, 2013b, p. 166. ‘Space of possibilities’ is understood as a space where the tools and activities enhance the participants’ possibilities for ‘be-coming’. ‘Be-coming’ is related to what the participants experience as ‘the good life’; Afdal, 2013b, p. 35.
possibility of belonging and participating from a distance. However, tools may mediate a huge variety of processes.\footnote{Afdal, 2013a.} Tools may mediate processes of empowering, change the reality and open up new possibilities, but they may also limit and constrain actions.\footnote{Wertsch, 1998, p. 31.} Consequently, deacons may open possibilities but also risk constraining possibilities. In the following, I present an illustration of the three tool-mediated modes in the ‘space of possibilities.’

Figure 2: A simplified illustration of the three tool-mediated modes facilitating the ‘space of possibilities’.

\footnote{Afdal, 2013a.} \footnote{Wertsch, 1998, p. 31.}
5.5 The second situation: The deacon William—Bible group for foreigners

When I observed the Deacon William, he was leading a Bible reading group with a focus on teaching Norwegian to foreigners. There are about five persons participating in the group, both Muslims and Christians. Everyone said they want to learn more about the Norwegian culture, faith and language.

In this group, William uses hybrid tools, such as the Bible, a dictionary, pen, paper, other books, coffee, cookies and language. Here, I focus on the language tools. William talks with them in Norwegian, English and an African language – he has previously worked in Africa. He uses the different languages to both recognize their learning skills and expand possibilities for learning Norwegian and as well as more about the Norwegian culture and the Christian faith. Further, he recognizes their ‘being’ by creating a positive focus on their different cultures and resources. Simultaneously, he uses the languages to expand their possibilities to ‘become’ more integrated into Norwegian society. The use of languages in the reading group creates for marginalized people a space in the parish center. When I observed William, I meet one of the participants working as a volunteer at the congregational office. Another volunteer ate lunch with us together with the staff. The use of language tools creates motion between the periphery and proximity and also changes the staff’s working days as they collaborate and talk with the volunteers.

William creates a hybrid space where different practices intersect. The direction of the use of tools is the search for the participants’ well-being and ‘well-becoming’ and creates the ‘space of possibilities’ both for the participants and the staff.

5.6 The third situation: The deacon Katie – Lady begging on the street

A year before I observed Katie, she had invited a lady begging on the street into the parish center for a cup of coffee. She knew that the members of the congregation had passed the woman with skepticism, but she invited her despite the fear of what the staff and congregation might say. The invitation generated tensions and discussions in the congregation, and the deacon experienced both critique and support.

A year later, when I am sitting in the deacon’s office, the lady, Elena, comes in and sits down. Katie finds the cash box and gives Elena money, as a gift for her work. Elena’s face beams. Katie says that Elena is cleaning and doing practical work. While I am sitting in the office, Katie uses hybrid tools such as a Romanian dictionary, money from a flea market and the language to invite Elena to the candle-lighting ceremonies. Katie is using language to recognize Elena’s ‘being,’ saying Elena is an excellent worker and that she can recom-
mend her to anyone. Katie has facilitated expanding possibilities as work and has contributed to Elena’s expanded ‘becoming’ from being a beggar on the street to being a working person. In the beginning, Katie had used the everyday tool of coffee to bring her from the periphery, the marginalized position on the street, in to the center of the community. Those who passed her on the street with skepticism are now working, drinking coffee and eating together with her. Despite the tensions, the deacon’s tool-mediated modes have, together with Elena and people in the congregation, facilitated a hybrid ‘space of possibilities’ for both Elena and the community. Through the tool-mediated modes and in the ‘space of possibilities’, it has emerged as a collective ‘becoming.’ Many people in the community have shown renewed interest in the needs of people outside the congregation.

5.7 Summary of the findings in the three situations

What characterizes the modes of tool-mediated knowledge in use that are established in the deacons’ interaction with the participants? I argue that the three modes from the first situation are also established in the second and third situations. In addition, the second and third situations strengthen the understanding of the starting point as the participants’ needs in their everyday lives and the search for well-being. Often, this calls for ‘productive change,’ where change brings something new. Productive change requires that hybrid tools are used with flexibility, sensitivity and empathy.

6. The findings’ implications for research on diaconia

The ‘space of possibilities’ is a complex space with for the dynamic use of hybrid tools within an interdisciplinary field, and the deacons may at the same time open up possibilities but also risk closing them. The deacons’ use of hybrid tools shows that they need knowledge about social science and theology. The deacons as social workers deal with cultural and social changes in an ‘increasingly complex and changing society.’ On the other hand, knowledge about theology and church life is often based on long historical and epistemic traditions. In the ‘space of possibilities,’ the deacons face the challenge of negotiating and combining ingredients from these different contexts. The empirical findings confirm that the deacons have a ‘go-between’ role between complex situations. They face unfamiliar situations with various options for solutions, working in ‘circles and lives where congregations do not reach.’

91 Wyller, 2010, p. 188.
93 Nordstokke, 2011, p. 47.
The deacons are constantly transferring tools and knowledge between an increasingly complex and changing society and the church’s long historical and epistemic theological traditions in the ‘spaces of possibilities.’ Thus, on the one hand, the deacons have a valuable position, being the ones who can introduce elements of one practice into another. On the other hand, their position is challenging, because they are easily seen as being in at the periphery.94 The deacons constantly need to use and probably create new tools in unfamiliar situations. Subsequently, I argue that there is a need for more empirical research on these dynamics in the ‘inter-spaces’95 between the human lives as they are found in a changing society and theology and church traditions. Empirical research on the combination of multidisciplinary knowledge and theology in use would be of importance for deacons and probably for other people working in the church and in Christian faith-based practice.

References


94 Akkerman, 2011.
95 Edwards, 2010, p. 43.


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Appendices

Appendix 1: Request and information letter for participants in the LETRA project
Appendix 2: Consent of congregational participation in the LETRA research project
Appendix 3: Project approval of the Norwegian Social Science Data Service
Appendix 4: Individual consent of deacons for participation in the LETRA project
Appendix 5: Interview guide, introductory interviews in fieldwork
Appendix 6: Interview guide, close down interviews in the fieldwork
Appendix 7: Declaration describing the independent research contribution of the candidate
INFORMASJON TIL INFORMANTER

Vi vil med dette takke deg for at du har sagt deg villig til å være informant i forbindelse med LETRA-prosjektet i Den norske kirke. Prosjektet gjennomføres foretas av en forskergruppe fra Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet, og er finansiert av Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet og gjennom de statlige bevilgingene til trosopplæringsreformen i DnK.

Opplysningene som kommer fram vil bli brukt i doktordavhandlinger, artikler og bøker. I disse publikasjonene vil menighetens navn og informantene bli anonymisert mht navn/kjenn/alders. Informantenes vev vil bli opplyst.


Vi vil gjerne understreke at det er helt frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Det er vår som helst mulig å trekke seg fra prosjektet, uten å oppgi noen grunn.

Forskerne er underlagt tautshetsplikt, og data vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Prosjektet er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste.

Har du spørsmål om dette, er du velkommen til å ta kontakt med forskergruppen.

Med vennlig hilsen

LETRA-prosjektet
Til [ansatte, frivillige, konfirmanter, barn og foresatte] i [navn] menighet

Nov. 2011

Vi er en forskergruppe på syv personer fra Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet, Oslo som arbeider med en studie om læring og kunnskap i menigheter i Norge og kalles LETRA (Lærings- og kunnskapabaner i menigheter). Målet med denne undersøkelsen er å finne ut hvordan læring skjer i trossammenheng og hvordan kunnskap utvikles blant ulike deltagere, frivillige og ansatte. Ansvarlig prosjektleder er [navn på menighet].

Tre menigheter er valgt ut som casemenigheter, og [navn på menighet] er en av disse.

Vi ønsker å undersøke følgende grupper: Diakoner, kateketer/menighetspedagoger, prestes, 5-6-åringer, konfirmanter og voksne frivillige.


Temene vi ønsker å belyse i intervjene er hvordan du selv opplever at du lærer i de ulike aktivitetene du er med på i menigheten, hvilke redskaper som brukes i læringens prosesser og om og hvordan du kan bruke det du lærer i andre aktiviteter du er med på. Intervjuet blir tatt opp ved hjelp av lydbåndopptaker.


Vi bør foresatte for konfirmanter og barn i menigheten om også å undertegne samtykkeerklæringen på neste side.

Hvis du har noen spørsmål om undersøkelsen er du hvertid velkommen til å kontakte undertegnende:

Geir Afdal
Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet
Pa 5044 Majorstua
0302 Oslo
telefon 22 59 07 07, email: geir.afdal@mf.no

Vennlig hilsen
Geir Afdal
Prosjektleder
Særtykkeerklæring.

Erklæringen leveres til [navn, adresse og telefonnummer til kirkeverge/kirketil (konfirmanter og barn) i menigheten].

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om prosjektet "Lærings- og kunnskapsbaner i menigheter" og er villig til å delta i studien.

Signatur ........................................ Telefonnummer ..................................

Foresatt ........................................ Telefonnummer ..................................
TILRÅDING AV BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 26.10.2011. All nødvendig informasjon om prosjektet foreløpig i sin helhet 25.11.2011. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

28558 | Learning and Knowledge Trajectories in Congregations
Daglig ansvarlig: Geir Sigmund Afdal

Personvernmelding har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsloven. Personvernmelding takser at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernmeldings tilrådning forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldingsannen, korresponderer med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven/-behehrsregistreloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.


Personvernmelding vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 15.11.2017, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vær samt helset | Kjersti Håvardsen
Vigdis Namsvedt Kvalheim | Kjersti Håvardsen

Kontaktperson: Kjersti Håvardsen tlf: 55 58 29 53
 Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Til diakonen

Nov. 2011

Vi er en forskergruppe på syv personer fra Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet, Oslo som arbeider med en studie om læring og kunnskap i menigheter i Norge og kalles LETRA (Lærings- og kunnskapsbaner i menigheter). Målet med denne undersøkelsen er å finne ut hvordan læring skjer i trossamfunn og hvordan kunnskap utvikles blant ulike deltagere, frivillige og ansatte. Ansvarlig prosjektleder er undertegnede.

Tre menigheter er valgt ut som casemenigheter, og [navn på menighet] er en av disse.

Vi ønsker å undersøke følgende grupper: Diakoners, kateketer/menighetspedagoger, prester, 5-6-åringar, konfirmanter og voksne frivillige.


Temaene vi ønsker å belyse i intervjuene er hvordan du selv opplever at du lærer i de ulike aktivitetene du er med på i menigheten, hvilke redskaper som brukes i læringsprosesser og om og hvordan du kan bruke det du lærer i andre aktiviteter du er med på. Intervjuet blir tatt opp ved hjelp av lydbåndopptaker.


Vi ber foresatte for konfirmanter og barn i menigheten om også å undertegne samtykkeerklæringen på neste side.

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Geir Afdal
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Pb 5044 Majorstua
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Vennlig hilsen
Geir Afdal
Prosjektleder
Samtykkeerklæring.

Erklæringen leveres til [ navn, adresse og telefonnummer til kirkeverge/kateket (konfirmanter og barn) i menigheten ].

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om prosjektet "Lærings- og kunnsakpsbaner i menigheter" og er villig til å delta i studien.

Signatur ........................................... Telefonnummer .................................

Foresatt ............................................. Telefonnummer .................................
Intervjuguide for menighetsdiakoner

2011

Innledning:

- Temaene jeg kommer til å ta opp er blant annet: arbeidsoppgaver, hva gjør du som diakon, hvilke studier du har tatt, tidligere arbeidserfaringer, hva du synes er viktig å kunne i jobben din, hvilke krav du føler andre har til deg, hva du tenker om diakoni, hvilke ting du bruker i jobben din som for eksempel Bibeltekster, mat, kaffe etc.?
- Noen spørsmål kan være gjentagende.

Intervjuguide:

1. Arbeidsoppgaver:
   a. Kan du fortelle litt om hvordan en arbeidsuке kan se ut?
   b. Hva er de vanligste arbeidsoppgavene dine?
   c. Hvilke målgrupper arbeider du med?
   d. Hva liker du best å gjøre?

2. Fagbakkgrunn og arbeidserfaring:
   a. Kan du fortelle litt om hvilke utdannelser du har?
   b. Hvor har du evt. jobbet før?
   c. Har du arbeidet som diakon andre steder?
   d. Hvor lenge har du jobbet som diakon her?

3. Kunnskap, jobb, utdanning:
   a. Hva slags kunnskap fra utdanningene har du mest nytte av i jobben som diakon?
   b. Hva opplever du har vært mest nyttig kunnskap fra diakoniutdanningen?
   c. Hvor dan synes du det samsvarer mellom den kunnskap du fikk gjennom utdanningene og behovet for kunnskap i jobben som menighetsdiakon?
   d. Hva tenker du er viktig å kunne i jobben din som menighetsdiakon?
   e. Opplever du at det som er viktig å kunne er “noe som gjelder til alle tider og alle steder” og/eller noe som skapes og videreutvikles?
   f. Dersom det som er viktig å kunne “er noe som gjelder til alle tider og alle steder”, kan dere beskrive dette?
   g. Hvis det er noe som skapes og utvikles, kan du beskrive dette? Når og hvordan skjer det?
      i. Kan du gi noen konkrete eksempler?
h. Hva synes du kjenne-tegner den spesialiserte kunnskapen diakoner har?
    i. Hvem eller hva bestemmer hva som er diakonifag?
    j. Er det en felles forståelse av hva det diakonifaglige er, eller det opp til hver enkelt diakon å forme dette?
    k. Hvor-ordan opplever du at kunnskapsutvikling skjer underveis i tjenesten som diakon?
    l. Hvordan legges det til rette for kunnskapsutvikling i jobben?
        i. Hva gjør kirken på overordnet nivå?
        ii. Hva gjør diakonene selv?
        iii. Hva tenker du hadde vært viktig for din egen kunnskapsutvikling i faget?
        iv. Er du fornøyd med slik det er nå?
    m. På hvilke områder tenker du det er viktig å utvikle kunnskap i jobben din?
    n. Hva eller hvem bestemmer hva som er viktig å kunne i jobben din?
    o. I hvilke situasjoner, i tillegg til jobben din, opplever du at du har fått eller utviklet det du mener er viktig å kunne som menighetsdiakon?
        i. Utdanning
        ii. Andre sosiale sammenhenger
        iii. Familie, venner etc.
        iv. Personlige erfaringer
        v. Kall
        vi. Annet
    p. Bruker du kristen kunnskap i jobben din? I så fall, kan du beskrive dette?
    q. Hvordan kombinerer du det evt. med annen type kunnskap? Kan du gi noen konkrete eksempler?
    r. Vil du kalle yrket som menighetsdiakonen en profesjon? Evt. hvorfor, eller hvorfor ikke?
    s. Hva opplever du er forventningene til diakoners kunnskap fra de som mottar tjenestene, kollegaer og andre samarbeidspartnere?
    t. Opplever du at den diakonifaglige kunnskapen din gir deg definisjonsmakt på jobb og i kirken som helhet?

4. Organisering:
   a. Kan du si noe om hvordan det er tilrettelagt for diakoni i menigheten?
   b. Hvem samarbeider du med?
   c. Hvordan bestemmes hvilke oppgaver som skal gjøres?
   d. Hva ønsker du selv å gjøre?
   e. Hva tror du staben forventer at du skal gjøre?
   f. Hvordan opplever du diakonrollen?
   g. Hvordan fungerer samarbeidet?
   h. Hvem opplever du har definisjonsmakt over diakonrollen?

5. Diakoniførståelse:
   a. Vil du si litt om hvordan du definerer diakoni?
   b. Hvordan tror du de du samarbeider med definerer diakoni?
      i. Redskaper:
a. **Materielle redskaper/ting:** Hvilke materielle redskaper som for eksempel bøker, bibeltekster, planer, dokumenter, lys, mat, musikk etc bruker du i jobben din?
   i. Hvilken funksjon har de, hvilke brukes, hvordan brukes de? Bruk gjerne konkrete eksempler.

b. **Psykologiske redskaper:** Hvilke psykologiske redskaper eller ressurser som for eksempel språk, verdier, tanker, innsikt, empati etc. bruker du i jobben din?
   i. Hvilken funksjon har de, hvilke brukes, hvordan brukes de? Bruk gjerne konkrete eksempler.

c. **“Kristne redskaper”:** Hvilke kristne redskaper som for eksempel tro, bønn, forbønn, sakramenter, nådegaver, skriftemål, verdier etc. bruker du i jobben din?
   i. Hvilken funksjon har de, hvilke brukes, hvordan brukes de? Bruk gjerne konkrete eksempler.

6. **Har du noe du vil føye til?**
7. **Har du spørsmål til meg?**
8. **Kort om veien videre.**
**Intervjuguide avslutningsintervju med menighetsdiakoner – 2012**

Kunnskap forstås i vid forstand, som for eksempel kroppslig kunnskap, empati, klokskap, teoretisk kunnskap etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teoriinteresser og analysespørsmål</th>
<th>Spørsmål til intervjuguiden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge creation:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engestrøms aktivitetsteori: subjekt, artefakter, objekt, regler, fellesskap (med hvem, definisjonsmakt, spenninger, utfordringer, gleder, hva kjennetegner relasjonene?) roller, oppgaver.</td>
<td>2. Hvis du tar utgangspunkt i situasjonen du nettopp beskrev, kan du tegne et kart over evt. med <strong>hvem</strong>, <strong>hvor og hva</strong> du opplever bidrar til å skape kunnskap?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Er det en sammenheng mellom det diakoner <strong>er og kan</strong>? Kan du beskrive en slik situasjon hvor dette kommer til uttrykk?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Kan du beskrive en situasjon der du bruker synlig profesjonskunnskap?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Kan du beskrive en situasjon der du bruker «usynlig» profesjonskunnskap?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Hvilke redskaper, kilder ressurser bruker du i det synlige arbeidet og i det «usynlige» arbeidet? Kan du tegne det inn på kartet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Er det noe som kan kalles en «diakonal metode» eller tilnærming som diakoner bruker i jobben? I så fall, har du noen eksempler?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Kan du beskrive en situasjon der språket er spesielt viktig i jobben din? Hva tenker du kjenne tegner språket diakoner bruker?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Kan du kort beskrive ulike samtaler du har med mennesker i jobben din?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Er det en sammenheng mellom avklarte roller og oppgaver og kunnskapsutvikling?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Hva tror du avklaringen av rollen din som diakon kan bety for kunnskapsutviklingen?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Arbeidsoppgaver:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Kunne du nå til slutt lage en ukeplan over arbeidsoppgavene dine?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spesifisering av artefakter, knowledge creation: Hvilke artefakter er i bruk?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hvilke artefakter er i bruk for avklaring av roller og oppgaver? Planer og dokumenter:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Hva opplever du bidrar til å avklare rollen din som diakon?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Hvilke planer, dokumenter, redskaper brukes i forhold til MR og andre styrende organer?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er planer medierende artefakter for avklaring av roller og kunnskapsutvikling?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diakoniplaner:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Har dere diakoniplan?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Hvordan lages den evt.? (Hvem er med? Hvem presenteres den for? Hvem har det avgjørende ordet?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Hva betyr planene for deg i dit arbeid?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Har den betydning for din kunnskapsutvikling? Hvis ja, på hvilken måte?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Årsmelding for diakoniutvalget 2011: Hvordan lages handlingsplanene og årsmeldingene? Hvem er med på å lage dem og hvem presenteres de for?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er diakonidefinisjon en medierende artefakt?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Hva betyr diakonidefinisjonen for Dnk for deg i dit arbeid?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Hjelper den deg til å avklare rollen din?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Har den betydning for din kunnskapsutvikling? Hvis ja, på hvilken måte?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engestrøm i forbindelse med avklaring av roller. Relasjoner, spenninger, samarbeid.</td>
<td>24. Hvem hjelper deg evt. med å avklare rollen din? Kan du fortelle litt om hvordan prestene hjelper deg til å avklare rollen din?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flere kunnskapskilder?</td>
<td>25. Hvor opplever du at dine viktigste kunnskapskilder som diakon er?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26. Hvordan bruker du pc' en i jobben din? Hvilke kunnskapskilder finner du der?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faglitteratur:</td>
<td>27. Hva leser du i forbindelse med jobben din som diakon? Hva kunne du ha tenkt å lese?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hvilke kunnskapskilder brukes ute på oppdrag? Hva er de viktigste kunnskapskildene?</td>
<td>28. Hva har du med deg i sekken eller vesken når du skal ut på oppdrag?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utvikling av artefakter:</td>
<td>31. Har du tatt i bruk nye redskaper/ ting underveis? Kan du beskrive noen eksempler?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangler det artefakter?:</td>
<td>32. Er det noen redskaper, kilder eller ressurser du savner i jobben din?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utdanning:</td>
<td>33. Hva opplever du at du lærte i utdanningen (både bachelor og viderutdanningen) som har hatt størst betydning for deg i jobben din som diakon? Kan du gi noen eksempler?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livet generelt: Livserfaring og profesjonskunnskap, («know how and know that»)</td>
<td>34. Er det andre områder i livet som har vært viktige for den du er og det du kan i jobben din som diakon? Har du noen eksempler?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hva kan bidra til systematisk kunnskapsutvikling?</td>
<td>35. Kan du til slutt si noen ord om hva du tenker kan bidra til systematisk kunnskapsutvikling for diakoner?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>