


2019

# African American Female Clergy in Dual Clergy Marriage

Demetra Keyanna-Michelle Hutchinson  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Demetra Keyanna-Michelle Hutchinson

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Walden University  
2019

Abstract

African American Female Clergy in Dual Clergy Marriage

by

Demetra Keyanna-Michelle Hutchinson

MPhil, Walden University, 2019

MTS, Wesley Theological Seminary, 2009

MA, Regent University, 2007

BA, Howard University, 1991

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

Walden University  
March 2019

## Abstract

Burgeoning evidence has shown rapid growth of licensed and ordained female clergy within the Protestant church. Consequently, dual clergy couples have also increased in number. Research has suggested that African American female clergy have experienced greater challenges than male clergy in leadership roles in the church, including social isolation, sexism, and glass-ceiling barriers. Female clergy are also disproportionately affected by mental and physical health complications including depression, obesity, and burnout. Guided by adult personal resilience theory and its tenets of determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability, this interpretive phenomenological study focused on exploring the lived experiences of 13 African American female clergy leaders married to male clergy leaders. African American female clergy, recruited through both purposeful and snowball sampling, through interviews shared their stories of living in a dual-clergy marriage. Using Colaizzi's seven-step process of qualitative analysis and coding, two major themes of Resolve and Resilience, and four sub-themes including Barriers to the Church, Multiple Roles, Health and Wellness, and Adaptation were identified. Findings from this research expand the current body of knowledge on leadership and gender roles in the Protestant church, including the need for a greater understanding of the experiences of female clergy in male-dominated congregational and ministerial spaces. Implications for social change include opening conversations regarding the unique experiences of African American female clergy, supporting awareness of the social, mental and physical challenges of female clergy, and engaging in larger conversations about equal access in all areas of church leadership.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my maternal grandmothers, Magdalene Scott (Mother) and Dorothy Smalls (Big Mamma); my husband, Rev. Dr. Louis J. Hutchinson, III; and my children, Naya and Louis Joshua. In addition, I dedicate this work to those in ministry charged with telling the “Good News” of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

According to Abernethy, Grannum, Gordon, Williams, and Currier (2016), pressures associated with ministry leadership put Christian clergy at risk of weakened capacity to serve their congregations. The pressures of ministry do not abate when a ministry leader is a woman. In fact, Thomas (2013) suggested that African American female clergy face greater challenges in ministry than their male counterparts due to traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Thomas further posited that gender roles within the church can impact the family, affecting relationships between husbands and wives. Mitchell (2017) posited that female clergy are more prone to stress because of the multiple roles and responsibilities that they manage. Many African American female clergy operate in multiple roles that may exacerbate stress and produce health challenges (Mitchell, 2017). Moreover, Brown, Carney, Parish & Klem (2013) suggested that the health of clergy is also tied to spiritual well-being.

African American female clergy potentially face greater challenges than their male spouses in these leadership roles (Cummings, 2008; Holder, Jackson, & Ponterotto, 2015). This study focused on the lived experiences of African American female clergy leaders married to male clergy leaders and the impact of these experiences on their marriage. Conducting this study was necessary because the number of African American female clergy leaders has been increasing in ministerial settings, and there has been little previous research specific to the impact of clergywomen married to clergymen (Birchett, 2013; Hendron, Irving, & Taylor, 2012; Pearson, 2015).

This study adds to the body of literature regarding African American female clergy and their lived experiences within a dual clergy marriage. The study findings may be beneficial to both men and women in clerical positions, as well as to others in church leadership, seminarians, marriage therapists, and clinicians who work with this population. In this chapter, I present the study background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and nature and significance of this research.

### **Background of the Study**

There has been rapid growth in recent years in licensed and ordained female clergy within the Protestant church (Mitchell, 2017; Pearson, 2015). The presence of female clergy in leadership roles has presented both challenges and opportunities (Hervet, 2014; Pearson, 2015). Female clergy are still subjected to stereotypical workplace barriers that impact their rate of leadership (Burnett, 2017). As a result of African American female clergy growth in church leadership, the population of dual clergy couples has also increased in size (Daniels, 2014; Thomas, 2013). Although the demands of a pastoral role are often strenuous for male clergy (Beavis, 2016), research has suggested that African American female clergy experience greater challenges than male clergy in leadership roles within church organizations (Greene & Robbins, 2015; Thomas, 2013). African American female clergy, for example, encounter numerous social and political challenges within church leadership, including overt and covert racism, lower pay, and sexism (Stamarski & Hing, 2015). Additionally, female clergy also experience mental and physical health challenges, including depression, obesity,

isolation, and burnout (Frenk et al., 2013; Williams, 2016). In turn, a system of discriminatory practices within church leadership was created (Grady, 2009), potentially affecting clergy effectiveness and how African American female clergy were treated and perceived (Thomas, 2013). Although there has been limited research on African American female clergy leaders who are married to male clergy leaders, Neff and Broady (2011) pointed out that in general, women are negatively affected by high levels of stress. The unique connection between working relationships that clergy encounter often conflict with marital and family relationship and how the household functions; which may lead to feelings of being disconnected and isolated (Hileman, 2008; Staley et al., 2012, Stamper, 2016; Wells et al., 2012). Guided by the theoretical underpinning of adult personal resilience theory through the lens of determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability (Taormina, 2015), this qualitative, phenomenological, interpretive study was focused on exploring the lived experiences of African American female clergy leaders married to male clergy leaders.

The movement of women entering ministry and assuming leadership roles continues to increase in significance (Lusted, 2010; Mitchell, 2017). Prior research by LeGrand, Proeschold-Bell, James, and Wallace (2013) suggested that some female clergy felt compelled to work harder than male clergy to be viewed as equal. While previous studies have highlighted the tension of male pastors in the midst of ministry responsibilities, little research has focused on experiences among African American female ministry leaders in the Protestant church (Seery, Holman, & Silver, 2010; Updegraff & Taylor, 2000). The available research suggests that female clergy

experience health challenges affecting their physical well-being and ministry work (LeGrand et al., 2013). Mitchell (2017) indicated that the health of female clergy is likely affected by the multiple roles they perform personally and professionally. Furthermore, being a parent and spouse in addition to fulfilling ministerial responsibilities creates stress for some married female clergy (Mitchell, 2017).

Providing spiritual direction and guidance to the church can create distinct challenges for clergy (Hileman, 2008; Wells, Probst, McKeown, Mitchem, & Whiejong, 2012). Health challenges and conditions such as burnout, depression, isolation, and obesity can be the result of ministerial overwork that clergy encounter as a result of leading specific ministries or the church as a whole (Miles & Proeschold, 2013). In fact, the very work that brings forth great rewards for clergy can also be the catalyst for feelings of despair and isolation (Williams, 2016). Other literature on clergy isolation provides examples of lack of friendships in clergy circles (Friedler, Casper, & McCullough, 2015; Hill, Darling, & Raimondi, 2003; Staley et al., 2013). Hileman (2008) reported that 70% of clergy lacked friends often reported feeling isolated, and were reluctant to reach out to others. The isolation that many clergy experienced is born out of a fear of judgement (Darling, Hill, & McWey, 2004; Hileman, 2008).

However, other researchers such as Wells et al., (2012) have posited that even though marriage is analogous across career paths, spiritual leaders encounter stressors that are linked to the demands of ministry. The demands of marriage and dual ministries for husband and wife clergy can be burdensome (Cattich, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Wells et al., 2012). The pressures that can be imposed by parishioners and a spiritual leader's own

personal expectations can create stress that ends in burnout (Berry, Francis, Rolph, & Rolph, 2012; Hileman, 2008). Furthermore, the consensus view of Neff and Broady (2011) was that stress in general adversely affects the quality of marriage and that ministerial challenges are a source of stress.

### **Problem Statement**

Christian religious professionals experience unique challenges as a result of the nature of their work in ministry (Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013). Challenges such as a fishbowl existence, isolation, and health challenges are some of the issues that may be compounded when clergy are married to one another, creating a dual clergy household (Wells et al., 2012). Clergy couples often encounter life stressors they are inclined to mask or conceal (Darling et al., 2004; Hileman, 2008; Wells et al., 2012). African American female clergy face issues of sexism and inequality (Hall, Everett, & Hamilton-Mason, 2012). Although previous research regarding African American female clergy has illuminated important findings, there remains a gap in the literature regarding how the ministry of African American female clergy affects their marriage to male clergy leaders. Given this, further research has been warranted in an effort to address the documented problem of African American female clergy's experiences in a male-dominated church institution and how sexism, glass-ceiling barriers, and pay inequality impact clergy couples' marriages (Mitchell, 2017; Pearson, 2015; Thomas, 2013).

### **Purpose of the Study**

There are more than 49,300 clergy leaders in the United States (U.S.) Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Of this number, African American women have begun to obtain

more and more leadership positions despite the challenges that they have encountered (Pearson, 2015). The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of African American female clergy in dual clergy marriages. I examined the experiences of African American female clergy who were married to male clergy leaders. Participants included licensed and ordained African American female clergy who served in ministry leadership roles within Protestant churches. I also explored the lived experiences of the African American female clergy leaders and whether their dual clergy marriages had been impacted by unfair, discriminatory actions. Prior research documented that African American female clergy had experienced sexism, racism, and economic discrimination in a male-dominated institution: the church (Lyons, 2015). Bringing greater awareness to the spiritual and helping community may help African American female clergy cope individually and in their marital unions.

### **Research Question**

The research question was the following: What are the lived experiences of African American female clergy leaders in dual clergy marriages?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study involved African American female clergy leaders' experiences in dual clergy marriages. Prior research suggests that female clergy have encountered issues such as sexism, glass-ceiling barriers, and pay inequality (Combs, 2016; Marina & Fontenau, 2012). The lens that was used to understand the African American clergywomen's experiences was adult personal resilience theory with a

focus on the determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability that existed within participants' ministry and marriages.

Adult personal resilience theory helped in outlining an interpretation plan for this study's population. According to Bonanno (2004) and Taormina (2015), adult personal resilience theory is based on the understanding that an adult can overcome stressful situations and events. Taormina stated that other theories usually focus on the resilience needed after trauma occurs. Noting that resilience theory had been treated as a one-dimensional concept, Taormina expressed the need for a multidimensional theory to effectively address an adult's personal resilience. In another study, Howard, Dryden, and Johnson (1999) submitted that the younger population had been the focus of resilience theory.

According to Taormina (2015), an adult's personal resilience is characterized by his or her internal fortitude to survive (Bandura, 1989), withstand adversity (Rutter, 1987), adapt to change (Bonanno, 2004), and recover from hardship (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Thus, four dimensions of personal resilience—determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability—differentiated this new theory from previous resilience theories (Taormina, 2015, p. 35). Taormina defined adult personal resilience as an adult's ability to bounce back from difficult situations, recover from misfortune, and be pliable. Adult personal resilience theory can help researchers understand why recovery is a reality for some people but not others (Taormina, 2015). Taormina also posited that the four factors of adult personal resilience can provide unique profiles regarding resilience for each adult. Ultimately, adult personal resilience theory is based on internal



provisions rather than external factors. These internal elements refer to the character or heart of a person rather than external influences, which are physical attributes such as social support that can be seen or touched (Taormina, 2015). Adult personal resilience theory tied to my study of the experiences of African American female clergy because of the four distinct components of the theory (i.e., determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability). Given previous research that suggested social and physical barriers for women in ministry, the four tentacles of adult personal resilience theory were relevant for guiding this study.

### **Nature of the Study**

I used qualitative phenomenological inquiry with an interpretive approach to conduct my research (Dowling & Cooney, 2012). This approach was used to interpret the experiences of the participants (Dowling & Cooney, 2012) and allowed me, as the researcher, to have a prominent role in the research through experiential interpretation of the concepts expressed by the participants. I explored lived experiences of African American female clergy who themselves coped with ministry in a male-dominated profession.

I used both snowball and purposeful sampling strategies to recruit participants. Inquiries were sent to the Calvary Episcopal Church in Washington, DC; East Friendship Baptist Church in Washington, DC; Metropolitan Baptist Church in Upper Marlboro, MD; and Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC.

I used semi structured interviews to collect data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). My data analysis was guided by qualitative content analysis (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas,

2013). I used open coding as a means of identifying themes that emerged from within the data collected for the research.

### **Definitions**

The following words/phrases were used throughout this study. Some terms were used interchangeably based on the context in which they were used.

*Burnout:* In this study, burnout was defined as a state of mind that is weary, dispiriting, and affects the functioning and well-being of an individual's life, resulting in feelings of despair, hopelessness, anxiety, worry, and stress (Sirin & Deniz, 2016).

*Clergy couple:* Within this study, the term *clergy couple* refers to a female minister and a male minister who are married to each other while simultaneously serving in ministry leadership in the church (Collingridge, 2015).

*Clergyman/clergywoman/pastor/ministry leader:* A licensed or ordained minister who performs one or more of the following duties: rituals such as baptisms, funerals, weddings, etc.; pastoring a congregation; preaching; teaching; organizing ministry efforts; and serving as an administrator of committee(s), building, budget, or community initiative (Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013).

*Depression:* In this study, depression refers to a diminished ability or desire to perform the physical, emotional, or social functions of one's role as ministry leader. Characteristics of depression for clergy include poor work performance and high levels of stress and anxiety (Burnett, 2017).

*Stained-glass ceiling:* The term used in religious organizations to describe the phenomena of obstacles and artificial barriers that women encounter in trying to advance in leadership positions within the church (Danberry, 2017).

*Isolation:* The term *isolation* is used in reference to African American female clergy feeling set apart, lonely, separated from others, segregated, and alone in their ministry roles (Ogeletree, 2012).

*Pay inequity:* In this study, pay inequity for female clergy involves being paid less than male clergy for the same jobs or positions. In situations of pay inequity, women are not paid the same as men or an equal amount for equal work in the church (Danberry, 2017).

*Racism:* Discrimination and prejudiced attitudes and beliefs that one group of people are superior to and mistreated by another individual or group (Nelson, 2013).

*Sexism:* The term *sexism* refers to attitudes or behaviors that are driven by gender. In this study, the term refers to the disparaging treatment of women based on gender (Hoegeman, 2017).

### **Assumptions**

I assumed that the African American female clergy participants were officially licensed or ordained ministers and provided ministry leadership or services within an organized Christian religious institution. My second assumption was that African American female clergy had a clear understanding of their personal experiences in ministry and marriage. Next, I assumed that adult personal resilience theory and the four components of determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability constituted the

best theory for understanding resilience of in female clergy leaders. Finally, I assumed that a phenomenological interpretive design was the best suited to explain the essence of the ministry experiences of African American female clergy leaders in a dual clergy couple marriage.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This research study focused on African American married female clergy leaders and their lived experiences with managing ministry barriers and marriages to male clergymen. I chose to focus on African American married female clergy because little research had been conducted to specifically explore this growing population (Lusted, 2010).

African American clergywomen continue to be a minority in overall Protestant ministry leadership. Although more African American women are entering seminary, becoming ordained, and taking on leadership and pastoral roles in the church, the “glass ceiling” and sexism remain obstacles for female leaders in the faith community and across denominations (Adams, 2007; Danberry, 2017; Longman & Lafreniere, 2012; Lyons, 2015).

### **Limitations**

Three limitations were specific to this phenomenological study. First, I was limited by the inability to triangulate participant experiences because each participant was unique. Second, no participant’s information was standard; rather the participant data was unique through the patterns and behaviors expressed during each interview. Maxwell (2013) emphasized that interview questions should be designed so that they elicit detailed

information to speak to the research question. Finally, as a clergywoman married to a clergyman, I recognize that bias could exist. Maxwell (2013) emphasized bracketing biases and judgements and focusing on the experience of the study participants. I also focused on being impartial and avoided imposing my own assumptions. In addition, I used memos to record my reflections.

### **Significance of the Study**

The outcomes from this empirical research could provide insight for female clergy and male clergy who experience stressors that affect their marriage while serving as ministry leaders. This study was unique because it addressed an underresearched area pertaining to the experiences of African American female clergy married to male clergy and how the challenges that female clergy encounter impact marriages for clergy couples. Clergy play a significant role in the lives of millions of parishioners, both female and male. This study may benefit pastors and spiritual leaders, counselors, seminarians, and congregations by informing helping professionals about the experiences of African American women in dual clergy marriages. This research could also provide resources for clergy women to embrace managing ministerial responsibilities and marriage. The increased representation of female leaders in the church has the potential to impact millions of parishioners. This study provides practitioners and scholars with additional resources and information on the experiences of married clergy women.

This research is intended to promote positive social change through the provision of resources and support for an understudied population. According to Collingridge (2015), with the increase in the number of female clergy attending seminary and becoming

pastoral and ministry leaders, more assistance, care, and aid are needed. Learning about the lived experiences of African American clergywomen and how they encounter, manage, and cope with ministry barriers in their marriage could provide assistance and greater awareness for other clergywomen, men, and helping professionals.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I introduced the problem of a lack of research on African American clergywomen leaders married to clergymen leaders and the lack of research on the challenges that can potentially impact these marriages. I provided background for the study, a statement of the problem, the purpose for the research, and the research's central question. In addition, this chapter included the theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions of terms used, assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations, significance of the study, and potential social change implications. I described my intention of interviewing 12 female clergy leaders to explore the lived experiences of the clergywomen. The research was conducted using open-ended questions with a qualitative phenomenological methodology to highlight the experiences of these women.

The results of this study may prove useful for clergywomen, clergymen, seminary students, and clinicians. The research could help clergypersons and helping professionals develop effective coping mechanisms and provide resources for this growing population. In Chapter 2, a literature review was provided and a detailed assessment of the theoretical framework that guided the research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore how the ministry ministerial challenges experienced by African American female clergy married to male clergy affect their marriage when both serve as ministry leaders. Mitchell (2017) posited that risk factors increase when African American female clergy have multiple roles and associated responsibilities. Having the roles and responsibilities of wife and mother could add to the trials of being a pastor and fulfilling expectations (Mitchell, 2017). Sippola (2008) recognized the challenges that African American female clergy encounter, such as the emotional and physical demands of managing home life while simultaneously managing ministry responsibilities. Work and homelife pressures could lead to or exacerbate existing health-related problems if unaddressed (Brown et al., 2013).

In this chapter, I synthesize the literature related to the above-mentioned predominant themes and perceptions. Specifically, I present the literary strategy, theoretical foundation, and literature review for the study. Primary categories in this chapter include physical health challenges such as obesity, other emotional and social issues such as isolation, the stained-glass ceiling, sexism, pay inequity, burnout, depression, and boundary ambiguity.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

My exploration of the literature included searching with Google Scholar, several databases accessed through the Walden University Library system, and the World Wide Web. In addition, I specifically searched relevant academic journals. I searched the

following databases: PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, and SocINDEX. I extended this search further to include abstracts, dissertations, and theses (ProQuest all dissertations and dissertations and theses at Walden) to gather information and expand my knowledge of the most current scholarly research on married clergywomen simultaneously serving at the same church or at the same time as their husbands who are also in ministry leadership. Within Google Scholar, I used the following key phrases to locate information relevant to the topic: *female pastors, first husband, clergy married to clergy, clergy female pastors, women pastors, effects of stress on women clergy, obesity and clergy, obese clergy, female clergy, female ministers, health of female clergy, female clergy obesity, female obesity, obesity of females in leadership, ordained clergy women, obese ministers, clergy health, female leaders, health of female leaders, female pastor's health, female pastor's weight, husband and wife clergy, stress and clergy, stress and resilience, pastors married to pastors, women in ministry, couples in ministry, married to the minister, stress in clergy marriage, marriage and stress in ministry, two person clergy career, clergy stress, clergy quality of life, clergy and clergy spouses, dual couple career, marital quality, pastoral stress, female clergy stress, rise of female ministers, husband and wife preachers, husband and wife ministers, clergy husband and clergy wife, clergy leadership, dual ministry roles, religion and families, clergy resilience, resilience in clergy marriage, resilience in marriage racism, sexism, glass ceiling, stained glass ceiling, pay inequality, struggles for women in ministry, clergy effectiveness on marriage, barriers to ministry, and African American female clergy.*



Specific journals searched included the *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, *Journal of Family Relations*, *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, *Nurse and Health*, *American Journal of Family Therapy*, *Nurse Researcher*, *Journal of Social Science Research*, *Social Science Medicine*, *Neuropharmacology*, *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *Nepal Journal of Epidemiology*, *Stress and Health*, *Obesity*, *Journal of Primary Prevention*, *Approaches to Social Research*, *Chaplaincy Today* (online), *Journal of Social Research*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, *Pimatisiwin*, *Stress and Health*, and *Psi Chi Journal of Undergraduate Research*. Other journals and resources related to psychology included *Pastoral Psychology*, *Psychological Thought*, *Journal of Family Psychology*, *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, *American Psychology*, *American Counseling Association Conference*, and *American Psychological Association*. Journals associated with religion included the *Journal of Religion and Health*, *Women's Role in Religion*, *Review of Religious Research*, *Journal of Spirituality and Mental Health*, *Sociology of Religion*, and *Rural Theology*. Specific books consulted included the following titles: *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research*, *Research Methods for Everyday Life*, *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, and *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*.

I compiled the literature using Zotero software and stored articles in a computerized filing system, for which I developed primary categories and subcategories. My approach was iterative and led to exhaustion of the literature based on the key word

searches. I further organized the information by separating the major themes found in the literature. The major themes included African American female clergy ministry experiences, physical health, obesity, isolation, burnout, depression, boundary ambiguity, and coping with and managing ministry and marriage. I completed the chapter by summarizing the literature review.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical framework that supported this study was influenced in general by resilience theory and specifically by adult personal resilience theory. The term *resilience* refers to individuals' capacity to maintain relatively stable mental function throughout the course of stressful or adverse events (American Psychological Association [APA], 2014; Bonanno, 2004; Child Family Community Australia [CFCA], 2012; Taormina, 2015). Adult personal resilience theory is grounded in the idea that an adult can adapt to or pull through stressful situations and events (Bonanno, 2004; Taormina, 2015). More explicitly, Taormina (2015) suggested that other theories typically focus on victims and the resilience needed after trauma occurs. Taormina expressed the need for a multidimensional theory of adult personal resilience rather than the one-dimensional concept used within other resilience theories. In another study, Howard, Dryden, and Johnson (1999) postulated that most of the research on resilience theory was focused on the younger population. The research conducted by Howard et al. revealed that confidence and social support predicted that first-year college students experienced less stress related to transitioning into college.

Taormina (2015) established that the focus of adult personal resilience theory is an adult's internal characteristics that promote surviving (Bandura, 1989), withstanding adversity (Rutter, 1987), adjusting to change (Bonanno, 2004), and recuperating from hardship (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Hence, the four dimensions of personal resilience—determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability—differentiated this new theory from previous resilience theories (Taormina, 2015, p. 35). Taormina recognized that these four elements of adult personal resilience theory were the distinguishing factors of his theory. Furthermore, *adult personal resilience* was defined as an adult's ability to bounce back from difficult situations, recover from misfortune, and be pliable. According to Taormina, adult personal resilience could help researchers understand why recovery was a reality for some people but not for other people. Taormina also posited that the four factors of adult personal resilience could provide unique profiles regarding resilience for each adult (p. 42). Adult personal resilience theory is based on internal provisions rather than external factors. These internal elements refer to the character or heart of a person as opposed to external influences, which are physical attributes such as social support that can be seen or touched (Taormina, 2015).

### **Determination**

According to Taormina (2015), determination involves having fortitude and deciding to push forward with resolve to succeed despite circumstances. Keen, Hadden, Porter, and Rodriguez (2013) highlighted how couples demonstrate self-determination in romantic relationships by being honest, having mutual respect, and practicing openness.

When self-determination exists, conflicts are managed and resolved quickly (Keen et al., 2014).

Taormina (2015) underscored the experience of a wounded soldier as an example of determination. This soldier was the sole survivor in a battle while at war, and he realized that saving the lives of fellow soldiers depended on him eliminating the enemy's ability to attack (Owens, 2004). Even in the face of his own injuries, he attacked the enemy camp to give the other surviving units a chance to prevail. The soldier pressed forward even though the odds were against him surviving. He took on the task despite the difficulty and possible negative outcome for himself (Taormina, 2015). The soldier was determined.

### **Endurance**

According to Taormina (2015), endurance describes a person's ability to push through difficult situations by using strength, courage, and stamina while maintaining the attitude of never giving up. Endurance can be physical or mental (Taormina, 2015). For example, Munich (2016) described how endurance enabled Zola Budd Pieterse, a professional runner, to persevere despite the personal and emotional challenge of suddenly losing her sister at age 14 and later being forced to stop running for nearly two years because of injury. Zola Budd Pieterse endured the cognitive challenge of having to change her thought process and reevaluate her belief system based on the trials she encountered early in life (Munich, 2016). Zola Budd Pieterse came against opposition in her thinking regarding her future as a runner but ultimately continued to endure hardships to become a world record holder in the sport of running.

**Adaptability**

The third attribute of adult personal resilience is adaptability, which involves being flexible, accommodating, and creative in addressing life challenges (Taormina, 2015). Marriage presents situations in which individuals must be adaptable (Hall & Adams, 2011; Taormina, 2015). For example, when two people join their lives in marriage, they must work to adapt new traditions and new ways of existing (Hall & Adams, 2011; Taormina, 2015). Stress can manifest when individuals must adapt to new responsibilities related to a spouse, family, ministry, and managing ministerial responsibilities. Hall and Adams (2011) posited that one gauge of adaptability for a couple in new marriages is learning how to manage spousal responsibilities and the household effectively. In addition, Taormina (2015) referenced adaptability in terms of an individual starting a new job and having to adapt to new people, new office protocols, and new workplace procedures. Some individuals adapt to new workplace cultures and are successful in the transitional process (Taormina, 2015).

**Recuperability**

Recuperability is the final component of the new theory of adult personal resilience. The core definition of recuperability involves having the ability to stand in the midst of adversity, maintain composure, pull through setbacks, and recover to a normal position when problems arise (Taormina, 2015). According to Taormina (2015), recuperability pertains to people experiencing both physical and mental recovery. Physical recovery can be observed, whereas mental recovery is cognitive in nature

(Taormina, 2015). When individuals think about situations cognitively within a positive framework, the results are regarded as constructive mental recovery or recuperability.

The focus of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how stress affects the marriages of clergywomen when both husband and wife serve as ministry leaders and to determine how married clergywomen manage that stress. I grounded my research by using the principles of adult personal resilience theory (determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability) to explain how married female clergy manage the stress that their occupations may cause within their marriages (Taormina, 2015).

Adult personal resilience theory was used as a guiding light in my research related to the personal resiliency of clergywomen. Principles of the theory were used to explore how clergywomen who served in ministerial leadership overcame stressors. While the principles of adult personal resilience theory were tested using quantitative methods, quantitative measures did not go deep enough to provide understanding of the lived experiences of individuals (Taormina, 2015). By conducting a qualitative phenomenological inquiry with an interpretive approach, I sought to explore further the lived experience of African American married clergywomen in ministry leadership and how they managed the ministry role and their marriage.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts**

This study explored the experiences of African American female clergy leaders married to male clergy leaders who operated in a male-dominated ministerial arena. With the increase in the number of African American women who have become licensed or

ordained ministers within the Protestant church, the number of dual clergy couples has increased (Collingridge, 2015; Frenk et al., 2013; Lusted, 2010). Previous studies have suggested that clergy marriages suffer due to the demands of ministry (Lee, 2010); work overload (Berry et al., 2012); financial struggles (Neff & Karney, 2004); and congregational scrutiny (Darling et al., 2004). Furthermore, other research identified the unique challenges that pastors faced as leaders of churches, such as isolation, burnout, depression, and obesity (Cattich, 2012; Chandler, 2009; Collingridge, 2015; Doehring, 2013; Miles & Proeschold, 2013; Wells et al., 2013). Collingridge (2015) indicated that dual ministry couples shared some of the same challenges as other double career couples. The consensus view seemed to be that since new opportunities for leadership had been created for women, many Protestant denominations were more willing to entrust the leadership of the church to African American female clergy (Mitchell, 2017). While prior research has addressed the challenges of pastors in general, there has been little research that has specifically focused on the experiences of African American married clergywomen whose husbands are also ministry leaders (Seery et al., 2010; Updegraff & Taylor, 2000).

Mitchell (2017) suggested that present-day African American female clergy encounter trials as they manage family dynamics while simultaneously providing ministerial leadership. Conditions intensify when mental and physical health-related problems are ignored (Brown et al., 2013; Mitchell, 2017). The health challenges that such clergy experience include depression and anxiety, which produce stress. Some clergywomen have the responsibility of juggling the roles of wife, mother, and pastor

(Wells et al., 2012). Mitchell (2017) posited that female clergy were prone to stress, which could be shown through exhaustion, frustration, loneliness, and many physical and emotional issues associated with the ministerial occupation. Wells et al., (2012) explained that while marriage was similar across career paths, pastors and spiritual leaders had stressors that were associated with personal and ministry demands. In addition, when pastors feel the demands of marriage and the demands of church responsibilities simultaneously, the results lead to overload (Cattich, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Wells et al., 2012). Hileman (2008) pointed out that the expectations of the congregation and the self-inflicted hopes that pastors have for themselves as servant leaders result in increased workload and burnout. Furthermore, prior research has shown that stress unfavorably impacts the quality of marriage (Berry et al., 2012; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2013; Moore, 2006; Neff and Broady, 2011). However, some research findings have revealed the positive nature of clergy relationships.

Cattich (2012) conducted a phenomenological study to evaluate how clergy and their spouses worked together to manage the pressures of ministry. For example, proactive decision making and synchronization of schedules were two strategies that clergy couples applied in their relationships to help manage ministry demands (Cattich, 2012). Cattich's study involved 24 married women who had been married for 3 to 44 years. Results from the study revealed three major findings: (a) women made many sacrifices by giving up time with family in order to serve the church, (b) spouses were faithful parents and supporters of their wives as they fulfilled their responsibilities and roles in the church, and (c) the couple focused on being peacemakers within the church



and at home. The Cattich study provided research that helped to illustrate some of the real-life challenges of clergywomen in the southeastern region of the United States. The couples addressed the experiences they encountered by (a) taking a disciplined approach to managing both family and ministry responsibilities, (b) ranking the needs of the church and congregation in order of importance, (c) attempting to put family needs at the top of their list in all areas, though they often struggled to maintain a consistent commitment to this decision, and (d) endeavoring to handle both family and church responsibilities equally. Given the stress that African American married clergywomen may experience in the context of their work-related ministry roles and personal responsibilities, this literature review highlighted the issue of whether adult personal resilience plays a role in the lives of clergywomen who are managing stress.

### **Physical Health Challenges**

Previous research indicated that ministers in general were at risk for being diagnosed with health challenges (Ferguson, Andercheck, Tom, Martinez, & Stroope, 2015; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2013; Proeschold-Bell & LeGrand, 2010). In addition, Ferguson et al., (2015) indicated that the negative health conditions were a real concern for clergy in the United Methodist Church. In my research, studies specific to African America female clergy health and the impact of health on marriage were scarce. However, Rolph, Francis Charlton and Rolph (2011) considered the physical, psychological, and spiritual health of female clergy; this health evaluation revealed that female clergy had low levels of health in these areas. Staley, et al., (2013) reported that

female clergy did not have adequate support with work and they endured pressures as a result of stress at work.

In the 2013 study of Protestant Clergy, Frenk et al., (2013) found that female clergy, older clergy, and clergy who experienced occupational hardship or trouble were more likely to take medication to deal with their stress. Physical challenges included numerous ailments such as obesity, high blood pressure, and feelings of anxiety that could hinder clergy from serving their church and meeting the needs of the congregation (Frenk et al., 2013). Furthermore, in this quantitative study, through the use of regression analysis, it was found that 28% of clergy who experienced distress or mood disorders obtained help through the use of psychotropic medications (Frenk et al., 2015).

In another study of clergy within the United Methodist Church in North Carolina, researchers found that stress coupled with burnout was a formula for health challenges including psychological issues that involved anxiety and depression (Miles and Proeschold-Bell, 2013). The focus of the mixed methods study was to investigate the usefulness of peer support groups in helping the psychological well-being and overall health of pastors in North Carolina (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2013). Hence, Miles and Proeschold-Bell (2013) indicated that having a pastoral support system had a direct positive impact on the marriage and the family of clergy. While female clergy were not the focus of the Miles and Proeschold (2013) study, the overall health of the pastors in the study included women. The researchers also reviewed prior data from an ongoing United Methodist clergy study to further examine trends related to this same population.

Participants included women and clergy under 35, as well as pastors of churches with 600 or more members.

Baruth, Wilcox, and Evans (2014) conducted a quantitative study to assess the health of African Methodist Episcopal (AME) pastors in South Carolina (Baruth et al., 2014). Data was collected over a 15-month period using a Faith Activity and Nutrition (FAN) program which was a community based approach (Baruth et al., 2014). Results revealed that 93% of the participants indicated they were obese. There was no significant difference in the findings between men and women clergy (Baruth et al., 2014).

Participants reported other health conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, arthritis, and diabetes (Baruth et al., 2014). The majority of the percentages for each of the health categories represented high levels of health challenges for clergy. Research by Robles, Slatcher, Trombello, and McGinn (2014) put forth the view that the quality of marital relationships was linked to physical well-being and health. Robles et al. (2014) indicated that the quality of marriage for women was associated with unhealthy eating behaviors. Ultimately, the literature also suggested that depression, stressful events within the marriage and outside the marital domain impacted the level of conflict and the decision to separate or divorce (Neff & Karney, 2009; Randall & Bodenmann, 2009).

### **Obesity**

Previous studies concluded that obesity is prevalent among ministry leaders (Ferguson et al., 2015; Frenk et al., 2013; Proeschold-Bell & LeGrand, 2010). In addition, researchers emphasized that long-term occupational stress, excessive work hours, and high congregational expectations contributed to clergy obesity (Baruth, 2014;

Ferguson et al., 2015; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2011; Wells et al., 2012). When both the husband and wife were clergy, each partner was susceptible to potential work related trails that could lead to obesity (Ferguson et al. (2015). Nomaguchi and Bianchi (2002) posited that married females may experience weight gain due to an increase in responsibilities and less focus on maintaining their own weight. It was also believed that married couples were less likely to spend time exercising than single individuals (Nomaguchi & Binchi, 2002). There was evidence that corroborated the notion that stress and obesity were synonymous in the clerical field (Baruth, 2914; Ferguson et al., 2015; Luckhaupt, Cohen, Li, & Calvert, 2014; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2013; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2010; Wells et al., 2012).

Epel, Lapidus, McEwen, and Brownell (2001) conducted research to evaluate the link between stress and eating habits specifically in women. The purpose of the study was to assess how psychological stress influenced eating behavior (Epel et al., 2001). The quantitative study collected data from 55 women and posited that the consumption of high fat foods was motivated by high levels of stress which could impact the weight and health of women (Epel et al., 2001). In the Proeschold and LeGrand (2010) study, researchers stated that stress was linked to obesity among clergy when self-care was lacking. Compared to other populations, clergy were found to have greater incidence of obesity and chronic health conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes (Proeschold-Bell & LeGrand, 2010). Robles et al. (2014) indicated that health challenges impacted couple marital functioning.

In the study conducted by Ferguson et al. (2015) researchers hypothesized that clergy obesity was a byproduct of anxiety. On these grounds, I could argue that if both female and male clergy were susceptible to health challenges as a result of ministry pressures, then married clergy couples may experience double the potential health issues which could impact their marriage. While there was insufficient research on obesity alone causing direct problems in marriage, the research of Ferguson et al. (2015) did posit that work strain was a contributor to health challenges for married clergy which could impact their relationship. Obesity can contribute to hypertension, depression, and other health challenges (Ferguson et al., 2015). No significant gender differences were noted among the examined variables (Ferguson et al., 2015). However, when clergy engaged in self-care the incidence of obesity was reduced (Ferguson et al., 2015). The consensus view was that obesity was a common health issue among clergy (Ferguson, et al., 2015).

### **Isolation**

According to Williams (2016) “isolation for women pastors is a constant struggle” (p. 135). Clergy women experienced feelings of isolation from clergy peers, colleagues, and support systems which contributed to their struggle (Williams, 2016). Some female participants in the Williams (2016) dissertation study indicated that contrary to the struggle of feeling isolated, another perspective was the desire of clergy women to be separated from always being “on call.” For example, one female pastor spoke of living in the church parsonage which was located on the same property as the church. Being able to look out the window and see the church at all times made it

difficult to get away from the work of the ministry; hence, making her feel as though she was always “on call” (Williams, 2016).

Staley et al. (2013) posited that clergy married to clergy were exposed to some of the same stressors as none clergy married couples. Researchers also indicated that 11 female pastors and 69 male pastors serving in senior roles experienced “interpersonal isolation” (Staley, et al., 2013, p. 847). The research was focused on finding out what tactics were being used to deal with clergy interpersonal isolation (Staley, et al., 2013). According to Staley et al. (2013) interpersonal referred to communicating or interacting with others and isolation was being separated or alone. Hence, interpersonal isolation in the Staley et al. (2013) study emphasized how clergy handled feeling alone and lacked communication with others.

All ministers participating in the Staley et al. (2013) study were from the Evangelical Friends and Nazarene denominations. Researchers used a modified form of the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQSR) and six open ended questions with a grounded theory approach to determine what obstacles, strategies, and coping skills were prevalent for clergy seeking to overcome loneliness. Originally, the experiences of clergy spouses regarding social support was to be included in the research; however, not enough spouses responded which caused the information not to be included (Staley, et al., 2013). Researchers posited that clergy social networks were sparse; in addition, the literature showed that clergy experienced loneliness and isolation regularly (Staley et al., 2013).

In more recent research by Mitchell (2017) clergywomen expressed overcoming isolation through spending quality time with family, engaging in hobbies, spending time

in prayer, meditation, and reading Scripture, as well as engaging in other forms of entertainment. The purpose of the Mitchell (2017) study was to explore what healthy behaviors, stress reduction strategies, and religious functions helped to facilitate leadership within ministry. The quantitative study was nonexperimental with a correlational design using a randomly selected sample of 67 clergywomen.

### **Stained-Glass Ceiling**

The term “glass ceiling” was coined nearly four decades ago by Lawrence and Marianne Schreiber, who were employees of Hewlett & Packard Company (Grover, 2015). The phrase was used to highlight discrepancies at a 1979 conference where company policies regarding the promotion of women was being discussed (Groover, 2105). Groover (2015) also suggested that the term glass ceiling was used in the political arena to describe the realities that many women encountered by saying: “The seen, yet unreachable barrier that keep minorities and women from rising to the upper rings of corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements” (p.1). In addition, in the Groover article there were four specific points presented that should be present for the inequalities of the glass ceiling to be considered: (1) no justification for gender or racial disparity regarding an employee, (2) gender or racial discrepancy at higher job levels over lower job levels, (3) gender and racial inequality regarding the opportunity for advancement to higher levels of employment in proportion to the majority population, and (4) gender and racial inequality over the span of a career where gender or race played a role.

Clergywomen faced “stained glass ceiling” obstacles in the church similar to nonclergy female barriers in secular work environments (Combs, 2016). Rowley (2010) posited that a large percentage of Fortune 500 companies were headed by females and African American women made up less than 1 percent of corporate executive management (Staley, 2010). Marina and Fonteneau (2012) suggested that the glass ceiling referred to a collective that was focused on overcoming racial barriers for African American women and abolishment of exploitive behavior for women globally. Marina and Fontenau (2012) stated that “there is more than one glass ceiling...the classroom, the boardroom, and the pulpit each present formidable challenges” for African American women who were educators, female clergy, and community advocates (p. 74). This article highlighted African American female clergy who have been focused in ministry work and other areas of service for the good of others.

### **Sexism**

According to Coleman-Crossfield (2008) sexism was defined as valuing one sex over another, primarily men over women. Andreason (2005) and Shorter-Gooden (2004) further defined sexism as oppressive treatment of women because of their gender and bias based on cultural beliefs and institutional rules. Stamarski and Hing (2015) attributed the inequality of women and sexist practices in the workplace in part to outdated human resources policies. Having long standing organizational policies and a workplace structure that promoted men over women was the norm for many businesses (Stamarski & Hing, 2015). Researchers had even posited that African American women were exposed to “triple jeopardy” which translated to African American women facing



greater challenges in the workplace than White women and Black men in the areas of sexism, racism, and classism (Guy-Sheftall, 2005; King, 1988). The “isms” that were prevalent in society also carried forth into the church which impacted African American female clergy and their pursuit of ministry leadership.

Sexism continued to be prevalent within society (Spencer-Rodgers, Major, Forster, and Peng, 2016) and in the church (Hamman, 2010). West (2011) suggested that sexism among female clergy had also been pervasive in Black church history. In an article by Adams (2007) women were said to have been deliberately excluded from leadership positions within the church. Adams (2007) sought to examine the gender barriers that existed for female clergy in 3 categories: overall preaching, matriculating to the pastoral position, and overall leadership of the church. The Adams (2007) study further focused on the barriers women encounter in the Christian church. Research suggested that women made up a majority of the church congregational body; however, their role in church leadership remained low compared to male clergy (Adam, 2007). Hoegeman (2017) conducted a study on the gender inequality of women in the church and found that patterns remained consistent showing that female clergy held lower level clerical positions than male clergy. The study also suggested that congregants were more supportive of male pastors than females as pastors (Hoegman, 2017). Hence, African American female clergy faced sexist views from church leadership and congregational members (Hoegman, 2017). Hamman (2010) submitted that female clergy faced discrimination based on sexist views when seeking pastoral roles along with male clergy;

this in-spite of women excelling in seminary and often ranking in the top percent of the class.

### **Pay Inequality**

African American female clergy continued to encounter pay inequity compared to clergymen (Durso, 2017; Thomas, 2013). As of 2017, the average female clergy earned only 83% of what male clergy earned and this percentage had increased over 10 to 15 years from even lower comparisons (Durso, 2017). An overarching theme in the Danberry (2017) study found that female clergy in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia were paid significantly less than their male counterparts. Likewise in the Thomas (2013) study, clergy women experienced being paid less than their male counterparts. Danberry (2017) also reported that in spite of the unequal pay, clergywomen in general were willing to serve in ministry even though the pay gap existed. The fulfillment and reward received from ministering to others kept many of the clergy women in this study focused and moving forward in their ministry positions (Danberry, 2017).

### **Burnout**

The burnout that some pastors experienced sometimes left them in despair (Michie & Williams, 2003). Burnout among clergy was prevalent because of the high demand of ministry which included time restraints, lack of privacy, judgement from congregants, financial strain, as well as frequent relocation (Chandler, 2009; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2013). According to Miles and Proeschold-Bell (2013) stress was a part of the pastoral job and burnout was one of the results. There was rapidly growing

literature on the increase of female clergy in pastoral and leadership roles which indicated that more studies were needed to understand the connection of burnout in the lives of this population (Richman, van Dellen, & Wood, 2011).

Robbins and Francis (2010) conducted a study of 874 ordained clergywomen in the Church of England. The researchers were focused on understanding the psychological health of clergywomen in the Church of England. The Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI) and a revised version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) revealed that the majority of clergywomen expressed having high levels of stress, feeling frustrated, emotionally exhausted, and burned out (Robbins & Francis, 2010). On the other hand, similar to the findings of Richman et al. (2011) and Doehring (2013) there were clergywomen who also reported a high regard for their position as clergy which gave them job satisfaction. The fulfilling work that the ministers did and their personal prayer and spiritual renewal helped to offset negative aspects of burnout (Doehring, 2013).

Yet another study by Carroll (2006) posited that clergy experienced on-going stressors that had a negative effect on the physical and psychological well-being of clergy leaders which sometimes led to burnout. Psychological distress and burnout was the result of emotional strain and the lack of managing crisis situations within the church family and the community (Carroll, 2006; Proeschold-Bell, 2013). Burnout affected many ministry families and specifically minister's spouses (Hileman, 2008). On the other hand, in the study conducted by Jacobson, Rothschild, Mirza, and Shapiro, (2013) researchers reported that the burnout rate among 96 Lutheran ministers in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States was low. Their research further stated pastors had a

moderate level of fatigue. However, this study also predicted that years of service in ministry was a predictor for burnout which often led to depression (Jacobson, et al., 2013). The research was conducted using a quantitative methodology with a cross-sectional research design.

Still Chandler (2009) and Kim (2015) put forward the view that clergy were at high risk for burnout due to the intense demands that pastors faced. In the last eight years, research on Pastoral burnout has supported the assertion that clergy emotional distress, impairment of spiritual, mental, and physical functioning has been a real reality (Bernard & Curry, 2012; Chandler, 2009; Doehring, 2013). Furthermore, according to Chandler (2009) the strain and emotional exhaustion that some pastors experienced jeopardized their ministerial effectiveness and sometimes led to burnout. For example, Chandler (2009) conducted a quantitative exploratory study to assess how pastors spiritually recharged, how pastors physically rejuvenated, and what support system routines they used to guard against burnout. There were 270 pastors surveyed in the Chandler (2009) study and the results revealed spiritual dryness as the most prominent indicator of pastors being emotionally exhausted.

Further research by Bernard and Curry (2012) focused on measuring two distinct characteristics of burnout, determining what factors helped to predict the difference in clergy fulfillment verses the emotional strain that clergy encountered. In this study, participants included 69 United Methodist clergy out of a potential of 435 who were asked to participate in the study from the southeastern region of the United States. Using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) as a measure, the study revealed that clergy who

exhibited high levels of empathy felt a greater sense of contentment in their ministry roles and reduced feelings of fatigue associated with burnout (Barnard & Curry, 2011). The study also found that a lack of energy and a lack of drive contributed to clergy burnout. In addition, clergy's own unrealistic expectations and the idealistic expectations of congregants created an environment for burnout. In this same study by Barnard and Curry (2012) minister's personal lives were affected as a result of being connected with others; hence, balancing their responsibilities was more manageable and burnout was less of a reality. While hard work did not always result in positive outcomes in ministry and pastors became disheartened by the reality that their work was ongoing and seemingly never finished, Bernard and Curry (2012) found that clergy who had high self-care were more likely to have greater satisfaction in their ministry roles and lower levels of emotional fatigue regarding their ministry responsibilities.

Furthermore, in the last 11 years, research on clergy burnout has provided ample support for the assertion that burnout affects both female clergy and male clergy (Bernard & Curry, 2012; Carroll, 2006; Chandler, 2009; Dellen, & Wood, 2011; Doehring, 2013; Hileman, 2008; Jacobson et al., 2013; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2013; Richman, et al., 2011; Robbins & Francis, 2010). There is insufficient research into how burnout specifically impacts clergy married to clergy to draw a conclusion about this unique population. This researcher seeks to explore the phenomena of clergywomen married to clergymen and how the stress that leads to burnout might influence their marriage.

## Depression

Proeschold-Bell (2010) suggested that high levels of anxiety, stress, and burnout encountered by pastors could lead to depression. Depression was a reality for many clergywomen serving congregations. Managing pastoral duties and personal responsibilities simultaneously had been challenging for some female pastors (Shehan, Wiggins, & Cody-Rydzewski, 2007). Clergywomen have been accustomed to caring for others; hence, often they failed to care for themselves which resulted in some female clergy developing health challenges including depression (Shehan et al., 2007; Sison, 2006).

According to Sison (2006) depression among clergy was as high as double compared to the general population (Sison, 2006). A study conducted by Smith (2015) revealed that clergy leaders had difficulty coping with the many demands they encountered as ministry leaders. Statistically, the United Methodist clergy reported that 5% of their clergy had been diagnosed with depression according to a 2013 Clergy Health Survey (Smith, 2015). The Center for Epidemiological Studies of Depression found that clergy were diagnosed with depression at a rate of 17% and 20% respectfully in separate studies (Smith, 2015). Smith (2015) further posited that United Methodist clergy experienced depressive symptoms 26% of the time. The Smith (2015) research revealed that one-fourth of United Methodist clergy were exposed to mental health challenges regularly which translated to “some functional difficulty from depressive symptoms” (p. 25). Such statistics supported the idea that depression was a concerning condition for clergy (Smith, 2015). In fact, Smith (2015) also stated that a study of United Methodist

clergy in North Carolina reported as much as 11% of clergy were depressed compared to 5.5% of the general population. In a measure by The Center for Epidemiological Studies of Depression, Catholic clergy reported as many as 20% suffered from depression (Smith, 2015). The previous study did not specifically identify female clergy in the survey, however, in another study conducted by Shehan, Wiggins, and Cody-Rydzewski (2007) the research indicated that “clergywomen who attempted to meet all of the demands of multiple roles, increased their risk for stress, strain, and depression” (p. 638). Ultimately, Shehan et al. (2007) concluded that a mean score of 33.9% of clergy women reported feelings of depression. The depressive feeling included experiencing insomnia, feeling lonely, sad, tearful, and unmotivated (Shehan et al. (2007).

### **Boundary Ambiguity**

Wells et al. (2012) asserted that with non-standard long work hours, pastoral counsel to parishioners, and a variety of responsibilities, clergy experienced boundary ambiguity between the domains of work and family. In addition, clergy played a unique role in the life of congregants which further complicated the scenario. With the spiritual responsibility of leading ministry and leading the church, boundary lines were often distorted creating challenges for clergy trying to separate work and home (Rowatt, 2001). Furthermore, according to Hileman (2008); Johnson (2012); and Rowatt (2001) the lack of boundaries had the potential to create challenges for clergy spousal relationships and the family as a whole could be negatively impacted.

Additionally, a more recent study conducted by McMinn et al. (2013) indicated that boundary ambiguity was a key factor that impacted the family and married clergy.

McMinn et al. (2013) highlighted in the study that pastors reported a lack of boundaries with congregants who call or visit unexpectedly. Pastors also revealed that the lack of separation between clergy responsibilities from personal time was challenging (McMinn, et al., 2013). The blurred boundary lines that clergy spoke about worked hand-in-hand with unrealistic expectations that were often placed on the ministry leaders.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

While research has been done on clergy in general, there still remained only a few studies done regarding the lived experiences of African American female clergy leaders married to male clergy leaders and the impact of dual clergy marriage and ministry. Lusted (2010) and White (2015) asserted that women becoming spiritual leaders was becoming more and more prevalent. African American female clergy who were also married faced unique challenges compared to persons who had jobs that were not associated with leadership of a church or congregation (Cattich, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Wells, Probst, McKeown, Mitchem & Whiejong, 2012). While the concept of marriage may have been similar across career paths, pastors and spiritual leaders had stressors that were different because of ministry demands (Wells, et al., 2012). The literature identified some of the stressor that pastors encountered. These stressors included unrealistic congregational expectation, lack of boundaries, low pay, burnout, anxiety, frequent relocations, and lack of privacy, isolation, experiencing the fishbowl effect, physical health and mental health challenges. And clergy couples were unique in relation to the lack of boundaries that existed because of the relationships clergy had with congregations and their personal families (Cattich, 2012; Hileman, 2008). One common denominator



among most pastors was that the boundary lines of work and family were blurred with many congregants feeling as though they were a part of the Pastor's family (Johnson, 2012). With blurred lines and a general lack of boundaries, spouses and families of clergy were at risk for being viewed by their congregations as less supportive of the ministry (Cattich, 2012). Research revealed that the family experienced the stressors the pastor dealt with, and the family was equally at risk because of the lack of boundary ambiguity (Cattich, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Wells, et al., 2012). Developing coping strategies and mechanisms to resolve the stressors was a goal that clergy and spouses actively salt (Cattich, 2012).

By using the four principles of adult personal resilience theory, determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability; my impending research aimed to explore the lived experiences of African American female clergy married to male clergy leaders. Taormina (2015) focused on how adults used personal resilience and this theory provided a guiding light for this research. Coping mechanisms were key components that were necessary for clergy to rejuvenate and reengage in their ministerial calling (Stamper, 2016). Ultimately, the objective of this study was focused on how adult personal resiliency played a role in managing responsibilities connected to ministry leadership for African American clergywomen married to clergymen. Based on the lack of research regarding African American female clergy leaders my research sought to extend the literature for this population.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

Female clergy had responsibilities that included juggling multiple roles such as wife and mother, which could add to the stress of being a ministry leader (Mitchell, 2017). Emotional and physical demands along with managing personal and ministry responsibilities could have been a challenge for female clergy (Sippola, 2008). Brown et al. (2013) posited that home-life and work-life stressors can worsen health challenges, especially when those challenges are not addressed.

In this chapter, I highlight predominant themes associated with married female clergy and the stress that impacts their life and marriage. I present the research design and rationale, my role as the researcher, and the research methodology. Additional subsections of this chapter cover instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

#### **Research Question**

The qualitative research question for this study was the following: What are the lived experiences of African American female clergy leaders in dual clergy marriages?

#### **Central Concepts**

The central concepts I explored in this qualitative phenomenological study aligned with adult personal resilience theory. I sought to understand the experiences that African American clergywomen married to clergymen encountered as they coped with the responsibilities associated with ministry leadership and any potential impacts of these

responsibilities on their marriages. Central concepts included (a) personal resilience in the face of ministry challenges, (b) the phenomenon of African American married female clergy in ministry leadership, (c) ministry challenges encountered by African American female clergy, (d) physical challenges experienced by African American female clergy, (e) emotional challenges suffered by African American female clergy, and (f) coping mechanisms of African American married clergywomen.

The core phenomenon of adult personal resilience theory is adult resilience (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). According to Taormina (2015), adult resilience accounts for experiences over a person's lifespan. Personal resilience involves internal resilience versus external resilience factors (Taormina, 2015). Taormina highlighted that the focus of adult personal resilience theory is on personal characteristics. The emphasis is on an attitude of determination, having endured adversity, having adapted to change, and the ability to recover from misfortune or difficulty (Taormina, 2015). The research question and interview questions were used to gain insight into the lived experiences of African American female clergy in ministry leadership in dual clergy marriages.

### **Research Tradition**

The purpose of qualitative research is to explore social problems that reflect a range of human experiences (Peredaryenko, 2013). According to Vishnevsky and Beanlands (2004), the focus of qualitative research is investigating distinct events and experiences while also defining phenomena. Researching lived experiences of a phenomenon is better suited to a qualitative approach than to quantitative methodology (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). The qualitative methodology is commonly used to examine life

experiences of a situation, event, or phenomenon (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). In contrast, quantitative methodology is more appropriate for measuring causes and effects of a process, object, or relationship.

Using a qualitative research approach enabled me to interpret and describe the participants' responses in narrative form rather than through numbers and statistics, which are more suited to a quantitative approach (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). The qualitative research methodology made it possible to uncover themes and patterns that explained the research phenomenon (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). In addition, using a qualitative approach allowed a discussion of the details of the phenomenon as opposed to the less specific information associated with statistically based quantitative research (Bender & Hill, 2016).

Three primary motives framed my decision to use a qualitative methodology. First, I sought to examine the beliefs, behaviors, and experiences of African American female clergy. Second, I aimed to explore the impact of ministry on dual clergy marriages. Third, by conducting this research, I sought to describe the unique experiences of the study population, rather than to conduct a statistical analysis of the study population.

I used phenomenological inquiry with an interpretive approach to conduct my research (Dowling & Cooney, 2012). Phenomenology is associated with investigating individual lived experiences of a phenomenon. The foundation of phenomenological methodology is a philosophical belief in the human experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas (1994) asserted that identifying the true meaning of a concept, theme, or idea

is the primary focus of phenomenology. Phenomenology emphasizes the innate meaning of a phenomenon or idea (Bednell, 2006).

I specifically used interpretive phenomenology for this study. Interpretive phenomenology required me to gain an understanding of the participants' world view concerning specific phenomena (Patton, 2012). Using interpretive phenomenology rather than descriptive phenomenology was appropriate for my research because the former is geared toward understanding the meaning of a phenomenon (Reiners, 2012). My goal was to engage in dialogue with the participants to gather details of their experiences while maintaining authentic meaning pertaining to the phenomenon (Given, 2012).

Within the family of qualitative inquiry, there were several approaches that I considered before deciding on qualitative interpretative phenomenology. Alternative approaches included case study, ethnography, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry. The case study approach would have supported an in-depth look into the historical background of the study participants, but case study was eliminated because this approach would not have accommodated an in-depth evaluation of the phenomenon of dual clergy marriage experienced by African American female clergy leaders. Ethnography was not chosen for my study because ethnography focuses on observing and studying the culture and historical phenomena of a group (Patton, 2002). A grounded theory approach was not chosen because grounded theory is a process used to generate or produce theory (Patton, 2002). I was not attempting to develop a new theory. Finally, narrative inquiry is rooted in storytelling and how a story is analyzed (Patton, 2002). Narrative inquiry requires that the researcher participate primarily through listening,

engaging in little interaction with participants; hence, narrative inquiry was not the best method for this research. These methods were not chosen because phenomenological inquiry was the most appropriate for my research purposes.

A quantitative research design was not suitable for this study because quantitative research does not support in-depth explanations and interpretations of phenomena (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). Quantitative research focuses on numerical descriptions and statistics generated from larger sample sizes (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). Using a numbers-driven method to research this problem might be possible in future explorations. However, my study of the lived experiences of African American clergywomen when both husband and wife are ministers was conducted using a phenomenological approach.

Finally, I did not use a mixed methods research design because both quantitative and qualitative research would have been required for data collection (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Patton, 2002). Quantitative research involves variables that need to be identified and statistical information that must be measured (Bhattacharjee, 2012). My study of these female clergy leaders married to male clergy leaders was focused on examining their lived experiences, which was best achieved using open-ended questions. A mixed methods approach would have included a quantitative perspective, which would have required a larger sample of individuals and statistical information rather than individual, unique experiences. Hence, I used interpretive qualitative phenomenological inquiry as my research approach to explore how this population experienced their dual marriage.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher, I had the role of facilitating an ethical, thorough, comprehensive, and well-designed study of the lived experiences of African American female clergy and the impact of a dual clergy marriage. As a clergy female myself, I needed to reframe my personal judgments.

Moustakas (1994) stated that a nonjudgmental phenomenological study can be achieved if the researcher actively engages in the *epoche* process. The *epoche* process, which involves suspending judgement in a particular area, was achieved by bracketing biases (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing was achieved by suspending preconceived perceptions about the participants and the research topic (Bevon, 2014; Peredaryenko, 2013). Each participant was the expert on her personal experience, and therefore, my aim was to neutralize any preconceived bias I might have toward the research topic or participants. Because I am an ordained female minister who is married to a male ordained minister, I recognized my own potential for bias. However, as a qualified Christian counselor with high professional standards, strong character, and integrity, I used my training to avoid countertransference.

*Countertransference* occurs when a therapist transfers or projects personal feelings upon a client (Cartwright, George, & Cowie, 2016; Machado et al., 2014). Although I was not conducting my research as a therapist, I was committed to taking extra precautions to ensure that clear boundaries were established to guard against potential partiality. I avoided countertransference by engaging in self-insight and self-integration to help guard against personal biases or potential countertransference when

interacting with participants (Gelso, Latts, Gomez, & Fassinger, 2002; Legault et al., 2017). *Self-insight* involves understanding one's own feelings, while *self-integration* signifies the recognition of boundaries between participants and professionals (Fatter & Hayes, 2013). I engaged in self-insight throughout the dissertation process. Self-integration was important throughout the dissertation process as well, specifically during the participant interviews to avoid compromising data collection. Using self-insight and self-integration helped me to avoid countertransference by ensuring that I was upfront, self-aware, and deliberate in my own beliefs.

Additionally, I built rapport with the interviewees and promoted a safe, comfortable environment for the participants. My approach to ensuring that participants were comfortable included selecting a relaxed but professional setting, a venue that was convenient in terms of location as well as private. As the primary instrument of this qualitative study, it was important that I uphold ethical standards, manage records, and protect the confidentiality of the participants (Bender & Hill, 2016). Ensuring that all participants completed an informed consent form prior to the data collection process was an essential part of the preinterview procedures. After the interviews, I demonstrated effective management of records and appropriate privacy practices based on Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) rules and regulations (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014; Bender & Hill, 2016). I developed a comprehensive research design, used an appropriate methodology suited for the project objectives, and maintained safeguards throughout the research process (Bender & Hill, 2016; Patton, 2002).



My role as the researcher also involved being sure that I was competent to carry out the research (ACA, 2014). I was confident in qualitative methodology and the parameters set forth for this research process. Based on my personal character, integrity, and experience as a counselor, I possessed the skills needed to conduct this study. If additional training had been necessary, I would have sought appropriate assistance. However, I ensured that an appropriate design plan and ethical standards were followed. I abided by the rules and regulations of the IRB and conducted a study that met the standards for trustworthiness.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants and Sample**

The sample for my qualitative study consisted of African American female clergy, 18 years or older, who were licensed or ordained, spoke fluent English, and were married to a male clergyman. The geographic location was the metropolitan area of the District of Columbia. I selected the African American female clergy population and researched how their dual clergy marriage was impacted by their ministry experiences. In addition, this population was based on the information in Chapter 2 indicating an increase in female clergy leadership. As a result of the increase in female clergy leadership, the prevalence of dual clergy couples in ministry has also increased. African American female clergy leaders were a natural and logical fit for my study. The study plan, sample selection criteria, sample inclusion criteria, recruitment documentation, informed consent, and data collection plan were submitted to Walden University's IRB for approval.

### **Participant Selection Logic**

The participants in my study shared their lived experiences as ministry leaders while managing dual clergy roles as wives of male clergy leaders. I sought to understand the African American clergywoman's perspective on potential challenges associated with female clergy leadership and the impact, if any, of these challenges on her marriage to a male clergy leader.

According to Janesick (2011), the recommended sample size for a qualitative research study ranges from three to 10 participants who have experienced the phenomenon being researched. I recruited participants through a purposeful and snowball sampling process. It was challenging to locate qualified participants to take part in the study through purposeful sampling only. For this reason, I supplemented the purposeful sampling process with snowball sampling.

I used both purposeful and snowball sampling to recruit participants through five local predominantly Black or African American Christian churches in Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia, as well as a seminary in Washington, DC. Purposeful sampling focused on choosing specific individuals who met certain criteria and whose experiences might best answer the research questions (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2011). Snowball sampling is an approach whereby confirmed participants are recommended by others who meet the study parameters (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Smith, 2008). Atkinson and Flint (2001) explained that snowball sampling is useful for respondents where "some degree of trust [was] required to initiate contact" (p. 3). Using a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling helped to improve the likelihood of reaching the

qualified population. Snowball sampling was especially useful as qualified African American female clergy shared their desire to participate with colleagues who were also interested in participating in the research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Christensen et al. (2011) posited that snowball sampling is not marked by a specific end process; rather, this sampling approach continues until the researcher's designated sample size is reached.

### **Sample Size**

The planned sample size for this study was 12 participants; this number was consistent with other qualitative studies on female clergy (Hervet, 2014; Thomas, 2013). As stated by Patton (2015), qualitative research typically uses a small sample size. However, this general rule can change, as in meta-analysis studies, which may require a larger sample size to attain validity. Likewise, my study sample size increased based on data analysis and assumptions. There were no set numbers of participants for phenomenological studies; rather, the sample size is determined by the researcher (Patton, 2015). However, Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) suggested that the sample size for qualitative research should have several participants even if the sample is small, and saturation happens when redundancy occurs and no new data emerge.

### **Justification for Sampling Strategy**

For this study, I aimed for heterogeneity within the participant group (i.e., African American female clergy in heterosexual marriages to clergymen). I sought to achieve data triangulation, drawing information from multiple locations (Washington, DC; Maryland; and Virginia). I used a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling to

reach the African American female clergy population. Using a dual sample strategy and multiple locations can help in avoiding selection bias (Malone, Nicholl, & Tracey, 2014). An example of selection bias is using only one means of recruiting participants.

### **Instrumentation**

I was the primary instrument for collecting data in this qualitative study (Maxwell, 2013). I used semi-structured interview questions to collect data for this study. Interview questions prompted individuals to provide information about their personal experiences. I developed an interview protocol guide and debrief script that consisted of open-ended interview questions (see Appendix A).

Using open-ended rather than closed questions encouraged the participants to tell their stories. Consistent with phenomenological interviewing, open-ended questions allowed the participants to provide more details and to use self-expression (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In addition, open-ended questions fulfilled the requirements of qualitative methodology which gave leeway to be creative and to provide meaning. Rubin and Rubin (2011) emphasized the importance of making sure that the questions were clearly asked. Maxwell (2013) asserted that interview questions should be designed so the questions elicit specific information to address the research question. I derived my questions for the protocol guide by considering the approach and structure of my impending interviews.

According to Bevon (2014) managing the process of questioning provided structure that supported a thorough investigation of the participants lived experiences. This investigation was conducted focusing on actively listening while being intentional to use clarifying questions. I concentrated on 3 steps to ensure the interview questions were

clear. First, I embraced the epoche process of shifting my own attitude and being critically aware of preconceived beliefs and viewpoints; second, I welcomed hearing the participant's unique experiences; and third, I actively listened to gain the full understanding of what each participant expressed regarding their unique experiences.

### **Face Validity**

I utilized face validity to evaluate my qualitative research questions. Patton (2015) encouraged researchers to use simple language that was familiar to the participants. After establishing the interview questions with insight from Patton (2015) I invited four subject matter experts (SME) to review the recruitment flyer and interview protocol for word choice, clarity regarding the structure of the interview questions, elimination of duplicate questions, and feedback related to the responses the research questions might evoke. The first SME was a Director of Counseling at the University level, life coach, physiologist, and counselor. The second SME was an owner of a local counseling organization and ordained minister, the third expert was a pastor and counselor, and the final SME was a professor and author. Each SME provided feedback and revisions to strengthen the interview and probing questions.

## **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

### **Participant Recruitment**

In order to recruit participants, a letter of cooperation was sent to several churches and one seminary asking for permission to recruit parties who meet the criteria for participating in the study. In addition, I asked the pastors and the dean to make announcements at group gatherings for potential participants to contact me. I obtained a

signed letter of cooperation (Appendix C) from each of the churches and the seminary. I sent the flyer to Calvary Episcopal Church in Washington, DC; East Friendship Baptist Church in Washington, DC; Metropolitan Baptist Church in Upper Marlboro, MD; and Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC; in order to recruit participants for this study.

Contact information was listed on the flyer on how interested participants can get in touch with me. Upon contact from potential participants, I had an initial conversation about the impending research study. During the initial conversation, I verify eligibility, an official meeting time or conference call time was established, and I conducted the interview.

If additional participants were needed beyond those from the churches and seminary who provided a letter of cooperation, I would have submitted flyers to the DC Baptist Convention which serves Baptist Churches in the Washington, DC Metropolitan area (Appendix E). Potential participants would have my contact information. Interested parties would have contacted me and set up an interview.

### **Data Collection**

After receiving approval from Walden's Internal Review Board (IRB) to conduct this research, I contacted the participating institutions to request permission to collect research data from married African American female clergy who may be associated with their church or organization. I requested permission to place flyers on the church or organization's bulletin board so that interested participants were informed about the impending study. The flyer included pertinent information about the impending research

and how interested parties could contact me in order to participate in the research. I posted the flyer and requested that the information on the flyer be announced in ministry meetings and at church and organizational events so that potential participants were aware of the study. Upon being contacted by interested participants, I verified that the potential participant met the minimum criteria. Once the criteria are verified I set up a confidential interview via phone or face-to-face in an appropriate location such as the private room in the South Bowie library in Bowie, MD. I conducted the interview, transcribed the collected data, and engaged in member checking with the participant. Once the data was verified then the data was transferred to Nvivo using the intrinsic tools of the application, I identified categories and themes through query tree maps and tag clouds to categorize themes.

### **Interviewing Process**

Privacy of each interview was accomplished through a face-to-face meeting or private phone conversation. The face-to-face interviews took place behind closed doors such as in a private room at the local library. For all phone interviews, a time was established and phone number verified for the participant to call in for the meeting. Prior to starting the interview, I had my primary audio device set up and notepad ready for manual note taking. I was respectful of the participant's time and if additional time was needed beyond the 30-60 minutes I initially established, I asked permission to proceed and allowed for a break if needed. I used a backup recording device and took notes to ensure all details of the participant's interview were captured (Maxwell, 2013). I started the interview with each participant by first thanking the interviewee for agreeing to

participate in my research study. I then explained that I was a Walden University doctoral candidate and shared my role as the researcher. As the researcher, I obtained informed consent from each participant. I followed the interviewing procedures as defined by Rubin and Rubin (2012) which consisted of establishing a rapport with the participants to promote a high level of comfort with the interviewees. As I engaged with the participants, my goal was to remain open-minded and manage my verbal and nonverbal responses (Moustakas, 1994). I utilized interviewing procedures by carefully listening, observing, taking notes, audiotaping and then interpreting the stories shared by the participants (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). I used semi-structured interview questions to gather information about the lived experiences of the female clergy. I used the responsive interviewing model and a conversational approach in the interview process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The responsive interviewing model was the process of reviewing the transcripts from the interviews and determining if additional interviews or clarification were needed (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Using the responsive interview model or pre-analysis of the raw data helped me focus on the participant's intended communication.

Upon completion of each interview, I transcribed the audiotape of what was shared by the participants in the interview. I also followed up with each participant to engage in data cleaning to confirm that my data interpretations were accurate; doing so also ensured that I accurately transcribed the participants' intended communication. Finally, according to Rubin and Rubin (2012) offering a summary of the research results at the completion of the study was a good practice. I also asked each participant for a brief follow-up meeting either face-to-face or via phone to ensure that the transcription



was accurate and the information conveyed overall was complete. If a participant could not meet face-to-face or via phone I asked for permission to send the information via email so that any needed clarifications could be made.

The close out and debrief process (Appendix A) included thanking the participants for their time, reiterating the parameters of the informed consent, and reminding the participant that they were welcome to review the transcript for accuracy. As a part of the researcher's responsibility to the participants, a list of counseling resources was provided if participants felt the need to speak to a professional about undue stress as a result of the interview (Appendix G). Finally, I requested that feedback and any updates from each participant interview be submitted back to me within three days so that the data analysis could be completed. I reviewed the informed consent and reminded participants that their participation was completely voluntary. Any participant could decide to withdraw from the study at any time by indicating that they no longer wished to participate in the study.

### **Bracketing and Reflection**

As the researcher, I was responsible for all aspects of the study including maintaining a neutral position between the participant and myself. Bracketing and reflection were tools that I used to help ensure that I minimized my biases, focused on being neutral, and reflected on the information provided by the participants and not my presumptions. According to Maxwell (2013) bracketing was setting aside one's own bias and judgements and focusing instead on the experience of the study participants. Reflection was a process whereby the researcher examined self as well as the relationship

to the participants. I used memos to record my reflections and bracketing to make note of any bias thoughts.

There were benefits to a reflection process. First, I had the opportunity to consider my bias about married female clergy that may have existed (Maxwell, 2013).

Acknowledging any disparaging thoughts was helpful toward me working through those notions. Second, I was proactive as I analyze the data for emergent themes regarding the study (Maxwell, 2013). Ultimately, the reflection process helped me to consciously manage my own bias so that I maintained a neutral position as the researcher.

Furthermore, as Rubin and Rubin (2005) pointed out, the researcher must manage discrepancies that become evident during the data collection stage.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) asserted that the difference between inductive and deductive reasoning was that inductive research used thought or opinion to guide the process which was representative of qualitative research, while deductive research focused on the hypothesis and the “systematic, empirical observation” (p. 168) of a study. My primary goal as the researcher was to manage the raw data collected from the interviews. Managing the data involved categorizing the information into themes that allowed for grouping into conceptual categories (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Saldana, 2015). Coding the data was necessary to group data into manageable clusters (Saldana, 2015). First, I analyzed the data by using open coding. Open coding allowed for highlighting different concepts to differentiate the ideas (Patton, 2002). In addition, I used key words to categorize the participant responses (Saldana, 2015).

As I prepared to conduct my phenomenological research I implored the seven step data analysis procedures as outlined by Colizzi (1978). These steps helped to ensure a thorough and proficient data analysis process. I followed the seven steps of the approach as outlined below:

1. I reviewed each transcription multiple times to ensure that I was well versed with the information;
2. I underlined noteworthy statements from each interview. These statements represented significant information pertaining to my research problem;
3. I generalized important information from the noteworthy statements as mentioned above;
4. Next, I grouped similar statements and placed them into categories;
5. I used topics, ideas, concepts, terms, phrases, and key words to establish descriptive narratives to develop themes,
6. I looked for a structure of the phenomenon by examining the data;
7. Finally, I confirmed the results of the interviews through member checking and contacted participants to follow-up.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

When using a qualitative approach to conduct a study, researchers speak about trustworthiness of the data rather than reliability of data. Trustworthiness is was achieved when the research is consistent, procedures can be documented, and the research adds to the body of knowledge (Paton, 2015). I used an audit trail as suggested by Lincoln and

Guba (1985) for trustworthiness measures which included a baseline of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### **Credibility**

Establishing credibility was a high priority when conducting this research. The steps to establish credibility include member checking, reflexivity, and triangulation. To verify information shared by participants, I paraphrased and repeated the information shared to ensure accuracy during the interviews to further establish credibility through this data cleaning process (Christensen, 2011). While I asked permission of each participant to follow up on key concepts if necessary, checking my understanding of what was stated during the initial interview was help to ensure accuracy without delay. I also engaged in member checking at the conclusion of each interview as a final verification of the participant's statements. I accomplished member checking by paraphrasing and summarizing the statements of the participants. I also allowed participants to review their respective transcript once transcribed. This allowed for an additional level of member-checking and credibility.

In addition, I established credibility of the data by documenting details of the interviews, by providing a road map, audit trail, and a step-by-step process of the data collection process (Bevon, 2014). Triangulation in using a dual sample strategy (e.g. purposeful and snowball sampling) was be another thread to ensuring credibility (Bevon, 2014). Furthermore, being organized, methodical, verifying notes, and following a well-established thought out procedure added to the success of the study (Christensen et al., 2011).

**Transferability**

In order to achieve transferability, I provided thick descriptions of the participant's account of their experiences. Choosing 12 participants rather than three to 10 as previously recommended by Janesick (2011) in previous research, I increased my variation in participant selection. Choosing a higher range of participants enhanced my ability to obtain rich, thick descriptions.

**Dependability**

Dependability or reliability in research is the ability of another researcher to follow the same procedures to replicate previous research (Cope, 2014). Protecting the integrity of the research also determines dependability. To establish dependability, I protected the integrity of the data collection process. Audiotapes of the interviews was securely recorded and stored in a fireproof, locked file cabinet. In addition, the interview notes, informed consent forms, and other appropriate study documentation were placed in a fire proof, locked file cabinet. Following the aforementioned steps ensured that the study procedures were dependable for future replication (Cope, 2014).

**Confirmability**

To establish confirmability, I maintain a journal to record data collection procedures and my initial interpretations of the participant interviews (Cope, 2014). The journal included details of the interview venue, the setting of the interview, my personal observations, and my reflections. The journal served as a resource to review details about the data collection process. The journal also helped me self-evaluate my thoughts to guard against influencing the interviewee.

In addition, Chan, Fung, and Chien, (2013) and Maxwell (2013) suggested using reflexivity to handle bias, which helped to ensure quality control and rigor in qualitative research. A reflexivity diary detailing the researcher's thoughts, viewpoints, and opinions was another mechanism for minimizing bias that I embraced. The reflexivity diary helped me to think through my own preconceived notions and opinions to bring forth a stronger awareness of personal bias. Being aware of my own potential biases and addressing limitations was also important to the legitimacy of this research project (NOHS, 2015). For example, some of my potential biases included personal preconceptions about married clergy females. Patton (2012) posited that a shift should take place on the part of the researcher from personal perception that allowed the participant to be empowered to tell her story. Hence, I took on the role of listening for details and the participant's perspective. It was important for me to be open-minded and receptive to the experiences explained by the participants.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical considerations were important to this study and Patton (2002) proposed a checklist that I consider when conducting research. This check list included "understanding the purpose, risk factors, reciprocity, confidentiality, informed consent, the participant's mental health stability, advice, data boundaries, and the legal and ethical ramification of the research participants" (Patton, 2002, p. 408-409). I ensured privacy for the participants while also maintaining complete confidentiality of the information shared by the clergywomen. It was customary to obtain consent at each interval of the research process. Hence, every ethical concern was addressed prior to beginning the

study. As a part of the requirements at Walden University to conduct research, I received certification for training and research from the National Institute of Health (Appendix F). The certification provided certification to conduct research. In addition, other ethical standard resources included The Harvard School of Public Health (2011) which provided online ethics training. This training was beneficial because it focused on potential ethical dilemmas that may arise such as information security, research integrity, and intellectual property (The Harvard School of Public Health, 2011).

As a member of the American Counseling Association (ACA), International Association for Marriage and Family Counseling (IAMFC), and the National Organization for Human Services (NOHS) I was bound to conduct myself within the ethical boundaries established by each organization (ACA, 2014; Hendricks, Bradley, Southern, Oliver, & Birdsall, 2011; NOHS, 2015).

All information shared in the interview was confidential. The researcher was ensured that all personal information was kept confidential and that the information obtained from participants would only be used for research purposes. In addition, neither the participant's name nor any other identifiable information was used in the study report. All collected data was secured and kept confidential by the researcher, Demetra K-M Hutchinson, in a password protected computer and in a key locked file cabinet where access was limited to only the researcher. All records pertaining to the study will be maintained for five years as required by Walden University. Once the five year time requirement to hold the documents is met all appropriate documents will be destroyed.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 provides the rationale and the foundation of why interpretive qualitative phenomenology was the best suited methodology and plan of inquiry for this research study. Established, open-ended research questions were provided as a baseline for inquiry into the lived experiences of African American female clergy leaders. Procedures to minimize biases, following strict meticulous research procedures, data collection, and data analysis helped facilitate an overall trustworthiness for this study. In addition, this chapter also highlighted the sampling strategy, the necessity of informed consent and the confidentiality to minimize negative effects to participants. Lastly, the responsibility of the researcher to uphold high ethical standards was also presented. Chapter 4 will provide the demographic information, participant responses, emergent themes, and study results.



## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of African American female clergy in dual clergy marriage. Participants provided insight into managing multiple roles within their marriage and ministry. Adult personal resilience theory was used as the theoretical framework for the study. Taormina (2015) stated that resilience theory presented a one-dimensional view that often focused on children, whereas adult personal resilience theory involves a multidimensional concept that includes determination, endurance, acceptability, and recuperability to help provide a framework and meaning to research. These four dimensions of adult personal resilience theory differentiate it from prior resilience theories (Taormina, 2015).

The predominant research question leading the study was as follows: What are the lived experiences of African American female clergy leaders in dual clergy marriage? Each participant shared her unique personal experiences of resolve and resilience in marriage and ministry. Within this chapter, I provide an overview of the research findings and an abbreviated profile of the participants. Additionally, the chapter contains a description of the setting, participant profiles, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as well as a summary.

### **Research Setting**

I conducted research primarily in the U.S. Mid-Atlantic area. However, as a result of snowball sampling, four participants were outside the Mid-Atlantic area. Specifically, nine participants were from the Mid-Atlantic states, two participants were from southern states, one participant was from the Northeast, and one participant was from the Midwest, for a total of 13 participants.

The interviews were conducted from March 2018 through May 2018. Each interview was conducted in a secure office space, in a pastor's study or via a private phone line, per each participant's preference and convenience. Interviews were taped using two separate recording devices. I maintained a log detailing the pseudonym of each participant using gemstone names such as Garnet and Amethyst. Additionally, the date and length of time for each interview were recorded.

### **Demographics (Participant Profiles)**

This demographic section provides a brief description of the study participants. Each participant self-identified and confirmed meeting the study criteria and signed the informed consent. I deliberately omitted the specific city and state of each participant to protect the identity of each contributor. Assigned pseudonyms provided additional assurance that personal identities would remain concealed. This process allowed me to use thick descriptive verbatim quotes to highlight the experiences shared. The pseudonyms listed below and used hereafter allowed me to share participants' stories while maintaining confidentiality. Table 1 lists participant demographic information, with profile narratives to follow.

Table 1

*Summary of Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym	Age	Church denomination	Paid/nonpaid clergy	Years married	Attended seminary?	Licensed or ordained before or after marrying	Spouse licensed or ordained before or after marriage
Garnet	47	Baptist	Nonpaid	9	Yes	Licensed before marriage	Ordained before marriage
Amethyst	53	Baptist	Paid	1.5	Yes	Ordained before marriage	Ordained before marriage
Diamond	46	Nondenominational	Nonpaid	11	No	Licensed after marriage	Ordained before marriage
Aquamarine	40	Nondenominational	Paid	2	Yes	Ordained before marriage	Ordained before marriage
Emerald	53	United Methodist	Nonpaid	28	Yes	Ordained after marriage	Ordained after marriage
Pearl	54	Baptist	Nonpaid	25	Yes	Ordained after marriage	Ordained before marriage
Ruby	51	Baptist	Paid	12	Yes	Ordained before marriage	Ordained after marriage
Peridot	Over 60	AME	Paid	38	Yes	Ordained before marriage	Ordained after marriage
Sapphire	70	Nondenominational	Nonpaid	47	No	Ordained after marriage	Ordained after marriage
Opal	*	Nondenominational	Paid	34	No	Ordained before marriage	Ordained before marriage
Topaz	Between 60 and 70	AME	Paid	42	Yes	Ordained after marriage	Ordained after marriage
Zircon	48	Pentecostal	Nonpaid	24	No	Ordained after marriage	Ordained after marriage
Onyx	38	United Methodist	Paid	9	Yes	Ordained after marriage	Ordained after marriage

\*Participant Opal did not disclose age.

**Garnet**

Garnet was as a 47-year-old African American licensed minister who had graduated from seminary and identified as Baptist. At the time of the interview, she had been married for 9 years.

**Amethyst**

Amethyst was a 53-year-old African American ordained clergywoman who had graduated from seminary and identified as Baptist. At the time of the interview, she had been married for less than 5 years.

**Diamond**

Diamond identified as a 46-year-old African American licensed clergywoman who had not attended seminary. Diamond identified as a nondenominational minister. At the time of the interview, she had been married for 12 years.

**Aquamarine**

Aquamarine was a 40-year-old African American ordained clergywoman who had graduated from seminary and identified as a nondenominational minister. At the time of the interview, she had been married for less than 5 years.

**Emerald**

Emerald identified as a 53-year-old African American female clergywoman who was licensed and progressing toward seminary graduation. She was a United Methodist minister and had been married for 28 years.

**Pearl**

Pearl identified as a 53-year-old ordained Baptist African American clergy who had graduated from seminary. She had been married for 25 years.

**Ruby**

Ruby identified as a 51-year-old African American clergywoman who had graduated from seminary, was a Baptist minister, and had been married for 12 years.

**Peridot**

Peridot identified as an ordained 60-plus-year-old African American clergywoman who had graduated from seminary, was African Episcopal Methodist clergy, and had been married for 39 years.

**Sapphire**

Sapphire identified as a 70-year-old African American ordained clergywoman who had not attended seminary and was a nondenominational minister who had been married for 47 years.

**Opal**

Opal was an African American ordained clergywoman who did not share her exact age. She had not attended traditional seminary but had attended Bible College. She had been married for 34 years and was a non-denominational minister.

**Topaz**

Topaz identified as an ordained African American clergywoman between 60 and 70 years of age. She had been married for 42 years and was an African Methodist Episcopal minister who had attended seminary.

**Zircon**

Zircon identified as a 48-year-old ordained Pentecostal African American clergywoman who had been married for 24 years. She had not attended seminary.

**Onyx**

Onyx identified as a 38-year-old African clergywoman and U.S. citizen who had been married for 9 years. She was ordained and was a United Methodist minister.

**Recruitment**

Purposeful sampling and snowball sampling were both used to recruit participants as described in Chapter 3. The purpose of these sampling strategies was to recruit participants who could share their lived experiences of marriage and ministry focused on

the research problem. Originally, I sought to recruit 12 participants; I ultimately received 14 inquires. In the end, one participant did not qualify; therefore, the final participant count was 13.

### **Data Collection**

The study's data collection was directed through a phenomenological lens with semistructured questions and a qualitative query approach. I used distinctively selected interview questions (Appendix A) to gather information about the lived experiences of African American female clergy who were licensed or ordained and married to male clergy. The interview questions were established and tied to connect the theoretical framework of adult personal resilience theory and the key components of determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability. Each participant was encouraged to share her personal story.

Each of the 13 participants agreed to a face-to-face personal interview or private phone interview. As a matter of convenience, 10 interviews were conducted via phone, and three interviews were conducted in a private meeting space or reserved office. Each participant received the informed consent and interview questions prior to the scheduled interview. Prior to the start of each interview, I reviewed all pertinent information to ensure a complete understanding of all study guidelines. All participants submitted electronic approval or a signature prior to the start of each interview. The interviews ranged in length from 30 minutes to 1 hour, 35 minutes.

All interviews were recorded using two separate recording devises. Field notes were taken during each interview to capture further details about participant experiences.

I started each interview by thanking the participant for her time and willingness to share her experiences. Opening comments were followed with a brief introduction indicating to each participant in full disclosure that I was a minister who was also married to a male minister. I assured each participant that her story was what was important and the purpose for the interview. Also indicated that counseling resources would be provided for anyone who wanted to seek therapeutic assistance as a result of any uncomfortable feelings arising from the interview (Appendix G).

After transcribing one of the interviews, I determined that using a transcription service would speed up the transcribing process. A follow-up request was submitted to the IRB for approval of the Rev.com transcription service. After submission of the appropriate confidential documentation, approval to have interviews transcribed was granted. After receiving the complete transcription of each interview from Rev.com, I reviewed each transcript prior to submitting it to the participant for member-checking review. Participants were reminded that, to protect their identities, no personally identifiable information would be exposed. Transcribed data were saved in a secure location on my computer and backed up to a thumb drive, which was placed in a confidential locked cabinet in my home. Field notes were saved and placed in the file cabinet as well.

### **Data Management**

Maintaining and organizing notes and data were key steps in managing this research project. I focused on maintaining password-protected files for all data and backed up information on flash drive to further enhance the security of the data. I



recorded field notes in one notebook journal and secured that information in a locked file cabinet in my home. All IRB protocols were adhered to in the data management process.

### **Data Analysis**

My goal for data analysis was to review the data several times to authentically understand the experiences of each participant. In accordance with interpretive phenomenological data analysis as outlined by Moustakas (1994), I remained aware of my own bias (epoche) and used bracketing (setting aside my own judgements and bias), examined the data, and structured the raw data to understand the categories and themes from the participant stories.

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was the approach used to analyze the data. The IPA approach provides the basis for focused insights on participants' experiences of a phenomenon (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Ultimately, I used the Rev.com transcribing service for quick turnaround of each interview transcription. Within 48 hours of receiving the transcription from Rev.com, I reviewed each interview to gain more clarity and establish themes and categories based on participant responses (Saldana, 2015). During the review process, I began coding the data and applied attribute coding, value coding, and in vivo coding to sections of data.

Attribute coding focused on participant demographics such as age, number of years married, church denominational affiliation, and paid or nonpaid status as a minister in the church (Table 1). In addition to the demographic information already stated in Table 1, other noteworthy demographic information included seminary attendance status for participants and their spouses, and licensing and ordination prior to or after marriage.

I used in vivo coding, where participants' own unique words were used to describe their experiences and my field notes helped to support the information gathered through the interviews.

An additional cycle of coding helped me to further classify data by using pattern coding and focused coding. Pattern coding was instrumental in helping me thoroughly examine the original codes and recognize themes established labels (Saldana, 2015).

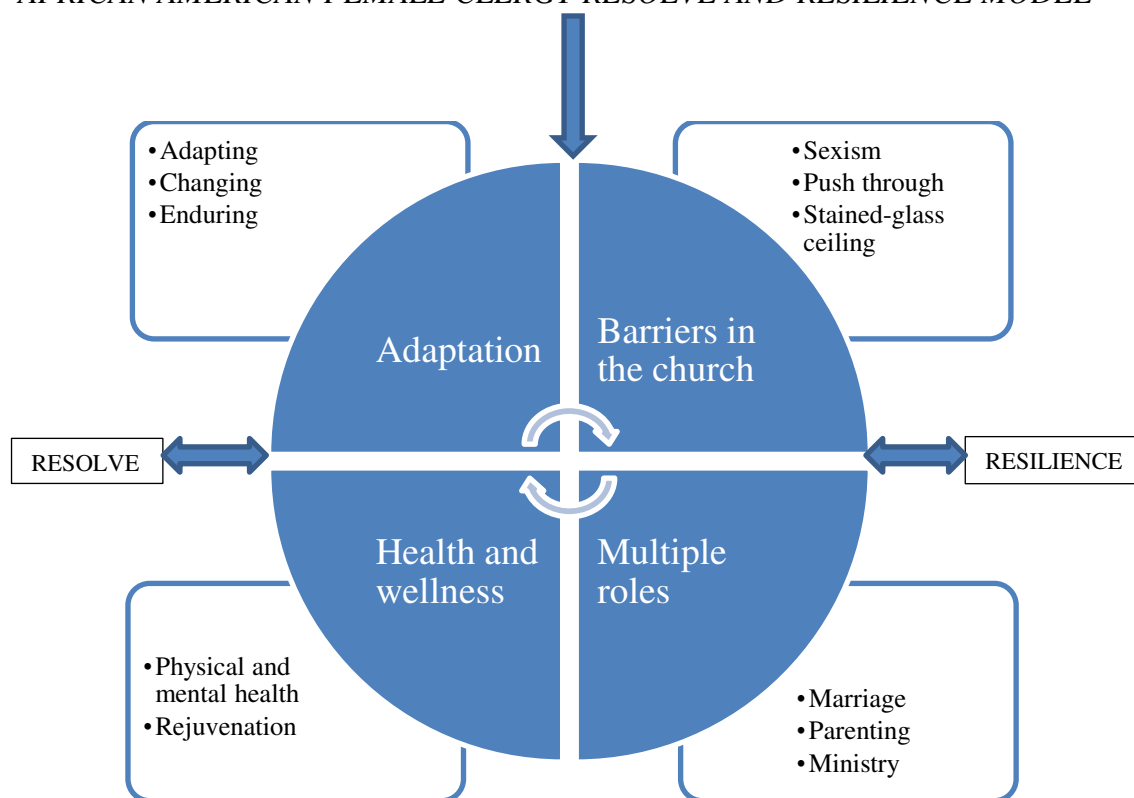
Saldana stated that pattern coding is beneficial because of the alignment of like codes into categories. Additionally, my field notes supported the information gathered through the interviews, and focused coding helped me to pinpoint the most frequently used codes so that categories could be formed.

I paid particular attention to the word associations that were achieved through initially using NVivo. However, I found that using variations of hand coding and using colored index cards was more comprehensive and visually beneficial for recognizing themes and patterns (Saldana, 2014). For example, two questions from my interview guide were focused on African American female clergy rejuvenation and the frequency of doctor visits for physical, emotional, and mental health. The general consensus from these questions was that female clergy engage in multiple activities to rejuvenate and treat doctor visits as a priority in order to maintain themselves and healthy wellbeing. Hence, the broad theme for these questions was *health and wellness*.

I repeated this process for the other questions in my interview guide. This process involved identifying categories that translated into themes and subthemes. I linked 152 codes from the questions and ultimately concluded with two overarching broad categories

(resolve and resilience) and four central themes: adaptation, barriers in the church, multiple roles, and health and wellness. Each of the four themes was further illustrated through subthemes (see Figure 1).

*AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE CLERGY RESOLVE AND RESILIENCE MODEL*

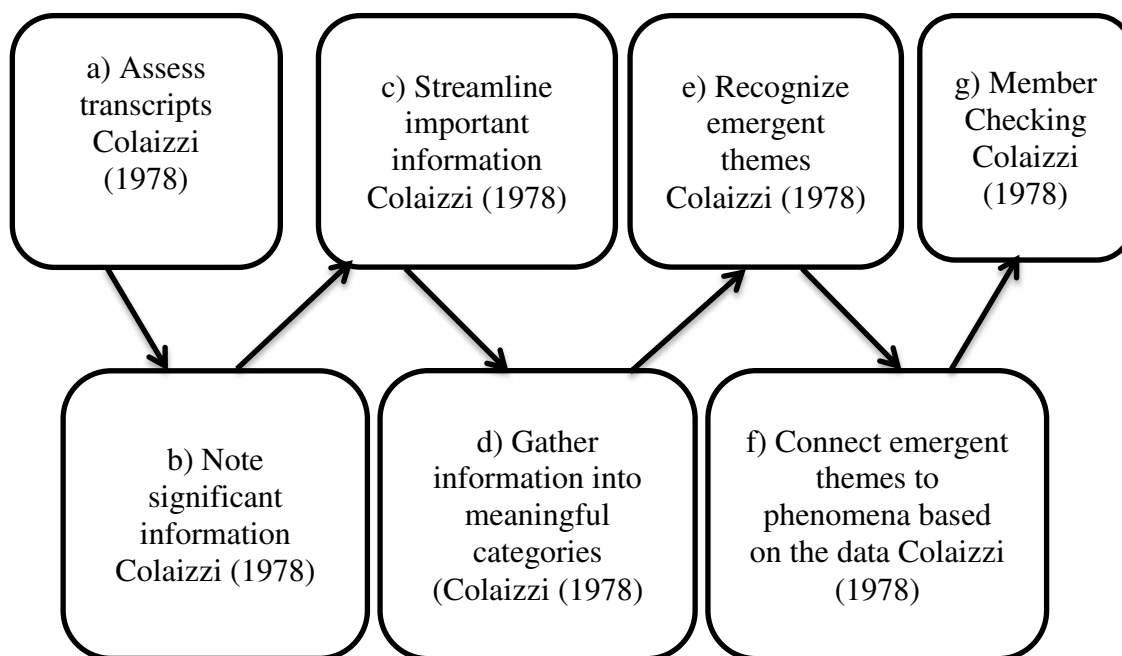


*Figure 2.* Summary of association of emergent themes.

Furthermore, for data triangulation, the Colaizzi (1978) seven-step process was used to ensure a systematic and efficient data analysis process (see Figure 1). This process involved (a) reviewing transcripts multiple times, (b) highlighting relevant statements related to the research problem, (c) simplifying significant statements, (d) grouping information into congruent clusters, (e) developing expressive themes based on the terms and phrases from interviews, (f) identifying phenomenon through data

examination, and (g) member checking. After final member checking and participant follow-up, I reviewed that data again to ensure I was aware of any updates from participants. Upon confirmation of the data I moved forward to recording data on colored notecards to outline patterns and themes.

#### DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS



*Figure 2.* Colaizzi's seven-step data analysis process.

#### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

A systematic approach and a conscious decision to follow the IRB approved procedures helped to ensure trustworthiness. I used a systematic research and procedures approach as outlined in my proposal, engaged in extensive field work by interviewing 13 valid participants, used bracketing and epoche to manage biases, member checking, thorough data analysis, received advise and direction from my chairperson, committee members, cohort group, and peers. In addition, I used data resources from Saldana (2009,

2015), Rubin & Rubin (2012), and Maxwell (2013) and conducted field work for two months from March – May. The member checking process included reviewing information and paraphrasing to ensure a clear understanding during each interview and seeking additional clarification through email or phone contact with participants once the interviews were transcribed. I sought feedback from other doctoral students for feedback on data analysis and I contacted my chairperson for additional feedback at various times during the dissertation process.

### **Transferability, Dependability, Confirmability**

Achieving transferability was accomplished by providing detailed accounts of the participant's stories to support my analysis of the data. I gathered an in depth understanding of the participant experiences through the interview process. To ensure the integrity and authenticity of the participants I used in vivo coding, semi-structured interviews, which provided support for interviews that, reflected the participant's personal experiences while reducing the potential for bias. Maxwell (2013) suggested that member checking adds a robust assurance for dependability. I verified data to ensure a thorough understanding of the interviewee's experiences and perspective during transcription. Finally, confirmability was accomplished by following the process and procedures outlined in the IRB protocol.

### **Results**

This study was designed to examine the lived experiences of licensed or ordained African American female clergy married to male clergy. The 13 participants in the study shared their experiences in ministry and marriage. There were 14 interviews conducted

but one participant had to be eliminated because she did not meet the licensed or ordained criteria of the study. From the data collected two broad categories (Resolve and Resilience) and four central themes emerged which included (a) Adaption (b) Barriers in the Church, (c) Multiple Roles, and (d) Health and Wellness. Subthemes which further materialized to extend the findings discovered within the data were also presented (see Figure 1).

### **Adaptation**

**Adapting and changing.** Participants communicated that being ministers impacted how they had to adapt, change, and endure. Some of the changes were a reflection of specific personal challenges and other changes were the result of the church environment and the congregation. Participants highlighted experiences of endurance that ultimately caused them to change while other experiences cause them to adapt. For example, Emerald stated,

I had to change my vernacular. I had to change my verbiage. I had to change my approach. I had to tone down a whole lot because church work is volunteer work. I had to change and get a little softer and gentle with congregants. Some folks here say, "Oh, you're just so bossy." I just think I have to do it because I don't want to get pushed over.

Having been in ministry for many years, Emerald had come to understand how to successfully relate to the congregation. She was not a part of the official paid staff but held leadership roles in the women's ministry and with the children's ministry within the church that her husband pastored.

Pearl had a different perspective on adapting and changing in ministry:

I had to accept that people will disappoint you. I've come to understand that the extent to which we all as individuals are probably more frail and capable of disappointing than we might even realize, because I've seen so much, I've seen so many people be disappointed or disappointing within the church world, it hasn't changed, [but] it has changed my perspective, or rather maybe it's matured my perspective or what I expect of people. I think I'm at a point in ministry where I now accept people for who they are and where they are.

Diamond's adaptations and changes were focused on obedience to God. She relayed that she had to "relinquish control."

I've just found that when I submit to Him and I trust the process and the way He's leading me, things go well. And I've had to learn how to make those adjustments."

Sapphire revealed that when it came to adapting and changing in ministry, she had to adapt a lot of her opinions, the way she thought it was and it should be.

Opal explained that she was genuine as it related to her stance in ministry. She goes on to state:

"I'm just me. You know, when we first started in ministry people would tell us, or tell me as a woman, how I should look, how I should dress, what I should be like in ministry, but I've never adopted those things. I said the only effective way that I could be in ministry was really to be me. I find myself just being me that people can appreciate who I am and some of them are free to be themselves, as well because they see the freedom that I have in being me.

Ruby expressed that she “learned how to serve her congregation through trial and tribulation,” recalling:

In a sermon several years ago, I have never forgotten it. When [the minister] talked about David and Saul, and how David could have killed Saul, but he knew God wouldn't have wanted that. So, he kept serving Saul, and in many instances, he had to duck, because he talked about, he's throwing javelins at him, he's threatening his life, and [the Preacher] said, David had to duck and keep on serving.

Additionally, Peridot shared that she “had to learn to adjust [her] schedule” without feeling guilty about not being in the office every day. Topaz gave testimony about learning how not to take it personally when people leave the church. Topaz further stated:

You deal with what you have. You grieve a little bit but then you move on, because people are going to leave you, period. They get mad about stuff and you don't know where they are, so those kinds of things had really impacted me a lot earlier on. I think if I had to change anything, it would be my own response to certain things in ministry.

On a personal note Onyx shared that she “tried to create [her] own space and rhythm in ministry and Zircon changed by “using more technology to engage members in Bible study.” She further stated:

So on two Wednesdays of the month; we do cyber Wednesdays which means that we are a faith supply. And so far it is working out wonderfully. We have people



that are not members or people that just click on and are being blessed by the Word of God that's being taught.

**Enduring.** Adding to adaptation and change, participants were also asked about “endurance in ministry” experiences. The specific question was as follows: describe what you have had to endure as an African American clergywoman. One participant, Amethyst, out of 13 participants stated that she had “more joy than endurance’s.” Different responses were shared by other participants. Specifically, four participants, Aquamarine, Emerald, Peridot, and Opal expressed that they “endured sexism,” two others, Onyx and Ruby experienced “tensions and feelings of being devalued,” while other individuals stated being “antagonized, betrayed, overlooked, underpaid, overworked, and experienced racism.” Their precise views on endurance are reflected in their own words below:

Onyx stated that “it’s a constant, constant struggle of really owning and claiming my own voice and how I deliver it and how God has called me to speak is a tension I just find myself in all the time.” Onyx recounted how difficult it was to serve her congregation because of racial tensions. She also shared the stress she experienced in her most recent assignment:

I’ve experienced some backlash about my stance on social justice concerns and a fragment of the congregation who have not been welcoming of me and who I am because of what they understand my positions to be on social justice issues.

Other participants shared different experiences about their strength through endurance Ruby expressed a challenging time of endurance: “I think being overlooked, or

feeling sometimes having a sense of, Am I really valued? Do you really know the contribution that I make? If you don't, then why am I here?"

Zircon's account of how she endured caused her to reflect and she "remembered pushing through doubts that caused her to question herself and recalls thinking maybe I'm not called." Zircon doubted herself based on experience with church members and leadership. Likewise, in my interview with Ruby, she admitted feelings of "being overlooked or sometimes feeling a sense of, "Am I really valued?" Emerald explained that the experience of being underpaid was all too real. For example, Emerald stated that she had speaking engagements, and just loved doing it, "but you go somewhere and they give you a check for \$100 but then your husband [goes] to the same church, and they paid him \$500 a night." These kinds of practices happened more often than not in her ministry experience.

Peridot was firm in her expression of endurance. For her the enduring was twofold and ongoing:

Racism and sexism, they go hand-in-hand with us as a people in the Black church. We are a hurting people. I cannot be coming out being angry because of how you feel about me. I have to take a high road. I have a higher calling. I have a responsibility because God called me to do his work in ministry.

Aquamarine conveyed that in her years in a church before she was married she was the only female clergyperson. She recalls a particular time of being scrutinized: "And so here I am, this young, single woman in this pulpit full of men. So everything was criticized, from how I dressed to how I acted, you know, everything."

And similar to Aquamarine being scrutinized, Garnet stated that a particular congregant was regularly and “publicly antagonistic with her.” Furthermore, Pearl spoke about being a workaholic and how the overdrive at work impacted every other part of her life. Pearl stated:

My personality trait had always been loyalty, diligence, don't fail, get it all done, and so I basically became a workaholic. I allowed a lot to be put on my desk that I was really doing at least two jobs and that became difficult.

Pearl finally realized that she had to make a change and ultimately she left per post and took on similar assignment with another ministry that had more work-life balance.

Diamond shared a time of endurance when she was new to her church:

I joined church and they did not have an active women's ministry. I was approached. I don't think I had been a member maybe for only about three months and I was approached by my Pastor and my first lady at that time and was asked if I would lead the women's ministry. I didn't feel anything in my spirit that I shouldn't and I didn't want to arouse a fear of doing something like that would stop me if that's what God wanted me to do. At some point I decided we needed to raise some money, so we did yard sales, things of that nature. I would just take my own money and I would furnish breakfast, just anything just to thank people for their time on a Saturday morning for coming. I had to pretty much endure that for months. I really questioned myself. Am I doing the right thing here? Nobody's really participating and then all of a sudden, it was just like the floodgates opened and women started coming.

Sapphire was motivated when she thought of her enduring experiences in ministry. There were doubters and people who thought they had authority to dictate what she was called to do in ministry. She shared how she responded to the doubters. Sapphire stated that she was:

Basically being told what I couldn't do. You can't do that. But whenever somebody tells me what I can't do as it pertains to the Lord, it stirs up a spiritual indignation in me. My heels dig in, and I will talk to my husband and say, they said I couldn't do this, but the word of God says I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Opal recounted enduring being judged based on the color of her dress:

I've met Pastor's and men who think women shouldn't wear red. I didn't understand that, it was ridiculous but he didn't even speak to us because of that. It's amazing but after you minister and after you preach they want to be your best friend.

### **Barriers in the Church**

#### **Sexism and the stained-glass ceiling.**

Two out of 13 participants, Onyx and Sapphire, expressed beneath the surface, overt, or hidden negative agendas because of their gender in male dominated ministry positions. Another two participants, Garnet and Emerald, conveyed that their focus in ministry was in areas where men didn't focus their attention such as the women's ministry or children's ministry; hence, no challenges were apparent. For example, Garnet said, "I think because my focus has been music, women's ministry, and children's

ministry, I haven't had to come up against that [sexism in the church] because usually those [ministries] are dominated by women.”

Four participants, namely Amethyst, Diamond, Opal, and Topaz expressed being accepted as female clergy without regard for their gender. For example, Diamond conveyed her sentiments about male clergy and their positions on women in ministry: “I can see where they're really a lot more open to women going forward in ministry and they can actually receive and they're totally comfortable receiving from women.” Opal stated that her previous and current experiences with sexism were different indicating somewhat of an evolution of sorts in her ministry:

Not as much as the past in starting ministry. It's more accepted now. When we started ministry, again, we both started Pastoring together. I would go places and they would call him Pastor and they would call me Sister. But that's changed, you know. I don't experience a whole lot of that anymore. Topaz also expressed little personal exposure to sexism or glass ceiling experiences within her personal ministry:

Well, for me it has been okay. Clearly there have been women and men in the church who have been resistant to my leadership, but that's very much more uncommon than common. Because my evolution into the position was so gradual, and people became very comfortable with me and they saw the work that I had done, I think that most people were comfortable. The AME church is very comfortable with female preachers, unlike the Baptist church, and I've heard that some of the brothers say that the women's ministry dominates and gets all of the attention and all of that, but I think they're okay.

However, there was also recognition by others of the same four participants that the stained glass ceiling and inequity that women encounter in the church does exist. To that end, Amethyst articulated a different view based on her experience regarding male verses female clergy:

I think male ego is real, you know. Sometimes I've read articles about the glass ceiling and the glass ceiling being there and just some of the things that women experience, like pay inequity and those kinds of things that men don't always have to deal with. I know women, our checks, [and] our honorarium are often less than what they pay a man. There is a glass ceiling. We can look around and see that and I appreciate those who are fighting those battles. I'll join in to a degree, as much as I can to fight them as well or to make sure that equities are in place, but this is mysterious stuff. It's God's work.

Furthermore, five participants which included Aquamarine, Pearl, Ruby, Peridot, and Sapphire voiced having problems with sexism within their ministry setting. Pearl reflected on the first church she served and the barrier she faced in that assignment with some congregants:

The first church where I served I was their first female Assistant Pastor and that was a big hullabaloo there, but the Pastor supported me and the congregation... most of the congregation voted for me. There was one person who had an issue with me being a woman.

Pearl's prospective on her experiences of witnessing sexism goes beyond the church and includes an association with religious institutions connected to the church. She specifically stated:

I could also talk about sexism...they [male clergy] claim not to have anything against women, but they really don't seek the call of the Senior Pastors. I would say this, as a woman in ministry; I have witnessed sexism in both the institution [seminary/higher education] and in the church.

Rudy's experience revealed what she saw happen to other clergywomen:

"I've seen now two female women who are exiting. They were both interested in the Pastor position. They were denied, although they were thanked for showing an interest."

Emerald posed a stance similar to that of Garnet. While they believe that sexism exists in the church, they see less personally because their ministry passions are less appealing to male clergy which shields them from direct competition or threat. Emerald declares:

I just think because the stuff I do, the men don't want to do. They all want an assignment with a pulpit. I haven't had to fight or joust for what I love to do because it's not what they love to do.

While Zircon stated, "The only pushback I had is from people that are not from our church because I believe a lot of Christians still struggle with women in ministry, and they struggle with the word "Pastor" being attached to a woman's name."

Onyx conveyed that sexism exists but it has not always been obvious and in fact has often been overt. She further stated, "I think [sexist actions] are probably beneath the

surface, but no one has like overtly said to me, I'm not listening to anything you're saying because you're a woman."

In contrast, Peridot was emphatic about experience with sexism in the church. She stated succinctly that "sexism is alive and well in the church." And Sapphire recounted occasions where she felt a lack of respect: "There were times that there was just disrespect. They wouldn't call me by my title. They'd call me just ... like, how you doing sister? And they would emphasize the sister."

**Pushing through.** Four of the 13 participants responded similarly to the question about having the fortitude to push through as they did to the question on endurance in their ministry. For example, Peridot said:

My [issue] to push through really [was] sexism. That's a reality, and it's really no fault of ours [in terms] of the history of the country and what it's done to us that it is not just an individual's opinion.

According to Pearl, being overlooked and being overworked were experiences she referenced in terms of having to push through within her ministry. "My workload that I had there [at the church] was just completely insane. I had to push through the amount of work that I was doing there and the things that I was trying to accomplish."

Furthermore, Ruby shared her thoughts: "I think being overlooked or feeling sometimes having a sense of, am I really valued? Do you really know the contribution that I make?" Other responses about having to push through were different. In brief, Emerald shared that she had to push through forgiveness.



Another participant, Sapphire spoke about overcoming negative words from others about what she could not do; stating that:

A lot of people told me things that I could not do. And I had to endure that since the inception of the ministry that we had since I accepted the call to say yes, God, I will do this. One congregant asserted that [he] didn't believe in women preachers. I said, well can I tell you something, sir? I don't believe in men preaching, either. But I believe in anybody doing what God has called them to do.

Topaz also asserted her resolve to push through the thoughts of others stating: “I feel I had to [push through getting] up out of the bed to come to church and face people, to trust God, because I just didn't know.” Likewise, Zircon shared that “[she] had to push through in the beginning and the look from some females that did not think [she] deserved or was capable of being Co-Pastor.” While Onyx expressed her ministry struggle by sharing that, “people have [wanted] to silence my voice. Showing up on Sunday and being present and not letting the minority voices overwhelm me and drown me in the midst of this.”

And yet another participant, Opal, spoke about having the personnel and financial resources to fulfill the vision that God had given to her. Specifically, she declared:

I think the challenges that we may have is when God gives us a vision or gives us a project or something to do that he has us to do in ministry; whether it's starting a new church or building a new building, or renovating something...just having all the personnel and the resources that we need to accomplish that which He's called us to do.

Garnet affirmed a slightly different scenario stating:

I'm bumping into is a large structure that's been in place for a while that is growing well and is working very well. Their willingness to do things a little bit differently has been my point of [challenge] to push through.

Diamond had challenges with a congregant who tried to take advantage of her position in the church. Diamond shared that "One of our members who just basically usurped the process and tried to maybe assert themselves in areas that were considered out of order." As a result Diamond spoke about having to take action to address the issue.

Aquamarine shared that she and her husband had a physical trial to overcome regarding their Bible study meeting venue. She specifically stated: "I think the biggest one is our location. We struggled....we had to quickly find a location."

### **Health and Wellness**

Walther, Proeschold-Bell, Benjamin-Neelon, Adipo and Kamaara, (2015) suggested in their study that clergy health in the United States was "cause for alarm" (p. 2236). Other studies conducted highlighted clergy mental health as an important part of clergy well-being (Carroll 2006; Doolittle 2010; Schaefer & Jacobsen, 2009).

Participants in this study shared their experiences of physical and mental health and how they replenish and rejuvenate as a way to engage in self-care. Ten out of 13 participants said they visited their doctor for an annual physical exam. Two interviewees, Garnet and Zircon only visited a doctor when they were sick or not feeling well. And one participant, Onyx, previously had an annual physical but has not gone for an annual physical in the past two years. In addition, four of the 13 participants, Amethyst, Diamond, Emerald,

and Ruby walk to rejuvenate. Two participants, Emerald and Sapphire listen to music as a part of the routine to rejuvenate. Three participants, Diamond, Aquamarine, and Opal go to the gym and workout regularly to relieve stress and invigorate themselves.

Other participants shared different combinations of activities to renew and engage in self-care such as traveling, getting massages, going to the beach, studying the Bible, meditating, balancing schedules, going to women's conferences, casual reading, going to the spa, getting regular manicure and pedicure treatments, going to the movies, annual retreats, taking sabbaticals and retreating to realign with God. Each participant expressed how she takes care of her physical health and some participants shared how they care for their mental health as well. Participants shared different ways that they revive which was an important part of self-care.

Garnet talked about self-care being important but admitted that she wanted to improve in this area. She said in reference to seeing a doctor regularly "I should, but I don't. I made a vow to do more this year, and I've already had a couple of standard appointments, I'm supposed to have, quarterly appointments, and annual checkups." And Onyx also stated:

I have not been to the doctor probably in two years and that was since having our last daughter; prior to that I was going for annual physicals. This last year has just kind of, it has not been a priority for me I would say.

Amethyst emphasized the importance of physical and emotional caring for her health. For example, she stated:

There was a time when I did not have health insurance and there were times when I was in and out of health insurance. And so, I wasn't as faithful to my doctor's visits and all of that, but I am up to date. I am current thankfully and so, yeah, I get an annual physical and do my mammo's and all of that and still have some work to do too with teeth and eyes, which I'm working on as well. I also have seen in the past a therapist and I recommend that for every clergy person. Now, I haven't done that in a very long time, but I'm not adverse to it. I just haven't taken the time to do that, but I think it's critical for our own sanity and well-being and for the wholeness of ministering to other people who are so broken that whatever we can do to make ourselves whole, then that's a good thing to do to keep ourselves whole.

On the other hand, Zircon articulated:

I see a doctor when I'm not well. I do take high blood pressure pills, and that's part of my family history, medical history. But I don't see a doctor regarding medical or mental on a regular basis and he doesn't either. We do go every six months for check-ups and things of that nature. But neither one of us are under a doctor's care.

Diamond shared her thoughts and routine regarding doctor visits and getting rest each day:

We both, well I do, and we both do as a couple. We actually have the same doctor. This is our primary care physician for our wellness visit once a year. We always like to do it in the beginning of the year. Additionally, I'm pretty good

about getting rest. I'm usually in the bed between 9:30 and 10:00 at night because I'm usually up around 4:00, 4:30 in the morning. We go to the gym and have devotion in the morning so I have to go to bed at night, because I'm just not a night person.

And Topaz revealed that she followed through with doctor visits and makes her health care a priority. Relating to seeing her doctors she stated that she has many of them. "Yes, I have primary care and orthopedic and gastroenterologist and gynecologist. Yeah, I have everything." Peridot shared that she takes her health seriously, she said:

I have a doctor that is a member of the church if anything is not right, if I'm not feeling well, I immediately will call. Additionally, I will stay home and, if I feel tired or I feel like I need to pull back, I pull back. I'm not in the office every day."

Aquamarine expressed that she sees her primary doctor every year:

"I do my annual pap smear, my annual visits. Outside of that I'm healthy and so there's really no need. I'm not on any medication. We try to take care of our health; I take care of myself from a health standpoint on a regular basis.

Aquamarine said that to rejuvenate [she] goes to get [her] nails done at least twice a month. That's the one thing [she did] for [herself was] to keep [her] hands looking nice. She shared further:

I use that time to veg out, kind of zone out, be in my happy place. I try to get a pedicure once a month. I get my nails done every other week and I try to get a pedicure once a month, and that is me time.

According to Emerald:

Every September, I see all my doctors. The first week, I see my gynecologist. The second week, I do my mammography. The third week, I see my general practitioner. The fourth week in September, I normally see my pulmonary. So my physical health, every year in September, that's my month for my health, because that's my birthday month. As far as counseling, speaking of emotional health, mental health, [I would have to say] no. I don't take care of mental health and, probably, the reason why is, because you want to find somebody when you take them on that your information is confidential. [Additionally], there is stigma attached [to] counseling.

### **Multiple Roles**

**Marriage, parenting, and ministry.** Participants shared that their lives revolved around the multiple roles they played. As married clergy who are also parents, managing the numerous responsibilities became a way of life. Marriage, parenting, and ministry were core areas the participants talked about being significant in their lives. For example, five of the 13 participants mentioned setting boundaries as a part of their strategy to manage multiple roles. As it related to children, 10 out of 13 participants had biological children and three of the participants had step-children or played a mothering role similar to participants with biological children. Connected specifically to the children, comments from participants included phrases such as, “church helped them [the children], they were inspired, they adapted well, sometimes difficult, challenging, positive, grounded in faith, the children loved the ministry. Three participants stated that planning their schedules so that the most important agenda items get accomplished first is how they managed

multiple roles. Similarly, ministry and marriage successfully coexist for four of the participants because of setting priorities.

Additionally, being married and both she and her spouse being clergy impacted her personal and professional functioning. The clergywomen shared in their own words how ministry impacted their marital relationships.

For example, Garnet stated that “boundaries, self-care, and prayer are the core and seeking the Lord to be a buffer of peace in all things” are most important as she manages her multiple roles. “Being a mother, wife, and minister Garnet stated:

You do your best to meet in the middle. And one thing that I'm learning is boundaries, self-care, and at the core of each of those is prayer and seeking the Lord to be a buffer of peace in the midst of all the other things spilling around.

She also added that her children are a part of the essence of her world. As it relates to how her children are impacted by the dual clergy roles of both parents, she responded by adding:

Going to church every Sunday is part of our normal routine. They, [the children,] talk about God and learn about God in school. And so it's just reinforced at home. So I think it's helped them in that way. It hasn't gotten to a point where I feel like it's been intrusive or that they've been neglected or felt abandoned, by us because of ministry.

Also, Garnet shared that for her and her husband related to marriage, having a more integrated approach to their prayer life as a couple would be ideal; while related to communicating with each other she stated, “It’s something that's improving, still has a

ways to go. I think that's normal.” She also shared that socially she and her husband tend to hang out more with other clergy, or with other friends that are in church, that are, serious about their relationship with God. Furthermore, Garnet shared that: “Getting my priorities from the Lord and not from other places [puts me] in a place right now where I feel like family and ministry is really where my energy and focus is.”

Onyx shared her beliefs about the multiple roles she embraces and stated:

Oftentimes I tell people that, I guess I am called, God has called me to this work, but my call is also to be a mother and to be a wife. It's dual in nature, so it's not just I'm called to the work of the church and that should take up all of my time, but there's also these other parts of me that require my time and attention as well.

Again, I think that goes back to setting healthy boundaries with your congregations and letting them know that your family is as important that God has given you to family to care for as well and they cannot be second to the work of the church. For me the church has been around for over 2000 years, the church will continue when I am gone, but I am one mother and I am one wife. I am not going to prioritize the church's needs over my family's needs. I will do the work that is required of me, but also I need to be present and available for my children and also my spouse. So again, I think it's more setting clear boundaries, letting the congregation know that my call is twofold, not just I'm called to be a pastor.

Furthermore, as it relates to the ministry Onyx reflected on a particular experience and stated:



Community often does not favor female clergy, but it was very interesting for them to consider me to be their first clergy woman. What I experienced in that setting was more kind of ageism where they looked at me more as a child than as someone who was in this role, like authoritative role as a leader in that sense. That perspective was more, oh, we are helping her along the way and we are doing for her. We're kind of helping to uplift her in her career and put her on the right path. It was some of those connotations in that setting.

Onyx went on to explain that while ministry and marriage coexist in her household, communicating with her spouse was important to their relationship: "I would say [my spouse and I] usually talk about decisions, we make decisions together. We talk through things together. A lot of it is conversational."

These conversations included their children and how Onyx and her husband handled the impact of both mom and dad being ministers. She further shared:

We have actually done a good job of trying to share both of our time with them. We're both in different denominations; we're affiliated with different denominations. That meant that we worshiped in separate churches on Sunday, so when the children got old enough we would take turns every other Sunday taking them to worship with us. They seemed okay with it, enjoyed spending time at mommy's church and also spending time at daddy's church.

Additionally, about their social life Onyx articulated:

I think [our social life] has been nonexistent. We don't go out often. I mean outside of church circles and maybe work related circles, there's not much that we

do. We're not hanging out with friends every weekend; we're not going on dates every week. Most of our married life together has been focused on our work in the church and also raising our children because we both kind of graduated from seminary, got married, and then had children. So everything was back to back to back and didn't really have any rhythm to establishing with ourselves and our married life together. Most of that rhythm has been dictated by children and then work.

Onyx recognized that marriage, ministry, and parenting are the prominent roles that represent her life.

Topaz described how she and her husband handled their children's reality of being double Preacher's kids also known as PK's:

We have really made a concerted effort to maintain a level of normalcy and not make a whole lot of demands on [the children]. As they were growing up, they loved the church and loved coming. When they went away to college and came back, they were a little bit more distant and a little bit more their own people, and while they are still involved in the church, I've never imposed. We've never imposed on them what you have to do because the people are watching. I tried my best not to ever use that with them.

Topaz recognized that roles have changed over time but she continued to handle multiple roles. She stated:

It's a lot of work. In another season of our lives, our children are all grown and out of the home, but we now care for our parents. They live with us. I am my mom's

caretaker, so that's a lot of responsibility. We can't do it by ourselves. There are people that assist us and help us to do what we are called to do. I have a schedule. I really have priorities; I set priorities in my life. Put things in position and have a schedule of what I do.

As it relates to her marriage Topaz also revealed that they have “always been pretty open and amenable. Not a whole lot of secrets. If we failed to communicate, it wasn't that we were trying to keep things. It was just because sometimes we forgot to say things.” Topaz goes on to say:

“We've always worked to try to keep marriage and family first in the midst of building institutions and churches and everything. And socially, for ourselves, we do what we do. We traveled quite a bit. We've always been conscious of taking our time to rest and do vacations, and that's when we really kind of unwind, and we still do that. We both are homebodies to some degree, but we do what we do. We've always worked to try to keep marriage and family first in the midst of building institutions and churches and everything.”

Topaz believed that ministry and marriage coexist in her household because:

We are a ministry family and they've embraced it. As much as their level of maturity will allow, they embraced the fact that we're all called to be ministers. We run our sermons by our kids; they're the first people to hear our sermons every week.

Aquamarine admitted that the family has multiple roles in the church and she in particular recognized her many roles including wife, mother, and Pastor. Pearl spoke lovingly about her kids and their journey as “double PK’s”:

I think it's been a positive influence on them. I'm happy to say I feel that they're spiritually formed, in a healthy way. They're all professing Christians and have a sense of spirituality and a relationship with God, and so yeah, they don't go around saying praise the Lord all the time, but the essence of their understanding of life and how they should live it, and how they relate to people has everything to do with the Gospel. I think our relationship as a clergy couple, all the time that they've spent in religious setting, and in talking about God, I think it's a benefit to them. I think they could possibly be further along than most of their friends who haven't had the benefit of so much time discussing theology and God and church. Moreover, Pearl confessed, “Sometimes not so well at all” when sharing her personal experiences about the multiple roles she embraced:

“I've realized the world is not going to stop if I don't do something as well as I had wanted it to go so I'm just like, okay, well, tomorrow is another day, keep it moving. I do feel like I have been very consciences about my kids. That's been the most important thing to me. I do what I know I need to be doing in ministry and beyond that I really just try to pour all my effort, energy, and time in to my kids.”

Beyond the kids, Pearl shared that she and her husband have a strong bond. She specifically shared how they communicate with each other, how ministry impacts their

relationship, and she described their social life as husband and wife while being dual ministers:

We believe in transparency. So we are very open with each other, and we think one way to avoid conflict is to be honest in the little things before they become the big things. [My husband] grew up with a very healthy sense of "women can do anything," and women can definitely be Pastors and lead a church and be bishops, and so forth. So he has always seen as his role to support, not just support but to be an advocate for women in ministry. And socially, because so much of our ministry has intersected with a large population of people that gave us very rich social life, many of those persons became our best friends, close friends, and colleagues. And because we were both in ministry, we had a lot of the same friends, which was awesome. We had some different friends, but a lot of our friends were the same friends. So yeah, it was very positive.

Aquamarine articulated how her children have adjusted through the many changes and growth phases of her and her husband's ministry:

I think our kids have adapted very well. Aside from having to deal with the whole blended family piece. And so, aside from just having to blend a life, because they were all in that coming of age phase, and us all trying to meld as a family, on top of that my husband and I launched a ministry together. So we're planting a church, merging a family, all at the same time. But believe it or not, our children are very well-grounded. They were our first members.

Aquamarine shared how she and her spouse communicated and related to each other as a dual clergy couple and how the coexistence of ministry and marriage played out in the lives. She added how she focused on being organized and making sure she safeguarded she and her spouse's special time together:

We're pretty direct, but we take a while to get there. We say what needs to be said and then we go back into our respective corners and deal with whatever that is, and then we come back together and somehow it works. [Additionally], I think in being able to coexist in ministry it is about being able to discern what is needed but it's being willing to be humble enough to admit when you need the other person's help. I think it helps that we minister together, but in some ways it also forces us to deal with stuff, because you can't have lingering bitterness and then try to get up in front of people and talk about God's forgiveness and God's love, if you're not exercising it yourself. [She went on to explain:] My marriage, my family is my first ministry. There are some things that are non-negotiable. Friday nights are me and my husband's date night, it's non-negotiable.

She also stressed that her social life and [her] ministry life [were] really intertwined; they intersect one another at so many different places.

Diamond shared:

For the most part the impact of ministry on my marriage [has] been positive, but there have been times when it's been a little rough. We had to go through the transition starting off as traditional Pastor and first lady and with people and we had to go through all of the nuances of running a ministry and the different groups

of people. Your marriage really gets tested when you are serving full-time in that type of capacity when you have a congregation.

When describing how she and her spouse communicate with each other, her children, and the impact of ministry on her marriage, Diamond declared:

We pretty much talk about everything. We try to mutually decide on things together so it's kind of like a shared governance of our home and our affairs. We just try to keep things in proper order and outside of ministry, we are a couple. As it relates to the kids, we could not have been more pleased. The children actually just said they were very inspired. Just as a result of that exposure to the ministry and that's something that we're very, very proud of, that they choose to continue to follow Him on their own.

As it relates to marriage, parenting and ministry in general, Diamond shared:

There are times where I feel overwhelmed because I'm a human being and there's only 24 hours in a day. There might be some things that I may be called upon to do, but I can't always do them at the expense of something else that's really important like school or my job, where I can't get those things done because right now, those things take priority. And in terms of the mom and the wife piece, the kids, for us now they're young adults and we're empty nesters, so it's a different type of relationship.

Emerald spoke about the coexistence of marriage and ministry, her experiences as a mother, and ministry impact on her and her family. She articulated that “marriage and ministry are really intertwined, to me. You can't have one without the other with us.

They've grown together". She also recognized that sometimes, [her] husband wasn't able to be at different events for their children. As it related to marriage, including social life, Emerald admitted:

Our social life has suffered during the years. But we've managed. We just manage. It's affected greatly. Especially when you've got a husband that's got a church spirit. He just wants to be at church. We're not able to do things like go to the outdoor concert or go somewhere for a weekend just with each other. [In general I have to remember, I have] a family; we have way more to do than men, I'm telling you. Way more to do. It just affects your entire life because you can go from one extreme in one day to something else in another day.

Ruby shared the joy of ministry. She talked about ministering to women and setting a boundary related to marriage and ministry for herself:

I encourage other women in ministry, and I say this for instance. I made it real clear when I was hired at this church. It was such a demanding place to work, and I knew who I was working for. Again, requires a lot of your time and attention, that my first priority and my first ministry was my marriage, everything else is secondary.

Ruby also shared how she felt about her marriage while recognizing the ministry impact on their social life, how they communicate as a couple, and how ministry impacted their children:

A lot of the things we end up doing socially are church related, or ministry related. Every now and then we may get out to a movie. That's one of the



challenges. That's one of the things that I've been trying to encourage him; that we have to be very intentional about having down-time away from it always surrounding church. That's something we just need to do a better job about.

Related to communicating with her spouse Ruby stated: "I guess it depends on the conversation. Sometimes it can be very challenging, depending on what it is, because you've got to pull things out of him. Some days we do better than others."

Regarding her step-children who did not reside with she and her husband Ruby stated:

I think, in some instances, for them growing up, they felt like the church, not me per se, but the church kept their father away from them. The church and preparation for ministry [impacted their relationship]. In some regards, it did not serve his relationship well; if anything, he was trying to get them engaged more in church and in a relationship with God. Even though he was setting a good example for them, as opposed to causing possibly a rift between them and God, [the kids did not see it that way].

Peridot had a special glow when she talked about her family, including her relationship with her husband and her children. She provided insight on her marital relationship, communicating with her spouse, and managing her multiple roles:

We are communicators and so we talk a lot. He's a historian, so he's analytical.

We have good conversation. I love being a mother and when I come home, I'm a wife and mother. I needed the Lord to give me clarity of how to do this. The Lord said very clear to me, "You listen to me. I will tell you what to do. I will tell you

what not to do. I will tell you when to go. I will tell you when not to go. And socially, we like to go to movies and have a lot of conversation about the movie. We like thinking movies, movies that have meaning, and we love to go to dinner and we love to travel, and we take breaks and travel together. One of the things that we, on the very front end of our team ministry was that you work hard in not bringing church home.

Sapphire shared her experiences with her children and how she coexisted between her marriage and ministry:

Our children learned faith through watching us walk with the Lord, and they are grounded, and most of them are in ministry. As a matter of fact, our youngest son pastors the church that we pastored for 29 years. He's doing an excellent job, and now we are his overseers. And then women have a double role because if they're in ministry and have a marriage as well, they've got their family to take care of, and then they've got Jesus to take care of. You cannot be effective in ministry and you don't take care of your household. I've learned how to plan and implement. I've learned how to focus on what is the most important at any particular time for what it is that I'm doing. So I've had to learn how to balance, I guess is the word I'm looking for. Balance family and balance ministry. And all the time it's not very easy, but it's doable.

Sapphire talked about the close connection that she maintained with her husband. She admitted that they do just about everything together and have a solid relationship that includes strong communication:

Our social life is good, most of [what we] do socially is, going to dinner, or take in a movie every now and then. We speak to each other with admiration and our communication is very civil. We've learned how to come together and respect one another. And we have learned how to let each have their time speaking or listening. [We learned] that you can't be all church and no family or all family and no church. It must be a balance there. When people get married and [you're] clergy together, you have to understand that before there was a church, there was a family. Opal was clear on her stance as a wife no matter the location or circumstance, she stated:

I'm his wife at home and I'm his wife at church. That doesn't change even though we're both Pastors. I'm submitted to him as a wife and I'm submitted to him as a Pastor co-pastoring with him. We both pray about it and he's very respectful of my opinion and my decision concerning something and I just as much as him. I lean toward whatever he felt like God is calling him to do, us to do in ministry or where our family is concerned.

Opal also described her children and their experience regarding ministry, as well as her ability to work through multiples roles, her social life, and how she communicates with her husband within their relationship:

The [children] love the ministry. They're grown now, obviously. My daughter helps us out in ministry. She preaches a lot for us, which is awesome.

It's a lot of work. In another season of our lives, our children are all grown and out of the home, but we now care for our parents. They live with us. I am my mom's

caretaker, so that's a lot of responsibility. We can't do it by ourselves. There are people that assist us and help us to do what we are called to do. I have a schedule. I set priorities in my life. Put things in position and have a schedule of what I need to do.

Opal's talked about her relationship with her husband being equally positive to that of her children. She shared that their lives have been intertwined in ministry since the inception of their union:

We married, we started ministry, we do ministry together and we do everything together so it's not like I'm competing with the ministry or he's competing with the ministry. Additionally, we're open, honest, and truthful, we talk about everything. In fact, he's probably a better communicator than I am. [I would also say related to our social life that] Church is [our] social life. We're very busy in ministry. We do take vacations and spend time together. We spend time with other couples in ministry. It's a blessing to us.

Amethyst discussed her relationship with her spouse with a joyful smile. She enthusiastically shared how ministry coexists with the other roles she played:

Ministry really is so much a part of our lives. I don't think in an unhealthy way. It just is, so we merge. We check calendars. He's the easiest going person that I've ever met and so, I'm often amazed and because of that, then there's the even more freedom to be able to say things and not worry about criticisms or judgements or lashing back or anything. We are blessed, our social life is good and we get out a lot. We do the things we want to do.

Amethyst also shared the mothering role that is a part of her life. Amethyst stated that she is the mother figure to a younger relative that lives in their home. When Amethyst reflected on some of the house rules particularly around church attendance she would often state:

You don't have to go every Sunday, but I don't know where you're going to live if you don't, but if you're in this house, you got to go to church. And so, that's probably our biggest bone of contention.

Zircon admitted that she was structured and organized. Managing multiple roles, she recognized the necessity in being methodical in her approach to all the roles she played including wife, minister, and mother:

You know what, I'm a Type A personality. I'm borderline Type A personality. I know how to compartmentalize. I do that well. As a wife, I serve him, and as a ministry partner, I serve him. And as my husband and as my Pastor, he serves me. We walk together, reunified. It does not overshadow our marriage. So we're able to remind each other what the Lord said and what God said and what the Word of the Lord said and [we] pray. Additionally, we're very open communicators, very honest, and very respectful. We think before we speak because we want to be respectful of one another. We make sure we talk about all things that need to be discussed.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of African American female clergy in dual clergy marriage.

Participants were recruited through snowball and purpose sampling. Interviewees came from the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, and Mid-West areas of the United States. Semi-structured interview questions were used to gather information from participants. Three interviews were conducted face-to-face and the remaining interviews were via phone. Each interview was recorded using two separate digital recorders. A journal was used to record details about perceptions and observations. The research question was “what are the lived experiences of African American female clergy leaders in dual clergy marriages?” The Colaizzi seven-step data analysis was used to identify patterns and themes. Through data analysis, four primary themes were identified. The study’s trustworthiness, credibility, transferability and dependability were established.

In chapter 5, I will present my analysis of the findings. The thematic findings will be presented and I will pose the study’s limitations, interpretations, recommendations, conclusion, and suggestions for comprehensive social change.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of African American female clergy in dual clergy marriage. Specifically, my emphasis was on examining the unique experiences of this population and the impact of ministry on dual clergy couples. Included in my focus was (a) individual resilience in the face of ministry trials, (b) leadership of African American married female clergy, and (c) the somatic and discriminatory challenges that married African American female clergy face. Each participant had been impacted personally and professionally by her experiences in a dual clergy marriage. In my study, I used an interpretive phenomenological research design and Colaizzi's seven steps for data analysis. An interpretive approach supported an inductive strategy and enabled me to amass data regarding the lived experiences of participants through semistructured in-depth interviews. Results from the study revealed two broad categories (resolve and resilience) and four primary themes: adaptation, barriers in the church, multiples roles, and health and wellness.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

#### **Resolve and Resilience**

The broad themes that emerged from my research were the resolve and resilience of the clergywomen. Having resolve was described by one participant as pushing through challenges or refusing to give up or give in to the trials she encountered in ministry. Resilience was described as having "bounce back" and toughness in the face of adversity.

The determination of resolve and the bounce back of resilience were testaments to the courage that each clergywoman displayed.

Women in this study had the unique experience of witnessing their spouses in ministry while managing their personal ministry positions. This unique exposure to ministry for the participants and their spouses, along with the personal marital relationships they shared, differentiated this study from others in the literature.

Participants offered stories of how demonstrating resolve by adapting and changing in ministry settings, overcoming barriers such as sexism, pushing through challenges such as the stained-glass ceiling, and managing multiple roles while maintaining their overall health and well-being were aspects of conducting ministry in a male-dominated field.

Many of the participants were change agents, with several being the first to achieve various things within ministry. For example, one participant shared that she was the first woman in the AME church to hold the leadership position of copastor. Another participant revealed that she was the first female assistant pastor on staff in a particular Baptist church. Yet another participant disclosed that she was the only female minister in a sea of male ministers at her church and explained that she had to show resilience to deal with the trials of that experience.

Ultimately, each participant experienced situations in ministry that required resolve and resilience. Adult personal resilience theory was instrumental in understanding their experiences because of the expanded view of resilience and the four tenets of the theory (i.e., determination, adaptability, endurance, and recuperability). Within the framework of adult personal resilience theory, one can surmise how the participants



overcame the barriers and challenges they faced as female clergy. Notably, in the context of their dual clergy marriages, participants described the support they gave and received from their spouses as women in a male-dominated ministry field. That bond was part of their “overcomer” attitude and strategy toward successful resolve and resilience in ministry.

### **Barriers in the Church**

Overall, the results of this study corroborated various findings in the literature regarding African American female clergy and the barriers in the church. For instance, female clergy continued to contend with a male-dominated ministerial arena. Despite an increase in the number of women attending seminary and becoming licensed and ordained in the Protestant church, there has remained a lack of women in leadership roles within the church (e.g. Combs, 2016; Marina & Fontenau, 2012). One participant talked about women being passed over when applying for staff ministry positions in her church. In another case, the women applying for a position exceeded the qualifications of the male applicant, but the male applicant got the job.

Research presented by Adams (2007) suggested that women make up the majority of congregations but occupy fewer church leadership positions than men. Hoegeman (2017) conducted a study that indicated that female clergy held lower level clerical positions in the church at a higher rate than male clergy. While researching clerical positions was not the focus of this study, it was revealed that six female clergy participants carried out ministerial duties without pay and provided ministerial assistance in various areas within the church. Some of the ministry positions did have a clerical

component, but none of the roles focused on clerical duties as a primary function.

Women shared how barriers in the church fueled their passions and inspired them to stand firm, persevere, adapt, and endure to stay true to the ministry assignments they embraced from God.

**Stained-glass ceiling.** Prior literature has revealed that a “stained-glass ceiling” has existed for many women in church leadership. Combs (2016) stated that the stained-glass ceiling is comparable to glass-ceiling barriers in corporate environments. One participant in my study shared that the stained-glass ceiling in her experience moved beyond the church, extending to other religious establishments associated with the church such as seminaries and other higher education institutions. Marina and Fontenau (2012) revealed that the stained-glass ceiling applied to the classroom, boardroom, and pulpit in churches. Sexism and the glass ceiling do not discriminate based on industry. My study outcomes substantiated these previous findings in the literature regarding gender discrimination in pastoral leadership.

**Sexism.** Adams (2007) described women as having been intentionally blocked from occupying leadership positions within the church. The deliberate exclusion of women constitutes sexism, which was defined by Coleman-Crossfield (2008) as valuing men over women. Andreason (2005) and Shorter-Gooden (2004) described sexism as “oppressive treatment” imposed by males on women because of gender and unfairness due to prejudiced beliefs.

Two of the 13 participants in my study shared that they had experienced covert and overt sexism within their male-dominated ministry settings. Another two participants

expressed being spared direct sexist encounters within their specific settings because they focused on children and women's ministry initiatives. Four other participants revealed that their personal exposure to sexism had been limited. These same participants, however, agreed that sexism does exist in the church, and some of them had witnessed other female clergy being discriminated against because of their gender.

**Pay inequity.** Another disparity that goes hand in hand with sexism and the glass ceiling is pay inequity. Previous research indicated that African American female clergy earned only 83% of the earnings of their male counterparts (Durso, 2017). In a study conducted in West Virginia, Danberry (2017) found that female clergy within the United Methodist Church were paid significantly less than their male counterparts. Two participants spoke directly about their experiences with pay inequity in the church, noting that honorariums for female clergy were usually smaller than those for male clergy. Unequal pay is yet another example of discriminatory practices existing in the Protestant Church.

Despite the realities and examples of sexism, pay inequity, and discrimination in the church, spouses within clergy couples were supportive of the work each did in ministry. For example, five out of 13 husbands and wives were licensed or ordained after they married; indicating that the spouses supported each other's calling into ministry after being married. Likewise, in four of the couples, were both partners were credentialed clergy prior to marrying, which was an indication of endorsement as clergy. Additionally, three female participants accepted their call into ministry after marrying their husbands. Participants shared how they resiliently matriculated through the clerical process of

seminary, church licensing boards, ordination councils, and the hierarchical leadership of the church process involved in becoming credentialed ministers. Spousal support was a common thread, with all 13 participants expressing consensus that ministry and marriage are intertwined. In the face of trials that these clergywomen faced in the church, having spousal encouragement helped their ministry and was positive for their marriage.

### **Health and Wellness**

Findings from this research further revealed that health and wellness were important for African American female clergy. Participants in this study shared how they engaged in self-care in order to manage the multiple roles and remain fit in order to meet ministry obligations while balancing marriage and family responsibilities. For instance, 10 of the 13 participants shared their commitment to consistent yearly exams as a part of their normal health and wellness regimen. According to Carroll (2006), Doolittle (2010), and Schaefer and Jacobsen (2009), clergy mental health is an important part of clergy well-being. Participants in general, however, focused less attention on mental health wellness. Two participants mentioned that they had or would seek counseling as a part of mental wellness. Eleven of the 13 participants specifically associated mental health with rejuvenation and physically caring for one's overall health as the plan to ensure strong mental health. The most popular methods used to rejuvenate included regular exercise (e.g., gym and walking), listening to music, and spending time talking to God.

### **Multiple Roles**

In exploring the relationships of clergywomen and their marital relationships with clergy spouses, Seer, Holman, and Silver (2010) established that while there had been

previous research on pastors in general, there was little research focused on clergywomen in a dual clergy marriage. In addition, Wells et al. (2012) and Mitchell (2017) determined that stress and juggling multiple roles were common threads for clergy, particularly clergywomen. For example, being a wife, mother, and minister can sometimes lead to overload (Cattich, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Wells et al., 2012).

Four of the 13 participants in my study indicated that they successfully managed their multiple roles by setting priorities. Five participants stated that managing multiple roles successfully was the result of setting boundaries. One participant specifically stressed the importance of setting healthy boundaries with her congregation, indicating to her congregation the importance of her family not being second to the work she did for the church.

### **Adaptation**

The boundaries set by some of the participants were reflected in adaptations made to manage their multiple roles, barriers, and their health. In the interviews, 100% of the participants expressed having to adapt, change, or endure conditions or scenarios in ministry. Adapting to the landscape of ministry demands meant managing personal and professional schedules and the multiple roles of minister, wife, and mother. Some participants had additional roles such as caregiver, grandmother, counselor, and mentor, which further intensified the experience of role juggling. There were changes that these women made to enhance their ministry lives, such as using technology more effectively to benefit parishioners and engage members, adjusting ministerial schedules to create

more work-life balance, and shifting mindsets from traditional church protocols to adapting new and innovative strategies to meet the needs of congregants.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Adult personal resilience theory was the theoretical underpinning for my research grounded in the belief that irrespective of stress, an adult can overcome challenging events and situations (Taormina, 2015). Several key findings emerged through the tenets of determination, adaptability, endurance, and recuperability. Taormina (2015) stated that adult personal resilience theory is different from resilience theory because of the tenets that guide it. These tenets gave context for the direction of the research. Participants gave voice to their perspectives on overall barriers they faced as clergywomen in dual clergy marriages. Noting that resilience theory was a one-dimensional concept, Taormina expressed the need for a multidimensional theory to effectively address an adult's personal resilience. The tenets of this theory provide a multidimensional framework for clergywomen.

To that end, notable findings of this study included how determined the participants were to fulfill their ministry assignments and their endurance to minister despite hurdles. For example, one participant disclosed that despite the bias that existed in the hierarchical system in the church, she was determined to move forward through racial tensions and sexist barriers. Moving forward meant speaking up and speaking out when necessary to address issues that arose while maintaining a focus on God. Addressing such issues required a level of endurance, and she trusted that good would prevail over the "isms" (e.g., racism, sexism, and inequality) that were prevalent.

In general terms, participants found that they had to adapt to their male-dominated clerical arena. One participant indicated that often she had to “duck and keep on serving.” She explained that adapting meant that even when she knew that someone did not mean her well, she would minister and serve through the adversity. Two participants encountered parishioners who challenged their ministerial authority because they were women. Adult personal resilience theory framed the experiences of the clergywomen interviewed.

In terms of recuperability, this study found the majority of participants able to recover in spite of the barriers they faced as female clergy. The participants shared how they managed the multiple roles of minister, wife, and mother. For example, several participants disclosed that setting priorities was the key to successfully managing the numerous roles they played. Other common strategies for maintaining stability that were revealed by participants were having an active prayer life, setting boundaries, actively communicating with their spouse, and practicing self-care. All 13 participants talked about the importance of communicating with their spouse about their ministry ups and downs as well as their personal marital relationship. While all participants agreed that communicating with their spouse was optimal, two participants stressed a desire to improve communication with their spouse.

### **Limitations of the Study**

In this study, every effort was made to ensure dependability and reliability of the research. According to Cope (2014), dependability and reliability are related to the ability of other researchers to duplicate previous research. Maxwell (2013) suggested that

member checking adds robust assurance for dependability. Patton (2002) stated that dependability is akin to a systematic approach within a process or procedure. Member checking and triangulation of the data served as trustworthiness measures. Additionally, the Colaizzi (1978) seven-step process was used to ensure an orderly and proficient data analysis process, which provided a supplementary layer of triangulation to enhance reliability.

Due to the nature of qualitative research, I cannot guarantee that other researchers would produce identical responses and results if they conducted this study (Patton, 2002). The sample size was moderately small, and there is no guarantee that the sample represents all African American married female clergy. However, Mason (2010) noted that qualitative studies commonly have small sample sizes because data saturation is often reached. Also worth noting is that the homogenous population for the study was limited to African American women; other ethnic groups were not represented.

Furthermore, the semi structured in-depth interviews allowed me to collect self-reported rich data from each participant, but there were no objective measures for examining the truthfulness of the experiences shared. It was presumed that participants shared honest descriptions of their personal experiences. No financial incentive was provided to participants who shared their experiences, but I made every effort to accommodate each clergywoman through in-person or phone interview options.

The other limitation that may have been relevant was that my sample was obtained using purposeful and snowball sampling. While the sample strategy was effective, the sample did not represent a large number of African American clergywomen



in the Pacific Western and Midwestern parts of the country; rather, the majority of the sample represented the eastern portion of the U.S.

### **Recommendations**

There are a number of proposed recommendations for future research. First, African American clergywomen continued to be a minority in overall Protestant ministry leadership despite the growing number of females in seminary and entering full-time ministry. Hence, I recommend additional research on clergy females and the struggles of obtaining leadership positions. Generally speaking, additional research in a wider geographic area, specifically in the mid-western, southern, and western part of the U.S. could provide greater perspective and insight as well.

Next, additional research could help to address some of the issues that the study participants shared related to sexism, the stained-glass ceiling, health concerns, and boundaries related to the multiple roles they play. The results of such a study could provide insight on ways to address the changing landscape of married female clergy. The impact of dual ministry on the marriages of clergy couples could also be expanded. Recognizing previous research according to Thomas (2013) that gender roles could impact couples in ministry and recalling Mitchell (2017) suggesting that female clergy were prone to stress due to multiple roles such as ministry leader, spouse, and mother; it is my recommendation to extend the current qualitative research which could lead to positive social changes for women.

Additionally, the Protestant faith is divided among numerous denominations. Within my study, five specific denominations were represented (e.g., Baptist, Non-

denominational, United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal, and Pentecostal). Each denomination varies in its policies regarding the hierarchical landscape of the prevalence or lack of female clergy in leadership positions. For example, one participant drew a distinction between Baptist Church policies versus the African Methodist Episcopal tradition and position of women in leadership. Therefore, I highly recommend a more extensive review of specific denominational policies to understand more extensively the growth and acceptance of women in clergy leadership.

Finally, while the African American population of female clergy is growing, expanding the research to address other ethnic groups is another recommendation that could help to infuse positive changes and initiate more equality for men and women in ministry. Furthermore, when both husbands and wives shared the call of ministry further research could expand ways for them to minister together while incorporating boundaries beneficial to their marriage.

### **Implications for Positive Social Change**

Various implications emanated from this study's findings regarding the gap of how the ministry of African American clergywomen impacted their marriage to male clergy. The collected data can be used to further support positive social change in the clerical community. One social change goal was to facilitate a greater understanding of the experiences of the African American female clergy's existence in a male dominated ministerial structure. Additional research could help to establish a wider scope of the problems that clergy women encounter and provide potential solutions for pushing through the stained glass ceiling.

Additionally, as the landscape of increased female attendance to seminary continues, changes in core curriculums to study practical ways to increase awareness and advocate for equality in all areas in church leadership might be beneficial. In this study, participants shared their abilities related to multitasking and managing multiple roles between ministry, marriage, and parenthood. Knowing the nature of ministry and the multiple layers of service required of Pastors and clerical staff helping to educate and inspire new ways to work in collaboration with male clergy and dual married clergy can benefit the church and its congregations.

Finally, I am eager to facilitate workshops at clergy conventions, provide education and insight to clerical hierarchical structures, write articles, and books to share research findings with a wide audience to stimulate change and bring about awareness in the new age of “the women.” I believe that the unique population of the dual clergy couple can provide a holistic approach to meeting the needs of the church and to congregations across Protestant denominations.

### **Conclusion**

This interpretative phenomenological study was an exploration into the lived experiences of 13 African American female clergy in dual clergy marriages. The participants shared their personal stories about their lives as clergy, wives, and mothers and the impact of the multiple roles on their ministry and marriage. Findings in this study demonstrated that African American female clergy married to male clergy managed their multiple roles by setting priorities and boundaries. Additionally, the African American female clergy experienced sexism, pay inequity, and discrimination in the Church, but

were supported by their clergy husbands. The research in this study suggested that the majority of these same women experienced having lower level positions within the church at a greater rate than male clergy.

My study was guided by the adult personal resilience theory with the specific tenets of determination, endurance, adaptability, recuperability. The participating women demonstrated each tenant in their ministry and marriage. For example, all 13 clergywomen were credentialed ministers with two clergywomen having been licensed and 10 clergywomen having the additional certification of being ordained. Despite knowing the statistics and realities of leadership roles in the church for female clergy, these women were determined to endure the process of becoming credentialed ministers. In addition, their resilience extended toward adapting to facilitate the intertwined existence of marriage and ministry. These women talked about the importance of rejuvenation and a focus on their marriage in spite of the extensive presence of church and ministry in their lives.

This study revealed that the majority of African American female participants reported that their ministry, marriage, and family life were intertwined and their marriage and their children were positively impacted by their life in ministry. Participants felt strongly about their need and desire to answer the call of God to minister to others while simultaneously maintaining strong marital relationships and healthy family functioning. The findings presented in this study will add to the body of knowledge that informs church leadership, clergy men, and women, educational institutions, seminarians, Pastoral counselors, professional counselors, and congregants in facilitating progressive change

for women and clergy couples in the church. Such changes would be aimed at positive social change for all religious institutions, families, and society as a whole.

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Appendix A: Interview Process Guide and Debrief Script

**Project Name: African American Female Ministers in Dual Clergy Marriages**

What are the lived experiences of African American female clergy leaders in dual clergy marriages? The associated sub questions are presented below:

Interview questions:

1. What is your age?
2. In what ethnic group do you identify?
3. Did you attend seminary? If so, what year did you graduate? What degree did you receive?
4. Where is your church located?
5. What is your church denomination within the Protestant faith? Examples: Baptist, Catholic, African Methodist Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Church of Christ, etc.
6. When and where were you licensed as a minister?
7. When and where was your spouse ordained as a minister?
8. Do you hold a paid position within the church? If so, what position?
9. Do you serve in a voluntary capacity at the church with the same responsibility as a paid staff person? Please elaborate.
10. How many years have you been married?
11. Were you a licensed or ordained minister prior to marrying your clergy husband or did you become a clergy person after you married?
12. Was your husband a licensed or ordained minister when you got married? If so, when was he credentialed?
13. Please describe your experience in ministry in each position you have held or currently hold.
14. What are your experiences working in a position that is mostly carried out by male clergy?
15. What 3 adjectives would you use to describe your experiences as an African American female clergy leader? Probe: In your own words, what do these words mean to you and your experience?
16. In your opinion, how would you describe success in ministry? If you feel comfortable, would you share where you are in your success continuum?

17. What is it like to be a clergy leader? Probe: What is it like having a husband as a clergy leader? Do you find it easy or difficult to be a part of a dual clergy couple? Please explain. Describe your overall well-being.
18. Do you see a doctor on a regular basis as a part of caring for your physical, emotional, or mental health? If so, how often? Please elaborate.
19. When you think of your ministry as it relates to your role in marriage, how do the two areas of your life coexist?
20. Describe your relationship with your church congregation. Describe your relationship with your husband's church congregation if different from yours.
21. What if any differences do you perceive as being an African American female clergy compared to that which you observe of your spouse as a male clergyman?
22. Describe your communication style with your spouse?
23. Describe your experience with church leadership regarding your position in the church.
24. What have you had to change or adapt to regarding your ministry?
25. Describe any experiences you have in ministry that require you to have resolve to push through.
26. Describe what you have had to endure as an African American clergywoman.
27. How do you manage multiple roles and responsibilities professionally (as a minister) and personally (as a wife)?
28. If you serve in the same ministry as your spouse what role conflicts, if any, do you encounter? In such a scenario, do you serve as pastor or in some other ministry capacity?
29. How do you handle adversity or recover to a normal state when problems arise?
30. How have your children been impacted by you and your husband both being ministers?
31. How is your social life impacted by your dual clergy marital status?
32. Please describe what if any role you have in your husband's ministry.
33. Please describe what if any role your husband has in supporting your ministry.
34. How do you rejuvenate, please expound?
35. How does ministry impact your relationship with your spouse?
36. If you could change anything related to how ministry impacts your relationship with your spouse what would you change and why?

**Debrief Script:**

- If you grant permission, you may be contacted after the interview for additional clarification of your interview responses.
- You can request a summarized copy of the final research study.
- The transcription of your interview will exclude your name or any specific identifiable information.

## Appendix B: Letter of Invitation

**Researcher: Demetra K-M. Hutchinson, Walden University**

**Project Name: African American Female Ministers in Dual Clergy Marriages**

IRB Approval Number: 03-13-18-0302717

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

This letter is written to seek permission for flyers to be emailed to clergy members who may be interested in taking part in a research study on the experiences of licensed or ordained African American female clergy married to a male clergy who both serve as ministry leaders. I am seeking a greater understanding of how these female married clergy manage stressors associated with their marriage and ministry. This letter of invitation is a part of “snow-ball sampling.” I am sending this letter because your organization may have married female clergy leader whose spouse is a male clergy leader. If your members of constitutes are interested in taking part in this research study, I will give you more details about this study and what it will involve.

**The Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this study is to explore how African American female clergy experience and understand challenges they may face in leadership roles in the church and the impact such experiences may have on their marriage to a male clergyman. My targeted participants will include licensed and ordained African American female clergy who served in ministry leadership roles within the Christian faith.

|

**Taking Part in the Study:**

- Participants must be 18 years or older.
- Participants must speak fluent English.
- Participant must be a licensed or ordained African American female minister who is married to a licensed or ordained male minister and both serve in ministry leadership.

I would like to share more details about this study to assist any interested party in deciding if there is a desire to participate. Please contact me at xxx@waldenu.edu so that we can discuss next steps.

**Note on Privacy:**

The information that participants provide as a part of this research study will be kept confidential. Participants will not be identified by name in the study and information will only be shared with my dissertation committee as required by the university. All audio tapes and notes regarding interviews will be secured in a locked file. Data will be kept secured at least 5 years, and then destroyed as required by the university.



## Appendix C: Demographic Screening Questionnaire

### **African American Female Ministers in Dual Clergy Marriages**

The purpose of this form is to identify participants who meet the criteria for participation in this study. Minimizing potential negative risk to participants is the highest priority of the researcher. The interview process will be professional, organized, respectful, and confidential. The interview process will be conducted in a discreet manner. Please review the following information to determine if you are a good candidate for this study.

#### **Read to the Participant**

- Participants must be 18 years or older.
- Participants must speak fluent English.
- Participant must be a licensed or ordained African American female minister who is married to a licensed or ordained male minister and both serve in ministry leadership.

Participation in the study requires that you meet all four criteria. If the aforementioned conditions are met and you would like to participate, I will schedule a confidential interview. When we meet for the interview I will provide additional information about the study and have you sign an informed consent form. If we meet via phone for the interview I will email the informed consent and provide additional information about the study prior to the interview start as required by my school's University Internal Review Board.

## Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation

**African American Female Ministers in Dual Clergy Marriages**

Date:

Address

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I, Demetra K-M Hutchinson, am requesting permission to collect research data from married African American female clergy who may be associated with (Name of Church or Organization). I am requesting permission to place flyers on your bulletin board so that interested participants are informed about the impending study. Contact information will be provided on the recruitment flyer. Interested participants can contact the researcher. Your signature below will verify that you have been informed of the purpose of the study and the nature of the research procedures. You further confirm that you have been given an opportunity to ask questions of the researcher. Thank you for your willingness to allow me to introduce this important study to African American married female clergy who may be associated with (Church or Organization).

Sincerely,

Demetra K-M. Hutchinson

## Appendix E: Recruitment Flyer

**Doctoral Research Study****African American Female Ministers in Dual Clergy Marriages**

**Are you a licensed or ordained African American female clergy minister, leader, or pastor married to a licensed or ordained male clergy minister, leader, or pastor?**

If so, please consider an interview with me to share your experiences.

**Participants:** This study will examine the lived experiences of African American licensed or ordained female clergy leaders who are married to licensed or ordained male clergy leaders. You must be 18 years or older and speak fluent English.

**All participants will be provided an informed consent (permission granted and acknowledgement of the benefits and risk of the study).**

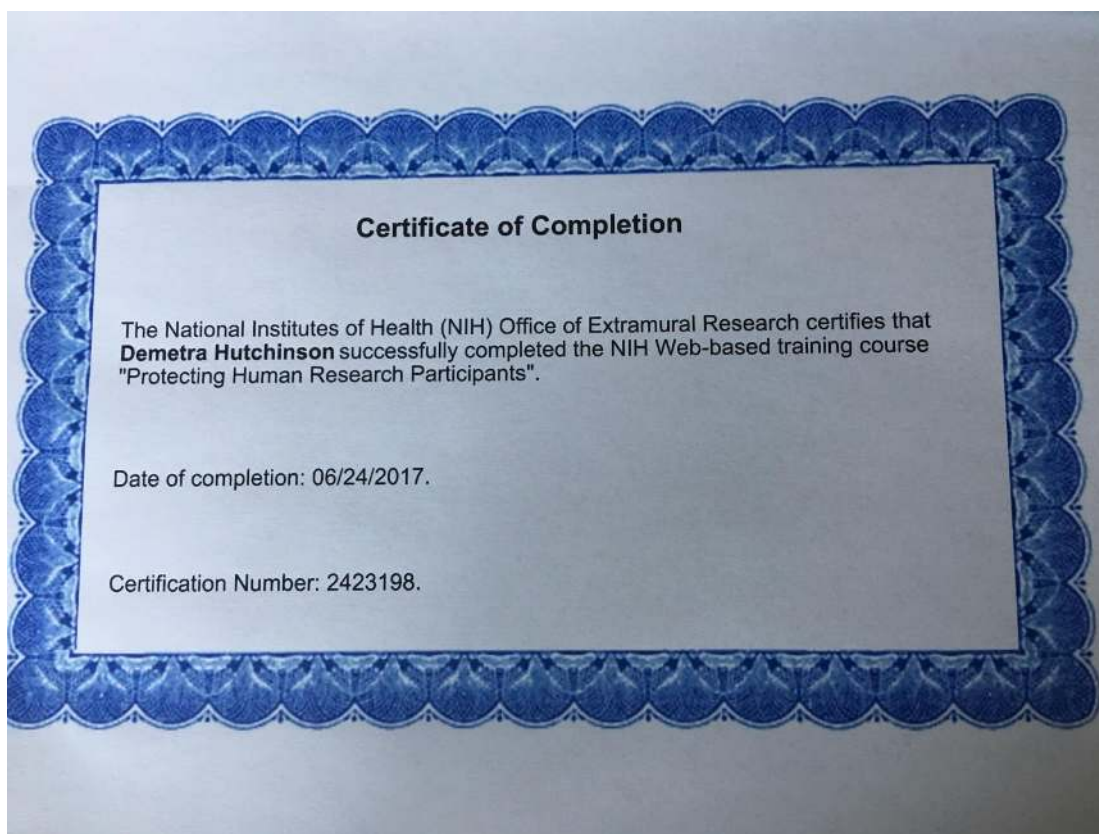
A confidential 30-60 minute in-person or private telephone interview will be conducted at a private, mutually convenient location such as a private meeting room in the local library.

Share your knowledge and life experiences in ministry leadership and what impact being a part of a dual clergy couple has had on your marriage.

**Note: Participation is voluntary and no compensation will be provided. In addition, your name WILL NOT be used or identity revealed in the study.**

If you meet the aforementioned criteria you are asked to contact the researcher, Demetra K-M. Hutchinson at xxx@waldenu.edu.

## Appendix F: National Institutes of Health Certificate of Completion



## Appendix G: Counseling Resources

The Pro Bono Counseling Project  
Phone: 410-825-1001 or 301-805-8191  
Toll Free: 1-877-323-5800

Joseph Izzo  
4102 10th Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20017-1805  
[www.whitman-walker.org](http://www.whitman-walker.org)  
202-526-2471

Camille Clay  
4014 Georgia Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20011-5857  
202-882-1400

Susan Bregman  
8920 Hilton Hill Drive  
Lanham, MD 20706-3519  
301-577-1577

Mary Keane  
1025 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Suite 310  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-293-4580

Teresa Wilson  
1050 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20036-5512  
202-496-5312