

SERVING GOD UNDER THE STAINED-GLASS CEILING: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
STUDY OF FEMALE CLERGY EXPERIENCES  
IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN WEST VIRGINIA

By

Mary Kathryn Danberry

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2017

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of female clergy in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia. Two theories were used as the framework for this study: Eagly and Karau's (2004) role congruity theory, and Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy. Role congruity theory is grounded in Eagly and Karau's social role theory, which suggests that "most behavioral differences between males and females are the result of cultural stereotypes about gender" (Eagly, 2004, p. 218). In Bandura's (1985) self-efficacy theory, it is asserted that "personal mastery expectations are the primary determinants of behavior change" (p. 1). The findings from this study include the need for mentor provided encouragement, and an awareness of the history of clergywomen and their experiences. The significance of this study emphasized the situational and learned experiences of the clergywomen, including the issues of gender discrimination, physical violence, personal property damage, sexism, and pay inequity.

*Keywords:* Bishop, clergy, deacon, elder, gender discrimination, glass ceiling, licensed local pastor, pay inequity, role congruity theory, self-efficacy theory, sexism, social role theory, stained glass ceiling, transcendental phenomenology, United Methodist Church, United Methodist Conference

### **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Without his help and inspiration, I would have given up a long time ago. This dissertation is also dedicated to my family, especially to my sister, Elizabeth Sheppard, who listened to me “fuss” for over four years about each class being more difficult than the last. To my brothers, Billy, and Philip Brannon for their encouragement all along the way. My mother, even though she has been with God for 25 years, has been a constant presence during this process, once referring to me as a “perpetual student,” and I am glad I lived up to this name.

My friends, Mary Burgess and Melissa Larsen who have also listened to my gripes and complaints during this long process. Patrick Larsen, Melissa’s husband who saved me and my laptop after a horrible incident late one night. Cinny Kittle, friend and co-worker who has been a great encourager.

My son, Matthew Danberry, for blessing me with two grandchildren during this process. My friend and second son, Donald Reed, who has encouraged and prayed for me during the process. He celebrated every victory, and most likely cried every tear.

Bruce Adkins, my friend, confidant, encourager, and boss. He has been beside me, behind me, and in front of me since I began the process.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my committee chair Tom Crites, EdD who mentored me throughout this process. His willingness to be my Chair, his guidance, and prayers made this dissertation possible.

I would like to thank my committee members, Vonda Beavers, EdD, and Drema Mace, PhD whose input, assistance, and encouragement along the way was unrivaled.

Sharon Sweet, PhD. My writing coach and mentor. Thanks for listening to me vent. Without your assistance, I would still be writing.

Jim Kerrigan, who came along when I was near the end of the process. Thanks for your support, positive reinforcement, and looking the other way when you caught me proofing my dissertation at my desk on work time.

Mildred Norris, Sandra Burrell, Sheryn Carey and Nell Phillips, wonderful encouragers, and prayer warriors.

Karen Brimhall, my friend and prayer partner.

All my church family who have lifted me up in prayer from the beginning to the end.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW)

Latter Day Saints (LDS)

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

United Methodist Church (UMC)

West Virginia (WV)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

Although women make up 27% of the active clergy of the United Methodist Church (General Commission on the Status and Role of Women [GCSRW], 2015), few researchers have tried to explain or explore the lived experiences of female clergy. Lived experience, according to Boylorn (2008), “as it is explored and understood in qualitative research, is a representation and understanding of a researcher or research subject's human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one's perception of knowledge” (p. 71).

Willhauck and Thorpe (2001) stated, “the presence of women in ministry and the reports of high enrollment of women in seminaries suggest a need for change in church leadership allowing women to lead in creative and new ways” (p. 19). Women, in general, and clergywomen have struggled for generations in their pursuit for equity in the home and in the workplace. Collins (1979) wrote about women’s early roles during Jesus’ ministry, “women were the first to tell the world of the events of the resurrection, they were the preachers and teachers of the new message” (p. 153). Although there is no written account of women as formal disciples, Jesus did allow women to travel with Him during his ministry, and He “treated women with dignity and respect, challenged the conventional sexism of the day, and forever redefined the role of women in the church and society” (UMC.com). Jesus respected people regardless of gender, and female clergy should expect the same respect from their peers when they heed the call. Historically, women clergy have not had the same opportunities as their male counterparts; however, the United Methodist Church (UMC) and John Wesley have welcomed women clergy.

Presented in this chapter is the framework for this research study. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of female clergy

in the UMC in West Virginia (WV). In addition, the reader is provided with a general understanding of the topic and foundation for the problem which makes the research necessary. An overview of the literature in which the research is grounded is contained in the chapter, as well as the importance of this topic is detailed for those interested in the experiences of female clergy in the UMC in WV.

### **Background**

The members of the UMC began to ordain female clergy in 1956, however, it was another 10 years before the number of women in seminaries and pulpits began to grow. However, since then many female clergies have encountered barriers while they serve God in their churches and as part of the UMC. According to Cooper (2011), barriers can include sexual harassment and gender inequity in assignments, pay, and benefits. Although women clergy serve in UMC churches all over the world, these barriers have always existed in the church. Hamman (2010) stated that the bias against women is “well documented by many scholars, both secular and religious, from theological, sociological, psychological, political, and economic perspectives” (p. 770).

The UMC Book of Discipline (2012) is an instruction book, which is used as a guide for all church governance. It “sets forth the laws, plan, polity, and processes by which United Methodists govern themselves” (p. 1), and it contains over 200 years of information developed during the UMC Conferences. Within it, there is an official policy on gender equality in all parts of society, including the clergy:

We affirm women and men to be equal in every aspect of their common life. We affirm the right of women to equal treatment in employment, responsibility, promotion, and compensation. We affirm the importance of women in decision making position at all levels of Church life and urge such bodies to guarantee their presence through policies of employment and recruitment. (§ 162)

Burton (2014) cited data from the Clergywomen Retention Survey (2012), where it was reported that there are 10,300 active and retired women clergy in the United States. This number represents a 30% increase during the last 20 years. The members of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW, 2013) reported that women now make up 25% of the total U.S. clergy population. In West Virginia, 19% of its UMC clergy are women, and West Virginia is ranked 44th in the nation with its number of female clergy. According to the General Council on Finance and Administration of the UMC (2014); in West Virginia, currently, there are a total of 954 UMC clergy, 207 of which are female. In addition, there are 15 women bishops who lead Episcopal areas in the UMC across the U.S., and the WV Conference has 1 woman bishop. According to UMC.org, the Rev. Dr. Sandra Steiner Ball was elected bishop in July 2012, and she is the spiritual leader of over 100,000 people in 1,100 churches in WV. Officially, the UMC continues to offer female clergy the opportunity to grow and prosper in the field. As reported by the U.S. Department of Labor (2015), clergywomen make up 18.6% of the total employed in the occupation which equates to 433,000 in the U.S.

However, in the academic literature, there is a gap which fails to address the lived experiences among female clergy and their search for equity, authority, and growth in the UMC. While women have made, and continue to make a huge impact on the church, some find “there is still blatant sexism in the way people respond to women’s leadership” (Park & Willhauck, 2014, p. 132). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, clergywomen in the UMC have been eligible for ordination for over 50 years, and women pastors “have been cracking the glass ceiling within the church despite an apparent lack of support, affirmation, and recognition of their unique contributions” (Park & Willhauck, p. 135). Clergywomen in the UMC continue to hit their heads on the glass ceiling on their way to leadership positions. They may also encounter barriers,

which can deter them from seeking leadership positions in the church. Istomina (2016), discussed the glass ceiling as it pertained to her 20 years working as an UMC clergywoman, “I do not see a way for me as well as for many other clergywomen, to get even near the glass ceiling without divine intervention” (p. 2).

### **Situation to Self**

I have always been interested in women’s rights, which include equality in the workplace, in the home, and in the church. My master’s thesis was titled *A Question of Equality: Will Women Ever Experience a Leadership Role in the Southern Baptist Church?* (Danberry, 2005). For the purpose of my thesis research, leadership role was defined as “a predetermined role set forth by male leadership in the Southern Baptist Church” (SBC; p. 3). Additionally, a leadership role, for a woman in the SBC is defined by me as service in any of the following roles: (a) deaconess, (b) usher, (c) teacher of men and women, and (d) pastor. After much research on the SBC, the answer to my thesis question was no.

Today, the Bible, with its many translations, is interpreted in many ways by many people including clergy and laity. Verses in the Bible are used by many denominations to: (a) subjugate women, (b) chastise errant children, (c) punish adulterous spouses, and (d) castigate church members. Kaylor (2010), stated that the SBC, which is defined as the largest Protestant denomination in the nation, is “continuing with their push for patriarchal gender roles” (p. 346). In the SBC where I was a member, I did teach a women’s Sunday school class, wherein no men were allowed in the class, but I was allowed to teach boys’ and girls’ classes. I received permission to teach a mixed (i.e., male and female) vacation Bible school class, but I left the church shortly before the class was to begin. I left the church because of a soul wrenching experience with gender inequity. Currently, I attend a UMC co-led by a female pastor. I chose

this topic for my dissertation because I wanted to investigate and describe the lived experiences of ordained clergywomen, and whether they encountered inequity within the church in regard to assignments, pay, and leave time. Also, I would also like to contribute to the literature and add data specific to the research base for WV clergywomen.

### **Problem Statement**

Although much literature exists regarding female clergy, there is a gap in the literature regarding female clergy and their lived experiences as clergy in the WV UMC. The focus of study is on the problem of gender inequity, sexual harassment, as well as inequity in the areas of leave, pay, and church assignments. There is research regarding female clergy in the UMC, who have experienced these problems, yet there is a paucity of information on WV clergywomen. During the Barna Group's yearly PastorPollSurvey (2009), information was collected from senior pastors of various denominations throughout the country to understand cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The Lead Woman Pastor Project (2012), developed by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) of the UMC, is another good resource for information regarding UMC women clergy. This Project began in 2008 and collects information regarding women clergy in the UMC including challenges with leadership, pay equity, and the presence of different standards for male and female clergy (UMC.org). Park and Willhauck (2014) posited that "women in ministry in the UMC have been engaged in a graceful struggle; one of those genuine paradoxes of leadership, and struggle which implies suffering, great effort, and determination" (p. 186). Similarly, Niemela (2011) stated "the spiritual or divine dimension of their profession is found to be extremely important for clergywomen, they have sought ordination-just like clergymen-because they have a sense of calling and a conviction that God has a plan for their lives" (p. 359). Finally, Cooper (2010)

maintained that, “Women who are entering ministry encounter sexism, sexual harassment, and abuse” (p. 23). There is a need for research to explore the experiences of female clergy as they entered and engaged in ministry in the UMC of WV.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of female clergy in the UMC in WV. In the research, experiences were generally defined as any events occurring in the performance of duties of the female clergy, such as entering the ministry and staying in the ministry. Some of these events may include episodes of sexual harassment by laity as well as other church officials, sexism, as well as inequity in the areas of leave, pay, and church assignments. Lind (2005) stated “many women in ministry consider fear of harassment to be one of the constant realities of their working life” (p. 68).

Many clergywomen have encountered the stained-glass ceiling, which was defined by Cooper (2011) as “cultural and institutional limits placed on the ministry of clergywomen” (p. 5). The stained-glass ceiling inhibits a clergywoman’s rise to leadership in the church, because she can only go so far up the hierarchy. This study, based on the data collected about the lived experiences of women clergy, is focused on their experiences as they entered and served as clergy. van Manen (1990) stated that lived experience is what is experienced as it happens, but it is only later, that one can reconstruct and understand the experience. Therefore, by asking detailed interview questions of the study participants, information was collected from the experiences of clergywoman.

Eagly and Karau’s (2002) developed the role congruity theory which “considers congruity between gender roles and other roles, especially leadership roles” (p. 575). Role congruity theory is especially pertinent to this study as women clergy are still rare in some



cultures and especially rare in WV UMC churches. Ritter and Yoder (2004) stated, “role congruity theory predicts that women will be less likely than men to emerge as leaders when expectations for the leader role are incongruent with gender stereotypes” (p. 187). Also, Hoyt and Burnette (2013) noted that “positions of power and influence in society have traditionally been occupied by men, whereas women have historically held lower status positions” (p. 1306). Clergywomen, who hold a position of power such as elder, district supervisor, or bishop, are rare.

Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory was used in this research as well. In self-efficacy theory, it is asserted that “personal mastery expectations are the primary determinants of behavior change” (p. 1). In other words, self-efficacy is the belief that one is capable of anything, no matter how difficult. Bandura (2000) posited “people are partly the products of their environments, but by selecting, creating, and transforming their environmental circumstances, they are the producers of environment as well” (p. 75). Clergywomen may begin their careers with certain values, goals, and a passion for God and serving others, but soon learn there are many difficulties in their path to the achievement of these goals. The existence of the stained-glass ceiling for women clergy can be a deterrent to the woman in her search for self-efficacy in her ministry. To achieve self-efficacy, the clergywoman must draw on the power within herself and from God to think, feel, and inspire herself and others. Hoyt and Burnette (2013) posited “positions of power and influence in society have traditionally been occupied by men, whereas women have historically held lower status positions” (p. 1306). Therefore, it may be difficult for a woman to measure her self-worth and self-efficacy if she believes she is destined to be in a lower status position during her career. Usually, self-efficacy is attained by drawing on past experiences, and through the conduct of this study, it is anticipated that the

responses to the interview questions will allow the clergywomen to reconstruct their experiences to arrive at the “lived experiences” to which van Manen (1994, p. 55) referred.

### **Significance of the Study**

The situational and learned experiences of the clergywomen added to the significance of this study. The findings about clergywomen in WV may help readers to learn about the experiences encountered by their peers during their time as clergy. Reading and learning about the phenomenon experienced by UMC clergywomen in WV may cause the women to unite to find ways to alleviate the problems. As reported by LeGrand, Proeschold-Bell, James, and Wallace (2013), clergy occupy a unique role in society. In this unique role, clergy are leaders of the church, community board members, and some even work a full-time job outside the church. The WV clergywomen may encounter similar experiences, and the findings from this study could generate a greater awareness of their unique experiences.

There is much research regarding clergywomen throughout the US and the world, but little regarding WV clergywomen. It is anticipated that the findings from this study will add to the research literature, where it can be used compare these experiences with other clergy in other states to determine if there are similarities.

Phillips (2015) posited that empowered women have a higher sense of self-assurance and self-efficacy. Clergywomen must be strong leaders to survive in the male dominated world in which they work. However, women who succeed in a traditionally male role, such as clergy, may be perceived as aggressive and overly confident. Kroeger and Kroeger (1991) reported that some women have been discouraged from following their calling by other Christians who tell them “this could not possibly be God’s will” (p. 23). These Christians cite 1 Timothy 2:12, “I do

not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet” [NIV], as the impetus for this statement.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

**RQ<sub>1</sub>:** How do female clergy describe their experience in obtaining/advancing to leadership positions in the United Methodist church?

**RQ<sub>2</sub>:** How do female clergy describe their experiences and challenges in leadership positions while serving in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia?

As members of the clergy in the UMC, women can serve as elders, deacons, and local pastors. Elders are ordained clergy and have the most responsibility in the church, including preaching and teaching, overseeing communion, and other rites within the church. Also, deacons are ordained clergy fully authorized to lead worship, preach, and conduct funerals and weddings. Local pastors give pastoral support and guidance, and train lay leadership in fulfilling their ministries. The local pastor has administrative oversight of the charge and supervises the programs of the congregation(s) he or she serves (UMC.org 2015). Lin, Irby, and Brown (2010), stated, “From ancient Biblical times, outstanding female leaders existed, according to the Biblical account of Deborah in Judges, female prophets and judges such as Deborah were respected by male judges and Israelites (p. 1439). Many clergywomen in the UMC have already proven themselves to be leaders by the completion of not only seminary, but ordination into the church. According to the authors of the *United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study II* (2010), clergywomen still experience: (a) racial and sexual prejudices, (b) systematic barriers within the church, (c) lack of support from the denomination and congregations, (c) conflicts with senior pastors and members, and (d) difficulty in the management of work and family.

**RQ3:** How do female clergy in the UMC of WV describe their self-efficacy in relation to their role?

Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1977) as the “belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 2). Events and environment in a person’s life are important to his or her pursuit of self-efficacy. Clergywomen should surround themselves with positive people who believe in their capabilities. The recollection of positive events in the clergywoman’s life can help to achieve self-efficacy. Belief in oneself and one’s own capabilities is important. Bandura (2000) posited that there are two main approaches to the measurement of a group’s efficacy. The first “combines the individual members’ appraisals of their personal capabilities to execute the particular functions they perform in the group, and the second combines members’ appraisals of their group capability operating as a whole” (p. 76). During the focus groups, by means of the group dynamic, it should be possible to determine how the participants describe their self-efficacy as it relates to their roles as clergywomen.

### **Research Plan**

During this qualitative study, using semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document review, data were collected from the participants regarding their experiences as clergy in the UMC in WV. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research “begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 44). Through the use of semi-structured interviews, clergywomen from the UMC in WV were

asked to tell the researcher about their experiences as members of the clergy. During the interviews, it was hoped that the participants could reconstruct their lived experiences. Paley (2013) posited that “lived experience can be studied by conducting interviews with people who have experienced a phenomenon” (p. 1520). Also, Paley explained that, it is possible to capture the unique and individual meanings of the people being interviewed during phenomenal studies.

Patton (2002) stated, “qualitative designs are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (p. 39). During the interviews, the researcher bracketed out her own personal experiences with the phenomenon. As noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2003), qualitative researchers “stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 13). During the engagement with the study participants during the interviews, a relationship did develop with this researcher; however, this relationship was maintained on a professional level. Doody and Noonan (2013) said “interviews are probably the approach most used to collect data in studies” (p. 28). It was essential that, as the researcher/interviewer, skills were built to build a rapport with the interviewees to gain their trust during the interviews.

In addition, the real-life experiences of female clergy were examined through the context of transcendental phenomenology. According to Moustakas (1994), transcendental phenomenology is a “scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness” (p. 49). During the study of the phenomenon of clergywomen’s experiences while they served in the UMC, copious notes were kept and revisited; as necessary, the interview questions were revised after completion of each interview, as necessary. Certain themes became apparent during the interviews and were recorded.

Creswell (2013), stated transcendental phenomenology is “focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of the participants” (p. 80). So, as the researcher, the focus was on the participants and their recollections of their lived experience.

### **Definitions**

1. Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church - a central office and professional staff that coordinate and conduct ministry and the business of the conference. (United Methodist Church.org)
2. Bishop - In the United Methodist tradition, bishops are clergy elected and consecrated to the office of bishop. (United Methodist Church.org)
3. Clergy - individuals who serve as commissioned ministers, deacons, elders, and local pastors, under appointment of a bishop (full and part-time), who hold membership in an annual conference, and who are commissioned, ordained, or licensed (UMC Book of Discipline, 2012).
4. Deacon - clergyperson called by God and ordained to the ministry of word, service, love, and justice. A deacon's ministry connects the worshipping community to the needs of the world (UMC.org).
5. Elder - holds the highest level of responsibility and is ordained to service, word, sacrament, and order (UMC.org)
6. Glass ceiling - refers to artificial barriers to the advancement of women and minorities (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).
7. Gender discrimination - a situation in which someone is treated less well because of their sex, usually when a woman is treated less well than a man. (Cambridge Dictionary.org)

8. Licensed local pastor - The licensed local pastor provides pastoral support and guidance, trains lay leadership to fulfill their ministries, and supervises the programs of the congregation(s) he or she serves (UMC.org)
9. Pay inequity - In the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), it was reported that, in 2014, women earned 76 cents for each dollar earned by male clergy.
10. Role congruity theory - perceived incongruity between the female gender role and typical leader roles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).
11. Self-efficacy theory - personal mastery expectations that are the primary determinants of behavior change (Bandura, 1977).
12. Social role theory - most of the known behavioral differences are between males and females and are the result of cultural stereotypes about gender (Eagly, 2004).
13. Stained glass ceiling - refers to the difficulty for women who seek to gain a role within church leadership (Rois, Rixon, & Faserus, 2013).
14. Transcendental phenomenology - a “scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness” (Moustakas 1994, p. 49).
15. United Methodist Church - The United Methodist Church is a 12.5-million-strong global church whose members strive to be faithful Christian witnesses to Jesus Christ (United Methodist Church.org)
16. United Methodist General Conference - The body that sets official policy and speaks for the denomination, an international body of nearly 1,000 delegates which meet every 4 years (United Methodist Church.org).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the study of female clergy and their experiences in the UMC in WV was described. The background of the study included history of female clergy in the UMC, as well as information on the number of women who serve as clergy nationally and in WV. The problem statement, the purpose statement, and the significance of the study sections of the chapter detailed the issue of gender inequity among clergywomen, the overall purpose of the study, and the importance of conducting the study to current and future female clergy. The research questions that guided the study were stated and supported by research. Also, definitions of terms used in the study are identified.



## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of female clergy in the United Methodist Church (UMC) in West Virginia (WV). As part of the phenomenological research process, Moustakas (1994) suggested that a comprehensive review of literature should be conducted. Through the conduct of this comprehensive literature review, I became familiar with the topic of women clergy in the UMC in general and WV women clergy. Denney and Tewksbury (2013) provided the following reasons for the literature review: “(a) literature reviews force a writer to educate him/herself on as much information as possible pertaining to the topic chosen, and (b) literature reviews demonstrate that the author has a firm understanding of the topic” (p. 219).

Although the ordination of women has been allowed for 60 years in the UMC, many clergywomen continue to experience sexism, sexual harassment, and inequity in pay and assignments. Sullins (2000) stated that “despite formal acceptance, women clergy have faced subordination in practice in many Protestant denominations” (p. 243). The focus of this review of the literature is on the global perspective of the experiences of UMC clergywomen, to support the collection of information and data during this study on the experiences of UMC clergywomen in WV.

### **Theoretical Framework**

There are two theories which provided the framework of this study, Bandura’s (2012) self-efficacy theory and Eagly and Karau’s (2009) role congruity theory. According to Bandura (2012), in self-efficacy theory, it is specified that “conditions under which the contribution of self-efficacy to performance may increase, remain stable, or decline over time” (p. 39). Eagly and

Karau (2002) stated that “men and women occupy social roles with attendant stereotypes and prescriptions” (p. 468). Typically, men are stereotyped as assertive, confident, and powerful, while women are stereotyped as pleasant, nurturing, and likeable. In addition, Mueller, and McDuff (2004) posited that “clergy are often stereotyped by the public as being satisfied with their jobs because they have self-selected into the ministry and presumably are following their calling” (p. 261). Gervais and Hillard (2011) explained that “people are evaluated positively when their characteristics are consistent with their social roles” (p. 223). While there are many active clergywomen in the UMC, and in WV, the role of pastor is predominantly male. Skelly and Johnson (2011) posited that, in role congruity theory, “individuals are penalized when they do not perform according to the expectations of society” (p. 34). The stereotypical role of clergy is that of an individual, who is White, married, and male with children. In 2016 in WV and in the UMC, the stereotype is the same with a selected few White, young, married women in the mix.

### **Self-Efficacy Theory**

Bandura (2012) stated that “human life involves diverse spheres of activity, one cannot be all things, and people differ in the areas on which they cultivate their self-efficacy and the levels to which they develop it even within their chosen pursuits” (p. 30). Self-efficacy, defined by Bandura (1977), is a “person's belief that he or she can execute behaviors required in a particular situation” (p. 1). For a clergywoman to achieve self-efficacy in her life and her ministry, she must have a positive self-perception. Self-perception is powerful. According to Smith (2013), “women have received so many mixed messages about what it means to be a woman that they often struggle to identify and maintain a healthy self-image” (p. 48). Creer and Wigal (1993) maintained that the “perceptions of one's own efficacy, as well as expectations that

he or she will succeed at performing given tasks, are important factors in directing the individual's behavior” (p. 1316).

Smith (2013) stated that “while everyone needs encouragement and reassurance at times, all pastors must possess at their core of there being an unshakable conviction that God and God alone has called them” (p. 5). Bandura (1993) stated “people’s beliefs in their capabilities affect how much stress and depression they experience in threatening or difficult situations, as well as their level of motivation” (p. 132). A clergywoman’s belief, that she is performing God’s work in an excellent manner, will allow her to be more productive in her chosen field.

Per Bandura (2012) “self-efficacy beliefs affect the quality of human functioning through cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional processes (p. 13). Faucett, Corwyn, and Poling (2013) commented that “clergy with a firm, unambiguous inner sense of calling may tend to take conflict in stride, perhaps even welcoming it to some extent, believing theological conflict to be inevitable in the struggle to win hearts and minds for God” (p. 299). Self-efficacy beliefs affect the way persons think about themselves, whether positively or negatively. Perceived self-efficacy is plays an important role in the life of clergy. Believing in oneself and one’s ability to prosper in their chosen career and their current assignment is essential for the church as well as the clergyperson. In addition, “perceived self-efficacy is a person’s judgement of his or her capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Bandura (1997) posited that perceived self-efficacy may “strongly influence a person’s motivation to undertake activities and persevere in the face of difficulties” (p. 116). Also, “perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 2). In other words, self-efficacy is the belief in one’s self as being capable to

manage situations, no matter how difficult. For female clergy, it can be daunting to maintain her sense of self-efficacy in her field of service, in her family, and in her personal life. When entering seminary, many women may be *on-fire* after hearing the call from the Lord and believe they are able to change the world, but, soon, many are brought back to reality. Women may experience sexism, discrimination, and harassment during their time in ministry (Cooper, 2012,). Thompson (2006) stated that “the pain that so many women have openly expressed and the sacrifices that many have had to make to answer their call are almost palpable at times” (p. 209). There is a plethora of research regarding clergywomen and their struggle for equality in the religious realm; some of it is so blatantly sexist, it can be difficult to read; however, research specific to WV is not available.

### **Role Congruity Theory**

Role congruity theory is a branch of Eagly’s (1992) social role theory which is used to explain the “contemporary causes of belief in gender difference” (Isaac, Kaatz, & Carnes, 2012, p. 80). Eagly, Wood and Diekmann (2000) posited that “social role theory originated as an effort to understand the cause of sex differences and similarities in social behavior” (p. 123). In social role theory, it is suggested that most known behavioral differences between males and females are the result of cultural stereotypes about gender (e.g., how males and females are supposed to act) and the resulting social roles that are taught to young people. Eagly (2009) believes social role/role congruity theory originated from the “division of labor which reflects a biosocial interaction between male and female physical attributes and the social structure” (p. 644). Also, Eagly, Diekmann, Johannesen-Schmidt, and Koenig (2004) posited that “sex-related attitudinal differences emerge both from the direct effect of sex-typed occupational and family roles on individual occupants of these roles and from culturally shared expectations that apply to

women and men in general” (p. 796). Role congruity theory is usually applied to women in leadership roles and was used as the framework for this research. Knobloch-Westerwick and Glynn (2013) stated, “role congruity theory specifies factors and processes that affect congruity perceptions and consequences for perceptions and behaviors” (p. 5). Eagly and Karau (1991) maintained that “role theory assumes that sex differences in social behavior are in part caused by the tendency of people to behave consistently with their gender roles” (p. 686). Most of the role theory research deals with the leadership styles of men and women. Men tend to have a more aggressive style of leadership, while women are more nurturing.

As a branch of social role theory, role congruity theory is used to look at the “congruence between gender and leadership roles” (Eagly & Karau (2002, p. 37). In role congruity, it is suggested that “female leader’s choices are constrained by threats from two directions: (a) conforming to their gender role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their leader role, and (b) conforming to their leader role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their gender role” (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 786). Skelly and Johnson (2011) posited that role congruity theory is similar to social role theory, except it has the idea that “individuals are punished when they fail to conform to societal expectations” (p. 60). As a member of the clergy, a woman’s leadership style and gender identity may constrain her behavior that is consistent with her own gender role. Broncano (2013) posited that central to the understanding of gender is the role of ideology, “which serves to perpetuate the dominant gender definitions” (p. 120). Ideology, which is defined as the “set of ideas and beliefs of a group or political party” (p. 120), plays an important role in the construction and reproduction of gender attitudes, beliefs, and discriminatory behaviors. Therefore, “specific social roles form an opportunity structure that individuals navigate as they pursue their goals,

individuals select specific goals, such as occupational or family roles, that fulfill important goals” (Diekmann & Eagly, 2008, p. 440).

Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) stated that gender roles can be “described in two different scopes, (a) communal, and (b) agenic” (p. 6). Women are expected to have high levels of communal attributes, which include “being friendly, unselfish, concerned with others, and emotionally expressive” and men are expected to have high levels of agenic qualities, which include “being independent, masterful, assertive, and instrumentally competent” (Eagly et al., p. 6). Powell (2012) posited that, role congruity theory states, “leader and gender stereotypes put female leaders at a distinct disadvantage by forcing them to deal with the perceived incongruity between the leader role and their gender role” (p. 125). Rudman and Glick (2001) stated

If women conform to the female gender role, they fail to meet the requirements of the leader role. However, if women compete with men for leadership positions and conform to the leader role, they fail to meet the requirements of the female gender role, which calls for feminine niceness and deference to the authority of men. (p. 750).

In addition, Niemela (2011) stated that “women who are employed in a traditionally male dominated field may also feel pressured to perform their ‘proper’ gendered identities and to behave as they feel people expect them to behave as a woman” (p. 368). As a female in a male dominated field, the clergywoman may find it difficult to determine what role she should play in her church and her home. In this respect, Sullins (2006) commented that “males are said to be socialized into secular ideals of aggressiveness and accomplishment, females into the more religiously compatible ideals of nurturance and conflict resolution” (p. 839).

As stated by Kemery (2006) “role behavior is defined in terms of the relevant social system in which an individual is located and provides information about what activities are considered” (p. 562). As a clergywoman, who is responsible for a large church and its members, she may be required to work under incompatible policies and guidelines and be unable to

complete an assignment without enough personnel. Cody (2006) posit that “clergywomen suffer a unique kind of role strain in which the expectation of ministry conflict with the expectations of being a woman” (p. 51). Females have differing leadership styles than that of males, in that, women tend to be more nurturing, while men are more aggressive. Although this is a stereotypical view, Scott (2014) posited that “one’s perception of an ideal leader do not always match one’s perception of an ideal woman” (p. 52). Budworth and Mann (2010) reported that “women are supposed to be socially sensitive, filled with kindness, thoughtfulness, sensitivity and other stereotypically feminine behaviors that demonstrate a concern for others” (p. 181), in other words, communal. In comparison, men “are supposed to behave in a self-assertive fashion, including behaviors such as competence and dominance, which are considered agentic behaviors” (p. 181).

### **Related Literature**

#### **Women in Religion**

According to the Pew Research Center (2015), the Christian share of the U.S. population is declining, while the number of U.S. adults who do not identify with any organized religion is growing. The three dominant religions in the U.S. are Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism. In 2014, these three religions represented a 70.6%, 20.8, and 1.9 % (i.e., respectively) share in the population of the U.S. (Pew Research 2015).

Women have played an enormous role in the shaping of religion throughout history. Parvey (1974) reported that “Christianity grew out of the rich intellectual and spiritual soil of Judaism of Jewish Palestine and Jews living throughout the Roman Empire” (p. 117). Women have strived to become recognized as pastors, priests, and rabbis in their religion.

In Catholicism, women have struggled to become recognized as clergy. Per the *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* (1976), Hunt (2009) stated that “the Vatican made clear that women could not be ordained because Jesus had not named any women disciples and women do not bear a ‘natural resemblance’ to Jesus in the Eucharist (in other words, women are not male)” (p. 87). Prior to Vatican II, women were excluded from such roles as students or faculty members in Catholic seminaries. Wallace (1992) noted that women were admitted to schools of theology for ministerial preparation in 1965.

Hein (2015) stated that, in the U.S., “the Reform movement ordained its first female rabbi in 1972, the Reconstructionist movement in 1974, and the Conservative movement in 1985” (§ 1). The Orthodox movement has yet to officially accept women in its rabbinate, although a few Orthodox women have been ordained in some seminaries. Each movement, except the Orthodox, has come to accept the right of women to become rabbis after long periods of reflection and debate regarding their own religious philosophies. One example of sexism in the Jewish tradition is the following prayers/blessings, which an adult male Jew recites every morning, “Blessed be God, King of the Universe, for not making me a woman” (Reuther, 1974, p. 196).

Additionally, McCombs (2015) reported that the Church of Latter Day Saints (LDS; Mormon) consists of over 15 million members; however, women cannot be ordained to the priesthood. Nevertheless, women are allowed hold other leadership positions in the church, such as “preaching, participating in priesthood councils, and serving proselyting missions (p. 7e). Women’s presence in the Mormon church have kept pace with the growth of feminism, since the second wave began in 1963 with Betty Friedan’s, *The Feminine Mystique*. *The Heavenly Mother* has been mentioned in essays which were published by the Mormon church. For example, Joseph



Smith, the founder of the LDS, allowed women to be ordained in the 1800s and allowed to “give blessings” (p. 7e), but this practice is not allowed currently.

Ulrich (2010) reported that many Mormon women remain feminists because they want to serve as their male counterparts do in the church and stated that stated Mormon women

became feminists as new ideas, filtered through a wide range of personal associations, helped them make sense of their lives.” Discovering history, they also discovered themselves. But like members of other minority groups, they were sometimes caught in the double-bind of identity politics, finding themselves stigmatized within their own group when they touched tender issues and dismissed by other feminists when they defended their heritage. (p. 59)

Patriarchal systems, which have been in place for centuries, have made women’s struggle for equality nearly the same in Catholicism, Judaism, Mormonism, and Methodism.

### **The Glass Ceiling**

Many women on their way up the corporate ladder get caught in two traps, which was demonstrated by Vanderbroek (2010): “the assumption that women and men have the same leadership qualities, and the belief that they must imitate male leadership behavior in order to succeed” (p. 767). Vanderbroeck speculated whether leadership qualities are gender neutral, that is, must women act like men to get ahead in the corporate world.

Before the discussion can begin in regard to the stained-glass ceiling, the term glass ceiling must be defined. Barreto, Ryan, and Schmitt (2009) stated that the word “ceiling implies that women encounter an upper limit on how high they can climb on the organizational ladder, whereas, glass refers to the relative subtlety and transparency of the barrier, which is not necessarily visible to the observer” (p. 5). The glass ceiling is “one of the most compelling metaphors for analyzing inequalities between men and women in the workplace” (Baxter &

Wright, 2000, p. 275). The term, glass ceiling, has been in existence for over 30 years, and there is a surfeit of information available.

Wilson (2014) stated the glass ceiling was originally introduced as an “invisible, covert, and unspoken phenomenon that existed to keep executive level leadership positions in the hands of Caucasian males” (p. 84). There are many definitions of the term, and one originates from Purcell, MacArthur, and Samblanet (2011), who defined it as “a popular metaphor for explaining the inability of many women to advance past a certain point in their occupations and professions, regardless of their qualifications or achievements” (p. 705). Carli and Eagly (2001) posited that the “glass ceiling is a metaphor for prejudice and discrimination, to the extent that people are prejudiced against women as leaders and potential leaders” (p. 631). McCrady (2012) maintained that women face a “myriad of unique challenges as professionals, among them inequality in the workplace, and some women feel they need to choose between a career and family, while others must decide when to get pregnant and how many children to have” (p. 720).

The Glass Ceiling Commission, a part of the U.S. Department of Labor, was created by Congress in 1991. In 1995 a report was published by the Commission, which defined a glass ceiling as “those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevents qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management level positions” (p. 1). This characterization was targeted toward the corporate world where women were extremely underrepresented and where women were not business owners (Acker, 2009; Weiler, & Bernasek, 2001). There have been many strong women leaders in the recent past, among them Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin. Milbank (2008) quoted Clinton in the Washington Post regarding her presidential run in 2008:

Although we weren't able to shatter that highest, hardest ceiling this time, thanks to you, it's got about 18 million cracks in it. And the light is shining through like never before, filling us all with the hope and the sure knowledge that the path will be a little easier next time. (p. 1).

During the 2016 presidential election, often, Clinton (2016) spoke of women's rights and breaking the glass ceiling. In her concession speech after losing to Donald Trump, Clinton stated, "Now I know we have still not shattered that highest and hardest glass ceiling, but someday someone will – and hopefully sooner than we might think right now" (p. 1).

Acker (2009) stated that "all organizations have inequality regimes, defined as loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations" (p. 201). These inequalities, systems, and structures within organizations can serve as impediments to women in their quest for higher leadership positions in the corporate world. Women have tried to break through the glass ceiling for many years. Johns (2013) posited that the glass ceiling, a phrase first introduced in the 1980s, "is a metaphor for the invisible and artificial barriers that block women and minorities from advancing up the corporate ladder to management and executive positions" (p. 1). Bonawitz and Andel (2009) took this metaphor one step further when they wrote about the glass ceiling being made of concrete, "instead of breaking through the glass ceiling, women have only been able to chip away at its surface, concrete" (p. 6). Myerson and Fletcher (2000) stated that

It's not the ceiling that's holding women back: it's the whole structure of the organizations in which we work: the foundation, the beams, the walls, and the very air. The barriers to advancement are not just above women, they are all around them. . . We must ferret out the hidden barriers to equity and effectiveness one by one. (p. 136)

Additionally, Bagilhole (2006) stated that many women reach a barrier at a certain point of the hierarchy of an organization; "they can see through it to the top positions as it is glass, but

still most remain below it because of structural and cultural issues in the organization that prevent them from [being able to move] through it” (p. 110). The conflict between work and family can be one of the barriers women encounter during their rise to the top of the hierarchy in the corporate world. As reported by Buckalew, Konstantinopoulos, Russell, and El-Sherbini (2012), many women “believe that their failure to reach the top management is due to family obligations and family responsibilities” (p. 149). Women may feel they are passed-over for promotions because of family conflicts, such as sick children, school activities, and the like.

In the corporate world, there is a new term, which describe whether a woman can rise to a higher position. This term is the *glass cage*, and Warrell (2009) defined it as the “misgivings that many women may have about whether they can succeed and handle the demands of leadership, without the sacrifice of other aspirations” (p. 1). Berry and Franks (2010) stated “while business organizations say they are struggling to hold on to their best and brightest women, the persistence of the glass ceiling makes this naught but talk for the women who walk in the halls of power” (p. 1). There are many reasons why the glass ceiling cannot be broken for women in higher corporate positions, among them, gender-based stereotypes, and variable leadership styles. Ellmers, Rink, Derks, and Ryan (2012) posited that “even though women increasingly succeed in reaching positions of leadership within organizations, there are a number of mechanisms that reinforce underlying gender stereotypical beliefs and perpetuate biased organizational realities” (p. 168). Also, some women may avoid the corporate world in favor of starting their own businesses and other better-paid positions. Baxter and Wright (2000) stated that “the metaphor of the glass ceiling implies the existence of an impermeable barrier that blocks the vertical mobility of women: below this barrier, women are able to get promoted; beyond this barrier they are not” (p. 276). Often, women are considered not as competent as

men even while they perform “male gender-typed work” (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007, p. 81), such as self-promotion. Women, who engage in this behavior are considered lacking in social skills and may be the recipient of penalties imposed by their male peers, such as social rejection and personally directed negativity as well as raises and promotions in their career.

The glass cliff is another expression which may be used when referring to women’s roles in the corporate world. Ryan and Haslam (2007) posited the glass cliff refers to “a position in which women are promoted into risky upper level positions in which failure and subsequent loss of the high-level position is likely” (p. 286). Women in the corporate world could be so desperate to gain acceptance in to the higher echelon of corporate leadership and management that they do not recognize what is happening. Women could find themselves as the scapegoat with no way out of the situation.

### **Stained Glass Ceiling**

The stained-glass ceiling is the clergywoman’s equivalent of the glass ceiling and refers to “cultural and institutional limits placed on the ministry of clergywomen” (Cooper, 2011, p. 5). Since women in the UMC can be clergy and ordained, some may surmise that they have already broken through the stained-glass ceiling, but many clergywomen encounter the stained-glass ceiling while they try to rise in the hierarchy in the church. The stained-glass ceiling refers to the difficulty for women who seek to gain a role within church leadership (Rois, Rixon, & Faserus, 2013). de Gasquet (2010) posited that, “in religious groups where women have accessed ordination. . . women come up against a very real glass ceiling that stops them from accessing leadership positions” (p. e29). Women in clergy positions do not reach the same positions as their male counterparts. The number of women in leadership positions diminishes as she climbs the ladder (p. e29).

Christo-Baker, Roberts, and Rogalin (2012) stated “the stained-glass ceiling, represents the complexity of the issues in a manner that considers each component discretely as well as part of a larger whole, much like a stained-glass mosaic” (p. 7). The barriers faced by clergywomen in their quest for leadership positions are many; among them are: (a) gender issues, (b) racial and ethnic factors, (c) role expectations, and (d) socialization (Christo-Baker et al.).

Also, the stained-glass ceiling is an issue related to Christian higher education. Leadership positions in higher education (i.e., administrators, professors, deans, etc.) have historically been filled by men, and women are extremely underrepresented. Longman and Lafrenier (2012) stated that “male-normed organizational cultures are a contributing factor to the scarcity of women in senior leadership positions, a reality that contributes to tokenism--an added challenge faced by many women” (p. 47).

According to Lowe (2011), “while American culture is beginning to experience more of a shift toward female leadership, there remains ground to cover before parity can truly exist” (p. 315). Increasingly, women take on more positions of power, are more self-confident, and become more educated. Clergywomen, who experience the stained-glass ceiling in their work, must forge ahead to continually improve their skills and serve God and their churches.

### **United Methodist Church**

The United Methodist Church (UMC) “is part of a tradition that has been an activity of human beings as far back in history as can be traced” (Allen, 1986, p. 11). McEllhenney (1986) stated that “Methodism represents spiritual energy, the intensity of human willpower acting in divine harmony with the divine will, to bring persons to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to send them out to reform their nation” (p. 10). McAnally (1995) reported that, while John and Charles Wesley attended Oxford University in 1729, they met regularly with others in their class for “intellectual and spiritual improvement and to help each other to become better Christians”

(p. 12). “So, systematic were their habits of religious duty and their rules of conduct that other students referred to them as Methodists” (p. 12).

Several classifications of UMC clergy were identified in Chapter One. The following provide more details. Deacons are ordained clergy, who “lead the church in relating faith and worship to life and ministry in the world” (Allen, 1986, p. 65). Elders in the UMC are “committed to serve as itinerating clergy, that is, to be sent where the needs of the church and their gifts for ministry are judged by the bishop and the cabinet to be a good fit” (p. 66). The UMC system is hierarchal, which needs explanation to understand the gender differences between the clergy. This organization is explained in the *United Methodist Book of Discipline* (2012). The General Conference is the main governing body of the church and has a hierarchal structure that is similar to the U.S. Government. Elders, local pastors, Associate Members, and Deacons make up the local clergy, who are members of the annual conference and not, necessarily, a specific, local church. The local church serves as the base of the structure, with one clergy who is the senior pastor. Larger churches have a senior pastor, in addition to the associate pastor, who makes less money and is lower in the structure. A local church is part of a district which has a District Supervisor (DS) in charge, and this DS is clergy, as well. All clergy in a district report to the DS, and each district can include 40-50 churches. Each district is part of a Conference.

The Conference is responsible for enforcement of the rules contained in the *Book of Discipline* (2012), and each Conference is led by a Bishop and his or her cabinet, which includes 10-12 members, who oversee various responsibilities throughout the Conference such as finances and leadership. The Bishop and his/her cabinet make clergy appointments to various churches within the Conference. Individual Clergy do not interview with a specific individual church,

instead, clergy endure a rigorous vetting system by the Bishop and the cabinet in regard to placement in a new church.

**Itineracy.** Another important aspect of the UMC is that all clergy are itinerant, which means they must be willing to serve a church for a limited amount of time (e.g., 3-10 years) and then move to another assignment. Sometimes, this itinerancy makes it necessary for clergy to move large distances to take their next appointment. According to the 2012 UMC Book of Discipline,

The itinerant system is the accepted method of The United Methodist Church by which ordained elders are appointed by the bishop to fields of labor. All ordained elders shall accept and abide by these appointments. . . Appointments are to be made with consideration of the gifts and evidence of God's grace of those appointed, to the needs, characteristics, and opportunities of congregations and institutions, and with faithfulness to the commitment to an open itineracy. Open itineracy means appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age. (§¶ 431.1)

However, itineracy can cause additional stress for the clergywoman. Borish (2009) observed that “moving to a new neighborhood is a stressful, anxiety-filled experience; which on average occurs every 3 to 5 years” (p. 16).

## **Women and the Church**

**Holy Scripture, unsupportive of women in ministry.** Beginning in Genesis (Genesis 3:1-13, 39:7-20), women are blamed for the fall of humanity and are depicted as deceitful and untrustworthy. In Genesis 19:30-36, Judges 16, 1 Kings 11, Deuteronomy 11:13-21, and Numbers 5:11-21, women are portrayed as sexual predators and suspected fornicators and adulterers. However, Grady (2006) noted that “history is littered with examples of people who have used the Bible to justify cruelty, injustice, or bizarre behavior” (p. 7). It is easy for anyone to take one verse from the Bible out of context to rationalize anything they want to do. Smith (2013) observed that “scripture is often taken out of context and used to prevent women from



serving as church leaders” (p. 33). Specifically, the verse in Ephesians 5:22 (NIV), wives submit to your husbands, as to the Lord, has been used to “compel Christian wives to tolerate physical or sexual abuse from their husbands in order to glorify God with submissive femininity” (Grady, p. 9).

The Holy Bible contains many verses about a woman’s role in the ministry of the church. Depending on interpretation, the acceptance of women into a ministerial role or even church attendance and worship is open to interpretation. Bristow (1988) stated that “throughout most of church history, the apostle Paul has held the reputation of being what one might call the Great Christian Male Chauvinist toward women” (p. 1).

The principal verse used by many, which is attributed to Paul for the subjugation of women, is 1 Corinthians 14:34, “Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says” (NIV). The second most frequently quoted verse is 1 Timothy 2:12, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet” (NIV). These two verses have been used as the rationale for women to be treated as second class citizens throughout history.

**Holy Scripture, in support of women’s ministry.** As mentioned earlier, scripture is interpreted differently by different lay people, pastors, and others. To a lay person, a verse of scripture can have a certain meaning in the morning and another meaning in the evening when read again. Cummings and Latta (2010) posited that,

In the New Testament when the Samaritan woman met Jesus at the well and accepted his invitation to spread the Word (John 4: 1-30), she moved women to the center of salvation history and offered an example of a woman’s response when she is called to preach. (p. 666)

Romans 16:1-15 may be one of the most comprehensive scriptures, which validates a woman’s role in ministry. In this passage, at least 10 women and their ministries are discussed by Paul.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, there has been no shortage of women leaders; one can find scripture regarding women and their role in the creation of Christianity.

In Genesis 1:27, Deborah (Judges 4:4-9) was a prophet and judge; Barak trusted her so much he would not go to the battlefield without her. Some say Mary Magdalene was the first women pastor, because she was the first to spread the message that Jesus had been resurrected, “When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene. . . She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it” (Mark 16:9-11). In Joel 2:28-29, Joel speaks to how women will be equal to men in the last days, and afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people, Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. In Mark 15:40-41, it was confirmed that women had a great role in Jesus’ ministry:

Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. In Galilee, these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Also, Luke 8:1-3 spoke of women who worked alongside Jesus in his ministry:

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 that women can be leaders and initiators:

“Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything

comes from God.”

The scripture which has been used for centuries as the bedrock for equality in work and life is Galatians 3:28; “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” This statement from Paul to the early church has been a “declaration of independence from human-fashioned boundaries, particularly those dividing ethnic groups, social classes and gender” (Lennox, 2012, p. 195). This scripture has been used in the discussion of the elimination of slavery, enhancement of women’s rights, and religion. On addition, in Philippians 2:5-7, Paul wrote “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” Paul’s intent is to impress upon Christians and others that our attitude should be like Jesus’ attitude. Jesus did not think about equality; he was an equal opportunity Messiah.

Whether we as a nation, a church, and a world have correctly interpreted this passage and others, which have been attributed to Paul (i.e., some not so complimentary to women), has not been proven. These scripture passages barely touch on the immensity of the woman’s role in the development of Christianity, and how women assisted Jesus and his apostles in the spread of Christianity. Hedberg (2010) posited that the

Bible is not a hammer for men to use against women or for women to use against men. Instead it is a remarkable reminder to both men and women to treat each other with love and respect. God did not intend for the Bible to be read selectively. Women are not somehow relegated to a partial gospel. The great commission is addressed to both men and women. Both men and women have spiritual gifts; both men and women are exhorted to strive for unity; both men and women are challenged to live lives worthy of their calling; and both men and women are called to live holy lives. (p. 75)

**Gender issues/gender roles in the United Methodist Church.** Martin, Reynolds, and Keith (2006) reported that “gender bias dynamics refers to interactions that draw attention to

gender when gender should have nothing to do with the job, task, or interaction at hand” (p. 671). The UMC is the second largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. and, of the 12 million UMC members, 54% are women, and 22% of UMC are led by a woman (UMC.org, 2015). Female clergy bring a different set of experiences to ministry, in that, women’s life experiences are different than that of men. “As much as women and men would like to believe that gender makes no difference, the reality experienced by many women clergy is that their gender affects (but does not determine) how they lead and how people respond to their style” (Park & Willhauck, 2013, p. 332). McDuff and Mueller (2002) posited that women clergy are older, more likely to be single or divorced, and are more likely to have had a secular job. In addition, Gerrits (2014) stated that “spiritual authority is gendered masculine and women pastors are feminine gatecrashers and thus scholars would expect women to face some exclusion” (p. 36).

When the church teaches Biblical stories, which show that Jesus respected persons regardless of gender, women who enter the ministry may assume that they may be well received and not encounter subversion and resistance (Cooper, 2011). However, often, this is not the case. Niemela (2011) posited that “gender roles often refer to the set of social and behavioral norms that are considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of specific sex in the context of the specific culture” (pp. 359-360). Also, women, who are employed in a traditionally male dominated field, may feel pressured to perform their “proper gendered identities and to behave as they feel people expect them to behave as a woman” (p. 368).

Regarding the roles of women, Grady (2003) stated that “women in the Bible carried out all kinds of diverse assignments, they were prophets, entrepreneurs, queens, servants, slaves, deacons, midwives, mothers, teachers, singers, dancers, evangelists, and messengers” (p. 86). A woman does not need to be married or a mother, but for many years this was her primary role in

the home. Grady observed the whole argument about a woman having a specific role in the church is a “clever religious way to candy-coat chauvinism and pride” (p. 87). According to Kim-Kort (2014), “to speak of sexism among some groups is to speak to what is generally accepted as a nonexistent problem” (p. 8).

As noted earlier, the UMC Book of Discipline (2012) addresses gender equality:

We affirm women and men to be equal in every aspect of their common life. We affirm the right of women to equal treatment in employment, responsibility, promotion, and compensation. We affirm the importance of women in decision making position at all levels of Church life and urge such bodies to guarantee their presence through policies of employment and recruitment. (§162)

However, Kenaston (2015) maintained that clergywomen’s salaries, appointments, and leadership styles “prove that the quest for gender equality is far from attained in the United Methodist Church” (p. 162). In addition, Kenaston (2015) stated that, “even though the UMC may intentionally seek diversity, it often succumbs to bias, conscious or not, that women are inferior to men at vocations that require management and administration” (p.162).

**Pay inequity.** In the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), it was reported that, in 2014, women earned 76 cents for each dollar earned by male clergy. In 2014, male clergy earned \$1,007 per week, and female clergy earned only \$763, a difference of \$12,000 in annual earnings. A clergyman may receive a pay raise when another child is born into his family, but the clergywoman may have her hours reduced and pay cut when she marries and has children.

**Ordination.** Reuther (2011) posited that “women have been excluded from [the] ordained ministry in the Christian tradition for most of its 2,000-year history” (p. 63). Almost 40 years ago, Kepler (1978) maintained that “the struggle for women’s ordination and employment has been very costly” (p. 402). Once they are ordained, women face an entirely new set of problems. Some women have faced discrimination in the process of finding and keeping

appointments. As noted previously, UMC clergywomen have been eligible for ordination since 1956 and, according to the UMC Book of Discipline (2012), ordination in the United Methodist Church is performed by the:

Historic laying-on of hands by the bishop, which signifies that the church affirms and continues its apostolic ministry through this person - empowered by the Holy Spirit. Those ordained commit to living and proclaiming the whole gospel. Persons may be ordained as deacons or elders. Deacons are ordained to the ministries of Word and Service. Elders are ordained to the ministries of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. (pp. 301-304)

**Call to ministry.** Kenaston (2015) stated that:

women have continued, in increasing numbers, to answer the call to ministry, their presence and their witness have slowly pushed the church in the direction of gender equality and by their service, many clergywomen have broken down their church members' prejudices and stereotypes about women in leadership. (p. 172)

Hearing and answering the call to ministry can be a personal and profound experience. Many clergywomen may not answer the call because they feel unworthy. Zikmund, Lummis, and Yang (1998) posited that "the call to ordained ministry remains an uphill struggle" (p. 22).

**Patriarchy.** Throughout recorded history, "a patriarchal social system in which the male has power and authority over the female has almost always prevailed" (Powell, 2012, p. 122). Patriarchy is an important issue in the discussion of a woman's role in the secular as well as the religious realms. Wentworth (2005) held that "women in the United States have challenged the patriarchy through such collective efforts of the Women's Rights Movement of the nineteenth century and the Women's Liberation Movement of the late twentieth century" (p. 1). While these movements have advanced the rights of women, the patriarchal system is still in existence. Murphy (2014) maintained that the Church "has long been an institution founded upon patriarchal authority and for centuries has structured its power in such a way that women play a subservient role" (p. 608). The term, patriarchy, always "indicates the rule of men, not just over

women but also over the general structure of social relations” (Credo, 2011, ¶1). Lerner (1986) defined patriarchy as “the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and in the extension of male domination of women in society in general” (p. 239). In addition, Clifford (2004) stated “patriarchy refers to systems of legal, economic, and political relations that legitimate and enforce relations of dominance in society” (p. 18). Further, Walby (1989) stated that “patriarchal culture is a structure composed of a relatively diverse set of patriarchal practices” (p. 227). Religion, educational systems, and corporate entities have relied on a patriarchal culture for many years. Patriarchal culture is about control and domination in every realm. Clifford (2004) noted that “patriarchy with its dominance and submission dynamics is a barrier to any interdependence and mutuality that can guide the vision of a holistic and egalitarian society in multiple ways” (p.21).

In Western culture, it is common for women to be “regarded (or treated) as emotional, whereas a man is rational; woman is identified with nature, referred to as Mother Earth, and man is identified with science that seeks to control and dominate her” (Clifford, 2004, p. 19). It has been the norm for a male to be the head of the church, school, and corporation. According to Johnson (2009), “patriarchy’s defining elements are its male-dominated, male-identified, male-centered character” (p. 29). It is important to identify the cultural elements of patriarchy and how they relate to the structure of social life, because women and men’s roles are different. Specifically, in patriarchal systems, it is allowed for clergywomen to be discriminated against, and this system is instrumental in shaping beliefs. It was Smith’s (2013) position that “patriarchal interpretations (and misinterpretations) of Scripture have shaped attitudes toward women” (p. 35), and women need to look deeper in the systems in order to fully understand the current discrimination against women in ministry. Arana and Salas (1994) maintained that

“patriarchal culture is based not only on a belief in the inferior nature of women but on a hierarchical view of reality, anthropomorphism individualism, secularization, aggression, competition and rationalism” (p. 20).

Grady (2006) stated

The rigid patriarchal view of the family says that men have been placed in the God ordained role of full-time boss and provider. The husband’s role according to the conservative religious model is to lead and protect his wife, while her role is to trust him and submit to his authority at all time without question. Since he is supposedly smarter, stronger, and more spiritually capable, the woman has no option but to accept her inferior status. (p. 80)

Many women, who have been called by God to serve Him as clergy, may have encountered a patriarchal system at home growing up, in seminary, at home with her husband, and even in her church as the first female pastor. Sultana (2011) stated that “patriarchy is the prime obstacle to women’s advancement and development” (p. 1). A patriarchal system can keep a woman subordinate and dominated. In countries outside the U.S., such as Pakistan, women are subjected to the patriarchal system which allows different types of male violence against women, such as “wife-beating, rape and other sexual abuse, female foeticide, and dowry murders. (p. 10). Feminists use patriarchy as a method to explain the oppression of women.

**Sexual harassment.** According to Bagilhole (2006), women can be kept from advancement in their careers and achievement in equality with men in similar careers by the cultural environments they encounter. Often, women in non-traditional occupations experience a culture that is hostile. Bagilhole (2006) stated that “sexual harassment in non-traditional work may be more extensive and aggressive than in traditional forms of female employment as women challenge the organization just by their presence” (p.118.)

Sexual harassment is rampant in U.S. society, especially among the clergy (Williams, 2016). Lay people may even experience unwanted advances from clergy persons in their



church. Clergywomen and laity alike may not have the equivalent resources or power of their male counterparts and may experience sexual harassment because they do not have these.

Williams stated:

In the beginning, God created all of us in the image of God. It's such a simple statement, right? Unfortunately, at some point, one decided to have dominion over another. The resources may include physical strength, more money, more land, more education, more prestige, and higher positions within the workforce, etc. For some the position of greater resources and dominance supports a belief that this is a free ticket to belittle, demean, and degrade a person with fewer resources. (p. 1)

Sexual harassment is about power and can take many forms. Lind (2005) posited that sexual harassment can include "an inappropriate touch, inappropriate language, and at times manipulation of a situation that can threaten the integrity of another person" (p. 70). How a clergywoman responds to sexual harassment is important also. Should she ignore it? Should she confront it? The ruling body of the UMC employs many opinions, resources, and processes to address sexual harassment in the church. In the Book of Resolutions of the UMC (2012), it is stated that "harassment is still a significant problem: well over three-fourths of the clergy (men and women) and half of the laywomen had experienced sexual harassment in the Church (about one third of laymen)" (§ 2044).

**Feminism.** Although the Women's Movement allowed women to make progress toward gender equality, "cultural and psychological barriers remain that may prevent women from capitalizing on the advances that have been made" (Rudman & Fairchild, 2007, p. 125). One need not be a man hating, bra burning, lesbian to be a feminist. However, in the mid-20th century, there were many cynics who tried to disparage the cause of feminism, even though Ropers-Huliman and Winters (2011) stated, "feminism focuses on injustices as they have historically developed and currently exist in our society" (p. 668).

Lundberg and Farnham (1947) described feminism as a “deep illness, characterized by a hatred for men and a taste of lechery” (p. 24). Also, Lundberg and Farnham (1947) maintained that “women belonged in the home, raising children, and taking care of their husbands, there was no need for women to pursue education, employment, or be active in politics” (p. 24). However, in contrast, Cooper-White (2008) posited that feminism means

Taking seriously the call for social, economic, and political parity and equal rights and responsibilities, of women with men, and looking unflinchingly at the painful realities and the negative impact on both men and women both historically and in contemporary societies. (p. 18)

Clifford (2004) held that feminism is a “a social vision rooted in women’s experiences of sexually based discrimination and oppression, a movement seeking the liberation of women from all forms of sexism, and an academic method of analysis being used in every discipline” (pp. 16-17). Further, Clifford stated that “a Christian feminist spirituality emphasizes conscious involvement of women in their own personal integration through a commitment to a self-transcendence that reaches toward the God revealed in Jesus Christ, through the grace of the Holy Spirit” (p. 210).

Similarly, Grady (2006) insisted that most modern Christians “don’t even realize that feminism began as a Christian movement” (p. 173). In 1848, Lucretia Mott and four female friends began the feminist movement during a conference at a Methodist church in Seneca Falls, NY. This movement involved the issues of work for a woman’s right to vote, as well as equality for women. Equality in the home, workplace, and in the church. Hull (1986) posited that there must be a distinction between the two approaches of looking at equality: (a) secular feminism, and (b) biblical equality. According to Hull, the secular feminist says

I want my rights. I want to be able to compete on an equal basis with men. The biblical feminist says: I want to be free to be the person God created me to be and to have the privilege to follow Christ as He calls me to do. Feminism without Christ is just another

power struggle. But adding the word biblical to feminism indicates that these feminists want to explore their conviction about equality of women in a biblical way and implement their findings according to biblical guidelines. (p. 56)

**Jesus Christ, the first feminist.** As much as he was a product of his era, admittedly one marked by gender, class, religion, and community exclusion, Jesus Christ brought a ministry of transformational invitation. “The Living Christ invited – and still invites – to a common table of grace, justice, power, people who had never before been invited to the religious power tables, including women, cultural and religious minorities, social outcasts, and disreputable community sinners” (Williams, 2004, p. 172). Leontine Kelly, the first black woman bishop in the UMC stated in a New York Times interview:

We must recognize the kind of culture in which Jesus and his disciples lived, it was a very male-dominated culture. However, Jesus did violate the customs of the culture in that he talked with women, shared with women. Women were part of the entourage of Jesus Christ. God calls whomever God would call. (as quoted in Nolan, 2012, p. 1).

Aguilar (2013) maintained that “Jesus Christ was a feminist” (p. 1). Jesus went out of his way to show kindness to women and to “challenge the cultural biases against women that were pervasive in Israel during the New Testament era” (Grady, 2006, p. 10). In Jesus’ day, women were considered evil and the source of the original sin, and were not permitted to be educated. Marina and Fonteneau (2012) posited “Jesus Christ appeared at a moment of crises in Palestinian culture, democratizing ministry for men and women by taking religious teaching out of the synagogue and to the roadsides and hillsides on the outskirts of town” (p. 71). Jesus’ ministry helped women like Mary and Martha. He performed miracles for both men and women; he had men and women followers, and women were a large part of his ministry.

Grady (2006) reported that Jesus went against the social and cultural norm during his ministry, by speaking to women as equals. In Luke 8:1-3, Luke named Mary Magdalene, Susanna, and Joanna as three women who traveled with Jesus and their money was used to

finance His ministry. Jesus was willing to “identify with the plight of oppressed women, he elevated them as no other religion has ever done” (p. 15). In addition, Grady (2003) stated that “Jesus came to set women free from oppression, he elevated women to a place of dignity and equality with men” (p. 44).

Brown (1996) observed that “Jesus’ attention was not distracted by societal shortcomings” (p. 119), such as the plight of women. For example, during the time Jesus walked the earth, “Israel had fallen to an all-time low in its view of women, but Jesus was emphatic in His regard for their person and their potential” (p. 119). “When Jesus began His ministry, there were rules for women and about women, because women were seen as inferior to men by both religion and society, they were to be treated accordingly” (p. 128). During His time on earth, Jesus tried to rewrite the rules as they applied to women. By the inclusion of women in his ministry, He helped to establish their value and their potential.

**Marriage and family.** Proeschold-Bell, Smith, Eisenberg, LeGrand, Adams, and Wilk (2015) posited that, “like all employees, clergy experience rewards and stressors in their work” (p. 704). Some clergywomen may think they must choose between marriage and family and their career in the church, especially because some clergy are always on call to help deal with the stressful situations of others. However, Golden, Piedmont, Ciarrocchi, Rodgeron (2004) theorized that “clergy often embark on their calling to ministry with a high degree of idealism and motivation, which may lead to significant psychological investment in their careers and greater work-family conflict” (p. 120). In addition, clergy are expected to be competent in a diverse range of skills and knowledge sets: as preachers, liturgists, educators, administrators, and pastoral caregivers” (Doehring, 2013, p. 623). The management of such different roles in

the church can add to the stress of the clergywoman. McMinn, Lish, Trice, Root Gilbert, and Yap (2005) identified the stressors which clergy may experience:

Role conflicts, proliferation of activities, discrepancy between amount of time in administrative duties versus pastoral duties, spiritual dryness, perfectionism, no time for study or to be alone, failure of dreams, unwelcome surprise, frustration, feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, loneliness/isolation, and unrealistic expectations of oneself, the senior pastor, one's congregation, and one's denomination. (p. 564)

Johnson (2012) stated that “while all adults in the paid labor force face the difficult task of managing the competing pressures of work and family life, clergy families encounter an added dynamic in the way spouses are integrated into the church” (p. 19). The boundaries of each pressure can be an ongoing struggle for couples to manage the demands of daily life. Darling, Hill, and McWey (2004) observed that, often, clergy are called upon to minister to and support individuals during times of crises and work long hours as they place the needs of their congregants above their family. Darling et al. (2004) posited that, “while they are serving the community, the needs of their spouses and families may often go unaddressed” (p. 261). Also, clergy and their families are in highly visible positions in the church. Many in the congregation watch the clergywoman's children grow up in the church, and they become a part of a large church family. However, there is also the expectation from church members that the clergy will be expected to meet numerous and sometimes unrealistic expectations. Weaver, Flannelly, Larson, Stapleton, and Koenig (2002) stated, “tension, fatigue, and the pressure of excess time demands can drain resources necessary for dealing with the normal responsibilities of family life” (p. 398).

Regarding the male spouses of clergywomen and their role in their spouse's church, Knight Johnson (2012) maintained that “male spouses of clergywomen are much less insistent on claiming a particular position, perhaps because they feel they are already paving new roads as

men” (p. 38). Clergy spouses must search and determine what role they will play in their spouse’s church. Both Murphy-Geiss (2011) and Knight Johnson (2012) posited that women and men must create their own unique strategies for fulfilling the role of clergy spouse and can remain within their set boundaries to carry out these strategies.

Cody-Rydzewski (2011) stated that “most men married to clergywomen are employed full-time, and are unable to perform the duties associated with clergy wives, such as involvement in social activities” (p. 277). Many men married to clergy may not be willing to perform these duties and may “distance themselves from domestic responsibilities to reaffirm their masculinity as spiritual head of the household” (Bartkowski, 1999, p. 40).

**Health issues for clergywomen.** Peyton and Gatrell (2013) noted that “clergy work has a religious calling at its core, clergy believe that their physical, intellectual and emotional selves are permanently claimed for the service of God” (p. 378). However, the health of the workforce of any organization is important to its overall success and productivity, and there is no religious exemption for the church from this requirement (Weems & Arnold, 2009). Mistakenly, many clergy (i.e., both male and female) attend to the needs of others before they attend to their own. In the UMC General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW; 2015), it is asserted that healthy clergy families are the underpinnings of effective pastoral leadership, which can be a driver of a vital congregation. “Clergy work-related poor psychological health, stress, and burnout pose an increasingly serious problem for the leaders of denominations throughout the world” (Lewis, Turton, & Francis, 2007, p. 2). In addition, “clergy health is mediated by stress and self-care and coping practices” (Proeschold-Bell, LeGrand, James, Wallace, Adams, & Toole, 2011, p. 700).

Proeschold-Bell, LeGrand, James, Wallace, Adams, and Toth (2013) stated that “the health of clergy is a compelling but somewhat neglected topic” some may think that clergy live life by “wise eating, exercise and stress management habits” (p. 701). However, according to the literature, this is not the case for many clergy. Ellison and Matilla (1993) posited that “pastors had difficulties with stress, feelings of inadequacy, and frustration meeting ministry goals” (p. 30). Proeschold-Bell et al. stated that “concern for the health of clergy has been neglected because the clergy position is so other-oriented as to stave off concern for them, and possibly due to the better overall mortality rates experienced by clergy” (p. 717). Combined stressors such as inadequate social support, low pay, high time demands, and other factors can decrease a clergywoman’s commitment to healthy behaviors. In addition, Proeschold-Bell and LeGrand (2012) posited that the “high chronic disease burden experienced by clergy (both men and women) raises the question of whether health problems are disrupting the ability of clergy to perform their unique leadership roles” (p. 736).

The need for connection with other clergywomen is an important aspect of clergy health. Whether it is a phone call, coffee date, one-on-one mentoring, or support groups, clergywomen need to be connected. Lehman (2002) posited that women need to stay connected to “serve effectively in ministry” (p. 45). Such pastoral care for women is needed, because “injustices still exist for clergywomen” (p. 48). However, Clergywomen need to hear one another teach and preach; they need to play together and pray together. McDuff and Mueller (2002) maintained that “female clergy [need to] receive higher levels of support from their congregations and colleagues than male clergy” (p.470). This support may be a result, because women clergy have a more positive attitude than their male counterparts, or women are more nurturing; thus, clergywomen receive more nurturing if they allow it to happen.

**Stress/burnout.** Ministry is a stressful vocation. Some clergy may experience stress and burnout because of their dedication and commitment to their chosen career. Barnard and Curry (2012) posited that “many clergy enter the ministry because they believe that they have been called to use their gifts to lead churches, relying on the grace of God to cover their inadequacies” (p. 149). While many clergy give their all, and try their best to be everything to everyone, many clergy experience burnout, which Barnard and Curry (2012) defined as “a decline in energy, motivation, and commitment and occurs when high expectations for achievement do not come to fruition” (p. 149).

Doehring (2013) stated that “clergy are often first responders to crises experienced by people and families in their congregations and communities” (p. 623). Some of these crises can be traumatic to both congregants and clergywoman alike. Grosch and Olsen (2000) maintained that “most clergy began their careers with high ideals, enormous optimism, idealism about their ability to be helpful, and a commitment to help people” (p. 619). There are still many in the churches who refuse to recognize that there is a problem with what is today called *clergy burnout* (Randall, 2013, p.334). Typically, burnout is typically characterized “by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment” (Miner, Dowson, & Sterland, 2010, p. 167).

Miles and Proeschold-Bell (2013) reported that “clergy often face a great deal of occupational stress that in turn can lead to psychological stress” (p. 199). Although stress and burnout can be issues in any person’s life and career, perhaps, it may be more abundant in that of a clergywoman. If burnout impacts a minister’s capacity to work consistently and productively, congregations may be affected by a decreased standard of leadership and care (Miner et al., 2010, p. 464). Schaefer and Jacobsen (2009) stated “one common cause of stress is the tangled



web of interests, beliefs, and priorities that exist between the cleric and the congregation (p. 59). There are so many difficult decisions and moral choices to consider in the church and, in a clergy person's personal life, stress and burnout is inevitable.

Wallace, Proeschold-Bell, LeGrand, James, Swift, Toole, and Toth (2012) stated the clergy vocation is "unique in its combination of responsibilities--clergy preach and make meaning for their congregants, perform sacramental rites, and visit sick congregants, and have numerous administrative duties" (p. 114). If a clergywoman is married, she may have the added responsibilities of children and the management of a household, which contribute to her stress level. "Research over the past several decades has demonstrated that clergy, like many professionals face a great deal of job-related stress" (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012, p. 23). Women clergy may encounter issues with their health more often than male clergy due to the amount of stress of being a female clergywoman (Frenk, Mustillo, Hooten, & Meador, 2011). Also, Frenk et al. posited that "researchers do not know how frequently clergy experience occupational distress or understand the pathways through which occupational distress affects outcomes relevant to clergy and denominational researchers" (p. 298).

Research on the nature of stress associated with the clerical profession suggests not only that clergy experience unique stressors related to their careers, such as counseling individuals and their families, teaching, guiding, and carrying out administrative responsibilities, but that these stressors may exacerbate the effects of work on their personal lives (Wells, Probst, McKeown, Mitchem, & Whiejong 2012, p. 216). Also, clergywomen may experience stress and tension in their career and family obligations, since they may be performing many of the jobs normally expected of clergy wives as well (Cody-Rydzewski, 2007, p. 277).

It was the position of Faucett, Corwyn, and Poling (2013) that clergy may be “particularly susceptible to role stress, because a minister must attempt to balance the frequently conflicting expectations of their congregations, denominational superiors, and family members, while attempting to stay true to their religious calling” (p. 293). Married women clergy with young children may have to rely on their spouses or family members an inordinate amount of time while they attend to duties such as being called out in the middle of the night, funerals, and conference attendance.

Proeschold-Bell and LeGrand (2010) posited that five prominent stressors have been identified for clergy: “(a) mobility, (b) low financial compensation, (c) inadequate social support, (d) high time demands and (e) intrusions on family boundaries” (p. 1867). The combination of these stressors can lead to a decrease in participating in healthy behaviors. When a clergywoman has had a long stressful day, it may be difficult to arrive home late and prepare a healthy dinner, especially if she has no spousal support.

Maslach, Schaufel, and Leiter (2001) indicated that burnout is defined as “a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job” (p. 397). Burnout is a common condition among those in serving professions. Usually, stress and overwork lead to burnout among ministers, who are a part of the serving profession. The relationship that people have with their careers and the difficulties that can arise when the relationship goes wrong has been a source of research for many years. Numerous many studies have been completed on the effect of burnout on Catholic priests, Presbyterian ministers, Baptist ministers, and Methodist ministers. Crosskey, Curry, and Leary (2015) maintained that “consequences of burnout include impaired physical health, low professional commitment, and low self-esteem” (p. 786).

Chandler (2010) stated that “pastors risk burnout because of inordinate ministerial demands which may drain their emotional, spiritual and physical energy and impair their effectiveness” (p. 273). Some of the practices she suggested to alleviate the stress and burnout associated with the ministry profession include: (a) spiritual renewal, (b) the practice of spiritual disciplines such as prayer and fasting, and (c) seek support such as professional counseling.

**Clergy mental health.** Clergywomen are expected to be compassionate and caring and act as a maternal role model to their congregation. In addition, clergywomen are expected to deal with their emotions as well as those of their congregants, a role that is termed, *emotional labor*. According to Hochschild (1983), emotional labor is defined as “the requirement to regulate personal emotions and manage the emotions of others as part of the job role” (p. 58). The effects of emotional labor can drain the clergywoman of her own peace and well-being. A clergywoman’s emotions may even be scrutinized by external forces. McKenna, Yost, and Boyd (2007) posited that pastors “face extreme work pressure because of the daily confrontations with only personal and personnel problems, but also the confrontations in the church and the emotional reality of the suffering and even death of others around them” (p. 180).

Wiggins-Frame and Shehan (2004) reported that clergywomen sometimes “find themselves caught in an impossible conflict between pastoral duties and family responsibilities” (p. 370). Clergywomen’s tasks can become a 24 hour, 7 days a week job. Proeschold-Bell, Miles, Toth, Adams, Smith, and Toole (2013) stated that the “clergy occupation is unique in its combination of role strains and higher calling, putting clergy mental health at risk” (p. 439). Trihub, McMinn, Buhrow, and Johnson (2010), discussed the need for mental health services and support for clergy to remain in their positions. Members of the clergy need to know that

they are not alone and must be made aware of the avenues in which they may receive counseling and nurturing to continue their ministries.

The health of clergy is important because the profession impacts a large percentage of the population. Francis, Village, Robbins, and Wulff (2011) stated that to “promote a psychologically healthy clergy the ongoing commitment to continuing professional development and education needs to focus on ways of helping clergy reduce the negative effects of stress and burnout” (p. 10). The demands of ministry work stem from the nature of the work and the way the work interferes with the families of the ministers. Shehan, Wiggins, and Cody-Rydzewski (2007), posited “clergywoman may find themselves caught in unmanageable conflicts between pastoral duties and family responsibilities” (p. 638).

Like all vocations, ministry can be full of trials and benefits. The clergywoman can be highly satisfied with her career choice, but may be at risk for depression if her sense of accomplishment or expectation is not felt. Lack of job satisfaction among clergywomen may lead to stress also. Zondaj (2004) stated that, “for pastors to be satisfied with their profession, they need to be able to regard their work as worthwhile, to consider their work important and believe in it – pastors will find it difficult to be satisfied with a job they do not believe in” (p. 257). Like all professionals, pastors need communication, support, mentoring, vision-casting, and friendship. They need to know that they are not alone, that they are a part of something bigger and have mentors who can remind them of their calling. Like those they serve, pastors need a pastor to listen and take notice of signs of distress, perhaps even before they are aware of it themselves.

**Itinerant system.** The UMC clergywomen, unlike other members of other religions, must also deal with the itinerant system within the church. The itinerant system is a system in which “all ordained clergy and their families are subject to relocation review on an annual basis to serve as pastors of churches or in other ministries determined by the Bishop of the Annual Conference” (Shehan, Schultz, & Wiggins-Frame, 1999, p. 248). Because of this system, UMC clergywomen and men relocate on an average of once every 4 years. The issues of marriage, child-rearing, and spouse careers can play a huge part in the mental, spiritual, and physical health of clergywomen during a relocation. MacAnally (1995) stated

Being a part of the itinerancy means that a clergy person is willing to go where sent. This system assures every pastor a church and every church a pastor. It also matches the gifts and graces of an individual with the needs of a particular church or area of service. (p. 58)

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, used itinerancy as a method to spread the gospel.

When he was traveling, often, Wesley was not welcomed into many venues, so he took the word and moved on to the next location. Jesus was considered an itinerant minister as well.

Although some clergywomen express anxiety or dread when it comes to moving, they can be assured that there is also a scriptural foundation for itinerancy. In Genesis 12:1 (NRSV), Abram is told by God to “go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” The Great Commission, found in Matthew 28, has Jesus saying to his disciples, “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Clergywomen promise God when they are ordained that they will go where they are needed, but according to Spiak (2011), “there is a disconnect between the amount of time it takes to build trust and the average appointment length of Methodist clergy” (p. 4).

**Women in leadership.** In every organization, including the church, effective leaders are needed. In recent years, the number of women who enter the ministry, including Methodism, has grown. Powell (2012) maintained that “effective leadership today requires a combination of behaviors that are masculine (contingent reward) and feminine (individualized consideration) and the absence of other behaviors that are sex-neutral (laissez-faire)” (p. 134). In addition, Newkirk and Cooper (2013) said these women “need to be prepared, supported and mentored” (p. 330) in order for them to be effective leaders.

Queen Esther was one of the early women leaders during the reign of King Xerxes. She was asked by Mordecai to help save the Jews from King Xerxes in Esther 4:14. “For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (NIV). God calls women to be leaders just as he calls men. Women must be ready to obey God’s leading and be ready, willing, and able to accept their royal position. Eagly (2007) stated, “in the United States, women are increasingly praised for having excellent skills for leadership and, in fact, women more than men, manifest leadership styles associated with effective performance leaders” (p. 1). With this statement from Eagly, Queen Esther and her role in saving the Jews from Xerxes can be revisited. If she had not had the leadership skills to back up her position as Queen, her entire family would have been destroyed. de Gasquet (2010) posited that

One of the typical features of a pioneering career is the woman’s permanent need to justify her acts, contrary to male ministers or rabbis, she must repeatedly explain to a great number of different people how she exercises her religious profession and why she is doing it as a woman. (p. e35)

Christman and McClellan (2008) observed that women administrators are “caught in the social constructions of gender and leadership” (p. 3). Kouzes and Posner (2007) posited that leadership

is a relationship and people are more likely to engage in activities led by those with whom they have a personal attachment. A clergyperson can be this personal attachment and allow for relationships within their congregation. Women tend to be more nurturing, and many church members find it difficult to speak to male clergy when they have personal problems. A leader can influence people in two major ways: (a) who they are and (b) what they do. Blackaby and Blackaby (2011) observed that these two ways of influence can be used to move people on to God's agenda by allowing the leaders to demonstrate the presence of God in their lives.

According to Adams (2007), "while women represent the vast majority of participants in religious organizations in the United States, their participation in top leadership positions within Christian congregations remains remarkably low" (p. 80). The church still operates from male created order or hierarchy and theological perspectives that diminish or blatantly reject female leadership (Willhauck & Thorpe, 2001).

According to Kim-Kort (2014), "women have been in ministry before recorded history, women have been co-creating with God through childbirth and nurturing, and finding ways to keep families and communities together" (p. 8). Women have been multi-taskers in life as well as the ministry all during history, stirring a pot on the stove with a child on her hip. Also, Rosie riveting in the airplane factories during World War II, while raising her children, with her spouse overseas, is another example of women working in stereotypical male occupations, and excelling at them.

Kenaston (2015) posited that "surprisingly, particularly due to a pastor's nurturing character, female pastors are still expected to lead more like men" (p. 162). Therefore, accordingly some women may not be wanted by larger churches, because they may be viewed as fragile and be easily coerced into doing something they do not want to do. Istomina (2016)

stated, “women have a deeper sense of compassion and people interpret it wrongly as – women are more vulnerable and too emotional” (p. 3). Sometimes women are labeled troublemakers, nuisance, pest, and an instigator, or too masculine or too pretty to be a preacher. Goodrich (2016) stated

Just like the discrimination women face in broader society, women frequently find themselves barred from particular leadership roles in their faith community, or they find it particularly difficult to rise to levels of authority, status, or power within their denomination. (p. 1)

Coder and Spiller (2013) posited that a “person’s sense of capability about their leadership potential may have more impact on their selection and acceptance of a leadership position than gender or gender roles” (p. 45).

### **Summary**

The available literature regarding the experiences of clergywomen in the UMC is abundant, but literature specific to WV clergywomen is not. Much of the literature addresses the issues of sexism, ageism, gender discrimination, and patriarchy, but does so within the culture of other states in the U.S. and abroad. This literature and the research data collected for this study can be used as a foundation for WV research, although WV specific research and data should continue to be collected.

West Virginia is a rural state and the culture is a patriarchal one. Women clergy are not eagerly accepted in many denominations, and churches in WV including the UMC. In Chapter Three the methodology of the study is presented, which includes the: (a) research questions, (b) the design of the study, (c) a description of the participants and the setting, (d) the procedures of the study, (e) the role of the researcher, and (f) the methods and procedures used for data analysis.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

In this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study, the experiences of female clergy of the United Methodist Church (UMC) in West Virginia (WV) were examined. For the purpose of this study, experiences are defined as entering in and engagement with the events or challenges which individuals experienced during their tenure of employment as female clergy. LeGrand, Proeschold-Bell, James, and Wallace (2013) posited that the “intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges faced by female clergy are largely the result of perceived or real concerns of congregations and church leaders about the competency of female pastors” (p. 312). The study was conducted through use of the theoretical lens of Eagly and Karau’s (2004) role congruity theory and Bandura’s (1977) theory of self-efficacy.

Because I have had an interest in women’s equality in the church, workplace, and in life, the topic of this current research study was clergywomen’s experiences in the UMC in WV. Therefore, the phenomenon of a clergywoman’s experience in the UMC, whether the experience was positive or negative, was examined. Husserl (1931, as cited in Moustakas, 1994) stated that the term, “phenomenology referred to knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one’s immediate awareness and experience” (p. 26). Similarly, Creswell (2013) stated that “phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 76).

Presented in this chapter are: (a) the research questions, which will guide the study; (b) the design of the study; (c) a description of the participants and the setting; (d) the procedures; (e) the role of the researcher; (f) the methods and procedures used for data analysis; and (g) the means by which the findings were validated.

## Design

In this study, the experiences of female clergy in the UMC of WV were examined with the use of a qualitative method of inquiry. As stated by Denzin and Lincoln (2003), qualitative researchers “stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 13).

van Manen (1990) maintained that the purpose of phenomenology is to gain “a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences” (p. 9). During the conduct of this study, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document review were utilized to elicit the real-life experiences of female clergy in WV. Giorgi (2007) cited the German philosopher, Husserl (1977), and his student, Heidegger (1982), as the two theorists who conceptualized the philosophy of phenomenology in the early 20th Century. Also, Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) cited Husserl (1977) and stated that the “starting point for knowledge was the self’s experience of phenomena, which are the various sensations, perceptions, and ideations that appear in consciousness when the self focuses attention on an object” (p. 495). The participants in this study were clergywomen, who served in the UMC in the capacity of elder, deacon, or licensed local pastor.

The theory of transcendental phenomenology was utilized in this study. Moustakas (1990) stated that transcendental phenomenology is a “scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness” (p. 49). In addition, transcendental phenomenology is “focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of the participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 80).

Also, Husserl (1931, as cited in Moustakas, 1994) was instrumental in the development of the terms and theories of transcendental phenomenology, such as: (a) Epoché, (b) noesis, and

(c) imaginative variation. The use of these processes allows researchers to clearly focus their phenomenological studies (Moustakas, p. 27). Moustakas stated that the researcher who follows “a transcendental phenomenological approach engages in disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being studied, and this is known as the Epoché process” (p. 22). In Epoché, “the everyday understandings, judgments and knowings are set aside, and the phenomena are revisited, freshly, naively, in a wide-open sense, from the vantage point of a pure or transcendental ego” (p. 33). Before, during, and after the interviews and focus groups, this researcher purposely set aside any prejudices, feelings, and thoughts regarding clergywomen and their experiences. Moustakas reported that, when one can become transparent in the viewing of things, then one becomes transparent to one’s self. When one views life transparently, it is necessary to “look, notice, and become aware, without imposing my prejudgment [of] what I see, think, imagine, or feel” (p. 86). In addition, Merriam (2009) stated that “prior to interviewing those who have had direct experience with the phenomenon, the researcher usually explores his or her own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions” (p. 25). Both Moustakas and Merriam supported the idea that, although this process is difficult for the researcher, it is necessary.

The term, noesis, refers to the “act of perceiving, feeling, thinking, or judging--all of which are embedded with meanings that are concealed and hidden from consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 69). During the process of noesis, I identified the way in which the clergywomen lived their experiences while they served in the church. This process complemented the identification of the clergywomen lived experiences.

The purpose of imaginative variation is to “grasp the structural essences of experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 35). It was important to realize that, although some of the experiences may have seemed the same, many of the clergywomen’s experiences were dissimilar.

Moustakas (1994, posited that the use of transcendental phenomenology provides a systematic approach, based on procedures, which are clearly identified, especially for the novice researcher. With the use of a transcendental phenomenological design, this researcher attempted to perceive the data freshly every time an interview was conducted as well as during the facilitation of two focus groups. Each clergywoman was distinct and had her own thoughts and experiences. During each interview and focus group, care was taken that this researcher’s personal opinions and thoughts about the topics being discussed were not applied to the data.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

- RQ<sub>1</sub>** How do female clergy describe their experience in advancing to leadership positions in the United Methodist church?
- RQ<sub>2</sub>** How do female clergy describe their experiences and challenges in obtaining leadership positions while serving in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia?
- RQ<sub>3</sub>** How do female clergy in the UMC of WV describe their self-efficacy in relation to their role?

### **Setting**

This study was conducted in WV, a rural state with an estimated total population of 1.85 million people, of which 94% are White, 3% Black, and 3% who identified themselves as another race (U.S. Census, 2010). The median annual household income was \$40,400, and 18% of the population lived below the national poverty level.

Burton (2014) cited the findings from the United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Survey (2010). There are 10,300 active and retired women clergy (e.g., elders, deacons, and licensed local pastors) in the U.S., this represents a 30% increase over the last 20 years. The staff of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (2013) reported that women now make up 25% of the total U.S. clergy population. In WV, 19% of the UMC clergy were women, and WV was ranked 44th in the nation with its number of female clergy (GCSRW). In WV, according to the General Council on Finance and Administration of the UMC (2014), there were 954 UMC clergy, of whom, 207 were female (2014). At the same time, there were 15 women bishops, who led episcopal areas in the UMC, and the WV Conference had 1 bishop. According to the UMC website (2016), the Rev. Dr. Sandra Steiner Ball was elected bishop in July 2012 and was the spiritual leader of over 100,000 people in 1,100 churches in WV.

Regarding the physical setting for data collection, the researcher provided comfortable venues which included comfortable seating, appropriate room temperature, and all were free from distractions. These sites were chosen by the participants for their convenience, and the interviews occurred in their office, parsonage, or a restaurant.

### **Participants**

Another of Moustakas' (1994) procedural steps for the conduct of phenomenological research is to "recruit participants for the study by use of acceptable sampling procedures" (p. 103). Purposeful sampling and convenience sampling were used to recruit participants for this study. Creswell (2013) described purposeful sampling as when the researcher "selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study" (p. 156). Merriam (2009) stated that convenience sampling is when "you select a sample based on time, money, location, availability

of sites or respondents” (p. 79). Creswell (2013) described purposeful sampling as when the researcher “selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study” (p. 156). Merriam (2009) stated that convenience sampling is when “you select a sample based on time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents” (p. 79).

Miles and Huberman (1994) posited that the use of convenience sampling “saves time, money, and effort but at the expense of information and credibility” (p. 278). Although purposeful and convenience sampling were used, this researcher could have used a snowball approach to identify retired and active clergy in the rural state of WV, who made up the sample, from which rich, thick data were collected for use in this study. Woodley and Lockard (2016) posited that the use of snowball sampling “allows increased access to individuals and groups that may otherwise remain inaccessible” (p. 321).

To identify and select the sample for this study, the researcher contacted the office of the WV Conference of the UMC. During a meeting with the Bishop, a request was made to invite clergywomen to participate in the research. An email was sent to Bishop Steiner-Ball to request permission to conduct the study, based on the contact list, which was sent soon after the initial meeting with the Bishop (see Appendix B). The categories of participants for this research study were WV UMC clergywomen with a minimum of 5 years’ experience and/or retired or currently serving.

A total of 13 women elected to participate in this study; there were 7 active clergywomen ( $n = 7$ ) and 6 retired clergywomen ( $n = 6$ ). To collect demographic data for these clergywomen, a questionnaire was developed (see Appendix B). This information served as a database for this current study as well as future studies of UMC clergywomen in WV. See Table 1 for a listing of

these data and participants' acronyms. The purpose of this questionnaire was to allow the participants the opportunity to provide some basic background information about themselves and their ministries.

Table 1

*Demographic Information of Participants (N = 13)*

| Pseudonym/Active  | Education    | Size of Church | Age   | Income          |
|-------------------|--------------|----------------|-------|-----------------|
| Amber             | Master's     | Over 150       | 55-64 | Over \$50,000   |
| Karen             | Master's     | Over 150       | 55-64 | \$20k -\$39,999 |
| June              | Master's     | 50-99          | 55-54 | \$20k-\$39,999  |
| Josie             | Doctorate    | Over 150       | 55-64 | Over \$50,000   |
| Tanya             | Doctorate    | Over 150       | 55-64 | \$40k-\$49,000  |
| Cindy             | Master's     | 50-99          | 35-44 | \$40k-\$49,000  |
| Nicole            | Master's     | 100-499        | 45-54 | Over \$50,000   |
| Pseudonym/Retired | Education    |                | Age   | Income          |
| Belle             | Master's     | N/A            | 75+   | \$40k-\$49,000  |
| Sylvia            | Master's     | N/A            | 65-74 | Over \$50,000   |
| Krysta            | Master's (3) | N/A            | 65-74 | Over \$50,000   |
| Leah              | Master's     | N/A            | 55-64 | \$40k-\$49,000  |
| Lavinia           | Master's     | N/A            | 65-74 | \$40k-\$49,000  |
| Mabel             | Doctorate    | 50-99          | 65-74 | Over \$50,000   |

The female clergy ( $N = 13$ ) of the UMC in WV were the participants in the study, and each had at least 5 years' experience as a clergywoman. The clergywomen served in the WV Conference as elders, deacons, and local pastors. Purposeful sampling as well as convenience sampling was used to identify the sample for the study. Forman, Creswell, Damschroder, Kowalski, and Krein (2008) posited that "each participant in a qualitative study is a rich and



complex source of information” (p. 767). Indeed, each of the study participants provided rich and complex sources of information. They were open, honest, and even loving toward this researcher.

All participants were white, all were highly educated, and 10 held Master’s degrees. In addition, 1 held three Master’s degrees and 3 had doctorates. It is important to note that the UMC requires that all who are to be ordained elders and accepted into full connection in the UMC Conference must hold a Master’s of Divinity or the equivalent Master’s degree from a University Senate approved seminary. Of the sample ( $N = 13$ ), 7 were currently married, 1 was widowed, 3 were divorced, and 2 had never married. Four of the clergy were part of a UMC clergy couple, which made their combined household income over \$50,000. Two single clergy earned under \$39,999 in annual household income. The median annual income in West Virginia is \$40,400; therefore, the annual salary of the 2-single clergywoman in the study was below the state median annual household income.

The sample consisted of 13 WV UMC clergywomen with at least 5 years’ experience, retired or currently serving. There are 207 female clergy, who currently serve in WV. I worked with the staff of the WV Conference to recruit the clergywomen with the most appropriate experience. In the effort to obtain a study for a sample, Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated “the purpose is almost always to define a sample that is in some sense representative of a population to which it is desired to generalize” (p. 198). Creswell (2013) stated that purposeful sampling “means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform and understand the research and the central phenomenon in the study” (p. 156). The data, which were collected from the sample (e.g., the clergywomen), allowed the researcher to describe the central phenomenon.

The use of purposeful sampling allowed me to select “information rich data that will elicit insight about the phenomenon” (Patton 2002, p. 40). These rich data were collected from the interviews, focus groups, and review of the letters, which the participants wrote to their earlier selves. After review of the list of clergywomen to determine their physical location in respect to the researcher’s, it was determined that convenience sampling would be used appropriate as well. Gelo, Braakmann, and Benetka (2008) reported that convenience sampling is a form of purposeful sampling, “whereby elements are drawn from a subpopulation according to its accessibility and research interest. However, Marshall (1996) maintained that convenience sampling is the “least rigorous technique, involving the selection of the most accessible subjects” (p. 523).

### **Procedures**

In the conduct of phenomenological research, Moustakas (1994) included the procedural step of “informing participants/co-researchers of the nature and purpose of the research, obtain informed consent, and ensure confidentiality” (p. 103). As a major part of this research study, I provided the necessary information regarding the nature and purpose of the research, as well as ensuring confidentiality for the participants and the data collected. According to Liberty University.com (2014), “before beginning a project, it is the responsibility of each investigator to seek review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for any study involving human participants” (see Appendix C). The participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and that none of their data would be shared with anyone outside of the research. This involved the provision of a detailed informed consent form that detailed all aspects of the: (a) data collection, (b) research methods, (c) analysis, and (d) results. Seidman (2013) reported that there are eight major parts to the informed consent form:

an invitation to participate in what, to what end, how, how long and for whom?  
Risks, Rights, Possible benefits, Confidentiality of records, Dissemination, Special  
conditions for children and, Contact information and copies of the form. (pp. 54-65)

These eight parts were included in the consent form designed by this researcher and submitted to her dissertation chair, committee members, and Liberty University IRB members for approval before data were collected (see Appendix D). This most important procedure of the study was followed precisely. Also, a dissertation committee chair was located, who is an expert in the field of the study. During this study, I ensured that all data, including password protected electronic data files and paper files, were secured in locked databases and file cabinets.

To find and select the sample for this study, I contacted the office of the WV Conference of the UMC, which is located in the town where I work. During a meeting with the Bishop, I asked permission to request consent from WV clergywomen to participate in my research. According to the General Council on Finance and Administration of the United Methodist Church (2014), currently, there are 207 female clergy in WV. During this qualitative study, the transcendental phenomenological design was used to collect data, analyze the data, and report on the findings.

### **The Researcher's Role**

I was the primary means of data collection, analysis, and interpretation for this study. Creswell (2013) stated the researcher is a “key instrument” (p. 45) in a study, and in order to ensure the integrity of the research, I must demonstrate that “she and her words can be trusted as representing truthful positions and statements” (Yin, 2011, p. 41). As the prime research instrument, this researcher was aware of any “potential biases and idiosyncrasies which can include conditions arising from her personal background, motives for doing the research, and the categories or filters that might influence her understanding of research events and actions” (Yin,

p. 123). Merriam (2009) observed it is important to identify and monitor these biases to determine how “they may be shaping the collection and interpreting of data” (p. 15). As previously stated in this chapter, I used Epoché to bracket out my own personal experiences with sexism that would hinder the research. Moustakas (1994) posited that the “challenge of the Epoché is to be transparent to ourselves, to allow whatever is before us in consciousness to disclose itself so that we may see with new eyes in a naïve and completely open manner” (p. 86).

As a condition of this research, I have acknowledged prior experience and hurt because of gender inequity in the church. This experience was bracketed from the data collection and data analysis. Bracketing, per Moustakas (1994), “means that the researcher must set aside all preconceived experiences to best understand the experiences of the participants in the study” (p. 22).

My education includes: (a) a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration Marketing; (b) a Master’s Degree in Strategic Leadership, (c) various computer programming classes, and (d) many years of attendance at the School of Hard Knocks. I am a mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, niece, daughter, and friend. I have worked 26 years as a public servant in finance and public health and taught on-line business and word-processing classes for 6 years. Currently, I am a doctoral candidate in pursuit of a degree in Educational Leadership, and believe that God will provide a second career teaching at a higher education institution.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection is an important aspect of any type of research study. Inaccurate data collection can impact the results of a study and ultimately lead to invalid results. Polkinghorne (2005) stated that “qualitative research is inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people’s lives” (p. 137). During the data collection phase of this

study, the qualitative findings emerged from analysis of four sources of data: (a) demographic questionnaire, (b) semi-structured interviews, (c) focus groups, and (d) document review. Stake (2010) maintained that “qualitative researchers seek data that represent personal experience in particular situations” (p. 88). During this study, I collected data about the lived experiences of UMC clergywomen, which was defined as personal experience in particular situations.

### **Questionnaire to Determine Interest**

To determine interest in study participation, a web-based questionnaire was developed with the use of Survey Monkey (see Appendix E). The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine the interest of potential participants in the study through their responses to a list of eight questions; this instrument was not used as a data collection tool. The eight questions were accessible through the Survey Monkey link, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XB9FXDZ>. An email (see Appendix F), which contained the link as well as information about the study, was emailed to 33 potential participants.

### **Demographic Questionnaire**

In addition, a demographic questionnaire was developed to collect data from the participants. This questionnaire was distributed by the researcher to the participants during the first encounter, which was prior to the interview. All 13 participants completed this questionnaire.

### **Interviews**

The purpose of the research interview was to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, and/or motivations of the participants on specific topics. Another of Moustakas’ (1994) procedural steps in the conduct of phenomenological research is to “conduct lengthy interviews with participants” (p. 103). Seidman (2013) stated, “interviewing is a basic mode of inquiry, and

in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people, and the meaning they make of that experience” (pp. 8-9). “A phenomenological approach to interviewing focuses on the experience of participants and the meaning they make of the experience” (p. 16). During the data collection phase of this study, the researcher asked the participants to respond to the interview questions. The interviews lasted 60-90 minutes, which, according to Seidman, “ninety minutes is long enough to make them feel they are being taken seriously” (p. 24). Two digital recorders were used (i.e., with participants’ permission) in order to collect the data from the interview questions and to ensure the collection of rich and thick data.

Interviewing is a time intensive process, and there are steps to follow in the conduct of the interviews. Seidman (2013) stated that these steps include: “(a) the researcher has to conceptualize the project, (b) establish access and make contact with the participants, (c) interview them, (d) transcribe the data, and (e) work with the material (data) and share what he or she has learned” (p. 11). Also, Seidman stated, “in-depth interviewing encourages people to reconstruct their experience actively within the context of their lives” (p. 13). During the conduct of the interviews with participants, this researcher hoped to gain their trust so that they would feel comfortable, share their experiences, reconstruct these experiences, and relive them in the context of the questions.

Merriam (2009) stated, “to get at the essence of the meaning of an experience, the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection” (p. 25). In this study, semi-structured interviews were used as the primary source of data collection from female clergy regarding their experiences in the UMC in WV. According to Merriam (2009), “in semi-structured interviews the questions are more openly worded, and the interview includes a

mix of structured and unstructured questions” (p. 89). There are several benefits for the researcher, who uses semi-structured interviews: (a) questions can be prepared ahead of time, this allows the researcher to be prepared and appear competent during the interview; (b) participants are allowed the freedom to express their views in their own terms; and (c) the researcher can obtain reliable, comparable qualitative data. Yin (2011) posited that “all interviews involve an interaction between an interviewer and a participant, and structured interviews carefully script this interaction” (p. 133).

Prior to interviewing the participants, open-ended interview questions were developed in order to garner the information needed about the experiences of these female clergy (see Appendix G). These questions were approved by the committee chair as well as the members of the IRB before any of the interviews were conducted.

The participants in the study ( $N = 13$ ) were asked the interview questions, and all responses were digitally recorded. Seidman (2013) reported that recording the interviews has many benefits, one of which is that the researcher is able to capture the actual words spoken by the participant as well as a method to return to the source to check data. Also, the researcher used a back-up or spare digital recording device. Each interview was limited to 60-90 minutes to alleviate any fatigue for the participant and the interviewer. The transcription of the interviews was conducted by the researcher and kept secure in locked file cabinets and password protected databases.

For the purpose of the study, the researcher wanted to know how and why the participants become clergywomen. Coming from a background where women were not permitted to have any type of leadership role whether preacher, deacon, and the like, the researcher was interested in how the UMC members regarded their women clergy. Women have been called to preach in

the UMC and its predecessor bodies since the earliest days of Methodism. In 1749, Sarah Crosby was converted under the preaching of George Whitefield and John Wesley. By 1761, Crosby publicly exhorted before nearly 200 people. She consulted Wesley about her exhortation, because some complained that her exhortation looked and sounded like actual preaching. Wesley told her, “I don't see that you have broken any law. Go on calmly and steadily” (UMC.com, 2015). Often, clergy are stereotyped as individuals with “unique professional motivations and irrational labor market behavior, based on religious calling and other faith-based criteria of concern for other professionals, such as pay, job security, and advancement potential” (Mueller & McDuff, 2004, p. 292).

According to LeGrand et al. (2013), “the intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges faced by female clergy are largely the result of perceived or real concerns of members and church leaders about the competency of female pastors” (p. 316). There were many challenges voiced by the clergywomen who participated in this study. To become an ordained clergy in the UMC in WV, one must attend a UMC seminary as well as obtain a Master’s degree. The educational requirement alone may prove competency as a minister. Clergywomen may experience an overabundance of challenges while they serve. Marriage and family responsibilities, gender discrimination, and sexual harassment were some of the challenges voiced during the study. Shehan, Schultz, and Wiggins-Frame (1999) posited that “when women choose to pursue a career--particularly one that has centuries of patriarchal tradition behind it, they must confront daily occupational challenges that make it more difficult to simultaneously attend to job and family demands” (p. 260).

The leadership styles of the clergywomen were of great interest and responses to questions (i.e., 4, 4a, and 4b) led to much useful information to include in the study. Female and



male leadership styles differ greatly. Males tend to be more aggressive, and females are more nurturing. Many ministers in the UMC climb a “pyramid of appointments, and as a rule women are excluded from the ‘upper echelons of power’” (Schmidt, 1996, p. 164). A clergywoman may look to God for answers to questions she may not have the ability to answer herself. As stated by Blackaby and Blackaby (2011), “spiritual leaders also allow the Holy Spirit to guide their thinking so it is based on God’s timeless truth rather than on society’s latest fad” (p. 128). Again, Blackaby and Blackaby (2011) stated that “one might assume that a congregation holding the same theology would naturally be unified, but Christians today are widely divided on social, political, and moral issues stemming from a broad spectrum of experiences and backgrounds” (p. 10).

Personal sacrifices and personal difficulties, such as the sacrifice of family time for ministry duties or living on meager salaries, were issues in which the researcher had particular interest. Interview questions 5, 5a, 10, and 11 were used to address these issues. Clergywomen, who are married and have children, encounter personal difficulties as they try to manage their families along with their ministry. For women, who have often been socialized to be sensitive to the needs of others, recognition of their own needs is sometimes the hardest challenge (Zikmund et al., 1998). “Most single clergy are more likely to see their occupation as an obstacle than as an advantage in having opportunities for a sustained intimate relationship” (Brown-Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998, p. 35). A few of the clergy have availed themselves of the assistance provided by the WV Conference of the UMC. By the provision of peer-to-peer counseling, as well as mental and behavioral health counseling, clergy are able to maintain their ministries. Ellison et al. (2010, stated “religious belief systems and communities offer an array of resources that contribute to psychological well-being” (p. 287).

The negotiation of family responsibilities, while active in clergy work, is a notable challenge. Most of the participants take their Sabbath, which in the context of this research is defined as their days off. At least one clergy takes Friday and Saturday as her family days. Time spent with children and spouses is necessary for clergywomen to effectively compensate for the huge amount of time spent in ministry duties. Zikmund, et al. (1998) stated that, often, it is more difficult for “members of the clergy to claim private space for themselves away from the demands of the church job” (p. 25). Marital status and whether clergy are the parents of minor children greatly affect the complexity of their lives and how they handle role demands, which emanate from their church employment.

Questions 6 and 7 were used to address the discrimination experienced by the clergywomen while in ministry or in attendance at seminary. One of the women related concern about covert discrimination and how it affected her and her ministry. She reported that the overt discrimination, such as unacceptable comments and behavior, was much easier to accept. Women continue to encounter “overt and subtle resistance and discrimination” (Lindley, 1996, p. 407). Discrimination during seminary attendance did not seem to be a problem for the clergywomen who participated in this study. However, many of the clergy could relate stories of classmates, who were harassed in seminary. Being a pastor is a more complicated job than it was in the early years. Many Protestant churches, especially Methodist, require clergy to attend seminary. Brown-Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang (1998) posited that attendance at “seminary provides clergywomen important tools and experiences, but it does not prepare for the difficulties they experienced after graduation” (pp. 102-103). The beginning point for the ministry of leadership is the people, “God has given us and the Gospel that we believe brings new creation” (Weems & Arnold, 2009, p. 19).

## **Document Review/Letters**

As a data source for this research study, participants were asked to write a letter. The purpose of this letter was for the participant (i.e., clergywoman) to write to her younger self, before she began to serve as a clergywoman. Additionally, writing of the letter was to provide an opportunity for the clergywoman to voice any concerns or experiences she had as a UMC clergywomen. These letters were written anonymously, and any personal information was redacted before being added to the data. Guidance for writing the letter is provided in Appendix H. Five letters were received from the clergywomen. Three were from active clergy and two from retired clergy. In these letters, the women were open and honest as to what they have experienced during their years of ministry. A few expressed bitterness as a result of being overlooked for promotion during their careers, and all of them expressed thanks to God for allowing them to become ministers. Miller and Alvarado (2005), stated a qualitative researcher must seek to “understand the world from a participant’s point of view” (p. 348), and these letters allowed me to accomplish this.

Patton (2002) reported that the content from documents can be “valuable not only because of what can be learned directly from them but also as stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviews” (p. 294). In addition, Miller and Alvarado (2005) stated that, “the formal nature of documents allows them to be used to identify social phenomenon; they can be used to illuminate formal and intertextual social structures not amenable to observation or reflection” (p. 351).

Bowen (2009) reported that “documents provide the background information as well as historical insight that researchers need to understand the historical roots of specific issues” (p. 30). I analyzed the data by use of three methods: (a) skimmed, (b) read, and (c) thorough

examination. As the analyst, the researcher determined the relevance and contents of the documents in terms of the current research problem and purpose. Owen (2014) maintained that, in the search for emergent patterns and themes in the documents, the researcher should be able to “structure a re-creation of the experiences and challenges that influenced” (p. 1) the clergywomen who comprised the sample.

### **Focus Groups**

The fourth type of data collection was focus groups. Kitzinger (1995) viewed the use of focus groups as a form of group interview which capitalizes “on communication between research participants in order to generate data” (p. 299). The strategy was to gather two groups of 4-8 people; each group would meet together in a relaxed and comfortable setting with refreshments available. However, the researcher was able to recruit only 2 clergywomen per group. One group was comprised of clergywomen, who currently served a church, and the other was comprised of retired clergywomen. The groups’ discussions were recorded in order to capture the content accurately. The content of these group recordings were transcribed by this researcher, and the data were added to the data collection.

Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008) stated, “the optimum size for a focus group is 6 to 8 participants, but can work successfully with as few as 3 and as many as 14 participants” (p. 293). Morgan (1996) added that “smaller groups are more appropriate with emotionally charged topics that generated high levels of participant involvement, while larger groups worked better with more neutral topics that generated lower levels of involvement” (p. 146).

The two active clergywomen and I met for lunch before beginning the discussion at another location across the street from the restaurant. The discussion was held in a conference room free of distractions with comfortable seating. The women were acquainted and talked freely with me and one another. The discussion went on for approximately 90 minutes.

The two retired clergywomen and I met for lunch at a local restaurant, and the focus group discussion took place during that time. The two women have been friends for years and were very comfortable in their discussion of the questions with each other and this researcher.

The use of focus groups for this study enabled me to engage with an assortment (i.e., age, actively working, retired, etc.) of clergywomen in active discussion. Redmond and Curtis (2009) stated that “to conduct effective focus group interviews, researchers should consider the questions they wish to ask, as they depend on the research question, the purpose of the study and the type of data required” (p. 64). The use of focus groups to collect data is similar to interviews but, also, they are a living instrument since the data consisted of the group and participant discussions.

For Gall, et al. (2007), researchers, who use focus groups, find “that the interactions among the participants stimulate them to state feelings, perceptions, and beliefs that they would not express if interviewed individually” (p. 245). The use of focus groups enabled the researcher to elicit responses from the participants that were based on a feeling of fellowship. The participants felt comfortable and seemed to feel free to share with their peers in this group process. A moderator guide was prepared (see Appendix I) to facilitate the focus groups, and the same questions were used (see Appendix J) the focus groups.

### **Data Analysis**

Creswell (2013) reported that data analysis “involves organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them” (p. 179). Also, Creswell described a data analysis spiral which included the following actions: “(a) organizing the data, (b) reading and memoing, (c) describing, classifying, and interpreting data into codes and themes, (d) interpreting the data, and

(e) representing and visualizing the data” (pp. 182-188). With the use of Creswell’s data analysis spiral and all guidelines, a thorough analysis was conducted. The analysis of the data from the three data collection sources was a challenging process. As stated by Sargeant (2012), “the purpose of qualitative analysis is to interpret the data and the resulting themes, to facilitate understanding of the phenomenon being studied” (p. 1). The three data collection methods used during this research study were: (a) semi-structured interviews, (b) focus groups, and (c) document review. With use of these three data collection methods, the researcher was able to demonstrate triangulation of the data and to establish trustworthiness of the study. Creswell (2013) described triangulation as, it “typically involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (p. 251). Regarding the analysis of data collected through the semi-structured interviews, the researcher transcribed all the recorded interviews. The researcher listened repeatedly to the recordings to ensure that nothing was overlooked. Seidman (2013) spoke to the importance of “reducing the text” (p. 120) in the transcription analysis process. Therefore, in reading the text, the researcher marked with brackets those passages which were similar and could be used as part of the data to be analyzed.

After the conduct of this research, an established qualitative research procedure was used to analyze the collected data. Of these procedures, the one specific to phenomenology is Epoché or bracketing. During the Epoché/bracketing stage, the researcher “set aside all prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” (Moustakas 1994, p. 85). *Things* in this study were the mention of any gender inequity or hurt, experienced by the participant during her service in the church. As the researcher, any preconceived ideas about sexism in the church were set aside. In this way, I could participate in the interviews and focus groups as a spectator. I had very little personal conversation with the participants after the interviews began; although my demeanor

was friendly, I remained detached. The data were analyzed and coded to record all instances of the things. The second procedure used during data analysis was horizontalization. This is a term developed by Moustakas (1994), which is a process of listing, when coding data, every significant statement relevant to the topic and give it equal value during analysis. Saldana (2009) defined a code as “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 45)

Moustakas (1994) stated, “horizons are unlimited and we can never exhaust completely our experience of things no matter how many times we reconsider them or view them” (p. 95). The use of horizontalization allows the researcher to analyze the data more than one time and to review for missed statements and data. Moustakas explained that “there is an interweaving of person, conscious experience, and phenomenon” (p. 95). During this process, the data were read and reviewed numerous times to assemble all statements by the participants and to determine comparative data. The researcher personally transcribed the digital recordings after every interview, which required careful listening to the audio transcript in terms of the verbal cues of the participants.

The third data analysis procedure was the development of a textural and structural description of the participants’ experiences. Creswell (2013) stated, “what participants experienced (textural) and how they experienced (structural) it during the study allows the researcher to combine these experiences and determine the overall essence of the experience” (p. 80). This essence, per Patton (2002), are the “core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced (p. 106). During the participant interviews, the researcher

endeavored to elicit responses to the research and interview questions in order to identify the essence.

To verify the findings of this study, a member check was conducted in which the participants were emailed copies of Chapters 4 and 5 to review. These chapters contained the findings, discussion, and recommendations for the research projects. The participants were asked to review their statements for accuracy and completeness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited that the task of member checking is to “obtain confirmation that the report has captured the data as constructed by the informants” (p. 236). Only 3 of the 13 participants contacted me with revisions, corrections, and recommendations.

Also, triangulation was used to verify the findings from this study. To achieve triangulation, at least three data sources must be used. Focus group(s), interviews, and document review were used in the data collection for this study. By use of these multiple methods, I was able to facilitate deeper understanding of the findings. Patton (2002) stated that the use of “triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods” (p. 247). In addition, an audit trail was to verify the findings. In the development of an audit trail, the researcher provided a transparent account of all research decisions and activities throughout the study and determined that there was a congruence between the interview questions and content, the literature, and the initial research questions.

desired outcomes.

### **Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of a research study is important to establish its value and significance. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that it is important to be “balanced, fair, and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple



realities” (p. 218). The trustworthiness of this research was addressed by means of: (a) triangulation of the data; (b) member checking; (c) development of a rich, thick description of the data; and (d) external audits.

### **Triangulation of the Data**

Smith (1975) stated, “originally, triangulation was a military term from navigation, which uses multiple reference points to locate an object’s exact position” (p. 126). In this research study, the researcher used questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and document review as the reference points to identify the essence of the clergywomen’s experiences. To achieve triangulation, at least three data sources must be used to attain triangulation of the data because a single method can never adequately shed light on a phenomenon. By use of multiple methods, the researcher could facilitate deeper understanding of the findings. Patton (2002), stated the use of “triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods” (p. 247). Focus group(s), interviews, and document review were used in the data collection. Creswell (2013) stated that “the process of triangulation involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (p. 251). Triangulation is used to determine whether there was a similarity in the findings and examination of the data across multiple data sets (e.g., interviews, focus groups, and letter review). In this way, the researcher can reduce any potential biases.

### **Member Checking**

To conduct member checking, the participants were emailed copies of Chapters 4 and 5 to review. These chapters contained the findings, discussion, and recommendations for the research projects. The participants were asked to review their statements for accuracy and

completeness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited that the task of member checking is to “obtain confirmation that the report has captured the data as constructed by the informants” (p. 236).

### **Rich Thick Description**

Maxwell (2013) defined rich data as “data that are detailed and varied enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what’s going on” (p. 126). To make the findings more credible and transferrable, the researcher provided a detailed description of the setting, research participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Merriam (2009) maintained that the qualitative researcher uses “words and pictures rather than numbers to convey what the researcher has learned about the phenomenon” (p. 16). Carlson (2011) maintained that one of the main functions of thick and rich description is to provide an understanding of the relevance to other settings. In addition, rich thick description is important because it allows readers to “make decisions regarding transferability” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). To demonstrate the transferability and application in another setting, the researcher assured that all tools used (e.g., surveys, interviews, access to research data, and documents analyzed) in this research study were made fully available to anyone for use in further research or replication of the research study.

### **External Audits/Audit Trail**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that “by implementing an audit trail, an auditor or second party who becomes familiar with the qualitative study, its methodology, findings and conclusions can audit the research decisions and the methodological and analytical processes of the researcher on completion of the study, and thus confirm its findings” (p. 319). In the development of an audit trail, the researcher provided a transparent account of all research decisions and activities throughout the study and determined that there was a congruence between the interview questions and content, the literature, and the initial research questions.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Gall et al. (2007) posited that “educational researchers have long relied on the philosophy of ethics, along with other bodies of knowledge, to help identify and resolve the many value-laden issues involved in the proper conduct of research” (p. 68). In the current world, it is necessary to protect human subjects and their personal information during research. Any information provided by research participants, if not adequately protected, can become fodder for the imagination of those who like to undo the lives of others.

According to Qu and Dumay (2011), there are several ethical considerations to consider in the conduct of research: “(a) do no harm--always be covered by an educational institution’s IRB, (b) disclosure of research intent – inform the participants of research topic and purpose (c) relationship-based ethics--don’t get too close to the participants, and (d) the participant’s right to privacy and confidentiality” (p. 252). For the purpose of this study, the researcher focused on several ethical considerations including exclusion of data from the study, the need for participants to remain anonymous, security of the data, voluntary participation, influence, and sensitivity of data.

#### **Exclusion of Data from the Study.**

As an ethical consideration, it was the researcher’s responsibility to set clear rules in the beginning of the study to set clear boundaries regarding exclusion of data. Lin (2011) posited that this is an important ethical consideration when beginning to analyze the data. The researcher must know him or herself well enough when this may occur and take a step back from the process. This researcher was aware of all ethical issues during the research, data collection, and reporting.

**Participants Must Remain Anonymous.**

To protect the participants' identities, pseudonyms were assigned (see Appendix K). All documents, flash drives, computer files, and the like are kept in a locked file cabinet during the research and 3 years after completion of the study.

**Security of Data**

The data collected during this research study were kept in a password protected database, and paper files were kept in a locked file cabinet. Back-up files were stored on flash drives, which were stored in another location in a locked box or file cabinet. Also, the list of pseudonyms for participants were kept in a locked file cabinet, so they could not be linked to the participants' actual names (See Appendix I).

**Participation**

Participation in this research study was voluntary. Written permission was obtained from each participant prior to data collection. The IRB approved informed consent form was signed by all participants prior to participation.

**Influence**

The researcher made every effort to develop research questions, which were unbiased, and she did not attempt to guide or influence the responses from participants. The researcher was not employed by the UMC and held no supervisory role over the study participants.

**Sensitivity of data**

Some sensitive data emerged while conducting the interviews and focus groups; however, the participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and that no data would be shared with anyone outside of the research. As far as the letters were concerned, any sensitive data were not included in the data analysis.

## Summary

In this study, the experiences of female clergy in the UMC in WV were examined. One area of exploration was the presence, or lack thereof, of stained glass ceilings. Rois, Rixon, and Faserus (2013) stated that

stained glass ceilings refer to the difficulty for women who seek to gain a role within church leadership. This term is metaphorical indicating a certain level of power or authority within church structures that impede women from advancing above a certain level within the church hierarchy. (p. 26)

Niemela (2011) reported that the entrance of women into the ordained ministry has been regarded as one of the most significant transformations in 20th Century Christianity and has changed both the institutional lives of the churches as well as the lives of those women who have been ordained. However, there is a gap in the literature, in regard to the issue of the experiences of female clergywomen in the UMC of WV and their search for equity, authority, and growth.

Presented in Chapter Four is a review of the research questions and a description of the study participants. Additionally, the findings from the data analysis is included which includes the semi-structured interviews, two focus groups, and review of the letters written by the clergywomen.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of female clergy who minister in the United Methodist Church (UMC) in West Virginia (WV). The goal was to capture the essence of the women's experiences whether positive or negative. Patton (2002) posited that essences are the "core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced" (p. 106). Presented first in this chapter are the research questions, followed by a description of each participant. Pseudonyms were used to identify each woman to protect their identities, and they provided data as they participated in: (a) face-to-face interviews, (b) focus groups, and (c) letters written to their younger selves. The research design was based on Moustakas' (1994) procedural steps for phenomenological research.

Throughout this study, the goal was to capture the essence of the clergywomen's experiences during their time in the ministry of the UMC in WV. The following questions were used to guide the research study:

**RQ1:** How do female clergy describe their experience in obtaining/advancing to leadership positions in the United Methodist church?

**RQ2:** How do female clergy describe their experiences and challenges in leadership positions while serving in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia?

**RQ3:** How do female clergy in the UMC of WV describe their self-efficacy in relation to their role?

For the purposes of this research study, the phenomena studied were the experiences of the clergywomen in the UMC in WV. The focus of this study was to understand the personal experiences of the clergywomen, both positive and negative.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study included Caucasian clergywomen, who served currently as pastors or elders in a UMC in WV, or who were retired clergy who had served previously in a UMC in WV. There was a total of 13 participants in this study; 7 of whom actively served in the church, and 6 were retired. Both purposeful sampling as well as convenience sampling were used to identify the sample for the study.

The basic demographic information for each participant is detailed in Table 1 in Chapter Three. In the following sections of this chapter, each participant is described and their verbatim responses to the first interview question, what led you to become a member of the clergy?

#### **Amber**

Amber was a clergywoman with 25+ years' experience. She has a Master's Degree in Divinity. She was married to a UMC clergy who served as a chaplain. She was one of the more outspoken women on the topic of sexism, and her call experience was as follows:

As far as my call, basically it was interest in theology, in college I fell in love with theology because that was really the first time that questions that I'd always had about God were "allowed," and welcomed and received. I wasn't really convinced about ministry, per se, as a pastor, but the next logical step was to go to seminary, and I just went there. Not really certain if that would lead to ministry but really wanted to pursue the study of theology and I just kept taking the next step.

**Karen**

Karen served the UMC for over 30 years. She was a divorced mother of 4 children and currently served as the pastor of a church of 50-100 members. Before she felt the call to ministry, she felt restless and stated that something was missing in her life. She also said about her call:

Becoming a pastor wasn't something I was really thinking about, I had worked with computers before, and I decided if I was going to do something with the rest of my life, it was going to be something that made a difference for people.

**June**

June had been in the ministry for 26 years. She currently pastored a small rural church with less than 100 members. She held a Master's of Divinity Degree from a UMC seminary. She stated in regard to her call: "It's simple. God. I ran from the call for several years. I had to say yes, or just turn and walk away. I couldn't walk away, so I said yes."



## **Josie**

Josie had served with her UMC clergy spouse for over 40 years. Recently, she was awarded her Doctoral Degree and served as a Hospice Chaplin. She related to me during the interview:

Since childhood I have been a part of the church. I have served God in various roles, from that of a musician, a Christian educator, a teacher, and an administrator in seminary education. I had never seen myself as “clergy” but God had other plans. I was called and “nagged” by God until I finally said, “OK, God!” and then I began the process toward ordination. It has been affirmed to me as the right thing to do.

## **Tanya**

Tanya was struggling with her move to another church when we spoke, and she had a lot to say regarding the UMC stance about itinerancy. She had been in the ministry for 25+ years and had been in a different career before she became a minister. She was a Master’s trained clergywoman. As for her call to ministry, she stated:

I had been raised by Christian parents and been active in my home church; I attended a small country church. It was during a time as a foreign exchange student, that I first felt the call from God, and that was the beginning of my call to ministry.

## **Cindy**

Cindy, the youngest of the active clergy, was also very outspoken in regard to sexism and the culture of WV. Cindy had also worked in another career before attending seminary to receive her Master’s Degree. She had pastored a rural church for several years, whose members commented on her clothing and physical appearance constantly. As for her calling she stated:

The classic answer is I got a call. I was raised in the tradition that I didn’t know women could be clergy. So, I didn’t know it was a call. Then I met my first female minister when I was a pianist at a UMC. Blew open my world. Then I really started to feel the call strongly and went to her, and she said we’ve been waiting on you. We’ve recognized it in you a long time ago. Then she helped me get started and here I am.

## **Nicole**

Nicole was an ordained clergywoman who had served in Christian education for 21 years. She had a Master's Degree in Christian Education. She co-pastored an urban church with a male pastor and had been in the same church for over 20 years. About her calling, she stated:

I never felt a call to be a preacher. Serving in the local church in ministry is different from the preaching aspect. I do that (preach) but it doesn't feel like my calling. It never did. I have no desire to preach. It has never changed. I've had people say, oh you'll change your mind, and I say there's no reason. I don't feel like I need to complete something.

## **Belle**

Belle, a retired clergywoman, was 80 years old and, at the time of the interview, she worked full-time in a hospital. Belle did not go to college until she was over 40 years old, and obtained her Master's in Divinity so she could be ordained and pastor a church. As for her calling, she stated:

I wanted to do psychology under the umbrella of the church. Went to school and got a degree in psychology. I wanted more of that so I started seminary.

## **Sylvia**

Sylvia was very interested in this study. She was 67 years old, and she had been married to a male UMC clergy for 40+ years. Sylvia began her career as a teacher and left teaching to attend seminary to get her Master's Degree. She called herself fortunate during her ministry, because she could take a 7-year leave of absence to raise her children. Regarding her calling, she stated:

I was very fortunate to have a lot of grooming in the church. My parents took me when I was very little. I loved church people. When I was 11 or 12 years old, I had two heart-warming experiences like Wesley's. I went down to the altar and said I really want to be a part of the family, Lord.

## **Krysta**

Krysta married late in life, was a retired clergywoman and was in her 70s. Krysta called herself a poet and a mentor to young clergywomen just beginning their ministry. She came of age in the 1960s and identified herself a feminist. She had two Master degrees. She spoke of her call:

I grew up in the church, and in fact I'm still active in the church where I first started. My grandmother was a Methodist deacon in the early part of the 20th century. She highly influenced me. My grandfather was Methodist pastor.

## **Leah**

Leah's first career was that of a school teacher. She was called to the ministry when she was in her late 40s. She was able to attend seminary through assistance from the WV Conference of United Methodist. She received her Master's degree. She related to me that she felt she had abandoned her son (i.e., he was in middle school when she was called), when she followed her call. She described her call as

As with most clergy, I identified a call from God. With me, as with most people, it's not just a singular event, it's not something you pick up and think it's your idea. What really turns it into a call is the affirmation of the church, affirmation of the people in the church, they can see the promise of ministry, a fruitful ministry, in you.

## **Lavinia**

Lavinia retired early from her pastoral ministry after 20 years as a clergywoman in a local church. She received her Master's degree in Divinity with assistance from the WV Conference of United Methodists. She worked full-time in a non-profit entity. She spoke of sexism and inequity in the church. In her calling story, Lavinia related:

I always knew from a young age I was going to be involved in the church in some manner. I went to Wesleyan and got my degree in Christian education. Thought that was going to cover it, but that didn't silence the voice that was saying I needed to be ordained and serve in the church. When I would sit in the ordination service at the conference, I

would see people being ordained, I would hear this tiny voice in my head saying, you need to get this done.

### **Mabel**

Mabel was the next oldest clergy in the sample. She had a Doctoral degree. At age 72, she has pastored a local Presbyterian church with a membership of less than 50 for five years. Her deceased husband was also a UMC clergy, and her daughter was the 4th generation UMC clergy in her family. About her calling, she stated:

Well, I come from a long line of clergy people. My daughter is a 4th generation Methodist clergy. It did not occur to me to be clergy, because when I was growing up you didn't do that. Women were directors of education or musicians.

All the participants' call stories were touching and, in some cases, amusing. Two of the clergy literally ran from God for years before they answered their call.

## **Results**

To identify the subthemes and themes in the collected data, participant statements are provided, as well as a representative sample of responses from interviews, focus group statements, and letter replies. This section is organized by research question, and analysis of the data to identify the subthemes and themes. Participant statements were utilized to support the analyses.

**RQ1:** How do female clergy describe their experience in obtaining/advancing to leadership positions in the United Methodist church?

This question was designed to collect information about career advancement for clergywomen in the UMC. This question elicited four themes: (a) the clergywomen were disheartened with being passed over for promotion, (b) the politics of the church make it almost impossible for a woman

to advance in the UMC, (c) clergywomen have different leadership styles than clergymen, and (d) some reported that this is why they do not receive higher appointments.

**Being Overlooked.** The clergywomen in this study reported that opportunities for advancement were always available, but that they were not always given the chance to take advantage of them. Many of the women had been passed over for advancement, and it was an uncomfortable and painful subject for them to discuss. All the women reported that they had experienced being overlooked throughout their ministries. Amber stated,

It's very easy for me to get agitated and angry at the system because when all of that happens (being passed over). I never feel better at the end of that. It doesn't change anything. . . so I choose to believe that even though all that sexism and all that may be true but, at the same time, wherever I am, I'm there for a reason and I do my best.

Six of the women were or had been married to UMC clergy and witnessed their spouse's climb up the ladder of the UMC. According to these clergywomen, the Bishop and her Council take into consideration the male clergy in the couple when recommendations are made for church appointments. Josie was outspoken on this topic, as she felt unnoticed in her own ministry career,

I believe I have been overlooked for leadership roles in the conference because of who I was married to and his role. I am an individual and have my own opinions and abilities apart from him.

Clergywomen, who were part of a clergy couple, remain subordinated to their spouse in the UMC hierarchy. The current Bishop, a female, has been in leadership in WV since 2012. Although the Bishop and her Council assign the clergy to specific churches, the male's appointment does take precedence over the female. One clergywoman admitted that she believed her career had suffered because of her husband's job in the UMC. Amber said, "I want to say people talk about a glass ceiling, as far as women go in the church, and I can see how that's perceived. Men get better appointments at larger churches in West Virginia."

**Church politics.** Church politics played a large part in the clergywomen's lives and ministries. Cindy was especially outspoken on this topic,

Overall, church politics are just astounding, especially in the Methodist church. I am frustrated because we never accomplish anything because we're so busy trying to say it in as pretty a way as possible.

Many of the women seemed to accept that church politics were something they had to deal with and allowed God to take control of the situation, but others seemed to be greatly affected by the them. Krysta stated, "you get bashed around a lot in the church, men do too. It's a hurtful place, the church is a strange beast – self-righteous." Some of the women chose to fight the political system and fight for their rights regarding equal salaries and appointments, and some chose to let the politics go and serve God. Cindy described the politics of the church as "exhausting."

Cindy was pastor of a rural WV church in which all her decisions from sermon topics, to church yard sale times, to her wardrobe were questioned daily. In Cindy's own words, being outspoken on the topic of church politics in her church as well as the politics in the Conference kept her in hot water.

Many of the active clergy had negative experiences about church politics when they worked in the WV Conference arena. Their service on committees did not lead to better appointments or more prestige in the Conference. These women related to me that they were confident in their overall abilities and their specific leadership capabilities when they served on Conference committees, but they were denied any standing for their efforts. Amber was very vocal when she spoke about the politics at the Conference level:

women who have come off the cabinet have not gone to the big steeple appointments as most males have. That's been kind of the expectation. But that has not happened for the women. I think this is sexism. We are generally paid less still. After about the third year of not getting a raise, I looked up pastor's salaries. I have never done that – but I did and I was not the lowest but the third one up from the lowest. My apportionments were

higher, my average worship attendance was higher, and my membership was higher. I reached a glass ceiling there. And I do feel like I've been passed over.

Josie said, "feeling invisible or perhaps being invisible causes me to question the politics of the System at times." As the wife of a 40-year minister, Jose had to struggle to maintain her own identity. As a pastor's wife and a minister, herself, it had been difficult for her over the years.

Two of the retired clergywomen had served on the Bishop's Council as District Superintendents. These were 4 year appointments, and the women related to me that these were very good years. However, there was some feeling of tokenism from the women, and they received no support from the male members of the committee. They served in the 1980s, when most Bishops were male, when the major feminist era was waning. Mabel stated, "I think there were men on there who had a hard time taking me seriously. They always treated me like the little sister, the one who should go get coffee." Krysta, a retired clergywoman made this observation regarding women clergy in leadership positions in the early days and stated: "There were about 12 women elders when I came into the conference in 1981, that's not counting the local pastors. 12 pastors among 300-400 ordained elders, there have been lots of changes." In addition, Mabel stated

I had a couple of people in my life along the way in my congregations who did not believe in women pastors. Said it wasn't scriptural. I decided early I was not going to defend scripture. But deep in my heart I knew I had been called by God. And I said to them quietly, why you don't take this up with the Lord because he's the one who called me.

At least one clergywoman realized that dealing with the politics of the church was something that could not be avoided. June stated:

I hate the politics. It's not just the UMC, it's in all the denominations. When politics becomes number one, I despise it. Because it not what we're all about. I realize we have to have politics, but still we can't be wishy washy when it goes contrary to God's word. The politics can drag you down if you let it.

Cindy, who was in her early 40s, said “most women who go into the ministry of my age group, tend to be more social justice orientated, so when you have that justice streak in you, politics is a waste of time, it’s a game.” Cindy also spoke to the need for less politics and more focus on leading others to Christ, feeding and housing people, and concentrating on their basic needs.

**Leadership style.** In discussion of their leadership styles, the clergywomen’s approach to leadership ran the gamut from authoritarian, collegial, low-key, to encourager. The clergywomen did not doubt their leadership abilities and were confident that they were good leaders when the discussion arose. The participants were the administrators of small, medium, and large churches with hundreds of members, and several hundred thousand dollar budgets. The UMC is an entity that operates like a machine, and there is an instruction manual (i.e., the UMC Book of Discipline) to detail how each church is to be managed, from what the pastors preach, to finance of the church, to janitorial services. The study participants did not mention any issues with their own management and leadership of their churches. Cindy spoke about her leadership style:

I really try to get people to operate the way Methodists are supposed to and be committee run, where things happen from the lay people. I try not to be that minister that has to be at everything, make every decision, and weigh in on everything. I find that exhausting and just not effective as far as time and resources, it’s just not.

June had served the same small church for 11 years and was very open regarding her feelings about a higher leadership position in the church. She was happy where she was and said

my leadership style is what I would call a shared leadership style, there are others who are a whole lot wiser than I am, there are others who are a whole lot more capable in some ways than I am, and we work together.

During the individual interviews, each participant was asked if she thought her gender had any impact on her leadership style. Mabel stated “Yes, I’m the mother not the father.” She added,



for some reason people are looking at you a little more closely as a pastor, the other thing, the more positive thing I've learned over the years is that, I try to not be stereotypical. There are some things that women respond to first with their hearts and not their heads. I think a woman's style of leadership in many cases is just a little different than that of a man's.

Amber also felt that her gender impacted her leadership style, she said "Maybe sometimes I care too much about what others think. I think women bring a different style, a different flavor, something to the table – the pulpit." Many of the participants spoke of the culture in WV and its role in the lack of promotion to higher leadership positions. Cindy thought that culture played a major role in her acceptance as a woman clergy and as a leader. She stated.

Often, I think it's more cultural than anything else, and generational too. Because I tend to be a lot younger than a lot of the people in the churches I minister in, so those two things really impact how things play out sometimes, and I always have to back up and say ok wait a minute, they're of that generation, that what I just did was probably viewed as disrespectful because I was a woman and wasn't in my proper place. I am in Appalachian culture where women are viewed differently anyway.

In the participants' responses to Research Question #1, the data supported the women's claim of lack of promotion to higher positions in the church. Their involvement in church politics (i.e., whether willingly or unwillingly) was a sensitive subject. All the women in this study were confident in their leadership abilities, although their leadership abilities were never called into question during their years in ministry. Their consensus was that it was their gender that kept them subordinate.

**RQ2:** How do female clergy describe their experiences and challenges in leadership positions while serving in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia?

In the analysis of the data for this question, several themes and subthemes were identified: (a) these clergywomen experienced a lack of authority and recognition as clergy, and (b) some of the challenges faced by the clergywomen during their ministries were overwhelming. Included in these challenges were the subthemes of: (a) sacrifice; (b) maintaining life balance; (c) gender discrimination; (d) sexism, overt and covert; (e) finances; (f) health; and (g) itinerancy.

**Authority.** One of the greatest challenges the clergywomen faced during their careers was that they felt they had no authority. This lack of authority caused turmoil with their sense of self-efficacy. As cited earlier, Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as the “belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 2). All the clergywomen in this study were strong, independent, Godly women, and many identified themselves as feminists. The women who identified as feminists considered themselves to be open minded regarding women’s rights. These clergywomen were not radical in their beliefs, but wanted to talk about how women were being treated in the church, in the home and in society. The clergywomen in this study were not bra burning activists but were the silent minority who fought from the sidelines under the banner of God. Cindy stated, “I am so different from many of my peers, I’m a liberal feminist young woman, and I have butted heads with a lot of people in my church. Because I actually want them to do things, like be aware of the poor and help them instead of judging them.”

All the clergywoman had the education and experience that the job requires, but many perceived that their parishioners, both male and female, or others, did not recognize their authority as ministers because they are women. Karen stated “it’s really hard for people to offer

you authority, and I'm not always sure if I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing." June added, "in some way I've always felt that we have to prove ourselves a little more than the males. I have never understood that. I firmly believed that if God called me into it, he was going to bring me through it." Amber added,

after a while you kind of realize that this is a big ship, this church, with a long history and I kind of feel like with my perspective now, the day I graduated from seminary--I got on board a sinking boat, but I just didn't know it.

Amber was very outspoken about the inequities in the church, including sexism experienced by women in the UMC. She stated, "I figure sexism has been around a lot longer than racism, because there was a long time when we didn't know other races existed. Sexism is more deeply rooted."

**Recognition as clergy.** The clergywomen reported that, if a congregation is not accustomed to a female minister, it is difficult for them to take her seriously. Cindy stated, "they [i.e., the church] really do not view you as the boss the way they do a man. And it shows up in little things, like how they call you 'young lady.' Things like that, which isn't bad, but if they had a male pastor my age, they wouldn't call him 'young man.'" Regarding recognition, Sylvia stated "the lack of support or the thought that they are waiting until they can get a male pastor is kind of covert. It's there, and as a pastor you can sense it, but it's not overt for the most part. It's just a little harder to deal with."

In comparison, there are children in the UMC who have never known a male pastor. One clergywoman told this story: "after a service on Sunday morning, a brother and sister came through to shake her hand, and the little boy said when I grow up I want to be a preacher, and his sister said don't be silly-- boys can't be preachers." Based on this statement, the future of women clergy in the UMC may be bright. According to Mabel, "I think the strongest candidates

coming into the church are women; part of it is economics, and part of it is it seems like a more viable career.”

**Challenges.** In the *Cambridge Dictionary* (2016), challenge is defined as “something needing great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully” (p. 1). These clergywomen faced many challenges during their ministerial careers, such as: (a) sacrifices made for church and family, (b) maintenance of a healthy life balance, (c) difficulty with finances, (d) mental and physical health challenges, (e) itinerancy, (f) gender discrimination, (f) sexism, (g) physical violence, and (h) property damage.

**Sacrifice.** In the *Cambridge Dictionary* (2016), sacrifice is defined as “to give up something for something else considered more important” (p. 1). The following statements provide an understanding of the participants’ experiences with sacrifice.

Nicole stated, “be careful answering the call because you’re making a lot of sacrifices, don’t let church become everything and have a separate life from the church.” There was an air of bitterness from her when she related her story of the difficulty to explain her career and calling to a potential mate. She did not marry until she was 40 years old and was open about what she thought she had missed out on when she as younger, and the church was her life. Nicole had to finally say to herself and her church, “I don’t need to be there all the time, and not let everything I am be tied into the church.” During the focus group in which she participated her body language and tone of voice echoed her bitterness about loss of valuable time that she could have been married and having children.

**Life balance.** Balancing a career in ministry and having a personal life was identified as a challenge for the clergywomen. During the discussions with the retired clergywomen, the topic of the women’s movement and “having a life” arose. Mabel stated,

one of the things the women's movement said was you can have it all. You can have it all, you just can't be as good if you do it all. There is a limit to your time and your energy and your focus.

Sylvia added,

I found that thankfully that the different relationships in our lives were workable. We could be a wife and a mother and a pastor, but I felt there were times when one or the other of these or several of these were overshadowed.

Having a good life balance can include taking a Sabbath. Since the clergywomen's work week includes Sunday, there is rarely a weekend off. Many of the clergywomen were adamant about taking their days off to renew and refresh and spend time with their families. Sylvia stated, "there is a limit to your time and your energy and your focus, I wish now that I had been a better mom, a better wife, I wish I'd been a better pastor." Tanya said she was intentional about taking her Sabbath now, and that taking time for her Sabbath has been a growing thing, "people will ask for as much time as you give them, that has really been something ministry has taught me; you need to take your Sabbath. You need family time." Josie mentioned the point of losing track of family relationships as a big sacrifice. She commented - as a clergy couple "we were usually busy on weekends when people could get together." Holiday church activities (e.g., Christmas and Easter) made it difficult to spend time with family.

The participants in this study had much to say regarding marriage and family issues in their quest for a healthy life balance. Sylvia stated "only by the grace of God could I be a wife, a mother and a pastor," although sometimes pastoral duties and church activities took precedence over children's school and sports activities. One clergywoman stated that the unconditional love of God and her spouse helped her to keep her ministry strong without any sacrifice to her family, friends, or church. Mabel stated "relationships are a gift from God, and I try everything I can to savor these relationships and keep them alive." Sylvia stated

“I also learned along the way, that, only by the Grace of God, could I be a wife, a mother, and a pastor. . . simultaneously!!! At times, I will admit that one or the other of those relationships suffered sometimes because another needed more attention; but as I said, with God’s help and the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit, we all have come through to this moment in time in His Grace and with His Peace.”

It was clear from the responses that the participants found it difficult to balance family life and church life as clergywomen. The clergywomen in this study encountered difficulty with this balance, but looked to God, spouses, and their church family to help.

**Finances.** Another subtheme that arose as a challenge for the clergywomen was that of finances, or a lack of adequate finances, in the early years of their ministries. Living on minimum salary was difficult for many of the clergywomen, especially if they had children. Lavinia, a single clergy, related a story about living in a parsonage in northern West Virginia in the winter with no extra money to buy fuel oil for the home. She related to me, “I told them I don’t have the money, you all are going to have to put fuel oil in here or everything is going to freeze, it was very difficult when that happened.”

Beginning in ministry, paying student loans, and living on a pastor’s minimum salary was difficult for several of the participants. Lavinia stated, “the hardest part was starting out on those minimum salaries. I think back then it was \$10,000 which was 1982-1985 which is not a lot when you’re paying utilities, that was the hardest thing, going further and further in debt. Everybody makes a sacrifice of some kind or another.” Karen also sacrificed with finances in her early years about 30 years ago, she related

I thought people would be a little more patient, I knew it was going to be tough. I think it’s common that churches expect their pastors to give it their all -all the time. Financially that can be a strain, especially if you can’t make ends meet, God helped me out.

The study participants experienced financial difficulties, especially during their early ministries. As far as current salaries are concerned, there was one clergywoman who was outspoken on the subject. She discussed the fact she had been in ministry for almost 30 years, but made less than her male counterparts who were pastors. She was bitter and resentful and was sure sexism played a role in her lower salary, although the research does support women's issues with lower pay.

**Health, mental and physical.** The interview question, what resources do you have for difficult personal circumstances, such as stress, depression, and financial issues, elicited much information from the participants. As cited earlier, Bandura (1993) said "people's beliefs in their capabilities affect how much stress and depression they experience in threatening or difficult situations, as well as their level of motivation" (p. 132). The clergywomen in this study spoke about their stressors as they pertained to their health both mentally and physically. All the participants reported that they had a support group, a covenant group, a prayer group, or other collection of friends, family, and peers on which they could rely. Karen said, "I have some really close dependable friends that I respect and I can go talk to them." Tanya related, "I do have a large network of friends and family, and I have friends who have been my friends for a long time who are pastors." The presence of support systems proved useful for the clergywomen in this study, and this may be a topic for additional research in the future.

The WV Conference of the UMC does have resources to assist clergywomen if they choose to avail themselves. Lavinia pointed out that the church used to have a fund to help pay for counseling for clergy, and that she had taken advantage of the benefit. She stated, "the church recognized that that could be a positive thing, not that the clergy is crazy, but being healthy and taking care of yourself." That attitude helped the clergywomen a lot, and support

from the conference made it easily attainable. “It was definitely a plus to see the church recognized that it was a strength to get help and not a weakness.”

**Itinerancy.** When clergy is ordained in the UMC, part of the oath of ordination is to promise God and the Church to be itinerant. As stated earlier, “the itinerant system is the accepted method of The United Methodist Church by which ordained elders are appointed by the Bishop to fields of labor” (UMC Book of Discipline, 2012). These “fields of labor” may be the church in the next city 10 miles away or the church across the state 300 miles away. These appointments are made by the Bishop and Council yearly, and the average appointment is 3 to 5 years. Josie, part of a clergy couple, discussed the difficulty of finding a new job when her clergy spouse was moved to another appointment. She stated

looking forward to the next place is never easy for me, but looking into the rearview mirror, I can always see where God has been at work in my life. At times, I have been angry with God and my husband for displacing us and removing me from comfortable friends and familiar places of employment.

The clergywomen talked about the grieving process they experience when they accepted a new appointment. It is difficult to start over in a new place. Karen said, “there’s a lot of grieving, but we cannot really say anything because we agreed to itinerancy.” Also, Tanya concurred about the grieving process, she said

I don’t want to leave; I genuinely love people. When I came into the system I promised I would go where the church sent me because I recognized that we need to have some accountable discipleship, that we are part of a connection, we have to trust that God is at work in our denomination. And I made that promise and I’m keeping that promise, and I believe in connectional ministry, but right now it’s hard. It just is.

Itinerancy is one of the challenges, sacrifices, and experiences that all participants in this study had experienced. All of them accepted the call of God in their lives, and being in the UMC denomination, they must accept the call of itinerancy when it occurs. One clergy related that



“there has been no place that I didn’t go kicking and screaming, but every place turned out to be where I should have been.”

**Gender discrimination.** The clergywomen reported instances of what they defined as gender discrimination during their ministry. Tanya said, “I had one fellow tell me once, man was created in God’s image, and God is a man. And I said well then, I’m female and God is male and God created humankind in God’s image. So, does that make me, not human? He said well you said it.” The subject of gender discrimination arose in at least one letter. This clergywoman wrote regarding discrimination in the beginning of her ministry in comparison to now, “although the world has changed, there is still discrimination, which all your frantic work and good intentions did not entirely overcome. Do the best you can, and put the rest in God’s keeping.” The retired women answered the call to ministry and let God take over when issues of gender arose. However, the active clergy seemed to take the discrimination as a personal affront, and they battled the discrimination when they could.

**Sexism.** Sexism was and still is encountered by the clergywomen in this study. Amber stated, “if I were to summarize my story, I was blind to sexism until just a few years ago”. Cindy, the youngest clergy, seemed to have the most difficult time with sexism or was the most outspoken. She related during her interview, “someone told me I give off too much masculine energy, I think too much like a man, I’m supposed to think like a woman.” Sylvia had experience with what she termed covert sexism, and it left her feeling inadequate and hurt by cruel congregants. She stated, “I will say that some discrimination against women is overt, the most insidious and heart-breaking kind is covert and manifests itself in different ways of deception or non-support on the part of those who don’t want you there because you are a woman.” However, Sylvia appreciated the lesson she learned in the way she was treated, and

she said, “those who did not accept me allowed me to grow in grace, to learn about my own weaknesses and short-comings and how to live and serve despite difficult circumstances.”

Sexism was a challenge for the clergywomen in this study.

**Inappropriate comments/inappropriate touching.** Many of the clergywomen were disconcerted by inappropriate comments regarding their clothing and their physical appearance during their time in the ministry. Also, there was the issue of inappropriate touching. These comments were from both male and females. This topic arose much more in the conversation with the active clergy rather than the retired clergy. Cindy stated

when I first started in the ministry, I was told by three different people that I was too pretty to be a minister, and I noticed, and I sort of made this unconscious decision and in the last ten years, I’ve really gained a lot of weight. And I’ve I had to sit and wonder if it is not a reaction to that because if like, to not be as attractive as I could be.”

Amber spoke to the issue of hugging and other touching. She stated

you don’t see male pastors hugging all the church members, I am very uncomfortable with hugging I don’t want to be just hugging everybody, because there’s some men I just don’t get a good vibe from. I think they’re taking a hug because they want a hug – but how do you hug some men and not the others?

There was also discussion of women in the ministry in general and how many men and women, especially in WV, do not agree with women serving as ministers. Cindy added “our culture still holds us responsible for the sexual sins of men, that’s what it boils down to.”

Regarding modest dressing, Amber stated, “the reason I like wearing a robe is because nobody’s going to be looking at what you’ve got on. I think the whole sexuality piece hits women more. I try to dress modestly. I don’t want to draw attention.” Based on the data from this study, many clergywomen responded that they were made to feel uncomfortable by inappropriate comments from parishioners. A few of the women were approached in their church offices and subjected to comments which contained sexual innuendo. Women

parishioners also made comments to the clergywomen regarding clothing and behavior. Some women in the church mentioned how wearing long earrings, open-toed sandals, and laughing and joking with the men in the church was seen as inappropriate.

Although a few of the women spoke out about women's rights, equality of pay, and appointments, they had not abandoned their calling for another career. The women, who served currently, truly love the Lord and their churches, and know where and how to get the help they need when they face circumstances beyond their control. The first place they go for help is to God, and the rest falls into place. Based on the comments provided, the retired clergy did not take many of the women's rights issues as seriously as the younger women. They accepted their circumstances and were grateful that they could pave the way for those women who follow.

**Physical violence, property damage.** There were several instances of physical violence and property damage reported during the conversations with the clergywomen. Cindy, the youngest clergywoman said that some church people cannot "wrap their brain around a woman being clergy." She stated,

I've been in a town where I was not allowed to be a part of the ministerial association. There was one town in which I was actually physically attacked for being a female minister. The guy hit me, because he said I don't hold with what you're doing, but that made it right for him to be a good Christian and go to physical violence.

Another story was related to me of an older woman in a church; her life was threatened for being a female pastor. She had to have her District Superintendent go with her everywhere she went for a while until they could move her. A man in her church said, "I don't like the fact that you're a woman and huntin' season is startin'. So, I wouldn't be outdoors if I were you." Cindy stated that "people don't like to admit that things like this happen to us in this day and age but it does." Krysta related a story of some upheaval in the church she pastored. During this time, she was driving on a dark road in northern West Virginia when something happened to her car. She got

out and looked and two of her tires had been slashed. She was sure the slashed tires were a result of an irate parishioner and stated, “things like this can make women leave pastoral ministry much more early than men, because of the pain.”

The experience of physical violence and property damage during their time in the ministry was rare for the clergywomen but it did occur. Their explanation for these experiences was ignorance on the part of the church members. The participants were knowledgeable about the WV culture, and knew that women as well as men church members did not want women pastoring their churches.

**RQ3:** How do female clergy in the UMC of WV describe their self-efficacy in relation to their role?

Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1977), is the “belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 2). In other words, how confident are the women in their roles, as clergy and as leaders? Based on the data from the interviews, focus groups, and letters allowed me to conclude that all the women were confident in the role of clergywoman and in their leadership ability. Belle shared,

I had been a Girl Scout Leader, a Cub Scout Den Mother, PTA leader, and Sunday School teacher, but this was the first time [UMC appointment in a small church] I had been in a position of authority over other adults. It was a good experience in that it gave me confidence and the assurance that I could lead a congregation effectively.

Many of the women were also wives and mothers and were confident that they had excelled in those roles as well.

Although confident in their leadership abilities and themselves, many of the women endured inappropriate comments related to their clothing and physical appearance. Also, there were times when the clergywomen found it necessary to seek counsel from others. The demands of ministry on their time and mental capacities made it imperative that they seek counsel from

their peers. The women spoke of resources available to assist with depression, crises of faith, and other personal issues.

**Resources.** Based on the data, it was important for the clergywomen to have some type of support system. Whether it was a covenant group she met with regularly, a therapist, or a mentor, the clergywomen mentioned they had experienced crises of faith and burnout at different times throughout their careers. Some of the women mentioned they had taken a spiritual renewal leave, which is encouraged by the UMC to revitalize themselves and their ministries. The UMC Book of Discipline (2008, ¶ 351, Section 3) states that “a clergy member may request a formational and spiritual growth leave of up to six months while continue to hold an appointment in a local church” (p. 285). Many of the participants who took advantage of the spiritual leave remarked they returned to their ministry revived and refreshed for what God had planned for them. Amber discussed how she dealt with stress and the everyday challenges of the ministry,

I exercise, it helps me deal with stress. I do take medication for depression and anxiety. Well you know meditation the kind of quiet. . . sometimes I just meditate. It’s not even God related. It’s just quiet. I’m an introvert. Being around people drains me. I love my days off. I love my down time, doing housework. . . Whatever. Just kind of down time. Really helps.

Many of the participants mentioned involvement with covenant groups and long-time friends. These groups were important for the clergywomen as they addressed stress and other personal and professional issues. Comments from the clergywomen regarding their support systems:

I have some really close dependable friends that I respect and I can also go talk to them.

(Karen)

I do have a large network of friends and family, that’s part of it. I have friends who have been my friends for a long time who are pastors. And so, certainly via email and phone I have pastors I pray with and talk to. (Josie)

Also, good, long-time friends are sources of support for stress and depression. I can just pick up the phone, and hope to be there for them in their times of stress as well. (June)

In this study, the researcher presented the experiences of active and retired clergywomen in the UMC of WV. The women reported that many men in the church do not believe women should be pastors; per the Bible, it is stated that women must be subordinate to men. The active clergywomen in this study were interested in serving God, social justice issues, and equality in pay and appointments. In contrast, the retired clergywomen in this study were more interested in following God's lead than concerns about social justice. However, the active clergywomen were not giving up in their quest for Conference level positions in the UMC of WV. They appreciated that the current Bishop is a woman and hoped they will be able to experience positive changes for women soon.

The matter of self-efficacy and self-awareness is not an issue for either active or retired clergywomen. The clergywomen in this study were strong, independent, and effective leaders in their churches and homes. They were life-long learners, teachers, and nurturers to their families, friends, and parishioners. In addition, the clergywomen know who they were but were sometime unclear as to what behavior they should exhibit. Social role theory and role congruity theory (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001) suggests that,

female leaders' choices are constrained by threats from two directions, conforming to their gender role can produce a failure to meet their leader role and conforming to their leader role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their gender role. (p. 786)

The clergywomen in this study had full knowledge of the implications of being female leaders in a male dominated profession and had to defend their roles as clergywomen. Being required to defend herself in her God-given profession seems a bit unjust, but they were given the power and authority to defend themselves and their ministries if they chose to do so.

These women were happy to have been in the ministry, and they expected to pay their dues as a woman minister. The retired women, were content, they did what God wanted them to do, and they heard the call and acted on it. They did struggle with family, financial, and gender discrimination issues, but did not let these experiences daunt them on their journey. They all continued to serve the WV Conference in one way or another, on leadership committees, teaching, and preaching when called upon to do so.

On the other hand, the active clergy struggled with the issue of self-efficacy. These women were on average 20 years younger than the retired clergywomen. These women felt they deserved more than those who had come before them in ministry. More opportunities, more pay, more Conference positions. The clergywomen who preceded them did succeed in breaking some gender barriers, but not all. The active clergy discussed their passion for their ministries in the beginning, but as the years passed, the passion has waned. Their ministry has become a job, not a calling. Some of them have always been clergy, they know nothing else and feel they are too old or too frightened to start something new. The women in their own words have encountered sexism, discrimination, pay inequity, and lack of support from the Conference as well as their parishioners.

There are more women who attend seminary than ever before, and it is easier for younger women to be ordained. The younger ordained women (e.g., late 20s to early 40s) appear to be more interested in social justice issues like feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and the like. One clergywoman in her early 40s, who was interviewed early in the research, stated, “most women who go into the ministry of my age group, tend to be more social justice orientated, so when you have that justice streak in you, politics is a waste of time, it’s a game.”

Someone, who is raised in the church, may be aware of the Great Commission, as stated in Matthew 28: 19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Jesus wants His disciples to go and tell.

Presented in Table 2 are the subthemes and themes, which were identified in the data.



Table 2

*The Overarching Theme and Major Themes and Subthemes according to Research Questions 1-3*

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Overarching Theme

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The overarching, inferential theme from this current study was that the participants reported contentment and satisfaction with their lives and their chosen careers. All were heroes and display great resilience and strength. Although they spoke of mental strain, physical abuse, gender discrimination, pay inequity, and sexism, basically, all were content in their service to God, their parishioners, and the UMC.

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| RQ1   | RQ2  | RQ3   |
|---|--|---|
| Advancement to Leadership   | Experience in Leadership   | Self-Efficacy in Role   |
| Promotion<br>Church Politics<br>Sexism<br>Leadership Styles<br>Gender | Authority<br>Sexism<br>Recognition as Clergy<br>Challenges:<br>Sacrifices<br>Life Balance<br>Finances<br>Health<br>Itinerancy<br>Gender Bias<br>Sexism<br>Physical Violence<br>Property Damage | Social culture<br>Recognition as clergy<br>Confidence:<br>Ability to preach<br>Administrative skill |

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## Chapter Summary

Presented in this chapter are the findings from analysis of the collected verbal and written data. Through the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant letter reviews, several themes emerged: (a) the presence of gender discrimination, (b) sexism, (c) evidence of pay inequity as well as several other issues. The active and retired clergywomen's experiences, although similar, were managed differently throughout their ministries. The older, more experienced retired clergywomen seemed to accept the situation and move on with their ministries.

The evidence of sexism was prevalent throughout the findings of this study. However, much more sexism was reported by the active clergywomen. The clergywomen were vocal in their distaste of sexism and how it affected their clergy lives. From inequity in pay (e.g., male clergy paid more than women), to physical violence and property damage, to the experience of inappropriate comments/touching, the theme of sexism was prevalent in this study.

All the women were confident in their ability to preach, teach, and administer the duties of a clergywoman. The women were comfortable in their roles as clergywomen, being called by God, and were confident in their roles as clergywomen, mothers, wives, and women. Although many of the clergywomen experienced push-back from parishioners and their male counterparts regarding their role as clergywomen, this did not deter them from serving God. The social culture in WV is unique and many persons do not recognize female clergy.

In Chapter Five, the results from this study are discussed and interpreted. Also, this chapter includes: (a) a discussion of the methodological and practical limitations of the study, (b) indications of the validity of the study findings, as well as (c) a discussion of future topics for research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of female clergy in the United Methodist Church (UMC) in West Virginia (WV). The findings from this study provided an account of the lived experiences of 13 clergywomen (7 active and 6 retired), who participated in the study. Analysis of the data revealed: (a) why these women entered the clergy, (b) what they experienced during their ministry, (c) how they endured along the way throughout their ministry, and (d) their perceptions of success. This chapter consists of four sections: (a) summary and discussion of the findings, (b) a discussion of the implications, (c) an overview of the study limitations, and (d) recommendations for future research.

### **Summary and Discussion of the Findings**

In the conduct of this transcendental phenomenological study, the data were collected through the use of interviews, focus groups, and letters written by the clergywomen. I examined only the experiences of UMC clergywomen in WV. With use of the research questions, four major subthemes were identified: (a) gender discrimination, (b) motherhood and marriage, (c) overt and covert sexism, and (d) itinerancy.

**RQ1:** How do female clergy describe their experience in obtaining/advancing to leadership positions in the United Methodist church?

Analysis of the data showed evidence of gender discrimination in the appointment system in the UMC in WV. Two of the retired clergywomen in this study had served as District Superintendent (DS) and enjoyed their time on the Cabinet. These women related how grateful they were for being allowed to serve, and they expressed appreciation for their time there.

Although they reported no gender discrimination during their time on the board, they felt pleased to be able to make a small crack in the stained-glass ceiling through their service. However, the active clergy were more vocal about their perceived lack of opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity, in comparison to those who were retired. It might be posited that leading a UM church with hundreds of members is an exceptional leadership opportunity. However, the active clergywomen seemed to regard their experiences as a social justice issue, as if “the system was out to get them.” Fielder (2010) stated that, currently, the members of “almost all religious denominations or traditions are engaged in transforming social reality, most are actively concerned with improving the lot of the poor” (p. 143). However, analysis of the data did confirm that there is gender discrimination in the UMC of WV.

**RQ2:** How do female clergy describe their experiences and challenges in leadership positions while serving in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia?

An analysis of the data showed the presence of: (a) sexism, (b) gender discrimination, (c) favoritism in appointments, and (d) inequity in the appointment of the male clergy in a clergy couple. In regard this issue, Fielder (2010) stated that “denominational leadership is hardest for women to achieve because it involves real power, and because those who elect or appoint such leaders must overcome any lingering gender bias in their decision-making” (p. 1). One active clergywoman was very outspoken when she described being passed over in consideration for a larger and more prestigious appointment. This clergywoman had been in the UMC for almost 30 years and was part of a clergy couple. She believed her career had suffered because of his.

**RQ3:** How do female clergy in the UMC of WV describe their self-efficacy in relation to their role?

Bandura (1995) stated that “self-efficacy is one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task” (p. 1). Analysis of the data indicated that both groups (i.e., retired and active) believed that they had the ability to succeed as clergy in the UMC. In comparison, the retired clergywomen were more grateful to have been able to serve God and the Church and were not as interested in social justice issues as the active clergywomen. These active clergywomen wanted to have more control over the events in their lives. By their exercise of the power they had over their own field of influence, they were better able to realize the

### **The Overarching, Inferential Theme**

The overarching, inferential theme, resulting from the analysis of the data from this study was that the participants reported contentment and satisfaction with their lives and their chosen careers. Although the clergywomen spoke of mental strain, physical and verbal abuse, gender discrimination, pay inequity, and sexism, all were content in their service to God, their parishioners and the UMC.

The women serving now truly love the Lord and their churches, and know where and how to get the help they need when they face circumstances beyond their control. The first place they go for help is to God, and “the rest falls into place”. Based on the comments provided, the retired clergy did not take many of the women’s rights issues as seriously as the younger women. They accepted their circumstances and were grateful that they could pave the way for those women who follow.

## Discussion

The two theories which guided this research were Bandura's (1985) self-efficacy theory and Eagly's (1987) social role theory/role congruity theory. Bandura (1985) described how the presence of self-efficacy plays a vital role in the development of self-directed life-long learners. Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) stated that the "problem of the underutilization of women's talents and abilities in career pursuits and the underrepresentation of women in higher status (usually male dominated) positions and occupations has long been a concern of vocational theorists and researchers" (p. 234). Clergywomen, as part of their ministry, continue to seek opportunities for growth in their chosen field; in addition, they stay grounded in Bible study and prayer. In comparison to active clergywomen, the retired clergy in this study were more focused on their task at hand, serving their families, God, and the church. The retired clergy maintained that they were content during their ministries to serve in any capacity. They spoke of their foremothers and how these women had paved the way for them as women ministers.

However, the active clergywomen seemed to want something more, something to show that their ministries were of value to the UMC and the future clergy. Bandura (1985) posited "as a society, we enjoy the benefits left by those before us who collectively fought inhumanities and worked for social reforms that permit a better life" (p. 38). The findings, which emerged from the focus groups and interviews, revealed a rich collection of anecdotes from the active clergywomen demonstrating their sense of self-efficacy. These women knew how to reach those who did not know the Lord. They knew how to be administrators, and most stayed true to their calling. They knew how to be successful in the development of their churches and outreach to the community. Bandura (1995) stated that "people strive to exercise control over events that affect their lives" (p. 1), and it seemed apparent, that the active clergy wanted to have more

parity over their pay, appointments, and actions of parishioners. Also, the clergywomen in this current study exhibited high degrees of self-efficacy and self-awareness. McNeal (2006) stated that David, Jesus, and Paul had an extraordinary amount of self-awareness and self-understanding. These three leaders listened to God and most of the time heeded what he had to say. From the time of David's personal self-examination of his life, to Jesus' temple experience, to Paul's missionary journey, these three spiritual leaders affected Christianity forever.

The second theory guiding this study was Eagly and Kauru's (2009) social role theory/role congruity theory. Per this theory, "sex differences in social behavior are in part caused by the tendency of people to behave consistently with their gender roles" (p. 686). Both the retired and active clergywomen had experiences in which people did not accept them as ministers, which the participants attributed to their gender. It was difficult for some parishioners to accept a woman as a pastor in this male dominated role.

Eagly and Kauru (2009) stated that "achieving leadership is more difficult for women than men because of the common perception that women have less leadership ability and the preference that women not exhibit this ability and instead engage in communal supportive behavior" (p. 581). This is especially true in male dominated social groups. Women tend to be more communal in their leadership, and men, more agenic. Hogue (2015) stated "agency involves displays of assertiveness, dominance, self-confidence, and control, while communality involves displays of supportiveness, nurturance, relationship building, and modesty" (p. 837). The women in this study had both communality and agenic traits. As women, they were nurturing, and supportive in their relationships with church members while counseling and ministering to them. But also as leaders and administrators it became necessary for them to show self-control, and self-confidence. In the summary data from the interviews, the researcher

found that the participants believed that the Church would like to have women who are communal but who do not “rock the boat,” and who agree with the status quo. The clergywomen in this study had been members of Conference committees; however, when they went against the consensus of the committee, they were never asked back to the committee.

### **Discussion of Implications**

The findings from this study yielded a variety of implications for female clergy in WV. At the beginning of this study, I hypothesized that the situational and learned experiences of the clergywomen would provide substance to the research. The value of the findings from this study, which are encouragement, awareness, and learning about their peers, can be used by clergywomen to gain a perspective of the experienced lived by their predecessors.

While interacting with the participants one-on-one, and during the focus groups I came to realize the clergywomen had been waiting for a study like this to be done. The women were very open when speaking about their personal experiences. The relationship between the clergywomen’s positive and negative experiences while in ministry had no determination as to how long they remained in ministry, but did have an impact on how happy they were in the role of minister.

When speaking about their personal experiences the clergywomen remarked on the need for a support system. Mentors or good friends can provide the support the clergywomen need to deal with emotional experiences including occurrences of gender discrimination and sexual harassment. Sharing these as well as other experiences with peers will enable them to grow in their ministries. The United Methodist Church offers counseling at the Conference level and clergy can take advantage of this avenue of assistance too.



All the clergywomen in this study have served the UMC for decades. This length of service is testament to their passion for God and the Church. The retired clergywomen remain involved in the UMC, teaching, and preaching. The active clergywomen all have active ministries in larger churches in the Conference, most never achieving the “big-steeple” appointment they wanted. Although the fervor of their earlier ministries had waned, the clergywomen had not abandoned their calling. They have good memories from the positive experiences throughout their ministries. The negative experiences have made them stronger ministers, stronger women, better wives, mothers, mentors, and friends.

### **Discussion of Recommendations**

Recommendations for aspiring clergywomen can be found in researching and studying how current UMC clergywomen feel about their chosen career path. Aspiring clergy should connect with active and retired clergywomen to learn about their lived experiences while in the ministry. Young clergywomen coming into the ministry in 2017 are entering a new age of corporate worship. A church service may be live streamed to parishioner’s homes on Sunday morning. Face-to-face ministry may become outdated. Clergywomen must become skilled in recruiting young families because many UMC churches in West Virginia are full of people 60 and over. Young clergywomen must see out mentors in the older more seasoned women who came before. The findings from this study point out that all women have experienced some type of gender discrimination and sexism during their ministries. Knowing this may encourage the younger women to unite to find ways to alleviate these problems. The future WV clergywomen may encounter similar experiences, and the findings from this study could generate a greater awareness of their unique experiences.

Recommendations for current female clergy in the UMC should include ongoing interaction with their support systems and mentors, as well as continuing discussions with WV UMC Conference staff. The District Superintendent could be a resource for assistance with concerns regarding inequitable appointments or inequity in pay. The Bishop is accessible and may be contacted for her input on these matters. Per the findings in this study the active and retired clergywomen do and did have issues with gender discrimination in the UMC. The current clergy can could strive to eliminate this problem through education and cultural competency training.

### **Study Delimitations**

The delimitations of this study include my decision to select only clergywomen with more than 5 years of experience, and only clergy employed in the UMC denomination in WV. Clergy was defined here as one of three classifications in the UMC (i.e., elder, deacon, and local pastor). Also, I chose to limit the participants to female clergy.

### **Study Limitations**

The limitations of this study include the following: (a) findings from this study may not be transferrable to locations outside WV, and (b) the findings may not be transferrable to male clergy in the UMC and/or to clergy of other denominations. In addition, the transferability of the findings is limited due to the geographical region from which the sample was collected. Participation in this study was voluntary, and all of participants lived in WV. Limitations were not expected to be found in the recruitment of participants; however, there were several problems including: (a) the recruiting email sent to clergywomen was considered spam, and (b) some

clergywomen were displeased that their personal email addresses were being used. Both issues were resolved, and the clergywomen began to answer my emails.

Nonetheless, it was difficult to recruit the women, many were busy, not interested, or did not answer the email. Additionally, the researcher experienced the following limitations in recruitment: (a) some of the clergy did not appreciate the researcher's relationship to Liberty University, (b) the data collection took place during a busy time in the church year, and (c) it was difficult to find convenient times to meet. However, I experienced a wonderful occurrence every time I conducted an interview or focus group. When we met, the clergywoman and I shook hands and, after the encounter, there was a warm hug as goodbyes were said. All the clergywomen commented that it was time this study was conducted.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Considering the limitations and delimitations of this study, there are several opportunities for additional research. Appropriate topics include: (a) UMC clergy couples, (b) the impact of divorce on clergywomen and their ministry, and (c) LGBT clergy in the UMC. During the data collection and data analysis steps of this study, these topics emerged, and much discussion took place as I asked probing questions of the participants.

Studies pertaining to clergy couples in the WV UMC would add to the body of research. Smith (2013) stated "balancing the weight of the pastorate between two ministers serving different congregations requires prayer, humility, compromise, organization, and flexibility" (p. 116). Of the 13 clergywomen in this study, 6 were or had been married to UMC clergy and were vocal about how their marriages worked. Additional research is needed to develop a deeper understanding of UMC clergy and their leadership experiences. The researcher found only two

studies of this type, North Carolina, and Kentucky. Both studies were conducted by clergywomen and I am a layperson, so the WV study stands alone.

In the future, researchers should investigate the rate of divorced women who are called to the clergy, in comparison to the divorce rate among clergy couples. The findings could expand the knowledge base of clergywomen experiences. In this current study, there were four divorced participants; three divorces occurred before they entered the ministry and one during her ministry. These participants reported that they felt no stigma attached to their situations and they thrived after their divorces.

Discussion on the topic of LGBT clergy elicited several opinions. Many spoke of the UMC stance, as well as their own personal stance about lesbian and gay clergy. It was reported that by not ordaining gay and lesbian clergy, the UMC is losing a lot of good preachers. Many of this population have transferred to other denominations that will accept them.

### **Dissertation Summary**

In summary, the findings from this study answered all three research questions. These clergywomen in the UMC in WV had both negative and positive experiences during their time in ministry. They have experienced: (a) gender discrimination, (b) physical violence, (c) personal property damage, (d) sexism, (e) pay inequity, and (f) divorce. Also, they recalled wonderful years in their service to loving congregations and a loving Lord. Following their calling may have been a struggle, but these women have endured.

Noble (1994) stated that a female hero is a “visionary, taking her life, her toils, and her own dreams seriously, and she strives to make those dreams a reality even if she does not fully succeed” (p. 195). All the clergywomen, who participated in this study, are heroes. The year, 2016 marks the 60th anniversary of full clergy rights for women in the UMC, and enrollments in

UMC seminaries are at an all-time high. In Mark 5:34 NRSV, it is stated “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” In this verse, the woman risked failure, she risked ridicule, she risked being wrong. She had hope when she touched Jesus. The power to heal was present because she reached out in faith.

In conclusion, the study participants were adamant in their loyalty to the UMC and to the WV Conference. These WV UMC clergywomen promised God and the Church that they would serve faithfully and go where needed, despite sexism, physical violence, low pay, and discrimination. Rhee and Sigler (2015) suggested that “women leaders continue to face challenges overcoming both sexual bias and stereotypes, women leaders, regardless of style, face an uphill battle in terms of perceptions of effectiveness and preference regardless of who their followers might be” (p. 109).

West Virginia is a rural state with 1.8 million residents and lies in the heart of Appalachia. Eller (2016) defined Appalachia as “a strange land inhabited by a peculiar people” (p. 1), which describes the culture in WV. West Virginia is 78% Christian, the largest denomination is Methodist, and the political ideology is conservative (Pew Research 2016). In 2013, 45% of births in WV were to unwed mothers (WV Vital Statistics, 2014), and 3% of West Virginians are non-white.

Educational material that is distributed to West Virginians must be written on an eighth-grade reading level. Also, WV has the highest rate of women who smoke while they are pregnant (27%). In addition, WV also has the highest rate of obesity, COPD, and heart disease in the U.S. West Virginia is like no other state. West Virginians are hearty stock, who have survived mine wars, mine closures, floods, derechos (i.e., a windstorm that can produce winds up to 125 miles per hour), and other natural and man-made catastrophes. The clergywomen in this

study lived and worked in this state. They lived and worked with the patriarchal culture in the state and survived, although some with deep emotional scars, a small portion of their stories were detailed in this study. Istomina (2016) stated, “the still patriarchal Church continues viewing women as desirable or disposable objects. Could it be that out of the fear of sexual harassment lawsuits, the UMC keeps women away?” (p. 2). Rhee and Sigler (2015) suggested that “women leaders continue to face challenges overcoming both sexual bias and stereotypes, women leaders, regardless of style, face an uphill battle in terms of perceptions of effectiveness and preference regardless of who their followers might be” (p. 109).

By participation in this study, all the participants learned that, although they have experienced gender discrimination, sexism, and pay inequity among other things, they are happy with their lives, families, and careers. In addition, these clergywomen were especially happy to be able to serve and were thankful to their foremothers who experienced most of the suffering. In James 1: 2-3, it is stated, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.”

I learned from this study that women are strong. Women pick the battles that are worth fighting, and avoid the ones that are not. My experience with these women of God was wonderful. I was encouraged, hugged, and prayed for. The retired as well as the active women were busy in their service to God, and they encouraged and mentored younger clergywomen. I am a better Christian and woman for having met these women.

The readers of this study can learn that the clergywomen, who serve in WV, are strong and resilient. These women have been knocked around and knocked down, but have emerged to serve the Lord. These women are called by many names: mother, wife, Christian, pastor,

grandmother, sister, and friend. The reader of this study will be able to look within these clergywomen's lives and what they have endured in the name of God and the Church.

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## APPENDIX A

### Permission Letter to Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball – To Conduct Research With Clergywomen in the WV Conference of United Methodists

Sandra Steiner Ball, D.Min.  
Bishop, WV United Methodist Conference  
900 Washington Street, East  
Charleston, WV 25301

Dear Bishop Steiner Ball:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The title of my research project is *Serving God under the Stained-Glass Ceiling: A Study of Female Clergy Experiences in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia* and the purpose of my research into understand the lived experiences of female clergy in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia. At this stage in the research, experiences will be generally defined as any events occurring in the performance of duties of the female clergy, such as entering the ministry and staying in the ministry.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in the West Virginia Conference of United Methodists and to utilize your lists of clergywomen in West Virginia to recruit participants for my research. Participants will be asked to click on <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YDDYT2W> to answer a few questions and contact me to schedule an interview/etc. The data will be used to complete the doctoral dissertation of the primary researcher, Kathy Danberry. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant respond by email to [kdanberry@liberty.edu](mailto:kdanberry@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

*Kathy Danberry*

Kathy Danberry, M.S., EdD<sup>c</sup>

**APPENDIX B**

Questionnaire –  
Demographic Data Collection

1. What is your current status of employment?
  - a. Retired
  - b. Currently serving a church full-time
  - c. Currently serving a church part-time
  
2. If currently serving where are you serving? (West Virginia county)  

---
  
3. What is the size of your current church?
  - a. Under 50
  - b. 51-100
  - c. 100-150
  - d. Over 150
  
4. What is your ethnicity?
  - a. White/Caucasian
  - b. Black
  - c. Asian
  - d. Hispanic or Latino
  - e. Other
  
5. What is your age?
  - a. 25-34 years old
  - b. 35-44 years old
  - c. 45-54 years old
  - d. 55-64 years old
  - e. 65-74 years old
  - f. 75 years or older
  
6. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?
  - a. Bachelor's
  - b. Master's
  - c. Doctorate
  - d. Other
  
7. What is your marital status?
  - a. Single, never married
  - b. Married or domestic partnership

- c. Widowed
  - d. Divorced
  - e. Separated
8. Do you have any children?
- a. Under 2 years? How many? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. 3- 10 years? How many? \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. 11-18 years? How many? \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Over 18? How many? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How many hours per week do you usually work at your job?
- a. 35 hours a week or more
  - b. Less than 35 hours a week
  - c. I am not currently employed
10. What is your total household income?
- a. Less than \$10,000
  - b. \$10,000 to \$19,999
  - c. \$20,000 to \$39,999
  - d. \$40,000 to \$49,999
  - e. Over \$50,000

## APPENDIX C

### Institutional Review Board Approval

## LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 21, 2016

Mary K. Danberry

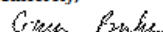
IRB Approval 2370.012116: Serving God under the Stained Glass Ceiling: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study of Female Clergy Experiences in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia

Dear Mary,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP  
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research  
The Graduate School

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## **APPENDIX D**

### **Participant Consent Form**

Title of study: Serving God under the Stained-Glass Ceiling: A Phenomenological Study of  
Female Clergy Experiences in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia

Principal investigator's name: Kathy Danberry  
Liberty University  
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of female clergywomen experiences in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a female clergywoman in West Virginia. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Kathy Danberry doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University is conducting this study.

#### **Background Information:**

The overall research question guiding this research is: How do female clergy describe their experiences serving in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia? The researcher would like to determine through document review, interviews, and focus groups whether clergywomen have had challenges and what type of challenges while serving in the areas of obtaining the UMC. The purpose of this study is this study is to understand the experiences of female clergy in the UMC in WV.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Agree to be audio recorded during the interview and/or focus group.
2. Agree to participate in a 60-90-minute interview with the researcher.
3. Agree to participate in and interact with others in a focus group.

#### **Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

There are no known risks associated with this research.

#### **Compensation:**

You will not receive any type of compensation or payment for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

The participants will be assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and that no data will be shared with anyone outside of the research. This will involve providing a detailed research information sheet outlining all aspects of the data collection, research, analysis, and results.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from this Study:**

The participant can leave a research study at any time. When withdrawing from the study, you should let the researcher know that you wish to withdraw. You can provide the researcher with the reason(s) for leaving the study, but you are not required to provide the reason. Any and all recordings, transcription notes, consents will be destroyed and will not be used as a part of this research.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Kathy Danberry. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at 304-539-3888 or [kdanberry@liberty.edu](mailto:kdanberry@liberty.edu).

The Chairperson for this student and research project is Dr. Thomas Crites, and can be reached at [ltcrites@liberty.edu](mailto:ltcrites@liberty.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION  
WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record, me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

Survey to Assess Interest in the Research Project  
Administered by On-Line Tool Survey Monkey

**<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XB9FXDZ>**

WV UMC Clergywomen Experiences – a Doctoral Research Project- Kathy Danberry

Introduction: This survey is to gauge your interest in participating in the doctoral research project titled Serving God under the Stained-Glass Ceiling. This research will include one-on-one interviews, focus group participation, and letter writing. You will be asked to participate in one or all of these data collection methods. I appreciate your answering these questions and I will be in contact when you are chosen for the research. Thanks so much.

1. How many years have you been a member of the clergy?  
Choices: less than 5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20, 20+
2. Would you be interested in discussing your experiences as a clergywoman?  
Choices: Yes, No, Maybe, Depends on what you want to know.
3. The researcher will meet the clergywoman where she is. Would you prefer one-on-one interview, or participating in a focus group, both?  
Choices: One-on-one interview, Focus Group, Both
4. All information collected will remain confidential at all times and kept in a locked cabinet in the possession of the researcher at all times. Pseudonyms will be used instead of real names. Will this be acceptable to you?  
Choices: Yes, No, I need more information
5. Interviews will include questions about your experiences as a clergywoman and your “call” to the ministry, challenges, and rewards of being a pastor, leadership style, personal and professional sacrifices, and gender issues. Are you comfortable discussing these topics? The interviews will also be audio-taped.  
Choices: Yes, No, Maybe
6. Focus groups, usually comprised of 6-8 of your peers, will be held in a comfortable venue away from any noise or stress. I (researcher) as well as a moderator will be in the room. The focus groups will also be audio-taped. This process will take no more than an



hour, and I will ask similar questions as the interview questions. Will you be comfortable in this setting? If not what can I do to make you comfortable enough to participate?

Choices: Yes, No, What can I do to help?

7. Part of the data collection is the review of a letter written by you (the clergywoman). This letter will be written by you (present time) to a younger you- when you first heard the call to ministry. I want you to tell your younger self about the experiences (good, bad, and indifferent) you have encountered on the journey to where you are now in your ministry and career. This letter will be anonymous, from you to you. Would you have any issues with writing this letter?

Choices: Yes, No, What are the problems? Can I help?

8. Would you like more information on the study? How can I contact you?

Choices: Yes, No, Please call or email \_\_\_\_\_.

## APPENDIX F

**Email to Clergywomen to Determine Their Interest in Participating in Study**

**From:** Danberry, Mary  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 2, 2016 4:37 PM  
**To:** clergywomana@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Doctoral Research

Good Morning Reverend A,

My name is Kathy Danberry and I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. I am in the process of recruiting active and retired United Methodist clergywomen for my research on clergywomen experiences.

I have included in this email a letter of explanation about my research.

I would like to ask you to read the letter and respond to the survey link included. Thank you so much and I look forward to your response.

*The WV Conference of UMC as well as the Bishop are aware of and have approved this correspondence.*

*Kathy Danberry*

Date: February 2, 2016

Dear Reverend:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to understand the experiences of female clergy in the UMC in WV, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

The overall research question guiding this research is how do female clergy describe their experiences serving in the United Methodist Church in West Virginia? The researcher would like to determine through document analysis, interviews, and focus groups whether clergywomen have had challenges and what type of challenges while serving in the area of ministry in the UMC. I ask that research participants be female and have at least five years' experience as a clergywoman. It should take approximately 60 minutes for a face-to-face interview with me, 60-90 minutes to participate in the focus group, and 15-20 minutes for you to write a letter. You may complete one or all three of these procedures.

In order to participate please use this link to access a short survey to determine your interest. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YDDYT2W>

Thank you.

Kathy Danberry

Kathy Danberry

## **APPENDIX G**

### **Interview Questions**

1. What led you to become a member of the clergy?
2. What is the greatest challenge of being a female pastor?
3. What would you say are your top two challenges as a pastor? A female pastor?
4. Tell me about your leadership style.
  - 4a. How do you think your gender impacts your leadership style?
  - 4b. How do you think your culture impacts your leadership style?
5. What personal difficulties have you encountered during your ministry?
- 5a. What personal sacrifices have you made during your ministry?
6. Have you ever experienced discrimination because of your gender?
7. Did you experience gender discrimination because of your gender during your time in seminary? Can you tell me about this experience?
8. Clergywomen sometimes report they are drained or disheartened by the politics of the church. Others have been more direct victims of it. What is your experience and how does it impact your life and work?
9. What resources do you have for difficult personal circumstances? Such as stress, depression, financial?
10. How do you negotiate the responsibilities for family and home with your spouse or others?
11. Do you think that some gifted and called women may refrain (i.e., hold back) from leadership because of family responsibilities? What is your own view of the balance? What would you say to those women?

## APPENDIX H

### Request for Letter from the Researcher to Research Participant

Dear Clergywoman,

As a participant of this research would you please write a letter? This letter should be from you, at your current stage in life (age, full-time, part-time, and retired clergy). This letter should be written to you at the time of your life when you were beginning your ministry. Please include any experiences, good or bad, that made you who you are today, as a mother, wife, clergywoman, etc.

Please refrain from using your real name and the real names of others in your letter. A pseudonym will be assigned by the researcher if requested.

Thanks,

*Kathy*

Kathy Danberry

[kdanberry@liberty.edu](mailto:kdanberry@liberty.edu)

304-539-3888

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Moderator Guide (used for both focus groups)**

Welcome:

Hello, please come in and have a seat wherever you like. Did you all have enough to eat?

We'll just bring in the food and drinks and please help yourself as we go along.

Make participants comfortable:

My name is Kathy Danberry and I am the primary researcher for this project.

Let me give you a little background on myself, I am a doctorate candidate at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA I have done all my course work on-line except for three classes. I had to travel to Lynchburg for two one week classes, and another class was finished in three weekends. They are called intensives...let me tell you they are named correctly. I am interested in women's studies, women's rights, and women clergy. I was born and bred southern Baptist and now attend a United Methodist Church.

In this group, I want to discuss your experiences as a clergywoman in the United Methodist Church. Some of the questions may get personal, if you feel uncomfortable answering please let us know.

Rules:

I would like to ask if you have your cell phone to put it on vibrate. I know everyone is important here and we have important jobs and family. If you need to answer, please excuse yourself from the room and come right back. This groups should take no longer than 90 minutes to two hours.

I am recording the focus groups and I have two recorders, one in the front of the room and the other in the back. I ask that you speak up and that you do not talk over one another.

There are no one-way mirrors in here only digital recorders. Nothing that is said in this room goes out of this room except on these recorders. These recorders are in my possession always or locked in my file box under my bed at home.

Besides responding to the questions and speaking your mind I would like you to respond to what others are saying. If you do not agree with something that is said, please feel free to speak up and speak your mind. So, if someone says something which you don't agree please say so. Even if it feels a little off, please speak up and let us know.

Ok, does anyone have any questions before we get started?

**Now let's find out who is in the room. As they speak, ask clarifying questions.**

## **APPENDIX J**

### **Focus Group Questions/Active and Retired Clergy**

1. Tell us your name, how long you have been a pastor, and where you serve now?  
ASK CLARIFYING QUESTIONS AS WE GO AROUND THE ROOM
2. What is the greatest challenge of being a pastor? A female pastor?
3. What are the greatest joys?
4. Have you ever experienced discrimination because of your gender?
5. Did you experience gender discrimination because of your gender during your time in seminary? Can you tell me about this experience?
6. Clergywomen sometimes report they are drained or disheartened by the politics of the church. Others have been more direct victims of it. What is your experience and how does it impact your life and work?
7. If you were in charge and could change anything about your job what would it be?
8. Think back when you first began your ministry.... what advice would you give a young woman who has heard the call and is about to enter seminary?

#### **Last Question**

Have we missed anything? Is there anything we should have talked about but didn't?



## APPENDIX K

### Pseudonyms for Sample

#### Pseudonyms – Active Clergy

| Active Clergy | Pseudonym | Date Interviewed |
|---------------|-----------|------------------|
| Clergy 1      | Amber     | 02/05/16         |
| Clergy 2      | Karen     | 02/15/16         |
| Clergy 3      | June      | 02/16/16         |
| Clergy 4      | Josie     | 02/15/16         |
| Clergy 5      | Tanya     | 02/16/16         |
| Clergy 6      | Cindy     | 02/15/16         |
| Clergy 7      | Nicole    | 04/29/16         |

#### Pseudonyms – Retired Clergy

| Retired Clergy | Pseudonym | Date Interviewed |
|----------------|-----------|------------------|
| Clergy 1       | Belle     | 03/17/16         |
| Clergy 2       | Sylvia    | 04/14/16         |
| Clergy 3       | Krysta    | 03/07/16         |
| Clergy 4       | Leah      | 03/08/16         |
| Clergy 5       | Lavinia   | 03/09/16         |
| Clergy 6       | Mabel     | 04/11/16         |