

MINISTRY LONGEVITY, FAMILY CONTENTMENT, AND THE MALE CLERGY
FAMILY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF
MINISTRY

by

Allen A. Lee

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences and the perceptions that affect family contentment and longevity of ministry for clergy families who are currently active in Christian ministry; in particular, those that may affect family contentment and longevity of ministry. Of particular interest was the clergy family's perception of the phenomenon of living as a unit within the vocational context of Christian ministry. Data were collected using digitally recorded and transcribed semi-structured interviews. Likewise, personal journals were submitted and transcribed, adding to the data. Two clergy families consisting of specifically a male clergy member, his clergy spouse, and two adult children of the said clergy member were interviewed individually to determine their individual and familial experiences of pastoral ministry. Participants identified contentment as developing from genuine interactions with their families that were consistent at church and at home. They also recognized the importance of family unity, as supported by intentional parenting and the formation of protective family boundaries. In addition, participants revealed that maintaining healthy support systems plays a part in family contentment. It is hoped that these results would illustrate how an effective balancing of the clergy's call to family and ministry can lead to greater efficacy in both areas.

Keywords: clergy family contentment, clergy vocational longevity, authenticity, intentionality, boundaries, support.

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CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH PROBLEM

Clergy fulfill a vital role in the development and functioning of the local church, its congregants, and the community where it resides. Despite indications that some have a broad interpretation of the concept of calling (Lucas, 1989), with their call into ministry, clergy have sense of divine direction and a presence of specialized skills. Beyond this, they possess a strong desire to provide quality work and be successful in the career that God has called them to (Christopherson, 1994). Their individual experiences go beyond a mere interest in a vocation or a particular developed skill. These men and women hold to a deeply rooted conviction that they are set apart for specific ministries (Patte, 2010), which include, but are not limited to, preaching God's Word, administering the sacraments, counseling and providing administrative leadership (Cattich, 2012; Darling, Hill, & McWey, 2004; Fahlbush, Locman, Mbiti, Pelikan, & Vischer, 1999; Wells, 2013b). For some, entering into ministry provides a sense that he or she has been called by God's design, with an indication of unique acceptance and direction (Christopherson, 1994). At the same time, the majority of these clergy men and women have been called to enter into a marital relationship, sometimes viewed as a partnership in ministry. Within this marriage, there is often an establishment of a family, which includes children. The calling to ministry may be present prior to the calling of having a family, but not necessarily. In addition, there are instances when the calling into clergy ministry is held, primarily, by the clergy themselves (Lee & Gilbert-Iverson, 2003). Regardless, the clergy, and now their family, are left with the task of the two callings not only co-existing but also thriving along-side of each other. Due to the flexing boundaries between the

vocational ministry of the clergy member and his or her family, the effect upon the spouse and children of the clergy member is inevitable. This query sought to explore this impact with the following research question: How do a select group of clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity?

Only 23% of a large number of clergy surveyed viewed themselves as regularly content with their relationship in Christ, their ministry, and their home (Krejcir, 2011). Another survey indicated that 80% of those questioned felt that serving as clergy negatively affected his or her family (Barna, 2009). In fact, 77% of the pastors surveyed in a separate study identified that his or her marriage was unstable (Krejcir, 2011). Between 50% and 89% of these clergy had considered leaving the ministry for a better work situation, even a secular one, some within the months preceding the surveys (Barna, 2009; Krejcir, 2011). In a related study, Barnard and Curry (2012) found that 70% of participating clergy noticed a decrease in self-esteem since beginning their ministry and 75% of pastors surveyed saw themselves as unqualified or poorly trained (Krejcir, 2011).

For some clergy, these data served as indicators of the true life of ministry, but for others, they proved to be indicators of more. The presence of personal and boundary-related stress (Wells, Probst, McKeown, Mitchem, & Whiejong, 2012), work-related stress (Blanton & Morris, 1999), family dysfunction (Darling, McWey, & Hill, 2006; Lee & Gilbert-Iverson, 2003), and marital disruption (Brock & Lawrence, 2008) were noticeable and in some cases, insurmountable. Evidence indicated that stresses appear more acute early in the clergy's ministry placement, decreasing over time (Wildhagen,

Mueller, & Wang, 2005), and that both clergy member and spouse responded to work-related stresses in similar ways. Time demands and expectations were two critical areas of stress (Blanton & Morris, 1999). Clergy stress was manifested itself in a physical manner, particularly when the stress was related to income and financial planning. Clergy emotional stress tended to be negatively impacted by the lack of supportive relationships (Blanton & Morris, 1999). Clergy wives also tended to be negatively affected by a deficit of supportive relationships (Blanton & Morris, 1999). Higher levels of vocational stress may also have increased conflict with parent-child relationships (Darling, McWey, & Hill, 2006).

It is noteworthy that the risks of emotional exhaustion and burnout became evident to clergy and their families. Beebe's (2007) sizable study of multi-denominational clergy indicated that when the clergy perceive their vocational roles as demanding or vague, there is a heightened possibility of experiencing burnout. An outcome of burnout included the individual's psychological withdrawal from others, as a means of protecting themselves from further emotional or social demands (Chandler, 2009), which unfortunately proves to be counter-productive. Indeed, studies indicated that attachment to social and emotional supports, in personal and vocational realms, were related to lower levels of burnout in clergy (Hall, 2010; Wells, 2013b). Time away from ministry responsibilities for rest and engagement with family supports were critical components of personal and professional well-being (Blanton & Morris, 1999; Chandler, 2009). In addition to support from the family, congregational and denominational supports lend to positive clergy emotional health and well-being (Lee & Gilbert-Iverson,

2003; Wells, 2013c). Critical support came through the clergy connection with the congregation, and the reciprocal support received, which also played a role in the clergy's vocational longevity (Wildhagen, Mueller, & Wang, 2005). However, even though the congregation may desire to show understanding and support of the values that clergy families with children have, Darling, McWey, and Hill (2006) found that in all actuality, the congregation may feel cheated because the clergy family responsibilities, at times, compete with the availability of the clergy member to the congregation. As a result, it is valuable to have opportunities for clergy families to relate to other clergy families. This interaction tended to provide unique support that is manifested by empathy and confidentiality. There is a sense of understanding that is found nowhere else, from which clergy children also benefit (Blanton & Morris, 1999).

As data unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that each member of the clergy family affects and is affected by vocational ministry. Clergy's ministry placement and longevity relies upon the needs of their families, even beyond what the ministry placement offers them, particularly as it relates to their spouse's employment and children's education (Beebe, 2007). Indeed, there are incidences in which individuals have exited ministry entirely because of the influence of the spouse (Lucas, 1989). Clergy wives who report a greater negative impact of their husband's work upon the family noted higher scores of loneliness and depression and a sense of being worse-off than others, and experienced lower levels of support (Baker & Scott, 1992). While clergy may experience fatigue, the effects may be compensated for by the satisfaction received by helping others. But when spouses experience fatigue or burnout, their stress is not

affected by the impact of compassion satisfaction that their spouse experiences first-hand (Darling, Hill, & McWey, 2004). However, clergy wives' satisfaction, specifically marital satisfaction, may increase when given the opportunity to provide support to their husbands in concrete ways (Brock & Lawrence, 2008).

At the opposite end of the spectrum, in a study which compared 196 wives of Lutheran clergy with 205 wives of non-clergy, Baker and Scott (1992) found that clergy wives were less depressed and experienced greater life satisfaction than non-clergy wives. These researchers also uncovered some variables which may factor into the outcome. More clergy wives worked outside of the home, finding their work rewarding. In addition, these women reported their husband's career to have less impact upon the family, and that their personal overall well-being and positive affect scored high (Baker & Scott, 1992).

When considering the presence of children in the clergy home, Darling, McWey, and Hill (2006) found that compared to clergy who did not have children residing in the home, clergy with children in the home spent more time each week with the family, had spouses who spent more time away from home, spent more time away from home themselves, had more unfinished tasks, and experienced increased spousal conflict. Despite these challenges, the clergy couple's sense of meaning and purpose was heightened, as a result of raising children. This benefit seemed to flow outward to their congregation with a particular sense of caring and compassion (Darling et al., 2006).

Darling, McWey, and Hill's (2006) study also supported two traditional challenges of the clergy family: glass house living and work-family balance. Clergy and

their spouses identified that the congregational expectations of their family inflicted stress on the family. Indeed, they found their family, children included, were held to a higher standard of behavior and responsibility than congregational families. Spouses also noted being stressed by the perception that their clergy spouse was preoccupied with church responsibilities and that time with family seemed to be interfering with vocational tasks. This interpretation was reported to grow out of the perception that their local church claimed all of the clergy time, even family time, and had full access to it.

In light of these findings, this study sought to explore and understand the phenomenon of the lived experiences of clergy families. It sought to answer the question: “How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the effect of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity?” In doing so, there was hope of clarifying further means of supporting longevity and contentment in ministry. Findings from this study may serve to support pastoral counsellors and clinicians in providing compassionate and effective care in their work with clergy families and religious organizations.

Purpose Statement

The present qualitative study was designed to explore the impact of ministry on clergy family’s lives who are currently active in Christian ministry. This phenomenological study was centered upon family experiences and perceptions during the years that children reside in the home. Lee and Gilbert-Iverson (2003) indicated the importance of collecting data directly from family members in a study such as this one. In following this model of research, understanding of the phenomenon of clergy and their

spouses bringing balance to the demanding lives of a clergy family was obtained (Darling et al, 2006). The collection of this data may more adequately prepare clergy families for living a life of ministry, thus decreasing levels of attrition (Blanton & Morris, 1999). Terms related to this study include: Christian ministry, clergy, impact, clergy family contentment, and clergy vocational longevity.

Research Question

The primary research question framing this study was: “How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity?” Of note was the clergy family’s perception of the phenomenon of living as a unit within the vocational context of Christian ministry.

Research Approach

Creswell (2013, p. 78-79) identified several reasons that qualitative research should be considered for use in a rigorous form of research. First, there are research questions that ask the question why, rather than how or what. Second, the study topic needed to be explored and theories needed to be developed, despite variables that are difficult to identify. Third, the topic demanded a detailed view of the data. Fourth, a qualitative approach allowed for the study of individuals in their natural setting. Fifth, through the writing, the writer brought himself to the study. Sixth, there was extensive data collection in the field and detailed analysis of the participant’s experiences. Seventh, the participants were receptive to the qualitative research approach. Finally, the researcher fulfilled the role of an active learner who can capture the information from a

participant's perspective.

In exploring the experiences and perceptions of the clergy family, a phenomenological hermeneutic approach was being used with research participants. This particular method and “way of thinking” (Musser & Price, 1992, p. 353) captures a perspective of the “significant world” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9) of the family in ministry with depth and insight.

Phenomenology

A phenomenological study was designed to obtain meaning from complicated realities by careful analysis of narrative subject matter (Portney & Watkins, 2000) and to describe the lived experience, or phenomenon, of a group of individuals who were connected by this common meaning (Creswell, 2013). Its purpose was to acknowledge a person's experiences of reality as an element of science to be studied (Musser & Price, 1992). Further, it was intended to encounter participants where they were most at ease, engaging with them in their life as they know it (van Manen, 1990). The underlying assumption of phenomenological research was that several experiences of reality existed among research participants, of which their perception was valuable and worthy of consideration (Hays & Wood, 2011). Phenomenological research joined well with professional counseling because detailed assessment of client experiences is a primary element with the profession. In addition, there was a profound interest in understanding the lived experiences of individuals (Hays & Wood, 2011). As such, a study that explores and seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the experience of clergy in Christian service, as well as their families, lends itself well to the phenomenological method.

In particular, a hermeneutic approach to phenomenology was appropriate to the elements of this study. Hermeneutics is the process of finding the meaning within human experience and conduct, through the understanding of verbal and written communications (Rennie, 2007). The interactions with the text, or the voicing of lived experiences (van Manen, 1990) was intended to uncover and promote in-depth understanding of the meaning behind the appearances (Moustakas, 1994). When the understanding emerged from the meaning, there was a tangible impact upon people, due to the resonance they discerned about themselves and others (Rennie, 2007).

First, Creswell (2013) identified four particular considerations in the selection of an approach to a dissertation study, through which he provided a framework for the author to consider the “fit” of method. He encouraged the researcher to be educated on the approaches other leaders in the field are taking. Contemporary data base searches indicated that peer-reviewed, qualitative studies of various compositions of clergy families number in the thousands, while and phenomenological studies number in the several hundred. Second, he then sought to evaluate the training necessary to proceed with the appropriate inquiry approach. In phenomenology, this refers primarily to the interview. As a counselor for more than 20 years and a counseling educator for over 13 years, I possess the training and comfort necessary to facilitate participant interviews. Third, Creswell (2013) encouraged the researcher to be aware of what work will contribute most to the scholarly literature within the particular field. While there are a number of studies which focus strictly upon the clergy man or woman (Broman, 2005; Francis, Hills, & Rutledge, 2008; Kinman, McFall, & Rodriguez, 2011; Lee & Gilbert-

Iverson, 2003; Meek, McMinn, Brower, Burnett, McRay, Ramey, Swanson, & Villa, 2003; Mueller & McDuff, 2004; Powell, 2009; Wells, 2013b; Wells 2013c) and clergy spouse (Baker & Scott, 1992; Blanton & Morris, 1999; Darling, Hill, & McWey, 2004; Hill, Darling, & Raimondi, 2003; Luedtke, 2011; McMinn, Kerrick, Duma, Campbell, & Jung, 2008; Morris & Blanton, 1998), the representation of clergy children is lacking (Strange & Sheppard, 2001). Furthermore, the studies of clergy, spouse, and adult children together are not represented in research. Finally, Creswell asks the writer to be aware of his or her comfort level: Is there a preference for a well-defined approach or is there an inclination toward a more flexible approach (Creswell, 2013, p. 124)? While there is a directive format in place in phenomenological research (exploration of an emphasized phenomenon, bracketing the researcher, data collection, data analysis, and identification of the essence of the study), the collection of data offers a variety of sources (interview, poems, observations, and documents) (Creswell, 2013). It is my preference to work within this semi-structured approach in studying the clergy family.

The response to each of these considerations led me to identify phenomenology as an appropriate approach for this study. The examination of the meaning of and the ability to descend to the very depth of human experience (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012) was crucial to gathering particular insight from each of the study participants. Portney and Watkins (2000) indicated that the ability to reach the innermost thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, can most effectively take place when a researcher enters into the environment of, in this case, the clergy family, in order to draw meaning from the reality of the family.

Researcher's Perspectives

My interest and understanding of this subject was impacted by a variety of situations and experiences. I am a professionally trained therapist in marriage and family therapy and a professor on a university campus that prepares young men and women for Christian ministry. However previously, I was trained in and held positions as an ordained full-time minister in the areas of youth and young adults. Through personal experiences and the collection of antidotal evidence, I gained a heightened awareness of the importance of a family's joining and navigating together the clergy's calling to both his or her family and to ministry. As a full-time youth and young adult pastor and a newly-wed, the challenging experiences of balancing the church's expectations with family responsibility and personal expectations, became very real to me. It may have been more noticeable because I began this position as a single individual and then married, but the boundaries between ministry and family, overall, appeared to be quite tense. My belief is that this tension exists, to some degree, for all who are serving in formal ministry. For me as a single man, there were a handful of actions that were scrutinized by select members of the congregation, and in turn by staff, which consistently crossed over what I perceived to be the boundary between vocational life and personal life. Once I married, I quickly found that the same scrutiny that I received as a single male clergy was applied to my wife, as well. We were, unexpectedly, met with the task of finding our seemingly new places in ministry, joining our callings with our marriage, my wife's career, and congregational expectations of how our time and efforts should be used and measured as effective. We found ourselves striving to balance our

calling to family and to ministry, with the realization that our vision for them could easily be lost. The incidence of a falling away from either one or the other, or both, occurs too frequently (Cattich, 2012; Miner, Dowson, & Sterland, 2010; Tripp, 2012). Throughout this study, I attempted to identify and “bracket” previous knowledge and opinions on the research topic in a manner that did not distract from the development of new knowledge that is gathered through the experiences of the study participants (Creswell, 2013). These methods are described in chapter three of this manuscript.

Definition of Key Terminology

In this section, definitions of the key terminology as they were used in this particular research are introduced. Each term has been represented within the research question of this phenomenological study. While none of the terminology is considered out of the norm for North American nomenclature, understanding of the specific usage brought clarity to this study.

Christian Ministry:

In this study, Christian ministry was defined as the current or former duties and functions of a full-time, church-based pastorate. Ministry encompassed the work which benefits the church and is endorsed by the church (Hasting, Mason, & Pyper, 2000).

Clergy:

In this study, clergy members could be a solo pastor, a lead pastor in a multi-staff church, or an assistant/associate pastor in a multi-staff church, who is responsible for ministry in a way that differentiates him or her from church laity (Patte, 2010).

Clergy Family Unit:

The family of those who minister will be defined as the spouse of the appointed clergy and/or the adult children of the appointed clergy.

Impact:

The term *impact* is defined as the meaning ascribed to the participant's experiences of ministry and the responses of the individual family member(s) to these experiences.

Clergy Family Contentment:

Clergy family contentment was considered in this study as the degree to which the individual family members, and the family as a unit, perceived their wants to be met. It is the comparison of "life-as-it-is with notions of how they want life-to-be" (Rojas & Veenhoven, 2013, p. 417) and the "satisfying calmness" (Parse, 2001, p. 336) that it presented in the midst of daily life. Consideration was being given to how contentment or life satisfaction was practiced in a clergy family.

Clergy Vocational Longevity:

In this study, the term *clergy vocational longevity* was the length, or life expectancy, of one's ministry, including, but not limited to, an unanticipated decrease in length of service.

Assumptions, Scope, Limitations and Delimitations

The following assumptions were made in this hermeneutic phenomenological study:

1. The participants interviewed responded to the questions raised with

openness and honesty.

2. The questions addressed were directly related to the primary research question.

3. The interviews were focused on obtaining a thorough understanding of the phenomenon observed.

This study explored the effect of ministry on two evangelical clergy families; specifically, one clergy member, one clergy member's spouse, and two adult children of the clergy member from each family, ($N=8$) in the United States and Canada. Data collection was accomplished through the use of a semi-structured individual telephone interview, compiled and facilitated by this researcher. In addition, each individual submitted a personal journal, which was transcribed and added to the data. The data was then intended to illustrate how an effective balancing of a clergy member's call to family and ministry can lead to greater family contentment and vocational longevity.

Limitations of the study were those over which the researcher had no control. This study was limited by the presuppositions and beliefs of the researcher and participants. The co-researchers were comprised of a male clergy member, a female spouse, and adult children. Due to self-selection, the couples and adult children who participated in the study were registered at either end of the spectrum of ministry contentment. As such, the "average" experience could have been overlooked. The fact that participants were willing to serve in the study, may indicate that families have fully embraced the clergy family experience, or they were markedly disgruntled. Also, the consideration that clergy job security may be connected with full honesty in self-disclosure of participants, despite guarantee of anonymity, served as a limitation to data collection.

Additional limitations included participation of only evangelical clergy. Limiting the study in this manner may skewed the outcomes in areas that pertain to levels of income, status, and culture. Individual journals were offered to the co-researchers as a way of providing insights to their personal experiences in a private venue. Self-report was the only form of data collection.

Delimitations are elements of the study that were controlled by the researcher. In this study, the following delimitations were considered:

1. This study involved only clergy families where the male clergy are currently serving in a full-time capacity.
2. This study involved only clergy families composed of a male clergy member, clergy member's spouse, and two adult children who have been raised in the clergy home.
3. This study involved participants who serve in evangelical congregations.

Significance of the Study

There were multiple reasons why a phenomenological study of clergy and their family's contentment and vocational longevity was important. First, it was inevitable that the roles and experiences of the clergy member would also impact his or her spouse and children. Second, there are a number of studies that have been conducted in which the focus was strictly upon the clergy man and his experiences (Broman, 2005; Francis, Hills, & Rutledge, 2008; Kinman, McFall, & Rodriguez, 2011; Lee & Gilbert-Iverson, 2003; Meek, McMinn, Brower, Burnett, McRay, Ramey, Swanson, & Villa, 2003; Mueller & McDuff, 2004; Powell, 2009; Wells, 2013b, 2013c). Third, while fewer in number, a

representation in research existed which addressed the clergy spouses, primarily wives (Baker & Scott, 1992; Blanton & Morris, 1999; Darling, Hill, & McWey, 2004; Hill, Darling, & Raimondi, 2003; Luedtke, 2011; McMinn, Kerrick, Duma, Campbell, & Jung, 2008; Morris & Blanton, 1998). Fourth, the examination of clergy was minimally represented in research; lacking thorough examination of personal significance to the children (Strange & Sheppard, 2001). Fifth, there were no published studies that examined the contentment of the clergy family, as represented by the lived experiences of the clergy member, his spouse, and adult children together. Finally, and sixth, research offered much on the longevity of clergy, as it relates to burnout (Barnard & Curry, 2012; Beebe, 2007; Chandler, 2009; Doolittle, 2010; Hall, 2010) or forced termination (Tanner, Wherry, & Zvonkovic, 2013; Tanner & Zvonkovic, 2011; Tanner, Zvonkovic, & Adams, 2012). However, the overall family experience of a clergy member's struggle for longevity was seemingly non-existent. This study provided critical information for clergy who, with their family members, are striving for effective and meaningful experiences in ministry as it relates to family contentment and vocational longevity. Of equal importance, this study offered insight into the personal experiences of clergy families, which can be translated into university and seminary training for those preparing for vocational ministry. Likewise, denominational leaders would benefit from this study's outcomes as they mentor clergy in current ministry placements.

Conceptual Framework

This qualitative study was designed to examine the experiences and perceptions of clergy families, as they described the impact of ministry on family contentment and

vocational longevity. The conceptual framework that undergirds the query is drawn from self-determination theory.

Self-determination theory is a human motivation theory that identifies elements of impact upon an individual's motivation, affect, behavior, and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In examining clergy family contentment, it was necessary to consider the same proposed influential individual components that are presented in this theory: personal development, self-regulation, universal psychological needs, life goals and aspirations, energy and vitality, nonconscious processes, the relations of culture to motivation, and impact of social environments (Deci & Ryan 2008, p. 182). A particularly applicable indicator of contentment was the element of autonomous motivation, which Deci and Ryan (2008) identified as intrinsic motivation that results in a "self-endorsement" of one's actions: an internal embracing of affiliation, generativity, and personal development. This was contrasted with extrinsic (controlled) motivation, which was based on external elements or reward or punishment and avoidance of shame, that lead one to seek wealth, fame, and attractiveness. Deci and Ryan (2008) maintained that when individuals felt controlled by others, they were prone to think, feel, and respond in a specific manner, as opposed to reacting in a way true to one's being.

Lee and Gilbert-Iverson (2003) indicated that clergy may be less affected by the frequency of demands and more impacted by how they interpret these demands; such as the pastor's perceptions modifying their sense of well-being. Closely related to the clergy family contentment is the sense of significance and meaningfulness in ministry (Barnard & Curry, 2012). Moreover, job security, autonomy, participation in decision making,

distributive justice, and opportunities of professional growth (Mueller & McDuff, 2004). Cohall (2007) indicated that job satisfaction and contentment are positively affected by supportive colleagues and working conditions, mentally challenging work, equitable rewards, and a sense of self-actualization. Those who possess satisfaction see themselves as effectively developing the church. Grieve (2007) indicated that embracing factors that contribute to individual wellness will positively affected longevity. Indeed, wellness can be sought after with intention.

Of critical importance to this study of clergy family contentment and longevity, Deci and Ryan (2008) maintained that,

autonomous motivation and controlled motivation lead to very different outcomes, with autonomous motivation tending to yield greater psychological health and more effective performance on heuristic types of activities. It also leads to greater long-term persistence, for example, maintained change toward healthier behaviors. (Deci & Ryan 2008, p. 183)

This study considered factors of contentment for the clergy member, spouse, and children, along with the related factors of vocational longevity for the clergy member. Findings were considered through the lens of self-determination theory, specifically, that of autonomous motivation.

Chapter Summary

This section included a brief introduction to this proposed qualitative study. The purpose of the study, definitions of research terms, and research question were presented in a manner that identified the co-researchers as clergy members, his spouse, and his

adult children. Moustakas (1994) introduced the concept of co-researcher in referencing what is commonly identified as a research participant. His concept grew out of the idea that researchers and the participants co-experience the process. However, only the co-researcher's experiences are considered in the phenomenological research. The primary research question, "How do a select group of clergy and their families describe their experiences in ministry?" dictates the method of hermeneutical phenomenology, specifically by interviewing and journaling, as the effective avenues of data collection. As stated by Merriam (2011), the use of the interview is important in situations when there are historical events which cannot be observed first hand, or replicated. As well, interviewing allows for the gathering of another's perspective or interpretation of their experiences. Additionally, I located myself, indicating my interest in the study. Much research surrounded the phenomena of the clergy in Christian ministry, some of which included the experiences of his family. Exploration of the literature served to effectively inform and support this proposed study. The following section will review published literature in the areas of ministry, clergy, and family.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This section presented a review of the research literature related to the experiences and perceptions of clergy families in Christian ministry. Blanton and Morris (1999) indicated that, by nature of their position, clergy are called upon to be nurturers of their parishioners. This work significantly impacts clergy, for better or for worse, and then some form of this impact follows the clergy member into his or her family life (Miner, Dowson, & Sterland, 2010; Stewart-Sicking, Ciarrocchi, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2011). For this reason, the nature of the clerical vocation must be studied in conjunction with the study of the contentment of the family unit and the longevity of ministry. Each area must be studied to understand the complete phenomena of the clergy family (Wells, 2013c).

Empirical research of clergy and pastoral ministry has been accruing for more than 60 years (Lee & Iverson-Gilbert, 2003). Within the last 45 years, the concept of family functioning has begun to be noticed by researchers (Morris & Blanton, 1998), and yet clergy families are considered to be an area that continues to lack rich research development (McMinn, Kerrick, Duma, Campbell, & Jung, 2008). Despite the amount of research written about the experiences of the clergy in ministry (Barnard & Curry, 2012; Beebe, 2007; Berry, Rolph, & Rolph, 2012; Buys & Rothmann, 2010; Chandler, 2009; Doolittle, 2010; Francis, Hills, & Rutledge, 2008; Lee, 1999; Lee & Iverson-Gilbert, 2003; Miner, Dowson, & Sterland, 2010; Stewart-Sicking, Ciarrocchi, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2011; Wells, 2013c; Wells, Probst, McKeown, Mitchem, & Whiejong, 2012) and

clergy and spouse relationships (Baker & Scott, 1992; Brock & Lawrence, 2008; Cattich, 2012; Cox, 2001; Darling, Hill, & McWey, 2004; Darling, McWey, & Hill, 2006; Knight Johnson, 2012; McMinn, Kerrick, Duma, Campbell, & Jung, 2008; McMinn, Lish, Trice, Root, Gilbert, & Yap, 2005; Moffat, 1997; Morris & Blanton, 1998; Staley, 2012; Warner & Carter, 1984), there are considerably fewer studies that directly examine the offspring's experience, as a child within a clergy family unit (Anderson, 1995; Anderson, 1998; Cattich, 2012; Cheung Fung, 2004; Darling, McWey, & Hill, 2006; Fox, 1997; Hill, Darling, & Raimondi, 2003; Morris & Blanton, 1998; Moy & Malony, 1987; Ristuccia, 1991; Strange & Sheppard, 2001; Stevenson, 1982). It is, indeed a rarity that a study on the clergy family includes the direct perspectives of all three: clergy member, spouse, and offspring (Cheung Fung, 2004; Ostrander, 1994; Strange & Sheppard, 2001). The non-existence of studies which include clergy parents and adult children of clergy, who are able to reflect upon their family experiences together from an adult perspective, represents a gap in the literature.

Since little empirical research has been conducted on the family functioning of the clergy member, spouse, and child, the purpose of this research is to explore the experiences and the perceptions of the families of those who are currently active in Christian ministry. Worth examining were those experiences and perceptions that may affect family contentment and longevity in ministry. This study of the impact of ministry on the clergy family examined the following research question: "How do a select group of ministers and their families describe their experience in ministry?" The study of

current research has presented primary themes that are functional in the exploration and full comprehension of the impact of ministry on the clergy family.

Purpose of the Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to examine the body of existing studies related to the impact of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity and the phenomenon of living as a unit within the vocational context of Christian ministry. This literature review reflected the need for this proposed study, which seeks to further the understanding of the lived experiences of the clergy family.

Steps to the Literature Review

The search for relevant literature in this study was accomplished by making inquiries using the following key phrases: impact of Christian ministry on clergy families, Christian ministry and family contentment, Christian ministry and family satisfaction, Christian ministry and clergy families, clergy family contentment, clergy family satisfaction, clergy member contentment, clergy member satisfaction, clergy spouse contentment, clergy spouse satisfaction, clergy child contentment, clergy child satisfaction, clergy family contentment, clergy spouses contentment, clergy child contentment, clergy family satisfaction, clergy spouse satisfaction, clergy child satisfaction, longevity in ministry, clergy longevity, clergy vocational longevity, and Christian ministry vocational longevity. The search engines used in the inquiries were: Academic OneFile, Academic Search Premier, APA PsycNET, ATLA Religion Database, JSTOR, ProQuest Religion, ProQuest Social Science Premium, Science Direct College Edition, and Summon. In keeping with the Conceptual Framework for this

inquiry, the studies unearthed are presented in the primary sections: “The Clergy Family Unit” and “Individuals in the Family Unit.”

The Clergy Family Unit

The following section examined the empirical literature that explores the family in ministry. For the sake of this section, the term *family* will be defined as the clergy, the clergy’s spouse, and children of a clergy man or woman who is currently serving in ministry or has formerly served in ministry. Within this section, literature which speaks to the family function and system was reviewed. Specific attention was given to the public and private roles and boundaries, work and family stress, and quality of life of the clergy family unit.

The majority of current literature on the clergy family focuses primarily upon the clergy and his or her spouse relationship. There is minimal research designed to incorporate adult children of clergy (Anderson, 1998; Cheung Fung, 2004; Strange & Sheppard, 2001) and studies of adult children with clergy parents are non-existent. There is a gap in the literature that this study seeks to fill. A clergy child, who is at or above the age of 18 years, offers perspectives on clergy family experiences that are different from a younger child.

As may be indicative of the clergy family phenomena, who experience multifaceted roles and responsibilities, sometime simultaneously, published literature tends to flow across the specified section headings of this research. It seemed inevitable that research which was intended to advance a particular focus of ministry families also revealed findings related to the broader experiences of the clergy family. It appeared

nearly impossible to entirely separate out the various components of clergy family life. Thus, despite efforts to independently examine the individual elements of the ministry family, overlapping in this literature review was unavoidable. There is a visible web of connection among each of the areas of research that included roles and boundaries, work and family stress, quality of life, contentment, and longevity.

Public and Private Roles and Boundaries

While serving in clergy ministry has elements very similar to the vocational experiences of others, with strong emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and motivational similarities (Stewart-Sicking, Ciarrocchi, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2011), the potential for greater difficulty in life management than other vocations is present. Johnson (2012) who studied the lived experiences of 46 clergy couples, indicated that clergy families are very similar to other families, in their handling an overabundance of responsibilities. However, because clergy families can face a lack of boundaries, they are at risk of experiencing marital and parental dissatisfaction and stress due to lack of support. In addition, because many clergy spouses follow the traditional practices of being involved, usually in an unpaid capacity within their spouses' churches, the boundaries and expectations become more complicated. The author maintained that for spouses in the study to be in a position to support their family, they must integrate work, family and religious life.

The clergy man or woman has not only chosen a vocation, but in most cases he or she has sensed a calling or directing from God into this work. As such, the clergy may push themselves to the point of exhaustion in order to be true to their calling (Barnard &

Curry, 2012; Beebe, 2007). However, the outcome does not simply rest on the individual, but also on his or her family.

Blizzard (1958) offered an historical perspective regarding the roles of the clergy and the expectations that were placed upon the male clergy and his family. The author identified that the clergy did not have the freedom to behave outside of his role as minister. Likewise, due to his position as minister, neither were his spouse and children allowed the leverage to act without considering his role. Despite a brief mention of spouse and children, Blizzard did not consider the melding of ministry with family. Rather, one seemed to dictate the other. However, even in 1958, the author did identify the need for further research to evaluate the roles and role conflicts associated with the clergy home.

In a study by Kuhne and Donalson (1995), the examination of day to day clergy realities took place. The five Protestant pastors were each observed for a period of five days. The observational data included the definition of work activity characteristics and the examination of the content of the work activities. The participants were male lead pastors who were serving in a full-time capacity in single churches respectively. Each had been in their present position for a minimum of one year, with no more than two other full-time staff, and a congregation of less than 700 Sunday attenders. Each pastor was between the ages of 36-46 years and they had between 11-13.5 years of ministry experience. Each had served in at least one prior lead pastor position. All held a master of divinity degree and one earned a doctorate in ministry.

The Kuhne and Donalson (1995) study yielded a number of findings which provided insight into the vocational, off-the-platform functioning of the clergy. The authors observed that there were marked differences between the stereotypical ideas of pastoral work and the actual observations of the pastoral work in the study. While the observations revealed a significant amount of time being designated to managerial activities, the research also found that the work activities transpired at a rapid pace with a considerable amount of fragmentation of time and brief contact, lasting less than five minutes 50% of the time (e.g. an average of 8 telephone calls per day, an average of 13 meetings per day, an average of 5 ministry trips per day, and an average of 11 work episodes at a desk per day at various lengths). The data revealed that the clergy tended to break the flow of work, by initiating a phone call or leaving their work to take an item to a secretary. Observational data also indicated that the participants wanted to be active in office interchange, leaving their office doors open to encourage ease of accessibility and fragmentation of their schedules.

Even though there was movement between activities, a genuine break rarely was observed. Even coffee breaks or visits to the washroom were seen to occur in conjunction with a tour of the facility or a connection with church staff. Often, breakfast and lunch times would be used for meetings, whether formal or informal. In addition to daytime business hours, evenings were also often utilized for scheduled meetings or church business calls from home.

Participants identified the importance of maintaining their figurehead role and having public visibility in the church community, which was indeed a highly held

expectation of the pastor's role. They acknowledged that their preaching and worship leading were the most important of weekly activities, as they spent 46% of their desk work time in preparation. Likewise, the participants lived out the importance of leadership development within their congregations and served as caregivers through counseling sessions, visitation, and crisis response, which was observed to modify an existing schedule or sermon preparation plan.

Although the authors did not differentiate between the vocations of the couples involved, Brock and Lawrence's (2008) study of the role strain and marital satisfaction of 101 couples was valuable. The findings brought understanding to the potential situations of a clergy couple. The study participants were approached by researchers, when they were accessing the Iowa state marriage license records. In all cases, both spouses ranged in age from 18 to 55 years. The couples answered study questionnaires at 3-6 months following their marriage, then at 12-15 months, again at 21-24 months, and then again at 30-33 months of marriage. The instruments used included the Chronic Strains Inventory, the Support in Intimate Relationships Rating Scale, the Quality of Marriage Index, and the Beck Depression Inventory. The study findings appeared to go against reason when it indicated that the husbands who experienced an increase in relationship role strain throughout the first three years of marriage found that the satisfaction of wives maintained a plateau during the second year of marriage. However, when the husbands had less of an increase in role strain, the wives noticed a greater decline in their marital satisfaction. Brock and Lawrence (2008) concluded that the correlation between the husbands' role strain and their wives' marital satisfaction was more apparent when the

husbands provided more support to their wives and, in turn, invited the wife to provide support for the husband. Essentially, the findings indicated the value of reciprocal support in the marital dyad. However, the study also acknowledged that when the wives perceived an escalation in their own role strain, there was no change to their marital satisfaction or the marital satisfaction of their husbands.

Similarly, a study conducted by Fox (1997) on ministry and clergy family stressors acknowledged a correlation between boundary violations and the related stress and the sense of personal and family satisfaction. The author collected data for this study as a component to a larger consortium study called The Clergy Family Project. The study was composed of a random sample of male clergy who were married to a non-clergy spouse, with a minimum of one child under the age of 18 still residing in the parsonage. Participants were drawn from Southern Baptist, Lutheran, Church of God, Seventh-Day Adventists, American Baptist, and Episcopal denominations. Of the 136 clergy couples participating, 93% were in their first marriage, with an average of 21 years in duration. There was an average of two children in the families, with ages ranging from 1-44 years of age. While children were present in the family unit, data was not collected from them directly. Rather, parental perceptions were registered. The majority of the clergy ($n=120$) served as lead pastors, averaging 51 hours of work per week. A number of spouses ($n=103$) spent on average of 31 hours per week in some form of employment. In addition to the survey, five primary instruments were used in the collection of data: Clergy Family Life Inventory, the Religious Problem-Solving Scale, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale, the Life Satisfaction Scale, and the Parental Satisfaction Scale. Participants of the

study identified the greatest challenge to marital satisfaction was the demands placed upon the clergy family from the congregation. These challenges came in the forms of a physical encroachment of the family's space, as well as an emotional pull toward the clergy work. Expectations from all around-- denominational, congregation, and family-- came together to test the boundaries of the family unit. These challenges to the family boundaries were reported to negatively impact the clergy and spouse, and risk maintaining clear family boundaries. When difficulties arose, a collaborative style of problem-solving was reportedly most effective in guarding marital and life satisfaction for the clergy and their spouse. The study found that in addition to boundary conflicts, problems associated with mobility, compensation, time-demands and lack of social support were also important factors which affected clergy families.

Cattich (2012) conducted a study of 24 clergy couples who participated in a semi-structured interview. Two of the couples had wives who were the clergy and two additional couples were both clergy members. The respondents of the study were gathered from various Protestant denominations in the southeastern United States. The findings offered a rather cursory perspective of three particular models of clergy couples who work toward effective family functioning. However, the study did not involve the perspective of a clergy child in discussing family life. First, being a living sacrifice was based upon the spiritual value of leadership to congregations, which many times involved a sacrifice to the clergy and their family. Second, being a faithful spouse and parent stressed the value of marriage and family. Also of importance, was the maintenance of boundaries by clergy resisting ministerial pressures that could negatively affect their

family's well-being. Third, being a peacemaker, which stressed the importance of being at peace with everyone. The author concluded that the clergy and their spouses often attempted to change their schedules and needs, as a means of meeting others' needs. These three models considered clergy intentionality, the spouse's role, and the congregational sensitivity.

The study by Hill, Darling, and Raimondi (2003) added to the discussion of professional and private roles and boundaries, with increasing depth. The authors set about to consider boundary-related stress and its impact on the clergy family. Through a focus group methodology, they interviewed three groups of clergy and two groups of clergy spouses, totalling 19 clergy and 13 clergy spouses. The participants were not necessarily married to one another. In the study, the clergy in the study served in their role for an average of 13.7 years, and clergy spouses had been married to a clergy for an average of 23.3 years. There was an average of 2.4 children represented in the participant families, but data was not directly collected from the children.

Findings suggested that most of the experienced stress was, indeed, related to boundary stress, which developed from the challenge in establishing boundaries between themselves and, one another, their extended families, and their ministries. Of primary concern, was the amount of stress experienced through personal or family intrusions. Obtaining personal space was determined to be one of the greatest challenges for clergy families. In fact, the concept of provided parsonages was considered to be the cause of additional stress and a disadvantage. The awkwardness of attempting to carve out personal space in a residence that is viewed as church property, created boundary issues

that made comfortable living a challenge for the clergy family. This arrangement tended to be more of a challenge for the clergy spouse, who reported that lack of privacy was a substantial cause of stress in the family.

Clergy participants identified that the context of ministry inflicted a struggle which affected their relationship with their spouse and children, which negatively impacted the sense of family cohesion and quality time together. Likewise, because of the ministry context, clergy wives found it difficult to be the primary confidant for their spouses, which was an outcropping of the clergy's tendency to isolate themselves from outside relationships. Also, impacting clergy children was the parental perception that they were held to a higher standard of actions by the congregation. In addition, it was common that clergy families did not live within close proximity to their extended families. The lack of this support was particularly noticed when the children were younger.

Participants found that a strong bond was formed in the clergy couple by the presence of personal and ministry compatibility, which helped them to manage the everyday stresses of a ministry family. Despite the challenges of establishing friendships, as a result of personal and professional boundary issues, clergy spouses stressed the importance of connecting with others in the community, as a means of building support.

Hill et al. (2003) concluded with four suggestions to assist clergy families in the management of personal and professional boundaries: (a) increase professional assistance to the clergy, in the form of paid or volunteer support; (b) provide clergy family should have access to networks of support for each individual and the family; (c) offer

educational programs and seminars to inform the clergy family of action steps pertaining to issues that cause boundary stress; and (d) require professional internships, in order to have increased clarity of ministry life.

Several ministerial issues that impacted the clergy family unit have been introduced through the findings in these studies. Some of them indicated benefits to the family, while others noted concerns detrimental to the clergy family. The previous studies presented more general perspectives of ministry and the interactions within the clergy family; however, the following subsection addresses the intersection of Christian ministry with work and family stress.

Work and Family Stress

Stress can be a consequence of busy and inflexible schedules, heightened expectations, personal and congregational conflicts, and a lack of support which may lead toward isolation (Miner, Dowson, & Sterland, 2010). Wells (2013c) saw several of the clerical responsibilities as being unique to the role of the clergy: specifically, preaching, teaching, providing counseling and guidance, and carrying out administrative duties. When these were combined with the clergy's personal life, there tended to be magnification of his or her stress, which reached an uncomfortable level. Lee (1999) concluded that vocational-related stress did not remain in the clergy's work domain. Rather, the impact generalized to one's sense of emotional well-being which extended to other life areas, particularly into the area of family. However, by the same token, when non-vocational stress increased, the congregational care of the pastor's family was experienced as generalized social support.

Blanton and Morris (1999) indicated that one of the greatest challenges for the clergy was to be openly accessible to his or her parishioners for the support of their spiritual and emotional well-being, all the while dealing with adversity in his or her own well-being which came from work-related stresses. The authors surveyed 136 clergy and spouse couples to study the influence of emotional stability in the face of ministry-related stress. Variables such as age, congregation size, financial income, and number of relocations were factored into the couple's experiences of wellness. Four conclusions were drawn from the research findings. First, work-related stress affected clergy and spouses in comparable ways, regardless of denominational affiliations. Second, the physical well-being of clergy was affected by the amount of their incomes and their role as financial providers of their families. Third, the husband's emotional well-being was associated with his perception of how his income compared to ministry peers' incomes. Fourth, the clergy wives' physical well-being was predictable, based upon a lack of support, along with time demands and expectations. Nonetheless, as their ages increased, it was found that their demands lessened, offering more time to invest in self-development.

Just prior to the previous study, the same authors Morris and Blanton (1998) completed a study with 136 clergy couples, which were randomly selected, and found that the perceptions of social context stressors affected the functioning of the couple. Specifically, couples noted intrusiveness, lack of social support, mobility, and time demands as particular stressors that impacted their families functioning. Clergy and spouses identified similar effects of stress in the area of family functioning. The clergy

acknowledged that the level of financial compensation was a stressor to some areas of family functioning. Further, the authors suggested that financial stress was a chronic stressor which impacted many clergy and their families.

In 2012, Wells, Probst, McKeown, Mitchem, and Whiejong conducted a study which accessed cross-sectional data and used correlation analysis and simple and multiple regression models. Original data were obtained from the Pulpit and Pew Clergy Leadership Survey (2001), conducted by the National Opinion Research Center. During the initial study, Duke University accessed a nation-wide random sample of 883 lead pastors, from over 80 United States denominations, to participate in approximately 45-minute telephone interviews. Wells et al. (2012) sought to understand the relationship between boundary-related stress and work-related stress. Findings indicated a strong correlation and association: as work-related stress increased, boundary-related stress increased. Ancillary findings tended to relate to situational variables relating to gender, marital status, age, education, employment variations, and length of service in ministry. Male clergy reported experiencing less work-related stress than their female counterparts. Married clergy reported increased amounts of boundary-related stress, but decreased work-related stress, in comparison to unmarried clergy. Clergy with children reported higher levels of both work-related and boundary-related stress, in comparison to childless clergy. In the realms of age and experience, findings indicated that as clergy aged, they experienced lower levels of boundary-related and work-related stress. Those with higher levels of education indicated increased levels of work-related and boundary-related stress. Those with vocational longevity of 20 years, or more, reported increased

boundary-related stress and decreased work-related stress, in comparison to those with 6-10 years of experiences, whose boundary-related stress was lower and work-related stress was higher. Clergy who were bi-vocational acknowledged a marked decrease in boundary-related stress and second-career clergy indicated lower levels of both boundary-related and work-related stress.

In the study of 73 clergy members (10 females and 63 males), Berry, Francis, Rolph, and Rolph (2012) found that the participants were fully aware of the stressful dynamics of the ministry, and yet they functioned in the manner that which they were consistently overworked. Further, the study revealed that few of the participants had a plan of action for effectively dealing with the psychological demands of their work. The study's method included the use of open-ended questioning, bringing to light the importance of eight particular key action steps: (a) assessing personal health; (b) identifying the characteristics of stress; (c) assessing the symptoms of stress; (d) identifying the causes of stress; (e) naming the sources of support; (f) finding forms of relaxation; (g) assessing pastoral care provision; and (h) enhancing initial clergy training. Through the collection of these data, Berry et al. (2012) formed four meaningful conclusions. First, the participants were well aware of their vocational-related stress dynamics, but they showed signs of functioning in work overload. Second, although the clergy were educated regarding the stresses and problems of their profession, few had an effective plan to deal with them. Third, even though they saw the value in developing efficient support systems, the participants were not trusting of the process. Fourth, the

majority of the clergy observed that professional training for ministry did not fully prepare them.

Kinman, McFall and Rodriguez (2011) reported findings from a study of 188 clergy, in which clergy well-being was examined. Participants demonstrated that work-related stressors included working extended hours, feeling overloaded by work and high expectations of the congregation, and receiving undesirable financial compensation. Simultaneously, these participants were able to acknowledge that their work was satisfying, meaningful, and worthwhile. Outcomes of this study identified that, while some clergy were well equipped, many would have benefited from specific training that would have protected them from the negative effects of emotional demands, in order for their ministry satisfaction to continue.

Clergy burnout is a topic that readily emerges in literature which addresses the pastoral ministry vocation. Although the topic of burnout goes beyond the parameters of this study, stress, when left unchecked, runs the risk of developing into burnout (Miner, Dowson, & Sterland, 2010; Sosin & Thomas, 2013). Therefore, it must be acknowledged that burnout is a critical factor which impacting clergy families, particularly in regard to their contentment and longevity. Stewart-Sicking, Ciarrocchi, Hollensbe, and Sheep (2011) identified the risk factors for burnout as:

too high a workload, a lack of control over one's work and decisions, role conflict and ambiguity, insufficient reward, lack of co-worker and supervisor support, a perceived lack of fairness, valued mismatch and a perceived incongruity between the worker and the job. (p. 716)

Buyss and Rothmann's (2010) survey of 115 clergy presented the conclusion that those in vocational ministry were increasingly reporting burnout as a consequence of the conflicts and challenges that the minister must attempt to manage. Beebe's (2007) study of 290 clergy showed that there may be a process leading the clergy toward the experience of burnout; (1) the individual becomes emotionally and functionally overwhelmed with the demands and expectations of the position; (2) the interpersonal turmoil of the individual leads him or her to draw back and emotionally remove himself or herself; (3) he or she is then unable to fulfill the responsibilities of the role; and (4) which leads the individual then concludes that he or she is ineffective in ministry. The authors contended that emotional exhaustion and burnout can be predicted by the pace and amount of work the individual has and the emotional demands he or she encounters, along with the clergy receiving little development opportunities and the congregational support.

The intent of Chandler's (2009) study, which surveyed 270 clergy online, was to examine the relationship between the clergy's spiritual renewal, support system efficacy, and his or her ability to remain rested. This correlation was structured by Chandler's definition of burnout as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishments (p. 283). The study identified spiritual emptiness, or lack of vitality, as the major predictor of emotional exhaustion. When this need is replenished, it has been reported to be a preventative of pastoral burnout. A secondary predictor of emotional exhaustion was the lack of rest. Chandler contended that as time for rest diminished for the pastor, the probability of emotional exhaustion increased. The intent of the study was

to identify and develop practices of self-care for the clergy that would help to maintain their stability and allow them to fulfill their vital calling. Findings indicated that the nurturance of an ongoing relationship with God was needed to bring balance, through the reduction of stress. However, no specific practices of renewal were identified. As such, the author recommended further research into specific spiritual practices and the effect upon individual clergy.

Hills, Francis, and Rutledge (2004) determined to develop a new measure that would be comparable with the Maslach Burnout Inventory, with the intent of applying it to their current study. In particular, they sought to establish the prevalence and extent of burnout, as well as any relationships that may have existed between clergy burnout and individual personality difference. The participants ($N=1071$) were Anglican clergy who responded to the researcher's mailed questionnaire. The measures utilized in the study were an inventory that was composed by modifying the MBI, in ways that would gear it more toward Anglican clergy. In addition, the researchers utilized a short scale version of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, Revised. The outcomes of the study indicated that marital status of the participants was the only demographic predictor of exhaustion. Findings indicated that married clergy, who comprised 84% of the study, experienced more exhaustion. Conflict between family and clergy responsibilities was presumed to be the critical factor. In addition, age appeared to be relative to the presence of depersonalization; a coping response that is utilized by the younger and less experienced clergy. As well, feelings of achievement were more prevalent in clergy who ministered in well-attended churches, as opposed to those that were financially overburdened.

Miner, Dowson, and Sterland (2010) spoke about the element of a vocational fit for the individual entering ministry, reporting that when the pairing did not match, the work was more stressful. It became inevitable that signs of burnout were present. Doolittle (2010) indicated from a survey of 358 clergy, that burnout is a job-related condition and that leaving the job would resolve the symptoms. However, the residual effects of the difficult ministry situation would not remain at the job, but would follow the individual into future positions or vocations. In view of the broader scope of ministry, clergy, family, the lack of vocational matching, and certainly the resignation from the ministry placement or vocation, would undoubtedly affect the clergy's view of his or her personal meaning. This would surely spill over to his or her function within the family system.

The implications of a vocational ministry that is often accompanied by the stress and strain of the job description, as well as the personal and professional rewards, played heavily into the value of this study. As previously noted, the clergy do not work in isolation, but rather there is an intermingling of experiences among ministry, clergy, and family (Wells, 2013). The clear perspective of each of these areas added to the efficacy of this study.

Ostrander's (1994) study of 169 Protestant clergy families, with children ages 8-18 years, found that family hardiness may be needed in order for families to manage stress in a way that guards against exhaustion. Further, families who possessed more hardiness in managing stress could still be vulnerable in situations with high levels of difficulty. Ostrander's (1994) volunteer sample identified United States evangelical

congregations which were chosen in an attempt to control for church structure, income levels, and congregational size. Surveys were pilot-tested for readability by adults and children. Measurements utilized in the data collection were the following: Stressors of Clergy Children and Couples Scale, Parent Life Event Checklist, Family Hardiness Index, Family Coherence, Spiritual Coping and Ventilation Coping, and Family Adaptation. This study showed that as clergy stress increased, the family perception of happiness and adaptive functioning declined. In addition, parent life stress was acknowledged to be an important negative predictor of family adaptation, which signified that the accumulation of stress related to normal life events would also have a negative effect on family adaption. However, normal family stress did not, alone, reduce hardiness or coherence in the clergy families. Ostrander (1994) concluded that in the relationship between stress, hardiness, adaptation, and coherence, the presence of family coherence served as the joining factor with hardiness, which lowered the impact of stress on the family. Also noted, was the observation that developing a purpose in life and a sense of control over events, moved the family toward successful family functioning. Anderson's (1998) findings indicated that moves were frequent and challenging for the family, particularly the clergy's children. However, Ostrander's (1994) findings recognized that the actual number of relocations were not the major factor. Rather, it is the level of stress associated with the circumstances of the move may have been the major factor when anticipating the effect of the move on the family. To summarize his findings, Ostrander (1994) concluded that clergy family levels of adaptation were affected by the volume of stress the family faces, their levels of hardiness, and the strength of family coherence.

Thus, it was important to reduce the amount of stress sources, while increasing the development of family strengths, such as hardiness and coherence.

Darling, McWey, and Hill (2006) studied the effects of children in the clergy home by surveying a random sampling of 232 male clergy and 169 female clergy spouses in the southeastern United States. The authors analyzed the data through the ABC-X model of family stress, in which A signified the compassion fatigue and family stress experienced, B indicated the level of coping, and C represented the psychological and physiological stresses, as well as a sense of coherence or unity. The X element of the model signified the perceived quality of life by clergy and spouses. This sizable study revealed critical findings for clergy families. As compared to clergy families without children, this group found that they were likely to spend more hours with their families each week, while at the same time, spend more time away from home. This finding reflected the observed that clergy salaries may not sustain a single-income family, resulting in a clergy's need to be bi-vocational. Likewise, clergy spouses with children also spent more time each week with their family and more time away from their homes, just as their husbands did. However, they also reported being faced with more unfinished tasks and increased spousal conflict. While families with no children reported lower levels of stress, clergy with children acknowledged higher psychological stress along with higher coherence. Nevertheless, the clergy spouses with children reported more deficits: higher psychological stress, higher physical stress, and a lower level of coherence.

Despite these noted variations between spouses, findings also indicated that the quality of life for both groups of clergy and clergy spouse was very similar, whether they had children or not. The study concluded that the meaning and rewards of parenting tended to offset the stresses of parenting. Thus, both groups had the same quality of life, but for different reasons. Darling et al. (2006) concluded that the stresses experienced in parenting may lead to a lower perception of meaningfulness and manageability as a parent, on the part of the clergy spouse. However, similar to Darling, Hill, and McWey's (2004) findings, these authors also indicated that the benefits of caring for congregations in a philanthropic sense does not apply to the spouse in the same manner it does to the clergy.

Two additional findings were revealed through a line of open-ended questions. First, echoing the findings of Anderson, 1998; Cheung Fung, 2004; Hill, Darling, and Raimondi, 2003; Stevenson, 1982; and Strange and Sheppard, 2001, the perception that congregational expectations were holding the entire family, children included, to a standard which exceeded that of the congregation's own families.' Second, there was an on-going family stressor from the perception that the church takes priority over the clergy family. The sense that the church had ownership over all of the clergy's time led the spouses, in particular, to feel as if the clergy were preoccupied with congregational work and that family was an unwanted distraction.

In Morris and Blanton's (1994) study of work-related stress and its impact on clergy couples, the authors randomly selected 136 couples ($N=272$) consisting of ordained male clergy and their non-clergy spouses from a mailing list provided by six

United States denominations. The measurements used in the study included the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale, the Clergy Family Life Inventory, the Edmonds Marital Conventionalization Scale, Parent Satisfaction Scale, and the Life Satisfaction Scale, along with a personal history inventory.

Participants identified being watched and scrutinized by the congregation inflicted an intrusion upon the family boundaries and instigated a heightened level of stress for the clergy couple. The couples also acknowledged an internal sense of “disruption and chaos” when they perceived their lives to be on display. Although this study did not incorporate the perspective of clergy children, it is safe to assume that this stress would, at a minimum, trickle down to them. Study participants also found that deficits in social support easily translated into stress for the couple. As well, the presence of time demands was notable. However, when flexibility in schedules and control of personal time were present, it was reported that satisfaction increased.

In a study conducted by W. Morrison & Associates (2005), ordained pastors ($n=12$), clergy leaders ($n=11$), and lay leaders ($n=12$) participated in semi-structured telephone interviews, lasting approximately one hour. The participants, 11 female and 24 males, averaging 23 years in full-time vocational ministry or lay leadership positions, were members of the Atlantic Baptist Convention in Canada. The study yielded a variety of valuable results related to the health and well-being of ministry family units.

Participants acknowledged that several of the occupational stresses of ministry were similar to those of other helping professions. In particular, leadership/activity was expected in the activities of the following: administration, visitation and counseling,

fundraising, committee leadership, teaching and preaching, evangelism and discipleship, and crisis intervention. At the same time, ministry was found to be unique because of the porous boundaries between work and family. Many times congregations expected 24-hour accessibility to the clergy. Participants also observed that when ministry-related stress came within the family boundaries, the spouse and children could take on a defensive stance against the church, to the point of becoming angry over the experiences their spouse or parent faced. When a response, such as this, was allowed to linger, the quality of family and ministry life was reported to diminish.

For the female clergy, participants ($n=15$) assessed that there were many challenges related to levels of acceptance and respect. Male clergy and lay leaders revealed a lack of support for female roles in vocational ministry. In addition, in a similar fashion as a clergy spouse (Luedtke, 2011), the female clergy with families were faced with increased demands of balancing ministry with family life. Unmarried clergy were found to encounter potential stress from their endeavors of managing congregational expectations, while living in periods of isolation and loneliness.

It was suggested that relocation caused the entire ministry family in particular stress. With relocation, came a new setting with new routines; a new home in a new community; a new church with a new congregation; a new school with new relationships; and new options of employment for the working spouse or bi-vocational clergy. Study findings found there to be a loss of leaving what is known and anxiety over what is new, with the expectations and challenges that were associated with relocation.

Study participants identified mechanisms of stress reduction and proactive measures in health and well-being such as the following: counseling in career guidance, financial planning, individual and family concerns, family-oriented support retreats, a broad range of health benefits, mentorship opportunities, self-care workshops/retreats, establishment of friendships in and beyond the congregation, clergy care initiatives, and confidential services.

Stress had an impact on both the clergy and his/her family. These studies represented the physical, emotional, and financial stresses that can be a result of a demanding vocation that tends to provide more critiquing than encouragement and full support. In addition, the challenge of effectively sharing time, focus, and energy between vocation and family was often unsuccessful, resulting in even more stress. These issues, along with others, undoubtedly played a role in the overall phenomenon of the clergy and family's quality of life and were represented through research in the following section.

Quality of Life

The ministry aspect of the clergy family was what provided the context or the environment for the family. Serving in ministry was what makes a clergy family different from a non-clergy family. While it normally does not reside in the home, nor is it a face at the dinner table, ministry is undeniably a presence in the midst of each member of a clergy family. Whether it is stress or contentment, burnout or meaningfulness, vocational ministry casts a presence upon the family that affects each member-- implicitly and explicitly.

Strange and Sheppard (2001) and Anderson (1998) observed that the experience of being scrutinized was an element that applied to the entire family of the clergy. The frequently used term of *fishbowl* referred to the presence of unrealistic expectations upon the clergy family (Cattich, 2012) and high visibility of the clergy family (Hartley & Taylor, 1977). The term *glass house* denoted being held to a higher standard than the families own standard, which may have interfered with the parenting of the children (Darling, McWey, & Hill, 2006). Undoubtedly, the life of ministry tended to take on a more public presence of the clergy family than that of a non-clergy family.

Darling, Hill, and McWey (2004) conducted a random sample of 259 clergy and 177 clergy spouses, in an effort to understand the quality of life of the clergy couple. Participants were drawn from a list developed by a clergy support center in the Southeastern United States. In addition to the use of questionnaires, the Family Inventory of Life Events, the Compassion Satisfaction/Fatigue Self-Test for Helpers, Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scales, Spiritual Well-being Scale, Occupational Stress Inventory, the Orientation to Life Scale, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale were used as measurement tools.

Four findings specifically addressed the family life situation. First, when a clergy in the family experienced fatigue, their symptoms were often offset by the sense of their satisfaction in helping others. However, when the clergy spouses experienced fatigue, they did not receive the benefit of experiencing compassion satisfaction. Second, the participant couples noted, as they reflected upon the previous year, that stress entered their home through the following situations: an increase in time away from home by a

family member, disagreements about activities of a family member, an increased number of unresolved conflicts or tasks, and the presentation of emotional problems in the family. Third, clergy spouses noted their experience of heightened physiological and psychological stress, often due to disruptions in family because of congregational or community crisis. As a result, the spouse was often left alone to keep the family functioning.

Fourth and finally, because the clergy viewed their daily challenges and demands as an investment and a commitment to the congregation, he or she struggled with being everything to all people. The outcome of this struggle normally resulted in a lack of attention toward their own family members. Darling et al. (2004) concluded that it was critical for clergy families to guard the boundaries which protected their families. In doing so, there was direct benefit to their family. Maintaining these boundaries also modeled to their congregations the importance of implementing appropriate and healthy family development patterns.

Several additional insights and recommendations came forth from this study: (1) spiritual well-being is important to the quality of life for clergy and spouse; (2) increased and on-going support networks are necessary; (3) on-going education in boundary issues, family, financial management, administration, and family health and wellness are essential; (4) internships should be required for the beginning ministers; (5) congregational feedback is helpful in role establishment; (6) clergy salaries need to be increased; and (7) more family time is needed since 50% of clergy spend 10 or fewer hours a week with their families.

McMinn, Lish, Trice, Root, Gilbert, and Yap (2005) reviewed existing literature to explore the coping styles of clergy family challenges, specifically as it related to the clergy and spouse. McMinn et al. (2005) referenced four published studies (Lish, McMinn, Fitzsimmons, & Root, 2003; McMinn, Ammons, McLaughlin, Williamson, Griffin, Fitzsimmons, & Spires, 2004; Meek, McMinn, Burnett, Mazzarella, & Voytenko, 2004; Meek, McMinn, Brower, Burnett, McRay, Ramey, Swanson, & Villa, 2003) focusing upon three primary areas of family coping. The authors found that 91% of the participants acknowledged at least one healthy habit which reflected internal self-care (e.g. exercise, healthy eating, hobbies), 55% signified at least one element of spiritual care; and 27% reported they took time alone to increase self-awareness. In fact, each of the four studies showed that clergy do the majority of their self-care while alone, because of the scrutiny they live under (fishbowl lifestyle). Because of this, clergy are left feeling isolated and disconnected when dealing with their thoughts or feelings. Also because of the fishbowl phenomenon, if a clergy couple is intent on maintaining healthy boundaries and take time off, it was reported that they needed to leave home to avoid places where intrusions are likely. The opportunity to relax at home appeared in jeopardy.

The McMinn et al. (2005) review acknowledged that 82% of the participants used a form of self-care which allowed for interpersonal connection (e.g. pastoral support group, Bible study, congregational social group, family, friends, or professional counselors). Further, 73% reported being the recipient of at least one form of care from their church, and 64% noted at least one form of care provided by their denomination.

However, as an unsolicited examination, 45% revealed that they either did not have a vital denominational affiliation or that the denominational care was lacking.

The authors found that due to the absence of close friendships, outside of the family, the family relationship was the primary place for emotions to be candidly shared. However, the benefit was only present when the spouse was able to fulfill this role. Clergy reported that finding support from other pastors or denominational leaders was valuable. However, they noted that one could easily feel vulnerable if this interaction took on a competitive nature. Clergy spouses noted spiritual discipline, sharing in ministry, having time with their spouse, enjoying time away from home, and having supportive same-sex friendships as necessary elements of self-care. Within the home, they noted personal attention from their spouse and their help around the home were significant ways of being cared for by their spouses.

Staley (2012) conducted a study to examine the types of strategies being used by clergy and their spouses to guard against and cope with interpersonal isolation. A grounded theory approach was used to identify four primary themes which arose from data collected on 80 senior pastors in the Nazarene and Evangelical Friends denominations. Demographic information on the participants revealed that roughly 86% were male and that the overall mean age of the participants was 49.7 years. In addition, 93.8% were married, with a mean number of 25.6 years of being married and a mean number of children of 3.1 children. Unstructured interviews and the Social Support Questionnaire were instrumental in acknowledging the primary themes of the study:

barriers to developing and maintaining close relationships, strategies for developing and maintaining close relationships, lack of support, and coping with loneliness.

Findings within the area of barriers to developing and maintaining close relationships indicated that some ($n=14$) pastors felt that time demands were a notable barrier in building and maintaining close relationships with others. Other participants noted that confusion over the particular role the clergy fills, at any given time, was a deterrent to knowing how to interact with each other. Growing from this role confusion, some ($n=11$) identified that unrealistic expectations were being imposed upon the clergy. Similarly, participants ($n=11$) revealed difficulty in being transparent with others, because others were often guarded around them. The final observation within this theme related to the challenges of frequent moves. Participants ($n=7$) revealed that relocation presented a challenge in developing close, supportive friendships.

Related to the theme of outlining strategies for developing and maintaining close relationships, clergy ($n=50$) reported that being intentional about allotting time to meet others and develop friendships was vital. Some ($n=8$) found it best to build a network with other pastors and peers for the purpose of providing support and accountability. Such a relationship is established upon vulnerability, of which ($n=10$) reported as being critical to meaningful relationships. Another representation of participants ($n=8$) acknowledged that finding others with shared interests helped in their establishing meaningful relationships.

Participants responded with the most positive feedback to the study when it focused upon the level of felt support. Only a minimal number ($n=4$) were surprised by

the lack of support from the church, and clergy ($n=36$) reported feeling at least minimally satisfied with the level of social support received. When faced with the feeling of loneliness and lack of support, the largest number of respondents ($n=24$) found that spending time with family and friends was a successful strategy. Smaller numbers ($n=8$) engaged in hobbies or recreation, clergy ($n=6$) turned to spiritual disciplines; and others ($n=5$) engaged in forms of entertainment. Interestingly, participants ($n=7$) acknowledged intentional withdrawal and solitude as a favorite strategy for dealing with feelings of loneliness.

Meek, McMinn, Brower, Burnett, McRay, Ramey, Swanson, and Villa (2003) conducted two consecutive studies to examine ways in which mental health professionals could learn from the experiences and understanding of pastors. The initial study included 398 evangelical pastors, 94% of whom were males with an average age of 47 years, who responded to a survey packet. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (3rd ed.) was utilized to ascertain exemplars in the study. Responses to three key questions were evaluated by using the Non-Numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing software. The adjoining second study included 26 participants who were exemplars in the previous study. These participants, 24 males and 2 females, with an average age of 52 years, attended a 30-minute semi-structured interview. The studies produced rather extensive findings, which the authors then formulated into themes of positive clergy functioning.

First, be intentionally balanced. The participants realized they needed to create boundaries to intentionally protect themselves, their marriages, and their families. A part

of this process was maintaining elements of independence from their roles as pastor. Their service as clergy was not all encompassing. Some participants explained their spouses' ability to provide a balance by maintaining a life outside of work. Second, be intentionally connected. Participants discussed the steps they took to maintain a healthy connection with their families. Family practices included praying together, praying for one another, and reading the Bible together. Third, establish extra-familial relationships. Participants acknowledged the importance of having an advocate who would listen to their concerns and journey with them through the solution process. Fourth, experience a sense of calling into ministry. All of the participants were able to acknowledge a call into vocational ministry. Fifty-eight percent noted a developing sense of calling, which took time to grow. The remaining 42% verbalized a distinct moment in time when a call was placed upon them.

Fifth, develop of spiritual disciplines. Respondents acknowledged their responsibility to prepare themselves spiritually, in order to best serve their congregations. Spiritual activities, such as prayer, fasting, scripture reading, journaling, and solitude were viewed as important by 33% of clergy in study one, and 66% of clergy in study two. Sixth, pursue self-awareness. The participants acknowledged God's work in and through their lives, God's power among all of their experiences, and their ongoing need of God's mercy. Seventh, see the need for personal examination. Because the pastor faced several experiences of a demanding nature, they knew they needed pro-active and restorative counseling. Eighth, avail themselves of organizational support. Participants understood their need for support, in order to build positive communication, mentoring, vision-

casting, and friendships. Furthermore, they learned how necessary it was to allow for discussions of how to deal with difficult congregants, to manage feelings of sexual attraction, to guard their marriages, to establishing friendships and mentorship, to note distress in self and others, and to seek help during crisis. Ninth, develop a system of remediation. Respondents expressed that having a safe and confidential space allowed them the freedom to reveal weakness or incompetency, without fear of negative reprisal or being subject to a perspective that God is not enough to handle it.

Summary of the Empirical Literature on the Clergy Family Unit

The clergy family is affected by the roles and boundaries which are either taken on by those in ministry or placed upon them by those whom they minister with and to. Likewise, vocational and family stress is either a product of the choices made in ministry or the demands and unrealistic expectations placed upon the clergy family, usually by those outside of the family unit and most often by the congregation. The idea of a quality of life in the clergy family is threatened by elements such as maintaining a public presence, time demands, infringement of boundaries, and physical, emotional, and spiritual fatigue.

However, the hope which is gleaned through the literature was that insights can be gained and coping skills can be utilized, as a means of healthy functioning in both family and ministry. Understanding the importance of scheduling time to have healthy interpersonal connection, maintaining a regimen of taking breaks from the influence of one's ministry, and adhering to the perspective that vocational clergy service is but one component of the minister, not the all encompassing whole, was essential. This study

expanded upon these phenomena from the perspectives of the clergy couple and the adult child. Moreover, the individual experiences of the study participants served to identify factors in family contentment and vocational longevity.

Individuals in the Family Unit

The Clergy Member in the Family

Oftentimes, the manner in which ministry impacts the family is attributed to the clergy directly, as if it is carried through the front door on his or her shoulders. The following section examined the literature which directly referenced the clergy experience and included the following: the phenomenon of being a clergy member in the family, clergy contentment, and clergy vocational longevity.

The phenomenon of being a clergy member in the family. For the purposes of this section, the term *clergy* is defined as “the holder of office” (Kung, 1967, p. 385) or those who are set apart for specific ministries (Patte, 2010). He or she is often “authorized by ordination to proclaim the Word and administer the sacraments” (Fahlbush, Lochman, Mbiti, Pelikan, & Vischer, 1999, p. 596-597). From the perspective of the clergy family, he or she is the reason that the family is involved in ministry, in the manner which they are. This section, specifically, examined the literature on the personal segment of the clergy’s life: who he or she is as an individual within the vocation of ministry.

Luder (2014) studied former pastors who prepared themselves for ministry, but who then removed themselves from the vocation between 2 and 5 years of service, without immediately seeking another position in ministry. A purposeful sample of 10

Caucasian male participants was used in the research, ranging in ages of 29 to 56 years of age. Data were collected by implementing an interview guide of demographic information and semi-structured, open-ended questions, which were administered through telephone discussions. The study yielded a number of findings which served to reveal the lived experiences of a former male Protestant clergy.

The rationale cited by the participants for leaving the ministry was not related to items of a religious nature. Rather, participants revealed problems of a practical nature or a life issue. Within the data, two themes presented with unanimous agreement among all the pastors. First, all were called by God to enter into vocational ministry. Findings indicated that the belief God had called them into ministry, effective theological education, and career satisfaction were not determinants to pastoral longevity. Instead, 60% acknowledged they had a significant spiritual or religious experience that was vital to their belief that God had led them into ministry, and 90% reported that the performance of their ministry-related duties was a confirmation of their call. In addition, 80% of the former pastors noted that they received confirmation from other sources, as well as, substantiating that God had called them into ministry.

Second, concerns for the well-being of their family played a major part in their decision to step out of vocational ministry. One participant reported that if he would have remained in the ministry, his children would have developed a negative view of the Church, which he considered a guarantee they would walk away from the Church. Participants expanded the rationale for leaving to include over-involvement in the local church ($n=6$), lack of external support, burnout ($n=6$), personality conflicts within the

church ($n=6$), and financial considerations. Sixty percent of the former pastors also revealed that the presence of medical issues, both mental and physical, was a considerable reason in deciding to leave the ministry. While this statistic was not mentioned by the author as a reason for leaving vocational ministry, it was noted that 20% of the participants struggled with pornography while in the pastorate, and it was believed to be more wide-spread.

In addition, it is valuable to acknowledge that despite the fact that each of the study participants left their vocational ministry roles, they did indeed manifest positive experiences in the process. During their academic preparation to be a clergy, 60% of the study participants identified that pastoral theology courses impacted them significantly, as did the opportunity to practice the skills of ministry while attending Bible college or seminary. Seventy percent considered a formal ministry internship to be valuable in their preparation. Once they became fully active in the vocational pastorate, 70% of the participants regarded their experience as good, while 60% enjoyed the work they did.

As Luder's (2014) research presented, the phenomenon of being a clergy had much to do with God's leading into the vocation. However, there was a gap between this beginning point and the extended completion of this calling. In this gap was found the presence or absence of clergy contentment. The following section presented research related to the perceived sense of well-being and life satisfaction in the life of clergy.

Clergy contentment. This section speaks to how those in full-time ministry view the reality of their current life circumstances, vocationally and personally, as compared to how he or she would prefer it to be (Rojas & Veenhoven, 2013). For the purpose of this

study, this comparison of current life perceptions in comparison to what more one would hope for and the enjoyment that comes from the fulfilling of roles (Cohall, 2007) will serve as the definition of contentment. In addition, consideration was given to how the presence of contentment affected clergy vocation and family.

Gill (2014) contended that clergy who have a high sense of well-being, along with heightened levels of emotional labor, would also be responsible when caring for others. Similarly, Lee and Iverson-Gilbert (2003) found that the clergy's perception of the congregational demands affected their own sense of well-being. The authors of the study administered questionnaires to a random sample of 312 Protestant clergy. The Ministry Demands Inventory, the Family Member Wellbeing Index, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale were also administered to the participants. The sample, with a mean age of 47, was primarily a male population with only 24 female participants.

The authors drew on the works of Blizzard (1958) and Hill (1949), which introduced the presence of stress and demands in the life of the clergy. While the presence of stress appeared expected for clergy and their families, the presence of support seemed to be lacking. The findings indicated that the larger the mass of support from the congregation, the more content the pastor was and the more optimistic his or her attitude. Conversely, the more demanding the congregants, the lower the perspective of satisfaction and well-being, and the more likely the individual was to encounter symptoms of burnout. However, the issue of demand and stress was not strictly external. According to Lee and Iverson-Gilbert (2003), the clergy may be less affected by the

frequency of demands and more impacted by how he or she interpreted those demands.

Hence, the pastors' perceptions modified their sense of well-being.

Lee and Iverson-Gilbert (2003) suggested that there was value in helping clergy to anticipate professional and personal criticism, in order for them to respond effectively.

Also, it was valuable for clergy to realize that not all of his or her family members would share a call to ministry. When this was not addressed as a family, there was potential for some to feel resentment by being pushed into a call that was not theirs. In this case, it would be particularly helpful for a clergy family to establish and share the identity of its own, in conjunction with the purpose of ministry, which the clergy member led them toward. In summary, the authors highlighted the finding that clergy satisfaction and general well-being was greatly affected by the support they receive from family, friends, and congregations. Secondary influence upon satisfaction and well-being was the clergy income.

Christian ministry is a vocation that is accompanied by various and vital responsibilities (Blanton & Morris, 1999; Wells, 2013c) which can have a negative and, sometimes, harmful impact upon the clergy and his or her family. However, despite the challenges, there are personal and professional rewards which accompany the position.

Regardless of the challenges of vocational ministry, studies indicated that satisfaction of ministry and felt accomplishments were present, and indeed may be a factor in coping with heightened levels of stress (Berry, Francis, Rolph, & Rolph, 2012). Miner, Dowson & Sterland's (2010) survey of 2132 clergy indicated that greater ministry satisfaction was present when the clergy had the freedom to make important work-related

decisions. This autonomous minister may possess an increased sense of competence and personal accomplishment, which directly impacted his or her ministry satisfaction.

Closely associated to the area of contentment was the sense of significance and meaningfulness in one's ministry. Particularly since, for most, the entry into ministry was accompanied by a strong desire to use their gifts in leading churches and meeting the needs of parishioners (Barnard & Curry, 2012); and thus fulfillment and meaning would be expected to follow. For something that tends to consume the majority of one's time and effort, it was critical to feel as if the investment had been worthwhile. However, the full benefit could not be assumed. When there were some aspects of the ministry that were meaningful, there was no indication that all elements of the ministry would bring particular fulfillment (Stewart-Sicking, Ciarrocchi, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2011).

As previously referenced, Barnard and Curry (2012) studied ministerial experiences related to emotional exhaustion and satisfaction. The participants in the study consisted of 69 United Methodist pastors, who completed a demographic questionnaire, as well as the following clergy version measures: Francis Burnout Inventory, Desire to Please Others, Test of Self-Conscious Affect – 3, Self-Compassion Scale, and the Differentiation of Self from Role. The study participants, 64% of whom were male, ranged in age from 28-78 years, and 89% acknowledged worked more than 40 hours per week. The authors defined self-compassion as being considerate to oneself during times of stress or failure, perceiving a connection with others, and holding worries back from ruminating.

Findings suggested that many of the clergy entered the ministry based upon a spiritual call to use their gifts in leading congregations. However, once in the ministry, approximately 50% of the clergy considered walking away from this call, and 70% reported the unexpected circumstance of experiencing a decrease in self-esteem since entering the ministry. The primary finding of this study was that clergy who maintained higher self-compassion, also experienced higher levels of ministry satisfaction, which translated into lower levels of emotional exhaustion. The results also signified that those who did this were able to remain connected with individuals around them, did not ruminate over their worries, and as a result, were less likely to experience burnout in ministry. The elder members of the study reported less emotional exhaustion. In general, this study proposed that clergy emotional exhaustion was correlated with the personality dimension of self-compassion.

Mueller and McDuff (2004) examined the outcomes of a 1996 national survey of 2,267 ministers within the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ Church respectively. Factors utilized in the comparison of data included the following: gender, race, church size, and church budget, with the dependent variable being job satisfaction. The purpose of the study was to consider whether minister-congregation mismatches, as it related to theological conservatism or liberalism, had an effect on clergy job satisfaction. The findings of the study showed that job satisfaction was equal between the two studied denominations. When there was clergy vocational dissatisfaction, it often led to a position resignation. Specific elements which led to job satisfaction were found to be job security, autonomy, participation in decision making, distributive justice in reward

allocation, and professional growth opportunities. In addition, job satisfaction was found to increase with the church budget, but not necessarily the church size. As well, the general pattern of satisfaction followed an initial decrease with tenure, followed by an increase the longer the minister was in the particular church or in ministry. Female clergy had greater satisfaction with their work than their male counterparts. The authors suggested that a vocation that brings contentment will add to overall life satisfaction and fulfillment. Participants indicated minimal importance of monetary income, possibly because it was a vocational expectation. However, informal benefits, such as a congregational gift of using a congregant's vacation home reduced living fees and were found to increase clergy job satisfaction.

Jackson (2012) studied 48 ministers, who were predominantly male and Caucasian ($n=46$) and currently served in an evangelical church, with the intent of examining the relationship between the management of clergy conflict and life satisfaction. These data were collected by using a researcher-developed interview guide, in conjunction with the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory, Satisfaction with Life Scale, and the Religious Commitment Inventory. Findings yielded three primary themes: (a) clergy could be put in positions that were incongruent with their mission, vision, and direction; (b) clergy could be faced with a disadvantage in their ability to communicate clearly; and (c) clergy sometimes perceived themselves to be lacking in their ability to manage conflict. Additionally, these data indicated that clergy who possess an avoidant conflict style experience a lower level of life satisfaction, as compared to any other style of conflict management. Those who chose to withdraw from conflict were often also

compromising their concern for themselves and their position. As a result, participants experienced a lowered perception of overall life satisfaction. As the level of conflict avoidance increased, the level of conflict related to the issue also increased. Thus, with the presence of conflict, the clergy's satisfaction lowered. As participants were asked to describe a recent conflict experience, reflections upon health and wellness arose. Specific reflections arose concerns of: *physical health*, as manifested by high blood pressure, stroke, anxiety, and depression; *emotional health*, as manifested by loss of trust, emotional scarring, increased sensitivities to conflict, grief; and *vocational health*, as manifested by taking a leave of absence, reconsideration of their calling, and removing themselves from ministry completely.

Cohall (2007) engaged in a study of 255 American Baptist pastors throughout the United States to examine clergy satisfaction, efficacy, and longevity. The data was compiled over a six-month period through the use of a survey and the Pastoral Education, Accomplishments, and Church Efficacy instrument. Demographic break-down of the study showed 26.7% of respondents were between the ages of 37-47 years; 46.3% were between the ages of 48-58 years; and 27% were 59 years and older. Ninety-five percent of participants were male, which was similar to the overall demographic of the American Baptist Church, of which the author reported to be 90% male. The ANOVA indicated no significant differences among the ages for leadership styles, roles, and vocational efficacy and longevity. Likewise, the pastor's background history showed no significant difference among job satisfaction, effectiveness, and vocational longevity. For the purposes of this study, Cohall (2007) defined job satisfaction as a genuine sense of

enjoyment related to the roles that pastors fulfill. Elements considered to impact job satisfaction were the following: supportive colleagues, supportive working conditions, mentally challenging work, equitable rewards, and a sense of self-actualization. Findings suggested that clergy who possessed satisfaction in their vocation did so because they believed themselves to be effective in developing the church. As such, job satisfaction could be considered a predictor variable for more than 11% of the variance for longevity.

Study findings indicated that academic theological training was an important component to individuals entering the ministry. However, participants showed that what was more important than academic preparation, was their call into vocational ministry, which then supported and substantiated their education. In addition to academics, church involvement prior to seminary and mentorship by an experienced clergy manifested the greatest amount of contentment. These data indicated that the highest level of job satisfaction was among pastors who are aged 59 and above and also among female clergy. Cohall (2007) concluded that because women tend to pastor smaller congregations, they do so with a greater sense of intimacy and connectedness, thus allowing for greater satisfaction.

In a study by Field (1988), the relationship between the stages of adult, formal education, and vocational ministry satisfaction was examined. Study participants ($N=275$) were approached because of their association with Western Evangelical Seminary. The represented seven religious denominations; 6 were females and 269 were males. Cross-sectional design was implemented and a three-part researcher-designed questionnaire was utilized, in conjunction with the Ministerial Job Satisfaction Scale and the Assessment of

Development Issues instrument. The study yielded a number of findings which are significant to the understanding of satisfaction in ministry. Of the 275 participants, 93.9% believed that they were following the call that God had placed upon them; 97.8% revealed that they found extraordinary meaning and purpose in their work; 86.7% reported they were comfortable bringing their personality into their profession; and 81.8% held no regrets about choosing the pastorate as their profession. The level of satisfaction did not appear to vary based upon the number of years in the church, but it was noted that growing churches accounted for less job satisfaction, as opposed to an already developed church. Field (1988) concluded that this may indicate that the stability of an ongoing ministry relationship was preferred above a life that is in a relative state of change. In addition, participants who pastored smaller churches reported higher satisfaction than those of larger churches. Again, Field (1988) suggested that the larger church may be more of a challenge and less rewarding or that the pastors of larger churches may have a personality that is not satisfied with the status quo and left wanting.

Various other revelations were seen in these data. There was a strong relationship between academic preparation and longevity of congregational service. Those individuals who entered into ministry as a second career showed little difference in their job satisfaction, as compared to those who chose the pastorate initially. The most common ages of vocational reassessment were 28, 35, and 40 years of age. Similarly, the clergy's level of job satisfaction was reported to have little effect on when they planned to retire. Finally, while 92.5% of participants reported that on the majority of days they were pleased to serve in the vocation, only 78.6% stated that their wives were happy with them

serving in that capacity. Of the remaining responses, 14% desired their spouse to have a different vocation and 10.4% were uncommitted.

Shehan, Wiggins, and Cody-Rydzewski (2007) asked 189 ordained United Methodist female clergy from all geographic regions of the United States the following research question: “What is the female clergy’s relationship between career commitment, job satisfaction, and depression?” The female clergy sample was composed of 90% Caucasian, 4% African American, and 3% Asian American, with an average age of 44.7 years. Sixty-four percent were married and on average, had fulfilled 11 years of service to the United Methodist Church. The participants, who were attending a national denominational conference, completed the Life Roles Salience Scales and the Work Satisfaction Instrument, from which calculations were made regarding work satisfaction and depression. The study was controlled for family roles, work conditions, and demographic variables. The authors concluded that work satisfaction held the strongest impact on levels of depression in the sample. The more satisfied the female clergy were in their career, the less they were depressed. The authors also noted the more committed female clergy were, the more they were depressed. Feeling obligated to God’s calling upon their lives, these clergy felt a pressure to succeed in circumstances that were very demanding and produced minimal external rewards, which became an equation for potential emotional dissonance resulting in depression. Despite this finding, the study revealed the clergy obtained high levels of job satisfaction and career commitment.

The ability of clergy to find contentment in their circumstances appeared bound by several variables. The clergy’s perceptions of their congregation and his or her ability

to care for themselves well are but two factors. However, it was critical to note that regardless of the variables, a lack of contentment in ministry led to a lack of longevity (Mueller & McDuff, 2004).

Clergy vocational longevity. For the purpose of this study, longevity referred to the life expectancy of the clergy's vocational ministry. The examination of factors related to the longevity of vocational clergy ministry was critical to the understanding of how ministry impacts the clergy family.

Lucas (1989) conducted a study to consider the characteristics of ministers associated with satisfaction and longevity in ministry. The research incorporated current pastors ($n=31$) and former pastors ($n=9$) who are or have been associated with the American Baptist churches of Indiana. The study was constructed in two phases, with phase one dividing the participants into three groups: (a) satisfied current clergy; (b) unsatisfied current clergy; and (c) former clergy. Measurements in the study included the following: Fundamental Interpersonal Relationships Orientation – Behavioral, Human Services Survey, Survey of Interpersonal Values, Survey of Personal Values, and the Scale of Perceived Support. Findings indicated that personality patterns were associated with pastoral ministry perseverance and longevity. Three significant variables were outlined here: “expressed control” was defined as the participant's desire, to control others (p. 124); “expressed affection” was defined as the participant's need for a meaningful relationship (p. 64); and “depersonalization” was defined as a participant's impersonal response toward another (p. 65). While these variables were significant to the question of longevity for the participants, they were not associated with a satisfaction in

ministry. In these cases, satisfaction did not determine perseverance in ministry. Lucas (1989) anticipated a noticeable difference in support, when comparing the current clergy with the former clergy. However, no significant difference was noted. The authors surmised that one factor may be that participants hesitated to acknowledge a lack of support from spouses, for fear of feeling disloyal. However, in response to open-ended questioning, several participants revealed they left vocational ministry because of their spouse's influence. One participant stated, "It was a choice between my job or my wife" (Lucas 1989, p. 126). The author also suggested that the reverse is possible: clergy may remain in ministry as a result of spousal influence.

Grieve (2007) conducted a study to predict the contributing factors of clergy wellness, thus longevity. A researcher-designed, semi-structured interview guide was utilized in the 90-minute discussion with 34 clergy, who were asked to share their experiences about wellness, through the forum of focus groups, in four regions of Canada. The respondents averaged approximately 20 years in vocational ministry and 7.5 years in their current placement. Participants made repeated reference to the importance of their call in maintaining longevity in their ministries, particularly in difficult periods. Grieve (2007) concluded that a clear call facilitated longevity, just as an uncertain call could be a factor for those who leave ministry. Thus, an embraced call led individuals into ministry and kept them in that same ministry. Study findings revealed that the majority of obstacles to wellness evolved from three primary locations: unresolved personal issues, conflicts from within the congregation, and challenges related to that particular ministry setting. The author suggested that while many factors which impact

wellness were beyond an individual pastor's control, wellness can be approached with intentionality by the pastor, the denomination, and the congregation. Study participants reported the importance of establishing boundaries. The tendency of younger clergy was to give of themselves to the point of overextending, which, particularly if they are raising a family, was unsustainable for any length of time before wellness is impacted. Support and accountability, through in-depth relationships, was identified as being exceedingly important to the participants. Many reported that they were able to fill these needs by going beyond the borders of their church, as a way of building relationships that can be transparent.

Hurst (2006) studied 22 United Methodist pastors from Louisiana and Texas to explore the question of how one perseveres in pastoral excellence. These pastors, who served in vocational ministry for 20 years within the United Methodist church, participated in the study through semi-structured interviews and the Ellison's Spiritual Well-Being Scale. A number of findings emerged from the study, revealing characteristics of longevity and clergy effectiveness. Many of the questions centered on the idea of excellence. However, after reviewing the participants responses, it was apparent that their perception of excellence had more to do with what someone does, rather than who someone is. More responses addressed areas of performance and goal attainment than issues of character and spiritual identity. These data suggested that for excellence to be present in ministry, it is first required within the individual. Respondents acknowledged that the need for self-improvement and self-care, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, was connected to the belief that the individual is the most recurring

obstacle in achieving ministry excellence. One-hundred percent of the participants correlated their personal movement toward excellence to positive development in their congregations. Nevertheless, the process seemed subjective, and the pursuit of excellence appeared different for each individual.

In addition to the data collected on excellence, information also emerged on conflict and leaving ministry. Eighty-two percent of the respondents referred to conflict in ministry as a memorable and hurtful experience, especially for those who valued being liked by others. At some point, the need for affirmation from others changed from a motivator to paralyzing element. Hurst (2006) observed that when respondents shared incidences of conflict, they were telling a story of being wounded and wronged. The author believed that in order for the pastor to move toward excellence, these wounds must be allowed to heal. The members of this study acknowledged God's call into ministry upon their lives, but also recognized that over time, experiences could either support or diminish this call. Those who considered leaving the ministry did so due to the accumulation of conflicts, struggles, unmet expectations, and difficult people.

Beebe (2007) conducted a study on burnout with 290 multi-denominational clergy who resided in up-state New York. The measurements utilized in the study included the following: The Differentiation of Self and Role – Clergy Version, Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey, Occupational Stress Inventory – Revised, and the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. Seventy-percent of the participants in the study identified work-related stress as the precipitating issue, as well as the diminishing of self-esteem, as reported by 70%. When the individual's understanding of the role was

vague or overwhelming, the result was an increased incidence of burnout. However, when there was clarity of self or role, elements of burnout were absent. Participants also consistently reported experiencing interpersonal conflicts, which led them to the point of burnout. The author reported that a possible reason for the ongoing occurrence of burnout among clergy was related to conflict with the congregation, as well as interpersonal conflict. It affected how the individuals perceived themselves as functioning within the pastoral role. This study indicated a pattern of movement toward burnout. Initially, the individual became overwhelmed by the demands and expectations of his or her role. This was then followed by interpersonal conflicts which precipitated an emotional separation, or depersonalization, from the congregation. Finally, the pastor experienced an inability to fulfill the role, causing more conflict and leading to the perception of professional and personal inability to minister. One half of the participants reported thoughts of removing themselves from the ministry, but suggested there were other considerations to take into account (spouses' employment, children's education, etc.). Beebe (2007) recommended that more study be done on the interrelationship between clergy and their families in regards to burnout.

The purpose of Chandler's (2009) multi-denominational study, which surveyed 270 clergy who were primarily male ($n=239$) and married ($n=255$), was to examine the relationship between the clergy's spiritual renewal, support systems efficacy, and their ability to remain rested. This correlation was structured by the author's definition of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishments. Chandler implemented his study with the assistance of the Maslach

Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey. It identified spiritual emptiness, or lack of vitality, as the major predictor of emotional exhaustion. The replenishment of this need was found to be a preventative of pastoral burnout. A second predictor of emotional exhaustion was the lack of rest. Third, the presence of psychological withdrawal was present, often as an attempt to avoid further emotional or social demands. The intended outcome of this study was to identify and develop practices of self-care of the clergy that would help to maintain stability and allow the clergy to fulfill their vital roles.

Doolittle (2010) acknowledged the high-stress environment of the church-based clergy and that some of the effects of stress were ongoing. The author reported that among the study of 222 clergy, those who served in a stressful church situation in the past were 10.5 times as likely to experience emotional exhaustion, even while they were no longer serving in the situation. While he identified burnout as a job-related issue, the author recommended some personal courses of action to counter its affect: (a) ministers who are able to exercise three times per week were one-fourth as likely not to experience emotional exhaustion; (b) ministers who had a mentor and engaged in personal retreats twice annually were found to have lower emotional exhaustion scores; (c) ministers who regularly studied the Bible remained better connected with the congregation; (d) ministers who had a solid network of relationships beyond their role in ministry showed fewer signs of emotional exhaustion; and (e) ministers who maintained healthy boundaries were better at disengagement from vocational responsibilities.

The Maslach Burnout measurement identified 19% of the participants as being highly emotionally exhausted, 26% were moderately emotionally exhausted, and 55%

registered as low in the emotionally exhausted scale. In terms of depersonalization, 10% met criteria for high level of depersonalization, 30% were moderately so, and 60% were low. In the area of personal accomplishment, 43% represented a high degree, 46% were medium and 11% yielded a low level. Self-assessments among participants indicated that 13% viewed themselves as having experienced burnout and 23% reported experiencing depression during their ministry. Individuals who described themselves as having experienced burnout were 30.6 times more likely to meet the Maslach criteria for high emotional exhaustion, and 16 times as likely to represent criteria for high depersonalization. Pastors who served in a congregation of high stress and conflict were 11.9 times more likely to experience high emotional exhaustion. However, participants who were satisfied with their personal spiritual life and disciplines were only 5% more likely to experience emotional exhaustion.

Wells (2013b) examined the dataset, which was initiated by a Pulpit and Pew Clergy Survey in 2006. The initial researchers conducted a nationwide random sample telephone interview of 883 sole and lead pastors, examining the stress and the health of the clergy. Wells (2013b) drew his variable for this study from select responses in the Pulpit and Pew Clergy Survey. Specifically, he examined the impact of boundary-related and work-related stresses upon clergy physical and mental health. The author identified the many responsibilities of the clergy (e.g. counseling, preaching, teaching, guiding, and administrative responsibilities) which could then cause them to experience professional stress, as well as stress that may interfere with their personal lives.

The findings indicated that work-related and boundary-related stress was related to the decline of both forms of health--physical and emotional. Male clergy did not experience a significant difference in physical or emotional health, in comparison to the female clergy in the study. Likewise, married clergy did not indicate significant differences in either area, when assessed against their single peers. Conversely, the findings showed there was a consistently lower level of emotional health among clergy with the presence of children in their home. Similarly, clergy parents occasionally showed lower levels of physical health. While clergy who had served in ministry for 20 or more years reflected lower physical health status, they found higher emotional health. However, the study also indicated that those who were younger than 45 years experienced increased emotional health over those who were age 45-50 years. These two findings together revealed a slight contradiction of or a very small window of 4 years of increased emotional health, given that clergy began formal ministry at the age of 21. In addition, the author suggested that second career clergy experienced increased emotional health. As well, the bi-vocational clergy indicated heightened levels of physical and emotional health. Those who ministered in two or more churches, simultaneously, found lower levels of physical health, but increased levels of emotional health.

In summary, Wells (2013b) indicated that, in several ways, work-related stress and boundary-related stress was significantly related to the emotional and physical health of the participants.

Wildhagen, Mueller, and Wang (2005) conducted a study to examine the factors come into play when clergy seek out for new ministry positions. As part of a national

parish clergy survey, the authors collected data from 2,139 clergy, through the use of mailed questionnaires. Three categories, church-specific skills, external clergy opportunities, and job characteristics, were considered as independent variables. The findings, though not extensive, offered valuable information about clergy longevity. These data indicated that even though the call to ministry is important in the decision to be a clergy, it is the specific position characteristics that are of primary consideration (e.g. financial package, job satisfaction, work expectations, and workplace justice). The researchers found that, possibly due to initial periods of stress, the tendency to consider alternative ministry positions was stronger at the early part of a clergy's tenure, than later. The stronger the connection to the congregation, which is often measured by reciprocal support, the weaker the motivation to search for other ministry opportunities. When a transition did happen, it was more likely to take place when the current work situations lacked important elements, than when the minister felt drawn toward an external opportunity.

Bailey's (1988) study of Free Methodist pastors yielded a number of important findings, via questionnaire. The 113 participants were residing in Michigan, serving in Free Methodist churches from 1 year to 41 years. All participants were male and averaged 44.5 years in age. Though the study was designed to explore various issues which speak to vocational longevity, the themes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction garnered the majority of responses.

The author found that the pastors who were most satisfied identified positive reinforcement from several external sources. They perceived that their superintendent

was supportive, offered guidance, and was knowledgeable of their strengths; that the congregation showed appreciation of them; and that their spouse and children were happy with the roles they filled in a clergy family. The contented pastors were happy with the level of challenge in their present ministry context. Those participants who indicated dissatisfaction, perceived their situations as the opposite. Bailey (1988) suggested that those pastors who were less satisfied were hoping to obtain additional support and assistance from their congregations and superintendents and that they were not being given access to desirable opportunities and places of service. Similarly, less satisfied pastors revealed that their spouses and children maintained a negative perspective of their role in ministry.

The author also found themes in the data which assessed differences between those newly involved in ministry and those who were established. The younger participants in the study did not acknowledge the magnitude of being called by God into ministry and did not see it as their primary motivator. In fact, they reported that their peers did not understand and embrace their profession. The established clergy, however, attached greater meaning to the call placed upon their lives. As a possible result, the established clergy tended to report a stronger commitment to pastoral ministry than younger pastors, who were also committed to traditional loyalties and denominational programs. Participants who sensed a call to preach early in life have experienced less stability in their career commitments, as opposed to pastors who committed to ministry at a later age and had fewer concerns about their choices. The clergy who recognized only the smallest amount of numeric or financial growth in the congregation, voiced the most

interest in a congregational reappointment. In contrast, those who manifested evidence in statistical increase of numeric and financial growth were considerably less interested in relocating.

Broman (2005) conducted a large and valuable quantitative study to examine the longevity of a selection of Canadian evangelical pastors. The author developed a questionnaire to measure demographics, levels of ministry stress, support systems, and clergy intentions to quit. The questionnaire was facilitated through a large evangelical denomination and disseminated over the internet. Of the 645 respondents, slightly less than 85% were male, 44% were between the ages of 31-45 years and 31% were 51-60 years of age. Among the participants, 52% had served in their current ministry positions for 1-5 years, 23% served for 6-10 years, and 11% held their current position for 11 or more years. Fifty percent of the pastors served in a lead pastor position while 26% held associate positions. All others served as youth and college pastor, children's pastor, or worship pastor.

Analysis of these data showed specific themes of ministry stress, including the following: sense of failure, lack of support, spiritual failure, heavy workload, continual church conflict, intense family conflict, and other difficult situations. These stresses represented contributing factors of vocational longevity and indicated that ministry stress encompasses the entirety of clergy life and work. Questions of leaving ministry were always present in varying degrees. The clash of expectations between society, the Church, the pastor, and God brought about added stress, but participants revealed that a sense of personal failure, spiritual failure, and the effects of personal sins were the most

detrimental to their call of ministry. Thirty percent of the pastors signified that doubts about their calling factored significantly into their thoughts about leaving their position of ministry. In addition, concerns about finances, church-related or personal, were found to be related to the clergy's thoughts of leaving.

Broman (2005) reflected that these data from the study gave the impression that leaving the ministry was a negative event. Nonetheless, he maintained that the process which led a pastor to consider leaving the ministry may have been facilitated by meaningful lessons, reflect the need for further training, or the need to seek a more seamless joining of ministry and gifting. He continued his assessment by signifying that God's kingdom still benefited by clergy moving from church-based ministry to positions of social reform, education, or medicine. Participants indicated that the benefit of peer support significantly changed the clergy's initial intention to resign from ministry. Thus, the author recommended utilizing various venues of clergy support such as peer and/or mentor groups, relationships between church co-workers, and the development of training in the areas of pastoral identity and personal issues.

Liddick (2009) studied the question of how a sense of divine calling impacts the vocational longevity of Wesleyan pastors. These semi-structured interviews of 25 ordained Wesleyan clergy were conducted through the use of a researcher-designed questionnaire and open-ended questions, which were administered by telephone. The participants were married males between the ages of 37-68 years with the average age being 53.1 years. The average length of service in ministry was 27.9 years.

Each of the 25 participants chose to remain in ministry, despite various challenges that, for some individuals brought the longevity of service into question. Despite the fact that conflict emerged among the findings as a consistent reason to question the pastor's vocation, 9 of the pastors reported that they had never considered leaving vocational ministry for another vocation. However, some did consider a realignment of focus within vocational ministry. Ten of the participants acknowledged that they had considered leaving ministry and an additional six briefly entertained the idea. One respondent shared that he felt this was a normal feeling for the vocation, because of the perspective that secular work was often considered less stressful.

One participant revealed that he had entered vocational ministry with unrealistic expectations of the role and that he experienced a collision of his vision of ministry and the realities of his ministry context. Fourteen of the clergy found that they needed reassurance throughout their tenure because of conflicts and discouragements. Some of the pastors ($n=5$) assessed that their calling had not changed much, but that as they lived out their experiences, they gained a deeper understanding of what it meant and a clearer image of themselves as pastors.

The majority ($n=20$) of the participants indicated that their calling into ministry was a life choice. They believed that the specific role in ministry may change, but their call was related to who they were, rather than what they did. Although the longevity of ministry emerged as relating primarily to one's call, many participants reflected upon the sense of joy and fulfillment that comes with seeing lives change, which accompanied this

call. Four participants indicated that this type of enjoyment served as a reassurance to them. Two others cited this as a source of ongoing passion for ministry.

In a very similar manner to that of clergy contentment, clergy vocational longevity was affected by several variables. The previous studies indicated that the presence or absence of elements such as support, conflict, stress, vocational call, personal wellness, and spiritual identity could either lengthen or shorten one's longevity in vocational ministry. However, it was important to be mindful of the fact that most clergy are responsible for their family, as well as their congregation. The next section presented research that is representative of the experiences of clergy spouses.

The Spouse in the Clergy Family

The phenomenon of being a spouse in the clergy family. The spouse of the clergy holds a vital place in the life of the clergy, as well as the ministry that he or she participates in. Regardless of their levels of ministry involvement, living life as a clergy spouse has far reaching impact upon their spouse, his or her ministry, and their family. The following studies will provide elements of the lived experiences of the spouse.

McMinn, Kerrick, Duma, Campbell, and Jung (2008) conducted a qualitative study, in which 25 women who were married to male Christian clergy were questioned during semi-structured telephone interviews, which were transcribed and coded. These participants were deemed to be especially emotionally and spiritually healthy by a mental health professional. The participants were selected as a convenience sample from an email list provided by Christian mental health professionals. Findings indicated that these clergy spouses valued the importance of relationships continuing to be healthy. In this

case, reference was made to relationships with their husbands, friends, family, and their spiritual relationship with Christ. Nearly all of the participants saw the importance of interpersonal relationships in managing stress. In addition, 88% of the participants identified valued spiritual practices as being vital in managing life stress. Specifically, 44% noted Bible reading, 72% mentioned prayer, and 32% indicated meditation as being healthy practices. In conjunction with spiritual practice, 48% acknowledged the importance of developing intentional strategies to cope with life stress such as maintaining a balanced family life, being flexible with daily scheduling, and protecting children from unrealistic expectations, as being a child of a clergy. Fifty-two percent of participants stressed the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle; 84% noted the value in setting clear boundaries with their time to protect their personal choice and family commitments; and 56% even indicated the importance of reading. The exemplar participants in this study were striving to be realistic in what they expected of themselves and their clergy family. Finally, the study findings indicated that personal challenges and related stress could help participants draw closer to God; 40% gave credit to God's benevolence.

Similar to McMinn et al. (2008), Johnson's (2012) study of 23 clergy couples indicated ways in which spouses managed ministry life by creating their own specific roles. Of the participants ($N=46$), 16 male and 13 female pastors were represented. The individual, semi-structured interviews of one to two hours each revealed the diversity that was represented by the clergy spouses, as they carved out their roles in the church, which in turn, impacted the manner in which balance was reached within the clergy couple.

Participants identified two particular aspects to integrating their lives with their spouses' ministry. First, because of their diversity, the opportunity to join interpersonal preferences with the contextual expectations served to establish their roles. Secondly, all of the clergy spouses indicated their personal commitment to ministry, in a way that influenced their roles as spouses toward congregational members.

This section has presented research regarding the clergy spouses' experience in their family and their spouse's ministry. While often times, the spouse was not vocationally serving the church, he or she was often motivated to have a healthy presence of support within their partner's ministry and in their home.

Spousal contentment. Spousal contentment within a clergy family reflects the degree to which the spouse, within the family unit, perceives his or her wants to be met. This section examined the studies that represent this area of ministry impact upon the clergy family.

The semi-structured interviews of 24 clergy couples, conducted by Cattich (2012) in his grounded theory study, indicated that the responsibilities of the clergy were many and varied. In addition, the study suggested that when these responsibilities draw the clergy's time and energies away from family, the spouse is often left with negative feelings toward the congregation and its demands of his or her spouse. Cattich (2012) pointed out that the clergy were often torn between their responsibility to their ministry and their responsibility to their family. Darling et. al.'s (2006) study of 232 clergy and 169 clergy spouses uncovered the finding that when a clergy is intentional about his or her focus upon the family, he or she was strategic in establishing clear and well-

articulated rules for the congregation what could be expected of him or her. In doing so, the clergy, spouse, and family experienced less tension and conflict because of the solidified boundaries.

Autry (2007) conducted a qualitative study of ministers' wives and professional counselors, with the intent to examine the lived experiences of the clergy wives and the particular counseling needs they may possess. These data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the participants. The clergy wives participated in two audiotaped interviews: the first collected data, and the second to adjust or add to the collected data, following a review of the first interview transcript. The data were collected from the counselor participants through a face-to-face interview, followed by an email transcript clarification.

Data were then analyzed and categorized through the framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. The following themes surfaced in the microsystem: faith, commitment to the call, relationship with husband, and sense of self. Themes in the ecosystem were ministry versus high profile careers, friends, and counseling. Within the macro system, the theme of expectations of the congregation and issues of perfection emerged. In the chronosystem, the lived experiences of ministers' wives were noted. The study findings presented a blend of positive and mildly negative experience for the clergy wives. Several of the clergy wives indicated that they were allowed to be their genuine selves in the church and that supporting their husband's call and embracing their own faith was self-defining. At the same time, the clergy wives were acutely aware of the expectations being placed on them by the congregation, which could then conflict with

their ability to be understood apart from their positions as clergy spouses. One participant shared that when congregation members become irritated with her husband, she could not simply dismiss or avoid the situation the way she could have if he had a different vocational position. Rather, responsibility rested upon the clergy couple to work together in continued positive interaction with the congregation regularly.

An additional challenge for some was their struggle with feelings of isolation and loneliness, as well as, with developing and keeping friendships. Warner and Carter (1984) also identified in their study, which utilized the UCLA Loneliness Scale, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Maslach Burnout Inventory, that clergy wives and their husbands reported significantly more loneliness and decreased marital adjustment, compared to non-clergy individuals. These same participants shared that while their level of pastoral roles provided significant investment in developing relationships, the wives and husbands acknowledged a deficit in their interpersonal relationships. From this finding, one can detect that an uneven value was experienced in various relationships clergy and spouses engaged in.

Luedtke's (2011) study of clergy wives presented findings of a similar nature to Autry (2007), Cattich (2012), and Warner and Carter (1984). Luedtke (2011) conducted semi-structured interviews with nine wives of Wesleyan pastors from Midwestern United States. Their ordained husbands were serving in full-time ministry for a minimum of five years. While the findings of the study were critical to the understanding of the lived experiences of the participants, they tended to represent the negative aspects or

challenges these participants faced. However, the wives reported that their spiritual faith was vital in their management of the challenges.

All of the respondents signified that their spouse and congregations relied upon them to help in maintaining a smoothly functioning church. This mainly occurred in smaller congregations. Six of the wives described this responsibility as physically “tiresome” or “exhausting.” Motivation for them to continue functioning in this way came from the affirmation of others and the hope that it reflected well upon their husbands’ work performance. At the same time, the criticism from others placed them in a position of questioning self and experiencing stress and depression. Some of the women would reach out for support in these situations. However, many of the participants confessed that being pastors’ wives impacted their ability to be vulnerable with others, which diminished the number of their friendships. This type of loneliness was revealed as an undeniable reality, regardless of their hunger for close relationships. Participants acknowledged that when a friendship connection did occur, it often became one-sided. The friend often wanted their needs to be met by the pastor’s wife, but had minimal desire to listen to the wives’ struggles. As well, the types of supports that would normally come from being part of an extended family was often lacking due to relocation for ministry assignments.

Participants outlined the challenges that come with balancing time between family and ministry. One participant revealed that she experienced jealousy regarding the number of times that ministry took her husband away from the family. Likewise, it was noted that ministry did not stay in the office, but that it was often brought home and

interfered with family plans. The establishment of boundaries was a critical element in protecting family time, while guarding against the hindered faith of the clergy spouses and children.

Some of the participants chose to have a paid vocation, either inside or outside of the home, in order to alleviate financial strains on the family. Two financial concerns that were noted were the desire to be able to afford to pay for their children to attend college and to own their own home for retirement equity. However, taking on a vocation had, in turn, also added an additional component to their work at home and church, bringing additional stress.

Davis (2007) conducted a study of eight women who were married to evangelical, ordained clergy. The clergy either currently served in a full-time capacity or vacated a full-time position within the year prior. Participants were selected based upon their experience with the phenomenon of loneliness as a pastor's wife, as well as a snowball sampling in the case of two individuals known to the author. Prior to engaging in an interview, the respondents completed the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale, as a way to ensure they had appropriate experience with the phenomenon. The participants also completed the Beck Depression Inventory-II to assess for, but not disqualify on the basis of, depression. In addition, following the interviews, respondents were asked to provide personal journals that addressed the topics of interest. Participants were Caucasian women who had been married for 12 and 38 years and had been serving as clergy wives for 4 to 38 years.

The primary findings of the Davis (2007) study emphasized three areas of impact upon the clergy wives: their roles as clergy wives, their personal choices as clergy wives, and their relationships with God as clergy wives. First, for the role of pastors' wives, the participants indicated that the role demands were ever present in their lives. Along with the personal impact, it was acknowledged that their actions also cast a shadow over their husband's vocation, for good or bad. Participants recognized the importance of having discrete boundaries within friendships, even to the point of denying their loneliness, for the sake of their family's privacy; particularly their husbands vocational standing. Respondents also revealed that despite the commonality of having their husbands away from home several evenings per week, the sense of loneliness was not alleviated. The author suggested that the pastor-husbands, which were included in this study, perceived their work as taking precedence over the needs of family, because it was seen as God's work. Though this study did not address the impact of this clergy perception upon their children, participants did feel of the pastorate taking priority over them. Some wives reported that, by filling their personal schedules, they were able to form their sense of identity, but regardless, continued to experience loneliness. Their husband's activities, along with their busy schedules, left the participants with minimal time to care for themselves, or even to recognize their loneliness.

Second, personal choices did not consistently aid the participants in managing their situations. Some chose to don a mask, in an attempt to be silent in their loneliness. As a result, despite being surrounded with congregational members, they continued to feel lonely and disconnected. Respondents revealed that even though they knew of other

women in similar situations, their apprehension and fear of betrayal kept them from approaching them. While 88% of the participants lived with significant feelings of loneliness and were able to see their need for a close friend, the fears associated with negatively impacting their spouses' ministry held them back.

Finally, the results of the study indicated that, regardless of the loneliness experienced by the participants, they remained committed to their faith and relationship with God. Nevertheless, their relationships with God did not bring about a decrease in their levels of experienced loneliness.

Baker and Scott (1992) proved to be a strong encouragement for the spouses of clergy; wives in particular. The authors' study of 196 clergy wives and 205 wives of non-clergy, addressed the primary study question of whether the quality of life is different for a clergy wife than it is for a non-clergy wife. Despite the fact that this position was one which is accompanied by high performance expectations, self-imposed or other-imposed, and there are often issues of loneliness and burnout, the study found that these clergy wives were found to have a greater sense of well-being than the wives of non-clergy professionals. In fact, the clergy wives with the highest life satisfaction scores reported that their husband's ministry demands had less impact on their family. They had greater support for their personal identity, and their husband's income was higher than the wives with lower life satisfaction. While the issue of family and ministry boundaries were not directly addressed, Baker and Scott (1992) implied that the presence and reinforcement of boundaries were an integral issue for their clergy-wife participants.

The previous research has indicated that clergy spouses found it challenging to maintain contentment. Knowing where they fit into the vocational ministry system, with the manoeuvring of role demands and boundaries, was a fundamental task. Beyond this, he or she realized the necessity of maintaining spiritual vitality and faith, but found themselves in lonely and isolated places, at times. In addition, many clergy spouses often led their children through potentially similar circumstances.

The Child in the Clergy Family

The phenomenon of being a child in clergy family. The children who are raised by clergy parents were faced with unique opportunities and challenges, that were unlike those of their peers. Because of this special position in family and culture, research was critical in gaining a full understanding of his or her experiences. This study included adult clergy children, along with their clergy parents, to further advance understanding of these children.

Stevenson (1982) conducted an informal survey of clergy youth in attendance at a youth retreat. The researcher compiled this questionnaire to gather data on the needs of the clergy families in the Louisville Conference of the United Methodist Church. The 16 question survey was completed by 22 participants: 12 males and 10 females, whose ages ranged from 12-18 years, with the median age of 15 years. The majority, 86%, of the participants were currently living in a parsonage, for the median number of 9 years. Many of the participants possessed a perspective that came from living most of their lives within the parsonage of a clergy family. This perspective may have accounted for the ambiguity in some of the study findings. When asked the question, “Do you ever find

yourself pleased that your parent is a minister?" 82% responded affirmatively. However, when asked, "Do you ever wish he or she did different work?" 77% responded affirmatively to this question. In a comparison query of parental and community standards, 50% denied that their family had different rules than many of their friends' families.

Sixty-four percent of the participants indicated that individuals outside of the family treated him or her differently because they had a clergy parent. Similarly, 73% shared that there were times when people watched them more closely because they were a child of a clergy, often referring to the fishbowl metaphor. Stevenson (1982) surmised that there are times when this extra attention or focus could be received as positively by the child. He or she could relate it to being a part of an extended family of the congregation, with the benefits that accompany having surrogate aunts and uncles. However, when greater independence was desired, likely in adolescence, the same attention could be viewed as an intrusion. Stevenson (1982) also indicated that the child of a clergy could easily find themselves in unusual social network situations. Their network could overlap with the clergy parent's social and work network, which could be especially difficult in times of congregational conflict, relocation, etc. The possibility of openly sharing with a confidant did not occur simply by virtue of his or her relationship to the congregational pastor.

Strange and Sheppard's (2001) study echoed some of the findings in Stevenson's (1982) study. Strange and Sheppard (2001) engaged 63 college undergraduate students to help determine whether a negative stereotype of preacher's children existed. There were

25 clergy children and 38 non-clergy children participants: 19 males and 44 females. The participants, who were recruited from psychology classes on a university campus, were asked to evaluate a mock clergy child applying to an educational program. Participants were provided with a list of 16 character traits, followed by the question of whether or not to admit the applicant into the psychology program. A Likert scale of 1-7 was used to evaluate the traits, which were designed to be 8 traits associated with positive stereotypes of a clergy child and 8 traits associated with negative stereotypes of a clergy child characteristics. Participants also completed a questionnaire related to clergy children. Study findings indicated that regardless of negative or positive stereotypes, preacher's children reported no different personal habits from their peers. At the same time, most preachers' children shared that they believed their actions were watched more closely by the church and community at large, simply because they were known as a preacher's child. Related to this type of scrutiny were the expectations that preachers' children were expected to be more spiritual and possess more Bible knowledge than their peers. Most participants indicated that, to some degree, they were expected to manifest wild and rebellious behavior. The Strange and Sheppard (2001) study supported many of the previous findings revealed by Anderson (1998); specifically, the sense of needing to live up to a different standard than that of the child's peers. Strange and Sheppard (2001) surmised that because of these stereotypes, preacher's children may tend to manage other's impressions of them and attempt to give a positive image of their lifestyle to others.

Approximately half of the study (Strange & Sheppard, 2001) findings related to the manner of upbringing experienced by the clergy children, who did not perceive themselves as being parented in an overly strict manner. However, they identified a parental pressure to act in a certain manner for the benefit of the church their parent was pastoring. At the same time, a large majority of these participants indicated that their parents were treated unfairly by the church and over 50% reported family financial difficulties. Despite the high levels of stress and expectations placed upon the participants as a clergy child, 78% categorized their experiences as positive, overall. Approximately 50% reported that they would raise their children in the same religion they were raised in, but the majority of the preacher's children stated they would not consider serving in a church-related vocation. Strange and Sheppard (2001) concluded that the pastor cannot be effective in ministering to his or her congregation and community, without first ensuring that the needs of his or her own family were cared for. Two questions were raised because of this study: "What are the most prevalent stereotypes impacting clergy children?" and "What are the current perceptions of the clergy family by the church and community at large?"

Moy and Malony (1987) conducted an empirical study of ministry families which sought to relate family environment and the minister's work behavior to the adjustment of the minister's child. Fifty-two families with 82 children, drawn from two mainline Protestant denominations, participated in the study ($N=134$) that used two survey tools and two psychological tests. The measures used in the study were the Achenback Child Behavior Checklist; the Social Competency Scale and the Behavior Problem Scale. In

addition, the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales III, The Minister's Questionnaire, and The Minister's Child Questionnaire were utilized. Moy and Malony (1987) identified four particular levels of adaptability: chaotic, flexible, structured, and rigid (pp. 60-61). The findings of this study indicated that families of ministers did not fall in the balanced range, as was anticipated, but rather more to the "extreme" classification on the adaptability scale. In support of this data, both clergy parent and child described their ideal family as maintaining "chaotic" levels of adaptations. Clergy parents tended to view their family as "connected and flexible", but the clergy children perceived the family relationships as being more "separated and flexible." However, both groups preferred to be more emotionally connected, moving toward what they perceive to be the "ideal" family. Since ministry is fraught with diffuse boundaries, it is unavoidable the family was involved. Thus, a healthy ministry family should possess fairly high levels of adaptability. However, Moy and Malony (1987) maintained that despite the need for high levels of adaptability in dealing with the stress of ministry, there was value in considering these extreme levels as unhealthy, with the possibility of leading a family system toward pathology.

The lived experiences of a child raised in a clergy home, echoed researched experiences of the clergy and spouse: There were positive and negative experiences. However, from the child's perspective, it appeared that the negative aspects were more prominent, even to the point of desiring their parents to work in a non-church-related vocation. The following section focused upon the specific issues of child contentment in the clergy home.

Child contentment. Remaining consistent with definitions of contentment in the clergy parents, child contentment in the clergy home reflected an overarching sense of satisfaction with where he or she lives, who they are exposed to, and what they gain from their experiences.

Anderson (1998) conducted a survey of 487 young adults, age 25 and over, who were raised as the child of a clergy member. The age of the participants ranged from 25-68 years, with an average age of 34.6 years. Of the participants, 70.8% had successfully completed undergraduate degrees and 34.7% possessed some level of graduate education. Using the Survey of Adult PKs, which was developed by the researcher, 10 primary categories emerged in the data: (a) intimacy with each parent; (b) parent's marriage; (c) relationships – friends and relatives; (d) moves; (e) parental consistency; (f) family time; (g) privacy; (h) expectations; (i) respect; and (j) church member support. In addition, Anderson (1998) utilized five open-ended questions, which were folded into the qualitative analysis. Essentially, the researcher divided his findings into positive and negative experiences of the participants. Among the positive experiences, the relationships that were established, the opportunity to travel, the status and other various benefits of their clergy father's position, and the educational experiences, ranked the highest. What the participant's parents brought to the experience, was also noteworthy: training, love, quality of family time, a positive example, and genuineness.

Unfortunately, Anderson's (1998) findings uncovered several items that are considered to be negative. Most notable was that 68.1% identified themselves as

experiencing a period of rebellion against the Church, and 13.2% did not consider themselves Christian, despite being raised in a Christian environment. Related to this was that participants acknowledged that they were able to demonstrate religious behaviors and know how to look good before others, but they struggled with internalizing and embracing a personal religion. Participants indicated that difficulty in this area related primarily to their parents and home environment and not to being a pastor's child. Individuals who reflected positively on their experiences identified with a loving home and involved parents who allowed for space to be themselves. They also described their parents as being sincere in their love of God and others and possessing the ability to separate church responsibilities from home life. Those who identified themselves as being less religiously committed indicated a poor relationship with their parents, a perception that their parents were very strict and forced religion upon them, a lack of family time, and a sense that the church took priority over them and their family.

The mobility of the clergy family was cited as a reason for this being a difficult period in the pastors' children's life. The mean number of moves that took place under the age of 18 was found to be 8.02, which represented a move approximately every two years. Several equated difficulties in school to the frequency of family moves, which resulted in change of schools and leaving friends. For those children who did not experience frequent moves, childhood was indicated as being the most enjoyable time because they were able to live in one location; they liked where they lived, they developed special friendship; and they enjoyed the amount of time their family could spend together.

Other negative experiences for the pastors' children were attributed to the church where their father served. The adult children of clergy in this study recalled unequal expectations, an emphasis upon behavior and performance, a lack of time with family, an underdeveloped relationship with their father, the sense of religion being forced upon them, the perception that the church takes priority over the clergy family, and even perceptions of abuse.

Cheung Fung (2004) targeted minister's children who were adults serving in, or preparing for, full-time Christian ministry. Cheung Fung explored and analyzed the social ecological components that were a part of forming attitudes of ministers' children, which in turn led them to full-time Christian ministry. The study's population ($N=34$) was comprised of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary students, staff, and faculty. For the purposes of this current study, this researcher was most interested in the clergy children's experiences of life in the clergy family unit, not necessarily the child entering into a ministry vocation.

These data were gathered through the use of semi-structured individual interviews and a researcher developed survey called the Questionnaire for the Adult Children of Ministers, which was administered to the participants prior to the interview sessions. Participants were requested to share the perspective of his or her experiences of being raised in a minister's family. As was the case with Strange and Sheppard (2001), findings were organized into three primary categories: the impact of family, positive experiences, and negative experiences.

Most of the participants ($n=30$) indicated that their parents were good role models, with strong spiritual foundations, and positive attitudes toward the ministry. The father in especially, served as an influential role model in shaping the attitudes which led the participant to consider a full-time vocational ministry. The father was viewed as a filter, through which the negative factors of church experiences, could be rendered. He was seen as the facilitator of clear boundaries which protected the clergy child from negative experiences at a young age. The father was also seen as one who could explain and educate the clergy child regarding the nature of the congregational occurrences.

Despite being raised by invested parents, some study participants ($n=15$) indicated a number of negative church experiences, while others ($n=12$) reported church conflicts which had a very negative impact on them. Some situations ($n=7$) led to the forced resignation of the participant's clergy parent, which had a lasting impact upon their lives. It made it even more difficult when the participant went through the difficult situations together with their father. Other experiences of a lesser nature, but still negative were the following: unrealistic expectations from congregation members for the clergy child to be especially mature and spiritual, an ambiguity of ministry and family boundaries, a lack of spiritual nourishment in the parsonage, a sense of insecurity, stress that came into the parsonage from a heavy workload being placed upon the pastor, observing the unpleasant interactions of ministry first hand, and financial pressure.

In further study findings, participants were able to identify a number of experiences which were positive and may have played a role in drawing them toward a ministry vocation. Participants indicated the positive exposure to youth ministers or

mentors, close peer relationships, solid Biblical instruction in the home, attending a Christian school or being home schooled and ownership of their Christian faith while interacting with Christian professors and ministers, during their time at college or on short-term mission trips. Some of the study participants who initially lived through negative experiences were able to reflect upon clergy and clergy families with greater empathy and motivation to be a part of making a difference for others in similar positions.

Summary of the Empirical Literature on Individuals in the Family Unit

The literature concluded that the lived experiences of the clergy family, although they filled very different roles, had marked similarities. Clergy, spouse, and child each found themselves in roles that had both positive and negative aspects. While there was joy in serving God and fulfillment in working among congregations, it came with periods of unreasonable demands and lack of support. These demands could have led to stress, conflict, and exhaustion. Though the clergy may have served most visibly, his or her spouse and children also lived with stringent roles and behavior expectations often perceived to be unreasonable. In addition, the clergy spouse and children were prone to deal with loneliness and isolation. This was complicated by their observing situations where congregants were unfair and lacked compassion. These, and other negative outcomes of the vocation, have led some clergy to leave their calling, often due to their spouse's influence, and have led children to wish for another career for their parents.

The data also indicated encouraging findings. This information supported steps of wellness, such as clergy keeping their spiritual faith vital, practicing self-compassion, seeking clear direction from God, and spending time to develop character and spiritual

identity. Each of these actions benefited and individual, whether in vocational ministry or another career.

What was absent in the research was data on clergy family contentment collected from at least four members of a family unit. This study sought to fill the gap in that specific research, through the collection of data from the clergy, spouse, and children, within a clergy family unit.

Comprehensive Summary of Literature Review

The empirical literature called for new research in order for scholars to more fully understand qualities and interactions of clergy families, in particular, those who may be at risk of discontentment (Beebe, 2007; Blanton & Morris, 1999; Darling, et al., 2004; Hill, Darling, & Raimondi, 2003; Kinman, McFall, & Rodriguez, 2011). There was a place in existing literature for the family study of the clergy family, to include clergy, spouse, and adult children, through which the formative years of the family were explored. It was the hope of this researcher that exploring this proposed question allowed counseling professionals to work more effectively with clients, both individuals and families, in which ministry, personal calling, and family were intertwined. Additionally, university and seminary professors were shown steps toward the effective balance between ministry and family boundaries. “As long as religion is a major force in our society, the minister and his or her family is an issue that will need to be addressed in research” (Strange & Sheppard, 2001, p. 59).

This study has summarized data of published research on the roles and boundaries of the clergy family, work and family stress, the quality of life, and the individual

experiences of being clergy, clergy spouse, and clergy child, as well as the levels of contentment that is associated with those roles. Additional data was being collected through the phenomenological study of clergy, spouse, and two children from the same family unit, filling the gap in the research.

Figure 2.1 represented the overarching structure of this study. The self-determination theory of motivation assisted in the study of the clergy family unit and the individual members of the family, by considering elements of motivation. Primary consideration was given to the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in several areas of clergy life. Specific interest was given to how intrinsic or “an internal embracing” (Deci & Ryan, 2008) of a role will impact the clergy and family’s contentment. Likewise, consideration was being given to the presence of extrinsic motivation, when participants were affected by a reward and punishment economy. The phenomenological collection of data with the family unit (clergy, spouse, and adult child) led to an understanding of the level of contentment experienced by the family, which connected to issues of longevity. These elements of the study were represented on Figure 2.1 by the broken line, showing the addition of new research of the impact of ministry on the clergy family.

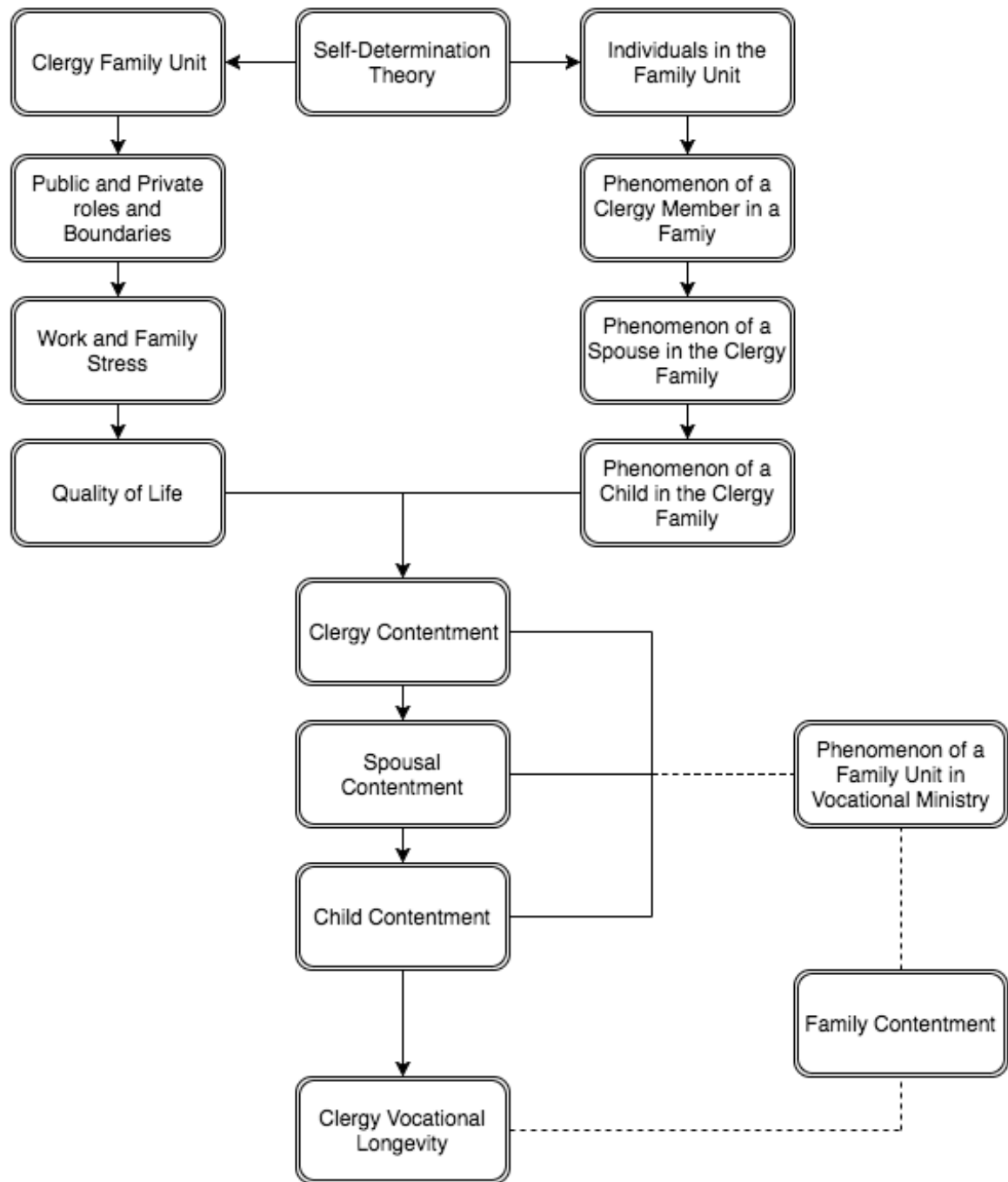


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Research Design

Phenomenology is the qualitative research method used in this study, which is designed with the purpose of grasping the meaning within the experiences of the study participants (van Manen, 1990). This approach focuses upon full descriptions of personal experiences, with the intent of unveiling the meaning for those who own them. By gathering the personal reality of individual experiences, generalized content is revealed (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Of great importance is the uncovering of meaning within the participants' experiences, manifested through the process of identifying themes that present during the interview process. van Manen (1990) describes this process of "theme analysis" as the discovering of themes that are embodied and full of meaning. The process begins during the interview engagement, with attuned listening to the participant's phenomenon. Because the researcher is engaged in this process, understanding of the phenomenon is enlarged and personal growth is facilitated within the researcher (Moustakas, 1990). Following the collection of the data, the transcripts are coded by highlighting select terms and themes, as a manner of analyzing the content and meaning.

Based on the literature review, themes that may emerge from the data include: public and private roles and boundaries of the clergy family, work and family stress, quality of life, the phenomenon of the clergy member in the family, clergy contentment, clergy vocational longevity, the phenomenon of the spouse in the clergy family, spousal contentment, the phenomenon of the child in the clergy family, and child contentment.

Additional themes not yet discovered from previous studies may also emerge. van Manen (1990) states:

Making something of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning is more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure – grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of ‘seeing’ meaning. (p. 79)

The proposed outcome of this study is to pull forth and compare the meaning of the participant’s experiences and perceptions; seeking for cues to contentment and longevity in ministry and in caring for his own family.

Selection of Participants

Prior to participant selection and data collection, the researcher applied for and obtained IRB approval from Liberty University. A call for participation from current clergy and his family was shared with the church district constituents, following the approval of the district leadership. A core membership of two (Creswell, 2013) current clergy, along with his spouse and two adult children (age 18 and over) were selected as co-researchers in the phenomenological study, through the use of a demographic survey. A smaller group of study alternates was also selected, in case of participant drop-out. Effort was given to provide diversity of clergy age, family composition, tenure of ministry position(s), size of congregation(s), spouse’s vocation, and annual income while the clergy children lived in the clergy home; and total number of years in formal ministry (Miner, Dowson, & Sterland, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). Inclusion criteria for the study were: (a) study participant clergy and spouses were married and living together during

the time of ministry when the participating children were being raised in the clergy home; (b) the clergy and spouse were either biological, adoptive, or step parent to the adult children participating in the study. Consideration of these variables served to more clearly describe family unit experiences of the participants.

Data Collection and Procedures

Since the phenomenological question seeks to gather meaning and not to solve a problem (van Manen, 1990), the method of this study centered on the collection of experiences through a recorded interview. The interview was preceded by a brief pre-interview recorded conversation of 10 to 20 minutes (Moustakas, 1994) which allowed for the discussion of the nature and purpose of the study, the screening of participants, and the securing of consent. Participants submitted a pre-interview journal, compiled over a three-day period, prior to the interview. This journal served as partial documentation of the participant's lived experiences as a clergy family member. When the family; clergy, clergy spouse, and adult children, were selected to participate as study subjects, the collection of data continued with up to a 107 minute, semi-structured, individual telephone interview. The interviewer utilized an interview guide to insure that critical data was collected. Co-researchers were given an interview guide in advance and responded to five questions of their choice, as a component of the pre-interview journal. This was done to allow for time and consideration in preparing for the interview and responding to the questions. The telephone interview allowed for further data collection from the participant's initial responses, as well as fully addressing the unanswered questions (McLeod, 2011). Questions probed the issues of clergy life within the context

of the clergy family unit (clergy, spouse, and children under 18 years, living in the family dwelling); seeking the presence of family themes. In order to limit the interview to an approximate time of 90 minutes, the number of open-ended interview questions were limited to ten questions. Table 3:1 presents the interview questions.

Table 3.1
Interview Guide

Family Experience:	
	2. How did you make the decision to become a pastor? What is your perspective of the idea that your spouse and child are affected by expectations that come as a part of your vocational role?
	6. In terms of structure and function of your family, what elements would you like to change? Why? How would you like them to be different?
Personal Experience:	
	1. Describe the ways (global & specific) that living in a clergy family has affected you, as an individual?
	10. Describe how being a member of a clergy family has affected your spiritual formation. How has your personal growth been impacted?
Contentment and Longevity Experiences:	
	3. Have you ever considered leaving pastoral ministry for another vocation? Describe the situation(s) and why leaving was considered. If this consideration has never occurred to you, to what do you attribute the singular focus and determination?
	4. What are the experiences related to being in ministry that have added to the effectiveness and stability of your family and personal functioning? Explain.
	5. What are the experiences related to being in ministry that have detracted from the effectiveness and stability of your family and personal functioning? How have you or your family become less effective? Has the family rebounded from this? If so, how?
	7. Drawing from your individual and family experiences, what advice for contentment and longevity would you offer a family that is beginning a vocation in church ministry? Why is this advice important?
	8. Who or what has impacted (positively or negatively) your ability to maintain an effective balance/boundary between being a ministry family and being your own family? How?
	9. How would you describe contentment in your daily life and life, in general? What percentage of your time (individually & family) in ministry have you been contented? What allows for this experience in your life and family?

Note. Questions 2 and 3 have been modified in the Clergy Spouse and Clergy Child Interview Guides to reflect spouse and child perspectives

Participants, in follow-up to the interview session, were requested to post-interview journal over the following three days; allowing for the individual to share additional private thoughts that may have arisen or changed following the interview. Both sets of journals were collected by the researcher and entered into the data collection. The methodological validity was enhanced by the collection of data from multiple sources in multiple ways (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Following the transcription and compilation of all the collected data, transcripts were reviewed by the individual study participants to validate accuracy and trustworthiness of the data (Yin, 2016).

Data Analysis and Synthesis

“Phenomenological research consists of reflectively bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of everyday life” (van Manen, 1990, p. 32). This study utilized the components of phenomenology to point to something and to point out something (van Manen, 1990) within the experiences of clergy families. The data was intended to illustrate how an effective or ineffective balancing of clergy’s call to family and ministry can lead to greater or less family contentment and vocational longevity.

Following the transcription of the data, the researcher carefully compared the transcribed data with the audio data to insure accuracy. The transcripts were reviewed and listed by statements or themes. These statements were understood to be units of meaning (Moustakas, 1994) and were organized by themes. Within his six phases of

phenomenological research, Moustakas (1990), identifies the value that immersion, illumination, and explication brings to the organization of themes. As the researcher deeply contemplated the research question, the process became immersive and the awareness of themes became evident. Illumination, an organic awareness of elements surrounding the research question, allowed for the gathering of these qualities into themes. Finally, through explication, the researcher combined his own gathered awareness of the significant concepts with those of the participants, developing primary themes.

The coding of these data represented the collection of themes and descriptions gleaned from the interviews, as seen by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Once compiled, these were also member checked by the co-researchers to further validate accuracy and trustworthiness of the data. Finally, verbatim statements were used to illustrate and support the meaningful themes in the data (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1990).

Validity and Reliability

The term used for validity and reliability of qualitative research findings is usually “trustworthiness” (Creswell, 2013; McLeod, 2011). Creswell (2013) recommends that studies contain at least two measures of trustworthiness which serve to validate the collected data. This study utilized the techniques of triangulation, member checking, thick description (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell, 2013), researcher bracketing, in which the researcher sets aside outside experience to allow the research process to only focus on the research question (Moustakas 1994, p. 97), and an audit trail (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Triangulation of sources, or the consideration of data from different

sources or times, occurred as the co-researchers compiled a journal of recollections from their personal experiences throughout their history as a clergy family unit. The same request was made of the participants in follow-up to the interview sessions. The journal data served as another source and method of data collection, which strengthened the interview data. The individual co-researcher's transcribed data was submitted to the individual for his or her review, or member checking. The participants were requested to check for clarity and credibility (Creswell, 2013). In addition to addressing potential errors, opportunity was given for the addition of further information or clarification (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The implementation of thick description increased trustworthiness as data were recorded in rich and explicit details. The depth of description added to the data's generalizability (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell, 2013). Researcher bracketing was a component of phenomenological reduction, which brought the focus strictly onto the research question, setting aside anything else that may detract from the research topic (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, trustworthiness was bolstered by the utilization of an audit trail, which documented the steps followed throughout the research project (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this study began with the participants' understanding of voluntary involvement as co-researchers. There was no undue pressure placed on any of the individuals, which encouraged his or her participation in this study, or direct responses against his or her will. Likewise, this researcher did not accept any evidence of pressure between participating family members, which impeded the voluntary nature of

this study. Statements which indicated that a participant was coerced into being a co-researcher, against his/her desire, would have disqualified the family unit from the study (Moustakas, 1994). As such, during a pre-interview conversation with the researcher each participant was informed as to the nature and purpose of the study he or she was being asked to participate in. If in agreement with the requests of the study, each participant completed a written form of consent which became an official entry into the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012) (See Appendix F).

The practice of confidentiality was maintained throughout each element of the study. This researcher holds a primary obligation to take every precaution in keeping the data secure and stored in a sound location. Transporting of data was done in a manner that reasonably ensures the safety and privacy of the material. Likewise, coding was utilized to replace the participant's personal identification and maintain confidentiality. All written notes, verbal conversations, journals, and audiotapes, of which this researcher had sole access to, came under the commitment of confidentiality. All materials were transported in a locked container and will be stored in the researcher's office in a locked cabinet behind a locked door; secured with passwords. However, it was within the participant's understanding that the coded materials would be utilized within the writing of this researcher's publishable documents. Records will be retained for a minimum of five years (APA, 2010).

Limitations

This study was limited by the presuppositions and beliefs of the researcher and participants. The co-researchers were comprised of male clergy, female spouse, and two

adult children. Due to self-selection, the couples and adult children who participated in the study may have registered at either end of the spectrum of ministry contentment. As such, the “average” experience may have been overlooked. The fact that participants were willing to serve in the study, may have indicated that families fully embraced the clergy family experience, or they were markedly disgruntled. Also, the consideration that clergy job security may be connected with full honesty in self-disclosure of participants, despite guarantee of anonymity, served as a limitation to data collection.

Additional limitations included participation of only evangelical clergy. Limiting the study in this manner may have skewed the outcomes in ways that pertained to levels of income, status, and culture. Because all of the participants were drawn from evangelical denominations, the generalization of the data is limited, unless characteristics of these denominations are equalled in other denominations. However, convenience and accessibility to the participants provided rationale for these limitations. Detailed demographic information was provided so readers can assess the applicability of the findings to other samples (McLeod, 2015). Self-report was the only form of data collection, which may have increased the risk of influencing the results of the study. While this study may not generalize to all clergy family unit situations, it does provide examples and descriptions of what has taken place in the lives of these current clergy families and it provides a benchmark for future comparative studies.

Finally, the design of the study presented the limitation of collecting data from families which are drawing from a previous period in their lives. This presented two considerations. First, there was a space in time between when life was lived and

experienced and the current experience of these recollections. It was feasible that what held strong meaning may have faded and weaker meanings may have ruminated and become more meaningful. Secondly, there was a gap in which cultural and denominational standards and expectations may have changed, bringing previous experiences to a place of current irrelevance to those who do not currently shared them.

Delimitations are elements of the study that were controlled by the researcher. In this study, the following delimitations were considered:

1. This study involved only clergy families where the clergy served in a full-time capacity, while raising his children to adulthood.
2. This study involved only clergy families that were comprised of a clergy, clergy spouse, and two adult children who have been raised in the clergy family unit.
3. This study involved participants who serve in evangelical congregations.

Chapter Summary

This study investigated the experiences and perceptions of clergy families, through the use of a phenomenological method of discovery. The perspectives of two clergy families were gained through the use of personal interviews and accompanying journals. Triangulation and member checking was utilized to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. This study provides critical information for clergy who, with their family members, are striving for effective and meaningful experiences in ministry as it relates to family contentment and vocational longevity. Of equal importance, this study offers insight into the personal experiences of clergy families, which can be translated into

university and seminary training for those preparing for vocational ministry. Likewise, denominations will benefit from this study's outcomes as they mentor and counsel clergy who are in current ministry placements.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of ministry on clergy families who are currently active in Christian ministry and living in Canada and the United States. The rationale for this study was to provide important information for counselors and counselor educators who support clergy and their family members who are striving for effective and meaningful family contentment and vocational longevity experiences. This study focused on family experiences and perceptions during the years that children resided in the clergy home. The primary research question framing this study was the following: "How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity?" Of particular interest was the clergy family's perception of the phenomenon of living as a unit within the vocational context of Christian ministry. This phenomenological study allowed for the uncovering of personal meaning within the experiences of the participants (van Manen, 1990). Through the collection of these individual experiences, purposeful themes were revealed (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Data Collection

After the Institutional Review Board approval was obtained for this study, a call for male clergy participants was shared with church district constituents. Following the approval of the district leadership, ten North American Evangelical church districts were contacted. Two districts issued a broad appeal for participants of the 525 clergy members

serving in those districts. Seven church districts provided access to clergy directories, and one district was unresponsive to the request. Gleaned from district directories, 403 appropriate participants, were emailed a letter of invitation (Appendix E).

Clergy who responded were asked to invite their spouse and two adult children to participate with them. When clergy families agreed to join the study, the clergy member responded via reply email by placing the word “Family” in the subject line. Within the message box, he also provided the name of each family participant and his/her personal email address. All further contact was made through the individual’s personal email address. Those who chose not to participate were asked to reply to the emailed invitation with the words “No, thank you” in the subject line.

There were five points of contact with each participant, following the letter of invitation. When an affirmative response was received, individual participants were emailed an informed consent form (Appendix F), which was signed by each participant and returned via email. Participant screening was then accomplished through the use of a demographic survey (Appendix A), to attempt a representation of diversity in gender, age, family composition, tenure of ministry positions, size of congregations, number of years in formal ministry, spouse’s vocation, and annual income while the clergy children lived in the clergy home.

Following the online submission of the demographic survey, clergy and clergy family participants were emailed the appropriate interview guide, depending on their position in the family: clergy interview guide (Appendix B), clergy spouse interview guide (Appendix C), and adult clergy child interview guide (Appendix D). The interview

guides included instructions to utilize three days to respond to five questions of their choosing, from the ten questions in a pre-interview journal. The remaining five questions were then discussed during an in-depth telephone interview. Upon the email submission of the participant's pre-interview journal, an appointment for a telephone interview was made. While 90-minutes were allotted for each participant's telephone interview, the actual length of time ranged from 26 to 107 minutes.

Each participant interview was scheduled at a time that was convenient for him/her to spend an extended period of time on the telephone. While the participant's location during the telephone interview varied (church office, coffee shop, etc.), the researcher's location during the interview was in a private counseling office, after business hours and with doors and windows secured for privacy. The first part of the semi-structured telephone interview entailed reviewing and following up on the pre-interview question responses. The second half of the interview consisted of a discussion of the remaining five questions, which had not been responded to previously. At the conclusion of the telephone interview, participants utilized a post-interview reflective journal during the following three days, to add additional thoughts or experiences, if any emerged.

Telephone interviews were audio recorded through a computer program on the interviewer/researcher's private, password-secured computer. The interviews were also recorded on a digital recorder, which was secured in a locked filing cabinet, within a locked room. The audio recorded interviews were transcribed into a written transcript by the interviewer/researcher and submitted to the individuals for their review. The

participants reviewed the transcript for clarity and credibility (Creswell, 2013). The journals and transcribed interviews were sent to a private email address which was secured under a password. Data was saved to a personal computer, a flash drive, and to cloud storage. The flash drive was stored in a locked filing cabinet, within a locked room. Participant identities were coded for confidentiality (e.g., the clergy in the first participant family was represented as 1A, his spouse, 1B, and adult children, 1C1 and 1C2). Individuals later chose a pseudonym for use in the writing and publication of the data.

The research interview guide questions were used to track and merge the data from the two reflective journals (pre and post) and the in-depth interview transcripts into three primary sections that related to the research questions: family experiences, personal experiences, and contentment and longevity experiences. A section was also designated for additional thoughts, which were primarily revealed through the post-interviews reflective journal. Consistent with phenomenological analysis methods, the organized data were then reviewed and statements, which are understood to be units of meaning, were further organized into themes (Moustakas, 1994). Themes discovered in an individual participant's data were then synthesized into the themes representing each family unit. This compiled collection of themes was emailed to each participant for member checking, to confirm accuracy and validate trustworthiness of the data (Yin, 2016).

Participant Profiles

As is customary for phenomenological research, participant profiles were included in the findings so that readers can determine the relation of the findings to other

populations (McLeod, 2011). Nine-hundred and twenty-eight invitations for clergy participants were issued in this study. The vast majority of these perspective co-researchers did not respond. Among those who did respond, 16 declined to participate in the study, and 5 male clergy responded with a commitment for his family to participate in the study. During the processes of obtaining signed informed consent forms, demographic surveys, journals and interviews, three of the five families either withdrew or neglected to submit all of the necessary information for the study. This provided a sample of eight individuals representing two family units, which was ample enough for a phenomenological inquiry (Creswell 2013, p. 81).

This section presented the stories of two full-time clergy families, each composed of a male clergy member, a female spouse, and two children over the age of 18 who lived their childhoods in the clergy home. It was the experiences and perceptions of these individuals and their phenomenon of living as a unit within the vocational context of Christian ministry that formed this study. Jake, Rene, Rhett, Anne, Steve, Samantha, Kaitlyn, and Hannah (all pseudonyms) shared their lived experiences as a member of a clergy family unit. These individually expressed experiences represent the participant's perceptions of the impact of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity. In this section, individual profiles of each participant is provided. Table 4.1 represents a summary of these profiles.

Table 4.1
Clergy Couples Profile

Name	Age	Years of Service	Congregations Served	Average Congregation Size	Average Length of Tenure
Jake	Mid-late Sixties	30+	5	300+	4-6 years
Rene	Early Sixties	30+	5	300+	4-6 years
Steve	Mid-late Forties	20+	4	300+	4-6 years
Samantha	Mid-late Forties	20+	4	300+	4-6 years

Jake, Rene, Rhett, and Anne

Jake, in his mid-upper sixties, is a full-time Caucasian, Christian minister. He and his wife, Rene, in her early sixties, also Caucasian, have four children. They have ministered together for more than 30 years, serving in five consecutive churches, most of which averaged an attendance of above 300 parishioners. The average length of tenure in their churches has been between four-six years. Jake and Rene, whose call into vocational ministry came after they were married, currently minister in the northeast United States. After being a stay-at-home mother until her children reached school age, most of Rene's vocational experiences have taken place alongside her husband in church ministry. However, Rene also worked in the para-church and public sectors. Among their four children, Rhett and Anne are also participants in this study. Rhett, in his thirties, a full-time clergy himself, is married, and with two children. Similarly, Anne, also in her thirties, works in the medical field, is married with two children.

Steve, Samantha, Kaitlyn, and Hannah

Steve and his wife Samantha, both in their mid-upper forties are Caucasian, and parents to four children. They have ministered together for more than 20 years, serving consecutively in four separate churches. Steve serves as a full-time Christian clergy and Samantha's vocational calling is to church ministry and childhood education. Like Jake and Rene, Steve and Samantha have ministered to congregations averaging 300 or more, in attendance. Also similarly, their average length of congregational tenure has been 4-6 years. Their call into vocational ministry came to them quite early in life and prior to their marriage. Steve and Samantha's family currently ministers in central Canada. Daughters, Kaitlyn and Hannah, who also participated in this study are single, young adult university students, currently living away from their parent's home.

Themes in the Data that Address the Research Questions

After a period of intense immersion in and close examination of the research data, significant themes, or patterns, emerged that were salient salient (van Manen, 1990, Wertz et al. 2011). To be considered a theme, five (62.5%) or more of the eight (100%) participants were to make reference to the subject in the data, in some manner. During this immersion and emergence process (Moustakas, 1994), eleven pertinent themes were revealed that addressed the research questions: "How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment?" and "How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on clergy vocational longevity?"

In the following section, each of the themes and secondary themes are described and the frequency of each are identified. Among the three over-arching areas of interview questions to do with personal experience, family experience, and contentment and longevity experiences, two primary themes emerged and were identified by 100 percent of the participants. Within the first primary theme, contentment, interpersonal authenticity, intentional parenting, family boundaries and balance, family unity, and personal preparations and support were identified as secondary themes. Within the second primary theme, pastoral ministry call and fit, the secondary themes of child ministry call and fit, expectations, difficult experiences, and heritage were identified.

How Do a Select Group of North American Evangelical Christian Clergy and Their Families Describe the Impact of Ministry on Family Contentment: Description and Frequency of Themes?

In answer to the first research question: How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment, the primary theme of contentment emerged, with five secondary themes: interpersonal authenticity, intentional parenting, family boundaries and balance, family unity, and personal preparation and support.

The first primary theme of contentment, recognized in 100 percent of the participant's responses, is a term that was defined earlier in the study by Rojas & Veenhoven (2013) as the degree to which the individual family members, and the family as a unit, perceived their wants to be met. In addition to this perspective, most of the study participants offered their own definition: "being satisfied with who you are and

where you are”, “being happy with who you are and enjoying what you do”, and “being happy, and joyful, and satisfied with whatever happens.” Other participants defined contentment as “the sense of God’s blessing on our lives”; and “not being happy, but being in the right place with God and being consumed with peace and hope.” Yet another expressed that her contentment tended to match the level of well-being that her husband and children were experiencing at any given point. However, possibly the most comprehensive definition of contentment came from Rhett when he expressed the following:

Contentment is when all is right, I think when you can live life to the fullest, when you can laugh at life, when you can be fully present no matter where you are at, and knowing that God has everything orchestrated for this time, for this reason, for this purpose right now. And to know this is a part of a bigger picture that He’s painting and to live out of that with a joy and not regret.

The secondary themes that add to the experiences of contentment were first, interpersonal authenticity and trust, which was acknowledged in 87.5 percent of the study participants. Authenticity and trust meant being able to live genuinely among family, vocational constituents, and community and to live out the sense of who one is, wherever one is. The second sub-theme, intentional parenting, recognized parental intentionality and a child’s awareness of being parented out of thought, reason, and explanation. It was identified as a secondary theme in 75 percent of the participants. It resonated a sense of forethought and formation. Third, family boundaries and balance, was recognized in 100 percent of the participants and described the presence of healthy family limits in the

home and in ministry. Identified in this were elements of re-educating the congregation on the needs of the clergy family. In addition, family unity reinforced the value of boundaries in the vital experiences of family sharing time and activities together, with an outcome of increased understanding and appreciation of the family unit. This secondary theme was also identified in 100 percent of the participants. Fourth, personal preparation and support was expressed as valuing the vocational preparation for ministry and the healthy support systems that are meaningful in maintaining contentment in the clergy family and was expressed in 62.5 percent of the participant's responses.

How Do a Select Group of North American Evangelical Christian Clergy and Their Families Describe the Impact of Ministry on Clergy Vocational Longevity: Description and Frequency of Themes?

In answer to the second research question: How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on clergy vocational longevity, one primary theme emerged, with four secondary themes: child ministry call and fit, expectations, difficult experiences, and heritage. The second theme of pastoral ministry calling and fit was identified in 100 percent of the participant's data and referred to the clergy member and their family's personal understanding of his leading into vocational ministry, as well as the gifts and graces of how he lived out this vocation. Included in this theme was the family's experiences of life as a clergy family unit. Within this primary theme was the secondary theme of child ministry call and fit, acknowledged in 87.5 percent of the participant's responses, which identified the experiences of clergy children as a young member of the clergy family unit and his/her

activities in ministry. In addition, consideration was given to how these childhood experiences have moved them toward their adult vocations. The second sub-theme expectations identified in 100 percent of the participant's data, was recognized as the framework in which the clergy family functioned and the level of freedom experienced in defining their family and ministry rules and roles. The third sub-theme was difficult experiences, or personal, family, and/or ministry hardships, as they impacted the perceptions of members of the family unit. This sub-theme was identified by 100 percent of the participants. Finally, the secondary theme heritage acknowledged by 62.5 percent of the participants, identified how the clergy and spouse's family of origin has affected the pastoral call and fit of the couple, and thus the family unit.

The two primary themes and the nine secondary themes are represented in Table 4.2. The number, accompanied by percentage, of study participants who identified these themes in the data are also portrayed in the table.

Table 4.2

Research Questions and Related Themes

1. How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment?		
Primary Theme	Secondary Themes	Identified by Participants: Number and Percentage
Contentment		8 (100%)
	1. Interpersonal Authenticity and Trust	7 (87.5%)
	2. Intentional Parenting	6 (75%)
	3. Family Boundaries and Balance	8 (100%)
	4. Family Unity	8 (100%)
	5. Personal Preparation and Support	5 (62.5%)
2. How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on clergy vocational longevity?		
Primary Theme	Secondary Themes	Identified by Participants: Number and Percentage
Pastoral Ministry Call and Fit		8 (100%)
	1. Child Ministry Call and Fit	7 (87.5%)
	2. Expectations	8 (100%)
	3. Difficult Experiences	8 (100%)
	4. Heritage	5 (62.5%)

In summary, this study had two research questions which revealed the two primary themes of contentment and pastoral ministry call and fit. In addition, nine secondary themes were acknowledged as being important to clergy family's perspectives on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity. In the next section, each theme will be described, with supporting vignettes from the data, per each research question.

Research Question One: How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment?

In answer to research question one the primary theme of contentment emerged, which included the five secondary themes that are described below.

Primary Theme One: Contentment. This section presented the theme Contentment and provides rich descriptions from research participants' experiences.

Reflecting on the experience of contentment, Jake maintained that "...contentment is learned; everyone can be content by learning what is important and what is not important. Just being satisfied with who you are and where you are." He suggested that what accounted for his contentment was that he enjoyed success in all of his churches. The successes were not limited to the numerical sense or even spiritual growth, but that he was able to make a more broadly defined difference in the churches. He stated,

When I left the church, it was always in better shape than when I got there.

Actually, to be able to look back and say, 'That was a good time, that was a good church to be at,' I think that's what contentment is.

He expressed that ministering as a clergy and living in a clergy family was a good experience for him. Likewise, he perceived that his family also enjoyed serving as a family unit in the various congregations and that they mirrored his levels of contentment, remarking, "I think your family sees whether you're content or not..." He referenced periods of discontentment, reporting that, "When I've left a church and gone to another

one, usually it's because I was discontent. I wasn't happy with what was going on. I feel like I wasn't working to my greatest ability." Additionally, he stated, "If I'm not content, I won't enjoy it, and I don't want to be some place I'm not enjoying."

Rene, who valued a strong and healthy marriage in ministry, reflected that she was highly motivated and content with being involved in doing things that were important to her. "For me in ministry, that meant being the best wife and mother that I could be in raising our four children to be obedient and respectful Christ followers."

Likewise, she stated:

I think that we both had such a strong call to being involved in evangelism that it was our primary focus. And the joy that comes with that endeavor was so important to us. We had such a great experience in our very first pastoral role that we have always stuck with it. And at each of our churches we have seen growth, so it has been an adventure for us all along the way.

Anne indicated that she experienced contentment in the clergy family at varying degrees. Her contentment was often based upon the ministry situations that her parents were facing, concurring with Jake's perspective that children's contentment levels mirror that of their parents'. She affirmed that she experienced a "very content childhood" and that she was "happy with where [she] was." Anne also acknowledged that her parents have been foundational in allowing "me to be who I am today and pole-vaulted me into allowing me to understand my spiritual foundation and run with it, and allowing it to grow even further."

Steve identified himself as one who had a "general sense of possibilities and

God's goodness." He shared:

...it's hard to get me too far off track, in terms of the sense of God's blessing on our lives. We've just been blessed, over, and over, and over again. It knocks me off track when there is conflict with a church or conflict with a colleague, those kinds of things. I'm not a high conflict guy. Nobody likes conflict.

In addition to ministry contentment, Steve placed a very high value on his family as a source of his contentment. He described himself as being the first one in his home who is up in the morning, "When I look in on sleeping children who are healthy and strong, and love Jesus, a wife who loves me, who attends to my needs – loves Jesus more than she loves me..." Thus, he defined contentment as "being on mission and living into the person God created me to be" and "seeing my family around me, living into the people that God created them to be."

Samantha acknowledged that caring for her family and participating in her ministry of interest, directly related to her sense of contentment. She related that how well her "husband and children are doing emotionally" impacted how content she felt. "If they are struggling, this can bring great discontentment in my life. If my husband is going through a stressful ministry time, this is hard for me and can lead to discontentment." At the same time, she related that she was aware of allowing circumstances to affect her level of contentment, noting that this was a point of development. However, she acknowledged that she experienced a "trap of thinking that if I gain contentment ... I will quit striving for the best."

Kaitlyn considered that, despite periods of difficulty and her occasional complaints: “I feel like my family has done a very good job in reminding me that God is always going with us, no matter what we’re going through.” As well, she indicated that ministry primarily offered her a positive experience. She concluded that her experiences as a part of a clergy family have “all been a part of God’s plan. And I feel like everything has gone into being who I am, and I wouldn’t change anything.”

In summary, participants referenced their experiences of contentment in various ways. For some, contentment was a product of the fulfillment they received from loving and caring for their family members. For others, contentment flowed from their ministry opportunities and the lessons learned from those experiences. Still others reflected that their contentment could be affected by the perceived well-being of family members, facing personal or ministry stress. For all, contentment emerged from the knowledge that they were participating in life in a manner that was pleasing to God and beneficial to others. The five sub-themes or significant components of contentment that emerged from the data were the following: interpersonal authenticity and trust, intentional parenting, family boundaries and balance, family unity, and personal preparation and support. These are described next.

Contentment: Interpersonal authenticity and trust. Interpersonal authenticity and trust was understood as the expression of genuine living in all areas of life. Jake expressed that he was able to be an effective pastor without the presence of barriers or phoniness. He stated, “I was able to be a person more than a pastor, which made me feel able to fit in and allowed me to be more open without people’s preconceived ideas

[affecting me]; I could be myself.” His wife also “insisted on not being hypocritical in her role as a pastor’s wife.” By living in a genuine manner, and enabling his wife and children to also “be themselves,” he indicated that he did not allow expectations for any of the family members to dominate who they were naturally. He added, “Also, I did not have any expectations for my children beyond any other children in our churches.” Because they knew that what he said to them was genuine, they developed an enduring trust that they too reveal as adults. Rhett concurred, that his parents enabled he and his siblings to “live out the identities that we had” by assuring them of who each were in Christ, rather than what other people felt and said. He reiterated, “They valued us and we were a priority. They were proud of us, that we were able to do life together in fun and engaging ways and that we created memories.”

Being non-confrontational by nature, Jake attempted to focus on what he thought Jesus would do in any particular situation, rather than focus on the issues. As an outcropping of this, Jake found himself preaching and teaching on the values of being oneself and not judging people. He was careful not to “put on a false face,” but to be “open and honest with everyone.” He revealed,

...there is an accountability that I model when I preach. I never preach something unless I’ve lived it first. I don’t want to be a hypocrite and I don’t think anyone would call me a hypocrite: preach something and do something else. I take that pretty seriously, and my family sees that too. They see it better than anyone else in the church. I think I’ve been pretty consistent in that. That’s rewarding to be able to say that.

Rhett acknowledged that, “The things I heard my dad talk about, I saw him do.” Jake and Rene were grounded individuals, who knew themselves and knew that God was using them to make a difference in others’ lives, leading them in a growing relationship with Christ. Rhett recalled, “One of the biggest factors was that my dad was the same person at home as he was on Sunday morning, as was my mother. Faith was lived out, not just talked about.”

Following this approach of transparency and integrity, there were some sermons where Jake said, “I’m not ready to preach that yet.” It was important to him that people saw consistency in his life from the pulpit. He remarked, “I’ve seen too many cases where that’s not happening and that really discredits the ministry...”

Rene shared that being chosen and called by God gave her freedom to be who she truly was. This perspective has allowed her to not be concerned over others’ expectations that may accompany her husband’s vocational role. “There were no pastor’s wife qualifications that I had to meet, only that I needed to be the best possible obedient Christian that I could be.” It was important to her that she served as a positive influence on people, “by my love of God and for people, and not by rules.” Being led by the Holy Spirit was more important to her than being led by others’ expectations. Rene had confidence in knowing that God was in control of her life, which allowed her to overcome many of her insecurities. She was no longer concerned about what other people thought, but only what God thought about her. She portrayed a very logical and uncomplicated yet somewhat revolutionary, perspective:

I also knew that God knows all things, and if He was calling my husband into ministry, God knew that I was married to Jake, and so therefore God was calling me to this new role also. It became apparent to me that God wanted ‘me.’ This was so freeing for me to realize that I could be ‘myself’ in this new role.

As for advice those who are beginning a vocation in church ministry, Rene found it important, particularly for a clergy spouse, to “find your niche in ministry and be yourself in that position.” She stressed that one should not try to do what they think others want them to do. Rather, one should do what fits the giftedness of the individual and the “God given desires as an individual.”

Steve expressed that the hope in his overall parenting style was that his family has learned about grace and forgiveness, as an outcome of life in their home. He identified a period in his life, where his ministry so strongly impacted him that he found himself in an extended process of restoration. He recalled, “...they [children] watched me as a dad work through probably a multi-year process of knowing about forgiveness from a head-knowledge, but really having to go there in my heart and my gut.”

Samantha discussed being genuine, as she engaged with her children in particularly challenging times in their congregations. She believed that possibly the most difficult situation for her children was,

seeing their parents stressed, not necessarily about the actual ‘hard’ thing that has happened. It is more in the way I handle the situation that creates either security or insecurity in their lives. If I make the situation appear as though it is bigger than God’s power, then I am acting as though I serve a God that cannot help.

She recognized her need for the Holy Spirit to be invited into the stressful things, not only to have peace herself, but to receive peace for her home and to create a place of security for her husband and children. She stated that she desired “a place where God becomes so real to them because they see how real He is to me.”

Kaitlyn and Hannah indicated that their home was a place where conversations with their parents were a part of the process of understanding their roles in a ministry family. They remarked that there were situations that they preferred not to be active in, but a conversation with their parents would often result in understanding, supportive remarks similar to, “Yeah, I get it, but you are serving the Lord and you are serving your church.” They felt listened to, understood, and guided through the particular decisions, which reiterated their family’s core values and closeness.

In summary, authenticity in parenting and pastoring were identified as being vitally important in providing an environment of clergy family contentment. The consistency of engagement and the atmosphere of openness and trust resonated with the study participants, as they reflected upon the wealth of living in an open and trusting family relationship that navigated the positive and negative situations.

Contentment: Intentional parenting. Intentional parenting involved parental awareness of how to best invest into each family relationship, with an understanding of why the action was beneficial. Jake indicated that as a new pastor, he would listen to taped lectures or discussions when he was traveling in the car. He related to some mentors whom he listened to that felt it was more important to be a successful parent than a successful pastor. He remarked, “That actually sunk in. I may flop in ministry, but if my

kids turn out good, I consider that okay.” He identified this as the starting place for his intentional parenting: “If I’m going to do this, I’ve got to figure out a way to do it.”

Jake described one of the most rewarding opportunities of intentional parenting he was engaged in with each of his four children, which occurred as they reached the fourth grade. Once a week, during their fourth grade academic year, Jake would take each of his children out for breakfast before school, where they would talk about temperaments, spiritual development, self-esteem, and leadership. He stated, “They knew that they were special when I got up extra early for them, and I spent time with only them ... That was important.” He recited two phrases of intentionality that were representative of his perspective: “prioritize the priority” and “the more important thing is most important.” In a busy and often interrupted day of a pastor’s life, these phrases were a helpful reminder.

Each family participant recounted the vivid memories and the vital impact that this year of breakfast meetings had on them. Rhett recalled conversations with his father over breakfast when he would share in a very genuine manner. “You know what? Here is something that God has used in my life.” Rhett recounted that his father would talk to him about his journey of spiritual growth, “He began to share his story with the questions he had, with the questions I had, and basically walked with us.” Rhett was positively affected by the trust and accountability that was developed in his relationship with his father, even to this day. His mother Rene was intentional in the same manner, but her impact took place as a daily occurrence or in the times before bed. Meaningful questions were asked such as, “What was your day like? Was there something that someone did or

said today that hurt you, or that encouraged you? Is there something that I did?" Rhett continued, "That is how we grew up."

Shortly after his discipleship year with his father, Rhett recalled entering his father's office where he was working, and Jake saying, "Rhett, I will pay you \$5.00 for every leadership tape that you listen to." And, "Every leadership book that you read, I'll give you \$10.00." He placed a value on it because these things had been so important for his own growth. Rhett reflected,

I have been very blessed to be a part of a clergy family where my parents were intentional about loving us and making time and space for our family to grow up in a very nurturing environment. I felt protected, encouraged, and empowered.

When the family traveled in the car, there were often times when the radio would be turned off, and they would talk together about their day. Jake and Rene would pray for and with the children on their way to and from school. Often, Jake would arrange his schedule so that he could drive the children to school and then be at home when they arrived back from school, so he could see them again. Because of this arrangement, he would sometimes need to go back to his office later in the evening, but it was important to the family that Jake and Rene were both at home when the children left for the day and when they returned home.

Jake acknowledged that despite their low income, "I don't think our kids knew we were poor." Jake and Rene were able to establish activities that were low cost and creative. They set a high priority for intentional quality time spent together as a family. Their family always observed a weekly Friday family night that was reserved for Jake

and Rene to spend uninterrupted time with their four children. They carefully planned the evenings, with the children's help, and each looked forward to this special set-apart family time. Family activities consisted of going out to dinner and a movie, playing board games, flying kites together, visits to the mall where each family member picked his/her favorite store that the entire family browsed through it together, going to the zoo, campfires, and so on. As their children grew and their youngest child was the only one remaining at home, they adjusted some family nights to allow for her to spend time with her peers. Jake renovated their basement to include a pool table and a viewing theater, so that Anne could invite friends over so they could have a comfortable space. She stated, "They cared that our home was a welcoming place, while at the same time they were protecting me and giving me boundaries." She indicated that many times her friends would actually be found sitting in the living room talking with Jake and Rene, everyone enjoying themselves.

The family was intentional about having everyone together for at least four or five meals each week, using the time to catch up with each other. Meals were followed with a prayer time for any concerns that may have been raised during their conversations. In addition to this, the family had times during the children's elementary and teen years of reading through sections of the Bible together with audio-tapes and discussing the passages. Rene stressed that,

Making this extra effort is so important in developing contentment and longevity by intentionally investing time in each other and for our children. As a result, we

now see our adult children applying these same intentional family times with our grandchildren.

Rhett expressed that the largest impact that his parents had on him were his views on life, God, and his ethics. He said,

I learned from a very young age what God's love, truth, and grace were all about. I was blessed to be able to grow up in an atmosphere where I could ask questions, where I could grow in my relationship with God with a healthy support system around me and an amazing environment in which to utilize my gifts and pursue passions for God's Kingdom.

Jake and Rene were very intentional about being familiar with the different stages of parenting, in regards to knowing when and how to discipline, when to coach, and when and how to encourage. They seemed to know when to push back and be a bit stricter. Rhett expressed, "...there was a tough love and an intentionality that we needed. We could question, could doubt, but yet we could be encouraged and grow and gain leadership out of that." He continued, sharing that Jake and Rene did such a wonderful job in parenting because they valued each relationship with their children and they protected them.

We weren't a pastor's kid first; we were their son or daughter first. We knew that we had expectations that people put on us that weren't legit or even something that we could live up to, but my mom and dad didn't put those things on us and they protected us.

There were times when ministry was one of those things that Jake and Rene felt

they needed to protect their children from. Rhett recalled seeing, “some of the ugly side of ministry,” referring to situations when his parents were treated disrespectfully. He shared,

My parents were really good about shielding us from these things, but inevitably we kids picked up on certain tensions within the congregation. We learned that hurting people hurt others, and sometimes that meant us. But it was not something that I took personally, as again my parents protected us and navigated through these trials with integrity and honesty.

Steve and Samantha related that their family is structured as a missional family, in that their intentional parenting recognized that personal growth and spiritual formation are essentially one in the same. Steve acknowledged the importance of a holistic approach in parenting and having a “sense of being on mission.” Though they saw themselves as having differing strengths and limitations, they were in unity in regards to the purpose of their family, as one that glorified and served God. They perceived this as a natural outgrowth of their family.

Steve and Samantha’s children participated in community sports and arts programs, where most people did not recognize them as clergy children. Steve shared, “This was an advantage for them in that they weren’t burdened with undue expectations and could just be themselves.” Kaitlyn recognized that being a part of a clergy family allowed her to connect with a variety of individuals, whom she learned and benefited from. She stated, “... I have formed relationships with people who I would never have come in contact with otherwise.”

In summary, participants acknowledged the importance of knowing each other and forming a system in which everyone is loved, supported, and encouraged with purpose and design. The experiences of intentional parenting provided necessary support and preparation for family and vocational contentment.

Contentment: Family boundaries and balance. Participants acknowledged the benefits of utilizing healthy limits in family and vocational ministry. Jake set firm boundaries with his congregants, as well as his family. In the church, he was comfortable limiting involvement with individuals, for the family's well-being and the health of the church. "I know that it makes sense that if you are too busy, you're not going to do the job well." For his family and congregation, he was skilled at placing a limit on what they were going to engage in.

Setting boundaries with his congregations allowed Jake to care for his family in the manner he chose, reflecting back to some of his and Rene's intentional parenting philosophies and practices. Referring to their weekly family night, the congregation was aware that from 3:00 on Friday afternoon, when the children arrived home from school, the rest of the day was blocked off for Jake and his family. With the exception of an occasional wedding rehearsal, this time was exclusively for their family, and the congregation was fully aware of it. Jake stated that he did not receive many complaints from congregants about this practice, and when he did, he would ask the question of them, "When is your family night?" He continued, "They knew that was right, and they supported me in that." Jake's position on protecting family time was solid, "You're always going to have something to do at the church. You're never going to have

everything done. But, you can't let that feed over into your family time." It was critical that his life was not centered around the church, but that he was responsible to schedule vacations and special family time. His family talked about the plans, and all shared in the excitement of having quality time together. At the same time, he discussed the importance of finding a balance for his family to understand he was also responsible to his vocation, "When I'm working at the church, preparing a message or something, then I need to get my work done, too. So, there's a balance there."

In regard to periods of difficulty in ministry and how they affected his children, Jake noted that he and Rene held closely to a policy to not discuss private ministry issues in their home. Rene shared, "When harsh words came at my husband, as a leader, it was our practice as a couple to leave those thoughts and conversations outside of our home." Jake remarked, "If they heard, it was through someone else. I never talked bad about the church or anything, with the kids around." Rene concurred, stating that she and Jake always tried to remain positive in their conversations about the church and the congregation. Anne also recalled, "He didn't allow the negative things to come into our family, so I really don't feel like experiences had a negative effect on our family, as a whole. Jake noted, "However, when they did become aware of difficulty or that individuals were upset, ...they just watched me and how [I dealt with it]." Anne remarked, "I feel like my parents were really good at keeping our family stable, no matter what happened in the church." She suggested that one cannot keep family and vocation completely separate in their lives because of the overlap of ministry onto family and vice versa:

You can't compartmentalize your life in that because it overlaps completely. But I guess keeping your family involved and just continually doing things only with your family; going on little trips and vacations or having a date night with your family and having someone else be there for the congregation or the people that you are ministering to, that they go... 'Okay, this is me and my family; this is family time.' It helps your family know that they are most important.

His children learned that during times of change and transitions in the church, when decisions needed to be made, it was likely there were going to be problems. He points out, "...and they saw I handled it pretty well." Rene reiterated that it is important to remember that many people who have deep hurts are the ones who may treat you poorly. Do not take "yourself or others too seriously."

Steve and Samantha expressed that they were in the process of establishing a best practices system of discussing ministry items in the family context. They reported that they spend a considerable amount of time talking about the business of ministry, as well as about the mission focus and dreams of their ministries. However, they acknowledge that their children may "know more than they should" at times, simply because they overhear these discussions, even from behind the closed doors of another room. In addition, the children seemed to "sense the intensity" in the discussion. Samantha shared her concern that their children may be exposed to information that is beyond their maturity. The challenge was to discern which discussions were good for them to be a part of and walk through as a family and what topics disqualified them from these discussions. Samantha reflected, "For them to hear whatever they overheard, I would like

to protect them from a little bit more of that.” She recognized that there are many happenings each day that she and her children are protected from but continues:

...it’s just those big ones that are unavoidable because it affects your whole church family. The people in the church are hurt, and they are coming to you. I don’t know how to have a boundary with that. It’s almost something that we have to go through as a family: this family and our church family. We have to just step into and trust God and grow through.

Rene discussed the areas of boundaries and balance that related more specifically, to a clergy spouse. She noted that she is “career minded” and values using her gifts outside of the home, stating that it can be very healthy to develop friendships in the community, outside of the church. It was a priority to work in maintaining friendships, in the community and in the church, but she exercised much caution in what she shared about her husband, family, or church business.

Rhett and Anne expressed their perspectives on family boundaries. It was established that there were at least some expectations that accompanied being a minister’s child. However, participants indicated that their parents worked hard to protect them and reduce the pressure of outside expectations. Rhett believed, “My siblings and I never felt the weight of having to ‘meet expectations’ that were outside our already agreed upon standards that my parents established first as our parents and not as our parents who happen to be in ministry.” He also acknowledged that one of the reasons that he never considered asking his parents to leave the ministry was that, “...my dad and mom always put our family first and set up guardrails and boundaries, making it clear to us and the

congregation that family was first.” He reiterated, “. . .my parents always protected our family night each Friday; we always ate family dinners together, and no church person or parishioner took precedence over us.” In addition, Jake utilized his weekly day off as a time when he was completely separated from his vocational responsibilities; he was focused on self-care and family. Rhett perceived,

Because love is time and where you put your time shows what you value. The struggle and the tension for a lot of people in ministry is that so many people are vying for their time. The thing that they sacrifice is time with the people that care the most. The people that can forgive them the most often too, but it comes to a point that if you’re not investing as much as you are taking, it becomes a bankrupt relationship.

Anne recalled that the practice of being a family was extremely important to her parents. Although she did not recall it being verbalized as a mandate that they had to be together, the system supported the value. Anne had particularly fond memories of the family’s candlelit spaghetti dinners every Thursday. She noted that they rarely used candles for any other occasion, but “Every Thursday night the candles came out, and we had a spaghetti dinner.” It was special things like this that reinforced the importance of enjoying their family time together, aside from ministry and other activities. Anne expressed that, “I feel like my parents created boundaries without us really realizing it. Like on Sundays, we wouldn’t really go out with friends; that was the day to stay home and rest. That’s just what we did; we didn’t even question it.” Childhood was good according to Anne; she indicated that without question, she knew that her parents loved

her, because they showed her love. At the same time, her observations were that some ministry parents and families are not well equipped to express their love to their families. She points out, "...quality time is what they need and when they can't get that the family may suffer."

Steve mentioned that his family took advantage of a sabbatical year which proved to be critically important in finding a "reset" and carving out the boundaries needed in that particular situation. However, because in most cases a sabbatical is not readily available it became critically important to them to focus on the ongoing family environment. He acknowledged that his wife was vital in maintaining an environment that benefited the entire family by keeping it safe and enjoyable. Samantha identified that Steve is very diligent in taking his Sabbath and using his earned vacation. "Without that, our relationship, Steve's and my relationship, would be tougher because we don't have those moments of pulling back and investing in each other and the relationship." Together, they worked to carve out healthy boundaries and margins around their lives. However, Samantha expressed that there were particularly difficult times when fatigue and stress, which came from ministry, tended to carry over and bring the emotional repercussions of this stress into the home:

It's those kinds of feelings that well up in you and just the hurt that you are feeling for them and you come back into the home having just had that laid on your own heart. I think that sometimes I can be shorter with my kids.

One of the practices that allowed for the setting of boundaries in the home, especially as it related to the focus of time and energy, was allowing the telephone to

work for them, rather than the other way around. Participants indicated that, in a pastor's home, a ringing telephone can be perceived as a negative, something that calls a parent away from the family. A way for participants to manage this was to utilize a telephone system that had two separate rings, indicating whether the call was coming from a family member or from an outside source. Likewise, allowing the message service to accept the calls, rather than answering the ringing telephone was successful in establishing healthy boundaries. Steve and Samantha determined, based upon early ministry experiences, that having the official ministry office in the residence infringed upon their ability to separate personal and family time apart from vocation. In fact, participants indicated that, if at all possible, living out of visual distance from the church building was helpful in maintaining healthy boundaries between vocational ministry and family functioning.

Kaitlyn and Hannah reflected on the presence of boundaries in their family. Some of their descriptions resonated with those of their parents. However, they also broadened the family perspective of boundaries. Both of these participants agreed that the level of activity the family engaged in outside of the home played a role in their stress and kept them from spending as much time with their family, particularly their father, as they would have liked. In reference to her and her sibling's participation in organized sports, music lessons, and dance lessons, Kaitlyn shared, "...it might have been a good idea to cut back on some of the things we did; we did a lot of activities..."

In the midst of these experiences in their family, it became increasingly important for them to set time aside with only their family. Kaitlyn express that, "It seemed like

our lives were hectic and crazy; there weren't many times that we were all just home."

Hannah concurred,

Whenever I spend time with my siblings, just me and my siblings, it's always separate family time, which is really good. It also gives me more of an appreciation of the church and my dad's job, to be able to have that separation.

The primary response to this need was an annual vacation, during which the entire family left their residential area with the main goal of spending time together. Between vacations, the family would welcome opportunities to leave town for shopping trips or meals out. When neither of these were possible, they "needed to retreat" into their home and "small family unit." When the family remained in their hometown, Kaitlyn felt that it was difficult to go into the community without being recognized by an individual(s) which drew them back across the boundary into the ministry context. She continued,

I feel like we are always a ministry family. It's not very often that I feel we are our own family. I guess that getting out of the town has helped us to feel like we don't have to be the ministry family; we don't have to be the pastor's family first. We can just be us.

In summary, study participants highlighted the vital importance of utilizing healthy limits in space and activity, as individuals and family engage with family and ministry. Participants recognized the boundaries that enriched their experiences, as well the need for firmer limits to be established.

Contentment: Family unity. Study participants resonated with the concept of being a “family team” in ministry. On one level or another, the entire family joined in ministry. However, family unity stretched beyond to encompass time and activities together and understanding one another beyond the ministry context. Jake indicated that his family was “...always involved in the church somehow and only in the areas in which they really wanted to...they always did something that came naturally to them.” Rene agreed with this “team model” when she said that she was always ministering by her husband’s side and “we tried to include our kids in ministry so that it was a part of their lives.” Anne celebrated the times that she ministered with her family:

I believe serving in the church creates stability in your home. When you’re putting others first and serving others, that also infiltrates into the way your family operates. At home, we are better servants and better at putting others first when we are putting God first.

Rene indicated there was a consistency in their family that resonated with who they were, wherever they were.

We are not a family that puts on fronts to look like a ministry family. If I try to imagine how we would be different as a family, if we were not in ministry, I’m not sure how that would look different.

Beyond formal ministry, participants recognized the joy that was a part of their family times together, currently, as well as previously. Jake remarked, “We loved; we still love, being together. We were together just a few week ago. Everyone was at our house, and it was incredible, all of us laughing and having fun. We just love it. Love our

family...” Even during difficult times in their lives, such as relocating, participants remained close because those relationships were the consistent and stable part of their lives. Participants in Jake’s family concurred that their family functioned as a small group who regularly “read God’s word, prayed, served, and had fun together” and that this was a primary factor in maintaining closeness.

Rhett reminisced about one of his most loved family activities that allowed for valuable time as a family and connected these types of opportunities with contentment in ministry. He relates,

On Sunday after church, we would go to this campground that we had a membership to. We would load everything up after church, go out, [and] spend the night. Then my dad had the day off on Monday, and we’d come back Monday night. We’d just camp, and [have] fires and stories, just things that you’d do in the summer, but we did it every Sunday in the summer.

He expressed that knowing when and how to celebrate life together and protecting those times that they were together placed a vital focus on their relationships.

Steve recognized that family unity was fostered within the structure and function of the family. He identified a true sense of unity around Christ in their home where “everyone is playing their role that God has given them to play.” Kaitlyn concurred with her father stating, “In our family, everyone supports and affirms one another and that is important, but I can never lose sight of what God has done and why we serve His church.”

Samantha reflected on the importance of caring for relationships with her spouse and children. Her husband's sense of contentment and well-being was her greatest concern. Speaking of her impulse to move ahead and to improve situations, she noted that her pressure upon him could actually become unhealthy. It is their relational unity that allowed her to be aware of the healthy limits and remove the pressure. In regard to her children, she acknowledged that at times, her ministry activities would produce an imbalance in their family expectations. She expressed that in these times, her children are comfortable in expressing their need of her, stating, "I think that has been healthy for them to call me on it," in order for forgiveness to happen and for their relationship to rebound. Hannah believes adds:

...the most important thing to do is to stay close to your family. If you distance yourself from your family, you will build up a resentment toward the church and each other. The strongest clergy families are the ones who are close and do ministry as a family.

In summary, the ties that united the participants with their respective families were acknowledged as serving a vital role in the maintenance of family contentment in the vocational ministry context. Further, participants indicated that this unity was extended beyond the time and limits of ministry.

Contentment: Personal preparation and support. Participants recognized and described preparation for vocational ministry and various systems of support that served them in meaningful ways. Steve and Samantha were seminary trained; Rene attended university; and Jake attended university and was denominationally prepared. All of the

adult children participants either completed university or graduate school, or were currently in the process of doing so.

Steve expressed that the number of educational resources that were available to him as a ministers in vocational ministry added to the stability and effectiveness of his family. His schedule allowed for levels of Bible study that many individuals do not have the opportunity for. In addition, he revealed, “I have been exposed to counselors, leaders, spiritual formation directors and coaches who have encouraged me to be the best husband and father possible.” Steve also expressed much appreciation for the pastor of his home church who served as “an example of care for his wife and family” during his formative years.

Prior to Jake’s call into vocational ministry, while he was working in a secular vocation, he was in the custom of listening to Christian leadership tapes in his car. When he arrived home from work, he would share with Rene what he learned that day; they shared in all that he was learning. His wife was aware of the positive influence this information had on his roles as husband and father. After accepting his position in ministry, Jake made it a point to include his church leadership and spouses in formal leadership training.

Rene described the process she experienced as she prepared for and began ministry, after following her husband and his call into ministry:

I prayed each day asking God to enlighten me as to His advice for me. In my devotions, God revealed to me His plan for my preparation. It was so exciting for me to hear His voice guiding me. I actually have that exact list that I recorded in

my Bible now. This is what I wrote in the inside cover of my Bible: Advice of God for being a pastor's wife – 1. Let LOVE be the aim of your life. 2. Watch out for spiritual danger. 3. Humble yourself before God. 4. Be patient to let God work. 5. Put God first in everything. 6. Have two goals: wisdom and common sense. 7. Let me live honestly. I stopped adding after number seven because I realized that God was showing me that what He wanted from me is to be the best Christ follower that I could be.

As well as direct leadership from the Holy Spirit, Jake and Rene identified a vital partnership with their church district leader and his wife. This relationship was a factor in adding to the effectiveness and stability of their family. Opportunity was provided for Jake and Rene to discuss any concerns and gain wise counsel. There was a system of pastoral support and prayer partners for the district clergy and their wives.

Aside from being the spouse of a pastor, Rene acknowledged the awareness that all “women need other women in their lives, no matter if you are a pastor's wife or not.” She researched the studies available and began a regular meeting of women in her home. She expressed, “That [was] one thing that I did in ministry was probably the best and most effective way of adding stability and personal growth in my personal life.”

Samantha reflected upon the important place that friends in ministry hold for those who serve in vocational ministry.

I've developed such great friendships in the church with people who can handle me not being perfect and me sharing maybe some of the hard things in my life,

sometimes dark things in my life, who pray for me and love me through it and who hold me accountable and call me on things.

She identified the importance of maintaining a network of support that goes beyond a spouse and may include a professional therapist,

You can't just be this Lone Ranger out there, trying to be everything to everybody... You've got to find somewhere where you can process it, somewhere that it is safe where you can just let it out and who can talk you through it and love you enough to be honest with you.

In a very similar manner, Steve related that he and Samantha benefited from observing other pastors very early on in their relationship and ministry. Steve remarked, “[They] were so incredibly faithful to their marriages and children. We learned so much from these families and were inspired to emulate their relationships in our lives and with our children.”

During difficult ministry times, Steve benefited from individuals who were determined to support him and encourage him. He stated that these individuals were friends and mentors, “who had my back, who loved me, who listened to me, who prayed for me, who would hear my whining – what I perceived as whining, and really loved me.” Out of experiences with supportive relationships like these, Steve stated:

From my observation, loneliness is a huge killer, and I was never lonely. If there is anything that I would say, I would say, ‘make sure you keep your friendship networks and mentor networks, and you’re going to need more than one because

if someone lets you down along the way, you have to have some soft place to land with some people who really do know you deeply.

Children raised in the clergy home often gained access to important individuals who support and encourage them. Anne recognized:

I was in a position to be able to form deeper relationships with adults and amazing Christian people. I was able to be a part of their home with normal daily activities to show me what a Christian home can look like. It looked very similar to my home but it was different watching other families interact and love each other so purely.

In summary, the participants identified and acknowledged the significance of preparing and gaining support from others, in order to be effective in their roles as clergy, spouse, and adult children of clergy. While formal educational preparation was a part of their experiences, most attention was given to the growth and experience that developed from relationships with mentors and encouragers.

This section considered the impact of ministry on clergy family contentment by examining participant experiences that indicated the value of clergy family interactions that were consistent and genuine. Likewise, a family that was structured with intentionality and healthy boundaries, which promoted family unity and maintained necessary points of support, were also revealed to be beneficial. The following section will offer participant experiences which indicate elements of clergy vocational longevity.

Research Question Two: How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on clergy vocational longevity?

In answer to research question two, the primary theme of pastoral ministry call and fit emerged, which included the four secondary themes that are described below.

Primary Theme Two: Pastoral Ministry Call and Fit. Participants identified pastoral ministry call and fit as a key consideration in the phenomenon of clergy vocational longevity. Particular significance was placed on the call of the clergy member and his spouse into vocational ministry and the ministry partnership that developed. Likewise, participants discussed elements that added to and helped to maintain their ministry longevity. Out of these experiences, recommendations were offered to those who may be considering a call into vocational ministry. The adult clergy children participants also reflected upon their perspectives of their parent's vocational calling and fit and its implications upon their own ministry calling.

Jake described his entry into vocational ministry as a long and gradual process which began with volunteer leadership in local church youth ministry. Being a pastor was not his first vocational choice. In fact, he was already pursuing education in a separate field. He explains, "Then, I found out that I enjoyed it and that I could do ministry well, so that's why it was a gradual thing." In contrast, Steve indicated that he decided to become a pastor when he was 15 years old. He was raised in a church congregation that allowed him to spend a considerable amount of time actively serving, often visibly in the worship services. He expressed, "Ministry service was a bit of a

natural fit for me, and the sense of God's calling was strong and seemed to be confirmed in a variety of ways." Both of these participants enjoyed the support of their respective pastors and the encouragement of their family members. Jake, in particular, who was raised in a clergy home and followed in the footsteps of generations of ministers, reflected a global view of ministry calling. His wife understood that he enjoyed it and "was good at it," thus supporting his decision to be a pastor. Jake stated that he soon realized that, "leading people to Christ became a desire of my heart; it came easily and I saw results." Steve's wife also played an integral role in supporting his efforts in ministry. Steve shares,

I don't think I would have been able to be as effective as a pastor [without her (wife's) presence and support]. I watch different pastors and spouses, and there are some spouses who aren't able to release their partner into the ministry in a way that allows that person to really thrive.

Jake discussed his longevity in the ministry, noting that he had opportunities to work in other vocations that were interesting to him, but he never seriously considered them. He found pastoral ministry so rewarding that the other choices paled in comparison. When asked if he ever considered leaving vocational ministry for any reason, he related,

No, I did not consider leaving the ministry, but I never wanted to have to be in ministry because I couldn't do anything else. I didn't want to be forced to be in ministry. I had a background in [a secular profession] before going into the ministry and that is what I prepared for in college. I understood being in the role

of being a layperson sitting in the pew. I valued that perspective which helped me to understand the people in my congregations. I attribute my determination in ministry and focus to the fact that I was having fun in ministry, which kept me going. If I stopped having fun, I probably would have quit.

Again, differing in his experiences, Steve indicated that he had seriously considered leaving pastoral ministry in consideration of another vocation. He said,

The situation was that I hit a wall of discouragement during my mid-thirties where I felt like I wasn't making the kind of difference that I wanted to make in the church where I was serving and that I could possibly be happier in another vocation. Thankfully, for me, God had other plans. I felt released from that particular place and service and was pursued by another church while at the same time exploring other vocational options.

Jake recalled that there were several very enjoyable things to him in his ministry that he attributed to longevity. He looked forward to meeting new individuals and found this to be a perfect component to his ministry: "I just keep meeting new people; learning new people's stories. I love people's stories about their life, what brought them to where they are here, now." His intention was that relationships would be established with these individuals so that he would be able to be a part of leading them to Christ. "I think seeing someone grow spiritually is the most exciting thing to observe. You're seeing someone who's a brand new Christian mature." Finally, Jake indicated that he found a true enjoyment in leadership, stating, "When...you are able to do your best at the task and it comes out successfully, that is very enjoyable."

When he was encouraged to draw from his individual and family experiences to offer advice on longevity to a family entering vocational church ministry, Jake replied that ministry was an adventure that his entire family enjoyed. His children were not forced to attend church. Rather, they were given opportunities in a context where they recognized God was working, people were growing, and their father was truly enjoying his ministry. As he reflected back, he noted experiencing very few problems with individuals or situations, giving credit to his non-confrontational personality: "I don't fight back. I'll just listen and love them; that's about the way I am. I'll just be patient with them and believe the best of them." Jake functioned out of the belief that people could change and everyone could learn there's a better way of serving, and responding, etc. He continued by offering several recommendations for longevity in ministry. First, he emphasized, "As a pastor, be sure of your call." He continued:

You can't waiver in that. That will take you through a lot of discouraging times and a lot of difficult times. Just know that God has called you into ministry and has called you to where you are at. That's so important. Also, [know] that your family understands that they are called into ministry too and that it's a team effort. Second, find someone to serve as your mentor. Jake expressed that early in his ministry that he found a more mature, experienced pastor to spend time with, ask questions, and observe how he functioned in ministry. He reiterated the importance of this relationship to those who are just entering vocational ministry. Third, he recommended that a pastor entering ministry, as well as one who is already established, be a part of an accountability group of other pastors. He stated:

You can get together, pray together, and ask questions; [have] someone to talk to. You're dealing with a situation you've never gone through before and you sit down with a group of four or five pastors, and maybe one or two of them have gone through it before.

Jake continued, "Pastors do not talk to pastors the way they do to others; they can only understand what pastors go through. That was so good because you can't really find these things in a book very often." These three practices were instrumental in building and maintaining his ministry longevity.

Jake's wife, Rene, served in church ministry with him for more than 30 years. However, it was not her initial intention or calling to be in vocational ministry, stating, "I did not choose to be a pastor's wife." Rene dated and married her husband while she was a university student. Jake was employed in a secular vocation, but they regularly attended a local church where they "were warmly welcomed and became involved in [ministries] that initiated a lot of spiritual growth in both our lives." Jake and Rene were attending a Christian convention with their church when he responded to the call to full-time Christian service. She shared,

Jake stood making himself available if God was calling him to ministry. As for me, I did not stand, but I was not surprised to see Jake allowing God to bring him to this point, since we were both growing so much and allowing God to work out His plans in our lives.

On the other hand, Steve's wife, Samantha, was raised in a clergy home that

provided a positive environment for her as a child. Because of this, she never found herself uncomfortable with the thought of being a pastor's wife. She revealed that she even sensed a specific calling on her life to ministry before meeting her husband, which confirmed her knowledge that she would one day be a pastor's wife. She related,

I have loved growing up and serving in the church. I love to see what God is going to do next, and there is such a thrill in allowing God to use my gifts and seeing how they interact with the gifts of others in the body. I find so much joy in seeing how God uses the local church to reach and transform a community.

Shortly after Jake's decision to pursue vocational ministry, he was contacted by someone in denominational leadership, requesting him to consider accepting a ministry placement. Rene shared that as their decision to take a position in ministry developed, she found herself considering what the implications would be for her. She reported, "I was partly excited, and partly scared to death." And, "I realized that my part in our marriage was vital in making or breaking the ministry that was upon my husband's shoulders."

Samantha concurred, stating,

I think a family has to ask themselves, 'Are we called to pastoral ministry?' I don't think it works too well if just the pastor feels a calling to the local church, because the spouse can be such a huge source of discouragement. If the husband feels a call to ministry, and his wife does not get behind him and help in the church, or is jealous of the church, it not only discourages the husband, it also discourages parishioners who are giving their best. This is a recipe for disaster.

Though Rene and Samantha's journeys into vocational ministry were quite different, it is worth noting that early on, they both became dedicated to their own call alongside of their spouse's call. Spousal dedication and determination became a key component of ministry longevity for each of these couples.

Each of the adult children of clergy in this study completely affirmed their respective parent's decision to enter vocational ministry, pointing chiefly toward their father's blend of traits and characteristics and his response to God's call. Rhett, the adult son of Jake and Rene, who himself is a full-time vocational minister, shared his perspective on his father's clergy call and service stating, "I believe my dad became a pastor because he was called to do so." He continued on to say that because of his father's gifts of communication and his ability to engage with individuals who did not attend church, he was able to discuss spiritual matters and decisions with those who are seeking God. He shared,

...one of the things that I loved about my dad is that he would be fully engaged with whatever the community was doing. For example, some of his friends were a part of the town bar league for softball, so he would go and just play. He was an unbelievable athlete. I remember going to the games and watching [as] he gained influence simply by how he played. Not just because he was a great athlete, but his sportsmanship, his encouragement of people, his character: people wanted to follow him. I wanted to follow him because I saw what it looked like.

Rhett recalled that the first church his father pastored in, "...paved the way for

how we viewed the church, how we viewed relationships, how we saw people's lives transformed..." He recognized that his father and mother were examples to him, by the way they lived their lives. His father was intentional about living a life as Jesus would. He observed, "I saw who he said he was on the stage, what he was passionate about, and then who he was when he lived it out." Rhett continued, "...and I began to make those connections right away." Rhett was blessed by both parents, who were consistently able to connect with individuals on a spiritual level: "I have always been supportive because I trust my parents and their leadership and sensing God's call." They possessed a natural and creative manner in communicating the Gospel. Rhett was taught to engage in similar ways in the same pattern in his own current ministry. He expressed that, "God was doing something bigger than just my mom and dad's call, but also the rest of our family and our call." When Rhett observed his father's passion for and effectiveness in ministry, it was a confirmation that it was not temporary, but rather, a commitment to the longevity of his calling and vocation, as well as a model for his own vocational ministry.

Anne, Jake and Rene's adult daughter reflected that she did not ever recall talking to her father about his vocational call to ministry. Jake was already established in the ministry at the time of Anne's birth so, in her childhood and young adulthood, she always saw him in this role. Due to her life-long perspective, Anne was able to observe that Jake's vocation was a perfect ministry fit for him. She remarked,

I feel my father has the gift of mercy and grace and is very good at problem-solving, as well as portraying the Word of God for people to understand and grow spiritually. I could not picture my dad doing anything else.

Anne indicated that it has only been in the last five to ten years, that she had become concerned about her parents' fit for ministry, specifically related to the unique needs of the congregations they served. She shared,

Coming into these churches, people are usually very hurt or scarred and are very difficult to work with or serve. So in turn, this affects my parents, personally.

They can become burned out more easily and just be tired of ministry more easily.

Anne's portrayal of her father's ministry tenure indicated that her concern for her parents may extend farther back than five or ten years. She revealed that her father specifically had been faced with situations where, "the church and leadership of the church was brutal to him." She shared that even while her father was serving in "thriving churches" and "doing great in ministry" there were situations in which he was treated poorly. She reiterated, "The way some churches deal with people make me very upset. This makes me not want my parents in ministry sometimes, and I guess why I grew up saying I didn't want to marry a pastor." Anne spoke in-depth about her perceptions of the climate that ministry offered in general. She realized,

Most people don't come to the pastor and say, 'Thank you, I just want to have a meeting with you on how awesome you are doing, and I want to sit with you for an hour and tell you that this ministry is going great and let's do it some more.'

Rather, usually, it's all the negative things that are coming up, and it comes to the senior pastor. It comes to my mom, as well, because she just always helps out my dad in the church... They are getting all the negative parts of life that just happens, and they're having to deal with it because that's what the church is for.

Anne acknowledged that the difficult times were not always confined to the church office, but there were times when it splashed over into the clergy home.

It's overwhelming at times. When it is overwhelming, that overflows and then we see it coming home with them, when they come home from work. I think it's messy and it affects the family; it affects us because I have to see Mom and Dad come home [in this way].

She remarked that, "When you make that decision to go into the ministry, your whole family is in the ministry...you don't just get one person and be done, it's your whole family involved." Anne acknowledged that it has affected her to see her parents come home frustrated or disappointed, having been hurt by other people. She concluded that this was a factor in her not being interested in vocational ministry service for herself.

Despite the challenging periods in a clergy family, Anne admitted that the experiences of ministry that have added to the effectiveness and stability of her family. While wondering whether her parents understood the positives that she and her siblings gained, she shared:

I feel like they didn't realize that watching them and how they serve would impact us as much as it did. Through the times that they weren't watching us watch them, I guess. As an adult, I know that they're still very, very spiritually encouraging to us and...watching them in ministry and their passion for it is still so encouraging.

Anne articulated perceived tension related to her parent's ministry longevity.

On the one hand, she expressed concern for her parents related to the difficult experiences they encountered over the years. In a very protective manner, Anne indicated

there are some times when she may have encouraged a vocational change. On the other hand, she also expressed the positives of their choices.

In summary, each participant entered into the vocational service of Christian ministry in a unique and very individual manner. Whether there was a definite calling placed upon them early in their childhood, or there was a personality fit with ministry in their teen years, or there was a vocational change that led them into ministry in their young adulthood, there were two elements that appeared consistent in the process. First, participants believed that God moved. He spoke with or through those around them in a manner that made it clear to the participants what their next steps should be. Second, they thought that God either matched their gifts and graces with the call, or enabled those gifts and graces to develop in the process of the call. Regardless, it appeared as if they were set on a journey with the equipment necessary to at least begin the travels. Participants stressed a vital need to be led by the Holy Spirit into vocational clergy ministry, in order to be successful in that journey and maintain longevity. They also recognized that if they were blessed with a spouse and children, everyone would be traveling together, and there needed to be a comfortable way to manage that. Adult children participants shared their observations and concerns over some negative or discouraging situations that involved their parents because of their clergy vocation, at times questioning the wisdom of remaining in ministry. However, they remained committed to their parents, their parent's calling, their own faith, and their determination to serve God in a ministry role of some manner.

Longevity: Child ministry call and fit. Participants recognized that clergy members and their spouses do not enter the ministry alone. At some point, children may become a part of the clergy family unit. Participants in this study emphasized that longevity in the ministry related not only to their calling and fit but their children's as well. Rene recognized that possibly the most valuable experience for her children was that, "They saw how we had great passion and zeal for what we were doing and they chimed in by being involved, as well." Jake and Rene did not pressure their children to participate in ministry, but waited for them to develop their own interests to minister in areas of their own choosing. Because of this, at a young age, Rhett approached his father to help him develop a sermon to deliver to one of his father's congregations. Samantha remembered that it was her family's practice to work together as they served, feeling as if these opportunities allowed for an awareness of personality characteristics, gifts, and talents that God wanted to use. Working together in ministry assisted in their developing family commitment. This was instead of ministry becoming an obstacle that took the parents away from the children, which participants pointed out could have caused their resenting the church and God and threaten their parents' ministry longevity.

Rhett remarked that only after he acknowledged God's call on his life for vocational ministry, did he learn that his parents had received this confirmation when he was an infant. He shared,

My mom and dad kept that a secret, never forced it, never initiated any conversation about it. When it happened, my dad was like, 'Yeah, I knew that. I knew that when you were a baby, when you were six-months old.

Yet, at the same time, Rene remarked that she tried to talk him out of his calling, “knowing that if his mother could talk him out of it, it was never a very strong call. I was not able to to convince him.” She wanted to protect her son and knew that ministry was not to be entered into lightly, “I wanted to see for sure if God was behind his calling.”

Anne expressed that she and each of her siblings were very involved in the church growing up, but they were not forced by her parents to do so. Rather, they were brought to the place of making their participation an individual choice. Now as adults, they are either in vocational ministry or in key volunteer leadership positions in their respective churches. She reflected, “I know this is a direct correlation to all of us siblings watching our parents serve in ministry with joy and passion.” Anne found that her childhood calling, which she enjoyed, was to be a family together and minister together. She stated, “That’s what we always did. If mom was helping out with something, then we would help out. We were just kind of born into that.” Anne remarked that one’s calling may be, “different throughout our lifetime and what that may look like, but I know that God has amazing things set up for us; whatever that may be.” She acknowledged a different leading in her ministry call than her brother’s. She expressed, “I did not want ministry to be a job for me. I didn’t want a church or ministry to be my income.” She expounded that it was important to her to be able to go to church because she wanted to, not because it was her job. The fact that it would be an obligation, rather than a choice, would make it look like something different than she desired. She shared on to say that she has always been involved in ministry, and as an adult she has recognized her own calling and spends

a considerable amount of time ministering in her church. The fact that it is a volunteer position makes it more comfortable for her.

I am friends with a lot of pastors and they are amazing at their job and they love what they do, but it is a job for them. And I see so many times their families are suffering due to the family member in ministry over involved in their job. When you leave the church building, you're never actually leaving work because you're dealing with lives.

Anne articulated a perspective of her own ministry calling that she has drawn directly from her personal observations and interpretations of her parents' experiences in ministry, both positive and negative. She reflected that there are negative things that come into a church, "Because it's people, they're humans and they have negative experiences." Anne and Rhett concurred that, while this was not their experience, they could easily see how similar experiences could be a negative turning point for clergy children, causing a detrimental impact on their spiritual life and threatening a pastor's ministry longevity due to his concerns about its impact on his family.

...if that's all you're seeing when Mom and Dad come home that 'they work at a church, they work at a place where you praise God, but they are coming home and they are not happy.' They are constantly carrying all these burdens. 'I don't want to have to deal with that. Why is God allowing them to go through that? Why do I even want to believe in God, or do I want to believe in a God that is allowing all these negative things to happen?'

Rhett reiterated this point when he referred to children of clergy, "...if they have a good experience in the church, they are often called and led; they lead well in the church too." Or he stated, "[They] go way off on the deep end." Kaitlyn concurred saying, "I feel like a pastor's kid is either going to be this perfect kid or they're going to be this rebellious person. Nobody really fits in between." Because these adult children participants were immersed in their parents' ministry, they found a calling of their own, either vocationally or as a volunteer. This unity of calling and understanding of ministry in its context aided in the clergy participant's family stability and ministry longevity.

Steve articulated a rather comprehensive perspective on his children's ministry call and fit. He identified that because their family is connected quite closely to their ministry, "our kids are all missionaries on some level." He indicated that each of he and Samantha's children possesses a strong sense of God's call. However, they have the freedom to be led by God. He revealed that as children, they exhibited a particular purpose, "...within the church or within the community, whether they're playing soccer in a soccer league or whether they are helping in the children's ministry, or helping in the worship ministry." Participants concluded that living in a clergy family has allowed them to build healthy levels of servanthood and an understanding of something larger than themselves.

Steve also noted that in discussions with his children about their adulthood future, he stressed that they do not have to feel human pressure to pursue vocational ministry. He believed that, "sometimes, it's the default mechanisms of pastor's kids that think, 'Well, we're just going to be pastors.' We've [he and Samantha] been careful to say, 'Guys, get

some education in some areas that you are gifted in...” He noted that it is important for his children to be aware of the value of non-clergy vocations.

Based on his own experiences at one stage in his ministry life, Steve admitted that he took the view of pointing his children away from vocational ministry, as a way of protecting them from discouragement and difficulty. However, “...God has checked me on that...because in one sense, we always knew that they are God’s kids, not ours. So, I have to be careful not to mess around with what God wants.” Steve’s comment reflected back to a period where he questioned his fit in ministry and thus, had an initial impulse to caution his children as well. Wanting to protect them from a similar disillusionment that nearly led him away from ministry, he came to realize that it is God’s place to determine if they are to go into ministry and to uphold their ministry longevity, not his.

Steve and Samantha asserted that everybody is called to ministry service and that everybody should approach their spiritual formation in a missional way. Because they want their children to leave their home with as much love and respect for the church as they did when they left home, they are very intentional about the environments they are exposed to, as they watch and pray for them.

In summary, each participant indicated that the healthy approach for them as individuals, as well as their family, was to allow for a genuine and supportive exposure to vocational ministry. This exposure was inevitable, by virtue of the family unit’s position, however, it demanded intention and care for it to be a healthy process. All participants identified that the process was void of forcing or being forced into a ministry area that did not fit one’s personal equipping or calling. Participants also indicated that children are

capable of being lead into a non-ministry vocational call, and yet be following God's call upon his/her life. As was noted in the definition of pastoral ministry call and fit, the two elements participants believed were needed for longevity are God's working in one's life and personal equipping for this call of God.

Longevity: Expectations. As an issue of longevity, participants indicated the presence of congregational and family expectations as a factor in pastoral ministry, with its ongoing interaction, and often tension, between the two areas of vocation and family. Steve recognized that he was always aware that his wife and children were affected by extra expectations that accompanied his vocational ministry position. However, due to Samantha's upbringing in a clergy home, she was able to help establish very healthy boundaries for their children. Jake identified that it was his practice to maintain reasonable and consistent expectations for his family and his congregation. He maintained the practice of monitoring the level of ministry involvement for his parishioners, as well as his family members. If anyone became too involved, he would require them to reduce their activities back to what he considered a balanced and healthy level, calculated in a strategic manner. His approach was to make it clear to his congregations that he did not expect more from his family than he did from anyone else. He indicated, "Just because they are preacher's kids, it didn't mean they need to do more ministry or do a ministry that didn't fit them. I just treated them like everyone else, that's all." His family was protected by his practice of not expecting them to minister in areas outside of their giftedness and by his stance that they would not have to do everything that he did in his position as clergy. In essence, his job description did not apply to his

wife and children. Not only were his family truly guarded by his actions, they acknowledged the awareness of this action with appreciation because it impacted them positively.

As would be congruent to this family and their goal of long-term ministry, when individuals approached Rene with their expectations of her roles, she would dismiss them in her mind and continue in the direction she felt was laid out by the Holy Spirit, “and do my very best to walk the talk and of being one of God’s children.” Likewise, Samantha, while very driven to succeed, was not motivated to please others outwardly. She stated that her mother who was a pastor’s wife who “... set a very good example of not allowing the expectations of others to effect how she served in the church. She knew where she wanted to serve and did it.” Rene found that over time, her perception of the expectations placed on her as a pastor’s wife has lessened, or she has become “more mature” in managing them. She also shared her perceptions about the phenomenon of living in a pastoral glass house, stating that despite its broad acknowledgement by several people, she considered it a myth and thus it never troubled her. She claimed, “Everyone lives in a glass house. If you think about your neighbors, you have a good idea about how they live their lives.” As such, this element of vocational ministry is likened to every other family’s experiences.

Anne indicated that despite her parent’s best efforts, there were struggles regarding expectations that crept into her experiences, while living in the parsonage. She admitted,

People do treat you differently and have higher expectations for you because of

your father's vocation. I never liked that growing up, and I always thought it was unfair to be judged differently than my best friend whose father was an English professor. People expected me to know the Bible more thoroughly than another person. This is the same thing as saying my best friend should understand and have memorized Shakespeare and English history because her father is an English professor.

She reported that, particularly in the smaller congregations, she "...felt like I always had a hundred eyes on me at all times." In the larger congregations, she was recognized as the pastor's child, "but I didn't feel like I had parents everywhere." She indicated that it was awkward at times when her friend's parents engaged in this pseudo-parenting role. A child of the same age, seated next to her in church, was not held to the same standard of behavior that Anne was. It was difficult when an individual felt authorized to discipline or voice disappointment in her with statements similar to, "You're the pastor's kid; you shouldn't be doing that." She also noted there was a positive side when congregation members took it upon themselves to serve as an extension of her parents or a mentor.

In addition, she described some positive experiences that included being allowed to attend the youth group activities prior to reaching the required age. Reflecting on these perceptions, Anne acknowledged them as mostly positive and helpful in her maturation. Participants resonated with the expectation to behave and serve as an example to others in all situations. Kaitlyn felt that because of her father's position, the expectation was "Of

course he knows what he's doing when raising his kids." The view was expressed that some children will accept that role, but others will rebel to be their own person.

Experiencing something similar to Anne and Hannah, Samantha revealed that being a pastor's spouse, "...the biggest thing that I have always felt is that eyes are always on me and watching me." She reasoned that this has not always been a bad thing because,

...in many ways, it holds me accountable to living a life of character. However, I have to be careful that I don't live a 'good life' out of what others think, but that true Holy Spirit living is what guides and directs my Christian walk.

She acknowledged a sense of expectation upon her to attend most events that were held in her church, but clarified that she enjoyed attending them and getting to know individuals better. Some of the ministry expectations are passed along to the children, particularly when Steve and Samantha are busy in their own ministry projects. In these times, the expectation is that the children will assist and they will "just do it." However, to balance these times, there are opportunities in which the children can choose their ministry activity, based on how they sensed God calling. Samantha observed that, "There has been both happening in our home."

Kaitlyn remarked that there were many times when she was under too much pressure and that she was inclined to step away from the expectations placed upon her. She admitted that, "I was just so tied to them [her parents] and their work in the church that I didn't want to let them down. I didn't want to fail, and I wanted things to go well." Sometimes, if it was something that she felt strongly about not doing, she would not tell

anyone outside of her family. However, she would normally discuss her frustrations with her parents. After talking with them, "...sometimes I would say, 'no' because I knew I wouldn't be able to handle it, but often times I would say, 'Yeah, I can do that; I can work that out.'" Kaitlyn continued, "...I did come to realize that people would often approach the pastor's family when they wanted something done, but it felt expected that the pastor's family will just do it."

Hannah agreed with her sister, Kaitlyn, indicating that she experienced a level of expectation to behave in a proper manner in all circumstances. She tended to place more pressure on herself when she was younger and had a difficult time feeling as if she could live up to the expectations. "I would have liked to have had less pressure to be perfect...more freedom to do more things and try different things." She acknowledged that some clergy children responded negatively to similar expectations, but some of the expectations have benefited her as she has matured, especially in developing accountability. Hannah stated, "It's a lot easier to know that my family doesn't judge me and that they are here to support me. It's really, really great."

In summary, each participant maintained an awareness of expectations on themselves, as a part of the role they fulfilled in the pastoral ministry call and fit. Participants acknowledged that expectations were a part of each area of life, particularly vocational and family. However, experiences revealed that the roots of many family expectations initially extended from the congregation which they ministered to. Participants identified an interchange between congregational, personal, and family structures leads to varying perceptions of the outcomes, whether positive or negative.

Both types of outcomes affect ministry longevity. Regardless, the ability to discuss these perceptions and reason together presented as an important process in navigating one's response.

Longevity: Difficult experiences. Study participants indicated that experiencing ministry and family hardships have impacted several areas of their lives, their ministry call and fit, not withstanding. Jake reflected that low financial wages have detracted from the stability of ministry. He reported, "Each time I moved to another ministry I made a lower wage, but through hard work, I was able to gain an increase to help support my family. God has always blessed us to manage in this area." He acknowledged that financial pressure added stress to the family, but that he and his wife tried to keep this struggle from their children. However, "...the fact that sometimes to make ends meet, I had to do some other things which took away from my ministry and family time [added to the challenge]. But, I tried not to make it a big obstacle."

The difficult times for Rene were with moving. She confessed, "I think that the hardest part for me was moving so many times. I hate moving and making all the changes that come with it." She indicated that her discontent was not related to the church they were leaving or the one they were moving to, "...they were all good experience." Rather, it grew out of the secondary changes that arose with a move approximately every 5 years, "...so that meant moving to different towns, schools, and making new friends and leaving behind friends." In addition, the moves were made more difficult when she attempted to secure a new job. In relationship to their children, "It played out differently for each of my kids. My son had a hard time of it when moving during his middle school years. But

for my oldest daughter, she was always up for a change.” Rhett concurred that these transitions were a challenge for him, stating, “...Certainly, as a teenager, having to be in 3 different schools during my middle school and high school years was not something I wanted to go through.” Hannah also viewed her family’s frequent moves as a very difficult time, particularly when making new friends. But as a young adult she is able to now see how these experiences helped her in adapting more easily to new situations and dealing with change more comfortably.

Rene described an additional challenge ahead for her and Jake:

When you always live in a parsonage, it’s hard to build up equity for living in your own home. It’s like we were renters all those years, and we don’t have a place called home that we will live in for the rest of our elderly years.

A deficit of resources and equity plays a factor in the length of ministry service.

However, indicative of her overall perspective, Rene stated, “... [It] is also in your attitude, because we know God always provided...He will continue to provide for our future.”

Rhett briefly discussed the processes of working through interpersonal challenges that he encountered during his experiences in his parent’s parsonage. He expressed that, “...the first couple experiences, probably you get defensive, ‘Is it worth it?’ Then you just realize the fact that people are people.” He indicated that his father was particularly helpful in his realizing that, “...when you know the reason why, behind why someone does something, or you get at least a glimpse of their story...” an attitude shift occurs that promotes resiliency in ministry in spite of the challenges.

Anne reflected back on her childhood and reiterated that she went through, ...situations or was exposed to situations with my parents and church members that were very difficult at times. Because of these situations, I was able to see how God had always provided and always allowed my parents to grow closer to Him through these.

At the same time, she found herself in a position to look ahead and expressed some concern for her parents' current health conditions, expressing the possibility that both her father's and mother's physical well-being has been affected by their tenure in ministry, in general and specific ways.

Steve and Samantha described a period in their lives when they found themselves facing disillusionment over Steve's ministry circumstances. It was during this period in his life that he considered stepping away from the ministry to pursue another vocation. Steve remarked that he was at a mid-point in his ministry tenure and was still facing identity discovery in some ways. He recounted a time when he knew he had reached the point of saying, "Okay, enough, I've got to be done." He recalled that he was at a place where he struggled to understand associates in ministry, whom he enjoyed a good relationship with previously. These challenges impacted his family in many ways, one of which was relocation. He shared:

The intensity of this episode took years to overcome... We overcame through a conscious decision to forgive and experience God's grace in our lives while recognizing the overall abundance of love and provision that God has always brought into our lives even in the midst of episodic intense conflicts.

Samantha continued,

I look back on that period and wonder if I was just frustrated with the people in the church because they didn't seem to want to try new things, or if I was upset by the way my husband was being treated. I am passionate about finding ways to reach people for Christ, and I am passionate about my husband being in a healthy work environment, so it was probably a combination of the two.

In summary, according to research participants, facing difficult times in life brings challenges for everyone, regardless of vocation. Issues of health, finances, and relocation are common for many. However, the participants revealed that the most difficult of experiences for the clergy family were those that related to being hurt or disappointed by individuals or circumstances, when a higher standard of conduct was expected specifically, by the faith community. In these cases, longevity was accomplished by shifts in attitude that appeared to normalize difficulties and facilitate pushing on.

Longevity: Heritage. It is inevitable that one's early periods in life and those who accompany them on that journey, will have an impact on their choice and conduct in adulthood. Jake's father, who died when Jake was ten years old, was a pastor in a conservative denomination, which he described as "legalistic." He indicated that, "There was usually not any explanation of the rules...I started questioning everything, not finding many valid answers." Because he felt that rules were over-emphasized, when he decided to enter the ministry, Jake was determined to lead from an opposite perspective and actually preached against that stance.

Following his father's death, Jake was raised by his mother, who was characterized as being interested in her children and intentional in the way she raised them. Jake said of his mother, "I knew where the line was; how far I could go and what not to do. She knew when to let the leash relax a little bit, when I earned her trust...My mother allowed me to be who I am." These early childhood experiences proved to be critical in Jake's approach to parenting and pastoring. In particular, Jake has been known for being trustworthy and genuine, which has played a vital role in his ministry effectiveness. Jake's son, Rhett, remarked, "I'm sure that the parenting structure that I didn't experience is very similar to what I felt myself," referring to the heritage that was passed on from Jake's father, to Jake, and now to Rhett. Obviously, Rhett was never able to meet his grandfather, but he was convinced that he was "an awesome, unbelievably, Godly man." Of his grandmother, Rhett identified her as a prayer warrior who prayed for all of her grandchildren everyday, "and she would let us know that." He reported that he has a number of extended family members who are serving in full-time ministry and that, "God's just got this anointing over our family that I can't describe."

Steve indicated that there was an expectation in his family of origin that he would represent the family well to the community they resided in. He described himself as the oldest child in the family and usually the most compliant and eager to please his parents and other adults. He remarked that this family dynamic helped prepare him to accept responsibility and work hard, which aided in his determination to minister effectively and with longevity. Steve reflected the humor that his wife was raised in a pastor's home, "but her parents did an amazing job of her not being on display." However, he was not

raised in a pastor's home and, "...I always felt like, being an extravert, in my little hometown. Just everybody knew everybody."

In summary, participants reported that child ministry call and fit, expectations, difficult experiences, and heritage, themes that emerged from immersion in the data, serves to illuminate the clergy family's perception of the phenomenon of living as unit within the vocational context of Christian ministry and clergy vocational longevity. In this section these secondary themes were clearly defined as elements of the primary theme of pastoral ministry call and fit and were represented as a merging of experiences that informed the broader question of ministry longevity. A significant degree of overlap existed between the findings of the particular primary and secondary themes.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings derived from studying research participants' perceptions of the impact of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity. The use of personal experience vignettes portrayed the essence of the primary themes of contentment and pastoral ministry call and fit. Participants identified contentment as developing from genuine interactions with their families that were consistent at church and at home. Participants also recognized the importance of the family unity, as supported by intentional parenting and the formation of protective family boundaries. In addition, participants revealed that maintaining healthy support systems played a part in family contentment.

Participants believed that a call placed on the clergy's life by God is crucial to the pastor's vocational longevity, or length of service. Participants believed that longevity

increased when the family at large joins in ministry, if that service is based on the actual gifts and interests of individual family members. Participants also believed that expectations placed on them and facing challenging situations in the vocational clergy family context could be threats to ministry longevity.

The next chapter presents an overview of the significance of this study and the interpretation of the findings. Implications for social change are provided, along with recommendations for action and further study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Overview

When a clergy member enters the vocational calling of church ministry, he or she often synthesizes this calling with either a previous or future calling to have a family: a spouse and, potentially, children. As such, it behooves the individual to understand the phenomenon of the harmonious co-existence of vocational ministry and family. Because of the permeable boundaries between these two areas, the affect on the spouse and children of the clergy is unavoidable. This study explored the affects of clergy ministry on family contentment and vocational longevity. Specifically, it examined the clergy family's perspective of the phenomenon of living as a unit within the vocational context of Christian ministry. As previously noted, Krejcir's (2011) study indicated only 23% of the clergy members surveyed perceived themselves as consistently content in their relationships with Christ, their ministry, and their home. This being the case, much was learned from examining the phenomenon of clergy families, as they experienced family contentment and vocational longevity.

A clergy member, their spouse, and two adult children from two separate clergy families ($N=8$) participated in this study which addressed the primary research question: "How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity?" This question was separated out to consider family contentment and clergy vocational longevity individually. Data from this phenomenological study were collected from each individual through three different sources and times: a pre-interview journal, a

post-interview journal, and an in-depth telephone interview. Five interview questions were answered in the pre-interview journals and the remaining five questions, along with follow-up questions were addressed during the telephone interviews. The post-interview journals gleaned additional data, during a three-day reflection period following the interviews. Data was synthesized and themes emerged from the data.

For the purposes of this study, clergy family contentment was defined as the degree to which the individual family members, and the family as a unit, perceived their wants being met. Additionally, participants described contentment as “being satisfied with who you are and where you are,” “a joyfulness,” and “knowing that God has everything orchestrated for this time.” Clergy vocational longevity was considered to be the length, or life expectancy of one’s ministry. While the meanings of these two terms are clearly different from each other, study findings found that they function in tandem, in a relationship that are reliant on one another. Participant levels of family contentment affected vocational longevity; longevity, in turn, affected levels of family contentment. Participants expressed that contentment was a motivator during a period of service, but when prolonged discontentment was a factor, it often resulted in shortened length of service to a particular congregation. The self-determination theory provided a conceptual framework to consider similar activities, in particular the affects of intrinsic motivation on one’s experiences (Deci & Ryan, 2008) of contentment and longevity. All participants acknowledged that their contentment was grounded in their awareness of honoring God and effectively serving others.

Interpretation of Findings

The primary research question: How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity was separated out to reveal the impact of ministry on family contentment and the impact of ministry on clergy vocational longevity. Of particular interest was the clergy family's perception of the phenomenon of living as a unit within the vocational context of Christian ministry. This section presented the interpretation of the study findings, by comparing and contrasting them to those found in the empirical literature described in chapter two. Additionally, it took into consideration the clergy family's perspective on contentment and longevity. The participants' views of contentment acknowledged the role of expectations, boundaries, the home as a peaceful and secure dwelling, investment in family members, embracing of individual purpose, appreciation for the parent's vocation, the family ministry call, and one's attitude in maintaining clergy family contentment. Similarly, participants identified the role of God's leading, personality fit, partnering with their spouse, support, being genuine, early exposure to ministry, ministry climate, and shielding clergy children in aiding to vocational longevity. In keeping with the format of the separated research questions, family contentment and vocational longevity were addressed separately. However, the findings indicated that this separation was artificial due to the interrelated nature of their workings. In other words, what brought contentment to participant families directly related to their views of what promoted vocational longevity.

How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment?

The terminology of contentment was only used by study participants when it was framed for them in the form of a question. When asked to provide their own definition of contentment, there was a consistent hesitation before providing a mindful and often comprehensive response. However, woven throughout the vignettes, language that appeared more natural to them was used to reflect their perspectives. When they did offer a personal definition of contentment, the similarities were noticeable. While there was not full agreement on the use of the term “happy,” other terms resonated: “satisfied,” “joyful,” “sense of God’s blessing,” “the right place with God,” and “knowing that God has everything orchestrated for this time.”

Participants identified the percentage of time they saw themselves as being content during the time they resided in a ministry family. When examining the responses, an interesting pattern emerged. In comparing the subjectively identified level of contentment among the clergy parents and their two children, in both families, the adult children rated themselves as 15% more content than their respective parents. While this was noteworthy, the reason why the adult children rated themselves as 90-95% content, while their parents ranged from 75-90%, may certainly relate to a number of variables and is inconclusive. Hypothetically, it was possible that the length of time their parents served in vocational ministry had an impact on their perspectives. It may also have been possible that the intentionality of the parental child-rearing buffered the children from discontenting experiences that occurred earlier in their fathers’ ministries.

Contentment: Clergy Family's Perspective. Participants included God's expectations as a critical component to their perspectives of contentment. Phrases like "being in the right place with God" and "knowing that God has everything orchestrated for this time, for this reason, for this purpose right now," indicated a foundational anchoring for the participants' sense of family contentment in vocational ministry.

Expectations. The climate of vocational ministry has long had a reputation for being a place where personal and systemic expectations are the norm. Fox (1997) claimed that clergy expectations were present from denominations, congregations, and their own family. Participant experiences showed an echoing of these findings, as well as those from Anderson (1998); Cheung Fung (2004); Hill, Darling, and Raimondi (2003); Stevenson (1982), and Strange and Sheppard (2001), which revealed unrealistic congregational expectations that held clergy families to a standard that exceeded those of congregant families. Cattich (2012) referred to the term *fishbowl* and Darling, McWey, and Hill (2006) used the term *glass house* to denote these experiences. However, some participants did not embrace the significance of these terms for clergy, pointing out that for clergy and non-clergy, alike, it was commonplace to be aware of others' actions.

All participants in this study resonated with this perception through their experiences and acknowledged the presence of both healthy and unhealthy expectations. They revealed the tension which the church would take priority over the clergy family. As previously identified, expectations impacted clergy families functioned and the level of freedom experienced in designing family and ministry rules and roles. Participants acknowledged a desire for their family to function in a natural manner that did not exceed

the standards of congregants' behavior, in the congregational context. Some clarified that the family would "be themselves" and not be dominated by others' views. Rene revealed that the very fact that she was chosen and called by God, gave her the freedom to be true to who God designed and equipped her to be. Her "love of God and for people" was what guided her in ministry, not the extrinsic "rules" or expectations of others. As such, when she was confronted with expectations of others, she was able to proceed with confidence and contentment, in the direction God was providing. Similarly, Kinman, McFall and Rodriguez (2011) identified that even with external expectations, their participants were able to acknowledge that their work was satisfying, meaningful, and worthwhile.

Clergy participants expressed that they were aware of the expectations placed on each member of the family as a result of their vocational position. The previous upbringing in a clergy home enabled some to establish a healthy perspective in setting limits for their family and congregation. However, despite the efforts of their parents, adult children of clergy participants recognized they were treated differently and held to higher standards of behavior and performance. They were cognizant that their friends were not held to the same standards. Kaitlyn remarked that her family was often approached when members of the congregation had a project and "it felt expected that the pastor's family will just do it."

Boundaries. Johnson (2012) indicated that the absence of boundaries in a clergy family can result in stress and dissatisfaction. Fox (1997) and Doolittle (2010) supported the presence of ministry and clergy family boundaries as a means of protecting personal and family satisfaction. Participants represented boundaries as important in establishing

the presence of healthy family limits in the home and in the ministry. Meek et al.'s (2003) findings indicated that boundaries should be intentionally balanced to protect the clergy, their marriages, and their children. Jake was comfortable in setting some of the same boundaries with his congregation that he set with his family. In doing so, he was able to protect and keep both areas of responsibility in a healthy state. An example of one such boundary was the limitation of ministry involvement. With his family and with his congregation, he would not allow more time to be utilized for ministry than was healthy for the individuals. In addition, publically maintaining family boundaries served as a model of encouragement to his congregation, as they observed his commitment to these limits. The establishment and protection of their weekly family night, in particular, served as an instructional opportunity to his congregation, as Jake stood before his family and the congregation to claim his family as a priority. As such, one night a week was off-limits for everyone but his spouse and children. In taking this step, he also defined the concept that his life was not centered on the church, but to a greater degree was focused on the well-being of his family. Participants expressed that boundaries were crucial in consistently ensuring family as a regular priority.

Meek, McMinn, Brower, Burnett, McRay, Ramey, Swanson, and Villa's (2003) study participants recognized the importance of being intentionally balanced as a way of protecting themselves, their marriages, and families. Luedtke's (2011) study of clergy wives recognized the challenges that were present with balancing family and ministry times. One study participant revealed that she became jealous over the number of times that ministry took her husband from the family. It was also noted that ministry work often

came home with the pastor and interfered with family plans. The study found that the establishment of boundaries was crucial in protecting family time and guarded against a negative influence in faith-development among the clergy spouses and children.

Hill, Darling, and Raimondi (2003) determined that obtaining personal space was one of the greatest challenges for clergy families. Participants in the current study recognized specific boundaries that helped to define the margins between personal and family focus as separate from ministry focus: maintaining a church office outside of the parsonage, going on annual out of town family vacations, honoring a weekly day off completely devoid of vocational responsibilities, keeping regular family outings and weekly family nights, having Sunday as a day of rejuvenation, gathering together as a family for evening meals, utilizing telephone mechanisms to keep from being a distracted, and living out of visual distance of the church facilities. Many of these boundaries were marked by intentionality, where plans were discussed and then adhered to.

Home as peaceful and secure. In support of Ostrander's (1994) and Cattich's (2012) studies, which concluded that family stress declined with the presence of family coherence, participants recognized the necessity of their family sharing time. This was in order to build a stronger family unit and appreciate one another. Time as a family unit was critical during periods of contentment, as well as discontentment. Jake acknowledged that his family could see when he was troubled and would tell them about what was happening, provided the issue was appropriate to share. Steve believed that his family has learned about grace and forgiveness within the confines of their home, which he and his

wife designed to be safe and comfortable; a home that manifested their unity on Christ. Samantha noted that there were times when challenges of ministry came into their home, and there was a heightened awareness of the need to create increased security. She shared that they often did this by acknowledging that God had the power to work in the situation. Inviting the Holy Spirit appeared to bring peace and security to each family member and into the atmosphere of the home. Rhett recognized that growing up in his home's nurturing environment was instrumental in allowing him to feel "protected, encouraged, and empowered."

The practice of having dinner together as a family, four or five meals each week, supported the sense of home and family in very meaningful ways for participants. These times were used to debrief with each other and pray for any concerns that were raised in the conversation. Anne expressed that this was one of the ways that her parents kept their home and family stable, regardless of what was happening in the church. She recalled fond memories of having candlelit spaghetti dinners every week. Rhett noted, "Love is time and where you put your time shows what you value." Participants identified the joy that came from their times in God's Word, prayer, serving, and having fun together as a family.

Darling, Hill, and McWey's (2004) study of 259 clergy and 177 clergy spouses found that stress seemed to enter the clergy home during an increase in time away from home by a family member, disagreements about activities of a certain family member, an increased number of unresolved conflicts or tasks, and the presence of emotional problems in the family. The current study participants recognized that when periods of

increased activity and stress emerged in the family, whether through ministry activity, conflict, or through individual activities, they often spent less time together as a family. Upon reflection, participants recognized that a decrease in activities would have been beneficial to the unity of the family, even to allow for time to “retreat” in their own home. Elements that made their home peaceful and secure included the permission to discuss frustrations as a family and the freedom to not be judged critically by each other. It was suggested that even a break from being known as a “ministry family,” in order to be “our own family” would have been healthy.

Invest in family members. In a 2001 study of undergraduate students, Strange and Sheppard concluded that the pastor cannot be effective in ministering to his or her congregation and community, without first ensuring that the needs of his or her own family were met. Within the secondary theme of intentional parenting was the practice of investing in family members. As is the case with intentional parenting, investment in family is accomplished through planning, reason, and explanation. Participants who invested in their families, highly valued them and genuinely cared for them. This stance supported findings in Darling et al.’s (2004) study, which stressed the importance of a focus on family spiritual well-being and increased family time. Participants in this study reported that important moments occurred through time spent together, even while being observed by other family members, as well as through direct conversations, instructions, and mentorship.

Jake recalled how he would listen to taped lectures or discussions while traveling in the car and then bring that information into his home through discussions with his

wife, as well as through changes in his choices and actions. Rhett reflected on how his father, Jake, would sit with him and discuss his personal spiritual growth and development, as a means of encouraging and mentoring Rhett. In the same manner, participants talked in-depth with their family members at the day's end, recounting both the positive and negative experiences of the day. Likewise, prayer was intentionally woven into their days by participants praying in the car, after dinner, or before bed. Meek et al.'s (2003) study of Evangelical pastors revealed themes of positive clergy functioning. One finding pointed out the significance of family members being intentionally connected. Family practices included praying together, praying for one another, and reading the Bible together. Families were structured as missional in nature, and participants found it crucial to stay close to one another and care for the health of their relationships. An overarching priority for participants was intentionally setting aside quality time to spend together. Outcomes of this priority were far-reaching for participants who reported that views on life, God, and personal ethics were shaped through it.

Embracing individual purpose. In a finding unique to this study, participants identified the importance of being involved with initiatives that were of specific interest to them. Activities involved family time, vocational ministry, volunteer ministry, or community ministry. Rene expressed how motivated she was to be “the best wife and mother” that she could be, because she viewed these roles as being very important. In conjunction with this, she advocated for clergy spouses to seek out a certain area of ministry that offered the opportunity for genuine and personal fulfillment. She also found

herself enjoying periods of employment outside of vocational ministry, in the para-church and secular sectors. Samantha agreed and added that participation is her ministry of interest added to her overall level of contentment.

Clergy parents shared their practice of exposing their children to a variety of ministry opportunities in the congregation and allowed their children's own interests to decide where their children might serve best. Their children experienced the "freedom to be led by God in His direction." Though Rhett's parents experienced an early confirmation that he would be called to vocational ministry, they were intentional about allowing God to lead him, rather than themselves. Once this occurred, they were intentional about testing his call, as a means of making it his own purpose. Anne knew early on that she did not want to serve as a staff minister, but was drawn to volunteer ministry. At the same time, she experienced the freedom to embrace the secular vocation that she was led to and remained open for God to use her through her work.

Within the clergy family, participants stressed the need to see oneself as a member of the family, before seeing oneself as a member of a pastor's family. These perspectives were carved out by setting boundaries and by focusing on the unity of the family. In addition, some participants noted the significance of being involved in activities where they were not known as a member of a clergy family, but rather, as an individual separate from vocational ministry. Participants recognized that living in a minister's family provided good opportunities for servanthood and where they may fit within the broader scope of things.

Appreciation of parent's vocation. Stevenson (1982) had previously established clergy children's negative and positive perspectives of living in a clergy family, where 82% of participants were pleased with their parents' choice of vocation while 77% wished their parents held a different one. Adult children of clergy participants recognized that the position they occupied exposed them to encouraging and discouraging experiences and opportunities. Some viewed their position as affording them opportunities to meet and connect with individuals who they learned and benefited from. Anne stated, "I was in a position to be able to form deeper relationships with adults and amazing Christian people." Similarly, Anderson's (1998) study with young adult children of clergy found positive experiences related to their parents' vocations including the relationships that were established, the opportunity to travel, and the associated status. The most rewarding opportunities were their educational experiences. Aside from the appreciation of how their parent's vocation impacted them directly, participants acknowledged the opportunity to observe their parents' vocational ministry, to watch them in action as they utilized their traits and characteristics in support of God's call on them.

Family ministry call. Participants portrayed their perception of themselves in family ministry as a "family team," in which each member was called into ministry, a calling that required team effort. They concluded that in one manner or another, each member of the family held an integral position in their local ministry context. Clergy and spouse were described as working in tandem with one another, as they exposed their children to various areas of ministry and allowed them to serve in the areas they were

drawn to. Samantha reflected that ministering together as a family assisted in developing family contentment, rather than being perceived as an obstacle that took parents away from the children. Participants recognized the discouragement that could happen in and through a family who is not joined in ministry, specifically, a spouse who does not share in a call to ministry. Anne commented, “When you make that decision to go into the ministry, your whole family is in the ministry.” However, somewhat differing from the participant’s perspectives, Lee and Iverson-Gilbert (2003) indicated the value in clergy realizing that all of the family members may share the same call to ministry. If this was not recognized and discussed as a family, there was potential for a family member to feel pushed into ministry activities that did not resonate with them. The study observed value in establishing a family identity that encompassed all members, while also allowing function and purpose of ministry.

Attitude. Steve described himself as an individual who has a “general sense of possibilities and God’s goodness.” Rene concurred, reflecting her general approach: “It’s also your attitude, because we know God always provided ... He will continue to provide.” Participants expressed that they always tried to remain positive in their conversations about the church and the congregation, taking care not to complain about individuals or situations. Similarly, in Cheung Fung’s (2004) study with adult children of ministers, many participants indicated that their parents’ strong spiritual foundations and positive attitudes toward ministry impacted them positively. Their fathers, in particular, were viewed as a filters, through which the negative church experiences were processed and kept from them.

How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on clergy vocational longevity?

Longevity: Clergy Family's Perspective. Barnard and Curry's (2012) study of pastors suggests that although clergy often enter vocational ministry believing they received a spiritual call to use their gifts in serving congregations, once in vocational ministry, approximately 50% consider leaving the vocation. They also found that clergy who maintained higher self-compassion also experienced higher levels of ministry satisfaction. The results also signified that those who did this were able to remain connected with individuals around them and did not worry as much. Data also suggested that clergy who manifested lower levels of shame, higher levels of self-compassion, and greater differentiation between their person and their role were more likely to experience maximum satisfaction and minimal emotional exhaustion. Participants from this study particularly resonated with Barnard and Curry's (2012) conclusions in two ways. Fifty percent of this study's participants considered leaving their vocational ministry during a difficult time in the ministry. However, due to their embracing their authenticity, they maintained ministry contentment and satisfaction.

God's leading. Meek, McMinn, Brower, Burnett, McRay, Ramey, Swanson, and Villa (2003) formulated particular themes related to positive clergy functioning. Their concept of developing a clear sense of calling to vocational ministry corroborated with the findings from this study. Meek et al. found that 42% of participants were able to verbalize a distinct moment in time when they felt the call, and 58% identified a developing call. Steve and Jake recognized that God's leading was apparent as they

entered ministry. Though the process was different for each, the outcome led both men to a ministry that was fulfilling. Steve identified his call to vocational ministry early in life, while Jake's decision came a bit later. However, both acknowledged it was God's leading that was the critical component to entering vocational ministry and its longevity.

In a similar fashion, Samantha and Rene's call into ministry varied, but remained vital and directed by God. Samantha identified her calling separate from Steve's, even before knowing him. Rene did not initially choose to be a pastor's wife, but joined in ministry when Jake accepted his call into ministry. Rene expressed that being led by the Holy Spirit and maintaining confidence in knowing that He was in control of her life and helped her deal with several personal insecurities. She reiterated, "God knows all things..."

In each case, God's initial direction and leading into vocational ministry was critical for both Samantha and Rene, as they determined to remain in vocational ministry. Participants in this study strongly believed that the calling of God to ministry was essential to sustaining the call and that "it alone may be what carries one through difficult times." Cohall (2007) found that beyond academic training, which was also important and obtained by the current study participants, it was their call into vocational ministry that was critical to their perseverance.

Jake's comments confirmed Mueller and McDuff's (2004) findings that vocational dissatisfaction often led to resignation, when Jake discussed the presence of discontentment as a consideration in his decisions to transition from one congregation to another: "If I'm not content, I won't enjoy, it and I don't want to be some place I'm not

enjoying.” He also said that discontentment occurred when he perceived he was not reaching his greatest potential in ministry fit. This finding is similar to Cohall (2007) and Beebe’s (2007), who found that clergy who maintain satisfaction in their vocation do so because they believe themselves to be effective in developing the church. Steve spoke of this when he expressed that there were challenging times in his ministry that led him to consider a vocational shift. Wildhagen, Mueller, and Wang (2005) collected data from 2,139 clergy, which showed that even though the call to ministry is critical in the decision to be a clergy, it is the specific position characteristics of financial package, job satisfaction, work expectations, and workplace justice that are primary in the decision. Similarly, Broman’s (2005) study of 645 pastors found 30% of the pastors already serving faced doubts about their calling and concerns over finances, church-related and/or personal, which led to thoughts of resignation. The challenges that Steve personally faced played an initial impact on his advice to his children, pointing them away from vocational ministry. However, this was brief and revisited by him, with a greater openness to God placing a call to ministry on his children’s lives.

Rhett recognized that his own calling into vocational ministry was largely influenced by watching his parents serving in ministry. Throughout his childhood, he learned and grew as he observed their call. He expressed, “God was doing something bigger than just my mom and dad’s call, but also the rest of our family and our call.” Rhett’s experiences were mirrored in Cheung Fung’s (2004) study with minister’s children who were adults serving in or preparing for full-time Christian ministry. In that

study, the father was seen as the facilitator of establishing clear boundaries which protected the clergy child from negative experiences in their youth.

Personality fit. All of the study participants recognized the importance of personality fit in the consideration of vocational longevity, which agreed with Miner, Dowson, and Sterland's (2010) findings that if there is not a personality fit for ministry, it will become increasingly stressful. The signs of burnout may then begin to appear. Barnard and Curry's (2012) study of 69 pastors revealed that most who enter vocational ministry did so with a strong desire to utilize their gifts in leading and meeting the needs of the congregants, which resulted in a sense of significance in their ministry. Conversely, Jackson (2012) who studied 48 ministers found clergy who were placed in positions that were incongruent with their mission, vision, and direction could lack ministry satisfaction. Illustrative of an appropriate fit, Rhett described Jake and Rene as being people of character who knew themselves and knew that God was going to use them to make a difference in people's lives. He portrayed them as possessing a natural and creative manner in communicating the Gospel. Liddick's (2009) study of 25 pastors found that many participants were drawn by the sense of joy and fulfillment that comes with seeing lives change. Jake identified his own tendency to be a non-confrontational leader as a benefit to his ministry effectiveness in a way that seemed to de-escalate potential problems and allow him to recognize the best in others. In addition, he found ministry to be rewarding and often "fun." He looked forward to meeting new individuals and building relationships.

Field's (1988) study of 275 clergy revealed that 97.8% of participants found deep meaning and purpose and meaning in their work, and 86.7% reported they were comfortable bringing their personality into their profession. Steve was raised in a congregation that allowed him to develop his ministry gifts, to the point where he was able to recognize that ministry service brought out his natural tendencies, which fit with his sense of God's calling.

Partnering spouse. McMinn et al. (2008) and Johnson's (2012) studies revealed the necessity of clergy spouses managing ministry life by creating their own specific roles. In particular, these clergy spouses indicated their personal commitment to ministry by participating in an area of ministry that matched their gifts, while at the same time by coming along side of their clergy husband in his ministry. Participants acknowledged that without their spouses partnering in ministry with them, they would be less effective in their call. Likewise, in this study, Steve and Samantha expressed the importance of taking time to invest in each other and in their relationship. This did not happen without their intentionally carving out times to disconnect from ministry and refocus upon each other. McMinn et al.'s (2005) study indicated that these times of ministry could offer an opportunity for clergy and spouse to candidly share emotions and thoughts together, particularly when there was no outside support available. However, this was beneficial only when the spouse was able to fill this role.

Hill, Darling, and Raimondi's (2003) study of clergy and clergy spouses revealed that a strong bond was maintained by the clergy couple because of the presence of personal and ministry compatibility. As acknowledged previously, Rene did not hold an

initial call to be in vocational ministry, but responding to Jake's obedience to God, she made a conscious decision to partner with him in ministry and began to equip herself. She found herself considering what the implications would be for her in ministry and realized that her partnership was vital for Jake's successful ministry. She has worked shoulder to shoulder with him for more than 30 years.

Support. Participants recognized the importance of proper support to the health and longevity of their vocational ministries. Darling et al. (2004) recognized the value of clergy families participating in on-going support networks. Likewise, participants in this study found that support through the following avenues were integral in helping them meet individual and family needs of the clergy family: the local church community through small group or ministry teams, district leadership mentoring and encouragement interactions, and among the general community. Participants also expressed the value in utilizing professional counseling when necessary. McMinn et al.'s (2005) study reinforced the practices of this study's participants, by pointing out the importance of self-care through the means of a pastoral support group, a congregational social group, family, friends, or professional counselors.

Lee and Iverson-Gilbert (2003) summarized that clergy satisfaction and general well-being was greatly affected by the support they receive from family, friends, and congregation. Participants in this study expressed that they received support primarily from their spouses and family and then from childhood pastors, mentor pastors in early adulthood, and a group of four or five other ministers who met regularly for mentorship and accountability. Participants echoed Hill et al.'s (2003) suggestions by recognizing

that one's support group should extend beyond their spouse to provide healthy boundaries in that relationship, women need to meet with other women, no one relates to a pastor like a pastor, and "loneliness is a huge killer." Staley (2012) found that being intentional about allotting time to develop friendships was vital.

Participants identified that taking a sabbatical year from ministry proved to be a vital time for rejuvenating and restructuring. In addition, the observation of a regular Sabbath was recommended. Participants also acknowledged the value of taking regularly scheduled vacations away from home, realizing that there are times that rest can only come by leaving town. Luedtke's (2011) study supported the use of family-oriented retreats in being proactive in clergy family well-being. Likewise, Doolittle's (2010) study of 222 clergy revealed five recommendations in establishing healthy stress management and support: exercise three times per week, find a mentor, and go on personal retreats, maintain regular Bible study, remain connected with the congregation, have supports outside of the ministry context, and keep healthy boundaries to disengage from vocational responsibilities. Some of these recommendations study participants were already practicing.

Being genuine. Being genuine or living authentically applied to living consistently in all domains of life. Anderson's (1998) study of 487 young adults who were each raised in a parsonage respectively revealed characteristics of their parents that added to their experiences. Parents offered the following: training, love, quality family time, a positive example, and genuineness. The current study participants were able to identify the practice and presence of authenticity in their parents, which in turn, allowed

them to “live out” their own identities in a natural manner. Clergy parents were described as living genuinely, which enabled their families to do likewise. They lived authentically as their children pointed out: “The things I heard my dad talk about, I saw him do,” and “My dad was the same person at home as he was on Sunday morning, as was my mother.” Further, participants believed that they were raised in a clergy family that did not “put on fronts to look like a ministry family.”

Beyond Anderson’s (1998) study, the character of genuineness appeared in research that focused primarily on ministers’ wives. Autry’s (2007) study found participants who were aware of the expectations of position, yet were free to be their genuine selves by their husbands in ministry. On the other hand, Davis (2007) and Luedtke (2011) found that participants who did not have the freedom to be authentic, particularly in building relationships, struggled with loneliness.

Early exposure to ministry. Early exposure to ministry referred to the experiences of clergy in their younger years and clergy children as young members of the clergy family unit and their activity in ministry. Participants identified how experiences with the clergy and spouse’s family of origin impacted them by providing a level of understanding of what life in ministry may be like. Likewise, Cohall (2007) found that church involvement prior to seminary and mentorship by an experienced clergy was beneficial in preparing the young clergy for effective ministry. Jake was born into a lineage of conservative clergy and, though his father died when he was a child, his mother carried on the biblical values and principles that his current character reflected. Likewise,

Samantha was raised in a pastor's home and was impacted by living among practices that placed healthy margins around her family and their ministry.

Adult clergy children participants reflected on their experiences in ministry and how serving in the church brought stability to their home. The fact that they were taught to place others above themselves and shown how to serve others led them to practice those activities in their homes more frequently. Likewise, clergy and spouse participants identified the value in having their children observe and be a part of the excitement of ministry that they reflected for their children.

Ministry climate. Ministry climate included was affected by difficult experiences such as personal, family, and/or ministry hardships, as they impacted the perceptions of clergy family members. Participant's experiences corroborated with each other and with the findings of Stevenson (1982) and Strange and Sheppard (2001) in acknowledging the sense of "having a hundred eyes on me all the time." This is a perception that was interpreted as an annoyance by some, but as an opportunity for accountability by others. Participants expressed that their ministry enjoyment and success were factors that influenced their longevity. It was also acknowledged by adult clergy children that their perception of ministry climate was often an outcome of what they perceived their parents to be experiencing. One of the lessons that was learned by all of the participants was that, "people who have deep hurts are the ones who may treat you poorly" or more commonly stated, "hurt people, hurt people."

All participants recognized that there are times when the hurts that are leveled toward the clergy are sometimes from unexpected sources, possibly from other leaders.

Lee and Iverson-Gilbert (2003) identified that clergy families appeared prepared for a level of stress, but were more affected by the absence of support. Anne reflected on a situation that involved her father and mother: “The church and leadership of the church was brutal to him.” She remarked that most congregants do not approach the pastor to encourage and cheer-on, but rather, they bring negative and hurtful feedback. Similarly, Hurst (2006) reported that 82% of study participants reported that ministry conflict was a memorable and hurtful experience, especially for those who valued being liked by others. It was expressed that the spouse struggles with the weight of the situation as much as her husband does. A characteristic of this was that what happens in the church office often comes home with the pastor. Anne revealed, “I think it’s messy and it affects the family. It affects us because I have to see Mom and Dad come home [in this way].” Ministry climate was identified as a place where tempering of information may need to happen. The implications for a clergy family, as expressed by participants, was that some issues are presented to clergy children before they are prepared to hear them and other issues may prompt discussions that are healthy for them to be a part of. However, contrary to Morrison’s (2005) findings that clergy children may take a defensive stance against the church, which may linger and diminish the quality of family and ministry life, participants in this study remained supportive and active in family ministry, growing more resilient and even closer through their suffering.

Broman’s (2005) study of Canadian Evangelical pastors found particular challenges for the clergy and their families included a sense of failure, lack of support, spiritual failure, heavy workload, continual church conflict, and intense family conflict.

Likewise, this study's participants reported that economic challenges, due to a low salary and an inability to build equity for retirement, and frequent relocations could threaten ministry contentment and longevity. Frequent moves were challenging; both participant families moved approximately every five years. According to Luedtke (2011), clergy spouses and adult children found moving challenging due to the logistics of the move and re-establishment in a new community with new schools, friends, spousal job interviews, etc. While participants in this study did not acknowledge these as more than an area to trust God in, Blanton and Morris (1999) identified financial income and relocations as stressors that hold the potential to negatively affect the well-being of a clergy couple, specifically, the husband's emotional well-being and the wife's physical well-being.

Participants suggested that ministry climate can provide added stability and effectiveness to the clergy family, at times through the educational resources made available to the pastor and family. Adult clergy children participants expressed their love of growing up in a vocational ministry context, often because of what is accessible from their perspective. One participant referred to being able to see behind the scenes, which allowed for a unique view of God's workings and how the church is ministering to the community. This was a unique finding that was not evident in previous research.

Shield children. Cattich's (2012) study of 24 clergy couples revealed the importance of maintaining boundaries by clergy resisting ministerial pressures that could negatively impact their family's well-being. Similarly, Jake and Rene expressed the need to protect their children from difficult situations when they arose. Rhett acknowledged that his parents were mostly effective at this, "but inevitably us kids picked up on certain

tensions within the congregation.” Jake and Rene held closely to a policy to not discuss private ministry issues in their home. In a like manner, Steve and Samantha made it a practice to speak of church planning items in the company of their children. They reserved discussions of church challenges to private conversations. However, they acknowledged that even when speaking behind closed doors, their children could sense the tension of the situation, without hearing the discussion. Rhett also noted that the children in his family were protected from “the weight” of outside expectations, by Jake and Rene providing agreed upon standards of conduct for them to follow, thus being offered freedom from the pressure to follow others’ opinions.

In this section, an interpretation of the study findings was presented and then compared and contrasted with the empirical literature described in chapter two. The following section revisits the conceptual framework used to guide this study in light of the study’s findings.

Conceptual Framework Revisited

At the conclusion of chapter two I presented a model conceptual framework for this study based on Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to Deci and Ryan (2000) intrinsic motivation was based on an individual’s need to feel competent and self-determined. From this perspective, an understanding of human motivation comes with a consideration of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy, or “activities that people do naturally and spontaneously when they feel free to follow their inner interests” (p. 234), was vital to intrinsic motivation. Motivation in the area of competence is enhanced by the presence of positive feedback, as compared to negative feedback or no

feedback at all. Relatedness, or being attached to a person or group of people in a secure manner, allows for intrinsic motivation to thrive. Deci and Ryan (2000) suggested that, “intrinsic motivation involves people freely engaging in activities that they find interesting, that provide novelty and optimal challenge” (p. 235).

Study participants expressed the roles and value of intrinsic motivation, as they shared their perceptions and experiences of living within the vocational context of Christian ministry. The freedom to be authentic in most settings, often times resisting the extrinsic pressures, allowed participants to realize the value of their roles and the motivation to fulfill them well. This finding corroborates with Dowson and Sterland’s (2010) conclusions that vocational ministry satisfaction is present when the clergy has the freedom to make important work-related decisions. This autonomy appeared to increase a sense of competence and personal accomplishment, which directly impacts ministry satisfaction. Figure 5.1 depicted the original Conceptual Framework (Figure 2.1) with the addition of this study’s findings. Figure 2.1, presented in chapter two, depicted the overarching structure of the study, the conceptual framework, based on relevant theoretical and empirical literature on this topic that was completed prior to this study. Figure 5.1 depicted the addition of the key findings from this study to this framework, including authenticity, intentionality, boundaries, and support; some of which corroborated with previous research and some that added new insights to the field. The following section presents the significance of the study, its key findings, and recommendations for social change.



Figure 5.1 Conceptual Framework Revisited

Implications and Recommendations for Social Change: Counseling, Education and Ministry

Significance of the Study

A phenomenological study of clergy and their family's contentment and vocational longevity was important for a number of reasons. First, the role and experiences of clergy inevitably impacted their spouse and children. Second, previous studies focused primarily on the clergy man or woman and his or her experiences, with far fewer focusing on the spouse and scant on the clergy family as a whole. Additionally, there were no published studies that examined the contentment of the clergy family, as represented by the lived experiences of clergy, spouse, and adult children together. Finally, the overall family experience of a clergy member's struggle for contentment and ministry longevity was non-existent.

Key Findings

In this study, data were collected and organized according to the primary research question: "How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity?" Of particular interest was the clergy family's perception of the phenomenon of living as a unit within the vocational context of Christian ministry. This section presented an application of the findings to the field of counseling, education, and ministry by including the following: Authenticity, Intentionality, Boundaries, and Support.

Authenticity enabled the clergy family members to experience life more naturally, without the need of conceding to others' preconceived concepts. Being authentic in ministry also allowed other family members the freedom to be genuine and to find their own place in ministry, thus building intrinsic motivation.

Authenticity. The understanding of who an individual is in God's design enabled the clergy family to embrace that identity and live consistently in every area of life, particularly in family and ministry. Living in this manner brought personal freedom and endeared family members and congregants to the clergy because they had a clear understanding of who they were dealing with. Anderson (1998) indicated that the presence of authenticity in clergy parents added to the quality of the family experience. Jake shared, "I was able to be a person more than a pastor, which made me feel able to fit in and allowed me to be more open without people's preconceived ideas. I could be myself." Being an authentic clergy and spouse, provided a family atmosphere that allowed each family member to be genuine and not dominated by the extrinsic pressures of ministry. Additionally, it allowed family members to view their clergy parents' faith as real and trustworthy, a faith they themselves could embrace.

Findings from this study showed that authenticity within the clergy family provided the freedom and encouragement for members to find a place in ministry which was a personal fit, based on interests and gifting, fed their intrinsic motivation, and propelled them to increased effectiveness and longevity. Participants identified the functional reality of clergy families possessing individual calls into a family, team style, necessary to acknowledge the climate of ministry accurately.

Clergy and ministry family authenticity was a characteristic which when present could be linked to effective ministry (Puls, Ludden, & Freemyer, 2014), but when absent could be associated with loneliness and decreased effectiveness (Davis, 2007; Luedtke, 2011). Awareness of these specific findings have application to the fields of counseling, education, and ministry as individuals prepare for ministry and as they seek counsel during the course of living out their ministry with their family. Note that applications with citations corroborated with previous research, while those without citations were recommendations based on the findings from this study in particular.

Application of Findings to the Counseling Field. The counseling field is an appropriate arena for clergy and their family to explore and improve living a life of authenticity. Application recommendations included the following:

1. Help clergy clients to examine their life goals (Also recommended by Ryan & Deci, 2000).
2. Help clergy clients to examine the life goals of the marriage relationship and family.
3. Help clergy clients to consider how the clergy may improve authentic leadership (See also Puls, Ludden, & Freemyer, 2014).

Application of Findings to Educators. In some cases, education faculty and administrators maintain the first formal opportunity to expose the preparing clergy to a deepening self-awareness and understanding of personal authenticity. Application recommendations included the following:

1. Consider adding authenticity self-awareness to the curriculum of the Spiritual Formation courses (Gushiken, 2002).
2. Include authorities on the topic of *authentic personal development* as student assembly speakers.
3. Provide staff and faculty mentors who regularly meet with cohorts of students to support them to build authentic relationships (Puls, 2014).
4. Consider training student leaders (i.e., students involved in student council and student academic affairs) in authenticity development.

Application of Findings to Church Leaders. It would be helpful if church boards and leadership teams, who partner in ministry with the clergy family, understood the benefits of clergy authenticity. Application recommendations included the following:

1. Develop an atmosphere of authenticity in and through the workings of church boards and lay leaders (Puls, 2014).
2. Similar to Puls (2014), instill authenticity into church staff building initiatives.
3. Similar to Puls (2014), provide trainings and mentorship through district retreats or camps.

Intentionality. Participants believed that when a clergy member and spouse believed that they had accepted a distinct call to vocational ministry, it increased their contentment and longevity in ministry. Participants expressed that the intentionality of following God's call into vocational ministry, and the commitment it marks, was sometimes the primary strength that led the clergy family through difficult periods in ministry. In a similar manner, participants shared the necessity of being intentional in

introducing their children to congregational ministry, exposing their children to what was so important to them.

Intentional parenting, as manifested by planning, reasoning, and explanation, was found to be vital to the contentment of the clergy family. The purpose and practice of pouring into family members as a unit or individually was viewed by the study participants as being critical for family unity, growth, and contentment. This study's findings revealed that various activities support this practice:

Weekly family night. Participants identified value in observing a weekly family night that involved the entire family in its planning and preparation. The night remained consistent, in order for the congregation to be made aware that this night was a time for only family and that no church business would be addressed. Additionally, congregants were encouraged to establish their own family night and guard it in a like manner.

Regular out-of-town vacations. Participants found that out-of-town vacations promoted.... The two important components to this were that the entire family attended and that they were away from home. Destination seemed to matter little, just that they enjoyed the time together as a family.

Regular entire-family outings. Similar to vacation travels, participants discussed the necessity of having outings with the family. Whether it was traveling to the next town for dinner or doing the grocery shopping, the key factor was spending time together as an entire family.

Family meals for connection and encouragement. Participants remarked that something as common as a meal together promoted contentment. Similar to other

activities, meals were planned for the entire family to attend four or five evenings per week. More important than the enjoyment of the meal was the enjoyment of one another's company. It was a time of connection and encouragement as the activities of the day were discussed and the family prayed for each other and related concerns.

Sunday as a day of rest and rejuvenation. In many traditions, Sunday is known as a day of worship and a day of rest. While the activities and opportunities of the day may seek to broaden the focus, some families are intentional about saving this time for rest and rejuvenation. One participant remarked that she did not give it much thought: "It was just something we did." Upon reflection, she realized that her parents were intentional about carving out a day for rest and rejuvenation. For her family, it was Sunday when the family was home together during unstructured time.

Special dinners. Likewise, a participant reflected upon her family's practice of making Thursday dinners special. She stated, "They always made dinner time a time when we were at home as a family. Every Thursday night would be spaghetti with candle light. We never had candles out, and you know we would have candle lit dinner Thursday night." The fact that planning and effort went into making these regular meals special reflected intentionality on the clergy and spouse's part to make their family feel special.

End of the day debrief. Participants indicated the importance of their family practice to spend a few moments with their children, individually to debrief the day's activities and to encourage them. It offered an opportunity to see that things were right, relationally, in the family and to provide apologies if needed.

Woven prayer. Participants discussed the intentionality of weaving prayer through the day's activities in a manner that offered an atmosphere of prayer. Rather than listening to the radio on the way to and from school, participants would make time to pray for each other.

Meek et al. (2003) indicated that intentionality should be used in assisting clergy families to remain balanced. Likewise, Darling et al. (2006) revealed findings that showed that when a clergy is intentional about their focus on the well-being of their family, there are strategic and well-articulated rules for the family and congregation to respect. The application of these findings to the field of counseling, education, and ministry are of an educational and supportive nature, in equipping clergy families with the principles and practices of intentionality.

Application of Findings to the Counseling Field. Trained counselors can play a pivotal role in the wellness and personal development of the clergy family as they strive to be intentional in their choices and actions. Recommendations for the counseling field included the following:

1. Explore the clergy family's levels of self-awareness and values development, which will serve as the foundation of intentionality (Jinks, 1999).
2. Provide psychoeducational training in intentional parenting (Bowers et al., 2011).

Application of Findings to Educators. Most university and some seminary students find themselves in the unique position of making choices and taking actions that

are more meaningful to them than to members of their family of origin. As such, it is appropriate to offer guidance and direction in the experience of intentionality.

Recommendations for educators included the following:

1. As recommended by Ma (2003), provide a new student orientation on the topic of being an individual with intentionality and the implications on campus and off campus.
2. Include the topic of *leading with intentionality* in the Pastoral Ministry curriculum (Ma, 2003).

Application of Findings to Church Leaders. Effective clergy leadership is often marked by intentional actions that are supported by sound reasoning. Embracing this thoughtfulness, as clergy and church leaders, supports healthy ministry.

Recommendations for church leaders included the following:

1. Provide denominational training on *managing a church with intentionality*.
2. Provide a church board planning session that focuses on assessing the intentionality of the overall church ministry, including the calendar of activities and mission statement.

Boundaries. In the vocational ministry, boundaries are designed to protect the clergy family and congregations. As one of the research participants stated, “I just made it very clear to my congregation that I wouldn’t expect my children to do any more than I expected from anyone else ... I treated them like everyone else.” In essence, being an intentional and effective parent enables one to be an effective and intentional pastor, as it relates to authenticity and setting boundaries.

Participants also identified various limits that impacted family contentment in the vocational ministry context. These included the following:

Balance activities with family time. Participants acknowledged that when life became busy with church, personal, or community activities, the absence of family time was noticed. Based on the premise of “Love is time and where you put your time shows what you value,” participants reflected that there may be times when activities may need to be paused so that family can reconnect in a beneficial manner.

Live as your own family. Several participants placed value on designing opportunities for clergy families to be seen and engaged with as a “regular” family, rather than a family that is known as “the pastor’s family.” They appreciated the times when their family was in an unfamiliar surroundings and they could just enjoy each other, without concern of vocational expectations.

Refrain from discussing ministry issues at home. Participants reflected on the benefits of limiting private ministry conversations to the church office and not allowing them through the door of the parsonage and included the recommendation that the church office not be located in the family home. Participants felt that the ministry phone should not disrupt the family home, which also guarded children from ministry details they were not equipped to understand. Finally, it preserved the separateness of the parsonage home, making it a safe haven for the family to retreat to.

Guard your day off. Participants believed in the importance of the pastor holding himself to honoring a full day off each week keeping it devoid of any vocational

responsibilities. They encouraged that on this day there should be no ministry work; it was reserved for personal and family time.

Maintain healthy distance. The final recommendation from participants, related to boundaries, was one that may not be possible for all clergy families. However, if possible, participants recognized the value in residing outside of visual distance of the church facilities. Some expressed that being in the sight of the church, greatly inhibited their ability to disconnect and take respite in their family home.

The field of counseling, education and ministry each serve a critical role in the understanding of boundaries and the effective implementation of healthy boundaries in the clergy home and ministry. Hill, Darling, and Raimondi (2003) identified the challenges that may be a part of establishing boundaries between the clergy family and their ministry. Likewise, Cattich (2012) indicated that the maintaining of boundaries was vital to the well-being of the family.

Application of Findings to the Counseling Field. The need for ministry boundaries is great, and clergy families would benefit from having help to determine their healthy personal boundaries. The counseling field offers opportunity and guidance in this process. Recommendations for counselors included the following:

1. Develop awareness of the function and importance of physical, spiritual, and emotional boundaries for the clergy family (Grieve, 2007).
2. Process the history of failed boundaries and personal healing.
3. Provide a support group to maintain accountability for healthy personal and professional boundaries (Baker & Scott, 1992).

Application of Findings to Educators. Formal education proves to be a meaningful context to support students in developing healthy personal and professional boundaries. Recommendations for educators include included the following:

1. Provide a student services orientation on the importance and implications of healthy personal boundaries (Rosenberger, 2011).
2. Initiate group/team projects across the curriculum to allow for the practice of healthy professional boundaries.

Application of Findings to Church Leaders. Because there are several roles filled by those in vocational ministry, the establishment of and adherence to healthy boundaries is important. Recommendations for church leaders included the following:

1. Provide education on the value of personal and professional boundaries to staff, lay leaders, and congregants (Darling et al., 2004).
2. Clearly identify and communally state the agreed-upon personal and professional boundaries of clergy families (Cattich, 2012).
3. Encourage congregants to establish and maintain healthy family boundaries and practices as a way of developing family wellness (Darling et al., 2004).

Support. Participants identified various levels of support that were vital to them for clergy family contentment. Participants believed that they had to be intentional about providing a safe home of comfort and retreat for their families. Participants also thought that living in a home established on the unity of Christ, which houses positive conversations about the church and congregations, and serves as a judgement-free zone for the clergy family; offered a milieu of support. Additional support was found in the

knowledge that God has the power to work in every situation. As a component of this, clergy families took encouragement from ministry successes. As well, healthy marriage relationships, supportive children, and extended family were vital components.

Support of a more organized nature included mentor relationships with previous pastors during the clergy couple's formative years. As well, maintaining a current cohort of four or five ministers who could mentor and hold each other accountable was important. As one participant remarked, "Pastors do not talk to pastors the way they do to others. They can only understand what pastors go through." By the same token, a participant revealed that she has found if it was critical for clergy wives, it was also for women in general, to meet with other women.

The healthy adherence to the observation of Sabbath and a formal sabbatical, when available, was also thought to support participants. Much like some of the previous boundaries that were identified, participants thought that these elements of personal and family contentment must be held closely and guarded to be most helpful.

Morris and Blanton (1998) and Blanton and Morris (1999) strongly advocated for the presence of effective support systems guarding the clergy family. Their studies revealed that clergy families reported a lack of social support. As a result, work-related stress was found to affect physical and emotional well-being. Educational institutes are in a place to share these findings during the equipping stages. Equally important is the dissemination of these finding to denominational church leadership, who has access to and direction over these clergy families.

Application of Findings to the Counseling Field. Participants in this study believed that effective support plays an important role in clergy family contentment and longevity. While participants were not involved in professional counseling, they remained open to it, should the need present. Recommendations for counselors included the following:

1. Provide liaison services to arrange counseling services or support groups (in a neighboring community), to bolster confidentiality for the clergy family (McMinn, Lish, Trice, Root, Gilbert, & Yap, 2005).
2. Provide annual wellness assessment for stress and burnout to the clergy family (Visker, Rider, & Humpher-Ginther, 2017).
3. Provide services to the clergy family on a sliding fee scale (Hill et al., 2003).
4. Broad accessibility can be a challenge as well as financial or insurance limitations. A number of denominations are developing initiatives that provide support and service through regional Clergy Care Directors. The goal of Clergy Care Directors may be to compensate for some these accessibility limitations by providing services at a reduced or no fee or to serve as a liaison to services.

Application of Findings to Educators. The university or seminary context offers a unique opportunity to provide various forms of support to its students.

Recommendations for education faculty and administrators included the following:

1. Establish opportunities for regular student cohort groups that are designed to foster community (Ma, 2003).

2. Provide routine campus-wide retreat days, designed to allow for personal rest and rejuvenation (Ma, 2003).

Application of Findings to Church Leaders. In the ministry context, it is more common that pastors see their roles as one who helps and supports, rather than one who requires support. Because of this, it may fall upon the leaders of the church to be proactive in offering support. Recommendations for church leaders included the following:

1. Encourage pastors to strictly adhere to weekly days off, semi-annual weekends away, and annual vacations (Doolittle, 2010).
2. Provide lay volunteer assistance to clergy and clergy families (Hill et al., 2003).
3. Establish a denominational clergy sabbatical policy (Francis, 2013).
4. Lease or purchase a cabin or cottage for clergy family retreats (days off, weekends away, etc.).

In summary, applications based on the findings from this study corroborate with previous research findings about what counselors, educators, and religious communities can do to promote ministry contentment and longevity for clergy and their families. The study also added a set of unique findings to the previous literature. Equipping clergy families in a manner that allows them to be authentic to their call, themselves, their families, and their congregations, as well as to function intentionally and with support, will assist in their obtaining family contentment and vocational longevity.

Recommendations for Further Study

This phenomenological study explored the experiences of two North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families who described the impact of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity. A follow-up study of a larger participant base of male clergy, of female clergy, or a composition of male and female clergy would provide a more complete understanding of clergy family contentment and vocational longevity. Further study is also warranted with a concentration on authenticity in the clergy family. Follow-up studies using both qualitative and quantitative methods would also help to broaden the research findings.

These study data were collected through the use of individual online journals and telephone interviews. A follow-up study that utilized face-to-face interviews of the individuals and/or family unit would provide an increased pool of data, due to the ability to observe and document not only verbal data, but also non-verbal gestures, postures, etc.

Worthy of note, this study invitation was initially disseminated to clergy members and their families in mid-November, which in retrospect was likely a season of heightened activity for these participants. As such, timing of the data collection undoubtedly impacted the participant base.

Researcher's Reflection

The motivation for this study rose out of personal interest and experience related to this subject, which was impacted by a variety of situations and experiences. Prior to the preparation for my current position as a university professor on a campus that prepares men and women for Christian ministry, I held positions as an ordained minister

of youth and young adults. Through these experiences, I gained an increased awareness of the importance of how a clergy family balanced the call to family with the call to vocational ministry. Therefore, I was eager to learn from the experiences of participants the ways in which the goal of clergy family contentment was attained, as well as ways that were not effective. I anticipated the discovery of complicated techniques used by the participants, as they reflected on their perspectives of family contentment and vocational longevity. This expectation was partially fed by the research data that indicated that maintaining this balance was a treacherous trek and partially fed by my own memories of the challenges. However, what was revealed were the shared experiences of clergy families who were intentional about being satisfied with who they were as individuals and satisfied with how they have balanced the mission of investing in Godly families, while also investing in their congregations.

When I began this study, my personal focus of application was on the university men and women who are preparing for clergy service and how what I learned from this journey may help them in their preparation. Just recently, I was offered an additional opportunity to serve as a district clergy care director, which entails coming alongside men and women at the helms of local church ministry. I am confident that the experiences of the study participants will inform me as I have the pleasure of partnering with students in preparation for ministry, as well as those currently serving, as all search for ministry family contentment and vocational longevity in their situations.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the findings by relating them to a larger body of literature on the topic. An interpretation of findings to the research question resulted in the recognition of several implications that were identified as tangible improvements to individuals, organizations, and institutions. Out of these implications, recommendations for action and further study were identified. Finally, this chapter reflected on my experience as researcher, which was rich and meaningful.

Present Study Conclusion

The first chapter of this study included a brief introduction followed by an articulation of the study's purpose, definitions of research terms, and the research question: "How do a select group of clergy and their families describe their experiences in ministry contentment and longevity?" The research method, a hermeneutical phenomenology was described, including the means of collecting data via interviews and journaling. Additionally, I located myself, describing my interest in the study.

Chapter two presented the empirical literature that called for new research in order to more fully understand qualities and interactions of clergy families, in particular, those who may be at risk of discontentment (Beebe, 2007; Blanton & Morris, 1999; Darling et al., 2004; Hill, Darling, & Raimondi, 2003; Kinman, McFall, & Rodriguez, 2011). There was a place in existing literature for the family study of clergy, designed to include clergy, spouse, and adult children, through which the formative years of the family were explored. This chapter summarized data of published research on the roles and boundaries of the clergy family, work and family stress, the quality of life, and the

individual experiences of being clergy, clergy spouse, and clergy child, as well as the levels of contentment related to those roles. Chapter three presented a detailed description of the study design with the hope that such a method would provide robust answers to the research question.

The fourth chapter presented the findings of the study, and personal experience vignettes portrayed the essence of the primary themes of contentment and pastoral ministry call and fit. In addition, secondary themes were identified and supported in the same manner.

The fifth and final chapter presented a discussion of the study findings with consideration of their implications to various populations. This research project has explicated the experiences of two clergy families as they shared their perceptions of the phenomenon of living as a unit within the vocational context of Christian ministry. Each one of the eight study participants have generously spoken into the research in ways that facilitate further understanding of the unique experiences of being a family who finds contentment, thus longevity, in vocational ministry. They recognized that, “God has everything orchestrated for this time, for this reason” and “know this is a part of a bigger picture that He’s painting.” Because of that, they live with “joy and no regret.”

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APPENDIX A: Demographic Survey

- A. Gender: _____ Male _____ Female
- B. Age: _____
- C. In which group do you place yourself?
1. African American/ Black
 2. First Nations/ Inuit/ American Indian/ Alaskan Native
 3. Caucasian
 4. Hispanic/Latino
 5. Other
- D. What is your **current** marital status?
1. Never married
 2. Married
 3. In a committed relationship
 4. Widowed
 5. Divorced
 6. Separated
- E. How many children do you have (including step and adopted)? _____
- F. What level of education have you completed?
1. 10th grade or less
 2. High School or GED
 3. Some college; Associates Degree
 4. Bachelor's Degree
 5. Master's Degree
 6. Ph.D., Doctorate, MD
 7. Other
- G. If other than Clergy, what is your vocation? _____
- H. How many **total** years have you served in church ministry?
1. 1-3 years
 2. 3-5 years
 3. 5-7 years
 4. 7-9 years
 5. 9-11 years
 6. 11-13 years
 7. 13-15 years

8. 15-20 years
9. 20-25 years
10. 25-30 years
11. More than 30 years

I. Size of your **current or most recent** congregation?

1. 1-100
2. 101-200
3. 201-300
4. 301-400
5. 401-500
6. 501-600
7. 601-700
8. Above 701

J. Please list any current health conditions (medical/ mental). _____

Please respond to the following questions in reference to the **previous** period of time when you lived as a clergy family unit (clergy, spouse, **child under 18 years living in the family dwelling**):

K. How many churches did you serve in?

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. More than 5

L. On average, how many years did you serve in each church?

1. 1-3 years
2. 3-5 years
3. 5-7 years
4. 7-9 years
5. 9-11 years
6. 11-13 years
7. 13-15 years
8. More than 15 years

M. On average, what was the size of each congregation served?

1. 1-50
2. 51-100
3. 101-150
4. 151-200
5. 201-250
6. 251-300
7. Above 300

N. What was your annual income, as compared to others in the community?

1. Poor
2. Below average
3. Average
4. Above average
5. Much above average

APPENDIX B: Clergy Interview Guide

Instructions: Please choose 5 of the following questions to answer in your pre-interview journal. The remaining 5 questions will be discussed during your telephone interview.

1. Describe the ways (global & specific) that living in a clergy family has affected you, as an individual. How, if at all, do you think personality and prior experience factors relate to your experiences in the ministry?
2. How did you make the decision to become a pastor? What is your perspective on the idea that your spouse and child are affected by expectations that come as a part of your vocational role?
3. Have you ever considered leaving pastoral ministry for another vocation? Describe the situation(s) and why leaving was considered. If this consideration has never occurred to you, to what do you attribute the singular focus and determination?
4. What are the experiences related to being in ministry that have added to the effectiveness and stability of your family personal functioning? Explain.
5. What are the experiences related to being in ministry that have detracted from the effectiveness and stability of your family and personal functioning? How have you or your family become less effective? Has the family rebounded from this? If so, how?
6. In terms of the structure and function of your family, what elements would you like to change? Why? How would you like them to be different?
7. Drawing from your individual and family experiences, what advice for contentment and longevity would you offer a family that is beginning a vocation in church ministry? Why is this advice important?
8. Who or what has impacted (positively or negatively) your ability to maintain an effective balance/ boundary between being a ministry family and being your own family? How?
9. How would you describe contentment in your daily life and life, in general? What percentage of your time (individually & family) in ministry have you been contented? What allows for this experience in your life and family?
10. Describe how being a member of a clergy family has affected your spiritual formation. How has your personal growth been impacted?

APPENDIX C: Clergy Spouse Interview Guide

Instructions: Please choose 5 of the following questions to answer in your pre-interview journal. The remaining 5 questions will be discussed during your telephone interview.

1. Describe the ways (global & specific) that living in a clergy family has affected you, as an individual. How, if at all, do you think personality and prior experience factors relate to your experiences in the ministry?
2. How did you choose to be a pastor's spouse? What is your perspective on the idea that you are affected by expectations that come with your spouse's vocational role?
3. Have you ever considered asking your spouse to leave pastoral ministry for another vocation? Describe the situation(s) and why leaving was considered. If this consideration has never occurred to you, to what do you attribute the singular focus and determination?
4. What are the experiences related to being in ministry that have added to the effectiveness and stability of your family and personal functioning? Explain.
5. What are the experiences related to being in ministry that have detracted from the effectiveness and stability of your family and personal functioning? How have you or your family become less effective? Has the family rebounded from this? If so, how?
6. In terms of the structure and function of your family, what elements would you like to change? Why? How would you like them to be different?
7. Drawing from your individual and family experiences, what advice for contentment and longevity would you offer a family that is beginning a vocation in church ministry? Why is this advice important?
8. Who or what has impacted (positively or negatively) your ability to maintain an effective balance/ boundary between being a ministry family and being your own family? How?
9. How would you describe contentment in your daily life and life, in general? What percentage of your time (individually & family) in ministry have you been contented? What allows for this experience in your life and family?
10. Describe how being a member of a clergy family has affected your spiritual formation. How has your personal growth been impacted?

APPENDIX D: Adult Clergy Child Interview Guide

Instructions: Please choose 5 of the following questions to answer in your pre-interview journal. The remaining 5 questions will be discussed during your telephone interview.

1. Describe the ways (global & specific) that living in a clergy family has affected you, as an individual. How, if at all, do you think personality and prior experience factors relate to your experiences in the ministry?
2. Do you understand your parent's decision to become a pastor? Was it a good choice? What is your perspective on the idea that you are affected by expectations that come with your parent's vocational role?
3. Have you ever considered asking your parent to leave pastoral ministry for another vocation? Describe the situation(s) and why leaving was considered. If this consideration has never occurred to you, what has kept you supportive?
4. What are the experiences related to being in ministry that have added to the effectiveness and stability of your family and personal functioning? Explain.
5. What are the experiences related to being in ministry that have detracted from the effectiveness and stability of your family and personal functioning? How have you or your family become less effective? Has the family rebounded from this? If so, how?
6. In terms of the structure and function of your family, what elements would you like to change? Why? How would you like them to be different?
7. Drawing from your individual and family experiences, what advice for contentment and longevity would you offer a family that is beginning a vocation in church ministry? Why is this advice important?
8. Who or what has impacted (positively or negatively) your ability to maintain an effective balance/ boundary between being a ministry family and being your own family? How?
9. How would you describe contentment in your daily life and life, in general? What percentage of your time (individually & family) in ministry have you been contented? What allows for this experience in your life and family?
10. Describe how being a member of a clergy family has affected your spiritual formation. How has your personal growth been impacted?

APPENDIX E: Letter of Invitation

September 15, 2016

Title of Study: Ministry Longevity, Family Contentment, and the Male Clergy Family: A Phenomenological Study of the Experience of Ministry

Principle Researcher: Rev. Allen A. Lee; Ph.D. Candidate, Liberty University; Christian Counseling Program Director, Kingswood University.

Dissertation Supervisor/Chair: Lisa S. Sosin, Ph.D., Director Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision Program, Liberty University.

I, Allen Lee, Ph.D. candidate, from the Counselor Education and Supervision Program, Liberty University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled *Ministry Longevity, Family Contentment, and the Male Clergy Family: A Phenomenological Study of the Experience of Ministry*.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the experience of ministry on clergy families living in the Atlantic Canada region who are currently, or have formerly been, active in Christian ministry. This phenomenological study will center upon family experiences and perceptions during the years that children resided in the home. The primary research question framing this study is: How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity? Of particular interest is the clergy family's perception of the phenomenon of living as a unit within the vocational context of Christian ministry.

Each individual participant will be asked to complete a 20-minute online demographic survey and participate in a 90-minute telephone interview, accompanied by a pre- and post- interview online journal. The expected duration of this commitment includes pre-interview online journaling for 3 days, a 90-minute telephone interview, and post-interview online journaling for 3 days.

This study will provide critical information for clergy who, with their family members, are striving for effective and meaningful experiences in ministry as it relates to family contentment and vocational longevity. Of equal importance, this study will offer insight into the personal experiences of clergy families, which can be translated into university and seminary training for those preparing for vocational ministry and current ministry placements.

If you, your spouse, and two adult children choose to participate in this research, please respond to leea@kingswood.edu with the word "Family" in the subject line. Within the message box of the email, please include the full names and emails of each family participant. If you choose not to participate, please respond with the word "No, thank you" in the subject line. Upon your affirmative response, each participant will be emailed an Informed Consent Form, which will be signed by each participant and returned to me by email or postal service. If you have any questions, please feel free to

include your questions in the message box of your email or contact me separately. Thank you.

Rev. Allen A. Lee
Ph.D. Candidate, Liberty University
(506) 432-4419
leea@kingswood.edu

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Liberty University's IRB.

APPENDIX F: Informed Consent Form

Study name: Ministry Longevity, Family Contentment, and the Male Clergy Family: A Phenomenological Study of the Experience of Ministry.

Researcher: Rev. Allen A. Lee, Ph.D. Candidate, Counselor Education and Supervision Program, Liberty University.
(506) 432-4419
lea@kingswood.edu

You are invited to be in a research study of the experience of ministry on clergy families. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a full-time Evangelical clergy member who resides in the Atlantic region of Canada. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this research is to explore the impact of ministry on clergy families living in the Atlantic Canada region who are currently, or have formerly been, active in Christian ministry. This phenomenological study will center upon family experiences and perceptions during the years that children resided in the home. The primary research question framing this study is: How do a select group of North American Evangelical Christian clergy and their families describe the impact of ministry on family contentment and clergy vocational longevity? Of particular interest is the clergy family's perception of the phenomenon of living as a unit within the vocational context of Christian ministry.

What you will be asked to do in the research: You will be asked to complete a 20-minute online demographic survey and participate in a 90-minute telephone interview. In addition, this commitment includes pre-interview online journaling for 3 days and post-interview online journaling for 3 days.

Benefits and Risks of the Research: This study will provide critical information for clergy who, with their family members, are striving for effective and meaningful experiences in ministry as it relates to family contentment and vocational longevity. Of equal importance, this study will offer insight into the personal experiences of clergy families, which can be translated into university and seminary training for those preparing for vocational ministry and current ministry placements. The risks involved in this study are minimal, no more than you would encounter in everyday life.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision to discontinue participation, or refusal to answer particular questions, will not influence your

relationship with the researcher or Liberty University, now or in the future. In the event that you withdraw from the study, email your request to the researcher listed below, along with a brief explanation. You will then be removed from the study and all associated data collected will be destroyed.

Confidentiality: The researcher has a primary obligation to take every precaution in keeping the collected data secure and stored in a sound location. Coding will be utilized to replace the participant's personal identification and maintain confidentiality. All written notes, verbal conversations, journals, and audio recordings, of which this researcher has sole access to, come under the commitment of confidentiality. All materials will be transported in a locked container and stored in the researcher's office in a locked cabinet behind a locked door, secured with passwords when appropriate. However, it is within the participant's understanding that the coded materials will be utilized within the writing of this researcher's publishable documents. Records will be retained for a minimum of five years (APA, 2010).

Questions about the research: If you have questions about the research in general or your role in the study, please feel free to contact me or my Faculty Advisor.

Researcher:
Allen A. Lee
(506) 432-4419
leea@kingswood.edu

Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Lisa S. Sosin
(434) 592-4042
lssosin@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, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information 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.

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

Consent: I consent to participate in *Ministry Longevity, Family Contentment, and the Male Clergy Family: A Phenomenological Study of the Experience of Ministry*, conducted by Rev. Allen A. Lee, Ph.D. Candidate. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
(Participant)

Signature: _____ Date: _____
(Researcher)