

HELPMET: THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PASTOR'S WIFE AS AN EXTENSION OF THE  
PASTOR IN PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING - A HERMENEUTIC  
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE MINISTRY HELPING EXPERIENCES OF  
BLACK PASTORS' WIVES IN PREDOMINANTLY BLACK CHURCHES

by

D'Juana Chantel Pittman

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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### Abstract

The position of pastor's wife presents itself as a unique role. For the African American Pastor's wife, this role takes on an even more interesting dynamic, considering the cultural back drop of the population many pastor's wives serve. A hermeneutic phenomenological research study was conducted to understand the phenomena of helper among African American pastor's wives who serve alongside their husbands in ministry, particularly in pastoral care and counseling. The study included a total of seven African American Pastors' wives from the state of Texas. The pastors' wives participated in structured interviews that were extensive in nature. Answering thirty-six questions with more than half being open-ended, the African American pastors' wives in the study described their helping experiences serving alongside their husbands in ministry. The results of the study revealed that the concept of helper was deeply ingrained in the service of the majority of these women. Their helping and serving nature was facilitated by their desire to meet any potential need encountered in ministry. Their helping and serving revolved around a sense of being called by God to be a servant. Their driving force was found in their commitment to be a helpmate and the love they had for God, their husband's, their congregation, and their church. The study's results could be used to inform senior pastors and congregations on the need to verbalize and exemplify appreciation and celebration for the under-sung service of the pastor's wife. The results of the study could also be a catalyst for the facilitation of financial provisions for resources that would assist the African American pastor's wife in effectively helping and serving in the African American church.

**Keywords:** African American pastor's wife, African American pastor, African American church, black church, helping, serving, pastoral care, and pastoral counseling.

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## **Dedication**

I would like to start by expressing my extreme thankfulness and gratitude to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is the lover of my soul and the Master of my life. Lord Jesus, thank you for being so great to D'Juana. In August 2016, you gave me exactly what topic to complete my project on and at every turn You have proven Yourself to be right in this choice by going ahead of me and making any crooked roads straight and by allowing so many things to flow smoothly. Even when it looked like I was reaching a dead end, when I got to the wall, you turned the wall into an open door and Father I am forever grateful for this and all the other many blessings you have given me. And Lord, I also want to express a special gratitude to You for allowing me to become so educated, especially in a field that I can use to make disciples of men and build Your Kingdom. Following You and saying yes to Your will for my life has proven to be perfect for me. This manuscript and this degree, along with all my other degree's is committed and dedicated to you!

I would also like to dedicate this project to the memory and legacy of my beloved mother, best friend, and prayer partner Mrs. Terry Lynn Pittman Parker. Thank you for believing in me, I have several degrees today because you believed in me, pushed me, and made up any shortages I may have had mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and financially. And though you did not get to see me complete my Master's Degree or this Doctorate, I feel like you've been here in spirit cheering me on and praying for me. God has met every need and deficit just like He did in the past when He would use you to do before you went to heaven. Mommy, July 10, 2013 changed my life forever. Never would I have ever believed that I would walk this life without you. From the sixteen-year-old girl who gave birth to a baby girl through shame to the amazing

woman God allow you to become right before my very own eyes. You left me with a legacy of humility, wisdom, and endurance and I'm ever so grateful. Your legacy of humility has taught me to take low for the sake of peace and the building of others. Your legacy of wisdom has taught me to walk in peace, know when to back down, and to not make decisions according to my flesh, but rather according to the best course of action for the final outcome. And finally, your legacy of endurance has taught me to fight the good fight of faith, never give up, and follow all the way through to the end. I miss you dearly and will forever love you!

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge my dad, Jeffrey Daniel Parker. When I was an eleven-year-old girl, you stepped into my life and picked up the slack that had long been left. You fathered a child that didn't come from your DNA but you never made it look like that were the case. Since my mom died, you have really turned into a rock for me. She would be so very happy to see how you're there for me when times get tough and how we have carried on in her absence. Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do for me. I am so proud to call you my daddy!

I would also like to acknowledge my spiritual father and mother. First to my Poppa, the late great Bishop Robert C. Blakes Sr. God brought me under your tutelage as a young girl. And considering some of the outcomes in my life up unto that time, it was the best decision He could have made for my well-being. If the enemy and society had had its way, I would be a categorical stereotypical mess. But because of the Power of God, that you allowed to flow through you and the church, God was able to lift up a standard that kept me from going down a path into utter and devastating ruin.

Secondly to my First Lady Lois R. Blakes, it was your Christian service at the side of your husband, our Bishop that gave me the idea for this project. For more than twenty years I watched you serve the people of God alongside your husband. And while you never carried the title of Co-pastor or Assistant Pastor to Bishop, I must admit that's how I saw you. For some reason, I saw you as the female version of him spiritually and in ministry. And I also watched and experienced your diligent counsel and care of myself and the many other women in our church. As I completed this dissertation, you and your service to the Kingdom of God often came to mind and it helped to push me to this place where I can say my dissertation and doctoral

degree is COMPLETE! Thank you so much for your Christian walk, Christian service, and your love, it's part of the reason I am who I am today.

I would also like to say a special thank you to my “little pastor” affectionately known to me as Pastor Bob aka Bishop Robert C. Blakes Jr. Sir, there is so very much I could say about you. You will likely never know or understand what you have meant to me and the great love and respect I have for you. The Lord sent me into your care at a very critical time, right when He was ready to do the internal work that would SHIFT me into my destiny. My transition from the Prophet to you was almost like a primary care physician sending a patient to a physician specialist. Folks will never understand how you fathered me, but I'm ever so grateful that you did. You believed in me no matter what came my way. I'm a five-time college graduate because you nurtured my desire to finish college and you made education important. You always saw the best in me, saw me going towards being my best, and pushed me towards my best. And you backed me not just spiritually, but also mentally and financially. Pastor, I am forever grateful to you for making a choice to father me even though I KNOW it was one heck of a task!

And finally to my sweet Liberty University. I just about fought God tooth-and-nail about applying to Liberty. For more than TWO YEARS I fought against applying to Liberty. I spent hundreds of dollars in disobedience trying to go other schools to avoid Liberty. But once again, GOD WAS RIGHT! Liberty University you have been sweeter to me than I could have ever imagined. Liberty was THE perfect school for D'Juana. From offering the exact program I needed that would provide me with professional expertise along with ministry skills that would allow my professional skills and education to translate into ministry; to providing me with an



education concentrated in a biblical worldview, Liberty has been the right choice. I'm so very glad I said YES to the will of God in this situation.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

Historically, pastors' wives have been noted as working alongside their husbands in ministry (Douglas, 1965; Finch, 1980). According to Johnson (2012), some pastors' wives viewed themselves as a type of side-kick to their husbands and worked alongside him in his ministry sometimes more extensively. This model of a pastor's wife was noted by Douglas (1965) as a "yoke-fellow for Christs" (pg. 33). To be a yoke-fellow for Christ means that a pastor's wife who takes on the work of ministry as her life's mandate may tend to view her work in ministry as her partnership with Christ in conjunction with her husband.

There are pastors' wives who see themselves as being called of God to be married to a pastor (Douglas, 1965; Rogers, 2000; Gioia, 2005; Brooks, 2008). For these pastors' wives, there is internal ownership that happens as it relates to the work of Jesus Christ and the success of their husbands (Sanders, 2014). But overall, these pastors' wives view themselves as God's servant to the people, to make the people's lives better. The women view their role through the lens of servanthood no matter the title or level of the position held (Sanders, 2014).

However, the problem detected revolves around a need to be informed on how the pastors' wives in the black community view their experiences and expectations within the role with consideration of cultural factors. Specifically considering most African American pastors, pastors predominantly black churches and black people historically have been dependent on the pastor (Cashwell, & Brown-Jeffy, 2014). Though the previous research has identified a common thread of feelings-of-calling, the research has not specifically or adequately discussed the cultural factors that specifically plague the African American pastor's wife within her role. With the black church being the central figure of African Americanism and African American



advancement in the United States (Langley & Kahnweiler, 2003; Gaines, 2010; Harmon, Blake, Armstead, & Hebert, 2013; Plunket, 2014; Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Barber, 2015; Brice & Hardy, 2015; Bilkins, Allen, Davey, & Davey, 2016; Dempsey, Butler, & Gaither, 2016; Nguyen, Chatters, & Taylor, 2016), as well as the black community being historically receptive of help through the African American church (Barber, 2015; Taylor & Chatters, 2010; Plunket, 2014; Langley & Khanweiler, 2013; Simpson & Mattis, 2013), especially as it relates to obtaining help for their internal issues since historically black people abstained from seeking professional counseling services (Avent, Cashwell, & Brown-Jeffy, 2014; Brice & Hardy, 2015; Hays, 2015; Bilkins, Allen, Davey, & Davey, 2016; Dempsey, Butler, & Gaither, 2016) there is probable cause to believe that cultural differences exist. There is a factual cultural difference among race, and these differences may likely determine how a pastor and his wife serve in ministry and the experiences they undergo as a result.

### **Background of the Problem**

Unique is the role of pastor's wife. There seems to be a sharing of a divine call almost by default for women who marry a pastor or during the marriage of a woman who becomes the wife of a pastor after marriage. For every other wife, on her wedding day, she becomes a wife, with wifehood as her chief focus. However, for the pastor's wife, on her wedding day, or somewhere during her marriage she not only becomes a wife, but she becomes an active part of her husband's decision to do pastoral ministry. His decision becomes her decision (Platt & Moss, 1976).

For the pastor's wife, her role as a pastor's wife is found in her relationship with one who called her husband to the pastorate. She does not escape her role as a woman in fulfilling her role as a pastor's wife (Rebuli, 2009). As a wife, she must be a helpmate. As a Christian, she is to

mirror Christ and walk closely with him, and in her service, she is to utilize the special resources found inside her as given to her by her creator for his Glory (Rebuli, 2009).

Through divine design, a wife is a helper. The word helper has a built in delineation that revolves around there being the facilitation of help, “support,” and “assistance” (Rebuli, 2009, pg. 104). When God speaks to the role of the wife in the garden, she is instructed to help the man tend the garden and the earth as a whole (Rebuli, 2009). She was left at the side of the man to help him carry out his purpose. However, the pastor’s wife role of helping is not just a divine requirement but a source of pressure. Inclusive of their divine mandate to assist their husbands as wives, there are many other sources of expectation that the pastor’s wife work alongside her husband. According to Davis (2007) and Taylor-Smith (2009), pastor’s wives, in general, tend to put a great deal of pressure on themselves to be super-women. There are also the added pressures the women have noted feeling from their husbands and the members of the churches pastored by their husbands (Davis, 2007; Taylor-Smith, 2009).

While there is limited empirical research on the pastor’s wife, the available literature is sufficient in its declaration that most pastors’ wives work alongside their husband in his work of ministry, at least to some degree. However, much of the available research seems to have been reported from the perspective Caucasian pastor’s wives (Marinan, 1966; 2005; Parker, 2006; Harris, 2017). Through nearly fifty years of research, there was no clear indication of any literature on the black pastor’s wife. Indeed, there is not much research on the pastor’s wife, and that limit almost moves into non-existence when it comes to the black pastor’s wife.

With near invisibility of representation in the literary thought’s on the pastor’s wife, the black pastor’s wife makes her way into the late modern writings of Henry-Whitehead (2004), Jenkins (2005), Parker (2006), Taylor-Smith (2009), Sanders (2014), and Harris (2017) with the

exception of Gioia (2005), all of whom are African American. Some of the previous researchers within this literature review didn't necessarily reveal the racial background of the participants. However, it was observable from the language, cultural perspective and from google searches of pictures of the researchers by name that the majority of the researchers were white-women who pulled their sample from among their surroundings, churches, or denominational affiliations which were all likely to be predominantly white.

As noted by the existing literature on the black pastor's wife, she works tirelessly at the side of her husband building the kingdom of God (Sanders, 2014). These pastors' wives stand strong at the sides of their husbands. As noted by a pastor's wife in a study completed by Sanders (2014), there are no boundaries to what these women will do to build the church and the people in conjunction to the vision of their pastor husbands.

### **Situation to Self**

When I first began to speak about my desired dissertation topic, I was asked by several people, what was driving my passion? I enjoyed entertaining the question because it gave me the opportunity to speak about my greatest life passion and that is, the Kingdom of God and the African American Church. Being born in the mid-1970s, I grew up during an era where I could see that the black church was the linchpin of the African American Community. During those days the black church was held in very high regard by the black community and the community depended on the church in dealing with all of life's circumstances and situations.

In this paper, I demonstrate through research the importance of the black church. However, I was able to confirm this information without a research article because I lived it in my everyday life. My great-grandmother was said to be a Holy woman, a woman who loved God, her family, and her church; In my mother's words "Big mama was a Christian, a real

Christian.” It was her love for God and dedication to the church that brought my family into the church. As a little girl, I remember always being at church, every Sunday. I LOVED being at church. Not only did I have my natural family, but our church was just one big family. At least several times a month, we had a program at church that caused us to bring food and fellowship over in the fellowship hall after Sunday morning service. I was in the youth choir and at least one Saturday out of the month we would have youth choir rehearsal that brought-out many of the families in our church. We would have a grand-old-time practicing for youth Sunday and enjoying each other. Our church was a big part of our world.

As I grew into my teen years, I became more engaged and active in church and the church’s work and it was during this time that I was able to see the pillar that my pastor was, not just in our church, but in our community-at-large. When a member was in need of counsel, care, encouragement, advice, monetary help, they went to the pastor. When a mother was having problems with her son whose father wasn’t around, she went to the pastor. If a member had a court situation, they depended on the pastor to walk the journey with them. If a grandmother was raising her grandchildren alone and in need of financial assistance, the pastor was there to help.

If a family was grieving, the pastor became their comfort and walked alongside them through the grief process. If someone died without insurance, the pastor and the church helped with burial arrangements. If there was a community issue that needed rectification or justice, the pastor stood as the leader and mediator between the community and the powers-that-be. And if someone needed prayer or encouragement from the scripture, of course, the pastor provided it. I can go on-and-on about all of the assistance, help, and provision both spiritual and natural provided by the black pastor. Even in all his pastoral care and community care task, he still was very faithful to his service in the church. I could go on forever about how I observed the black

pastor serving the black church and the black community, but I think this list sums it up well. I will however say that the pastor did not do all this work alone. My Pastor had a helper in his wife.

For the past thirty years, I have watched the black pastor's wife be the pillar of her husband. I watched them tirelessly care for him outside the church (taking care of the home, the children, and him) and within the church (serving the church, the people, and community). Some worked in the spot-light, others worked in the background but they all worked. Because she worked with the same tenacity and fervor as the pastor, I have often viewed the Pastor's wife as an extension of the pastor to many of the women in the congregation; especially to the female population. In my observation, she is the person that many will seek for instructions when the pastor is not available. For some reason, it seems she is expected to have as much ministry information, knowledge, and skill as the pastor.

In my observation, she is the single most sought after person by the female members of the church. In particular, she is often sought out for counseling in lieu of the pastor. Most female parishioners go directly to their church's First Lady (as we often call our Pastor's wives First Lady in the African American church) to seek care and counsel. Because she is perceived as the nurturing side of the pastor, she is often sought for other ministry roles such as children's ministry worker or children's Sunday school teacher. For the past twenty or so years, she was even tasked with filling in within the pulpit when needed. But in my opinion, none of her roles in ministry was as inundating as her role in pastoral care. While I was able to see that the black pastor's wife worked hard serving alongside her husband in the church and in ministry, I have not been able to determine why exactly this is.

For the average wife, being a helpmate is the norm. Taking care of her husband in the home, cooking, cleaning, washing or caring for his clothes, speaking those soft and encouraging words that provides him with internal comfort and fortitude, as well as ministering to various other physical needs and desires is what wives do. However, in my observation of pastor's wives, their loyalty and service goes far beyond wifely duties, and to me, this brings great distinction between the pastor's wife and other wives.

However, in ministry, in particularly the black church, the pastor's wife seems to be an expectedly active participant in the work of her husband. The black pastor's wife makes it look like there is an internal mandate that she works in ministry with her husband. It was for this reason, I completed an investigation that studies the black pastor's wife as an active participant, paid or unpaid, in her husband's pastoral ministry. The study sought to unearth the life experiences, internal perception, unseen motivations, and hidden perspectives that drive this external facilitation.

### **Purpose Statement**

Research has highlighted the large role the black pastor plays in providing care and counseling to the black community. This research project first utilized existing research to illuminate the unique role the black church historically played in the black community. As a result, the existing research briefly highlighted the pastoral care and counseling facilitation of the black church and black pastor. This illumination of care provided in the African American church; specifically, by the African American pastor, evoked questions about the woman who sleeps beside him. These questions then caused the researcher to investigate the African American pastor's wife in her role in assisting her husband in facilitating pastoral care and counseling in the African American church.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of the African American pastor's wife as a type of assistant pastor or co-pastor to her husband serving alongside him in pastoral care and pastoral counseling. This topic was chosen because of the researcher's personal observation of a silent phenomenon in the black church. From the researcher's perspective, the African American pastors' wife seems to operate as a type of assistant pastor or co-pastor in the African American church in pastoral care and pastoral counseling.

While there is a sufficient amount of research on the plight of the black pastor and his care for the black church and the black community, an equally important person who was found to work just as hard in meeting the needs of the church was the black pastor's wife, affectionately known as the first lady. There is a small number of academic dissertation's that study the African American pastor's wife either predominantly or as part of a study on other pastor's wives, these include Lee, (2000), Henry-Whitehead (2004), Gioia, (2005); Jenkins (2005), Parker (2006), Brooks, 2008, Taylor-Smith (2009), Murphy-Geiss, 2011, Sanders (2014), and Harris (2017). However, there was a gap in the literature on the African American pastor's wife.

Considering the limitations of the existing available literature on the African American pastor's wife, this study posed questions that shined a light on the experiences of being a pastor's wife when both the Pastor and wife are African American and they serve in a predominantly African American church. The guiding question for this study was "What have been the experiences of African American Pastor's wives as "helpers" serving alongside their husbands providing pastoral care and counseling within the African American Church?" The researcher

held a series of interviews with seven African American Pastor's wives serving the African American Christian Church that helped in providing answers to this question.

### **Significance of the Study**

Though having been key and highly observed figures for many years (Douglas, 1965); there is still limited research on pastor's wives. The researcher made several significant attempts to discover research on this population of Christian Leaders but all attempts only produced minimal literature. For the African American pastor's wife, there is even less research even in Dissertation form. More than 95% of the search done by the researcher yielded minimal research literature on this group. This dissertation investigated this under-studied population, the African American pastor's wife.

This study focused on the African American pastor's wife, and it revealed a common fortitude that is likely relatable among black women, especially black women who are married to pastors. The results of the study uncovered themes that are possibly present in black women as a whole and it revealed them within their roles as nurturers, builders, and women who despite stereotypes, walk alongside their men serving and leading as subordinates.

This dissertation research study, will add to the current available studies by qualitatively discussing African American pastor's wives in predominantly black churches who serve alongside their husbands in pastoral care and pastoral counseling. The results of the study provided insight on this limitedly discussed population of Christian servants. With this information, senior pastors and church congregations can now be privy to the inner workings of African American pastors' wives service to the church and the congregation. The study was able to add to the existing conversations by denoting, at least according to the participants in this study, that these women work passionately at the sides of their husband serving the church and



the people. The study is also significant because it can inform pastors and congregations on the need to appreciate and celebrate the African American pastor's wife in her abundance of service to her husband, her congregation, and the black church.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Pastor.** The Holy Bible defines Pastor as an overseer. The role of the pastor is to feed and care for the sheep (people) in the church of Jesus Christ. In 1 Timothy 3, the Apostle Paul lays out a list of qualifications ascribed to a person fulfilling the role of pastor. The list denotes a man of excellence and upright standard who is given to righteousness. The term pastor is a biblical term used to describe the man who is responsible for overseeing and shepherding a church congregation and is denoted in the Bible as a five-fold ministry.

**Pastors' wife.** A woman identified as a pastor's wife is a woman who is married to a man who serves as the pastor of a church congregation (Gioia, 2005). While there is no official title for women who are married to pastors, as noted in the situation of self section of this manuscript, there is a term of endearment that may also be used to identify this perceivably sacred position.

**First Lady.** The technical definition of the term first lady is ascribed to the wife of a national leader such as the President or other chief leader of a nation (Matz & Stelluto, 2015). In the United States, the first lady is the wife of the president. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/first-lady-United-States-title>, 2019). In this study, the term refers to the wife of a man who serves as pastor of a church. Rogers (2000); Gioia (2005); Jenkins (2005); Davis (2007); Taylor-Smith (2009); Beniot (2010); & Sanders (2014), also noted this term in relation to pastor's wives.

**Pastoral Counseling.** Pastoral counseling is a counseling form generally performed by a pastor, minister, or a Christian in private practice trained to offer mental health counseling from a biblical world view and a theological perspective using their training and education in behavioral science (Gioia, 2005).

**Pastoral Care.** Pastoral care is the care, nurturing, support, and engagement pastors, ministers, and other church leaders provide to members of the church or community around the church (Gioia, 2005). In essence, it's how the congregation is cared for by the leader or leaders.

**Helper.** The term helper is defined as a person who helps; in particular, a person who is not being paid to serve or work in the manner they are working. A helper is a person who helps with an activity. (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/helper>; <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/american/helper>; & <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/helper>).

### **Research and Interview Questions**

The central research question for the study asked, what have been the experiences of African American Pastor's wives as "helpers" serving alongside her husband in Pastoral Care and Counseling within the African American Church? To answer this question, structured interviews were completed. The following is the list of the interview questions posed:

1. How long have you been a pastors' wife?
2. Was your husband a Pastor when you married him or did you go into ministry together as husband and wife?
3. Does your husband pastor a church he planted or a church that hired him?
4. What is your official title if you have one?
5. How did this title come about?

6. How does your husband address you in ministry?
7. How does your congregation address you in Ministry?
8. Do you have any Christian/Biblical/Theological Education?
9. What are some of your roles and tasks (how do you serve) in ministry?
10. How were you brought into these roles or tasks?
11. Discuss with me your viewpoint on assisting and helping your husband in ministry.
12. Do you view your ministry service as a call from God or is it more of an obligation?  
Explain your viewpoint...
13. Before becoming a pastor's wife, did you feel you were called to the ministry or to work  
in ministry at this level and/or to this capacity?
14. Do you view yourself as your husband's ministry assistant of some sort?
15. Do you view yourself as a type of female pastor such as co-pastor, executive pastor, or  
assistant pastor?
16. Do you feel that the congregation in your predominantly black church views you as a  
type of assistant pastor or the female equivalent of the pastor?
17. Are you expected to fulfill such a role?
18. What demands are put on you by your husband?
19. What demands are put on you by the congregation?
20. What are your experiences in pastoral care and counseling?
21. What are your opinions and feelings about your role and task?
22. What drives you to help in your husband's pastorate?
23. Are there expectations placed on you by your husband to serve? If so, what are those  
expectations and how do you meet them?

24. Are there expectations placed on you by the congregation to serve? If so, what are those expectations and how do you meet them?
25. When it comes to congregants seeking your help, what service do you find to be the one you are most sought after to provide?
26. Which gender seeks these services the most?
27. Why do you think that is?
28. What do you see as your biggest responsibility in ministry?
29. What do you find to be your most daunting responsibility or expectation in ministry?
30. Of the ministry services you provide, what task would you say requires the most of your time?
31. What has been your greatest challenge working in ministry?
32. What has been your greatest love working in ministry?
33. Describe your life as a ministry helper working alongside your husband in ministry.
34. Think outside your current life: If you were not a pastor's wife, would you still feel obligated, or be passionate about serving in the church at the same rate, and with the same fervor? Why or why not?
35. Is there anything that I have not asked that you think is important for me to know about the Pastor's wife?
36. Are you feeling uneasy about anything that we have discussed?

### **Research Method and Results**

The investigation employed a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative research design that investigated the phenomena of helper as it related to the lived experiences of the African American pastors' wife serving alongside her husband in pastoral counseling and congregational

care within predominantly black Christian churches. A total of seven African American wives participated in the study. The results of the study found that the phenomena of helper among the African American pastor's wives who participated in the study, revolved around four themes: meeting the needs, being called to be a servant, being a helpmate, and love. The themes that emerged all facilitated the phenomena of helper among the women and their experiences of helping.

### **Implications**

The results of the study could assist in meeting several verbalized and un-verbalized needs of African American pastors' wives. First, considering most of the women in this study denoted not having any ministry or Christian education, such education or training in practical form could be useful. The information in this study could also inform the necessity for the appreciation and celebration of African American pastor's wives, in their ministry service.

### **Delimitations**

The research investigation, only studied the experiences of the African American Pastor's wife. The investigation only focused on African American pastor's wives who serve in predominantly black churches. With the understanding that Pastor's wives of other ethnicities, denominations, and geographical locations may have different and similar experiences as pastor's wives; this study chose to focus on a population who is less-likely to be observed in a scientific manner. Only pastor's wives who stated that they serve alongside their husbands in ministry were allowed to participate. Having been married to a pastor and in pastoral ministry for at least one year was a requirement of all participants.

The study did not consider the size of the church as a factor in the study. Church size was not viewed to have an impact on the experiences of the pastor's wives. The study did not

consider any socio-economic factor which could factor into the services rendered by the pastor's wife. Only women 25 years-and-older were allowed to participate.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this research study included several items. The study size was relatively small; the size of the study potentially hinders generalizability. Only the experiences of African American pastor's wives were investigated. This could also impede the generalizability of the study. Because the study was completed only on African American pastors' wives, the results of the study and subsequent suggestions and recommendations may not be generalized to pastors' wives of other races or cultures. Also, there was no quantifiable measurement of the pastor's wives' role, task, or duties.

### **Summary**

This chapter introduced and discussed the research investigation that will unfold throughout this manuscript. Included in this chapter was an account of the background of the problem presented, the significance of the problems, and the researcher's purpose for completing the study. An introduction of the study as well as the results of the investigation was briefly reviewed. The study will be discussed at length in the following chapters.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Black Church & The Black Pastor**

Central to African Americanism is the black church. Dating back to Slavery, the black church has played a vital role in advancing African American society (Langley & Kahnweiler, 2003; Gaines, 2010; Harmon, Blake, Armstead, & Hebert, 2013; Plunket; 2014; Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Barber, 2015; Brice & Hardy, 2015; Bilkins, Allen, Davey, & Davey, 2016; Dempsey, Butler, & Gaither, 2016); Nguyen, Chatters, & Taylor, 2016). Considering the stronghold that the church has had in advancing the community, footprints of the church can be seen throughout black society as it relates to forward movement. When it comes to equality and freedom that has historically come easy for others; it was the African American church that led the way in forging these right for the African American (Gaines, 2010; Avent & Cashwell; 2015; Barber, 2015). “It was only in the African American church that black people found racial power and community” (Gaines, 2010, p. 370-371; Avent & Cashwell, 2015).

Providing help to the African American community as it relates to everyday life has been a part of the historical role of the African American church (Barber, 2015; Bilkins, Allen, Davey, & Davey, 2016; Dempsey, Butler, & Gaither, 2016). From times past until now, the black church has been responsible for the care of black people (Barber, 2015; Taylor & Chatters, 2010; Plunket, 2014; Langley & Khanweiler, 2013; Simpson & Mattis, 2013). And the black pastor led the way (Plunkett, 2014; Barber, 2015; Hays, 2015; Brice & Hardy, 2015; Dempsey, Butler, & Gaither, 2016). It was the black pastor who took up the charge of leading the people and the community providing the leadership and care that the race needed. As a vitally important person in the help of the black race, Dr. Martin Luther King, a black pastor from Georgia, became quintessential in leadership during the civil right movement. Leaders such as the Rev. Dr. Martin

Luther King through his crusade for freedom pushed and charged black church in being more active in advancing black society (Barber, 2015). But this push did not stop with Rev. Dr. King, other pastor also took part. Black pastors in general have played an important role in helping black people and the black community. Black “pastors” is the lynchpin in the African American church (Avent, Cashwell, & Brown-Jeffy, 2014, p. 33).

### **The Black Pastor & Pastoral Care and Counseling**

Church is crucial in the life of the black American. Black people spend more time in church than any other race of people (Taylor & Chatters, 2010; Harmon, Blake, Armstead, & Herbert, 2013; Avent, Cashwell, & Brown-Jeffy, 2014; Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Hays, 2015; Bilkins, Allen, Davey, & Davey, 2016). Not only do African Americans spend more time in church, but they tend to build their life and perspectives around their faith (Thompson, McDonnell, & Futterman, 2016).

It is not uncommon for black people to be highly dependent on the pastor and the church. In Avent, Cashwell, & Brown-Jeffy (2014) article, this dependence was denoted and the work of the black pastor clearly noted as more than just the church leader. Black pastor’s roles extend past spiritual liaison. Sometimes the black pastor “takes on the role of a father- figure” (p. 60) in providing care to the people. The people view the pastor in high regard and they believe in the help he can provide them. In conjunction to the black pastor’s role in the black community at-large via the advancement of the race, in the church as previously noted, the black pastor also provides care and counseling (Stansbury, Harley, King, Nelson, & Speight, 2012). Whether it’s viewed and carried-out as one-in-the same or separately as in the concerns of some of the participants in the Stansbury, Harly, King, Nelson, & Speight, 2012) report, holistically caring for the people is of importance to black pastors.



According to Avent, Cashwell, & Brown-Jeffy (2014), the pastors in their study specifically denoted having to provide counseling services. Hays (2015) confirmed black pastor's denotations of providing counseling services. Pastors provide counseling services because it is not in the norm that black people will pursue professional services for their internal care (Avent, Cashwell, & Brown-Jeffy, 2014; Brice & Hardy, 2015; Hays, 2015; Bilkins, Allen, Davey, & Davey, 2016; Dempsey, Butler, & Gaither, 2016). Black people depend on their churches for their internal care, happiness, and the management of internal discrepancies and discomforts (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Hays, 2015; Dempsey, Butler, & Gaither, 2016; Nguyen, Chatters, & Taylor, 2016). When it comes to getting help with their internal matters from the church, not only is the senior pastor sought, but other leaders and officials under his tutelage make up those who are the preferred to render aide among black people (Stansbury, Harley, King, Nelson, & Speight (2012), Avent, Cashwell, & Brown-Jeffy (2014), Plunkett, 2014), Dempsey, Butler, & Gaither, 2016).

The weight and the responsibility of providing care and counseling to black congregants by black pastors goes back to the issues of inequality previously mentioned. Black people have historically not been interested in being counseled outside of the church, because black people did not necessarily trust professional counselors (Stansbury, Harley, King, Nelson, & Speight, 2012; Plunket, 2014; Brice & Hardy, 2015; Hays, 2015; Bilkins, Allen, Davey, & Davey, 2016; Dempsey, Butler, & Gaither, 2016). Considering this historical perspective of dependence on the black pastor, it is imagined that the work load of the black pastor can at least at times become overwhelming. In Matthew 9:37, Jesus said to His followers that the harvest is ripe, but the laborers are few. He meant that there was plenty of work to be done, but not a lot of people to get it done. Do to the abundance of work carried out by the black pastor, there is a wonder

concerning the role of the black pastor's wife in helping him in carrying out his duties to the church and its inhabitants. And considering the fact that no man is an island and two or better than one, neither does the black pastor or any other pastor serve alone in ministry when they are married.

### **The Pastor's Wife**

The old saying goes; beside every good man is a good woman. This is true in the case of the wife of the pastor. As previously noted, the pastor of the church tends to become the chief cornerstone of the people. This tends to be exceptionally true in the black church. However, for the average pastor, serving the church and the people in it is not a job he is forced to do alone when he is married.

The Bible has a few things to say about the office of pastor, who qualifies for the role, and what's needed to fulfil the role. However, when it comes to a pastor's wife, there are no rules, no requirements, no stipulations, and no biblical model. As a matter of fact, the Bible doesn't even talk about the pastor's wife (Rebuli, 2009).

In researching the subject of the pastor's wife, the researcher of this paper was unable to find a plethora of information on this unique role. Of the existing information on the pastor's wife, which is limited as it relates empirical research, the researcher was only able find less than 75 resources on the pastor's wife and far less of those resources were usable for the project. However, the researcher was able to find a significant amount of user manual type books for the pastor's wife. And according to Platt & Moss (1976), prior to the 1960's, the only writings available on the pastor's wife were written to the pastor's wife as instruction and help in fulfilling the role of pastor's wife. This meant that there was no empirical research that told her story from her perspective.

For the minister's wife, her role as a pastor's wife is found in her relationship with one who called her husband to the pastorate (Rebuli, 2009). Considering there is no biblical model for the pastor's wife, Rebuli (2009), discusses the position through the lens of the pastor's wife in her role as woman. The pastor's wife does not escape her role as a woman in fulfilling her role as a pastor's wife (Rebuli, 2009).

The Bible does provide a framework for the role of woman and womanhood (Rebuli, 2009). According to the scripture, woman was created as a helper to the man as God decided it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2). In Genesis, 2, the woman/wife is identified as a helpmate to the man. The word and concept of helper originates in scripture with God helping His children (Rebuli, 2009). With this understanding there is a built in definition of the word helper that revolves around there being the facilitation of help, "support", and "assistance" (Rebuli, 2009, pg. 104).

The woman as a helpmate to the man is not a social construct but a divine idea wrought with purpose. In Genesis 2:18, God spoke purposefully about the creation of a helper for the first man Adam. It seems God felt like Adam needed a companion made in his own image and capable to help him as God would design. The woman was created as a crucial and necessary part of the man's being, man was literally incomplete without the woman (Lee, 2000). Considering God's perspective as made evident by Genesis 2:18, Man could not complete his God given assignment to populate and subdue the earth without the help of the woman God created as his helper (Lee, 2000).

Before the woman is regarded in any of her positions (mother, etc.), she is viewed and instructed in being a wife and a helper submitted to the authority of her husband. When God speaks of her role in the garden, she is instructed to help the man tend the garden and the earth as

a whole (Rebuli, 2009). As a Christian, a woman should be living out her life in a way that causes her to reflect the character of Jesus Christ. As Christ, beloved, the woman should be living in a manner where she walks closely with him. And for the Glory of Christ, she is to utilize the special resources found inside her (Rebuli, 2009). This recipe mixed together begins to develop into what may be considered the very role of the pastor's wife, at least that's what it seems Rebuli (2009) was attempting to assert.

### **History**

The truth of the matter is that during the American colonial times, it was virtually unheard of for ministers to be married (Rankin, 1960; Denton, 1961; Finch, 1980). Roman Catholicism was the majority religion and as seen in today's society, Catholic clergy did not and still do not marry (Denton, 1961; Finch, 1980). The ministerial focus of clergy-hood was the work of the God (Rankin, 1960). This was due to the fact that prior to the sixteenth century, ministers did not engage in sexual intercourse (Finch, 1980). So the idea of pastor's wife, minister's wife, and definitely first lady is a fairly modern concept (Rankin, 1960). However, with the onset of the protestant reformation came some of the first signs of married ministers (Finch, 1980). And it was learned that a pastor's wife is a very essential addition to his ministry and ministry work (Rankin, 1960).

During these early times of the concept of the minister's wife, minister's wives were indeed expected to work alongside their husbands (Finch, 1980). The pastor's wife duties of the time revolved around carrying over her domestic duties of housekeeping in the home, into the church. In conjunction with completing housekeeping duties in the church, the pastor's wife was also tasked with being a receptionist and "personal secretary" (Finch, 1980, p. 855). Also, even then, the pastor's wife was found working among the women of the church; and many used their

availability to serve in other areas of ministry (Finch, 1980). No matter the form, the minister's wife as a helper in her husband's occupation seemed to be static.

Unlike women who marry men in other occupational fields, the minister's wife, not only marries a man, she marries the mission of the man in that she becomes a viable part of his ministry work (Denton, 1961). Different from the wives of other professional men, the clergyman's wife works alongside her husband in his work in the church. According to Denton (1961) & Douglas (1961), the minister's wife is never demarcated from her role as the clergyman's wife.

### **The Role of the Pastor's Wife**

According to Finch (1980), the early understanding of the minister's wife was not without its issues. There were a number of concerns that came with how the minister's wife was chosen and essentially who qualified to be a minister's wife. And according to Finch (1980), the very identity of the minister's wife was found in the occupation of her husband and her value has historically been determined by how well she performs at the side of her husband. Subsequently, pastor's wives were found to garner their purpose through their husband's job (Finch, 1980).

Dating back to the early history of the clergy wife, the women who filled the role were known to be and expected to be hard workers within the ministry of their clergyman/husband with endless responsibilities (Douglas, 1965). Of the early researchers on the topic of the clergy wife, Douglas (1965) was the researcher who did a significant empirical study that became the literary visual of who exactly the pastor's wife was. From his research results, Douglas (1965) was able to detect a pattern of categories that many of the wives in his study fell into. To begin the discussion of his results, Douglas (1965) discovered what he called "the team worker" (pg. 33). According to Douglas (1965), "the team worker" is the pastor's wife who works hand-in-

hand with their husband who is the pastor of the church. In Douglas (1965) words, she is the “yoke-fellow for Christ” with her husband. In this wife’s estimation of her role, not only is her husband “called” to this position, so is she (Douglas, 1965, pg. 33).

The next pattern that Douglas (1965) discussed was the category that he called “the background supporter” which most of the pastor’s wives in the study fell into (pg. 38). The background supporter views herself as another parishioner. She does not view or carry herself as the team worker. Instead, she stands by her husband as the ideal homemaker and mother focusing her attention on ensuring that home is well taken care of (Douglas, 1965).

The final category that Douglas (1965) was able to unearth was “the detached” pastor’s wife (pg. 46). This clergy wife does not view herself within a frame of her husband job. She carries herself in the same manner as the wife of any other man. She is a woman who is married to a man who works at a church just like a man who works at a restaurant (Douglas, 1965).

According to Rankin (1960), many people in Christendom believe that not only is the husband called to the office of the pastorate but if the pastor is married, his wife is uniquely designed to be a part of that call making it her divine destiny as well. So the pastor’s wife should at least value his call at the same proportion as him according to Rankin (1960). Just like the pastor, the pastor’s wife is perceived as a guide and somewhat of a superior though under the tutelage of her husband. This perception also includes her sometimes taking on the role of her husband’s pastoral associate or co-laborer in ministry and not just life. In particular, one of the most conspicuous roles of the pastor’s wife is that of mentor to the women in the church as it relates to their role as women, wives, and mothers (Rankin, 1960).

The life of the pastor’s wife acclimates in totality to what her husband does for a living and as his purpose. For every other wife, on her wedding day, she just becomes a wife. However,

for the pastor's wife, on her wedding day, or somewhere during her marriage she not only becomes a wife, but she becomes an active part of her husband's career. His purpose automatically becomes her purpose (Platt & Moss, 1976).

In their 1976 study, Platt & Moss made a very interesting assertion about the role of the pastor's wife. Platt & Moss (1976) asserted that in a role "corresponding expectations on the part of others who are related to a person in the performance of the role" (pg. 193). This means that a role is determined by the beliefs and needs of the people on the receiving side of a role performance (Platt & Moss, 1976).

In particular, in the Platt & Moss (1976) study of Episcopal pastor's wives, the pastor's wives varied in how they defined "supporting their husbands" (pg. 206) with some of the pastor's wives reporting their roles as working closely with their husband in ministry. It seems that in the Platt & Moss (1976) study, many of the pastor's wives determine themselves to only be a behind the scenes helpers for the purpose of ensuring that there is a line of demarcation between who the pastor and leader is and who is not. However, no matter how the pastor's wives categorized herself, when it came to participating in church, most of them reported some type of participation in varied ways and for some maybe in no way at all (Platt & Moss, 1976).

For her 2000 dissertation, Rogers investigated "the lived experience of pastor's wives", Rogers created a qualitative study that interviewed a total of four pastor's wives; three white women and one black woman. Each of the pastor's wives had been a pastor's wife for a significant amount of time with none being in ministry less than ten years. The age of the women within the study varied between the late thirties and early sixties (Rogers, 2000).

Because Rogers (2000) utilized a qualitative research style, there was no statistical data to report. Instead, Rogers (2000) was able to learn about the experiences of the pastor's wives as

pastor's wives from their own account of their lives and roles as the wife of a pastor. As a result of the use of a qualitative research designed, Rogers (2000) was able to detect a pattern of perspectives within the transcribed interview data.

The results of the interviews as defined by the emerging themes found that for many of the participants in this study, there was shared belief of being divinely designed to marry a pastor (Rogers, 2000). Feeling divinely chosen to the role of pastor's wife seemed to be the most dominate argument presented and was the umbrella by which most of the women viewed their enjoyment of the status and their ability to deal with any challenges within the role. For example, the women shared feelings of what seemed to be congregational hopes that they feel sometimes out-weigh what the pastor's wives felt they were able to produce (Rogers, 2000). Though challenging, most of the pastor's wives denoted being able to work towards fulfilling the prospective of the church attendees (Rogers, 2000).

Only one participant admitted to feeling overwhelmed by the role and its expectations and not viewing herself as being called to the place of pastor's wife. She even felt that she struggled with who she actually was once she was no longer a pastor's wife. Overall it was the participant's thoughts of being called to be a pastor's wife that enabled them to deal with the challenges of the role as well as being able to function in the role (Rogers, 2000).

An interesting finding in Rogers (2000) study, was that the participants denoted that they did not carry out church work as the wife of the leader of the congregation but rather in the same manner as any of the other people who were apart of the church. Meaning the pastor's wife chose what she wanted to do in ministry according to her desires and not necessarily her role of being the pastor's wife. This finding raised the question of which race of pastor's wife made these assertions and what was the need level of the church. The questions form as a concern of whether



pastor's wives in different races have a different need base within congregations of her same race.

According to Douglas (1961), there are minister's wives who are better prepared and skilled than their husbands. This discovery of Douglas (1961), is contrary to both the findings of Jenkins (2005), and Henry-Whitehead (2004), who both found that minister's wives tend to believe that they were not prepared to be pastor's wives.

Douglas (1961) denoted that there have been women who utterly detested being a pastor's wives. According to Douglas (1961), these were generally the women who did not marry a pastor but rather became a pastor's wife after the marriage had convene.

Douglas (1961) provides a unique perspective on the different types of pastor's wives based on their level of satisfaction. Douglas, in his 1961 article delineated pastor's wives according to satisfaction and the different common denominators that seem to facilitate satisfaction or the lack of satisfaction in the role of pastor's wife. The first type of pastor's wife that Douglas discuss in his 1961 article is the "at home from the beginning" pastor's wife (p. 11). This wife is the one who embraces the call of ministry on her husband and the work of ministry for herself (Douglas, 1961).

Then there is the "hard struggle – but worth it" pastor's wife (p. 12). This clergyman's wife is the wife who has found the role of being a pastor's wife to come with its own set of challenges however, she feels the purpose and subsequent development that comes with the role of being a ministry wife is worth the struggle that happens prior to arriving at a place of "growth" (p. 12). The 3<sup>rd</sup> type of pastor's wife discussed by Douglas in his 1961 article is the "Damn the Torpedo's" pastor's wife. This pastor's wife is the one who would prefer not to be married to a pastor and is likely to have become one during the course of the marriage and not at

the onset of marriage. For this pastor's wife, there tends to be a great disdain for the role and the work alike and because of this deep "resentment" she experiences great distress in the role (Douglas, 1961, p. 13).

Finally, Douglas (1961), discuss the pastor's wife who he calls "the outgrown wife" (p. 14). According to Douglas (1969), "at many points, they match William Whyte's description of the outgrown wife of executives" (Douglas, 1961, p. 14). As noted by Douglas (1961), "the outgrown wife" is the pastor's wife who has history with her husband that spans before as well as into his entry into the pastorate, but now after so many years, the pastor has evolved while the wife has remained the same, namely due to focusing her life on his. This wife, simply put, has been surpassed by her husband and now finds she is unable to keep up with who her husband has become. As a result of her feelings, personal and professional lack, this wife "retires from the spotlight" of ministry (Douglas, 1965, p. 14).

Along with these four types of pastor's wives, Douglas (1961) also discusses what he calls the "team worker" (p. 16). The pastor's wife, who works as a colleague of her husband in ministry, works side-by-side with her husband and takes co-ownership for the success of the ministry. However, Douglas (1961) contrast this pastor's wife with what he calls the "background supporter" whom he identifies as a pastor's wife who takes sole ownership of caring for the husband and the things that concerns his personal life rather than his professional life (Douglas, 1965, p. 16).

In Lee (2000) final project paper for Fuller Theological Seminary, she provided a biological descriptive of her life as a Christian and pastor's wife. Lee (2000), discussed at length, her conversion and journey as a pastor's wife in the Korean church in the United States of

America. In her personal dialogue on doing ministry as a pastor's wife in the Korean church, Lee (2000) was able to provide great depiction of cultural differences in churches.

At her first two churches as a Pastor's wife in the Korean church, the churches expected her to serve as a comrade in ministry with her husband. She was expected to provide soul care and counseling, and teach the bible and teach different type of Christian and biblical classes. However, when Lee (2000) and her husband Pastor Ben, arrived at their third pastoral assignment, the culture was different. Ben and Lee (2000) walked through the doors as a ministry couple who did ministry together. Though they started off flowing in ministry as they always had, after some time, they were met with resistance and Lee (2000) was essentially told that her serving at the side of her husband was inappropriate and that she should serve the home and her husband inside the home. This was very different for Lee (2000) who said at one point she was verbally denoted as the assistant pastor by some members in her previous church.

While Lee's issues of cultural difference happened within churches of the same racial makeup, her experience provided great insight on cultural differences in the church. It confirmed that each church is different both in-race and out-of-race. While there was a difference in the race and culture that Lee (2000) severed, the role itself did not differ from what has been previously spoken. Lee's voice made it clear that in some cultures, the pastor's wife operates as a type of assistant pastor's while in others she is expected to be a background fixture.

Henry-Whitehead (2004) and Jenkins (2005) were both able to determine that pastor's wives desired and needed training and additional education to fulfill their role successfully. Lee (2004), also echoed this sentiment noting that pastor's wives could not effectively serve alongside their husband's ministry without proper preparation. Lee herself was a student at Fuller Theological Seminary completing her D.Min at the time of her writing.

As a Korean wife, to a Korean Pastor, in service to a Korean Christian church, Lee (2004) says her most important role as a pastor's wife is serving alongside her husband in pastoral counseling noting that as it relates to counseling with women, the women prefer to be counseled by a woman.

Marinan (1966) ran a qualitative study that investigated the role of the pastor's wife. Marinan (1966) study did not specify the race, age, or exact locations within the U.S.; nor did it specify a particular denomination. The study was however, clear that its focus was the role of the minister's wife. If correctly understood, the researcher's review of the study eluded to the study possibly being conducted using mainly Caucasian women and the general location spoken of within the study was Montana and possibly other areas of the Midwest United States and most were from agricultural and farming communities. Marinan (1966) investigation found that the pastor's wife role is an orthodox role.

The pastor's wife is expected to be somewhat of an extension of her husband with congregation anticipation that she will take part in her husband's pastorate and be of full-time service to the congregation. Marinan (1966) study took an in-depth look at the lifestyle of the pastor's wife as she discussed the life of the pastor's wife in-depth but didn't too much focus her study on what exactly she does within her church task. Marinan (1966) study found that pastor's wives are expected to complete a host of duties within her role including provide pastoral care and counseling. And while some of the women alluded to their feelings about their role, expectations, and duties, the study did not provide any specific or influential information on the pastor's wives experiences in their role as a pastoral caretaker or pastoral counseling.

The study provided substantial information on the role in general while providing some insight on different task and expectations in passing. However, Marinan (1966) did find that

some pastor's wives did operate from the role of assistant pastor in most cases; meaning the pastor's wife tends to be a partner in ministry with her husband. She also found that other pastor's wives mainly operated as background supporters focusing most of their attention on taking care of their husbands to ensure they were able to work at a high level.

Finch (1980) was able to document the ministry service of the pastor's wife as well as the fact that her life being married to a minister revolves around his work as a minister. But Finch (1980) also noted the household responsibility of the pastor's wife and the fact that she is more likely to maintain the home and children while her husband focuses more on his job.

Finch (1980) also pointed out the lack of friendships that pastor's wives have. Some pastor's wives feel a sense of aloneness due to the nature of their positions (Finch, 1980). While issues of familiarity may be a problem that forces isolation, the pastor's wives in Finch (1980) study also noted avoiding building personal friendship with church members to ensure that members who are not as close to the pastor's wife, don't feel slighted.

In Finch (1980) study, the researcher found that the wives choose what they would do as it relates to working in their husband's ministry once they were in the church that their husband would pastor. Initially, the pastor's wives noted that they worked according to what they wanted to do. However, Finch (1980) later learned that many of the pastor's wives began to work in their husband's ministry as a necessity, to work at his side and help in his career; with an interesting thought of pastors' wives lives revolving tightly around her husband's ministry career (Finch, 1980).

In discussing the pastor's wife role, Finch (1980), noted the challenges that many pastor's wives are likely to face noting the lack of finances and not necessarily having a choice in living arrangements as well as the previously noted bouts of social seclusion as key issues. As a result,

according to Finch (1980), pastor's wives are more likely to be careful in their personal presentations as not to cause an issue within her husband's pastoral ministry. It seems that Finch (1980) at least believes that pastor's wives keep these items as some main focal points.

Finch (1980), in conjunction to discussing pastor's wives' statements of how they choose what activities they do within the church their husband pastor's; noted that the wives have a set of self-imposed core criteria that the wives felt they needed to meet. Of these criterions was ensuring that they are always found assisting their husband in his career. In fact, according to Finch (1980) pastor's wives take great care in performing at a level that will eliminate any potential damage to the husband's job with this effort being universal to a majority of pastor's wives. A key consideration of Finch (1980) research was coming to the understanding that pastor's wives feel like it's impossible to be married to a pastor and not become interwoven in his career in ministry.

Like other authors, Finch (1980) also discusses the viewpoint of pastors' wives that their first duty within their role as a wife be to the caretaking of both their husband and children. Finch (1980) denoted this as the orthodox view of many of the pastors' wives in the sample in which she studied. Within Finch (1980) study, the research found that a pastor's wife outside job took a lower seat to her role as both wife and pastor's wife with much of her work focus revolving around her husband's career which tended to be deemed more important. According to Finch (1980); Platt & Moss (1976), a pastor's wife is unable to escape their role as pastor's wife and the role literally tends to become the very identity of the women who fulfill the role of pastor's wife. In Finch (1980) concluding thoughts, she restates the pastor's wife role and its inundation of the career choice of the man she married. Within these thoughts, Finch (1980), makes an interesting claim about the pastors' wives. The researcher said that in order for a

pastor's wife to detach herself from the identity of pastor's wife and all that goes along with the role, a woman would have to result to extreme decisions that would go against the status quo, which none would be willing to carryout (Finch, 1980).

Liken unto the three categories coined by Douglas (1965), Johnson (2012) completed a qualitative research study that examined more than twenty clergy couples all of the Protestant reformation through individual interviews. Johnson (2012), investigated the participation level of spouses in their minister's career. The researcher utilized what she called a "random sample" (p.22) of participants from both small and large churches and communities and she included both "suburban" and "urban" areas (p. 23). While the researcher did denote her sample as being random, she also admitted that the study did not include a mixture of different races or socio-economic difference. The participants in the study were all white Americans. The pastor's in this study were both male and female.

The researcher found that most of the pastor's spouses operated from one of three different pattern types. The first discussed was what Johnson (2012) called "the partnership model" (pg. 26). Johnson (2012), found that participants who fit this model, were more likely to engage heavily in their spouse's ministry career. Minister's spouse with this methodical mentality takes responsibility for the wellbeing of the clergy-person's ministry career. This spouse is usually found doing whatever is necessary for the success of the ministry. In Johnson (2012) study, the spouses also noted utilizing their services to become woven into the fabric of the congregation and the lives of the people. In the minds set of these minister's spouses, the work of the hired one becomes the responsibility and care of the two. Ministry couples who operate from "the partnership model", see the ministry career as the destiny of the spouses regardless of which is the actual clergyperson (Johnson, 2012). One exceptional note about the

“partnership model” discussed in the investigation, was the fact that male pastors’ spouses generally operated from this model even though Johnson (2012) interviewed a female pastor’s spouse who also identified under this model.

The second model discussed by Johnson (2012) was “the layperson model”. In this model, Johnson (2012) denotes, that couples with this mentality operate from what would be defined as a “balanced” perspective (pg. 27). In “the layperson model” discussed by Johnson (2012); the spouse of the clergy-person does not attempt to partner with their spouse as a type of assistant but rather “the layperson” spouse works in ministry as another member. This mentality does not necessarily work alongside their spouse but rather deems themselves to be just another member of the congregation serving in the church. In “the layperson model”, the clergy spouse is able to distinguish themselves as the person married to the pastor and not the pastor themselves or even a capable assistant of the pastor. Ministry couples who operate from “the layperson model” are more likely to serve in ministry according to their desires or previous ministry service prior to their marriage. Whatever the case, “the layperson model” ministry marriage has well defined confines unlike “the partnership model” where the calling is the responsibility of both spouses.

The third model discussed by Johnson (2012) and most the intriguing model was what Johnson (2012) called “the independent model”. This model seems to be the disconnecting model of the three models though that is not to say or determine that there is no spousal support from minister’s spouses who identify under this model. The participation of a minister’s spouse who operates from “the independent model” maintains a separate work life from their spouse. In other words, their job is their job and their spouse’s job is their spouse’s job and rarely if ever shall the two meet and mingle. As mentioned by researchers such as Luedtke & Sneed (2018)



using different terminology, participants in the Johnson (2012) study who identified under “the independent model” sometimes don’t necessarily feel like a career in ministry is a part of their destiny even though some of the respondents in the Johnson (2012) study identified as ministers themselves.

A corroborating finding in the Johnson (2012) study that was mentioned in other research studies such as Luedtke & Sneed, (2018), is the concept and anticipation of support and service from congregants. In the Johnson (2012) study in each model, some of the participants noted feeling like the congregation believed that they, as the pastor’s spouse, should be involved to some degree or in some form in ministry. As noted by Johnson (2012), none of the clergy spouses in this investigation completely abandoned supporting their spouse. For many, their tended to be an unconscious spiritual sanction that pressed them to support to some degree because of the mantle of divine design of their spouse.

In 2011, Murphy-Geiss published an article of her investigation on the role changes of clergy spouses. Thousands of clergy wives and husbands from the United Methodist church were a part of the study sample for an investigation that was more focused on gender than race; the race of the sample was not included in the literary write-up. While the researcher was able to obtain information that detected some movement in the role from that of orthodox understanding, this was more likely to be among husbands of women pastors and younger women who were not of the background of the standard orthodox in some way. With these role changes being smaller in number, Murphy-Geiss (2011) was able to confirm that for the most part the orthodox role of the pastor’s wife is still the relative norm. Murphy-Geiss (2011) study went deeper into the minister’s husband concept that is now a part of the makeup of the church in small ways. It was through her comparison of the pastor’s wife and the pastor’s husband that Murphy-Geiss (2011)

was able to determine that the pastor's wife participation still holds the traditional standard and she is still more likely to be very active in the church making the pastor's wife apart of Jenkins (2005) concept of employ the pastor and get his spouse at no fee.

Harris (2017) completed an investigation that measured leadership perspective of clergy wives and women who are called to the ministry hold authoritative roles in ministry. To complete the study and obtain the desired information, Harris (2017) used a "quantitative research design" along with "semi structured approach" (pg. 65 & 98). More than 175 women participated in the study with more than 77% of the participants identifying as minister's wives. Even though the researcher herself was African American as made evident by a google search of her picture, the majority of the study participants seem to be Caucasian women. The majority of the women in the study identified as having been in ministry more than five years so there was significant ministry experience in the sample. The researcher being able to obtain a large sample of women who work in ministry, with more than half of the sample being pastor's wives, further confirms the notion of pastor's wives as vital parts of their husband's ministry careers.

### **Challenges of the Role**

The position of the pastor's wife comes with its own set of challenges. Researchers have been able to investigate a number of issues that tend to be isolated to the clergy-family. An article by Banks (2017), used a survey to investigate pastor's wives. In the investigation, Banks (2017) borrowed from Denton's (1961) notion of pastoral families living in a "fishbowl" (p. 18). The findings of the surveys utilized for the article echoed the sentiments of Baker (1989) in discussing the happiness and sadness of the pastorate family with a primary focus on "isolation and financial struggle" as a chief concern (p. 18). Douglas (1965) also noted these issues. Without going into too much discussion, Banks (2017) reverberated by Douglas (1961), Douglas

(1965), Denton (1961), and Baker (1989) each noted of both pleasant and unpleasant in ministry.

For the majority of clergymen wives, the role somewhat forces them into a life described as being secluded (Denton, 1961; Douglas, 1965; Baker, 1989). For the minister's wife, developing close friends, in particularly with the members of her husband's congregation is a no-no. This unwritten rule, comes as a result of pastors' wives believing that they should not seek friendship from their church community (Denton, 1961). One of the reasons Douglas (1961) feels that pastors' wives have sometimes avoided relationships within their church is for the purpose of avoiding the appearance of favoritism. Denton (1961) on the other hand felt that pastors' wives worked to avoid some forms of envy and resentment. Though being a minister's wife seems to come with somewhat of a built-in gratification for most clergyman wives, there tends to be a struggle with distinctiveness. However, pastor's wives tend to work towards being who they are and they encourage other pastor's wives to do the same (Denton, 1961).

The pastor's wives in Rogers (2000) study also discussed their struggle with building friendships while in the role of a pastor's wife. Three of the four participants in the study found making friends as the pastor's wife to be tricky. The women noted that building friendships within their congregation could lead to problems but they also denoted feeling great love from the people (Rogers, 2000). However, while the women felt great purpose in their role, they also met with difficulties that produced some mental and emotional strain. The participants in Rogers (2000) research also identified feeling like they had to present themselves as a living heavenly host for their church members.

Among the different issues discussed by the pastors' wives in Rogers (2007) study, each highlighted the different experiences that cause them distress. For one pastor's wife, she

struggled with the challenge of obtaining privacy. Another pastor's wife she felt like different aspects of her life was under scrutiny. Another pastor's wife felt like she was constantly made to feel like she needed to be at the beck-and-disposal of the congregants of the church (Roger, 2007).

Some of the pastor's wives in Rogers (2000) study discussed issues of perpetual obtainability placed on their husband's time and sometimes their own time. It seems that congregation expectation that they have their pastor's full attention begins to take a negative toll on the pastor and sometimes even the marriage. The participants of the study also dealt with great overwhelm and extravagant assumption from the people their husbands served.

Though the pastors' wives' experiences, produced effects on their daily life and living both outwardly and inwardly, the pastors' wives were driven by what they believed within themselves rather than what may have been the assumptions of the people their husbands pastored. Several of the pastors within Rogers (2000) study collectively agreed that when it came to their Christian service, their conviction to serve in ministry came from their duty to be obedient to God's will for their life. The final results of Rogers (2000) investigation of the pastor's wife determined that pastors' wives found that feeling called to the role of the pastor's wife and having confidence in that call allowed pastor's wives to experience happiness within their role as a pastor's wife and it enables them to carry out their call (Rogers, 2000).

While most pastors' wives report feeling lonely, many of them say they also deal with living a life described as "living in a fishbowl" (Denton, 1961, p. 21). The concept of "fishbowl living" comes partly a result of "parsonage life" in which pastors' wives feel they have limited "privacy" (p. 21). For some of the wives of ministers, lack of privacy is their biggest pet-peeve. Clergyman and their wives and family live a highly visible life that doesn't allow for

concealment. This is an interesting contrast to the pastor's wife issue with isolation. However, for the minister's wife, the isolation she feels comes from the lack of meaningful, personal, and quality relationships, whereas "fishbowl living" comes from the visibility of her very public life with the greater variant exuding from living in a church funded house that maybe far too close to the church (Denton, 1961, p. 21).

In an investigation that used a "survey research design", Darling, Hill, and McWey (2004, p. 264) studied a multitude of clergy families to determine the clergy life and its effects on clergyman and their wives. In the study, the researchers pulled information from both the minister and his wife individually in that each clergy couple completed surveys discretely and each turned in their survey at a different time than their spouse. As it relates to the life of the clergy husband and wife in this study, the investigation found that the average couple had been in ministry for more than twenty years (Darling, Hill, and McWey, 2004). The study found that ministry took up the majority of the couple's time even overtaking the time spent with their relatives. Most of the wives in the study worked in jobs outside of the home and prior to making ministry their occupation, many of the minister's in the study noted having worked in a different field (Darling, Hill, and McWey, 2004).

In the Darling, Hill, and McWey (2004) study, the notion of parsonage life described by Denton (1961), seemed to fit some of the clergy with about 33% of the clergyman and their wives living far too close to the church. The study noted that the majority of the clergyman couples lived at a distance far enough away that the couples "drove in" but there was no information on how far away the couple's actually lived (Darling, Hill, and McWey, 2004, p. 266).

The findings of the study revolved around the coping practices of pastors and their wives when it comes to the impact of their work in ministry and the care that both provide (Darling, Hill, and McWey, 2004). The investigation found that clergy couples experience different stress-related issues due to what the researcher noted as “compassion fatigue” and the impact it has on curtailing or remedying stress and stress related issues (Darling, Hill, and McWey, 2004, p. 266).

In the study, pastors and their wives differed in their management of stress (Darling, Hill, and McWey, 2004). On average, pastors were better at managing stress and stressors. Pastors wives on the other hand did not measure up to their spouse in managing stress inducing issues and were found to have a greater amount of stress. The very nature of the work of ministry produces great stress for both the pastor and his wife. The researchers used the Compassion Fatigue Scale to determine to what degree the pastor’s and their wives experienced stress and what mechanisms proved to be most effective in minimizing stress (Darling, Hill, and McWey, 2004).

The pastor was better able to handle different types of stress than was his wife (Darling, Hill, and McWey, 2004). However, it was found that when a pastor and his wife practiced good spiritual health, there was a decrease in the negative impact of stress that comes with ministry and caring for others. The study determined that pastors and their wives were more often to rely on their spiritual life in managing their mental and physical well-being. Another unique finding in the study was that feeling a sense of purpose somewhat buffered issues of stress (Darling, Hill, and McWey, 2004).

Stalfa (2008) investigated the stressors experienced by clergy couples and the impact the challenges have on the marriage. Within the study the researcher engaged in detailed discussions with long-time clergy couples who have in-depth experience in the totality of clergy-hood. The

researcher was able to narrow down the greatest issue to clergy marriage as being issues with time constraints.

According to Stalfa (2008) one of the biggest and most general requirements of a clergy couple is the giving of their time. Church members and congregations have beliefs that their pastor and even his wife should be readily accessible to them even if their assumption is absurd. Considering the challenges of time-constraint and the sometimes vying for the spouse's affection and attention, it is very important that the spouse of the clergyman feel to some degree that she or he is also a divine part of their clergy spouses call to the ministry. According to Rankin (1960), without a spouse who has a passion for the work of ministry, a minister themselves cannot be successful in the pastorate with a spouse who is not up to the challenge of the call.

For success, the clergy-person's spouse must have a heart for the work of ministry or they could easily become disgusted by the job and the responsibility of their clergy-person spouse. Stalfa (2008) study found that clergy couples have a fondness for the life purpose that ministry affords them and the chances the clergy couple gets to care for people and provide guidance for their society. The couples in the Stalfa (2008) study denoted the family orientation of clergy-hood as it relates to their connection and closeness to their congregation and its members.

A study completed by Baker (1989) investigated the impact of "peer support" on pastor's wives "well-being" (p. 16). Baker (1989), was able to confirm some of the notions of both Douglas (1961) and Denton (1961). In particular, Baker's (1989) found that pastor's wives differed in opinion on ministry as it relates to what they enjoyed and what they didn't enjoy. However, most of the participants in the study were able to confirm the ups-and-the-downs of ministry with "loneliness" being a factor that some identified as a challenge while others had no

issues with relationship building (p. 22). Baker (1989) study concluded that pastor's wives are able to live a better ministry life in the face of "peer support" (p. 24).

A study by Luedtke & Sneed (2018) studied the lives Wesleyan pastors' wife as it relates to living and dealing with being overwhelmed. The study hosted a total of nine participants who were all wives of full-time pastor's in the church. The results of the study illuminated two themes that arose with one essentially amounting to coping mechanisms and the other amounting to challenges experienced. Much like the Johnson (2012) investigation of clergy spouse, Luedtke & Sneed (2018) also found that pastor's spouse many times feel a sense of divine destiny within their perspective of pastor's spouse. However, in the Luedtke & Sneed (2018) investigation, the researchers were able to learn that the participants referred back to this idea of divine destiny and their dependence on God in coping with the different challenges that come along with the role.

Many of the participants in the Luedtke & Sneed (2018) investigation found themselves overwhelmed by some of the challenges that could sometimes present themselves within the role. A unique finding within the Luedtke & Sneed (2018) investigation was the finding that church size had an impact on the service needs of the congregation. In bigger churches the pastor's wife didn't experience the demand of having to complete too many task or fill vacant roles because there were people in place via one-avenue or the other to ensure that things were taken care of (Luedtke & Sneed 2018). While not emphatically mentioned, it has been deemed the same did not apply to pastor's wives in smaller churches.

All of the pastor's wives in the Luedtke & Sneed (2018) study discussed feelings of aloneness as a result of being in the role of a pastor's wife. Such as (Finch, 1980), the pastors' wives in the study noted feeling like they had to be isolated because of the nature of the



information they carried about certain members. They also noted that they generally didn't find themselves in situations where people didn't see them as the pastor's wife. They also had to innately govern themselves according to the perceptions of the role. In conjunction to the distresses of the role, the pastor's wives in the Luedtke & Sneed (2018) study also mentioned the pro's and accolades that come with being a pastor's wife (Luedtke & Sneed, 2018). It was the feelings of divine requirement and their love for God that kept each participant in the study.

In their 1994 study of the coping practices of clergy couples in the face of the challenges that accompany the profession, Frame & Shehan (1994) utilized a sample of Methodist clergy couples who had been in the pastorate for varying amounts of years. The study investigated the clergy couples during transition to a new location to determine how they coped with the different built-in stressors that came with the regular transitioning of clergyman in the United Methodist Church. In conjunction to reiterating the notion of pastor's wives being active parts of their husband's ministry careers, the research study was able to shine a little more light on the role and challenges of the pastor's wife and clergy couple. The results of the study found that the pastor's wives in the study noted having much greater to-do list than their husbands and were less likely to have an outlet for relief and relaxation from their duties and requirements (Frame & Shehan, 1994).

Clergy couples struggle with financial issues (Douglas 1965; Platt & Moss, 1976; Baker, 1989; Brooks, 2008; Luedtke & Sneed, 2018). This holds true for the United Methodist clergy couples in the Frame & Shehan (1994) study except the pastor's wives noted these challenges as a result of frequent relocation. The determination of the clergy being a job that hires one person but forces the position fulfillment on both spouses is derived from the fact that the pastor's wife life revolves around her husband's career. As in the study of Frame & Shehan (1994), the

pastor's wives had to forego many of the lifestyle pleasures of non-clergy wives in that many had to live in housing provided by the church so they were not able to make it their own.

This notion was echoed to some degree by Rankin (1960) in his dialogue on the pastor's wife and her life as it relates to the churches provision of a residence for the clergy family. Some pastors' wives had to deny themselves a career of their own because they had to be available to flow with their husband's job (Frame & Shehan, 1994); not to mention having to play a supporting role that ensured that their husband was able to focus more heartedly on their ministry career, along with being the ideal wife and church servant. Valuable is the position of the pastor's wife. According to Frame & Shehan (1994), when a pastor's wife serves alongside her husband providing different forms of assistance, her service allows him to focus more on his aspects of the ministry and his career.

In her 2007 dissertation study, Jama Davis completed a phenomenological qualitative study of the loneliness experienced by pastor's wives. The study sample was capped at ten people with only eight accepting the invitation to participate. Each of the participants were interviewed to obtain their account of their lives as a pastor's wife and to learn what they had to say about loneliness within the role. The sample only included Caucasian women and each of the women had significant role experience.

Some of the reporting in Davis (2007) investigation was consistent with much of the other research on the role of the pastor's wife. A prominent theme in the literature has noted the feeling of purpose that pastor's wives experience when they are serving the people of the church alongside their husbands. This was directly noted by a participant in the Davis (2007) study. These feelings of purpose provide for satisfaction within the role (Platt & Moss, 1976). But as it relates to the nature of the role, feelings of loneliness have been a recurring theme (Baker, 1989;

Darling, Hill, and McWey, 2004; Davis, 2007; Brooks, 2008). As it relates to self-imposed mandates, Brooks (2008) found that most of the pastor's wives in her study put great demands on themselves as it relates to their role. This sentiment was reverberated by a participant in Davis (2007) study in that a pastor's wife reported not feeling like she fit the mold of a pastor's wife.

As noted by one participant in the Davis (2007), ministry has a way of sometimes engulfing the life of the clergy family. One participant denoted the changes she experienced when her husband became full-time on a pastoral staff. This participant became a big-fish-in-the-pond with great visibility and as a result, she became the person that the people would seek out for help. As a pastor's wife, being all encompassing is the norm. As noted by another participant in the Davis (2007), pastor's wives work in many different capacities in the churches that their husband's pastor.

Another common theme in the literature on the pastor's wife and clergy family is the issues with time (Darling, Hill, and McWey, 2004; Davis, 2007; Stafla, 2008; Luedtke & Sneed, 2018). The clergy family is unlike other nuclear families, because of the focus of the husband's job which is ministry and the demands that are placed on the pastor, and sometimes the wife. When a woman is married to a man who chooses as his career profession, the office of pastor, his wife holds a dual role of wife and pastor's wife.

In conjunction to time constraints, financial lack, and loneliness, there is the issue of satisfaction in the role of pastor's wife. In a quantitative study with a sample of 145 pastor's wives in the Southern Baptist Church, Brooks (2008) studies role satisfaction. Within her study, Brooks (2008) provided some information on the Role of the pastor's wife in the Southern Baptist Church. Most of the women in the study had been ministers' wives for more than 10

years. As it relates to role expectations, more than 70% of the wives in the study felt like their husband's congregation had expectations of them as the pastor's wife.

Along the same lines, more than 85% of the wives noted awareness of expectation from their husband's as it relates to their role as the first lady and more than 75% of the women noted that they and their husbands were on one-accord in the journey and had the same vision. For more than one-third of the participants in the study, the women denoted feeling like not only was their husband called to the ministry of running a church and serving people, so were they. For another almost two-third of the sample, even though they did not feel like they had a special calling from the Lord directly to ministry, they felt like they were in the perfect will of God being married to their husbands who were called specifically to the pastorate. Brooks (2008), findings showed that the pastor's wives put a significant amount of demands on themselves within their role that they didn't feel able to meet. Brooks (2008), was also able to discuss the issues pastors' wives have with not being able to be seen outside of being pastor's wife.

Brooks (2008) did not agree with other as it relates to pastors' wives and their issues with creating close relationships. Brooks (2008), felt that the pastor's wives' bout with limited friendships came from the constant transitioning of the pastors from church to church. For pastors' wives, the subject of satisfaction is subjective, for many pastors' wives, the work of serving the people and helping them to connect to the Almighty God brings about great gratitude (Platt & Moss, 1976; Brooks, 2008). However, for some, if not all, there are areas of the role that minimize the happiness a pastor's wife can experience within her role (Brooks, 2008).

With all of the expectation of the pastor's wife, for most if not all, there is no prior formal preparation (Platt & Moss, 1976; Henry-Whitehead, 2004; Jenkins, 2005). Pastor's wives have generally not been trained or prepared for the role of pastor's wife (Henry-Whitehead, 2004;

Jenkins, 2005). Henry-Whitehead (2004) completed a study that investigated the educational needs of the African American pastor's wife in the Baptist church. Henry-Whitehead (2004) utilized the interviews from three different genre groups to determine the educational needs and the availability of education for the black pastor's wife in the Baptist Church.

The three groups sampled were black pastor's wives, community leaders who had leadership roles connecting to black pastors' wives, and higher education organizational educators of adult education. Henry-Whitehead (2004) sample included thirteen participants. The sample was comprised of five pastor's wives who were part of several different groups created by the researcher for the study. The participants were chosen accordingly because they either were a black pastor's wife in a Baptist church, were an administrator or affiliate in higher education or adult education who had experience with black pastors' wives, or because they had an affiliation with the Baptist Church or Black Ministers' wives' organization or similar organizations (Henry-Whitehead, 2004).

Pastors' wives feel they experience many blessings within their role (Henry-Whitehead, 2004). The blessings they feel are a heightened spiritual life, as well as walking besides their husbands while performing a great work, and being able to serve and take care of people. No woman in any congregation is expected to share their husband with the church and other congregants. However, for the pastor's wife, sharing her husband with the church is one of her number one responsibility (Henry-Whitehead, 2004).

The result of Henry-Whitehead (2004) study revealed several areas where pastors' wives perceived they need educational advancement. Pastor's wives felt they needed education that increased their spiritual development, increased their personal development, helped them to support their husband, helped them to support their family, and education that helped them to

support the congregation and community. Much of the research and literature on pastors' wives denotes pastors' wives lives revolving around their husbands, families, congregations, and communities. These educational revelations provide further insight into the way these women view their roles and the commitment many have to adequately fulfilling their roles (Henry-Whitehead, 2004).

Jenkins (2005), completed an investigation that examined the education and training needs of pastors' wives. The study synopsis hosted a total of five questions related to the ministry life of a pastor's wife and their training needs. The study had a sample of 151 pastors' wives of different denominations across the country.

The researcher performed the investigation by interviewing pastors' wives in several different forms. The initial interview was an online form using a panel of six pastors' wives. A follow-up interview was a survey form where a survey was sent to another group of clergy-wives. The instrument used was a Likert Scale Survey that included one rank-order, demographics, and open-ended questions. The ethnicity of the sample varied to some degree. The subjects of the study identified as African American, Caucasian, and Latin American. The majority of the participants were either African American or Caucasian; but there were more African American participants than Caucasian. The remaining two subjects identified as other. The age range of the sample varied between twenty and eighty.

The results of the study found that pastor's wives thrive in the presence of appropriate understanding and skill. The research did not provide information on program or training availability or types of training needed. The basis of the research results revolved around the product of education and training and the usefulness of educating and training pastors' wives for ministry.

### **The African American Pastor's Wife**

Almost invisible within the literary conversation on the pastor's wife, the black pastor's wife makes her way into the late modern writings of Henry-Whitehead (2004), Gioia (2005), Jenkins (2005), Parker (2006), Taylor-Smith (2009), Sanders (2014), and Harris (2017) most of whom are African American. While some of the previous researchers within this literature review didn't necessarily reveal the racial background of the participants, it was observable from the language, cultural perspective, and from google searches of pictures of the researchers by name that the majority of the researchers were white-women who pulled their sample from among their surroundings, churches, or denominational affiliations which were all likely to be predominantly white (Murphy-Geiss, 2011).

While most of the research available on pastors' wives utilized primarily Caucasian samples and culture, just like the Caucasian pastor's wife, there is not a lot of difference in the role of the African American pastor's wife from the Caucasian pastor's wife at especially not from the standpoint of supporting her husband. In fact, the African American pastor's wife may be even more supportive when it comes to building the church and people in the church.

In her mixed methods design, Parker (2006) reported the stories of black pastor's wives, and their view of their role as a pastor's wife. To provide comparison, in conjunction to studying more than 35 black pastor's wives, Parker (2006) also reported the experiences of almost 15 white pastor's wives. One unique finding that was hard to overlook regarding the pair of pastor's wives studied in the investigation was the differences in opinion of the perception of the role.

According to Parker (2006), the Caucasian pastor's wives acknowledged themselves as being more focused on the man as their husband while the African American pastor's wives were both focused on the man as husband and the work as their purpose. Black pastor's wives viewed

themselves as part of the building of the people and they took great pride in doing so (Parker, 2006).

The participants in Parker (2006) found time issues to be a big challenge with African American pastor's wives being more vocal about this (Parker, 2006). Both groups of pastor's wives felt the demands of ministry; however, the Caucasian pastor's wives were more vocal about the demands. Another interesting finding in the Parker (2006) investigation was that more than likely when there was an issue with finances; it was the Caucasian pastor's wife who vocalized it as a challenge while the African American pastors' wives didn't note it as an issue. Overall the African American pastor's wives tended to be more satisfied in their role as a pastors' wife. Even though not all of the African American pastor's wives reported positively, this finding could provide some evidence that the other researchers in the literature whose racial identity and participant identity was determined to be white actually was because in most of the studies, satisfaction was subjective and a persistent theme within the research (Parker, 2006).

Support of the husband in his career was of concern for both sets of pastors' wives; however, the African American pastors' wives seem to want that support reciprocated (Parker, 2006). Though there are some differences, overall, the black pastor's wife has some of the same challenges as the white pastor's wife. Black pastors' wives, experience the impact of the career chosen by their husband, just like other pastors' wives, however, there seems to be a difference in the distressed experienced from the impact (Parker, 2006).

The study of the African American pastor's wife continued with Taylor-Smith (2009) dissertation study of more than nineteen black pastors' wives. Taylor-Smith (2009) decided on a phenomenological qualitative design that allowed the pastors' wives to describe and define their own stories. Like Parker (2006), Taylor-Smith (2009) sought to uncover the experiences of the



black pastor's wife as black pastors' wives. However, Taylor-Smith (2009) went with a design that would provide a more in-depth view of the experience of the role.

More than 59% of the women in the Taylor-Smith (2009) study reported being active in ministry alongside their husbands. The positions, areas, and leadership roles held by the pastor's wives in the study varied. However, none of the positions reported were in a counseling or care ministry. Like in the other research studies, the question of friendship was asked to which most of the pastors' wives in the study replied they do not have close friendships (Rogers, 2000; Parker, 2006; Stalfa, 2008; Taylor-Smith, 2009; Luedtke & Sneed, 2018). Some report the role as being the best-and-worst of times at the same time while others reported only information that translates to satisfaction with the role (Taylor-Smith, 2009).

One of the participants in the Taylor-Smith (2009) study echoed the perspective of the researcher in that the African American pastor's wife is more of a staple in a black church than a non-black pastor's wife maybe in her church. While many of the pastor's wives in the Taylor-Smith (2009) study work in ministry, the overall consensus of the women in the study was their main role was not to the office of pastor's wife but to the role of wife and mother. And for these pastor's wives, there was not a true issue of balance as it relates to what's most important and the main focus.

The participants in Taylor-Smith (2009) study echoed what was observed by Davis (2007) and that is that personal pressures and the beliefs of others as to who the pastor's wife is and what she should be doing comes with the life of being a pastor's wife. Fifty percent of the women in the study felt like being married to a pastor was God's divine will for their life while another 45% were determine to move in stride with their husband's commitment to the work of the church (Taylor-Smith, 2009).

In the Taylor-Smith (2009) study, the participants reported on some other ideas about the role of the black pastor's wife. The participants reported that they were expected to dress and act in a certain way. In black churches of the participants in the study, the church members believed that the pastor's wife should exhibit certain "leadership" behavior as well as have a certain level of "biblical" prowess and that she be a prominent part of her husband's pastorate (Taylor-Smith, 2009, pg. 94). The pastor's wife should have "gifts and talents" that are viewed as "gifts and talents" that pastor's wives distinctively have of a pastors' wife (pg. 96). For the African American pastor's wives in the Taylor-Smith (2009) study, the list of what's expected of the black pastors' wife as it relates to the congregation seems to far exceed what was observed from the other non-black research studies. The pastor's wives in the Taylor-Smith (2009) also noted their challenges with people seeing them as more than human.

Being married to the pastor, the pastor's wives in the Taylor-Smith (2009) investigation reported being viewed as a type of assistant pastor; if the pastor's couldn't do it, the wife was viewed as being able to take his place. The women themselves even believed that their active existence at the side of their pastor husband was very important (Taylor-Smith, 2009).

In 2014, Ophelia Sanders, an African American pastor's wife in Florida completed a dissertation research study that utilized a heuristic qualitative research design that investigated a total of nine pastors' wives and included the researcher as a tenth participant because of her firsthand knowledge. The research looked at the unorthodox roles held by the pastor's wives in the study. According to the researcher, the pastors' wives "served as co-pastor's or some other non-traditional role" alongside their husbands in ministry (Sanders, 2014, pg. 41).

The pastor's wives in the study each had extensive ministry experience. Only one had less than fifteen years of ministry experience as a clergy wife. Each of the pastors' wives in the

study held high leadership positions alongside their husbands in ministry. Most of the women in the study identified as their husband's co-pastor. The researcher herself, who is counted in the study sample, held the position of church administrator with only one person over her and that was her husband, the pastor. Among the themes discovered from the analyzation of the data, the most prominent theme was that of "helpmate to their pastor/husbands" (Sanders, 2014, pg. 76). According to Sanders (2014), the impact of the pastoral career could be determined by the pastor's wife fulfilling the role of "helpmate" (pg. 76).

Some of the pastors' wives in the study took ownership of the success of the ministry that her husband's pastored. As a result, these pastors' wives worked hard towards the success of the ministry and their husbands whom they revered as God's handyman (Sanders, 2014). According to the statements of the pastors' wives in the study, all who are deemed to be African American, these women and their husband's operate as a team in ministry (Sanders, 2014).

In the Sanders (2014) study, while some of the women discussed their administrative role in the church alongside their husbands, some discussed working in Christian education at the church. However, others made it plain that they often provided pastoral care and counseling to members although none of the women went into detail about their role as a pastoral counselor. Another dynamic mentioned by at least one of the women in the study was having to help her husband start their church and the challenges the pursued. It almost seemed that by default this particular pastor's wife who was a part of a startup church, was forced to do just about everything in the church especially in the beginning when membership was low (Sanders, 2014).

Overall, the pastor's wives in the study viewed themselves as God's servant to the people for the purpose of making the people's lives better. The women viewed their role through the lens of servanthood no matter the title or level of the position held (Sanders, 2014).

### **Pastor's Wives in Pastoral Care and Counseling**

Several of the researchers' (Marinan, 1966; Lee, 2000; Jenkins, 2005; Benoit, 2010; Sanders, 2014) notated the pastoral care and counseling as one of many tasks that pastors' wives carried out, but none of them went into detail about their role. Everyone spoke of pastoral counseling in passing. However, one researcher actually ran a quantitative study on pastor's wives in pastoral care and counseling. In 2005, Elizabeth A. Gioia completed a dissertation research study that investigated the involvement of the pastor's wife in pastoral counseling and pastoral care. Gioia (2005) utilized what she said was a diverse sample, but actually lacked diversity since more than 90 percent of the participants were Caucasian. While the sample was not reflective of the entire population, the study was able to further confirm that some pastors' wives provided a significant amount of pastoral care and counseling in the churches they serve.

The exact reason for providing these services were not mentioned; however, the participants noted having a desire to help people with their problems. The educational levels among the pastor's wives varied but most had at least a bachelor's degree. The study did not specifically identify the areas of study for those with degrees but did note that one of the participants had a master's degree in counseling and several worked specifically as vocational counselors or social workers (Gioia, 2005).

The first ladies in the study ranged in age from 35 years-old to 72 years-old and had ministry service duration varied between 3-to-54 years of church service (Gioia, 2005). The average amount of years in ministry was around 23 years. The pastor's wives provided answers to a plethora of questions from a number of quantitative scales surrounding their care and counseling activities. Each of the participants also answered questions denoting that they provided a variety of counseling to a number of different life issues; however, issues of marriage

and family were the chief concern in the counseling sessions (Gioia, 2005). Gioia's study was the only one of its kind.

Gioia (2005) conducted what she defined as a pilot study on the pastor's wife in pastoral care and counseling. The mixed method study was descriptive in nature but mostly quantitative in scope as the researcher relied heavily on statistical analysis. The purpose of the study was to measure involvement and not to reveal experience. Gioia (2005) only used a sample of pastors' wives from the Central Association and the Valley Rim Association of the Southern Baptist Churches. Though originally inviting more than 140 pastors' wives to participate in the study, Gioia (2005) was only able to obtain 21 eligible participants for her study. All of the participants of the study lived in the state of Arizona.

The participants of the study varied in age and years in ministry. The participants were all married to senior pastors in the Southern Baptist Associations. Though Gioia (2005) noted her study as being ethnically diverse, more than 81% of the participants were Caucasian women. Of the 21 participants, only one was African American. The remaining participants marked themselves as of Hispanic, Asian, and Indian descent. As it related to educational background, all of the participants had college degrees with several having advanced degrees. One of the participants with an advanced degree held her degree in counseling. Three of the study participants noted working in a human service field as either a counselor or social worker.

Gioia (2005) study found that all of the participants had a heart for the inner personal issues of the members of the church and each of them have been involved in providing some type of support, mainly in the form of prayer to members of the church as they deal with personal life issues. Of the 21 participants, each of them had provided some type of counseling

support be it taking a parishioner to a counseling session, sitting in on a counseling session provided by their husband, or providing direct counseling themselves.

Many of the women felt their husbands expected them to be involved in pastoral counseling in their church. The women noted providing various forms of counseling and support to different types of issues. The wives also reporting participating in pastoral care service. Most of the pastor's wives in the Gioia (2005) study reported feeling they had at least some feelings that either or both their husband and congregation expected them to be involved in some are all of the before mentioned aspects of pastoral care or counseling.

### **Gap in the Literature and New Research Focus**

Pastor's wives are thrust into leadership positions within the churches that their husbands pastor but they sometimes don't generally have any prior preparation or guidance (Henry-Whitehead, 2004; Jenkins, 2005; Harris, 2017). There is great ministry responsibility places on the pastor's wife (Harris, 2017). "The role of senior pastors' wives and other women in ministry should be understood as service, commitment, passion, and calling" (Harris, 2017, pg. 95)

The current research available on pastor's wives is limited. Other notable literature is also limited but only comes in the form of encouragement and guidance books written mostly by ministers' wives for ministers' wives. Of the existing literature whether dissertation or journal article, there is no research that specifically examines the role of the African American Pastors' wife as a ministry helper specifically in Pastoral Care and Counseling.

The dissertation study completed by Gioia (2005) provided concrete evidence of pastors' wives activity in providing pastoral counseling and care to parishioners. However, this study, like others did not provide results that could necessarily be generalized to pastors' wives of other ethnicities. In particular, the research did not account for the pastoral care and counseling

experiences of African American pastors' wives serving in predominantly black churches and other available research on African American pastors' wives did not necessarily discuss the pastoral care and counseling service of the black pastor's wife. None of the available research on pastors' wives or African American pastor's wives provided any phenomenological qualitative investigation on the experiences of pastors' wives in pastoral counseling and care. Also none of the research specifically focused on the experiences of African American pastor's wives in pastoral counseling and congregational/community care.

### **Summary**

Pastoral care and counseling is a very important part of any church, especially the black church. For pastors, this task comes with the job. At the side of most pastors' is his wife. Pastors' wives of all races tend to be highly active in ministry service alongside her husband. The existing research has made clear the pastor's wife as a helper in her husband's ministry. Various areas of service and task have been noted within the literature as it relates to how pastors' wives serve alongside their husband. Of the existing literature, only one study has even considered the pastoral care and counseling service of the pastor's wife. However, that study only looked at the issue from a quantitative perspective and generally only focused on the Caucasian pastor's wife in the role of Pastoral Counselor and Caretaker in what seemed to have been predominantly white churches. As the only one of its kind, this study will examine the lived experiences of the African American pastor's wife in her role as a helper serving alongside her husband in pastoral counseling and pastoral care in the black church.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Introduction**

The method used for this study was a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative research study that investigated the phenomena of helper in the lived experiences of the African American pastors' wife in pastoral counseling and congregational care serving alongside her husband within predominantly black Christian churches. The purpose of the study was to shine a light on the involvement and perspective of black pastor's wives who hold active roles in ministry service alongside their husbands. The researcher was interested in knowing if the African American pastor's wife was viewed as somewhat of an assistant pastor or co-pastor within the church that her husband pastors. The researcher also wanted to understand the extent of the African American pastors' wives service to her congregation in pastoral care and counseling.

The researcher's personal observation of the phenomena of helper surrounding the African American pastor's wife is that the pastor's wife in a predominantly black church setting seems to take on a role that mimics the pastor; especially in regards to serving the female parishioners of that congregation. Literature about pastors' wives seems to suggest that some pastor's wives as being viewed as somewhat of an extension of the pastor by church members or herself (Gioia, 2005).

### **Qualitative Research and Phenomenology in Qualitative Research**

The qualitative research style called phenomenology was best for revealing the information that the researcher was interested in. Phenomenology is the science that concerns itself with the lived experience (Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Groenewald, 2004; Fernandez 2017; Mapp, 2008). Phenomenology is a common qualitative research tool.



According to Sloan & Bowe (2014), phenomenology revolves around the observation of humanity and would like to understand things from their perspective. Phenomenology discusses experiences as told by the experiencer (Groenewald, 2004). In doing so, qualitative research is tasked with delivering truth about the phenomena. Qualitative research attempts to reveal the communal paradigm of existence (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Phenomenology seeks to uncover and reveal the internal perspective of an occurrence (Groenewald, 2004; Mapp, 2008; Bruzina, 2012; Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Fernandez, 2017; Worthington, n.d.).

Phenomenology deals with the core or heart of a matter as it relates to its meaning to a person experiencing the phenomena (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Phenomenology research has the potential to successfully convey the unspoken composition of common encounters (Worthington, n.d.). In the same manner that phenomenology research is the study of the human experience, hermeneutical phenomenology focuses on the human within the experience and their understanding of the phenomena (Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Worthington, n.d.).

The position of phenomenology is that internal thoughts, beliefs, and understanding can be revealed and of value. Phenomenological research allows for tunneling into the inner corridor of an experience that unveils hidden dynamics and presents the soul of the phenomena and experience (Wertz, 2005). Seeking to understand the intrinsic nature of the phenomena, phenomenology penetrates the experience itself and steers clear of superficial observation or judgment (Worthington, n.d.). In hermeneutic phenomenology research, the observations, experiences, and perceptions of the researcher become a fixture within the research processes (Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Mapp, 2008). This will allow the researcher to bring her understanding of the phenomena into the data collection and data analysis.

While not conceptually ambitious, phenomenology research can provide a cultural understanding of a phenomenon. In extracting meaning in a robust way, phenomenology research gives way for the phenomena to be considered in high regard and allows each perspective to hold a standard within the research results (Wertz, 2005).

### **The Researchers Role in the Study**

The researcher's interest was developed through many years of being a member of the African American church under the leadership of an African American pastor and African American pastor's wife. The researcher herself noticed through close observation that pastor's wives tended to automatically work diligently in ministry right alongside their husbands. In particular, the researcher found that the female population of most of the African American churches she observed, including her own, all depended on the pastor's wife in one way or the other. The researcher's main reason for seeking out her pastor's wife or any African American pastor's wife was for counseling and counsel, either in the form of formal scheduled counseling or one-on-one personal ministry, advice, guidance, or prayer.

The researcher also observed how pastor's wives took care of not only their husbands but the people in the church from the elderly all the way down to the kids. The pastor's wives would often have a busy schedule because in conjunction with taking care of the home, the kids, and their spouses, they always appeared to have responsibilities that revolved around making sure the church and the members were okay.

The researcher is educated in the field of Mental Health Counseling and is at the time of this research study, completing a doctorate degree with a specialization in Pastoral Care and Counseling. And being that the researcher herself has an extreme passion for the African American Church and the ministry of the church, she plans to utilize not only her business

acumen but also her Master's and Doctoral Education within the church and Kingdom Ministry settings. As a result of these aspirations, the researcher wanted to understand the experiences and drives of the pastor's wife in serving the church and the people of the church. With the information obtained the researcher hopes to take part in the fortification of pastor's wives as well as develop church programs and systems that would assist pastor's wives and lay members alike in providing service to the church and its members with efficacy. The first task in accomplishing this goal was the researcher taking part in this researcher study.

The researcher's role in the research study, made her responsible for collecting all the data by way of individual interviews. The researcher, in her role as participant in the study became a part of the study through asking the interview questions and intently listening to each participant during interviews while observing what was unspoken such as facial expressions, tone, and other modest behavior. The researcher then became the analyzation instrument in that the researcher was responsible for analyzing the data and interpreting the results.

### **Method**

As previously noted, the research design utilized for this study was a phenomenological qualitative research design. The hermeneutical phenomenological research method was used to interview a total of seven African American Pastors' wives. To qualify for the study, the Pastors' Wife had to be African American women, a senior pastor's wife, acknowledge that she serves and has served in ministry with her husband at a predominantly black church for at least one year.

### **Gaining Access**

The method for pulling a sample for phenomenology research is directly determined by what the phenomenon or issue is (Groenewald, 2004). This study used purposive sampling

(Groenewald, 2004; Wertz, 2005; Creswell, 2007; Mapp, 2008). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to pull a sample according to the purpose of the study. The reason for this sampling technique was to attempt to choose pastor's wives whose roles closely align with the role of the pastor as it relates to the pastoral care and pastoral counseling. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the participants involved in the study have lived the experience or are living the experience (Mapp, 2008).

In conjunction with inviting pastor's wives she was already acquainted with in some form to participate in the study, as well as receiving referrals from associates and colleagues, the researcher utilized the assistance of a senior first lady in the city of Houston to obtain a sample of other pastor's wives. The senior first lady operated as the sampling-lead or gatekeeper, as noted by Groenewald (2004). She was the person in whom other participants were garnered. The gatekeeper/sampling-lead was a senior first lady and co-pastor in Southeast Texas about two hours outside of Houston. Her husband is the senior pastor and bishop of their church. The gatekeeper first lady was chosen because she is also a part of a ministry fellowship of pastor's and pastor's wives and she has direct access to pastor's wives that would be useful to the study. Snowballing was an approved recruiting mechanism of the study but no participants were obtained via snowballing although one potential participant who was deemed unqualified for the study was given permission to tell her pastors' wives friends about the study.

### **Data Collection**

Phenomenology research data collection is carried out through interviews. In phenomenology, these interviews were handled in a meaningful way where both the interviewer and the participant were actively carrying out a conversation (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). This qualitative method of research obtained information on issues through direct discussions with

people involved in the experience (Creswell, 2007, Mapp, 2008)). There are other forms of phenomenology that require the researcher to ignore their personal experiences and personal opinions or thoughts on a matter (Mapp, 2008; Groenewald, Sloan & Bowe, 2014). This famous concept or method in phenomenology is bracketing or *epoche*, which is the researcher's requirement to remove all prior thoughts or notions about the phenomena in which they are studying (Creswell, 2007, Bruzina, 2012, Sloan & Browe, 2013, & Fernandez, 2017). This is done in hopes that the researcher's own inclinations about the phenomena would not infuse into the research. However, unlike other forms of phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology allows the researcher's own observations and opinions regarding the subject matter to be considered within the research (Wertz, 2005).

Data collection for this research study began with obtaining approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Full approval was granted once the IRB had reviewed the IRB application and all supporting documents which included; a document containing the study interview questions, recruitment letter, a script that the researcher used as initial contact with the pastor's wives she knew, and a consent form. Once all documents had been fully approved, the researcher began the data collection.

To carry out the data collection, the researcher worked with the gatekeeper to obtain women who could be potential study participants. The gatekeeper emailed a total of 44 pastor's wives between her two database of pastor's wives. While the gatekeeper was awaiting responses, the researcher contacted several pastor's wives she had an acquaintance with via social media inbox and spoke with friends who had personal relationships with pastors' wives. The researcher contacted a total of nine pastor's wives via social media private inbox using the approved script to ask could she forward them information on the study. Of the nine women contacted, six of the

women responded by providing an email address where a study invitation letter could be forwarded.

Once obtained, the gatekeeper sent the researcher the contact information of three women who had agreed to either participate or learn more about the study. An additional lead was obtained from an associate familiar with the study. The researcher also received five participant referrals from a colleague familiar with the study and one referral from one of the pastor's wife who had received information about the study.

### **The Sample**

Of the women who received initial contact and/or the recruitment email, only seven women completed all the tasks. Participation task included responding to the screening questions and sending them back to determine eligibility. Then, completing the electronic consent form, which was sent via email in a secured google format. Then contacted by the researcher via phone or email to further discuss the study, and/or secure an interview date and time. One potential participant was disqualified because she did not meet participation requirements. One potential participant was disqualified because the study maximum limit of participants was met before she completed all task. Another potential study participant was disqualified because the study had ended before she completed all task. In qualitative sampling, the sample size should be enough to gather holistic viewpoints on the phenomena but shouldn't be too large for fear of nullification due to the replication of information from too many respondents. The sample size in a qualitative research study should be determined by the purpose of the study. Some studies require larger sample sizes while other studies need only a few participants in being able to define the phenomena (Mason, 2010). Creswell (2007) also recommends a small sample. The researcher

was hoping to obtain between five and seven participants and was able to obtain a total of seven participants.

### **Setting**

While face-to-face interviews were available, in observing the schedule and availability of the pastor's wives who agreed to participate in the study, the researcher found the need to focus on allowing the participants to complete a web interview for their comfort and schedule. Because of their schedules, many of the women had a hard time just getting their screening and consent paperwork done and phones calls made in relations to the study went unanswered for days. Also, several of the women in the study didn't live within the Houston city limits or even in the greater Houston area. For these reasons, the researcher found it necessary and almost mandatory that these women be interviewed using a web-based platform that would allow them to complete their interviews in whatever manner they needed using their computer or telephone. All of the participants preferred this method since it was more convenient for them.

### **Screening**

All participants in the study met all of the study criteria. Each participant was an African American woman 25 years of age or older, married to an African American senior pastor, had been married to her senior pastor husband for at least a year, her husband pastored a predominantly black church, and she had served alongside her husband in ministry for at least a year.

### **The Interviews**

The researcher conducted structured interviews with each of the participants by asking the exact same questions in the exact order. The researcher clarified questions as needed. Each participant was asked a total of 36 questions of which 16 questions were open-ended while the

other only required a single answer. The purpose of the study was to answer the central research questions, what have been the experiences of African American Pastor's wives as "helpers" serving alongside her husband in Pastoral Care and Counseling within the African American Church? To arrive at an answer to this question, the researcher completed interviews that asked the following questions:

How long have you been a pastors' wife?

Was your husband a Pastor when you married him or did you go into ministry together as husband and wife?

Does your husband pastor a church he planted or a church that hired him?

What is your official title if you have one?

How did this title come about?

How does your husband address you in ministry?

How does your congregation address you in Ministry?

Do you have any Christian/Biblical/Theological Education?

What are some of your roles and tasks (how do you serve) in ministry?

How were you brought into these roles or tasks?

Discuss with me your viewpoint on assisting and helping your husband in ministry.

Do you view your ministry service as a call from God or is it more of an obligation?

Explain your viewpoint...

Before becoming a pastor's wife, did you feel you were called to the ministry or to work in ministry at this level and/or to this capacity?

Do you view yourself as your husband's ministry assistant of some sort?



Do you view yourself as a type of female pastor such as co-pastor, executive pastor, or assistant pastor?

Do you feel that the congregation in your predominantly black church views you as a type of assistant pastor or the female equivalent of the pastor?

Are you expected to fulfill such a role?

What demands are put on you by your husband?

What demands are put on you by the congregation?

What are your experiences in pastoral care and counseling?

What are your opinions and feelings about your role and task?

What drives you to help in your husband's pastorate?

Are there expectations placed on you by your husband to serve? If so, what are those expectations and how do you meet them?

Are there expectations placed on you by the congregation to serve? If so, what are those expectations and how do you meet them?

When it comes to congregants seeking your help, what service do you find to be the one you are most sought after to provide?

Which gender seeks these services the most?

Why do you think that is?

What do you see as your biggest responsibility in ministry?

What do you find to be your most daunting responsibility or expectation in ministry?

Of the ministry services you provide, what task would you say requires the most of your time?

What has been your greatest challenge working in ministry?

What has been your greatest love working in ministry?

Describe your life as a ministry helper working alongside your husband in ministry.

Think outside your current life: If you were not a pastor's wife, would you still feel obligated, or be passionate about serving in the church at the same rate, and with the same fervor? Why or why not?

Is there anything that I have not asked that you think is important for me to know about the Pastor's wife?

Are you feeling uneasy about anything that we have discussed?

Because of the researcher's many years of experience with the phenomena, a hermeneutic phenomenological study was more effective for this study to remove any methodology that would force the research into bias. Because of the "reflexivity" (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p.1297) in hermeneutic phenomenology which engages the experiences of the researcher, the interview process is more of a flowing conversation where the interviewer's personal experiences and observation of the subject matter is interjected versus the traditional formal interview (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). However, the researcher utilized a structured question set to ensure that the phenomena was thoroughly investigated. The research did not interrupt the flow in which the participants answered questions.

A mechanism that has been one of the key notions of phenomenology is the philosophy of intentionality (Wertz, 2005; Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Fernandez, 2017) this could be the internal factor of some African American pastor's wives as it relates to their role as helper. While researchers like Fernandez (2017) noted that many phenomenologists have moved away from the philosophy of intentionality, intentionality could account for the internal perspective of the black pastor's wife as it relates to her help in ministry. Qualitative research does not seek to quantify

an analysis via the verification of a hypothesis. But rather, qualitative research searches to understand the core perspective of something (Mason, 2010). For example, this research study sought to understand the “helper” phenomena and perspective of the African American wife as it relates to her side-by-side work in ministry with her husband.

As previously noted, the interviews were conducted via a secure online interface called Zoom. Completing the interviews via a web interface allowed the participants comfort and convenience and this was visible once each participant had logged-on for their individual interview despite the concern some of them had regarding what questions they would be asked. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The duration of the interviews were determined by the need for an inundation of information (Mapp, 2008). This was also the reason the researcher asked an influx of questions during the interviews. Sampling is thorough in phenomenology, once saturation is met. Once data becomes monotonous; meaning the answers become the same then saturation has been met. According to Mapp (2008), different researchers have met saturation at different points during the interviews. However, it seems that there is a consensus that anywhere between 30 minutes and two hours, saturation could be reached.

Each interview was recorded using the Zoom software. The recordings were saved to a secure drive on a password protected computer. Qualitative interviews are generally taped to obtain verbatim testimony and then transcribed (Creswell, 2007; Mapp, 2008). The researcher herself transcribed the first three interviews. However, due to the inundation of interviews, the remaining four interviews were transcribed by a confidential professional transcription service.

### **Data Analysis**

Each recorded interview was transcribed. Each transcription was saved under the pseudonym created for each participant. As each transcription became complete, the researcher

reconnected with the participant via conference call to go over the transcript focusing on the key portions of each answer allowing the participant to interject as needed. The researcher also asked the participant “was meaning capture in the answer” as well as allowed the participant to make any desired changes to content. The researcher also allowed the participant to add any additional information that was deemed necessary.

Six of the seven participants reviewed their transcription with the researcher. One participant emphatically declared that she did not need a follow-up conference to review her transcription. The participant stated she was very aware of everything she said in the interview and she meant everything that was stated. All other participants accepted a conference call to review their transcript. Allowing the participant an opportunity to review the transcript is a part of an analysis technique called the Colaizzi method which requires that the researcher provide the participant with the information in the final transcript to ensure accuracy (Mapp, 2008). According to Groenewald (2004), allowing review of the transcription and leaving the interviewee to determine its accuracy assists in the validation of information.

By reading the interview transcripts back to the participants, the researcher was able to become even more acquainted with the information. In conjunction to listening attentively to the participants during the interview and going through the transcripts multiple times including the review session, the researcher, who also conducted the interviews, was able to be fully immersed in the information. Though she was not with any participant for a long period of time, she had extended engagement with the conversation had via persistent thoughts and mental engagement of the participant answers, emotions, behaviors, and concerns. The researcher herself analyzed the data by first obtaining a transcription for each interview. The researcher then completed

review of the interview transcript with each participant for information accuracy. The researcher then re-read each transcript, coded the transcripts, and extracted the emerging themes.

Once the participants in the study had reviewed their transcript and stated that everything within was accurate and they had said what they meant, the researcher opened each individual transcript on a computer all at the same time. She then went through each interview question and grouped the 36 questions into topics discussed. She then used the topics discussed and the answers to create codes. A total of eight codes were created (See Table 1).

Table 1.

Study Codes

CODE #1: Ministry & Church Titles	Q.4 Q.5 Q.6 Q.7
CODE #2: Roles & Task	Q.9 Q.10 Q.16 Q.21
CODE #3: Expectations & Responsibilities	Q.17 Q.18 Q.19 Q.23 Q.24

	Q.28
CODE #4: Purpose & Calling	Q.12 Q.13 Q.21 Q.22 Q.32 Q.34
CODE #5: Ministry Assistance	Q.11 Q.14 Q.15
CODE #6: Counseling – Care – Serving People	Q.20 Q.25
CODE #7: Stress – Overwhelm – Anxiety - Discouragement	Q.29 Q.30 Q.31
CODE #8: Other & Concerns	Q.26 Q.27 Q.30

According to Mapp (2008), methods such as the Colaizzi method allow for qualitative research to be “interpreted” (p. 310) when the data is coded. Once the codes were created, the researcher then used a large note pad creating a page for each code. Under each code, she wrote the pseudonym name for each of the seven participants one-by-one. The researcher then wrote

the answer to each question in the code in a separate section for each participant. This was done for each code. Once each of the participant's answers to the respective questions had been written down under the proper code, the researcher once again reviewed the answers looking for common thoughts, perspectives, answers, and themes. From the coded participant answers, four themes emerged. While bracketing in hermeneutic phenomenology isn't necessary (Wertz, 2005), bracketing became unavoidable and paramount during the study as the experiences of the participants took center-stage and drove meaning.

### **Horizontalization**

Horizontalization happens when the meaning in a phenomenon is derived from several key questions (Creswell, 2007). In this study, several questions drove the experience and meaning. Horizontalization was used in the coding process via highlighting and examining key and common statements made by the participants who experienced the phenomenon.

### **Clusters of Meaning**

From horizontalization, clusters of meaning developed from the key and common statements made by the participants who experienced the phenomenon. These clusters of meaning helped the researcher to obtain textural description of the experiences of the participants in the phenomena (Creswell, 2007). These descriptions then allowed the researcher to obtain a structural description that facilitated theme emergence.

### **Data Collection & Transcription Timeline**

Data collection for the study was hosted between March 15 -27, 2019. Data collection began with sending out participation invitations and request to provide information on the study. The interviews were conducted between March 21 - 26, 2019. Transcription began on March 23, 2019 and completed on March 27, 2019. From March 15, 2019 to March 27, 2019 the following

things took place: potential participants were invited to the study, other potential participants were notified of the study and were asked to be sent study information. Participants completed screening and informed consent, issues in obtaining screening and informed consent happened and was rectified accordingly, scheduling and issues in scheduling happened, interviews were conducted and recorded, review calls were made and review was conducted, and all recordings were transcribed.

### **Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

Credibility in a qualitative research design can be obtained by taking steps such as examining the data sets which are the transcribed interviews to look for patterns and common experiences and statements and conveying the meaning of the information examined correctly and efficiently (Thomas & Magilyv, 2011). Then these steps are taken “a qualitative study is considered credible” (p. 152).

In this study, the researcher obtained verbatim transcripts for each interview. Once the transcripts had been obtained, the researcher conducted reviews with each participant to discuss their interview. The review calls lasted between 20 and 57 minutes. During the review, the researcher and the participant collaboratively reviewed the transcripts. First the researcher re-read the question and then read the answer given focusing on the key statements. After each question and answer the researcher asked the participants was the answer what was said and meant. After a review of each question asked had been done, the researcher asked the participants had what she said and meant been captured. The researcher then asked if changes needed. And finally the researcher asked the participant if they wanted to add anything. Changes and additions were made when needed, with clarification.



### **Transferability**

In qualitative research, transferability is equivalent to generalizability. This means that the result of the study can be generalized or transferred to other populations (Creswell, 2007; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). To achieve transferability both Creswell (2007) and Thomas & Magilvy (2011) stated that intense narration of the data and participants must be carried out. This in-depth portrayal of the participants and their meaning of their experiences is called “rich, thick” according to Creswell (2007, p.209).

By providing a narrative and a depiction of the data and participants, the researcher considered and noted themes, meaning, demeanor, tone, expressions, and geographical information such as years in pastoral ministry taking into consideration if the husband was a pastor at marriage or not, and considering the dynamics of his pastoral appointment.

### **Dependability**

Dependability determines that if the research is carried out in the same manner using the same steps and methodology using a different sample, the subsequent results would resemble the results of the mimicked study. The method and procedures for this study is mapped out in Chapter III. Furthermore, according to Creswell (2007), efficacy in reliability “can be enhanced by transcribing the taped recordings” (p. 209). In this study, all participants’ interviews were transcribed verbatim.

### **Conformability**

According to Thomas & Magilvy (2011);

“conformability, similar to objectivity in qualitative terms occurs when credibility, transferability, and dependability have been established” (p.154).

In this study, the opinions of the researcher were involuntarily halted at onset of the interviews. As previously noted, while bracketing is a viable phenomenology technique, (Fernandez, 2017; Bruzina, 2012, Sloan & Browe, 2013), it is not mandatory in hermeneutic phenomenology (Wertz, 2005). However, bracketing happened naturally as the experiences of the participants drove the interviews and set the determining tone of reality. In conjunction with the achievement of credibility, transferability, and dependability discussed in the proceeding paragraphs, this occurrence was important in facilitating conformability. According to Thomas & Magilvy (2011), “the researcher must remain open to the study and unfolding results” (p. 154).

### **Ethical Consideration**

At Liberty University, all research involving human subjects is required to be done ethically. For this study, prior to any data being collect, an application was submitted to Liberty University IRB to carry out the study. As part of its review of the study to ensure that no human subject would be hurt or harmed in any manner, the researcher submitted to the Liberty University IRB an application containing the details of the study including procedures and steps along with procedure for informed consent and confidentiality.

Included among the reviewed documents was the invitation that was sent to potential participants detailing the study. Also included and reviewed was the informed consent that detailed the study providing background information on the study, information on the researcher, procedures and steps, possible risk, benefits of the study, compensation, confidentiality, conflict of interest, the voluntary nature of the study, how to leave the study should they desire too once they had agreed to participate, and contact

information on both the researcher, the dissertation chair, and the Liberty IRB. For their participation in the study, each participant received a \$25.00 Visa gift card and a participation gift for their time and consideration.

To maintain the confidentiality of all participants, the participants were given pseudo names on all connecting documents and data with the exception of the informed consent. Informed consent was obtained through electronic documents and saved on a password protected drive on a password protected computer. Only the investigator has access to passwords. Some of the interviews were professionally transcribed by one transcription company. The tapes were uploaded to a company's secure system. According to the agreement of the company with all customers, all transcriptionists have signed agreements to maintain strict confidentiality.

### **Summary**

This chapter documented the process and procedure used to study the phenomenon of helper within pastor's wives who serve alongside their husband in ministry. As previously noted, this research was conducted to give voice to the African American Pastor's wife within her role of helper specifically as a counselor and caretaker within the black church. The research employed a hermeneutic phenomenological method that allowed the research to consider her own biases about the role of the African American pastor's wife while running the research. However, researcher biases about the phenomena and meaning were thwarted by the expressed meaning of the phenomena by the women who experienced it.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This study was conducted to provide a description of the African American Pastor's wife as a helper to her husband working alongside him in his pastorate. A total of seven African American women married to African American men who are senior pastors of predominantly African American churches were investigated. Each of the participants were 25 years-old or older and had both been married and worked in pastoral ministry alongside their husband for at least one year. All of the participants in the study were screened to determine if they had experienced the phenomena investigated.

Qualitative research has been the research model denoted as being able to uncover deep truths about a lived experience because it investigates an experience as lived (Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Groenewald, 2004; Fernandez 2017; Mapp, 2008). As previously stated, phenomenology centers around humanity and perception and is the research area that seeks to uncover how people define their life experiences (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The research sought to answer the question, what have been the experiences of African American Pastor's wives as "helpers" serving alongside her husband in Pastoral Care and Counseling within the African American Church. In the previous chapter, the research provided a through description of the research design and process used to obtain information on the phenomena of helper among African American Pastor's wives. This chapter will present the findings of the research study. Discussion about the findings will be had in the next chapter.

### **Portrait of the Sample**

In her 1969 classic, Tammy Wynette recorded a song where she discussed the nuances of being a women and particularly the nuances of being a woman in love with a man. The title of

this hit song was “Stand by Your Man” released under the country music genre. For the unmarried woman, standing by a man is a choice. After all, on any given day either of the party can decide they no longer want the relationship. However, in a marriage relationship, standing by your man is a divine mandate. It was in the garden of Eden where there was a decision that man should not be alone and needed a suitable helper.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it..... The Lord God said, it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. Genesis 2:15,18.

Yes, it was God’s idea to make woman a helper in marriage. In this research study, seven helpers were studied in their role as helpers to their husband in pastoral ministry.

### **Group Profile Portrait**

The study investigated seven African American senior pastor’s wives all who in some way serve alongside their husbands in ministry. All of the women interviewed live and serve in pastoral ministry in the state of Texas. Four of the participants live and serve in pastoral ministry in or near the Greater Houston area. Two of the participants live and serve in ministry in or near the Greater Dallas area. And one participant lives and serves in pastoral ministry in or near the greater Austin area. The pastor’s wives ranged from just under two full years in pastoral ministry to over twenty-two years in pastoral ministry. Three of the seven women married their husbands after they had become pastors. The other four participants were already married when their husband accepted his call and assignment into pastoral ministry.

Of the seven participants, four of the pastor’s wives husband had planted the church they were pastoring at the time of the study. Two of the pastor’s wives were

married to men who were hired to pastor the churches they were currently pastoring. And one of the participants was married to a pastor who inherited the church he was pastoring from his father.

### **Abraham's Wife.**

It was not a church he planted, actually it was his father's church and it was always that he would take over the church when his dad retired and his dad retired, so he took over the church.

Of the pastor's wives who were married to men who planted churches, two of the wives married her husband after he was already pastoring and two were married to their husbands before the church was started.

It was not specifically determined if any of the church plant pastors had pastored previous churches. But two of the pastor's wives who husband planted the churches they were pastoring, mentioned them and their spouses having been members of other churches immediately preceding their church plant. Of the two pastor's wives who said their husband was hired by the churches they were currently pastoring, one said her husband grew up in the church. This led the researcher to believe that he had not pastored a previous church and there was no mention by the wife of him having pastored a previous church. The wife of the other hired pastor said that her husband had previously pastored another church. As it relates to the pastor's wife whose husband inherited his current church, the wife said that he had previously pastored in another state.

The study did not consider the exact age of the pastor's wives but it is known that each of the pastor's wives are at least 25 years-old. Being at least 25 years-old was a

screening requirement for the study. Each of the women in the study stated that they were at least 25 years-old.

Table 2.

***Participant Profile***

<b>Name</b>	<b>Year's Married In Pastoral Ministry</b>	<b>Husband a Pastor Before Marriage</b>	<b>Husband Planted a Church or Hired</b>
Adam's Wife	7 yrs.	YES	Planted a Church
Noah's Wife	22.5 yrs.	YES	Planted a Church
Abraham's Wife	22 yrs.	NO	Inherited Father's Church
Moses Wife	8.5 yrs.	NO	Planted
Isaac's Wife	12 yrs.	YES	Hired
Jacobs Wife	18 yrs.	NO	Hired
David's Wife	2 yrs.	NO	Planted

**Individual Profile Portraits**

**Adams Wife.**

Adams wife was a soft spoken but self-assured woman who seemed to be in her mid-forties. She married her husband in 2011 and instantly became a pastor's wife. Her husband pastors a church that he planted. She denotes her official title in ministry as being Prophetess and Elect Lady. As it relates to how this title came about, Adam's Wife said:

Years, years of individuals telling me that I spoke something into their lives and it came to pass and years of counseling uh just time with God. That's the main thing

time with God. God had basically spoke that to me a long time ago but I didn't want to receive it because I was raised Baptist but I accepted my calling or my ministry, I accepted that in the COGIC background. And so, it was much easier for me to be accepted as a preacher in COGIC rather than in Baptist. So once I accepted it, about, I want to say about seven years later I accepted my call into the prophetic. (Interview, March 21, 2019)

### **Noah's Wife.**

Noah's wife was a timid sounding woman who seemed passionate about her love for God, her husband and ministry. She sounded to be like she was in her fifties. She had been married to her husband for 22.5 years and said that when she married her husband he was already pastoring. When it came to her official title she said the following:

I consider myself just to be a regular member. I do not go by First Lady at all. I just feel like I'm one of the members just like everybody else. So I do not prefer that title. There are some members that try to call you that. But I'm Sister Noah's Wife, I go by Sister Noah's Wife. (Interview, March 22, 2019)

### **Abraham's Wife.**

Abraham's Wife was a well-to-do woman. She engaged the interview with poise and clarity. She looked to be in her mid-to-early-fifties. She did not say how long she had been married but did say that her husband became a pastor after they got married and that he had been pastoring for twenty-two years. She denoted her official title as being First Lady and was address as so. When asked how her title came about, Abraham's wife said the following:



I think that's just what they usually call pastor's wives in the black church and so that's how it came about. (Interview, March 22, 2019)

### **Moses Wife.**

Moses wife was a down-to-earth girl who was comfortable in her own skin. She engaged the interview poised and ready to tell her story. She looked to be in her mid-to-late thirties. She said when she married her husband, he was not a pastor. She said they were serving in another church and started having ministry in their hometown because there was a missing spiritual element. She said during the process of just going back having services to engage the people spiritually, God led them to plant a church in the area almost nine years ago. As it relates to her official title, she is the Senior Pastor under her husband the Bishop of the church. Here is what Moses Wife had to say about her title:

The title came about throughout the years, because we split the church. And so he deals with what you call the operations. And I deal with the observation. And so I handle those that come in and out of the church, outreach all of that stuff. So we kind of split the church, that way it's not so much on him in ministry. (Interview, March 25, 2019)

### **Isaac's Wife.**

Isaac's Wife was a beautiful calm-spoken woman whose beauty lit up the room that she was sitting in when she hosted her interview. During the course of the interview, she stated that she was 46-years-old. She had been both married and a pastor's wife for twelve years. Her husband was a pastor when she married him. As it relates to her official

title, she said most people call her First Lady, but other than that, she goes by Sister Isaac's Wife and prefers to be addressed that way.

Well, a lot of people always call me "First Lady" but other than that, Sister Isaac's Wife... I'm more comfortable with Sister Isaac's Wife though. (Interview, March 26, 2019)

### **Jacob's Wife.**

Jacob's wife was the more nonchalant pastor's wife of the group. She spoke plainly and didn't exhibit that same fire and passion as the other six pastor's wives. But she did make it clear that she would do whatever needed to help her husband in ministry because she loved him. She sounded to be in her late thirties to mid-forties. When she married her husband he was pastoring but a few years into the marriage he took over the pastorate of the church he grew-up in. When it came to her official title, Jacob's wife was very adamant about her dislike for titles. She says she goes by Sister Jacob's Wife or her first name.

Well, I don't have a title because, like I said, I've always preferred not to be called a first lady or pastor's wife. (Interview, March 26, 2019)

### **David's Wife.**

David's wife had a pure passion for ministry and building the Kingdom of God and she literally breathed this passion. It was very, very evident that she took her ministry service very seriously. She looked to be somewhere in her thirties. She mentioned that she will have been married for fifteen years this coming August 2019. However, her and her husband are only approach their second year in pastoral ministry. As it relates to her

official title, she says she's the First Lady and she is addressed as First Lady David's Wife or Lady David's Wife.

I am the First Lady and I'm known as First Lady or Lady David's Wife.

(Interview, March 26, 2019)

## **Results**

The results of the research were obtained by transcribing each of the recorded interviews. As previously noted, each participant was interviewed at a separate time from the other ladies. During the interviews, each lady was asked the same questions in the same order. There were a total of 36 interview questions half of which was open ended. The interview questions were carefully crafted to ensure emersion in the phenomena. Gioia (2005), Parker (2006), and Taylor-Smith (2009) had several questions among their questions that asked something similar as several of the interview questions in this study. However, none of the questions were identical or verbatim and like this study, the posing of the questions in each study was designed to identify information relative to each individual study's topic, design, and desired results. After each transcription was obtained, the researcher setup a conference call with each participant to review their transcript. The researcher read of the transcript with the participants focusing attention on key portions of each answer to ensure the question was answered directly and to ensure accuracy and meaning. As needed the participants made changes and additions to the interview transcript.

All transcripts were reviewed and approved via in member checking (Creswell, 2007). In-member check is one technique utilized in qualitative research to facilitate validity and credibility. In-member checking gets the members of a research study,

further involved to check for accuracy of information to ensure validity and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2007).

After reviewing the transcripts with each participant, the researcher then coded the data using horizontalization which was driven by several key questions that placed a spotlight on key statement made by the participants. Once these key statements were detected, the researcher then “created clusters of meaning that allowed for the emergence of themes among the data” (Creswell, 2007, p.61).

### **Emerging Themes**

An investigation of the clusters of meaning revealed the emergence of four primary themes and one sub-theme. The first emerging theme was the theme of “Meeting the Need”. This theme emerged because over and over in each of the interviews in many of the questions the women denoted doing whatever was needed. The second emerging theme was the theme of “Being Called to be a Servant”, in conjunction to extensive discussion on their servanthood to the people, and their unconditional support to their husbands, the pastor’s wives tended to believe that serving alongside their husbands in ministry and serving in the church was a part of their divine calling. The third emerging theme was the theme of “Being a Helpmate”. This theme was not a unilateral theme of the pastor’s wives taking care of their husband and supporting them but also there was a commitment to supporting and caring for the members of the church. To this theme was a sub-theme of “Care and Counsel” this theme emerged in that all of the pastor’s wives spoke of providing personal encouragement to the members of the church, mainly the women of the church.

The final emerging theme was “Love”. Many of the pastor’s wives mentioned love and when love was not explicitly mentioned it was expressed in tone, description of service, and emotion exuded. The love of their husbands, their love for God, their love for Kingdom ministry, and their love for the people was a resounding tone in the data.

### **Emergent Theme I: Meeting the Need**

The most prominent theme that arose in the data was the theme of “meeting the need”. When it came to answering the different questions in the interview, depending on the lifestyle, while most of the answers were similar, some were different such as in the case where the women had different titles. However, when it came to their reason and how they help their husband in ministry, the theme of meeting the need was pretty prominent.

When asked about her role and task, Lady Adam’s wife literally stopped and laughed with exasperation and said “what don’t I do”. While she used many of her God given gifts to serve in ministry she also admitted that she had to sometimes do things that she would prefer not to do but she did them because there was a need that she did them. Like many of the pastor’s wives she often found herself filling in where ever there was a need.

I serve as the executive administrator so I’m the director over all of administration, the entire executive team rather. I am the director of our choir. I’m a musician. I’m a psalmist. I’m an artist. I’m an activist.... So I pretty much do everything that you can possibly image. I’m the person that works the back to make sure that everything goes smoothly. But overall I can say that my main

position at church is directing our choir. And then, I pretty much run the service on third and fourth Sunday.

Like Lady Adam's wife, Lady Noah's wife, utter the sentiments of being very active and busy in ministry.

I am the Sunday School teacher for our children and youth. I serve in the choir, I'm very active with Sunday School and prayer meeting and Bible Study. Also with outreach ministry. Outreach is a major part of our ministry, however with time pass, with me in school and working, I'm not able to do as much outreach as I would like. That outreach ministry is a lot of work. You know when you plant a church; so much is involved in that.

On and on throughout each interview there was the thread of having multiple task working alongside their husbands in ministry. Each woman provided a detail account of their roles and task. However, it was the commonality of why many of them found themselves doing so much in ministry. According to Lady Abraham's wife, there were needs that had to meet.

There was a need and he (the husband) thought that with the marriage ministry and the women's ministry that I would be the better person to lead those roles and so, I guess he assigned me and yes, so he assigned me.

Whether assigned by their husband because he noticed a need that their gifting could fulfill such as the case with Lady Adam's wife and Lady Abraham's wife or the voluntary meeting of the need, the pastor's wives worked with great fervor in ministry to ensure that there were no missing elements.

However, meeting the need also took on a meaning different than being assigned or volunteering because there was desire or volunteering because there was no one else to do it. Lady Moses wife denoted seeing a brokenness that needed healing among certain populations in the church namely the women. So she started a women's ministry because there was a need to ministry specifically to the women of the church.

For Isaac's Wife, she just looked for where there was a gap and service was needed. She said just volunteered and did "whatever was needed". Lady David's wife answer was able to further confirm the theme of meeting the need. Her situation, like several of the other Pastor's wives in the study revolves around serving alongside her husband in a church plant. For most of the wives whose husbands planted churches, the need was much greater, these women found themselves doing more work due to minimal available bodies. So these women's role and task were more extensive.

#### **David's Wife.**

I serve right now pretty much filling in areas needed because of course we are a growing ministry. Growing, meaning we're growing in number. So, I being the first member outside of my husband, my job is to embrace any area where help is needed the most. I currently administer praise and worship. I'm over the prayer and intercessory team. If there's ever a fast that we're doing, I normally initiate that as well. Also, announcements; I do announcements. So just basically putting my hands to work in whatever area that's needed, making sure I am of course not being a burden to my husband as we were all called together, but willingly putting all hands on deck making sure that all needs are met. So I pretty much do it all. Of course, I'm playing the role and doing what's needed until we grow more and we

can begin to delegate some of these assignments to willing workers. But other than that, I pretty much do everything that he doesn't do. He shows up and he's there for counsel. He preaches and all of that. But outside of that, I do everything else. I assist with setting up the equipment. Now, of course, we have children that serve with us in ministry as well, so they're helping with equipment, offering and passing out things and just being hands wherever needed. But outside of that, I do everything. Keeping track of the finances, I keep track of the ministry finances as it pertains to what's coming in, managing the contributions and the outgoing ministry expenses.

When it came to meeting the need, the ladies all agreed that whatever was needed they were willing to do. Not all of the task they did revolved around their gift set. Not all of the task were to their liking, but the women realized there were needs, and it was very obvious from each answer and the passion in their voices that they were willing to meet any need for the sake of kingdom, their love for God and their love for their husbands.

### **Emergent Theme II: Called to be a Servant**

While none of the women saw themselves as pastor's wives before they met their husbands, all of them believe that they are called to serve in ministry and some of them believe that they were divinely called to be married to a pastor. Lady Jacob's Wife denoted the following:

I view my ministry as a call from God because I believe when God placed me and him together knowing that he was called, I knew that I would have to be in a



position to be able to serve him so he can effectively, you know, minister in his calling.

Others of the women echoed the sentiments of Lady Jacob's Wife in that they also believe that it was the will of God that they married men who were pastors. But the resounding belief among all of the women was the call to be a servant of God and serve in ministry. All of the women made it clear that even if they were not married to pastor's wife they would still serve in ministry. And some of the women said they would still serve at the very same level, fervently and passionately. When asked do they believe they would still serve and be passionate about ministry if they weren't a pastor's wife here's what several of the women had to say:

**Adam's Wife.**

Most definitely, it's just in my blood, it's in my blood to minister, the want to, to be in the presence of God, and usher people into the presence of God and talk to them about God and witness and tell them testimonies you know and see their faces lighting up when I tell them, man God is so awesome God did this, you know to see that their saying to themselves, I'm agreeing with you yes He is you know. And so, if I was not a pastor's wife, man, if I wasn't a pastor's wife, whew, I don't know where, I would probably be in Africa, I don't know, I would probably be in Jamaica, I would probably be everywhere witnessing and sharing the good news, yeah, so if I wasn't a pastor's wife, I think being a pastor's wife slowed me down, yea. I think being a pastor's wife slowed me down and helped me to understand who I was.

**Isaac's Wife.**

I think I would be. At this point in my life, I've grown spiritually and like I stated earlier, it'd be in-- The main thing is that, let me see... I lost my train of thought. Just being there. Like I said, I don't need to be in the front. You know? And my mission is to service the people, and I do believe that. I'm not going to say-- About 20 years ago, I didn't have that mind frame, but now I do and I know what I've been called to do, and what my purpose here on Earth is.

**Jacob's Wife.**

Definitely, I would. Like I said earlier, because I'm serving in the capacity that I would be serving in regardless if I was a pastor's wife or not.

**David's Wife.**

Yes, because again, my desire is to please God and wanting to be a disciple that wins others to Him. Now, before we stepped into this role, my husband, as I mentioned the church that we were serving under we were very active in ministry, both in and outside of the church. So there's always been great joy and fulfillment in doing that. Knowing that God had called us as ministers first.... So if I were not in the role of a Pastor's wife, I still find joy and fulfillment in just serving as a regular lady minister or a member of the church.

For a few of the pastor's wives, the burden of ministry has at times been hard to bare. So as it relates to whether they would still serve at the same level as they do in being a pastor's wife, some said they wouldn't serve at that level but they would still serve. But most of the women denoted that they would still serve, and the majority of them said they would still serve fervently and passionately.

### **Emerging Theme III: HelpMate**

The third emergent theme related closely to the first emergent theme. Sanders (2014) also discovered a theme of helpmate in her research. However, the focus of her theme revolved specifically around the care of the husband. When it came to how the pastor's wives in this study serve in ministry and why they serve in ministry the general consensus among the pastor's wives was the consensus of meeting whatever needs that arose. Connecting back to that consensus was the pastor's wives understanding and viewpoint of themselves as helpmate to their husbands. Each of the women referred to themselves as a helpmate. When speaking of themselves as helpmate's it was obvious that the women viewed themselves as being called to the side of their husbands to help him.

However, this viewpoint of being a helpmate didn't just stop with their service to their husband as wife or helper. There was also an evident perspective of serving both the husband and the church as needed. As discussed in the first theme, the women made it their business to help out in ministry where ever there was a need. When it came down to their ministry service, each of the women felt like they were called to serve in ministry so they take their service and ministry very seriously.

#### **Noah's Wife.**

Definitely a call from God. You know God doesn't put us here to ask us to do nothing. We all have a purpose in life we're here for. I want to do whatever it is God has for me to do and it is not an obligation to me.

#### **Abraham's Wife.**

A call; I think it is a ministry. I do believe in being a helpmeet and it just so happens my husband is a pastor. And so for me I guess it goes over to the ministry also so yes from God, I feel obligated for some of it. But certainly I feel called.

When it came to helping and meeting the need, for some of the pastor's wives, it went past being a help meet to just their husband but also being a help meet to the community and meeting the needs of the community. Lady Moses Wife, made a passionate discourse regarding helping to meet the needs of the community. She denoted going back to her home town where all of her old friends were and seeing that something was missing and there being a cry among the people for help. It was the need for spiritual revival and a church where the people could come to not only serve God but also grow in Christ and enjoy God.

All of the women demonstrated through their discussion in the interview that they are more than just help meets to their husbands. Each of the women identified being a help meet to the people in the congregation in one way or the other. Lady Noah's Wife denoted being the primary transportations for some in the church. She spoke of having to run errands with the members in the church and she talked about taking them to different types of appointments such as doctor's visits. She also spoke about being there in their time of need mentioning visiting the members sick loved ones when asked.

But there was a sub-theme of care and counsel that emerged among the discussion of helping the people. When directly asked about their experiences in pastoral care and counseling, most of the women tended to steer clear from saying that they did pastoral counseling. As a matter of fact, Lady Jacob's Wife emphatically stated that she "left the

pastoral counseling to her husband”. However, it was found that the women did provide a type of pastoral care and counseling to the members they just didn’t call it pastoral care and counseling.

In identifying their one-on-one engagement with the members, the pastor’s wives used language like, personal ministry, personal prayer, a listening ear, giving advice just being there, and providing encouragement. Here’s what Lady Jacob’s had to say about helping the members:

Just being that listening ear and kind of like putting things in perspective and kind of just making them see the glass half full type situations and not majoring in the minor. And kind of giving them a bigger picture when they are overwhelmed and feeling like things are not what they should be, so ... Just being there, knowing that they can come to me in confidence and you know, if I just need to be a listening ear or if I can be a word of encouragement.

Uttering similar sentiments regarding helping the people in the congregation, Lady Isaac said the following:

People have come to me and I pray for them and encourage them. I’m more of an encourager. So, in that sense, my thing is younger females tend to come to me... Whoever is receptive of seeking guidance, me being that type of woman in order to help them along the way, and I’m there for them.

As previously noted, Lady Noah, defined her member care in terms of helping with everyday life stuff like transportation. But she too, acknowledged providing one-on-one help that went beyond the physical and states that she sometimes provides one-on-

one prayer with the members. However, she also made it clear that if needed, she will help however she can, even in counseling.

### **Noah's Wife.**

Well, I leave the counseling to my husband. But should a member want to just specifically speak to the pastor's wife then I'm truly up for it and I will do whatever I can for that person...

Moses's Wife, denoted her purpose for starting a women's ministry in the church was to provide services that would bring healing to the brokenness she saw among the women. She also said that she provides group settings for help and even does some life coaching though she said she doesn't like using that term.

Adam's Wife said that one of her primary task in providing counseling. She was one of only two of the women who directly spoke of providing pastoral counseling. When asked about her experiences in pastoral care and counseling, Lady Adam's Wife said, "Now that is something I can truly say that I do a lot of." Lady David's wife also directly stated that she provided pastoral counseling.

My experiences in pastoral care and counseling, there was a couple who had been having some challenges in their marriage and as they connected with my husband and I, I was present as well to help counsel and provide critique, spiritual guidance on more than one occasion for this couple. There was a member who was having some challenges in the home with a parent. So we went over and did a house visit in which we both counseled together. There was a saint who had to be taken to the hospital. We were there. I was there, serving along with my husband at the hospital praying, interceding, and believing in God for a complete and total

healing. There are random phone calls that occur as well, especially when someone has previously reached out regarding an area of need. I don't mind giving a follow-up call back or text messages just to find out how things are going and to offer that listening ear or as the Holy Spirit leads, some words of encouragement or whatever.

While only two of the women stated that they provided pastoral care and counseling, all of the women used language and words that made it clear that each of them helped the members of the church by providing pastoral counseling and care in some form.

#### **Emergent Theme IV: Love**

All of the women do what they do in ministry, in marriage, and for the people of God all for the sake of love. There was a pure sentiment of love resonating throughout each of the interviews. The resonation could be seen in emotional expression, tone, and in the words the women used. This resonation of love revolved around the love of their husbands, their love for God, and their love for ministry.

##### **David's Wife.**

My greatest love working in ministry is serving; is serving. Yes, ma'am. And helping my husband. Serving and helping my husband. It gives me great joy when he says, "You know what, I appreciate you. I thank God for you. You don't have to do what you do, what you're doing and the fact that you're always there and I don't profess to have it all together, believe you need."

When speaking about why she works so fervently in ministry, Lady Noah's wife, voice cracked as she started to cry speaking about the passion her husband has for

ministry. When asked what drives her to help in her husband's pastorate here is what she said:

Because of his passion; He just loves, loves, loves what he does. He's a people person, and it doesn't matter whether they are in the church, got one foot in and one foot out. Whatever something that's somebody's going through he's always trying to help people. Sometimes I tell him, you know you tend to do too much for people. I mean if a member or a non-member needs him for something, he just tends to kind of drop all that he's doing just for love for what he's doing, he does it from his heart, and as his wife I truly know that and he just puts his heart into and he just does anything he can for people. I mean they'll have to hear a long story behind it, I mean he's going to come down on you hard but he will do whatever he can. And that's what makes me love him and want to stand by his side and do all that I can and give him all the love and support I can as his wife. Try to always be so understanding you know, about everything. And my love for God, my love for Christ.

For Noah's wife, and several others, there was a deep seated love for their husbands that drove them to serve alongside him in ministry. For some of the women, this same love also became the driving factor in the reason why they worked so hard and were willing to do anything. There was great passion for the husbands and their success among many of the women.

### **Abraham's Wife.**

I want to do whatever he needs me to do so whatever I need to do to help him and to assist him, I try to do.



The love for these men ran deep. And just like any other good wife, there was a desire to help him because there was a love that didn't want them to fail. When asked what drives her to assist her husband in ministry here is what Lady Adam's Wife said:

Love, I don't want to see him fail, I don't want to see him hurt. Knowing that he truly, truly loves God and he truly loves ministry, I just want to see him succeed in everything that he does. You know and he works so hard at it and uh, at the end of the day love, Love drives me. I will, I will climb the mountain tops. I will go into the deep valleys you know if I feel like that is what God needed me to do in order to enhance my husband you know, I am truly the helpmeet with uh, with sometime some extra you know sometimes I do things that I shouldn't do you know but uh never-the-less I do it anyway because hey, I'm human you know but at the end of the day I can truly say love, love is what drives me every day, every day.

Another resonation of love that ring out like and alarm was the love of God and the love of ministry. Each of these women loved God and they loved the work of the church. There was so much passion during the interview as the ladies spoke about serving in ministry. With many of the women, it was very obvious that they gained their breath from serving in ministry.

The final resonation of love that became obvious was the love the women had for the congregations that they had the pleasure of serving. Lady Adam's Wife denoted that her greatest pain and love in ministry is the people. Here's what two of the other pastor's wives had to say about their love for the people.

**Abraham's Wife.**

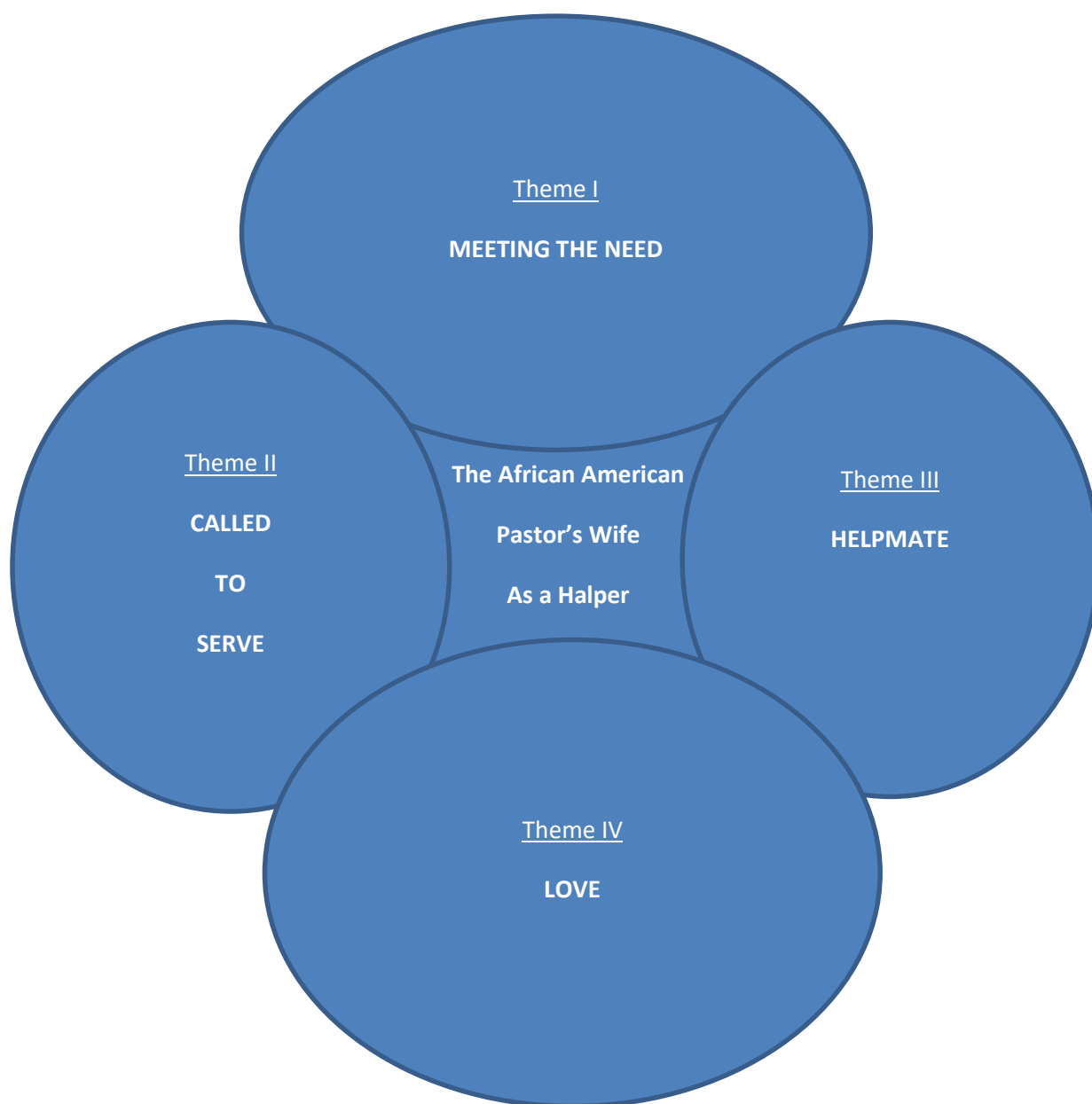
I think just being there for the people when there has been a need. My husband often says that being there for people in their extremes be it joys or sadness. So just being there. Being there for them, when they need me the most. And if I can add to that, it would also be uh, spending time with the seniors. I love, love, love, enjoy, enjoy, enjoy spending time with them. And sometimes it's for the wisdom that I can receive from them but just the conversation also.

**David's Wife.**

Because when you pastor people, and especially if you genuinely love people, when you connect, you connect hard. When you love and when you embrace, you do it with your everything. Because again, these people belong to God and not us. So even if we don't feel like it, we still have to go out of what we feel in order to embrace and love.

Table 3.

The African American Pastor's Wife as Helper - Emergent Themes



### **Summary**

A total of seven Pastor's wives were investigated to see how they defined their roles serving alongside the husbands in ministry as helpers. Pastors wives tend to view themselves as helpers to their husbands be it officially or unofficially. Whether serving as assigned, voluntarily, or because there is a need, the pastors' wives were willing to do what was necessary for the sake of the call, for the sake of the Kingdom, and for the sake of love. Four themes emerged each defining the pastor's wife in her role alongside her husband. The first theme was the theme of meeting the need. Throughout each interview this theme was present and was conveyed in several of the interview questions. The pastor's wives denoted their commitment to meeting whatever there was, for the people, for the church, and for their husbands.

The second theme that presented itself was the theme of being called to be a servant. Connecting back to the themes of meeting the need, the pastors' wives in the study believe that, that's the very reason they are in their position, because God called them to the position. Each of the women acknowledged being called to serve, called to help, and called to meet the needs of both their husbands and their congregations.

The third theme that was revealed was the theme of helpmate with a sub-theme of care and counsel. The statement took on a twofold meaning in the study. The pastors' wives were not only a helpmate to their husbands, but they were also, helpmate to the people that they served in ministry. The pastor's wives have committed their hearts to serving the people in any way they can and sometimes through personal care and counseling.

The final theme that emerged was the theme of love. From the demeanor and words of these women, love is their driving force. Love for God, love for their husbands, love for the people, and love for serving. From their expressions and discussion, it seems that they would not be able to do what they do, if there was not love.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Introduction**

This study was designed to investigate the phenomena of helper among the African American pastor's wife serving alongside her husband in ministry within the African American church. I particularly, the study wanted to know if the black pastor's wife viewed as an extension of the pastor by her congregation or herself when it came to pastoral care and counseling. Seven African American women, who were married to African American pastors, were interviewed. Each of the women had been married and in pastoral ministry for more than one year. All of the women were over the age of 25 years-old. And all of the women reported serving in ministry alongside their husbands in ministry. According to the results reveal in the study and detailed in chapter four, the African American pastor's wife is indeed a helper in ministry. The phenomena were defined by the women helping however they needed too, to please God, for the advancement of the church, for the success of their husband's pastorate, and for the betterment of the people in the church.

### **Overview of the Findings**

During individual interviews, seven African American Pastor's wives discussed with the researcher their lives and roles as pastors' wives. The women answered a total of 36 questions; fifteen of which were opened-ended. The major determinant of the phenomena of helper revolved around three considerations; meeting the needs of the church, fulfilling a call from God, and being a helpmate to both the pastor husband and the congregation with all three influences being in-cased in love. There was no determination that the pastors' wives were directly an extension of their husbands when it

came to serving in ministry. While one of the pastor's wives held a pastoral title, and another viewed herself in a type of pastoral role besides her husband; each woman's role of helper was more of a compliment considering their service and the reason for their service. In defining the phenomena according to the women who live it, four themes and one sub-theme arose. The themes of the study were garnered by coding each interview based on the topics discussed and the answers provided from the interview questions.

In answering the central research question of what have been the experiences of the African American Pastors' wives as "helpers" serving alongside their husband in pastoral care and counseling within the African American Church; four themes determined what it means to be helper in ministry and why helping occurs. The emerging themes of the study were: Meeting the Needs, Called to be a Servant, Helpmate with a sub-theme of Care and Counsel, and Love.

For the African American pastor's wives investigated in this study, the phenomena of helper centered on the themes that emerged from the data. The women helped because of their desire to meet whatever need there was in ministry. The women helped because of their commitment to fulfill the call of God on their lives. The women helped because of their desire to be a helpmate to their husband and the congregation. And the women helped because they loved God, their husband, and the church congregation.

### **Discussion**

The first theme that arose among the coded data was the theme of "meeting the need". When it came to serving in ministry and helping their husbands, the congregation, and the church at-large, the common perspective of the women orbited on ensuring that

they did whatever was needed for success and to be a blessing whether it was something that they wanted to do or not. As it relates to the skills, abilities, and task of the pastor's wives, some of the task overlapped, while other areas varied. However, each of the women denoted their will to help in whatever way needed. When it came to why the women were committed to doing whatever they needed to do to help, it was their desire to see the church thrive and do well as well as their desire to see their husbands succeed. There was also this deep sense of pleasing God with their service and commitment. There was also the love for the people that drove this theme.

The second theme that emerged was the theme of being called by God to serve. Each of the women exhibited a deep connection to God and they relished their relationship with Him through their commitment to serving and advancing His Kingdom. It was in their discussion of being called that many of the women exuded their greatest argument. The women made it clear that even if they weren't pastor's wives, they would still serve in ministry because they felt like it was a part of their obedience in their life in Christ and the reason they were born.

The third theme that emerged in the data was the theme of helpmate. In conjunction to some of the women calling themselves a helpmate, the women described themselves as helpmates through their care and consideration of their husbands and congregations. The women felt like they were divinely placed with a pastor and as his wife, their role was to be his helpmate not only in the home as wife, but by his side in ministry. There was also this sense of responsibility that permeated from the women when they discussed their support of the member of the congregation. From this sense of responsibility came a sub-theme of care and counseling that was defined by the pastors



through their service in taking care of the members. No matter if it was by providing some type of service or by meeting with them one-on-one to listen to their problems and concerns, to pray for them, to give them advice and instructions, or to just encourage them.

The final theme that emerged in the data was the theme of love. To be a helper, to these women meant doing what was necessary for the victory of the church, the pastor, and the members. It meant being an ambassador for Christ and yielding to His plan for their life (Douglas, 1965). It also meant being at the side of both the pastor and the people to ensure that both felt supported and loved. And finally, to these pastor's wives, love was the reason for it all. Love drove their service; love drove them to help.

While none of the women complained about their life as a pastor's wife, they did say things that made it clear that the role wasn't the easiest. In their final remarks about the role of the pastor's wives, the women raised concerns that ranged from how to deal with women who flirted with their husbands, to facilitating appreciation for the pastor's wife from the pastor husband, to providing advice to new pastor's wives to be authentically them. But none-the-less, for each of the women in the study, there was a commitment to live their lives, carrying out their description of their role.

### **Implications**

According to this investigation, pastor's wives are of great value to their husbands and congregations whether it is realized by the two or not. The pastor's wives in this study gave a lot of themselves to better others and the church of Jesus Christ. To ensure that these women, who could be deemed national church treasures, can always operate at an optimal level in their roles as helpers, there is a number of things that can be done.

At least five out of seven of the women, in this study specifically said they did not have any biblical or theological education. Yet they serve in many capacities within the church ensuring that no key area of ministry is left unmanaged. Because the pastors' wives of this study are just as committed to ministry as their husbands, the information revealed in this study may alert churches to the need to provide resources that would facilitate practical training and education that would specifically assist the African American pastor's wife in her service. Practical training such as a general Christian Counseling course or a certificate program in biblical studies and church administration could prove to make these women even more invaluable in their service. Both Henry-Whitehead (2004) & Jenkins denoted the potential need and benefit of providing educational assistance to pastor's wives.

Considering the extensiveness of the service of the pastor's wives in this study, the research in this study could provide the congregation and the pastor with the understanding of the pastor's wife need for appreciation and celebration. During the course of the interviews, the researcher was able to detect a strong air of gratitude from the pastors' wives in the study towards the researcher taking the time to highlight their service at the side of their husbands. The appreciation sensed and heard was the women feeling grateful that someone was showing appreciation for their ministry service. Abraham's wife particularly noted that many pastor's wives that she knew didn't feel appreciated or celebrated, in particular by their husbands. She also noted that, the husbands as pastors tended to receive the appreciation while the service of the wife went virtually unnoticed. But as previously noted, the women did not complain about their ministry task or roles. However, it was clear that these women work hard and there was

an evident commitment to helping their husband in ministry and supporting the people no matter what. Appreciation and celebration is deemed necessary.

Though only a sub-theme, pastoral care and counseling, played a role in each of the participant's service in the church. In this study, when asked about their experiences in pastoral care and counseling directly, most of the women downplayed their role deflecting to their husband and the ministerial staff. However, all of the women had a hand in providing pastoral counseling to the membership; they just defined it in different terms. Because these women are sometimes sought out for counseling or for some, it is one of their primary task as made evident in this investigation, this study may alert pastors and congregations to the benefit of providing the pastor wife with specific counselor education to ensure that they are effective in their assistance in this area at whatever level they choose to provide this type of care.

While only one pastor's wife in the study detailed the types of counseling cases she's encountered, the other pastor's wives do provide some form of one-on-one ministry that is liken unto counseling and a general counseling course geared towards pastors' wives or even lay members may provide the women with more effective one-on-one ministry skills. Gioia (2005) suggested providing cases specific counselor training to the pastors' wives in her study considering what the women felt would be more beneficial. As previously noted, considering the pastors' wives in this study defined their pastoral counseling in general terms such as listening ear, and giving advice, a multi-hour general Christian counseling course could assist in adding great effectiveness.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited in that it only considered the African American Pastor's wife. The study does not take into account the role of pastor's wives of different ethnicities. The study only investigated women who stated that they served only in black churches. Socio-economic consideration was not given to the churches that the pastor's wives in this study served. Only pastor's wives who denoted serving alongside their husband's in ministry were allowed to participate. The study does not provide any quantitative report of pastor's wife duties and task. The sample size for the study was relatively small. Though saturation was met, the size of the study prevents generalizability. Finally, the results of the study are not generalizable to other races considering only African American Pastor's wives were investigated. Cultural factors could possibly have an influence in the role of pastor's wives.

### **Future Research Studies**

The following is a list of potential future research studies that could build on this study to further enhance the dialogue on the African American Pastor's wife.

- New research could quantitatively investigate the African American Pastor's wife in her provision of types of counseling and care.
- New research could provide a qualitative analysis of the partnership viewpoint of the African American Pastor and Pastor's wife together.
- New research could provide a qualitative or quantitative investigation of the African American pastor's wife perspective on being appreciated.

- New research on the African American pastor's wife could quantitatively or qualitatively explore the pastor's wife experience with feeling or being appreciated by her husband and congregation.
- Finally, further research could survey African American pastor's wives with counselor, Christian, or theological education and its effect on their ministry service.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided a discussion of the results of a study on the African American pastor's wife as helper serving alongside her husband in pastoral care and counseling. The study investigated seven pastor's wives in their roles serving alongside their husband. The investigation uncovered four key themes. The themes of the study provided a description of the pastor's wives in the phenomena of "helper" serving alongside their husbands. The findings revealed that the pastor's wives focus in serving was on meeting needs, being a helpmate to both her husband and the congregation, and fulfilling their divine call and in the name of love.

This chapter concludes with providing implications that would allow churches and pastor's to esteem the pastor's wife providing her with the tools she needs to excel in her service. The implications also provided insight for pastors and congregations that will alert them in the importance of ensuring that the pastor's wife feels appreciated and celebrated in her role. Finally, this chapter concludes by providing future researchers with some information to assist in furthering the discussion on the African American pastor's wife.

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## Appendix A

Table 1.

## Study Codes

CODE #1: Ministry & Church Titles	Q.4 Q.5 Q.6 Q.7
CODE #2: Roles & Task	Q.9 Q.10 Q.16 Q.21
CODE #3: Expectations & Responsibilities	Q.17 Q.18 Q.19 Q.23 Q.24 Q.28
CODE #4: Purpose & Calling	Q.12 Q.13 Q.21 Q.22 Q.32

	Q.34
CODE #5: Ministry Assistance	Q.11 Q.14 Q.15
CODE #6: Counseling – Care – Serving People	Q.20 Q.25
CODE #7: Stress – Overwhelm – Anxiety - Discouragement	Q.29 Q.30 Q.31
CODE #8: Other & Concerns	Q.26 Q.27 Q.30

## Appendix B

Table 2.

### *Participant Profile*

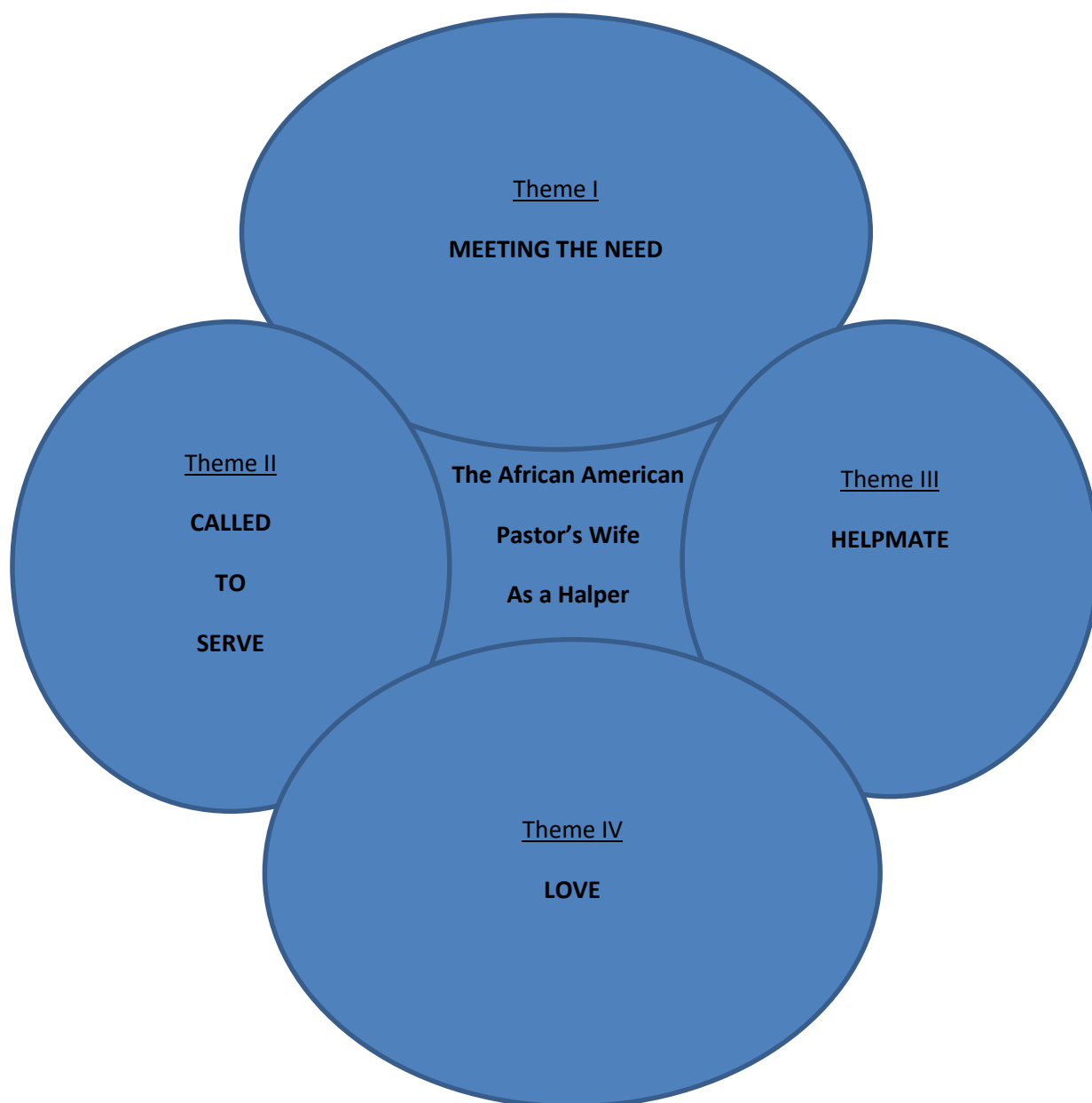
<b>Name</b>	<b>Year's Married In Pastoral Ministry</b>	<b>Husband a Pastor Before Marriage</b>	<b>Husband Planted a Church or Hired</b>
Adam's Wife	7 yrs.	YES	Planted a Church
Noah's Wife	22.5 yrs.	YES	Planted a Church
Abraham's Wife	22 yrs.	NO	Inherited Father's Church
Moses Wife	8.5 yrs.	NO	Planted
Isaac's Wife	12 yrs.	YES	Hired
Jacobs Wife	18 yrs.	NO	Hired
David's Wife	2 yrs.	NO	Planted



## Appendix C

Table 3.

The African American Pastor's Wife as Helper - Emergent Themes



## Appendix D

Dear First Lady,

As a graduate student in the Community Care and Counseling Department in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The purpose of my research is to learn more about the ministry service of the African American pastor's wife and to provide empirical research that tells her story clearly among the existing research on pastor's wives.

The study is open to all African American senior pastors' wives who are 25 years old or older, currently serve alongside their husbands in ministry and have done so for at least one year in a predominantly African American church congregation, and have been both married and a pastor's wife for one or more years. The study will consist of a 45- to 60-minute recorded interview that will ask questions about your ministry service to the congregation. You will then be contacted by the researcher to go over your interview transcript for accuracy and meaning. Your name and other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but this information will remain confidential.

The reason I want to know more about the phenomena of the ministry service of the African American pastor's wife is because there is limited research on her unique experiences in ministry service to a historically marginalized group of Americans. Taking part in research is always optional. However, participation in the study will help the researcher to unveil valuable information that could be used to develop resources designed to assist other African American pastor's wives in ministry as well as provide insight on the potential needs of church congregations. Each participant in the study will receive a \$25.00 Visa gift card for their participation.

**If you are interested in participating in the study or would like more information, please reply to this email with a telephone number where you can be reached and a good time to call.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

What Time to Call: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please provide answers to the following screening questions in your reply email:**

- 1) Are you an African American woman married to an African American senior pastor?
- 2) Are you at least 25 years of age?
- 3) Have you been married to a senior pastor for at least one year?
- 4) Have you and your husband been in pastoral ministry for at one year?
- 5) Is the church your husband pastor a predominantly black church?
- 6) Have you served alongside your husband in ministry for at least 1 year?

If you decide you are interested in the study and you qualify to participate, you will receive an email link to the consent form for completion. The consent document contains additional information about my study. Once you have electronically signed, dated, and submitted the consent form, I will contact you via phone to confirm an interview time and date.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

D'Juana C. Pittman

## **Appendix E**

### **Research and Interview Questions**

The central research question for the study asked, what have been the experiences of African American Pastor's wives as "helpers" serving alongside her husband in Pastoral Care and Counseling within the African American Church? To answer this question, structured interviews were completed. The following is the list of the interview questions posed:

1. How long have you been a pastors' wife?
2. Was your husband a Pastor when you married him or did you go into ministry together as husband and wife?
3. Does your husband pastor a church he planted or a church that hired him?
4. What is your official title if you have one?
5. How did this title come about?
6. How does your husband address you in ministry?
7. How does your congregation address you in Ministry?
8. Do you have any Christian/Biblical/Theological Education?
9. What are some of your roles and tasks (how do you serve) in ministry?
10. How were you brought into these roles or tasks?
11. Discuss with me your viewpoint on assisting and helping your husband in ministry.
12. Do you view your ministry service as a call from God or is it more of an obligation?  
Explain your viewpoint...
13. Before becoming a pastor's wife, did you feel you were called to the ministry or to work in ministry at this level and/or to this capacity?
14. Do you view yourself as your husband's ministry assistant of some sort?

15. Do you view yourself as a type of female pastor such as co-pastor, executive pastor, or assistant pastor?
16. Do you feel that the congregation in your predominantly black church views you as a type of assistant pastor or the female equivalent of the pastor?
17. Are you expected to fulfill such a role?
18. What demands are put on you by your husband?
19. What demands are put on you by the congregation?
20. What are your experiences in pastoral care and counseling?
21. What are your opinions and feelings about your role and task?
22. What drives you to help in your husband's pastorate?
23. Are there expectations placed on you by your husband to serve? If so, what are those expectations and how do you meet them?
24. Are there expectations placed on you by the congregation to serve? If so, what are those expectations and how do you meet them?
25. When it comes to congregants seeking your help, what service do you find to be the one you are most sought after to provide?
26. Which gender seeks these services the most?
27. Why do you think that is?
28. What do you see as your biggest responsibility in ministry?
29. What do you find to be your most daunting responsibility or expectation in ministry?
30. Of the ministry services you provide, what task would you say requires the most of your time?
31. What has been your greatest challenge working in ministry?

32. What has been your greatest love working in ministry?
33. Describe your life as a ministry helper working alongside your husband in ministry.
34. Think outside your current life: If you were not a pastor's wife, would you still feel obligated, or be passionate about serving in the church at the same rate, and with the same fervor? Why or why not?
35. Is there anything that I have not asked that you think is important for me to know about the Pastor's wife?
36. Are you feeling uneasy about anything that we have discussed?

## Appendix F

**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 15, 2019

D'Juana C. Pittman

IRB Approval 3709.031519: Helpmeet: The African American Pastor's Wife as an Extension of the Pastor in Pastoral Care and Counseling - A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study of the Ministry Help Experiences of Black Pastors' Wives in Predominantly Black Churches

Dear D'Juana C. Pittman,


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

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

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

Sincerely,

  
**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**

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## Appendix G





## Appendix H

The Liberty University Institutional  
Review Board has approved  
this document for use from  
3/15/2019 to 3/14/2020  
Protocol # 3709.031519

### CONSENT FORM

Helpmeet: The African American Pastor's Wife as an Extension of the Pastor in Pastoral Care and  
Counseling - A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study of the Ministry Help Experiences of Black  
Pastors' Wives in Predominantly Black Churches

D'Juana C. Pittman, M.Ed.

Liberty University

Community Care and Counseling / School of Behavioral Sciences

You are invited to be in a research study on African American pastor's wives. I am investigating the ministry helping experiences of the African American pastor's wife working alongside her husband in Pastoral Care and Counseling. You have been selected as a possible participant because you are an African American woman who is married to an African American man who is currently a senior pastor, pastoring a predominantly African American church. Also, you have been both married and a senior pastor's wife for one or more years, and you are currently 25 years old or older. Finally, you have served alongside your husband in ministry for at least one year. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

D'Juana C. Pittman, a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Education in Community Care and Counseling program in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** The purpose of this study is to answer the question what have been the experiences of African American Pastor's wives as "helpers" serving alongside their husbands in pastoral care and counseling within the African American church? The major construct of the study will be the black pastor's wife's experiences as a ministry helper with the considerations of the cultural perspectives of black people and their historical reliance on the black church. The researcher is hoping to gain knowledge of the ministry work and effort exertion of the African American pastor's wife, as well as a better understanding of the needs and expectation of the members of the black church.

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

1. Participate in a recorded interview. Face-to-Face interviews will only be audio recorded. All web interviews will be video recorded. You will be asked between 25-40 questions regarding your ministry service alongside your husband. The interview will take between 45-60 minutes to complete.
2. You will be contacted by the researcher once the interview is completed to confirm the information obtained. The review phone call will take no longer than 20-30 minutes.

The Liberty University Institutional  
Review Board has approved  
this document for use from  
3/15/2019 to 3/14/2020  
Protocol # 3709.031519

**RISKS:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**BENEFITS:** Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. However, the research results could provide valuable information on the resource needs of present or future pastor's wives.

**COMPENSATION:** Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. For your participation, you will receive a \$25.00 Visa gift card after all procedures have been completed.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

During interviews, all participants will only be acknowledged by their ministry title of First Lady. However, all participants will be identified by a pseudonym (fake name) in all written documents, hard copy, and computer saved documents and recordings.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:** Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the study at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

**HOW TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

**CONTACT AND QUESTIONS:** The researcher conducting this study is D'Juana Pittman. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at dpittman12@liberty.edu or 832-353-6310. You may also contact my research supervisor and chair, Professor Dr. Melvin Pride, via email at [mpride2@liberty.edu](mailto:mpride2@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 Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information 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/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

**Type Your Name and Date Here:** \_\_\_\_\_

