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Challenges of Pastoral Leaders: Maintaining Resilience While Contemplating Transitioning out of Ministry

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Abstract

This study was based upon 40 years of observation of pastoral leaders who faced challenges that tested their resilience to remain in or transition out of full-time ministry. Those who were fortunate to navigate their way through these challenges were resilient in ministry or were able to move forward by becoming bivocational. Some went back to school and got secular degrees and sought jobs outside of their calling. While facing career identity challenges, pastors feared their ministerial skills were less viable in a secular context and were reluctant to make a transition. This study aimed to understand their resilience while having few alternatives regarding their gifts outside of their calling. The conceptual framework used for this study was role theory. The research was a qualitative case study that consisted of the interview. The study's data collection consisted of interviews conducted using a phone and an MP3 digital voice recorder and then transferred to a laptop computer. The sample included African American ministers of Churches of Christ affiliated with the Florida State and Southeastern Regional Lectureships, whose focus was leadership development and church growth learning opportunities. The researcher used an open coding system and a thematic analysis in the study's research procedure. Through the study, the researcher uncovered concerns about the lack of leadership and identified a lack of respect for ministers, which revealed a significant challenge to ministry resilience. There was a realized deficiency in role recognition and pastoral support. Each minister emphasized the importance of leadership development as essential to ministry to prevent hardship and create competence within the church. The ministers stated a deficiency in resolving conflict; they recognized and expressed the lack of support and the significance of spiritual support needed to sustain them in ministry. They described experiencing a crippling effect on making progress as a leader. There was disparity when comparing the church leaders' salaries to secular leaders.

Finally, the study demonstrated a need for comprehensive help for those ministers struggling with the desire to seek secular careers or remain in full-time ministry.

Keywords: burnout, calling, pastoral resilience, role conflict, role theory, self-care, support groups or system, transition, well-being

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Chapter 1: Introduction

While serving in church leadership for nearly 40 years, I observed pastoral leaders (preachers, evangelists, ministers) who faced challenges that caused them to transition out of full-time ministry. Those who were fortunate to navigate their way through these challenges were able to move forward by becoming bivocational. Some went back to school and got secular degrees and sought jobs outside of their calling. Many of these pastoral leaders in my social context who had 40 plus years in the ministry had extraordinarily little formal education or ministerial training but came up through the "churches." Also, there were those with formal education, primarily religious and theological degrees and diplomas from schools of preaching, which is excellent.

However, since these are not regionally accredited degrees, they are unaccepted in secular education contexts. Therefore, given the spiritual and emotional attachment to their calling, there is a frictional relationship between clergy work and the choice regarding their families' security. Thus, pastoral leaders usually experience indecision to remain in or leave the ministry during both dissatisfying and quiet periods while serving at their post (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013).

Background

The study's purpose stemmed from personal experience as a church leader for more than 38 years. It was primarily motivated by discussions encountered during a leadership workshop facilitated in November of 2014 involving ministers among the African American segment of the Churches of Christ entitled: What are the challenging encounters in the ministry of preaching? Churches of Christ are Christian congregations that trace their roots back to New Testament principles of the first century and their American roots to the Restoration Movement that began

in the early 1800s in the United States (Dowling, 1964). Each of their congregations was autonomous but tied together worldwide through a common doctrine and practice of New Testament Christianity.

Those unique to this study were African American ministers of the Churches of Christ who, because of various economic, sociological, and cultural circumstances, either remained in or transitioned out of full-time ministry and later returned. Being one of the facilitators within this regional and statewide network of church leaders, I had access to church leaders within this contextual environment who were the studies' targeted subjects. As a vendor, one of the lectureship presenters, and as the investigator of this study, I had direct access to a database of contact information: phone numbers, email addresses, and the churches' websites. With this access and established relationship, I conducted face-to-face interviews and collected data via email and telephonic medians. I participated in these training and development programs on a quarterly and annual basis and had developed relationships and rapport, thereby gaining the trust and understanding of the studies' targeted subjects.

Fortunately, church leaders, preachers, and pastors-elders were present at this seminar who had been in the ministry 25 plus and up to 50 years. However, those ministers who had only been in the ministry five to 10 years were astonished by the older generation of preachers and church leaders' testimonies, including mine. Subsequently, their statements revealed that many pastoral leaders experienced divorce, a rebellion of their children, and lost community identity due to ministry demands (Cafferata, 2017). Many of them experienced an economic crisis due to a lack of financial stability. They lived with stress and grief for being forced to secure secular employment to ensure their well-being (Tanner, 2015). Conversely, some long-term ministers or preachers who considered transitioning to secular careers lived with the fear that the leadership

duties as preacher-leaders had little worth in a secular business world (Strunk et al., 2017; West, 2016). Therefore, the study aimed to identify pastoral challenges, the effectiveness of the support systems or groups, and the lasting effects the challenges had on pastors.

Statement of the Problem

During the past 40 years, while serving in church leadership, I observed pastoral leaders who faced challenges that caused them to transition out of full-time ministry. Leaving a church is difficult compared with secular careers (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013; Haney et al., 2015). When facing career identity challenges (Cafferata, 2017), pastors fear their ministerial skills acquired in ministry are less viable in a secular context and are reluctant to transition (West, 2016). Transitioning to a secular career is especially challenging, given pastors' various emotional and spiritual attachments to their calling (West, 2016).

In effect, transitioning occurs as pastors are unsuccessful in developing their congregations amid ongoing conflicts that overwhelm them (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013; West, 2016). Therefore, there is an immediate need for a solution to transition (Cafferata, 2017; Joynt, 2017). According to Joynt (2017), "Clergy play an important role in the establishing and sustaining of the church. Without them, congregants will not be firm in the faith, nor will the faith be transmitted to the next generation" (p. 2074). Consequently, unresolvable issues emerge that complicate their ability to lead their churches effectively. As a result, pastors leave the ministry (Cafferata, 2017; Joynt, 2017).

Like other helping professionals facing change, burnout, isolation, and rejection, pastors also need a support system (Salwen et al., 2017; Scott & Lovell, 2015). So, in recent years, churches have turned to peer support groups to combat these challenges (Berry et al., 2012; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). However, many of these support groups tend to focus on

pastoral effectiveness rather than reducing psychological distress among pastors (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2013). As a result, there is a need to understand the internal conflict ministers experience while having few alternatives regarding their leadership gifts outside of their calling (Haney et al., 2015). Furthermore, there is a need to understand pastors' involvement in support systems or groups and their effectiveness regarding the minister's well-being during or posttransition.

Purpose Statement

This study's purpose was to gain an understanding of the internal conflicts ministers experience while having few alternatives regarding the use of their leadership gifts outside of their calling and their resilience to remain in the ministry, given that conflict and transitions will inevitably occur (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013; Haney et al., 2015). Research over the past decades has demonstrated that pastors face significant challenges that lead to their transitioning out of full-time ministry (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013; West, 2016), such as stress, burnout, moral failure, and their children having a faith crisis because "the church fired their daddy." It would be stressful to uproot their family and move to another town or state to secure other employment, often with little notice (Tanner, 2015).

Having this understanding of what ministers encounter, this study was to inform others of the economic crisis experienced by pastors having to live with stress and grief to transition to secular employment to ensure their well-being (Tanner, 2015). Churches have resorted to external support groups to help their ministers with their challenges (Berry et al., 2012; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). However, many of these groups tend to focus on pastoral effectiveness rather than reducing psychological distress among pastors (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012).

Therefore, the study aimed to identify their challenges, the effectiveness of the support systems or groups, and the lasting effect the challenges have on pastors.

Research Questions

For this study, the specific research questions were:

RQ1. What are the challenges faced by pastoral leaders that lead to the transition from a full-time ministerial to a secular vocation?

RQ2. What internal matters confront pastors having to stay in or transition from full-time active ministry to secular vocation?

RQ3. What kind of ongoing support is available to sustain pastors in transitioning from full-time ministerial to secular vocation?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework described in this study was role theory. Role theory tells us that when role expectations are unclear or conflicting, individuals may exit the role or experience a great deal of stress (Biddle, 1986; Burr et al., 1979). This study was a qualitative case study that consisted of the interview. The case study is one of the most frequently used qualitative research methodologies (Yin, 2002). Categorically, this case study responded to the question that asks to explain the methods to real-life interventions (Stake, 1995). According to Merriam (1998), one must view a qualitative case study as a bounded phenomenon that is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of programs, institutions, persons, processes, and social units. Those unique to this study were African American ministers of the Churches of Christ who, because of various economic, sociological, and cultural circumstances, either remained in or transitioned out of full-time ministry and later returned.

The qualitative case study design was appropriate because case studies allow an in-depth understanding of participants, events, behaviors, and feelings that occur during specific experiences and specified timeframes (Padgett, 2008; Woodside & Wilson, 2003).

Definition of Key Terms

Burnout. Burnout is a gradual unaware process of loss during which the minister's energies are no longer a match for the demands of the ministry. In other words, the requirements of the job have overwhelmed them (Scott & Lovell, 2015; Vaccarino & Gerritsen, 2013).

Calling. The concept and meaning of calling, in this study, refers to the divine summon to fulltime Christian ministry by God to serve God. It is a call to a spiritual work to help others and to meet their spiritual needs (Joynt, 2019).

Pastoral resilience. Resilience is an adaptive response to challenge the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances (Pearce & Morrison, 2011). It is a process that forces pastors to adjust to challenging events or situations to remain in the ministry.

Role conflict. Role conflict in this study relates to the ongoing opposition of two or more role expectations (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013; Katz & Kahn, 1978). According to Strickland (2013), role conflict describes a conflict between or among the roles corresponding to two or more statuses fulfilled by one individual.

Role theory. As asserted by Biddle (1986), role theory concerns one of the most important features of social life, characteristic behavior patterns or roles. It explains roles by presuming that persons are members of social positions and hold expectations for their own behaviors and those of other persons (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

Self-care. Self-care is one's ability to recognize the need to seek and maintain positive health and working toward it. It means balancing all aspects of health to include the spiritual, physical, emotional, social or interpersonal components of life (Salwen et al., 2017; Vaccarino & Gerritsen, 2013).

Support groups or system. Support groups are communities offering support, thus, enabling people, in this case, preachers, ministers, evangelists, pastors, or the clergy, to engage with others in a dialog to discover means to sustain or improve their well-being while in ministry or postministry (Gubi, 2016; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012).

Transition. Transition has reference to a passing or passage from one condition, action, or (rarely) place to another; change. Transition in this context means leaving the full-time ministry or resigning from one's post to pursue another ministry or church, which may occur voluntarily, involuntary, by forced termination, or due to conflict and unresolvable issues (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013; Tanner, 2015).

Well-being. Well-being has reference to the human dimension as a person-rendered judgment about his or her satisfaction and self-concept. It is how a person evaluates their emotional state of mind as human beings (Medvedev & Landhuis, 2018). It is what humans seek in determining their quality of life and what makes them happy as an individual and as groups (Salwen et al., 2017).

Chapter Summary and Preview

Regarding the challenges that pastoral leaders face in transitioning out of ministry, the literature indicates a problem exists that needs investigating to find solutions for the well-being of both the minister and the ministry (West, 2016). Research over the past decades has demonstrated that pastors face significant challenges that lead to their transitioning out of the

ministry, such as stress, burnout, moral failure, and other demands of ministry (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013).

While having few alternatives regarding using their leadership gifts outside of their calling, pastoral leaders find it stressful to uproot their family and move to another town or state, often with little notice (Tanner, 2015). As a result, many pastors have lost their families due to the demands of ministry. Furthermore, pastors who experience economic crises must live with stress and grief for having to transition to secular employment to ensure their well-being (Tanner, 2015).

Given the spiritual and emotional attachment to their job, there is a frictional relationship between clergy work and the security of their families. So, pastoral leaders usually experience indecision as to whether to remain in or leave the ministry during both dissatisfying and quiet periods while occupying their post (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013; West, 2016). Even as the ministry is stressful, presents occupational stains, and physical and mental health issues (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012); in a concerted effort, this study focused on the core category "calling," which is a significant factor concerning the reasons clergy leave the full-time pastoral ministry for secular employment (Joynt, 2019). Unfortunately, an exodus of qualified ministers from the ministry has occurred, and a deterrent has arisen to those considering entering the ministry (Joynt, 2019). Consequently, if declines persist, the church overall will experience a permanent loss of those responsible for both quantitative and qualitative growth of the church's membership (Joynt, 2019).

Therefore, by identifying pastoral challenges regarding burnout, calling, pastoral resilience, role conflict, role theory, self-care, support groups or system, transition, and well-

being, researchers can discover ways to assist pastors, develop and improve support groups, and minimize the lasting effect that ministerial challenges have on pastors or preachers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

While serving in church leadership for nearly 40 years, I observed pastors who faced challenges that forced them to transition out of full-time ministry. Research over the past decades has demonstrated that pastors face significant challenges that lead to their transitioning out of the ministry (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013), such as stress, burnout, moral failure, various conflict, experiencing divorce, and the rebellion of children due to the demands of ministry. Also, many pastoral leaders experienced an economic crisis due to a lack of financial stability and having to live with grief for being forced to secure secular employment to sustain their welfare (Tanner, 2015).

Pickett et al. (2017) suggested that social-cognitive limits play a significant role in these debilitating causes. That is, humans have maximum sustainability of 150 personal relationships, and beyond this number may lead to distress. As a result, they suggested that ministers were managing a network exceeding the typical social network sizes over an extended time experienced higher levels of burnout and lower levels of ministry effectiveness (Pickett et al., 2017). Pastoral (clergy, minister) work works toward serving others and is characterized by a devotion to the Christian faith and a feeling of divine calling (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012).

Pastors occupy many roles, including teacher, counselor, preacher, administrator, and fundraiser (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). In recent years, the stress of ministry leaders has become of increasing interest within the academic community and the religious public. In response to this crisis, churches have turned to peer support groups to combat pastoral leaders' challenges (Berry et al., 2012; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). However, many of these groups tend to focus on pastoral effectiveness rather than reducing psychological distress among pastors (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012).

Therefore, the purpose of this literature review was to identify the challenges ministers or pastors face, their resilience, the effectiveness of the support they are receiving, and the lasting effect the challenges have on them during or after the transition.

Burnout

Researchers assert that ministry and its demands often violate or blur the boundaries that are to exist between the pastor's work and his family life. This conflict between work and family time usually occurs because there is ambiguity regarding expectations of the pastor's role, which ultimately leads to burnout and departure from the ministry (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012; Vaccarino & Gerritsen, 2013). More so, as ministry can be stressful and present occupational stains, the outcomes may be negative physical and mental health issues (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). Burnout does not occur overnight; there is a gradual process that eventually manifests a mismatch between the demands of the job and the needs of the person that, over time, grows greater (Vaccarino & Gerritsen, 2013).

Given the close and often inseparable relationship between clerical work and family, there is a peculiar nature of the conflict that exists between them. Subsequently, the kind of stress associated with the pastoral profession suggests that clergy experience unique stressors related to their careers, such as counseling, teaching, and administrative responsibilities, but that these stressors may exacerbate the effects of work on their personal lives. Even though family and work conflict are present in many other professions, it is manifested far higher in the pastoral business (Wells et al., 2012). Clergy burnout ultimately involves questioning self-worth and one's sense of call in the face of various demands and conflicts. Regardless of whatever the combination of contributing factors concerning exhaustion, if left unattended, burnout can result in ministers leaving ministry entirely (Muse et al., 2016).

Burnout and depression are associated with age, level of experience of the clergy, and length of service. It is a crucial factor impacting job satisfaction in many helping professions, and without intervention, it often leads to a decision to leave the business (Muse et al., 2016). It is also associated with high role expectations from self and others, coupled with a low sense of control over factors impacting success. Scott and Lovell (2015) suggested to help pastors overcome some of the biggest hurdles in their personal and professional lives and bolster the primary means by which they try to improve these problems is to cultivate spiritual closeness to God. Subsequently, Adam and Hough (2017) suggested that even though clergy experience many stressors in their work, clergy may benefit from burnout prevention strategies used by counselors and other helping professionals. When compared to other helping professional's burnout, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) measures three aspects of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Thus, across these three factors, ministers' ratings were better than those of other helping professions (Adam & Hough 2017). Barnard and Curry (2011) stated that burnout is "a decline in energy, motivation, and commitment" (p. 149). There is much uncertainty about the exact figures of clergy burnout. Still, there is a notable reality that many clergies do not admit that they are experiencing some degree of burnout (Scott & Lovell, 2015).

Calling

In a concerted effort, this study focused on the core category "calling," which is a significant factor surrounding the reasons clergy leave the full-time pastoral ministry in the church as an organization (Joynt, 2019). Given pastors' various emotional and spiritual attachments to their calling (Haney et al., 2015), leaving a ministerial career is difficult compared to secular jobs (West, 2016). Furthermore, pastors who fear their pastoral skills

acquired in ministry are less viable in a secular context are reluctant to transition out of full-time ministry (West, 2016).

The concept and meaning of calling, in this study, refers to the divine summon to full-time Christian ministry by God to serve God. It is a call to a spiritual work to help others and to meet their spiritual needs (Joynt, 2019). Thus, because of the nature of calling, it is difficult to separate the faithful minister from his calling. Since calling is a core concept in pastoral theology, often, the following Bible verse is cited during a minister's installation, "The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it" (*New International Bible*, 1978; 1 Thessalonians 5:24). Also, noted within the church's tradition, all Christians receive the calling to be faithful ministers of the graces of God in whatever profession they may serve (Joynt, 2019).

According to Dik and Duffy (2009), a calling is a transcendent summon, experienced as originating beyond the self. It permits a person to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating a sense of purpose or meaningfulness. That holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation. Even though the idea of calling is a core concept in theology and religious practice, the phrase is used in different contexts, meaning different things to different people. In modern times, calling is used synonymously with a vocation (Ahn et al., 2017; Steger et al., 2010). According to Dik and Duffy (2009), a vocation or calling is an approach to a particular life role oriented toward demonstrating meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation. Therefore, it appears then that the fundamental distinction between a vocation and calling is an internal yearning (self). The other is an external summon (which is God) upon one's life.

Steger et al. (2010), as career counseling psychologists, asserted that "if calling carries inherently religious connotations consistent with its historical heritage, promoting calling among

nonreligious clients could cause a conflict in values between clients and the counseling approach" (p. 83). Conversely, Hernandez et al. (2011), who view calling and vocation from a career counselor and vocational psychologist perspective, suggested that vocation and calling are synonymous and that their presence in career decisions are significant factors.

Furthermore, to recognize both similarities and distinctions between a ministerial calling and secular calling, Ahn et al. (2017) examined how a sense of calling is related to the career change or transition process. In contrast, career changers perceived their secular career transition to fulfill a calling. According to Ahn et al. (2017), those interviewed defined calling "as a source of fulfillment, a way to serve the greater good at work, a spiritual conviction that one is doing what one wants to do, and as an important part of one's identity" (p. 49). As a result, participants were satisfied with their changes and gained a greater sense of well-being at work.

However, researchers like Nillsen et al. (2014) approached the matter from a view of distinction. There is a distinction between calling in the sense of vocation and calling as a divine summons to him. Calling in the spirit of vocation is what a person owes to the providence of God, and it has limitations and restrictions. Furthermore, Hahnenberg (2010) suggested that vocation is not a profession or calling, but rather one's persons, as they are a unique creation set in place by God in a particular time, place, with specific abilities, disabilities, experiences, and associations. According to Nillsen et al. (2014), calling can be religious, linked to faith, and vocational to self-exploration and fulfillment. Initially, Harvey (2014) understood calling to be a summons by God to faith and discipleship; but later, during the industrial revolution, asserted the idea of vocation became more secularized, and therefore changed his view.

Finally, vocation has links to a calling as some would consider it conceptually and practically different. However, clergy have not escaped the professionalization of their

occupation, which steered the focus of the clergy's work from fulfilling a traditional calling to the gaining of results (Joynt, 2017). Yet, at the same time, the sense of calling, clergy, experience as compared to nonclergy experience, contributes to higher satisfaction and longevity in their vocation (Nillsen et al., 2014).

Pastoral Resilience

Resilience is an adaptive response to challenge the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances (Pearce & Morrison, 2011). It is a process that forces pastors to adjust to challenging events or situations to remain in the ministry. According to the literature, the concept of resilience has its origins in the studies of children who seem to develop normally or even thrive in environments that pose significant social risks (Lee, 2010). Resilience carries the sense of recovering from adversity, illness, abuse, or setbacks and indicates a measure of health. Lee (2010) suggested resilience encompasses elasticities, the ability to maintain one's level of functioning in the face of challenges, and buoyancy, the ability to recover or "bounce back" even after disruptions to functioning.

In the corporate sector, resilience seems to capture the meaning of "a system's ability to continue to meet its objectives in the face of challenges" (Barasa et al., 2018, p. 492). Although the term's context has changed due to time and settings, the concept of resilience is closely related to an element's capability and ability to return to a stable state after a disruption. According to Bhamra et al. (2011), the term resilience appears in various fields: ecology, individual and organizational psychology, supply chain management, strategic management, and safety engineering.

Schuhmann and van der Geugten (2017) described resilience in the context of caregivers' organizations. At the same time, they promoted resilience where employees were at risk of

potentially traumatic situations, such as the military, police departments, fire departments, and hospitals. In that, cases involve confrontation with human destructiveness, violence, suffering, and death, which requires resiliency. According to Considine et al. (2015), resilience is an adaptive response to a challenge composed of three elements: sustainability, a more chronically challenging situation; recovery, an isolated disruptive concern; and growth, a sustained adaptive effort that prevails despite the challenge. Grant et al. (2014) suggested that developing resilience was linked with enhancing professional practice required when dealing with people in a heightened emotional state. During those moments, it requires inner strength and coping skills that can offset high levels of stress and burnout, which, in practice, may promote employee retention (Grant et al., 2014).

However, when applied to church pastors, in resilience literature, religion and spirituality are essential resilience factors. But in contrast, spiritual and religious coping may also be detrimental and lead to negative psychological adjustment (Considine et al., 2015). Many sources also associate resilience with longevity (Reed, 2016; Schweitzer, 2015; Strunk et al., 2017). Strunk et al. (2017) asserted that it takes five to 10 years to go from being merely the preacher to being the pastor because the title is not the same as the role, and until people trust an individual, they will not follow that individual. Patterson (2002) distinguished between resilience and resiliency, as the former refers to actual adaptive processes, while the latter refers to assumed traits or capacities. Some authors have already begun using the language of resiliency to refer to a pastor's coping resources. According to Reed (2016), a considerable number of novice ministers who are gifted for the work and sense a calling from God embrace their first congregational positions with enthusiasm but leave the ministry after only a few years. They

offered many reasons for leaving vocational ministry, often involving various forms of personal and congregational difficulties.

> Younger individuals in helping professions believe that it is their job to exert large amounts of time and energy into helping solve other people's problems while neglecting their self-care. On the other hand, while more experienced clergy understand the need for personal time and the importance of therapeutic self-care, for a variety of motivations, conscious and unconscious, they may still neglect this. (Muse et al., 2016, p. 148)

However, because of the "helping profession" nature of pastoral work, pastors push themselves to perform double and sometimes triple duty in meeting the needs of their churches and community. As a result, these pastors experience high levels of stress and many other health issues that led to burnout and, ultimately, relinquishing their call to ministry.

In summary, despite the multidisciplinary interest in resilience, there is not one clear defining sentence, no universally agreed definition. Therefore, pastoral counselors can play an essential role in promoting resilience. Thus, the importance of leadership practices to organizations and individuals' resilience is a recurrent theme across the selected literature in health and other sectors and for acute and everyday challenges. Therefore, since a long-tenured ministry is essential for cultivating congregational vitality (Strunk et al., 2017), the dialogue regarding pastoral resilience must include a well-informed discussion of those qualities that contribute to a long tenure in pastoral ministry.

Role Conflict

Pastoral (clergy, minister) work works toward serving others and is characterized by a devotion to the Christian faith and a feeling of divine calling (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). Ministers occupy many roles, including teacher, counselor, preacher, administrator, and

fundraiser (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). In recent years, the stress of ministry leaders has become of increasing interest within the academic community and the religious public. Consequently, one of those concerns is that of role conflict. However, as other role-related issues surface in connection with role conflicts, such as role stress, role transgression, role ambiguity, role overload, vision conflict, and vocational dissonance, these terms are interchangeably used (Faucett et al., 2013). Still, for this study, role conflict was the focus.

Role conflict in this study relates to the ongoing opposition of two or more role expectations (Katz & Kahn, 1978). According to Strickland (2013), role conflict describes a conflict between or among the roles corresponding to two or more statuses fulfilled by one individual. Dollhopf and Scheitle (2013) suggested that complications involving role conflict in leadership transition could be difficult and important moments in an organization's life. As a result of role conflict, tension is apparent before the change even occurs.

According to Spencer et al. (2012), role conflict by nature happens because of the pressure put on an individual by two imposing, opposing, and conflicting demands competing against each other. Also, ineffective organizational policies are a direct cause of some forms of role conflict. However, in pastoral ministry, the lack of clearness and distinctness as to what roles are, as there is often a lack of clarity from the various referents as to what the role of a pastor should be, and the referents often disagree concerning the pastor's role (Hoge & Wenger, 2005). Thus, as Strickland (2013) noted, role descriptions are essential, asserting that when there is no agreement stating what to prioritize, this constitutes vocational dissonance, even though few detect it as such.

Several researchers have found that over half of the conflict events in their study of congregations concerned authority, which would indicate that leadership is a common source of

disagreement for a group. If conflict over a congregation's leadership becomes strong enough, a change in that leadership could follow. McDuff and Mueller (2000) suggested that since church employers make no significant investment, and there is no real financial risk to them, role conflict is no major factor to compromise; therefore, turnover is inevitable. Research showed that besides burnout, role conflict in their church and moral failure were also reasons why pastors left the vocation. Joynt and Dreyer (2013) asserted that role stressors, such as role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload, raised the intention to leave the ministry. Randall (2013) contended that the first years of being a minister are especially trying, which indicates that this is when support and mentoring are needed the most regarding ministerial roles.

Dollhopf and Scheitle (2013) made three significant points regarding the causes and consequences of role conflict among religious or church organizations: (a) leadership transitions can be difficult and important moments in an organization's life. They can exist before the change even occurs; (b) where forces such as congregational conflict and membership decline can lead to and result from leadership transitions; and (c) role conflicts are not only disruptive but also crucial for establishing organizational direction, roles, and identities.

In summary, leadership transitions are often elaborate events where causes and consequences are intertwined and nearly inextricable. Role conflict may amplify or ignite the tensions or problems that led to the change. Compounding the challenges of church leadership transitions are the changing demands placed on congregational leaders and their roles.

Role Theory

Essential to this study as a conceptual framework, it viewed pastors' problems leaving the ministry through the lens of role theory. Much research attributed role stress, role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload as leading causes of this phenomenon (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013;

Joynt & Dreyer, 2013; Randall, 2013). Role theory has its origin among the social sciences and is a central concept in anthropology, psychology, and sociology since the 1920s and 1930s (Biddle, 1986).

Role theory offers opportunities to integrate researchers' fundamental interests in sociology, psychology, and anthropology (Baert et al., 2019). As a conceptual lens, role theory has helped scholars systematically organize their assumptions concerning how individuals' roles in groups are assumed and evolve to shape interpersonal interactions (Biddle, 1986; Georgakakis et al., 2019). Role theory explains roles by presuming that persons are members of social positions and hold expectations for their behaviors and others (Biddle, 1986). According to Biddle (1986), role theory is not a general theory; it is a set of guiding concepts that still need to identify with methodological and theoretical discussions. Katz and Kahn (1978) suggested that role theory implies that individuals behave under the functional, relational, and structural features of the social unit in which they coexist.

Role theory exhibits an agreed-upon set of core ideas to improve human problems. It can help dissect the process by examining the specific roles employees engage in when engagement changes and how those role-based behaviors link to outcomes, either intended or unintended (Welbourne & Schlachter, 2019). Role theory tells us that when role expectations are unclear or conflicting, individuals may exit the role or experience a great deal of stress (Burr et al., 1979). As it pertains primarily to church organizations and their pastors, this study sought to understand an organization's insides. Many defined a role as a set of expectations applied to the incumbent of a particular position by the incumbent and by role senders within and beyond an organization's boundaries (Van Sell et al., 1981). Roles that are both important to the organization and allow employees to bring more of themselves to the workplace will be

important targets for effective employee engagement programs. When organizations fill “empty” jobs with new members, they attempt to create output from a given role composed of those behavior clusters (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

Shivers-Blackwell (2004) suggested that job tasks specific to any given role with certain expectations of any given job. However, role sets influence expectations. The role set comprises various individuals who operate interdependently, such as the immediate supervisor or individuals in adjacent offices. Many organizations’ hierarchy creates role pressures that seek to generate conformity across individuals holding the same roles. Van Sell et al. (1981) asserted that employees are engaging in behaviors that help the company while not necessarily being part of the organizational member role’s core job. This role and associated work may be called organizational citizenship behaviors. Noticeably when organizations clarify which position should receive the primary focus from each organization’s member, they usually experience success (Van Sell et al., 1981). The perspective also implies that organizations are rational, stable entities. All conflicts within them are merely role conflicts. The participant will inevitably be happy and productive once the leadership resolves the role conflict, or the dissatisfied person(s) will eventually leave the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

Self-Care

While serving as a minister-pastor, I have observed that in most churches, the functions of the clergy include many of the duties required in other helping professions that can be predictors of burnout. Clergy who serves in congregations are repeatedly called upon to support persons dealing with a wide range of emotional and spiritual issues. Individuals often turn to their clergy person in times of crisis before drawing upon other sources of support (Salwen et al., 2017). Which, in time, places enormous amounts of mental stress and harmful pressure upon

ministers as helping professionals. It should, therefore, not be surprising that clergy self-care is essential to prevent burnout. According to Vaccarino and Gerritsen (2013), clergy burnout can lead to depression; burnout can damage relationships and negatively affect ministry. Therefore, to prevent burnout and self-neglect, the clergy needs to take care of themselves.

Furthermore, Vaccarino and Gerritsen (2013) described "self-care" as understanding, desiring positive health, and working toward it. Self-care is balancing all aspects of health, including the spiritual, physical, emotional, social, and other components of our lives. Salwen et al. (2017) suggested that although there appeared to be a small amount of research that addressed pastoral mental health, the pastor's mental health could significantly impact churches and communities. And even though some Evangelical pastors might resist the findings of psychological research, many now understand the mental illnesses they are potentially facing. In the case of self-care, the primary point of discussion is the pastor's need for mental health care, rejection, and denial that a mental health need is warranted.

However, the contributing factor that leads to the pastoral health crisis is associated with endeavoring to accomplish unrealistic goals for and with their congregants. Thus, research is saying that this mentality leads to mental breakdowns of pastors, and they quit the ministry (Salwen et al., 2017).

Muse et al. (2016) suggested that younger individuals in helping professions believe that it is their job to exert large amounts of time and energy into helping solve other people's problems while neglecting their self-care. On the other hand, while more experienced clergy understand the need for personal time and the importance of self-care, for a variety of motivations, conscious and unconscious, younger clergy are negligent in this regard. However, because of the "helping profession" nature of pastoral work, pastors push themselves to perform

double and sometimes triple duty in meeting the needs of their churches and community. As a result, these pastors experience high levels of stress and many other health issues that led to burnout and, ultimately, relinquishing their call to ministry.

Vaccarino and Gerritsen (2013) emphasized that four critical and fundamental self-care practices tend to emerge in the literature, namely boundaries, time and working hours, rest and the Sabbath, and network of support. Among these concepts, the need for balance and boundaries are the most critical. Even though it is understood and expected that clergy care for others, consequently, very competent clergy may suffer colossal physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual strain as they try to sustain their callings. Unfortunately, many clergies may burn out within the ministry because they have life's priorities out of balance (Vaccarino & Gerritsen, 2013).

Transition

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2004), a transition is a passing or passage from one condition, action, or (rarely) place to another; change. Transition in this context means leaving the full-time ministry or resigning from one's post to pursue another ministry or church, which may occur voluntarily, involuntary, by forced termination, or due to conflict and unresolvable issues (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013; Tanner, 2015).

Therefore, as a unique factor to this study, it is needful to seek to know the causes, motives, effects for ministers (transitioning out of), leaving the full-time pastoral ministry, and acquiring secular employment. A reasonable purpose for transitioning ministers from the ministry is that it is essential first to understand the social, psychological, and cultural effect transition has on anyone transitioning from one career to another. Attachment to an employer is not the same as an attachment to one's occupation (profession). There is a debate that suggests

that devotion to one's employer is based primarily on economic rationality. In contrast, attachment to one's occupation (trade) is determined more by adherence to a service call associated with that occupation (McDuff & Mueller, 2000).

When seriously considered, the study of transition may introduce us to a variety of ways to view transition, including leadership transition, political transition, social transition, cultural transition, economic transition, and technological transition (Dewey, 2012). All these types of changes provide useful insight and strategies for people moving into new positions, roles, and environments. A review of the literature revealed five main groupings of challenges faced by transitioning leaders: cognitive, behavioral, interpersonal, psychological, and systemic (Gilmore, 1988). The transitioning leader must develop new thinking patterns and learn to deal with complexity and ambiguity on a cognitive level. On a behavioral level, new trends are required, including time management, driving for results, learning to communicate effectively, and learning to rely on others. From an interpersonal perspective, transitioning leaders need to build new networks, learn to influence others, and establish trust. Psychologically, they need to learn to deal with anxiety and loss of identity. The transitional environments are rife with questions, uncertainty, and fear of the unknown. What will happen next? A transitioning leader needs to understand what the new job entails within the systemic context and organizational culture (Gilmore, 1988).

Regarding the effects, there are two significant challenges to transition, identity, and role. Identity means the internalized and evolving story that results from a person's selective appropriation of past, present, and future (McAdams, 2003, p. 187). McAdams (2003) argued that the concept of identity as a narrative is especially critical for our understanding of identity dynamics during role transitions, being defined as passages between sequentially held

organizational, occupational, or professional roles. Often a person risks losing their established identities during both wanted and unwanted transitions. For instance, many senior officers who transition from military service to a civilian environment often lose their identity and experience culture shock because they are no longer saluted and addressed as 'Sir!' (Cafferata, 2017; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). According to Coll (2011), "There is the disorientation, change of status, and a search for identity and meaning"(p. 488).

Similar to the culture shock of the military officer, ministers serving many years in the specialized ministry culture as they transition out of full-time also face career identity challenges (Cafferata, 2017). Fearing their ministerial skills acquired in the ministry are less viable in a secular context, they are reluctant to transition (West, 2016). A pastor's failed expectations of growth may challenge a sense of identity revitalization (their own or others) by difficulty navigating the emotionally challenging tasks that must be completed (McAdams, 2003). Challenges faced during a career transition are significant. They are described as "crucibles" and are such a prominent factor that a cultural transition specialist is now helping others navigate the processes. Although transition periods are disruptive and uncertain, those in transition have overcome.

According to Dollhopf and Scheitle (2013), leadership transitions in religious congregations might be especially challenging given the personal relationships involved and the spiritual dimension of a leader's position. For example, because of the emotional attachments among religious people, religious leaders' actions to leave or stay can become divisive and may affect the overall stability of the group. As a result, pastors are often in stressful and challenging situations regarding decision-making involving their current ministry or the thought of moving to another type of work. Clergy employs an essential role in the establishing and sustaining of the

church; many attendees without them would not acquire strong roots in the faith. As a result, the next generation will be deprived of both spiritual and numerical growth. Unfortunately, both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches are facing a considerable risk regarding the distribution of displacement clergy. Therefore, the sustainability of clergy to their call to full-time pastoral ministry is crucial for the church's continued existence (Joynt, 2017).

Hoge and Wenger (2005) listed the main reasons for clergy leaving for secular careers as the discouragement and depression linked to their lives and ministries. Hoge and Wenger (2005) noted the pastor's purpose, vocational commitment, and personal fulfillment as the three primary aspects affecting clergy retention. Joynt (2017) suggested that the global church is experiencing a clergy shortage and that since no one is listening to them, it contributes to clergy leaving the full-time pastoral ministry. Thus, not being heard either confirms or negates their decision to remain in the context of full-time pastoral ministry (Joynt, 2019). Also, because of internal conflict, financial issues, secularization, and multiple tasks placed upon the clergy, an exodus of qualified ministers from the ministry has occurred, and a deterrent has arisen to those who are considering entering the ministry (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013; Joynt, 2019). Consequently, if challenges persist, the church overall will experience a perpetual decline of those responsible for both quantitative and qualitative growth of the membership (Joynt, 2019).

Randall (2013) addressed the transition problem among the ordained ministry of the Anglican Church in England and Wales, which identified demographics, churchmanship, personality, and work-related psychological health factors as causes of leaving. Among the four, work-related mental health demographic factors on emotional exhaustion in ministry revealed more frequent consideration about departing the ministry. West (2016) suggested that although most pastors receive adequate Bible knowledge, business administration, and church leadership,

they fall short of being efficient vocational ministers because they are ill-prepared in emotional intelligence (EI). However, if they were to receive training in EI, they would be more effective as pastors and enjoy their jobs even better and experience more significant outcomes. Unfortunately, there is a noticeable performance gap among pastors as they do not reach maximum job satisfaction because of the amount of energy they spend nurturing their congregations. As a result, the reality of leaving the ministry is eminent (West, 2016).

Furthermore, Tanner (2015) spoke of minister transition as it related to forced termination. Tanner (2015) asserted that forced termination is the process and result of psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual abuse directed toward ministers, such that there is no other option for the minister but to leave the post of ministry. Furthermore, forced termination is a counterpart to workplace mobbing, which is like the concept of forced separation (Tanner, 2015). Consequently, personal attacks upon the minister(s) and their families impact the ministers' performance and lifestyle and their ability to remain in the ministry. Spencer et al. (2012) conducted a study on exploratory factor analysis using Wickman's (2004) Pastors at Risk Inventory that measures the likelihood of whether clergy may face forced or unforced resignation. In doing so, Spencer et al. (2012) identified vision conflict and compassion fatigue as the primary cause of a pastoral transition. By identifying these factors, the purposeful development of prevention and remediation strategies may arise to address the phenomena associated with pastors at risk.

Support Groups

According to Stunk et al., (2017), the most prominent and visible people responsible for organizing, managing, and leading churches are clergy. Based on personal experience and social statistics surrounding pastoral influence, clergy are among the most trusted professionals in our

society. Not only are ministers directly providing many of these services, but their leadership is essential and influential in the moral, mental, and social formation of their churches (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013). Though pastors face countless challenges in the ministries, many find ways to overcome their trials and ultimately thrive in their profession. Given the responsibilities that clergy are carrying, often working long hours and making a substantial personal sacrifice, that whether while working in ministry or following a transition from it, the support of their well-being is essential (Berry et al., 2012). Thus, as pastoral literature repeatedly reports that loneliness, isolation, and burnout with the lack of pastoral support systems, a support network is essential.

In recent years, churches have turned to peer support groups to assist in pastoral leaders' challenges (Gubi, 2016; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). According to Miles and Proeschold-Bell (2012), not all of these groups focus on reducing psychological distress among pastors. Therefore, results indicated that participation in peer support groups was not beneficial concerning psychological distress. Muse et al. (2016) explained that facilitators for clergy in crisis programs observed that many pastors do not have their own pastor or mentor and have not utilized counseling to understand emotional issues. According to personal observation and research, many pastors view their family relationships as a primary support system. However, as Spencer et al. (2012) suggested, clergy who experience stress tend to cope better when they meet regularly with a support team. Thus, in a study conducted by Francis et al. (2013), in their research surrounding pastoral care and support for the clergy, the authors assessed five support studies to reduce burnout among the clergy: "study leave, sabbaticals, ministry mentors, spiritual directors, and minister peer groups" (p. 320). Unfortunately, there was no unanimous outcome that yielded positive results overall.

In recent years, reflexive groups (RGs) have appeared to support ministers who have gone through a crisis and presently encountering a crisis. However, they do not suit everyone (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). According to Gubi (2016), reflexive groups offer a form of support that enables ministers to feel less isolated, which allows them to gain insight into the way they think and allow clergy to respect differences better and gain a better sense of self-care. Furthermore, these groups enable ministers to engage in a better quality of pastoral encounters with others and to interact better with others in their ministry.

According to Braudaway-Bauman (2012), reflexive groups create communities of practice for intentional reflection on participants' ministries. Reflexive groups allow openness and honesty before others and members, and they provide a chance for participants to tell their story, to give and receive support. Ironically, Gubi (2016) sought to establish the effectiveness of RGs in supporting clergy. On the other hand, Miles and Proeschold-Bell (2012) asserted that such groups are not beneficial for everyone, and evidence from the use of RGs within other professions suggested that such groups have their limitations.

Research that addresses the topic of support groups regarding pastoral support has identified two dimensions of support: emotional and instrumental. Emotional support involves listening to and consoling after a traumatic event, whereas helpful support consists of resolving a work crisis by intervening (Tanner et al., 2012). Pastoral literature repeatedly presupposes loneliness, isolation, burnout, and trauma with the lack of pastoral support systems as a leading cause for pastors transitioning out of the ministry (Tanner et al., 2012).

According to Ngamaba (2014), faith group leaders should develop and fund models of support for clergy that utilize small peer groups and mentors or facilitators. Many of the studies showed the importance of healthy relationships outside the ministry setting for promoting clergy

resiliency. Faith group leaders should focus on educating congregations on the importance of supporting the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of clergy and creating reasonable and healthy expectations for clergy leaders (Ngamaba, 2014). Leadership development for clergy should include training in conflict resolution, practical interpersonal skills, and the ability to set appropriate boundaries. While thriving, pastors must be willing to utilize support systems to cope with the challenges they face (Ngamaba, 2014).

These networks may originate early in life, and participants reflected on the importance of receiving and nurturing support in a variety of ways. Additional help may come from colleagues and mentors, and resources such as additional training and personal therapy may also increase job satisfaction and minimize transition. Responses about support systems and self-care practices highlighted essential ways in which these pastors achieved success over time. Their contributions are a gift to others who are considering embarking on a life in ministry.

Well-Being

Well-being has reference to the human dimension as a person-rendered judgment about his or her satisfaction and self-concept. It is how a person evaluates their emotional state of mind as human beings (Medvedev & Landhuis, 2018). It is what humans seek in determining their quality of life and what makes them happy as an individual and as groups (Salwen et al., 2017). Pavot and Diener (2013) defined well-being in terms of a definite system that measures individuals' responses in three categories: emotional responses, internal satisfaction, and global judgments of individuals about life happenings.

Medvedev and Landhuis (2018) explained that well-being is a broad term covering all aspects of ordinary life: physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual. Well-being is a more loving state of mind involving evaluating events that happen to human beings (Medvedev &

Landhuis, 2018). Well-being, however, falls into at least two categories: spiritual and psychological. Spiritual well-being is associated with a person's subjective religious and existential sense of one's quality of life (Salwen et al., 2017). According to Akram (2019), psychological well-being is an interaction of positive effects such as happiness and optimal functioning of people in social and individual areas of life. In contrast, Medvedev and Landhuis (2018) suggested that existing definitions of happiness, subjective well-being, and health-related quality of experience in the research literature seemed to overlap.

However, regarding the minister's well-being, according to Kinman et al. (2011), work-related stressors cause harm to the pastor's well-being and retention. Their study examined the relationship between emotional labor, psychological well-being, and job satisfaction of the clergy. Their research suggested that even though clergy found their work satisfying, meaningful, and worthwhile, clergy also experienced high levels of emotional labor (Kinman et al., 2011). Kinman et al. (2011) described emotional labor as the pastor's inability, on account of their role as a helping professional, to maintain clear boundaries between their personal and professional life. Their failure to maintain boundaries, in most cases, significantly contributed to the pastors leaving the ministry due to the pressure of their work (Kinman et al., 2011). Kinman et al. (2011) concluded that counseling training and a more extensive social network might protect clergy from the negative impact of emotional labor and could add support to their well-being.

Tanner et al. (2012) attributed the adverse effects of forced termination to a minister's psychological well-being and physical health. The chronic stress of working with demanding churches inflicts a significant toll upon both ministers and their families. As a result of their

empirical study, there appeared to be a connection between the forced termination of ministers and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and general anxiety disorder (GAD).

In summary of the well-being regarding ministers and their work, Kinman et al. (2011) suggested that clergy members found their work satisfying, meaningful, and worthwhile. In addition, clergy were the happiest and most satisfied helping professionals overall. However, well-being research suggested that emotional exhaustion among clergy members exceeded those reported by other groups of "caring" professionals (Francis et al., 2013; Salwen et al., 2017). Also, significantly more depression and anxiety existed among clergy than the general population. Besides, leaving intentions among clergy were significantly associated with the stressors and strains of the job, and clergy considered leaving the ministry due to the pressure of their work far surpassed the intention of other helping professionals (Akram, 2019; Francis et al., 2013).

A deterrent has arisen to those who are considering entering the ministry (Joynt, 2019). As mentioned, pastoral leaders who experience an economic crisis live with stress and grief for being forced to secure secular employment to ensure their well-being (Joynt, 2017; Tanner, 2015). Consequently, if declines persist, the church overall will experience a permanent loss of those who are responsible for both quantitative and qualitative growth of the membership of the church (Joynt, 2019).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a literature review that sought to identify the challenges, the effectiveness of the support they are receiving because of these challenges, and the lasting effect the challenges have on ministering pastors. Several keywords, such as *burnout*, *calling*, *pastoral resilience*, *role theory*, *role conflict*, *self-care*, *support groups or system*, *transition*, and *well-*

being, provided this study's foundation. Researchers are saying that ministry and its demands often violate or blur the boundaries that exist between the pastor's work and his family life. This conflict between work and family time usually occurs because there is ambiguity regarding expectations of the pastor's role, which ultimately leads to burnout and departure from the ministry (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012; Vaccarino & Gerritsen, 2013).

Ministry is stressful and presents occupational stains, including physical and mental health issues (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). In a concerted effort, this study focused on the core category "calling," which is a significant factor concerning the reasons clergy leave the full-time pastoral ministry for secular employment (Joynt, 2019). Given pastors' various emotional and spiritual attachments to their calling (Haney et al., 2015), leaving a ministerial career is difficult compared to secular jobs (West, 2016).

Regarding pastoral resilience, resilience is an adaptive response to challenge the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances (Pearce & Morrison, 2011). It is a process that forces pastors to adjust to challenging events or situations to remain in the ministry. Regarding role conflict, in recent years, the stress of ministry leaders has become of increasing interest within the academic community and the religious public. Consequently, one of those concerns is that of role conflict. Role conflict in this study related to the ongoing opposition of two or more role expectations that lead to disagreements (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Where forces such as congregational conflict and membership decline exist can both lead to and result from leadership transitions. Role conflicts are not only disruptive but also crucial for establishing organizational direction, roles, and identities. Role theory in this study told us that when role expectations are unclear or conflicting, individuals might exit the role or experience a great deal of stress (Burr et al., 1979). As role

theory pertains primarily to church organizations and their pastors, this study sought to understand an organization's insides.

In the case of self-care, the primary point of discussion is the pastor's need for mental health care, rejection, and denial that a mental health need is warranted. However, the contributing factor that leads to the pastoral health crisis is associated with endeavoring to accomplish unrealistic goals for and with their congregants. Thus, research is saying that this mentality leads to mental breakdowns of pastors, and they quit the ministry (Salwen et al., 2017). According to Dollhopf and Scheitle (2013), leadership transitions in religious congregations might be especially challenging given the personal relationships involved and the spiritual dimension of a leader's position.

Thus, as pastoral literature repeatedly reported that loneliness, isolation, and burnout with the lack of pastoral support systems, a support network is essential. In recent years, churches have turned to peer support groups to combat pastoral leaders' challenges (Gubi, 2016; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). According to Miles and Proeschold-Bell (2012), many of these groups tend to focus on pastoral effectiveness rather than reducing psychological distress among pastors. However, regarding the minister's well-being, according to Kinman et al. (2011), work-related stressors cause harm to the pastor's well-being and retention. Furthermore, there is a need to understand pastors' involvement in support groups and their effectiveness regarding the minister's well-being during or posttransition.

Chapter 3: Research Design & Methodology

Purpose Statement

The study's purpose was to explore the challenges of pastoral leaders (preachers, ministers, evangelists) transitioning out of full-time ministry to secular employment. Since the functions of the clergy play an essential role in the establishment, development, and sustaining of the church and are responsible for the perpetuation of the faith and practice to the next generation (Joynt, 2017), clergy transitioning is a matter that needs to be explored and explained.

Research over the past decades has demonstrated that pastors face significant challenges that lead to their transitioning out of full-time ministry (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013; West, 2016). Problems included stress, burnout, moral failure, and their children having a faith crisis because "the church fired their daddy." It would be stressful to secure other employment, and it would create an economic and social crisis for pastors to uproot their families and move to another town or state, often with little notice (Tanner, 2015).

In recent years, churches have turned to peer support groups to combat pastoral leaders' challenges (Berry et al., 2012; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). However, many of these groups tend to focus on pastoral effectiveness rather than reducing psychological distress among pastors (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). Therefore, this study enables other ministers and church organizations to understand the internal conflict ministers experience because they have few alternatives regarding using their leadership gifts outside of their calling. This study also enables an understanding of the pastor's experience living with stress and grief to transition to secular employment to ensure their well-being (Tanner, 2015). It identifies pastoral challenges, the effectiveness of their support systems, and the lasting effect the challenges have on pastoring

ministers as these conflicts and transitions will inevitably occur (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013; Haney et al., 2015).

Research Questions

For this study, the specific research questions were:

RQ1. What are the challenges faced by pastoral leaders that lead to the transition from a full-time ministerial to a secular vocation?

RQ2. What internal matters confront pastors having to stay in or transition from full-time active ministry to secular vocation?

RQ3. What kind of ongoing support is available to sustain pastors in transitioning from full-time ministerial to secular vocation?

Design

The conceptual framework described in the literature review was role theory. As a theoretical lens, role theory has helped scholars systematically organize their assumptions about how individuals' roles in groups are assumed and evolve to shape interpersonal interactions (Biddle, 1986). For this study, the focused subjects were African American ministers of the Churches of Christ who, because of various economic, sociological, and cultural circumstances, have transitioned out of full-time ministry and later came back in.

The case study is one of the most frequently used qualitative research methodologies (Yin, 2002). This case study sought to describe, understand, and explain the reasons for a factual decline in pastoral leaders' retention as there is an exodus occurrence of qualified ministers from full-time ministry (Joynt, 2019). This case study design was most appropriate for this study because a phenomenon refers to an occurrence, experience, or event (Moustakas, 1994) that usually negatively impacts the subjects' lives. Using this design will enable the investigator to

address the phenomenon of challenged pastoral leaders transitioning out of the ministry to secular careers (Yin, 2002). The study sought to identify the difficulties that pastoral leaders in career transition face, the effectiveness of the support they are receiving because of these challenges, and the lasting effect the challenges have on them.

Methodology

This study pursued a qualitative case study research approach. Qualitative research traditions originated in the social and behavioral sciences and are used effectively among those in the helping professions (Patton, 2015). Qualitative research is the study of the world from the viewpoint of the person(s) under investigation. It has subcomponents such as phenomenology, history, ethnography, and case studies (Patton, 2015).

During the latter half of the 20th century, the qualitative research approach found its way into the research arena, closely followed by the mixed method (Patton, 2015). It is distinguished from quantitative research by using descriptive words instead of using numbers to express outcomes and using open-ended interview questions instead of close-ended as in quantitative (Roberts, 2010). It is an approach that seeks to understand the meaning of groups and individuals ascribe to a human and social problem. In a qualitative approach, the inquirer seeks to examine an issue related to the oppression of individuals. Thus, individuals are interviewed at some length to determine how they have personally experienced challenging events, public controversy, conflict, or abuse (Locke et al., 2013).

Furthermore, whenever a concept or phenomenon needs exploring and understood because little research has occurred, it merits a qualitative approach compared to quantitative methods (Locke et al., 2013). In this study, the qualitative case study design was appropriate because case studies allow an in-depth understanding of participants, events, behaviors, and

feelings that occur during specific experiences and specified timeframes (Padgett, 2008; Woodside & Wilson, 2003). In a case study, the investigator drew data from multiple sources, such as archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts. Mostly, since the case study relies on data triangulation (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2002), these multiple sources established the internal validity of a case study. On account of their knowledge and experience of the topic of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Smith, 2018), those interviewed were senior ministers with 20 years or more of service. Former ministers who left the ministry were also interviewed. This approach employed demographic variables of participants in the study. Thus, the proper utilization of various sources enhanced the understanding of the phenomenon.

Since the case study is one of the most frequently used qualitative research methods (Aaltio & Heilmann, 2012; Yin, 2002), it led to a way of looking at the event from an individual's or group of individuals' points of view (Stake, 1995). According to Merriam (1998), one must view the qualitative case study as a bounded phenomenon that engages and analyzes programs, persons, and social units.

Population

This study population was pastoral leaders (preachers, ministers, and evangelists) within the African American segment of the Churches of Christ within the United States' Southeast region who, because of various economic, sociological, and cultural circumstances who have transitioned out of full-time ministry and later came back in. The study's demographics and geography were African American ministers affiliated with the Florida State and Southeastern Regional Lectureships, which are annual events that rotate statewide and regionally, concerned with leadership development and church growth learning opportunities. The church leaders for

this study were from churches with less than 200 to 300 congregants, and each congregation functions autonomously of others.

Sample

For this study, I used a purposeful sampling strategy, which involves ministers who serve in a pastoral capacity within the African American segment of the Churches of Christ. Those sampled were African American ministers because of various economic, sociological, and cultural circumstances who have transitioned out of full-time ministry and later came back in. Being one of the facilitators within this regional and statewide network of church leaders, I had access to church leaders quarterly and annually within this contextual environment who are the studies' targeted subjects. As a vendor, one of the lectureship presenters, and as the investigator of this study, I had direct access to the database of contact information: phone numbers, email addresses, and their church's website. With this access and established relationship, I conducted face-to-face interviews and collected data via email and telephonic medians.

Data Collection and Analysis

The purpose of the data collection in this study via interviews was to identify the challenges that pastoral leaders in career transition face, the effectiveness of the support they receive, and the lasting effect the challenges have on them. Patton (2015) suggested that "the purpose of the research is the controlling factor in conducting sound research, that all other elements in research flow from the purpose" (p. 248). Magilvy and Thomas (2009) suggested that in a qualitative study, the researcher is the instrument of research, meaning researchers generate data by asking questions in personal interviews or focus groups, making observations and recording notes, possibly participating in an event, reflecting on this participation, or taking photographs.

On account of their knowledge and experience of the topic of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Smith, 2018), those interviewed were senior ministers with 20 years or more of service and former ministers who left the ministry. This approach employed demographic variables of participants in the study. The collection process initially occurred while entering the conference site and occurred via phone or email. The interview portion included six queries (see Appendix A). Furthermore, this study's author was one of the participants as the investigator and human instrument to collect, analyze, and present the study's findings.

According to research, the multiple source method allowed comparison and contrast and examination of all data and references related to the issue (Patton, 2015). Interview protocols associated with qualitative studies provide in-depth information about the participants' lived experiences and viewpoints related to a particular phenomenon. This study followed a structured interview process related to a specific field (ministry), with a need to answer specific questions. As in structured interviews, each participant was asked the same questions in the same order (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Asking the same questions in the same order helps interviewers collect similar types of information delivered in a uniform context from interviewees (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Padgett, 2008; Simons, 2012). With properly formulated questions, the interview experience is more effective in obtaining the most critical and relevant information (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Simons, 2012).

Also, researchers suggest that the interview process demands to be open-minded, nonbiased, and ethical (Creswell, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2016; Patton, 2015).

Regarding the analysis of the data, an open coding system was selected. Coding is primarily a "hermeneutic (or interpretive) act that represents the transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 4). Open coding, however,

takes place during the initial stage of qualitative data analysis. Open coding is related to grounded theory, a method of qualitative data analysis with a theoretical understanding developed inductively by identifying themes that emerge from a given data set (Saldaña, 2013). Open coding consists of labeling concepts, defining and developing ideas and categories based on their properties, and is significant to the data collection process (Glaser, 2016).

Further, open coding allows for an iterative-inductive thematic analysis, line-by-line, every sentence, and even word-by-word analysis (Cascio et al., 2019). This study used a thematic analysis through line-by-line open coding of structured interview transcripts. By using this thematic analyzes, the approach gave preference to participants' perspectives, and it prioritized validity. According to Schensul and LeCompte (2013), prioritizing validity assesses "whether the results are congruent with what the researchers intended to measure or study and whether they are congruent with reality as expected for participants in the field" (p. 320).

Ethical Considerations

Regarding ethical considerations, researchers insist that establishing trustworthiness is critical to data collection. Data collection related to the qualitative study requires integrity, which supports the intention of remaining neutral and impartial (Guerra-Lopez, 2008). Those interviewed were senior ministers with 20 years or more of service who had access to read and sign or verbally consent to a confidentiality consent form agreeing to an interview. Upon entering the conference site, a request for participating in the study occurred, whether via phone, email, or in-person. It was emphasized that their participation was strictly voluntary. There were no compensation provisions for participating. The information given was to assist in making informed assessments regarding the study and that this interview information was confidential without public access.

This study enables other ministers and church organizations to understand the internal conflict ministers experience as they have few alternatives regarding using their leadership gifts outside of their calling. In addition, it will foster an understanding of the pastor's experience living with stress and grief for having to transition to secular employment to ensure their well-being (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013; Tanner, 2015; West, 2016). There was little to no risk since each interview was conducted and submitted on an individual and secret basis separate from their congregations' knowledge or involvement. Also, prior to publishing, each participant may review their information. The data for this study was stored on a USB hard drive and in a secure filing cabinet. However, in five years, I will destroy all data (hardcopy and softcopy) to ensure the study participants' fidelity and confidentiality.

Limitations

Because of this case study, the intended samples from among pastoral leaders (preachers, ministers, and evangelists) within the African American segment of the Churches of Christ within the Southeast region of the United States may only represent a generalization and not be an accurate representation of pastoral leaders' (ministers') challenges nationally (Simon & Goes, 2013). However, in general, based on qualitative methodology, the samples are believed suitable for the study.

Delimitations

For this study, based on their knowledge and to ascertain their understanding, their congregations' understanding of leadership, and their experience of burnout and leaving the ministry, only senior ministers with more than 20 years were selected for interviewing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Smith, 2018).

Furthermore, for this study, it was not intended to minimize the experiences of those ministers who are bivocational that have experienced the challenges of ministry. However, on account of the difficulty of measuring an actual lived experience of transitioning from full-time ministry to a secular vocation, bivocational ministers are not considered in this study (Simon & Goes, 2013).

Trustworthiness

There was a need for establishing trustworthiness since, in qualitative research, both the interpretation and representation of the data primarily reside in the control of the researchers (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Trustworthiness ensures that findings are valid; it captures the truth of peoples' experiences and perceptions and provides credibility, transferability, and neutrality. There are several strategies that researchers can employ to ensure trustworthiness (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation and prolonged engagement to establish trustworthiness were applied for this study. Triangulation occurs when more than one source of data is used. Prolonged engagement suggests that the researcher spends enough time in their research environment to understand the broad setting, the phenomenon, and the background (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this case study, I participated in the training and development programs on a quarterly and annual basis and had developed relationships and rapport, thereby gaining trust and understanding of the studies' targeted subjects.

Chapter Summary

This case study's design was to help ascertain why pastors face significant challenges that lead to transitioning out of full-time ministry to secular careers. It sought to identify the effectiveness of the support they are receiving and the lasting effect the challenges have on them. The methodology for this study was qualitative research. This study's method was a case study.

The method responded to the question that asks to explain the processes to real-life interventions (Stake, 1995). Also, as a conceptual framework, this study viewed pastors' problems of leaving the ministry through the lens of role theory. The subjects for this study were African American ministers of the Churches of Christ within the Southeast region of the United States. Those interviewed were senior ministers with 20 years or more of service and those who left the ministry and returned.

All study documents must be relevant, reliable, and valid to provide significant data sources for research projects (Guerra-Lopez, 2008), and data are gathered through multiple sources as there is a need to understand pastors' involvement in support systems and their effectiveness regarding the minister's well-being during or posttransition.

Chapter 4: Analysis of the Findings

This research aimed to explore and describe pastoral leaders' experiences of maintaining resilience while contemplating transitioning out of ministry. In this chapter, I presented the context in which the study site existed, participant demographics, the method used for collecting data, the technique used for data analysis, evidence of the study's trustworthiness, and the investigation results. Also, as a conduit to understanding these ministers' experiences, role theory was used as the lens as role theory tells us that when role expectations are unclear or conflicting, individuals may exit the role or experience a great deal of stress (Burr et al., 1979).

During the past 40 years, while serving in church leadership, I observed pastoral leaders who faced challenges that caused them to transition out of full-time ministry. Those who were fortunate enough to navigate through these challenges continued in providing ministerial services by becoming bivocational. Some went back to school, earned secular degrees, sought jobs outside of their calling, and moved on to other careers. Many ministers who had 40 plus years in the ministry had extraordinarily little formal education or ministerial training in my social context. Still, they persevered, coming up through the "churches" and remained in the ministry.

Furthermore, there were those with formal education, primarily religious and theological degrees, and diplomas from preaching schools; however, since these were not regionally accredited degrees, they were rejected in secular education contexts. As such, those ministers usually experience indecision to remain in or leave the ministry during both dissatisfaction and quiet periods while serving at their post (Dollhopf & Scheitle, 2013).

This study's central research question was: What are the challenges pastoral leaders face maintaining resilience while contemplating transitioning out of ministry?

The three individual research questions were:

RQ1. What are the challenges faced by pastoral leaders that lead to the transition from a full-time ministerial to a secular vocation?

RQ2. What internal matters confront pastors having to stay in or transition from full-time active ministry to secular vocation?

RQ3. What kind of ongoing support is available to sustain pastors in transitioning from full-time ministerial to secular vocation?

Participants and Demographics

Those unique to this study were African American ministers who, because of various economic, sociological, and cultural circumstances, transition out and later return to full-time ministry. The six ministers who experienced the difficulties of maintaining resilience while contemplating transitioning out of ministry have affiliations with the Florida State and Southeastern Regional Lectureships. These are annual events that rotate statewide and regionally and are concerned with leadership development and church growth learning opportunities. The church leaders for this study were from Churches of Christ with less than 300 congregants, and each congregation functions autonomously from others.

Churches of Christ are Christian congregations that trace their roots back to New Testament principles of the first century. Its American roots date back to the Restoration Movement that began in the early 1800s in the United States (Dowling, 1964; Noll, 2012; North, 1994). Although their congregations are autonomous, they are unified worldwide through a common doctrine and practice of New Testament Christianity.

Six participants currently serving in ministerial positions or who left and returned to ministry provided the narratives foundational to the results outlined in this chapter. However, I did not include those ministers who were bivocational in this study (Simon & Goes, 2013).

Participant quotes used pseudonym designations (e.g., Matthew, Mark, Luke) to identify the sections from separate individuals. Therefore, to avoid participants' possibility of compromising their identity by aggregating their quotes, each participant's pseudonym designation was used.

I concluded that the participants' richness of information was only possible because they were encouraged by my assurance that their identity would be protected and not compromised. To nullify the possibility of confidentiality breaches for the six ministers who made themselves vulnerable by sharing deeply personal experiences, I deemed it necessary to limit each participant's descriptive detail. Maintaining this level of confidentiality was not only for the sake of the six ministers who participated in this study but also to encourage future participants to become involved in scientific studies to benefit emerging ministers as they prepare for ministry.

Matthew

Matthew has preached for 53 years and has served four churches; he is married and presently preaches in South Florida. Matthew has had no interruptions in his preaching career, has formal education, and before full-time ministry, Matthew served as a chief physical fitness and sports director. Matthew worked with young people in the church and as a missionary for several years, but later, while doing local ministry work, Matthew conducted numerous Gospel meetings across the country annually and was a featured speaker at many of the lectureships.

Mark

Mark has preached for 40 years and has served six churches; he is married and presently preaches in Central Florida. Mark left the ministry for a year or two and later returned to full-time service and has formal education. During Mark's college years, he acquired a ministerial degree in counseling, as his ministering style catered to outreach ministries, he conducted many workshops for churches that ministered to those dealing with addiction and incarceration. As

church leaders need a specialist to address prison ministries, Mark is one of the primary persons most church leaders call to speak to the issue.

Barnabas

Barnabas has preached for 40 years and has served five churches; he is married and presently preaches in North Carolina. Barnabas left the full-time ministry for nearly two years and later returned to full-time ministry and has formal education. Barnabas was one of the first recognized within the Southeastern brotherhood to author and publish more than five books. Barnabas's giftedness in organizing professional development opportunities for novice and experienced preachers has become a significant asset for the brotherhood. Barnabas has also been an encourager to younger ministers in using entrepreneur strategies in conjunction with church growth.

Paul

Paul has preached for 51 years and has served seven churches; he is married and presently preaches on the East Coast of Florida and has no interruptions in his preaching career. Paul is a School of Preaching graduate and has a theological degree. Paul is known throughout the country and the Caribbean as a studious Bible scholar and teacher and has authored eight books on subjects from both Old and New Testaments. Paul is also a highly sought-after gospel-meeting preacher and has influenced and trained numerous men to become preachers. Paul has also spent considerable time in the mission field and is a featured speaker on national, regional, and state lectureships.

Luke

Luke preached for 30 years on an interim basis and has served three churches; he is married and presently lives in North Florida. Luke left full-time ministry and has not returned;

his present function is as a university professor, but he does serve churches as a church psychologist. Also, he conducts ongoing online marriage and relationship seminars.

John

John has preached for 60 years and has served four churches; he is married and presently lives in South Georgia. John's expertise in family and relationship development has been an essential aspect of his ministry. He is known for his benevolent spirit in helping younger preachers develop their churches. John has formal education, has been a prominently featured speaker on lectureships on all levels and demographics, and presently serves as Minister Emeritus and has no interruptions in his service to the ministry.

Data Collection

For this study, I used a purposeful sampling strategy, which involved ministers who serve in a pastoral capacity within the African American segment of the Churches of Christ.

Purposeful sampling recognizes specific participants with in-depth knowledge, offering rich data regarding pastoral leadership challenges (Patton, 2015). Being one of the facilitators within this network of church leaders, I had access to church leaders within this contextual environment who was the study's targeted demographic.

As a vendor, one of the lectureship presenters, and investigator of this study, I had direct access to the database of contact information: phone numbers, email addresses, and their church website. Because of this access, I conducted interviews and collected data during a national pandemic by phone. During the data collection process, I used a phone and an MP3 digital voice recorder and then transferred the data to a laptop computer.

As the investigator, I drew data from interviews, coupled with prolonged engagement and participant observation (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2002). On account of their knowledge and experience

of the topic of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Smith, 2018), those interviewed were senior ministers with 40 or more years of ministerial service. The interviews were to take 30 to 35 minutes; however, most of them lasted about 25 minutes. In each case, I sought participant agreement to share at least 30 minutes of their experiences. I was permitted to solicit the interviewees via phone and secured a verbal agreement to the interview. The reason for this process was that some of the potential interviewees were not technologically proficient. As the researcher, I provided written proof verifying the agreement of those who consented by telephone only.

To limit potential confidentiality breaches, I transcribed the contents of all interviews (see Appendix B). I included all potentially identifying information from the transcription if the report's content was immaterial to the study focus. Otherwise, I edited the narrative to preserve the study participants' confidentiality without impacting the shared data's richness.

Observation Data

Data drawn from participant observation represent interactions with interviewees during previous training workshops, personal relationships, and mental and written notes of the interviewees' attitude and voice tone during the interview.

Both mental and written notes indicated that each of the interviewees spoke from the place of one or more or a combination of the following descriptive: eager, reluctant, angry, excited, enthusiastic, bitter, concerned, anxious, worried, hostile, disappointed, hurt, frustrated, vulnerable, depressed, hopelessness, confused, optimistic, pessimistic, discouraging, upset, direct, informative, passive, and aggressive.

Matthew

By observation, Matthew was enthusiastic and eager to participate in the research but initially displayed vulnerability that others would know how he felt about the ministry. He did, however, express his disappointments concerning three significant areas: the ministry having a strain on the family, the inadequacy of leadership, and the lack of biblical training among Evangelists, as they are ill-equipped to serve. These shortfalls to him are frustrating and discouraging, and if not corrected, "our churches are in serious trouble in the future."

Mark

Mark was enthusiastic and eager to participate in the research but initially spoke from pessimism and hopelessness that ministry will ever be what many think it ought to be. Mark once left full-time ministry but returned due to a call on his life. His frustration and mild hostility stemmed from not counting the ministry's cost and members not understanding the actual work that ministers must do and appreciate their work. Even though he has balance in his current ministry, he feared that younger ministers would not weather the ministry's storm because of the church's inadequacy in leadership and its support of ministers. To him, these issues led to disappointment, discouragement, and depression among ministers.

Luke

Luke was noted as intelligent and enthusiastic and was eager to participate in the research. Similar to Mark, Luke left full-time ministry but never returned; however, he was involved in ministry-type work. Luke's biggest frustration was churches asking ministers to do too much in addition to their current role. His anger and disappointment stemmed from knowing it was impossible to do and be all things that members needed, and no one seemed to understand that this is a problem for ministers. His concern was that minister might not be versed in every

skill set, which can be burdensome and lead to burnout and anxiousness. Also, he felt the ministry was difficult because the congregation's expectations usually did not match the minister's expectations.

John

John was the most senior and experienced interviewee. He was eager to interview but reluctant to speak freely because of the bitter feeling conjured up in his heart because of the "crooked brethren" he encountered. John expressed experiencing hardship and a lack of support that led to disappointment, discouragement, and depression. With mild anger and frustration, he stated one of the things that contributed to depression in ministry was that the minister can be lonely and have no friends. He felt vulnerable to speak with other church leaders and be 100% transparent without being judged by them. One of the causes that lead to discouragement was when situations or visions did not come out as the minister thought they should.

Barnabas

Barnabas was noticeably a skillful motivator and possessed an entrepreneurial spirit. However, he was agreeable to the interview but reluctant on account of being possibly misunderstood. Barnabas once left full-time ministry but returned due to a call on his life. He was noticeably confident in himself and understood what it takes to be successful. Barnabas's concerns and frustration focused on the lack of ministry success, a feeling of lack of accomplishment, and a lack of numerical and spiritual growth. He expressed a lack of fulfillment that his talents were underutilized and worthwhile in ministry. He felt he had been affected by disappointment the greatest. He has observed that discouragement had been the most significant factor for many preachers.

Paul

Paul was verbally affluent, aggressive, and confident. He was very eager to interview and to share what he believed to be the abnormalities of ministry. One of the biggest problems he identified was a lack of leadership. A lack of leadership and firing back, he says, go hand in hand. Leaders can have difficulty getting along with other leaders in the church. It was difficult for the minister to get the buy-in, and it can be a battle to get the ministry going. This problem could lead to stress and depression when a minister must battle so many things at once. He was direct in stating that being unappreciated as a minister causes more ministers to leave the ministry than any other church problem.

Data Analysis

For this research, I used an open coding system, which consisted of labeling concepts, defining, and developing ideas and categories based on their properties and are significant to the data collection process (Glaser, 2016). For this study, I used a thematic analysis through the line-by-line open coding of structured interview transcripts. By using this thematic analysis, I gave preference to participants' perspectives, and it prioritized validity.

Trustworthiness

The evidence of the study's trustworthiness manifests itself since both the interpretation and representation of the data primarily resided in the researchers. However, there is a need to establish trustworthiness (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). For this study, applied triangulation and prolonged engagement were used to develop reliability. Triangulation occurred when I used more than one source of data, and as enough time in the research environment took place, I employed prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness ensures that findings are valid; it captures the truth of peoples' experiences and perceptions, providing credibility,

transferability, and neutrality (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transcription remained faithful to what the participant reported verbatim. Thus, I had taken steps to obfuscate details that may connect uniqueness to any participant.

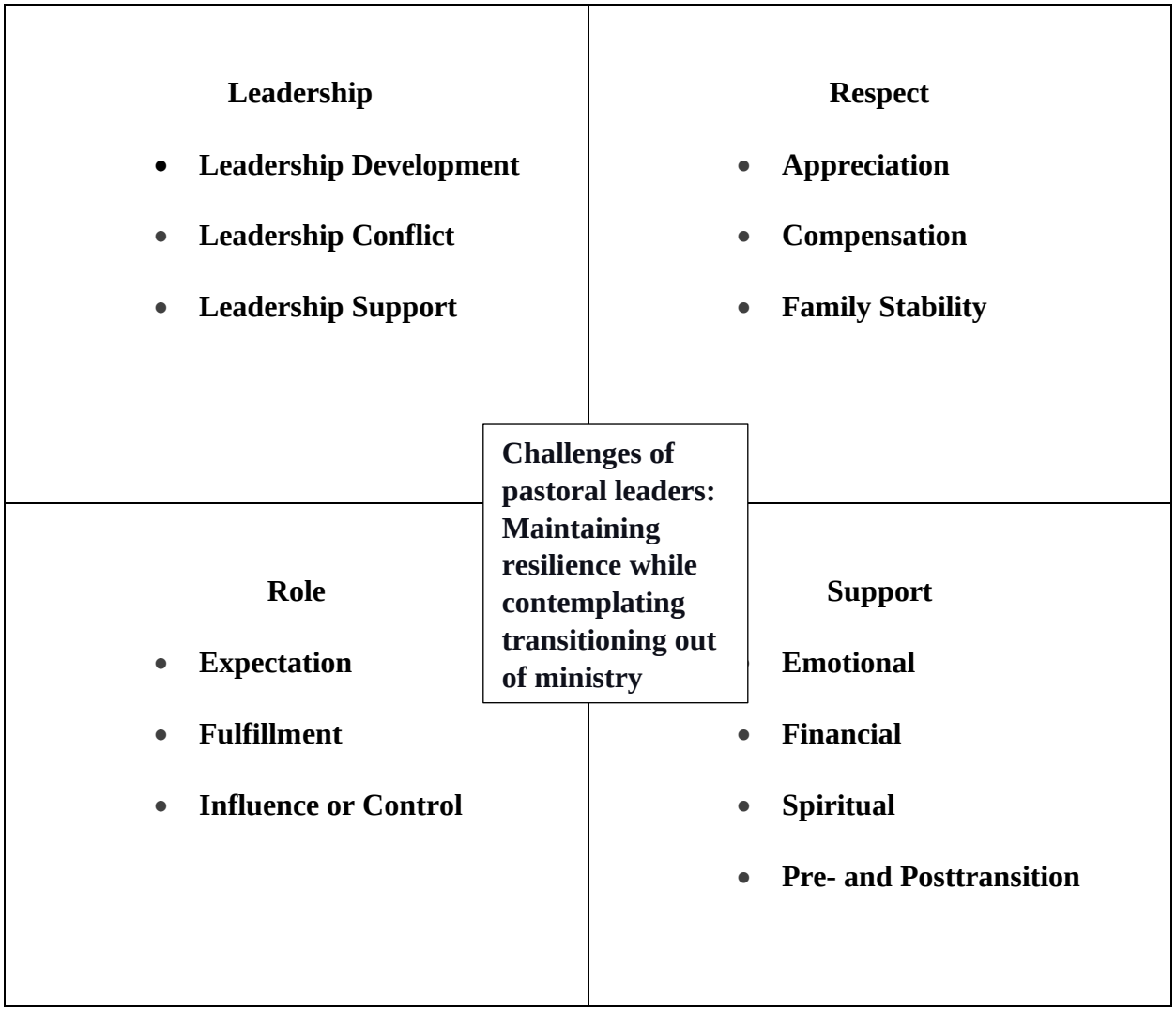
Findings

I collected data from interviews and coded them based upon emergent themes from those interviews, and the participants' interviews served as the basis of the themes and subthemes. The interviews also described how and what the participants experienced. Thus, the interviews provided 145 codes, which initially yielded eight significant themes, but after closer analysis, delivered four themes with 14 sub themes (see Figure 1).

The themes for the study were leadership, respect, role, and support. The subthemes were leadership development, leadership conflict, leadership support, appreciation, compensation, family stability, expectation, fulfillment, influence or control, emotional, financial, spiritual, and pre- and posttransition. Through these themes, I extracted, addressed, and responded to the study's central research question: What are the challenges pastoral leaders face maintaining resilience while contemplating transitioning out of ministry. I also addressed the three individual research questions. Those unique to this study provided me with in-depth knowledge offering rich data regarding the various economic, sociological, and cultural circumstances of African American ministers of the Churches of Christ who transition out and later return to full-time ministry.

Figure 1

Challenges of Pastoral Leaders



Theme 1: Leadership

All participants expressed concern about a lack of leadership as their primary challenge in ministry. However, they categorically discussed those concerns in terms of leadership development, conflict, and support.

Subtheme 1: Leadership Development. Four of the six participants referred to the lack of leadership development as a root cause of the minister's challenges. Matthew said,

"Discouragement sets in when it is not adequate leadership to support you. Also, it disappointed me and took a great toll on my family." As a result, he took courses in leadership to improve his leadership ability. Mark said a "lack of leadership caused him to realize that there are little understanding and appreciation of the minister's work, which was very disappointing." Mark said that to overcome this problem, he "associated with a therapeutic network for ministers and attended many lectureships." Barnabas said, "Many of our ministers have not had adequate training to be good leaders in the church. And it seems that no one could train other ministers." Barnabas suggested to "make oneself accountable to a confidant or looked for life coaches to help keep a proper perspective in leadership development is the best solution to the problem." Paul sighted that "poor and weak leadership" is disappointing to ministers. As ministers, they experience leadership opposition, and their families are ill-treated, and they are discouraged.

Even though stated differently, each minister emphasized the importance of leadership development as essential to ministry. Therefore, they desired to implement a leadership development program to prevent unnecessary hardship and create competence within the church.

Subtheme 2: Leadership Conflict. Three of the six participants emphasized that conflict involving leadership is a real challenge. Paul said constant "leadership opposition and conflict with other leaders drive ministers to quit." Thus, fighting back at times only makes matters worse. Furthermore, Paul said, "burning out and unhappy in ministry alone can complicate the minister's ability to lead, but compiled with dispelling circulating untruths, can drive a minister out the ministry."

Luke said one of the most complicating aspects of ministry is when the minister "compromises to accept undue pressure directed toward the wife and children." Thus, "this sort of dilemma forces the minister to violate a commitment to his own family." Luke stated that

ministers face the challenge of educating themselves by "reading books on conflict management" for support during such times. John explained that ministers who experience "blocked vision and congregation pushback" become disappointed and discouraged in ministry. John stated that as with many other organizations, "role distinction and power control profoundly affect a minister's ability to lead, so in some cases, they quit."

Collectively, the ministers stated that there is a deficiency in resolving conflict, and if not corrected, it can cause significant harm to their ministry. The sentiment is that they are in a continuous combative state with those who they are serving.

Subtheme 3: Leadership Support. Five of the six participants addressed the lack of leadership support from other church leaders as a significant concern. Matthew stated that discouragement sets in when there is no "adequate leadership" to support the ministers. Furthermore, Matthew said, "as a supportive measure to sustain themselves in ministry, the minister must retool themselves by taking special courses in leadership training and development." Luke suggested that many ministers "lack spiritual support from their leadership." In many cases, Luke stated that "ministers must educate the church and its leaders concerning the spiritual leadership that the minister needs." Luke's response seemed too common among other ministers.

John explained that as "hardship, lack of support, and crooked brethren" sets in, it leads to depression that drives the ministers to contemplate resignation. John said that "to ensure adequate support for ministry resilience, many ministers attend lectures workshops that provide the needed support." Barnabas stated that most ministers require "a father image" in ministry, as some can only draw support from the church family. Also, some ministers get involved with a "community support group" because the church is usually ill-equipped to do so. Paul said, "If I

cannot put forward the ideas that I think are good for the church and are not supported by the leadership, I feel trapped." Paul also stated that as an alternative, "the minister has to create a preaching fraternity" for good support.

These ministers collectively recognized and expressed the lack of support and the significance of spiritual support needed to sustain them in ministry. Each of them described experiencing a crippling effect when it came to making progress as a leader. However, it appears in their case that peer support would be a good solution. In either case, whether leadership development, conflict, or support, role theory exhibits an agreed-upon set of core ideas to improve human problems. Role theory can help dissect role-based behaviors link to outcomes, either intended or unintended (Welbourne & Schlachter, 2019).

Theme 2: Respect

Four of the six participants identified a lack of respect for the minister as a significant challenge to ministry resilience. Also, appreciation, compensation, and family stability were critical areas of concern. During the interviews, there was an immediate connection between the interviewees and me regarding the three areas. Respect regarding each area adds self-worth and value to preaching and ministry, according to each interviewee.

Subtheme 1: Appreciation. Four of the six participants expressed that ministers feel unappreciated for what they do. Matthew said what is depressing is the "minister is never celebrated for his efforts." Matthew further emphasized that "a lack of respect for the minister also strains the wife and children, as the whole family is a part of the ministry." Mark said the ministers' disappointment manifests itself because there is "little understanding and appreciating of the minister's work" by the local membership, which generates a disconnect and creates conflicting expectations between the minister and the congregation. Paul stated, "Depression sets

in as they further experience a lack of appreciation, honor, and respect for their knowledge." Paul further noted that "a lack of appreciation was a common issue among all the congregations he ministered to in the past." John suggested that "becoming an ordained minister" might change the church's attitude toward them as their minister. John suggested since people are prone to respect titles, perhaps being recognized as an ordained preacher might make a difference.

The participants collectively expressed that having church members show appreciation for their services could significantly encourage them to remain in the ministry. They all expressed there were too few incentives for ministers than secular institutions that regularly provide for their leaders, especially celebrating their efforts.

Subtheme 2: Compensation. Four of the six participants expressed great concern about not receiving adequate compensation. Compared to appreciation and family stability, the issues concerning compensation seemed to be the most significant among those interviewed. Mark stated, "Having inadequate compensation creates discouragement and depression," as it creates conflicting expectations between the minister and the congregation. Luke said that in comparison to their secular helping professionals, they are "underpaid as ministers." Luke also stated his reason for leaving the ministry was to "acquire financial support and having a nonvulnerable position in greener pastures." John said that ministers must "attend and host workshops that would teach the church to support its leaders better financially, which he said seems to be a conflict of interest." Paul stated that having "negotiated for a salary comparable to other professions" successfully added support to his ministry resilience.

Each participant emphasized the need to be sufficiently compensated as a minister, as it is essential to one's well-being. Collectively, there was a sense of disparity when comparing the church leaders' salaries and the secular leader's pay scales. Unfortunately, having to champion

one's own cause regarding money often put ministers in an awkward position was the overarching sentiment.

Subtheme 3: Family Stability. Three of the six participants expressed serious concern regarding their families dealing with instability. Matthew said that disappointments in ministry cause "a strain on the family as both wife and children must be understanding." Barnabas stated, "Chronic conflict with members impedes his responsibility to his family, which brings on depression." Barnabas further said this "undue pressure directed toward wife and children forces the minister to violate a commitment to his own family." Mark stated, "Having left the ministry for a secular job relieved the pressure placed upon my family to conform to so-called 'preacher family' ideology" that went away. However, he later returned to ministry with a better view of dealing with the problem. Each of the participants expressed the importance of ensuring their families' welfare and that the ministry conflicts make it challenging to do such. Being unable to manage those conflicts places an enormous strain on the family. Thus, in either case, whether appreciation, compensation, and family stability were critical areas of concern, McDuff and Mueller (2000) suggested that since church employers make no significant investment, there was no real financial risk to them. Therefore, role conflict is no major factor to compromise; therefore, turnover is inevitable.

Theme 3: Role

Four of the six participants mentioned role recognition as a significant factor in ministry challenges. However, the minister's expectation by the church, the minister's self-fulfillment, and the minister's influence or control were significant role issues.

Subtheme 1: Expectation. Three of the six participants believed that the expectation placed upon ministers was imbalanced. Mark stated that having "conflicting expectations

between the congregation and the minister" created discouragement and depression. Luke said that being "overtasked in addition to their current role minimizes expectations and creates disappointment in failure to meet those expectations." John stated ministers who experience "blocked vision and congregation pushback" are often unable to meet expectations. The participants identified with the apparent gap between the churches' understanding of expected outcomes and the ministers. Thus, having this gap created a negative impact on accomplishment.

Subtheme 2: Fulfillment. Four of the six participants expressed the importance of experiencing ministry fulfillment in their role as a minister. Luke stated that because of ongoing "ministry failures," the minister is disappointed as he realizes "minimum accomplishments." Luke also said, having left the ministry afforded him to be "care-free of significant church obligations." Thus, Luke said, "I am not overworked and underappreciated." Barnabas stated that his "underutilized talents" discouraged him. Mark admitted having to preach where there is "lacking support groups and infrastructure" and where there is a "chronic lack of respect, that precipitates feeling ineffectiveness and unfulfillment."

Matthew said, "Working with a church where the minister faces continued conflicting issues, where families are not together" and where dysfunctionality with "uncommitted men in the church" complicates his ability to succeed in his role.

Participants shared the frustration of being both unappreciated and overworked in some capacity. Thus, having no real structure and support does lead to unfulfillment, loss of motivation, and commitment to ministry.

Subtheme 3: Minister's Influence or Control. Three of the six participants mentioned not having enough control or latitude in getting the job done as an essential challenge to their role. John said, "Role distinction and power control" affected a minister's ability to lead.

Depending on the circumstances, Luke commented that those "Evangelists working along with elders can be a challenge because then it becomes a dual position." Mark said, in part, that his reason for leaving the ministry was due to "congregations felt that they owned the preacher and knew his job better than the preacher." Also, he stated that the "job description for the minister was only gray and vague." Paul stated, experiencing a "lack of appreciation, honor, and respect for their knowledge" minimized his influence and control to make a real difference in his ministry.

Collectively, participants indicated that having an inadequate power base undermines the minister's ability to be as effective in ministry as they understand it should be. Therefore, ministers were left to feel inadequate and unappreciated. According to Van Sell et al. (1981), when organizations clarify which position should receive the primary focus from each organization's members, they usually experience success. On the other hand, the participant will inevitably be happy and productive once the leadership resolves the role conflict, or the dissatisfied person(s) will eventually leave the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

Theme 4: Support

All six of the participants referred to support as a significant issue regarding the challenges of ministry. However, they referenced four categories: emotional, financial, spiritual, and posttransitional. These four areas caused the most significant levels of worry, stress, and burnout and challenged the minister's faith more than the other ministry work challenges.

Subtheme 1: Emotional. Four of the six participants expressed concern regarding experiencing an emotional challenge in ministry. Luke stated that "disappointment in meeting expectations usually leads to loneliness and a loss of friends." Barnabas said, **"**Helping the helpless, experiencing people's burnout, and having impeded responsibility to his family" brings

on depression. Paul said being “burned out and unhappy” in ministry alone can complicate the minister’s ability to lead. But Paul further stated that compiled with “dispelling circulating untruths usually cause a minister severe emotional distress.” Matthew said, “I feel trapped when I am in a state of despair. The feeling of being alone is when I have felt trapped.” I do believe ministers feel emotionally trapped at times.

Participants agreed that when ministry challenges affect relationships, family obligations, and generates a sense of losing and being alone, they experience emotional stress and anxiety. Thus, the need to escape becomes a reality and a felt need and often challenges their willingness to remain in the ministry.

Subtheme 2: Financial. Four of the six participants mentioned financial support to be important in experiencing resilience in ministry. Paul stated, “Lack of financial support and a retirement plan” could force a minister out of the ministry. Luke said, “Financial support having a nonvulnerable position in greener pastures works best for me.” John said, to ensure adequate support for ministry resilience, many ministers “attend and host workshops that would teach the church to support its leaders financially.” Matthew stated that “not all ministers are as fortunate as others, as I can do other things than preaching to support me financially.”

There was a shared sentiment among all participants that being in ministry without adequate financial support puts them in a vulnerable position regarding their calling. It affects their ability to be good stewards during and postministry. Also, there were mixed emotions regarding bad choices of not having gone bivocational at times by those who never left the ministry.

Subtheme 3: Spiritual Support. Three of the six participants regarded spiritual support as essential to sustaining one’s ministry. Luke said a minister’s “lack of spiritual support” from

their leadership prevents them from meeting the demands of "devotion to ministry." John stated that the minister often "becomes disappointed, discouraged, as hardship and a lack of support from the leadership" increases. As an alternative, Paul said ministers have had to "create a Preaching Fraternity" for good spiritual support.

Ironically, each participant stated that the place where there should be spiritual support (the church) was grossly lacking to the point that the minister's spiritual welfare and willingness to commit to the ministry were in jeopardy. Thus, the apparent alternative was to seek help outside of the church family.

Subtheme 4: Pretransition. Five of the six participants expressed their challenges as a sense of being trapped in the ministry when they perhaps wanted to leave. Paul said, "If I decide to leave, I will feel trapped with feelings of guilt. Ministers should not feel guilty about retiring from ministry." Barnabas stated, "Once a person commits to the ministry, it is kind of like a trap," but feeling trapped in the ministry is "simply a human feeling." Barnabas also stated, being "ill-prepared to generate adequate income outside of the ministry" can create feeling trapped. Also, people can hold the minister emotionally hostage. Mark said, "Ministers experience feeling trapped in ministry when they feel skill-less outside of the ministry." He said a minister will "suffer and feel agony if their mindset is limited to ministry only." Luke stated, "If ministers feel trapped, they should leave because ministry should not make you feel trapped." John said some "ministers feel like they let God and the members down, so they stay in the ministry, as there can be feelings of guilt and lack of self-worth."

Among the participants was the reality that ministers sometimes feel trapped in ministry and that it is not always easy to explain nor easy to escape. The sense of guilt of letting God and

the church down had caused them to remain in ministry when they had opportunities to leave but would not. So, then, the issue of transition created a dilemma for them.

Subtheme 5: Posttransition. Four of the six participants addressed support beyond leaving the ministry as three of the six never left the ministry. As one who left and never returned to full-time ministry, Luke said, "If ministers develop other skill sets, they should use them." Mark said, "Ministerial skillsets are transferable" to the secular context, but ministers must learn to apply them. John said that "some ministers seek out support networks with fellow transitioned ministers" outside the ministry. As one who left and came back, Barnabas said, "Experiencing an enjoyment of retirement and a change from the daily oversight of the work and planning is great." Barnabas further stated that now that there was "time to enjoy your family and take real vacations," he could "recalibrate and be more effective in providing for his family."

Regardless of the cause, whether it was a lack of emotional, financial, spiritual, and pre- or posttransitional support, leadership transitions were often elaborate events where causes and consequences were intertwined and nearly inextricable. Role conflict may amplify or ignite the tensions or problems that led to the change. Compounding the challenges of church leadership transitions are the changing demands placed on congregational leaders and their roles. As a conceptual lens, role theory has helped scholars systematically organize their assumptions concerning how individuals' roles in groups are assumed and evolve to shape interpersonal interactions (Biddle, 1986; Georgakakis et al., 2019).

Conclusion

The study participants provided perspectives from their experience of leading churches of less than 200 to 300 members. Collectively, these ministers represented 294 years of ministering

service. On average, those interviewed served four churches during their ministering years and had tenures that averaged four to 10 years per congregation, with few exceptions of 35 to 45 years. Of those interviewed, three never left the ministry full-time at any time, two left and returned, and one left and never returned to full-time ministry. Not all the participants saw posttransition support alike. One had no regrets about leaving the ministry and was relieved by departing. Others considered their skills acquired in church work to be useful in the secular setting and that all ministers should develop other skills that they can use in and out of the ministry. Another believed some ministers who left could best support those contemplating leaving if ministers considering leaving would seek them out to assist in their transition.

What was unique or familiar about those who never left the ministry was that their spouses had stable careers that could significantly supplement them where gaps existed with their salaries and benefits. Also, their spouses had strong beliefs about ministry life. Interestingly, those that left and returned, on account of what they missed in ministry, contributed to their return. Thus, having an in-depth discussion could bring greater clarity to this study's findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this study, it was clear based on experience in the ministry that pastoral leaders faced common causes that led to disappointment, discouragement, and depression. They experienced conflicting issues that complicated their ability to lead, having had their resilience tested as they contemplated leaving the ministry but remained therein.

Essential to this study as a conceptual framework, it viewed pastors' problems leaving the ministry through the lens of role theory. Role theory offers opportunities to integrate researchers' fundamental interests in sociology, psychology, and anthropology (Baert et al., 2019). Role theory explained roles by presuming that persons are members of social positions and hold expectations for their behaviors and others (Biddle, 1986).

This study's purpose was to address three research questions:

RQ1. What are the challenges faced by pastoral leaders that lead to the transition from a full-time ministerial to a secular vocation?

RQ2. What internal matters confront pastors having to stay in or transition from full-time active ministry to a secular career?

RQ3. What kind of ongoing support is available to sustain pastors in transitioning from full-time ministerial to secular vocation?

As a result of this study, the realized dominant themes were leadership, respect, role, and support. There were 14 subthemes, which categorically challenged the ministers' resilience within this social group as they contemplated leaving the ministry. Also, all quotations in this chapter (i.e., "a strain of the family," etc.) reflect the participants' thoughts in the discussion and not the researcher's.

Leadership

In this study, I uncovered concerns about the lack of leadership as a primary challenge in ministry. The deficiencies in the subcategories of development, conflict, and support precipitated disappointment, discouragement, and depression among those interviewed. The disappointments in ministry cause "a strain on the family." Both wife and children must be understanding of the nature of the minister's work. Because of not knowing the "the cost of ministry," disappointment manifests itself because the minister realizes that there is little "understanding and appreciation" of the minister's work. As a result of ongoing "ministry failures," the minister is disappointed as he realizes "minimum accomplishments." Constant "conflict with other leaders and a "lack of ministry support by members" and having "poor and weak leadership is disappointing to ministers." Also, disappointment in meeting expectations usually leads to "loneliness and a loss of friends."

Given the close and often inseparable relationship between clerical work and family, there is a peculiar nature of the conflict that exists between them. Even though family and work conflict are present in many other professions, it is manifested far higher in the clerical business (Wells et al., 2012). This conflict between work and family time usually occurs because there is ambiguity regarding expectations of the pastor's role, which ultimately leads to burnout and departure from the ministry (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012; Vaccarino & Gerritsen, 2013).

Furthermore, the study revealed that discouragement sets in when there is no "adequate leadership" to support ministers. What was depressing was that the minister was never "celebrated" for his efforts. Also, "inadequate compensation and barriers to goal setting and conflicting expectations between the congregation and the minister" generated discouragement and depression. The minister's "underutilized talents" discourage them. Also, as ministers

experience “leadership opposition and their families ill-treated,” ministers are discouraged. Chronic “conflict with members, helping the helpless, experiencing people burnout, and having impeded responsibility to his family” brings on depression (Muse et al., 2016).

Unfortunately, depression sets in as they further experience a lack of appreciation, honor, and respect for their knowledge. Also, because of “overtasked in addition to their current role,” which becomes burdensome and leads to burnout, ministers become discouraged and depressed. Ministers who experience “blocked vision and congregation pushback” become disappointed and discouraged as “hardship and a lack of support as well as crooked brethren” leads to depression. Burnout and depression were associated with age, level of experience of the clergy, and length of service. It is a crucial factor impacting job satisfaction in many helping professions and, without intervention, often leads to a decision to leave the business (Muse et al., 2016). Adams and Hough (2017) suggested that even though clergy experience many stressors in their work, clergy may benefit from burnout prevention strategies used by counselors and other helping professionals.

Respect

This study also identified a lack of respect for the minister as a significant challenge to ministry resilience. According to Pearce and Morrison (2011), pastoral or ministry resilience is an adaptive response to challenge the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances. It is a process that forces pastors to adjust to challenging events or situations to remain in the ministry.

Despite having minimum to no respect as a pastoral leader, given pastors’ various emotional and spiritual attachments to their calling (Haney et al., 2015), leaving a ministerial career is more complicated than secular jobs (West, 2016). Thus, it is not easy to separate the

faithful minister from his calling because of the nature of the calling since calling is a core concept in pastoral theology. So, having to preach where there is lacking support groups and infrastructure and a "chronic lack of respect" even though pastors may not leave precipitates feeling inadequate.

Another complicating ministry aspect was when the minister compromised and accepted "undue pressure directed toward wife and children." This sort of dilemma forces the minister to "violating a commitment to his own family." Also, some conflicting issues go unresolved that complicated ministers' ability to lead, causing them to leave the ministry for a secular career. Ministers must minister while facing conflicting issues at churches where "families are not together" and where dysfunctionality with "uncommitted men in the church" is the norm.

Role

As another revelation in this study, role recognition and support appeared significant in ministry challenges. However, the minister's expectation by the church, the minister's self-fulfillment, and the minister's influence or control were significant role issues. According to Miles and Proeschold-Bell (2012), ministers occupy many roles, including teacher, counselor, preacher, administrator, and fundraiser. Like many other organizations, "role distinction and power control" affects a minister's ability to lead. Luke stated that depending on the situation, "Evangelists working along with elders can be a challenge because then it becomes a dual position," and the minister is a leader regarding some tasks and a follower in others. In recent years, the stress of ministry leaders has become of increasing interest within the academic community and the religious public. Consequently, one of those concerns is that of role conflict. According to Strickland (2013), role conflict describes a conflict between or among the roles corresponding to two or more statuses fulfilled by one individual. Dollhopf and Scheitle (2013)

suggested that complications involving role conflict in leadership transition could be difficult and necessary in an organization's life. As a result of role conflict, tension is apparent before the change even occurs. As a result, some ministers have "initiated a mentor system within the church and have sought out mentors or coaches" and "attended as many Lectureships as possible" to learn how to recognize and avoid role conflict. Often, most ministers require "a father image" in ministry. Some can only "draw support from the church family." According to Spencer et al. (2012), role conflict by nature happens because of the pressure put on an individual by two imposing, opposing, and conflicting demands competing against each other. So, some ministers get involved with a "community support group, make oneself accountable to a confidant," or look for "life coaches to help keep a proper perspective" despite role challenges.

Spiritual and Financial Support

Furthermore, many ministers "lack spiritual support from their leadership." They are "underpaid as a minister" in comparison to their secular helping professionals. As a result of these challenges, they cannot meet the demands of "devotion to ministry." Being "burned out and unhappy" in ministry alone can complicate the minister's ability to lead, but compile with a "lack of financial support and a retirement plan" can force a minister out of ministry.

According to research, the most prominent and visible people responsible for organizing, managing, and leading churches are clergy. Clergy are among the most trusted professionals in our society (Strunk et al., 2017). Given the responsibilities that clergy are carrying, often working long hours, and making a substantial personal sacrifice, that whether while working in ministry or following a transition from it, the support of their well-being is essential, whether spiritual or financial (Berry et al., 2012).

Problems such as stress, burnout, and role conflict have caused ministers to secure other employment outside of their calling. It has created an economic and social crisis for them to uproot their family and move to another town or state, often with little notice (Tanner, 2015).

Because of the inevitability of conflict, ministers are challenged to educate themselves by "reading books on conflict management" for support. As an added measure for help, the minister must also "train their church to better support ministers financially." To ensure adequate support for ministry resilience, many ministers "attend and host workshops that would teach the church to support its leaders" morally, spiritually, and financially.

Transition Support

Finally, there is a certain kind of support needed along the way as ministers wrestle with staying in or leaving the full-time ministry. Thus, some ministers experience challenges that affect their sense of well-being and exhibit feeling trapped in the ministry. According to one minister, not all ministers are as fortunate as others, "I can do other things other than preaching.". Other ministers experienced feeling trapped in ministry when they "feel skill-less outside of the ministry." A minister will "suffer and feel agony if their mindset is limited to ministry only." However, "ministerial skill sets are transferable" to the secular world.

Regarding the effects, there are two significant challenges to transition: identity and role. Identity means "the internalized and evolving story that results from a person's selective appropriation of past, present, and future" (McAdams, 2003, p. 187). Similar to the culture shock of the military officer, ministers serving many years in the specialized ministry culture as they transition out of full-time also face career identity challenges (Cafferata, 2017). Fearing their ministerial skills acquired in the ministry are less viable in a secular context, they are reluctant to transition (West, 2016).

Thus, feeling trapped in church work is “simply a human feeling.” Being “ill-prepared to generate an income outside of the ministry” can create feeling trapped. Also, people can hold a minister emotionally hostage. It can be a “feeling of guilt that you’re letting God down” if you decide to leave the ministry. Ministers should not feel guilty about retiring from the pastorate. If ministers feel trapped, they should “leave because ministry should not make you feel trapped.” If ministers develop other skill sets, they should use them.

As a supportive measure to sustain themselves in ministry, the minister must retool themselves by “taking special courses in leadership” training and development. Ministers must align themselves with and be “associated with a therapeutic network for ministers.” As an alternative, the minister has “created a Preaching Fraternity” for good support. Others regularly “attend annual retreat centers for a minister.” Also, some ministers seek out “support networks with fellow transitioned ministers” outside of the ministry.

According to Dollhopf and Scheitle (2013), leadership transitions in religious congregations might be especially challenging given the personal relationships involved and the spiritual dimension of a leader’s position. For example, because of the emotional attachments among religious people, religious leaders’ actions to leave or stay can become divisive and may affect the overall stability of the group.

Role Theory Relating to Each Participant

Essential to this study was a conceptual framework that viewed pastors’ problems of leaving the ministry through role theory. Role theory offers opportunities to integrate researchers’ fundamental interests in sociology, psychology, and anthropology (Baert et al., 2019). Role theory explained roles by presuming that persons are social positions and hold expectations for their behaviors and others (Biddle, 1986).

Katz and Kahn (1978) suggested that role theory implied that individuals behave under the functional, relational, and structural features of the social unit in which they coexist. As a conceptual lens, role theory has helped scholars systematically organize their assumptions concerning how individuals' roles in groups are assumed and evolved to shape interpersonal interactions (Biddle, 1986; Georgakakis et al., 2019). However, regarding each of the six participants in this study, role theory was applied or manifested differently.

Matthew

In Matthew's case, he expressed how he felt about the ministry, his disappointments concerning church work as having a strain on the family, the inadequacy of leadership, and the lack of biblical training among Evangelists, as they are ill-equipped to serve. Role theory suggests that Matthew failed to realize or did not fully grasp that the role of a pastor is inherently stressful, that his role is to set things in order and train others to function correctly in the ministry (*New International Bible*, 1978; 2 Timothy 2:2–3). Also, he failed to realize that conflict between work and family time usually occurs because there is ambiguity regarding expectations of the pastor's role, ultimately leading to burnout and departure from the ministry (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012; Vaccarino & Gerritsen, 2013). However, the minister's expectations by the church, the minister's self-fulfillment, and the minister's influence or control were significant role issues.

Mark

In Mark's case, role theory suggests that since Mark once left full-time ministry but returned due to a call on his life, perhaps he realized he was not ready for the role of pastor. Thus, he needed to distance himself from ministry to reflect on how to behave under the functional, relational, and structural features of the social unit in which they coexist (Katz &

Kahn, 1978). Even though he did not think that ministry would ever be what many believe it ought to be, fearing that younger ministers would not weather the ministry's storm because of the church's inadequacy in leadership and its support of ministers, he quit. However, when organizations clarify which position should receive the primary focus from each organization's members, they usually experience success (Van Sell et al., 1981). Also, in Mark's case, role theory explains roles by presuming that persons are members of social positions and hold expectations for their behaviors and others (Biddle, 1986).

Luke

In Luke's case, as he left full-time ministry but never returned, his biggest frustration was churches asking ministers to do too much in addition to their current role. His anger and disappointment stemmed from knowing it was impossible to do and be all things that members need, and no one seemed to understand that this was a problem for ministers. However, role theory suggests that Luke never fully comprehended that minister occupy many roles, including teacher, counselor, preacher, administrator, and fundraiser. Role set influences expectations and comprises various individuals who operate interdependently. Like many other organizations, "role distinction and power control" affects a minister's ability to lead. Therefore, in Luke's case, if employees are inevitably happy and productive, the leadership resolves the role conflict, or the dissatisfied person(s) will eventually leave the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

John

In John's case, when situations or visions did not come out as he thought they should, he felt vulnerable to speak with other church leaders and be 100% transparent without being judged by them. Therefore, bitter feelings conjured up in his heart because of the "crooked brethren" he encountered, as he experienced hardship and a lack of support. As role theory relates to John, it

can help him dissect the process by examining the specific roles employees engage in when engagement changes and how those role-based behaviors link to outcomes, either intended or unintended (Welbourne & Schlachter, 2019). Role theory tells us that individuals may exit the role or experience a great deal of stress (Burr et al., 1979).

Barnabas

In Barnabas's case, as a skillful motivator, possessing an entrepreneurial spirit, self-confidence, and understanding what it takes to be successful, he left full-time ministry but returned due to a call on his life. As it relates to him, role theory suggests he faced two significant transition challenges: identity and role. Identity means "the internalized and evolving story that results from a person's selective appropriation of past, present, and future" (McAdams, 2003, p. 187). Similar to the culture shock of the military officer, ministers serving many years in the specialized ministry culture, as they transition out of full-time, also face career identity challenges (Cafferata, 2017). Fearing their ministerial skills acquired in the ministry are less viable in a secular context, they are reluctant to transition (West, 2016). If so, they usually return to familiar territory.

Paul

In Paul's case, role theory suggests his eagerness to share what he believed to be the abnormalities of ministry by identifying a lack of leadership and being willing to fire back: conflicts on an agreed-upon set of core ideas to improve human problems. Many defined a role as a set of expectations applied to the incumbent of a particular position by the incumbent and by role senders within and beyond an organization's boundaries (Van Sell et al., 1981). As Paul had issues of getting buy-in, difficulty getting along with other leaders in the church, and not being appreciated and contemplated leaving the ministry, he recognized that he was a member of an

organization of social positions that held expectations for their behaviors and others (Biddle, 1986).

Furthermore, knowledge of role theory helps dissect the process by examining the specific roles employees engage in when engagement changes and how those role-based behaviors link to outcomes, either intended or unintended (Welbourne & Schlachter, 2019). According to Biddle (1986), role theory is not a general theory; it is a set of guiding concepts that still need to identify with methodological and theoretical discussions.

Collaborative Viewpoints

In summary, regarding the outcome of the discussion, even though stated differently, each minister emphasized the importance of leadership development as essential to ministry. Therefore, they desired to implement a leadership development program to prevent unnecessary hardship and create competence within the church. Collectively, the ministers stated that there is a deficiency in resolving conflict, and if not corrected, it can cause significant harm to their ministry. The sentiment is that they are in a continuous combative state with those who they are serving. These ministers collectively recognized and expressed the lack of support and the significance of spiritual support needed to sustain them in ministry. Each of them described experiencing a crippling effect when it came to making progress as a leader. However, it appears in their case that peer support would be the right solution. Each participant emphasized the need to be sufficiently compensated as a minister as it is essential to their well-being. There was a sense of disparity collectively when comparing the church leaders' salaries and the secular leaders' pay scales. Unfortunately, having to champion their own cause regarding money often put ministers in an awkward position was the overarching sentiment.

The participants collectively expressed that having church members show appreciation for their services could significantly encourage them to remain in the ministry. They all expressed too few incentives for ministers than secular institutions that provide for their leaders, including being celebrated regularly. Each of the participants expressed the importance of ensuring their families' welfare and that the ministry conflicts make it challenging to do such and being unable to manage those conflicts places an enormous strain on the family. The participants identified an apparent gap between the churches' understanding of expected outcomes and the ministers. Thus, having this gap created a negative impact on accomplishments. Participants shared the frustration of being both unappreciated and overworked in some capacity. Thus, having no real structure and support does lead to unfulfillment, loss of motivation, and commitment to ministry.

Collectively, participants indicated that having an inadequate power base undermines the minister's ability to be as effective in ministry as they understood it should be. Therefore, they expressed feelings of inadequacy and unappreciated. Participants agreed that when ministry challenges affect relationships, family obligations, and generate a sense of losing and being alone, they experience emotional stress and anxiety. Thus, the need to escape becomes a reality and a felt need. A shared sentiment among all participants that being in ministry without adequate financial support puts them in a vulnerable position regarding their calling. It affects their ability to be good stewards during and postministry. Ironically, each of the participants stated that the place where there should be spiritual support (the church) is grossly lacking to the point that the minister's spiritual welfare and willingness to commit to the ministry are in jeopardy. Thus, the apparent alternative is to seek help outside of the church family.

Among the participants was the reality that ministers sometimes feel trapped in ministry and that it is not always easy to explain nor easy to escape. The sense of guilt of letting God and the church down had caused them to remain in ministry when they had opportunities to leave but would not. Not all the participants saw posttransition support alike. One had no regrets about leaving the ministry and was relieved by departing. Others considered their skills acquired in church work to be useful in the secular setting and that all ministers should develop other skills that can be used in and out of the ministry. Another believed some ministers who left could be a good support, but ministers in transition must seek them out. There is also a certain kind of help needed along the way as ministers wrestle with staying in or leaving the full-time ministry.

Even though ministers experience challenges that affect their sense of well-being and exhibit feeling trapped in the ministry, there are skills that ministers need that overlap between their role as a minister in a secular context. Even though some ministers never left the ministry, they have experienced having the desire to leave it on numerous occasions. Some ministers who left a full-time ministry enjoyed and missed some things during their time out of full-time ministry. What ministers that left the ministry have enjoyed was that on the secular job, a solid understanding of job descriptions and chains of command. The leadership position was not only gray and vague—but congregations also felt that they owned the preacher and knew his job better than the preacher—but they also experienced the enjoyment of retirement as a change from the daily oversight of the work and planning. Some had the luxury of the secular job because the pressure placed upon their family to conform to so-called preacher family ideology was nonexistent. They benefited from a full-time job with a benefits package that was taken care of by administrations. The ministers now had time to enjoy their family, take real vacations, and

be carefree from significant church obligations. Thus, the participants and I are not overworked and underappreciated.

However, those that left and returned expressed that it was very gratifying to develop ministry development time and platforms with uninterrupted study and sermon build time. Speaking to the believers was deeply missed. A minister shares their fellowship as a minister to see that person transform their life from conditions and circumstances and to a more pointed focus on soul-saving and community influence.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore and describe pastoral leaders' experiences of maintaining resilience while contemplating transitioning out of ministry. Having this knowledge and understanding informs other ministers, higher education, and church communities of the economic and emotional crisis experienced by pastors having to live with stress and grief to transition to secular employment to ensure their well-being (Tanner, 2015).

Therefore, as revealed in the discussion, the minister is disappointed as he realizes minimum accomplishments because of ongoing ministry failures. Constant conflict with other leaders, a lack of ministry support by members, and poor and weak leadership is disappointing to ministers. Disappointment in meeting expectations usually leads to loneliness and a loss of friends. Also revealed were discouragement sets in when there is no adequate leadership to support ministers. What was more depressing, the minister goes uncelebrated for his efforts.

The discussion identified a lack of respect for the minister as a significant challenge to ministry resilience, including role recognition, support, and expectations by the church. The minister's self-fulfillment and the minister's influence or control were significant issues. The participants identified the lack of spiritual support from their leadership and being underpaid as

ministers compared to their secular helping professionals. Also, being burned out and unhappy in ministry alone complicates the minister's ability to lead. But compiled with a lack of financial support and a retirement plan, they cannot meet the demands of devotion to ministry, which usually forces a minister out of ministry.

Also, there was a certain kind of support needed along the way as ministers wrestle with staying in or leaving the full-time ministry, as they needed a way out. Thus, some ministers experience challenges that affect their sense of well-being and exhibit feeling trapped in church work.

Furthermore, those interviewed stated that there was a deficiency in resolving conflict within their ministry. Church members show little to no appreciation for their services; thus, there were too few incentives for ministers than secular institutions that provide for their leaders, including being celebrated regularly. Also, having an inadequate power base undermines the minister's ability to be as effective in ministry as they understood it should be. Therefore, there were feelings of inadequacy and being unappreciated.

Participants agreed that when ministry challenges affect relationships, family obligations, and generates a sense of losing and being alone, they experience emotional stress and anxiety. These concerns affect their sense of well-being and cause them to exhibit feeling trapped in the ministry. In their thinking, ministerial skills do not always overlap between their roles as ministers in a secular context.

The study participants provided perspectives from their experience of leading churches of less than 200 to 300 members. Collectively, these ministers represented 294 years of ministering service. On average, those interviewed served four churches during their ministering years and had tenures that averaged four to five years per congregation. Of those interviewed, three never

left the ministry full-time at any time, two left and returned, and one left and never returned to full-time ministry. What was unique or familiar about those who never left full-time ministry was that their spouses had stable careers that could significantly supplement gaps in their salaries and benefits. Their spouses also had strong beliefs in ministry life. Interestingly, those that left and returned, on account of what they missed in ministry, contributed to their return. This study identified pastoral challenges, their support systems' effectiveness, and the lasting effect the challenges had on them as ministers.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, other ministers can better picture the pastoral leaders' lived experiences. Since they have few alternatives regarding their leadership gifts outside of their calling, their resilience remaining in the ministry is essential, given that conflict and transitions will inevitably occur. This study's results should enable other ministers, church organizations, support groups, and schools of preaching, seminaries, colleges, and universities to understand the pastor's experience living with various challenges that caused their transitioning to secular employment. The results can also enable other church organizations to recognize the tremendous pressures that their key employee is experiencing and give them cause to provide adequate support for their pastoral minister.

Organizations like schools of preaching, seminaries, Christian colleges, and universities that equip, train, and educate ministers for pastoral service should intentionally design curriculum and academic platforms to address the challenges outlined in this study. Ministers should continue to attend and host workshops to teach the churches to support their leaders spiritually and financially. Churches should implement leadership development programs that address ministry challenges to prevent unnecessary hardship and create competence within the

church. Support groups that focus on pastoral effectiveness should also focus on reducing psychological distress among pastors by incorporating discussions that address burnout, calling, pastoral resilience, role conflict, role theory, self-care, support system, transition, and well-being.

Support groups that support ministers should design personal soul care retreats. These retreats should include adopting spiritual disciplines, a personal rule of life, Sabbath time, and acquiring and balancing suitable power bases. Spiritual disciplines require accountability partners, as every Christian minister is responsible to God and other faith leaders (*New International Bible*, 1978; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; I Peter 4:10, 11). Ministers must acquire the gift of discernment, vision to spiritual direction, and love for the community.

Regarding a personal rule of life, the minister should ensure a solid understanding of relationships, that family is vital and essential. That prayer and knowledge of worship are imperative, that good work requires a true heart, but rest is necessary for resiliency. It is crucial to understand Sabbath time and how affected we are as pastoral ministers when our bodies need rest, our minds are clear, and our thinking is focused. It is exceedingly difficult to think clearly when our body is tired. Sabbath is not about time off or a break in routine. Sabbath is far more than a diversion; it means being in an encounter with God's delight.

Furthermore, ministers must acquire and balance a power base. Usually, a leader's power base is obtained based on the structure of an organization. In some instances, a leader's power base comes from the organization's culture based on their performance and a legitimate authority, which comes with the position. Having a power base can leverage the minister's role and support them in decision-making regarding transitioning.

This research aimed to explore and describe pastoral leaders' experiences of maintaining resilience while contemplating transitioning out of ministry. Having this knowledge and

understanding will inform other ministers, higher education, and church communities of the economic and emotional crisis experienced by pastors having to live with stress and grief to transition to secular employment to ensure their well-being (Tanner, 2015).

Thus, the study's results should add to the growing amount of literature regarding transitioning out of ministry and may uniquely contribute to the research of transitioning from the perspective of leadership in a particular cultural context. However, follow-up research on specific applications could provide a more detailed contribution to a professional application of these same interview questions if a study were conducted with a broader context to include White ministers within the Churches of Christ and those who are bivocational.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions for Research Paper

Challenges of Pastoral Leaders: Maintaining Resilience While Contemplating Transitioning Out of Ministry

The purpose of the study is to identify the challenges ministerial leaders face that lead to transitioning out of the ministry and their effect on pastoral leaders.

- Based on your experience in the ministry, what are the common causes that lead to disappointment, discouragement, and depression of ministers?
- What are some of the conflicting issues you faced that went unresolved that complicated your ability to lead, causing you to leave your calling to a secular career?
- What kind of support did you receive along the way when you wrestled with staying or leaving full-time ministry?
- How would you describe your experience regarding your role as a minister that challenged your sense of well-being and caused you to exhibit feeling trapped in the ministry?
- What are the skills that overlap between your role as a minister and working in a secular context?
- What did you enjoy, and what did you miss during your time out of full-time ministry?

Appendix B: Transcripts of Interview Questions for Research Paper

Challenges of Pastoral Leaders: Maintaining Resilience While Contemplating Transitioning Out of Ministry

Interviewee: Matthew

Me: The purpose of the study is to identify the challenges pastors face that lead to transitioning out of the ministry and the effect they have on pastoral leaders.

Me: Based on your experience in the ministry, what are the common causes that lead to disappointment, discouragement, and depression of ministers?

Matthew: One of the disappointments I see in the ministry as a minister in the Lord's church is a strain on the family. It really takes its toll. Being a Leader in the Lord's church, having a wife to understand, having the children to understand what your ministry is in the Lord's church, and sometimes, there is [are] many times, I would say, it takes a toll on the wife and the children because here is a man who has the weight of a local congregation, and that congregation could be going through numerous problems and not only has to deal with the problems of the congregation he is working with but also the problems of his wife and children and sometimes that takes.

Matthew: One of my disappointments is having adequate leadership. There has been a lack of biblical training. Evangelists are not equipped to have leaders be the man they need to be in the Lord. Something that is discouraging to me is not having a congregation that is scripturally organized or has sound teaching and the lack of new goals for evangelism.

Matthew: A lack of appreciation for the comfort zone of evangelists. Some members think they know more than I do, and they don't honor and respect our knowledge, our ability.

Me: What are some of the seemingly unresolvable issues that emerge to complicate the minister's ability to lead, causing them to leave the ministry for secular careers?

Matthew: Families that are not together. For a church to grow, you must have strong families. There are not enough faithful men. We need men that are faithful to the Lord.

Matthew: Lack of financial support, retirement. Brothers have a difficulty sometimes supporting ministries in other countries such as the islands.

Me: What kind of support would be effective for leaders having been affected by transitions?

Matthew: Getting adequate training. Take a course in leadership. Environment and schooling for the children. The preacher should have a salary comparable to other professions. The church should be able to supplement the income.

Me: What is your view regarding the notion that ministers at times exhibit an inner conflict of feeling trapped in the ministry?

Matthew: I don't feel trapped in the ministry because I am equipped to other things other than preaching the gospel. I enjoy coaching and teaching. We have to prepare ourselves in other arenas.

Matthew: If I am not able to put forward the ideas that I think are good for the church and are not supported by the leadership, then that makes me want to look for another congregation where my ideas will be better supported.

Me: How do you regard the skills that ministers acquire while serving in the ministry as being transferable to a secular context?

Matthew: Prepare yourself for both the ministry and secular world. What else can I do other than preach? Working under another minister helped train me. I also went to school.

Matthew: I have learned to interact with other people through ministry. I would take my skill set and host workshops, counseling, hospitals, etc.

Matthew: I am thankful to serve and be a member of the church.

Me: What did you enjoy, and what did you miss during your time out of full-time ministry?

Matthew: I never left the full-time ministry.

Interviewee: Mark

Me: The purpose of the study is to identify the challenges pastors face that lead to transitioning out of the ministry and the effect they have on pastoral leaders.

Me: Based on your experience in the ministry, what are the common causes that lead to disappointment, discouragement, and depression of ministers?

Mark: Not counting the cost of ministry and memberships not understanding the total work that ministers have to do and appreciating it. Compensation and understanding the worth of a good preacher has been a challenge that can lead to disappointment, discouragement, and depression of ministers.

Mark: When we set our goals and ambitions for the church and we encounter challenges that delay the goal. We allow ourselves to become depressed and discouraged.

Mark: Isolation. Sometimes as an elder, it feels like we're treated as second class. Sometimes you have to energize yourself. Sometimes that can be very discouraging. Sometimes depression comes in when you are never celebrated.

Me: What are some of the seemingly unresolvable issues that emerge to complicate the minister's ability to lead, causing them to leave the ministry for secular careers?

Mark: A good support group and infrastructure for the minister. Lack of respect for ministers. Running up against challenges or people that challenge your effectiveness.

Mark: When a minister doesn't feel effective, it could cause them to look for something else to fulfill.

Mark: We have to fight through that and trust in the Lord. We have to press hard enough.

Mark: I have been very blessed to come into the church at just the right time. I was surrounded by good leaders that explained sometimes for the Lord's church. It's not about me but the Lord's church.

Me: What kind of support would be effective for leaders having been affected by transitions?

Mark: There needs to be a network of therapy for ministers that is ongoing. We don't have a system set up to help the human warrior. [A] mentor system needs to be implemented in the church.

Mark: The support that is needed and the support that we will accept don't always go hand in hand. The support that is needed is that everyone needs somebody. We still need a mentor or coach no matter how long you are in the ministry. If you can't reinforce yourself daily, then it is critical to get a team of support. It is important to be transparent so that you can receive the

proper help you need. Don't burn yourself out. If so, reach out for a mentor. The lectureships are beneficial but may not necessarily address the need that may present at the time. Fellowship and Doctrinal [are] is key. We can improve on both sides. Lectureships are a good support, but they will not sustain one long enough because we do not have them often.

Mark: Lectureship and workshops for ministers. Getting together with other brothers in the faith is critical. Fellowship is key.

Me: What is your view regarding the notion that ministers at times exhibit an inner conflict of feeling trapped in the ministry?

Mark: Once you commit to the ministry, it is kind of like a trap. Especially if you have not established a skill set outside of the ministry. We need to teach various job skills to ministers.

Mark: I do believe ministers feel trapped at times. Sometimes we feel skill-less outside of the ministry. A minister will suffer and feel agony if their mindset is limited to ministry only. These skill sets are transferable to the secular world. Ministers should not feel limited to ministry. It is important that we help ministers see the multiple skill sets within themselves. I can only feel trapped when I feel inadequate within myself.

Mark: The only time I feel trapped is when I am in a state of despair. Feeling and being alone is when one can feel trapped. If we're not foundationally sound, there will be problems.

Me: How do you regard the skills that ministers acquire while serving in the ministry as being transferable to a secular context?

Mark: The minister has a lot of counseling and knowledge of the word of God that can be transferable to any job.

Mark: Ministers have so many skills and talents that God has placed within us. If we have a narrow view of ourselves, we will not be able to transfer these skills to a secular world.

Mark: Sometimes, we are able to have a greater influence on members outside of the body.

Mark: Speaking and encouraging others are talents that can be used in the secular world.

Mark: Counseling, talking, and communication can be transferable to almost any secular context.

Mark: I embrace conflict because if there is a negative situation, I can find a positive. I have spent 33 years in law enforcement and 22 years in the military. Structure is paramount to me.

Mark: There is a calm in the chaos because I am a child of God.

Me: What did you enjoy, and what did you miss during your time out of full-time ministry?

Mark: What I missed from full-time ministry was the daily knowledge of knowing that I would have a set-aside time slot to develop ministry platforms and assist in monitoring those platforms of ministry. I also missed the knowledge of knowing my study and sermon develop[ment] time would have a period that would not be interrupted by the demands of a 9–5 and all that secular employment involves.

What I also had the luxury of on the secular job was that the pressure placed upon my family to conform to so-called preacher family ideology was nonexistent in your daily job requirements; the secular job hires the individual, and there is not a created paradigm of hiring the preacher and family when you decide to take the position.

The thing that I miss by having a full-time job was the benefits package that was taken care of by administrations on the job in their front office and did not have to concern myself with.

Another thing that was unfortunate with the congregation that I was employed full time was that on the secular job, a solid understanding of job descriptions and chain of commands was fully adhered to and who was designated as supervisors and titled employees were not only respected but there was no question of that chain of command; in many congregations, the position of leadership was not only gray and vague, many congregations felt that they owned the preacher and knew his job better than the preacher who had spent his life perfecting his craft.

Interviewee: Luke

Me: The purpose of the study is to identify the challenges pastors face that lead to transitioning out of the ministry and the effect they have on pastoral leaders.

Me: Based on your experience in the ministry, what are the common causes that lead to disappointment, discouragement, and depression of ministers?

Luke: One of the biggest things is asking ministers to do too much in addition to their current role. It is impossible to do and be all things that members need. Ministers may not be versed in every skill set, which can be burdensome and lead to burnout.

Luke: Ministry is difficult because the expectation of the congregation usually does not match the expectations of the minister (i.e., the wife being involved in the ministry, expectation that the minister is skilled in every area, etc.) The expectations when they are not fulfilled can lead to disappointment.

Luke: Some of the things that lead to discouragement and depression are when leaders have a vision on how they want to move the congregation forward but are unable to do so because of the pushback from the congregation. I have been discouraged the most out of the three. Sometimes, you ponder, is this really worth it? You get over the discouragement by remembering the prophets and those who came before you and how God got them through.

Me: What are some of the seemingly unresolvable issues that emerge to complicate the minister's ability to lead, causing them to leave the ministry for secular careers?

Luke: A leadership that does not support, guide, [and] direct can be a challenge. When ministers don't receive spiritual support from their leaders, it can lead to issues because it is difficult for ministers to lead effectively.

Luke: The conversation having a very immature view of the written word of God. Therefore, the congregation shifts to feelings that could lead to unresolvable issues. How can the minister get the congregation to become bible-based when they are functioning on feelings when the congregation is unwilling to gain bible-based principles?

Luke: Evangelists working along with elders can be a challenge because then it becomes a dual position and sometimes the work the minister needs to do is unable to be achieved.

Me: What kind of support would be effective for leaders having been affected by transitions?

Luke: It would be effective for leaders to reach out and seek leaders and professionals that can help them with the skills they need. Conflict management supports are needed at times.

Luke: Helping preachers to become a life coach, etc.

Luke: You develop a great skill set in ministry that is transferable at any level. Passion for others, empathy, compassion, honesty, integrity, gentleness are skills that could transfer to any profession.

Luke: The best support would be to network and find a fellow minister that has already transitioned.

Me: What is your view regarding the notion that ministers at times exhibit an inner conflict of feeling trapped in the ministry?

Luke: When ministers feel sick mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally and struggle to attend to the needs of members regularly, these are key signs that ministers are beginning to feel trapped. When this happens, ministers feel burdened and stay, or they transition to another place, which nine times out of 10 is not the answer.

Luke: Feeling trapped in the ministry is simply a human feeling. All professions have experienced this feeling. It is important to have a venue to channel these emotions. Different views and different expectations can create conflict. Ministry should be viewed as a learning opportunity.

Luke: I have not personally experienced feeling trapped. I know that there have been men that have [been] trapped because there were not many opportunities for them, and they were not progressing how they would like.

Me: How do you regard the skills that ministers acquire while serving in the ministry as being transferable to a secular context?

Luke: You develop a great skill set in ministry that is transferable at any level. Passion for others, empathy, compassion, honesty, integrity, gentleness are skills that could transfer to any profession.

Luke: If they have learned how to work with people and understand them, then they will be good communicators in the secular context.

Me: What did you enjoy, and what did you miss during your time out of full-time ministry?

Luke: My full-time ministerial experience was short-lived: one year. And while the experience was mostly rewarding, the way it ended after one year greatly influenced the decision to not return.

My tenure abruptly ended because I lost financial support from a sponsoring congregation. But it, perhaps, was the best thing that could have happened to me early in the career. Given the experience, I concluded—right or wrong—that I wasn't going to put myself in such a vulnerable position ever again; and I haven't. When I left, I left. And did so for "greener pastures"—one where I would have more control over my own professional

destiny. One where the rules were based on more stable and predictable outcomes. Frankly, there isn't anything I missed during the time out of full-time ministry. And that is because my subsequent professional path of psychology allowed me to continuously serve the church in a different, albeit equally important, ministry: counseling. The major difference with being the church's psychologist was choice—the choice of serving or not, the choice of doing it as service or as a job, and the choice of deciding how much of it I wanted to do. And yet, as the church's psychologist, I would minister, and in a way that being the church's pulpit minister couldn't.

Interviewee: John

Me: The purpose of the study is to identify the challenges pastors face that lead to transitioning out of the ministry and the effect they have on pastoral leaders.

Me: Based on your experience in the ministry, what are the common causes that lead to disappointment, discouragement, and depression of ministers?

John: Hardship and a lack of support, as well as crooked brethren, are causes that lead to disappointment, discouragement, and depression of ministers.

John: One of the things that contribute to depression in ministry is because the minister can be lonely and have no friends. It is difficult to speak with others and be 100% transparent without being judged by them. One of the causes that lead to discouragement is when situations or visions don't come out as the minister thought it should. Disappointment is tied to people not meeting our expectations when you know they are capable.

Me: What are some of the seemingly unresolvable issues that emerge to complicate the minister's ability to lead, causing them to leave the ministry for secular careers?

John: Role distinction and understanding who's over who a challenge in the church for many years has been. Education or lack thereof has played a major part in this.

John: One of the issues is not making enough money. Also, the level of devotion that is demanded. We strive too hard to meet the requirements of social media more than the requirements of Jesus. When the focus is on the church model versus building disciples, this can lead to unresolvable issues.

Me: What kind of support would be effective for leaders having been affected by transitions?

John: Teaching would be an effective support because we must teach that the church needs to support its leaders. Prior to that, it is important to legitimize the ministry. Ministers should be ordained. Better support [for] ministers financially.

Me: What is your view regarding the notion that ministers at times exhibit an inner conflict of feeling trapped in the ministry?

John: Minister's desire to preach but see so many things happen that they want to achieve, but if they don't, they feel like they let God down and the members down. There can be feelings of guilt and self-worth.

John: If you feel trapped, leave because ministry should not make you feel trapped. If you develop other skill sets, use them.

Me: How do you regard the skills that ministers acquire while serving in the ministry as being transferable to a secular context?

John: Culturally and socially, you are able to interact with others. It is also important to be educated and take that knowledge to support other individuals.

John: If a minister is an effective preacher, he can most certainly transfer a strong skill set to the secular context. Including financial skills and being an entrepreneur.

Me: What did you enjoy, and what did you miss during your time out of full-time ministry?

John: I never left the ministry.

Interviewee: Barnabas

Me: The purpose of the study is to identify the challenges pastors face that lead to transitioning out of the ministry and the effect they have on pastoral leaders.

Me: Based on your experience in the ministry, what are the common causes that lead to disappointment, discouragement, and depression of ministers?

Barnabas: A lack of success in ministry. A feeling of lack of accomplishment. Lack of numerical and spiritual growth. Lack of fulfillment that my talents are being utilized and worthwhile. I have been affected by disappointment the greatest. Discouragement has been the biggest factor for many preachers.

Barnabas: Trying to reach the helpless and bring them closer to God. The disappointment is trying to help a person because you know the outcome of disobedience.

Me: What are some of the seemingly unresolvable issues that emerge to complicate the minister's ability to lead, causing them to leave the ministry for secular careers?

Barnabas: A minister is directly incapable of changing one's behavior.

Barnabas: Abusing his own teaching. Stealing from the church and taking over the church as if he is god. Violating a commitment to his own family.

Me: What kind of support would be effective for leaders having been affected by transitions?

Barnabas: Every preacher needs a father image. Every preacher needs a coach and mentor, as well as every church. This would help the preacher be more effective in ministry.

Barnabas: The church leader needs support from the members. Resources should already be available for leaders.

Me: What is your view regarding the notion that ministers at times exhibit an inner conflict of feeling trapped in the ministry?

Barnabas: If a preacher isn't prepared to generate an income to take care of himself outside of the ministry, he will feel trapped.

Barnabas: You should want to stay in ministry because you are doing the will of God. When people reject you, that is the work of Satan.

Me: How do you regard the skills that ministers acquire while serving in the ministry as being transferable to a secular context?

Barnabas: I would suggest that a person can transition secular skills into ministry much easier. Ministers need to reflect on their skill set to transfer it into secularism. A skill set could be a skill set to explain and teach. Therefore, education programs [and] organizational and motivational skills.

Me: What did you enjoy, and what did you miss during your time out of full-time ministry?

Barnabas: My ministry for over 46 years has had some exciting ups and downs. However, the joy of it all was when a new soul came to the surrender to the master's will. The joy that I felt when that person changed their life to be a member of the body of Christ is unspeakable.

To see that person transform their life from conditions and circumstances that they were not aware would lead them to an unpleasant eternality. Now they are in the protection of the Savior. It is a feeling of knowing that you may have played a small part in the transformation.

Being away from the role of ministry role to enjoy retirement did have a profound impact on my life. The change from the daily overseeing the work and planning for community activities and events. The time I studied and prepared for the right lesson to speak to the believers was truly missed. The unique fellowship that you share as a minister with the membership slowly goes away. No matter what you do, there will be a massive void.

However, the time you now have to enjoy your family and take real vacations without thinking about the church allows for real relaxing and downtime. The time you have to plan for family and be carefree of significant church obligations will let you see a new life. You will feel younger with more energy.

Returning to ministry as I did with years of experience behind me, and now a new attitude and perspective allowed me to focus on training and structure for the congregation. Starting for a second time, I recall the mistakes and setbacks that cost so much delay and challenging times in my ministry's first leg. Having a realistic level of experience now, I know how to avoid mistakes and setbacks and develop a church with more teamwork and harmony, more love and unity, and a more pointed focus on soul-saving and community influence.

The second time around, you know that you do not have to be popular and called on my other ministers in the brotherhood. You can work on your work.

It is worth noting that it was good restarting in a small, undeveloped congregation that needed all the help it could get versus a congregation that was well established. The smaller work allowed me to set things in order the biblical way without the influence of the old set in their way attitudes that and establish congregation may be seated with.

The return to ministry is very gratifying. I can say I am not overworked and

underappreciated. The balance is just about right.

Interviewee: Paul

Me: The purpose of the study is to identify the challenges pastors face that lead to transitioning out of the ministry, and the effect they have on pastoral leaders.

Me: Based on your experience in the ministry, what are the common causes that lead to disappointment, discouragement, and depression of ministers?

Paul: One of the biggest problems I have discovered is leadership. A lack of leadership and firing back. Leaders can have difficulty getting along with other leaders in the church. It is difficult at times for the minister to get the buy-in, and it can be a battle to get the ministry going. This could lead to feelings of stress and depression when you have to battle so many things at once.

Paul: Poor leadership or weak leadership in the church. Also, members in the church who are not spiritual be allowed to experience some power of control. When you work hard, and it seems like someone is trying to control or go against you, it can lead to depression. Sometimes, conflict with leaders and how they treat your family can lead to disappointment.

Me: What are some of the seemingly unresolvable issues that emerge to complicate the minister's ability to lead, causing them to leave the ministry for secular careers?

Paul: Ministry is not a profession. It is a calling. The minister has to be able to follow the calling. At times, ministers will feel burned out and will not be happy with a secular job because they are walking away from their calling.

Paul: People sometimes circulate untruths, and you have to correct it. Unfortunately, sometimes it is unable to be resolved. You can't lead people when you have a group of people going against you.

Me: What kind of support would be effective for leaders having been affected by transitions?

Paul: Preaching fraternity is a good support. It is important to meet with individuals of precious faith. It is important for ministers to have an outlet. A lot of time[s], ministers don't have downtime; they struggle to develop good relationships with their spouse.

Paul: Establish some type of retreat center for a minister to go to that can address the depression, disappointment, and discouragement.

Me: What is your view regarding the notion that ministers at times exhibit an inner conflict of feeling trapped in the ministry?

Paul: No matter how pure your faith is or how committed you are, Satan will not leave you alone. It is important to recognize and respond to your needs. God did not call us to frustration. Frustration usually comes from not saying no. It is important to understand my role and keep my

focus. I am frustrated when I am unable to do what God has called me to do. If I decide to leave, I will feel trapped with feelings of guilt. Ministers should not feel guilty about retiring from ministry.

Paul: When you're trying to do all, you can manage secular and ministry, when you're trying to move the church forward, and others are going against you, [this] can lead to feelings of conflict and feeling trapped.

Me: How do you regard the skills that ministers acquire while serving in the ministry as being transferable to a secular context?

Paul: When God calls a person to ministry, he equips that person. Some skill sets are communication skills, edifying others, etc. Having key principles can be transferable from the ministry to the secular realm.

Paul: You develop many leadership skills in ministry. You're able to host training presentations, etc.

Me: What did you enjoy, and what did you miss during your time out of full-time ministry?

Paul: I never left full-time ministry.

Appendix C: IRB Approval Letter

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

September 7, 2020

Benjamin A. Griffin
Department of Graduate and Professional Development
Abilene Christian University

Dear Ben,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Challenges of Pastoral Leaders: Maintaining Resilience while Contemplating Transitioning out of Ministry",

(IRB# 20-130)is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs