

**MORAL CONFLICT IN PROVIDING PASTORAL CARE IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
SITUATIONS: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY**

by

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## **Abstract**

Domestic violence is a serious problem in the United States. Domestic violence affects women and children regardless of age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or religion. The current study examined the process of dealing with moral conflict among female clergy while providing pastoral care in domestic violence situations. The study explored moral conflict among clergy in their roles as pastoral caregivers about domestic violence. The research question was: How do female clergy describe the process of dealing with moral conflict during pastoral care in domestic violence situations. Grounded theory method was used to construct a theory about moral conflict and domestic violence in pastoral care. Eight female clergy were interviewed from five different faith denominations. The data analysis resulted in the development of six themes in dealing with the process of moral conflict: (a) advocates for change, (b) recognizing conflicts in care, (c) awareness of emotional conflict, (d) consultations, (e) healthy coping and, and (f) promoting safety. The study concluded that acknowledging abuse, an increased awareness, and using various coping mechanisms are ways to deal with feelings of moral conflict. It is recommended that future research focus on female clergy work in the church and the study of dissonance across multiple disciplines.

## **Dedication**

To my mother, Jessie, who has encouraged me to always be the best at whatever I decided to do in life and my career. You have and always will be my inspiration.

To my husband Patrick, thank you for your love, understanding, support, and encouragement. I know at times, I was not always available because of the demands of this project, but you never complained and always lifted me up when I did not always think I could finish this project. I love and appreciate you.

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## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **Background of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory research was to study how female clergy describe the process of negotiating moral conflict in pastoral care of domestic violence cases. A symposium of the Christian Association of Psychological studies addressed the church readiness to provide prevention and interventions strategies to individuals who are victims of violence (Walker & Aten 2012). According to Walker and Aten (2012) who reviewed approximately 59 studies related to religious issues and intimate partner violence, reoccurring themes in religion, spirituality, and IPV were: (a) Women receive inconsistent messages from clergy on how to deal with abuse in their marriage, (b) Clergy have limited training in regard to assisting victims of domestic violence, and (c) Clergy use scriptures from the bible to justify staying in abusive marriages. The researchers concluded that further research may help to better understand ways in which clergy understand domestic violence as a theological issue and the thought process involved in applying it. The theoretical framework for this research study was constituted by the theories of moral conflict and cognitive dissonance. The theory of moral development developed by Kohlberg is defined as stages of transformation that occur in an individual's morality or how an individual go about solving problems related to his or her understanding of right or wrong (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). According to Kohlberg, an individual's moral judgement develops across his or her lifespan. Individual's move through six stages based on their level of reasoning, their ability to progress from one stage to the next and develop higher level of thoughts during each stage.

The characteristics of these stages are as follows; (a) stages are structured, meaning individual's thought process are consistent in their level of reasoning; (b) stages are sequential, individuals are able to move from one stage to the next; and (c) stages are hierarchical, individuals are able to comprehend at all stages of development (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977).

The first level in Kohlberg's theory is the preconvention level. Individuals learn acceptable and unacceptable behavior through a set of rules and cultural norms starting in childhood. Kohlberg's preconvention level has 2 stages; punishment and obedience orientation and instrumental-relativist orientation. Stage one, punishment and obedience orientation is when an individual's decision to do right or wrong is based on rewards or punishment. Stage 2 is the instrumental-relativist orientation which states an individual's incentive to make the right decision is based on meeting their own needs but only sometimes other's needs (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977).

The conventional moral level of Kohlberg's theory is the individual understanding the difference between right and wrong in society and complies with societal rules. The two stages at this level are interpersonal concordance orientation and law and order orientation. Stage 3, interpersonal concordance orientation is seeking acceptance of others by displaying what is seen as acceptable or good behavior. Conformity is seen during this stage. An individual seeks approval in how he or she behaviors or acts. Stage 4, law and order orientation is enforcing rules by delegating and giving orders (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977).

The post conventional level of Kohlberg's theory is an individual's ability to apply principles of moral reasoning based on their own sound judgement. This is the highest level of

moral reasoning for most individuals. Stage 5, social contract orientation is an individual's increased knowledge of rules and laws and how they operate in society. An individual is also able to recognize there are legal consequences for breaking rules/law. Stage 6, universal ethical principal orientation is an individual developing their own sense of moral ethics and values. Individuals makes good decisions based on their values. In this stage, thinking is more abstract. (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977)

The other theoretical framework used in this study was the theory of cognitive dissonance by Festinger (1957). The terms used by Festinger to develop his theory are dissonance and consonance which mean inconsistency and consistency. Cognitive dissonance occurs when thoughts or perceptions are inconsistent and cause psychological tension. The basic hypothesis of dissonance is: (a) the existence of dissonance causes a person to become psychologically uncomfortable, and (b) to reduce this discomfort, they seek a more agreeable solution. Avoidance is common when an individual refuse to deal with situations they are not comfortable with (Festinger, 1957).

Dissonance may occur in several circumstances and situations. These situations may be relevant when dealing with domestic violence. Dissonance may arise from logical inconsistency. This states that observation of one follows from the other on logical grounds in the person's own thinking process. Dissonance may arise from cultural mores. In this case, dissonance exists when culture defines what is consistent and what is not. Dissonance may originate from an individual's belief or set of beliefs. Lastly, dissonance may arise because of an individual's past experiences (Festinger, 1957).

Moral conflict or dissonance is a term used to describe when psychological discomfort occurs where there is inconsistency between beliefs and actions (Alipoon, 2001). Victims of domestic violence often seek assistance from clergy because they view the faith community as a safe-haven (Homiak & Singletary, 2007). An individual's spiritual beliefs play a role in how we view the world around us (Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006). Several studies on clergy and their experiences providing pastoral care in domestic violence and mental health issues concluded the church may serve as a safe haven from an abusive situation, but may also create at times a barrier to care (Brade, 2009; Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009; Gilbert, 2011; Leavey, Loewenthal, & King, 2007; Levitt & Ware, 2006a,2006b; Openshaw & Harr, 2009). Studies also suggest that women are often rejected by religious leaders when they attempt to address domestic violence issues and are encouraged to stay in abusive relationships based on interpretations from the Bible (Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006). Religious leaders often feel conflicted if their intervention caused the relationship to end in divorce (Nason-Clark, 2009).

Domestic violence is a widespread problem around the world that has resulted in either injury or death (Levitt & Ware, 2006a; The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). Recent data in 2011 from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence survey reported over 10 million women and men in the United States experienced physical abuse at the hands of their partner. One in five women and one in seven men suffered severe injury by an intimate partner. In addition, the immediate impact of physical violence has psychically and psychologically long-term consequences requiring lengthy recovery (The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). In a southern state, in 2013, there were 76,704 reported victims

of abuse. In 2014, domestic violence hotlines answered 185,373 calls. There were 114 women killed by an intimate partner in 2012, which is more than 10% of the national total (National Coalition against Domestic Violence [NCADV] 2015).

Domestic violence has no boundaries in regard to gender, race, ethnicity or religious affiliation. A perpetrator uses several forms of abuse to gain power and control over their victim. The Power and Control Wheel developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project explains various type of abuse a perpetrator may use to control and manipulate their victim (Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006). Prevention and intervention strategies are important in the treatment and care of domestic violence victims. The battered women's movement of the 1970's developed community based interventions for women who have experienced domestic violence. The primary goals for intervention and prevention programs are safety for women and children. Resources available to victims of domestic violence may include legal, social, and housing services, and, support of family and the religious community (Shannon-Lewy & Dull, 2005). In the past, religious and conservative groups saw domestic violence as a problem but not always as a societal trend or public health crisis (Koss et al., 1994).

Often religious leaders are among the first individuals who receive reports of domestic violence (Levitt & Ware, 2006b). Victims of abuse often seek support and refuge from domestic violence at their place of worship (Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006). Previous studies conducted on domestic violence and the faith-based community has found that the church can be a place of safety or shame regarding abuse (Homiak & Singletary, 2007). Consistent with Festinger's theory, dissonance may occur for clergy when there is a struggle to maintain consistency in their

social worldview and religious beliefs they hold about their own and other's behavior (Lawrence, 2014). Mental health professionals and other domestic violence service providers bring their own experiences to the process. Service providers are often managing their own feelings and their client's feelings about violence. A difficult situation presents itself causing mental or emotional strain. As a result, avoidance occurs leaving the problem or situation unresolved (Lawrence, 2014). For example, a woman may make a decision to remain in a physically or verbally abusive marriage; the need to empower the woman and respect their right to make their own decision may conflict with normal judgements about violence. Predisposed notions about a situation may be seen as defensive behaviors and may prevent cognitive dissonance from occurring (Lawrence, 2014).

There is a growing body of research that discusses the perspectives and experiences of clergy who deal with individuals and families in their congregation who are victims of domestic violence. Current research does not address female clergy experiences and few studies address the moral conflict that clergy experience when dealing with family violence in faith-based organizations. Previous studies have focused on clergy perspectives of domestic violence in the African American church (Brade, 2009; Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009). These studies employed mixed methodology and included both male and female clergy. While the results of these studies revealed the church's acknowledgement of domestic violence in their congregation and the need for more training in faith-based communities, it was limited to only African American Clergy. Rotunda, Williamson and Penfold (2004) conducted a quantitative study on clergy's responses to domestic violence. Ninety percent of the clergy participants for the Rotunda et al. (2004) were

male. There are a few qualitative studies on clergy response to domestic violence including some intervention efforts (Gilbert, 2011; Levitt & Ware, 2006a). Both Gilbert (2011) and Levitt and Ware (2006a) were grounded theory studies that examined perspectives and experience of religious leaders on the issue of domestic violence, but these studies were limited by race, predominately male participants and denominations.

### **Need for the Study**

Domestic violence has been researched from several different entities such as prevention/intervention programs, social work, counseling, support systems, faith/religion and police and legal (McAllister & Roberts-Lewis, 2010). Clergy often report problems for which individuals seek counsel are related to marriage and family concerns (Weaver, Koenig, & Larson, 1997). Because clergy are often the first source of support or intervention, understanding their experiences and perceptions are important areas of family psychology and interventions and prevention programs. Previous research has lacked in areas of female clergy advising individuals on domestic violence matters. The current grounded study analysis that was conducted helped to establish a theory on situations of moral conflict that female clergy face when dealing with domestic or family violence issues. Research is also currently lacking in the area of female clergy and diverse denominations. Previous research all indicates a need for future studies to focus on diversity in gender and faith based denominations (Brade, 2009; Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009; Levitt & Ware, 2006a).

The current study was designed to understand how female clergy describe the process of negotiating moral conflict in the pastoral care of domestic violence cases. Domestic violence

affects women from different racial, cultural, or socioeconomic backgrounds (Popescu & Drumm, 2009). It was important to understand the role that religion and religious beliefs play in either helping or hurting the situation of domestic violence. Clergy provide spiritual teachings and guidance that help individuals develop beliefs about the world and life in general. Clergy's messages can strongly influence rules and behavior within religious family. Acceptable and unacceptable behavior is affected by these religious norms set by clergy (Shannon-Lewy & Dull, 2005).

The research literature on clergy advising on domestic violence indicates that while clergy are supportive in providing support in family violence issues, they do not always feel properly trained to handle these situations (Bent-Goodley, St. Vil, & Hubert, 2012; Brade, 2009; Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009; Rotunda, Williamson & Penfold, 2004). Studies have been limited to African American clergy and Catholic, Christian, and Protestant faith-based communities. A grounded study by Levitt and Ware (2006b) has focused on the dealing with the conflict of preserving marriage within the religious context and avoiding divorce in intimate partner situations. The Levitt and Ware (2006b) study sought to formulate a theory to understand how religious leaders perceive intimate partner violence and deal with divorce in these situations. Twenty-five senior and mid-level religious leaders were interviewed about their understanding of intimate partner violence and religion. Only four female clergy out of 25 participants were interviewed and denominations were limited to religious leaders from Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths. The study concluded that while religious leaders were concerned about domestic violence, they struggled with supporting divorce and separation. Other religious leaders placed

blamed for the abuse to the victims of IPV (Levitt & Ware, 2006b). The research explored the concept of moral conflict that clergy may experience. The current research also sought to add more diversity in gender and denominations by interviewing only female clergy.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to study how female clergy describe the process of negotiating moral conflict in pastoral care of domestic violence cases. Dissonance may occur for clergy when their spiritual and world beliefs conflict with the beliefs of their client. This struggle may cause a clergy to be ineffective in their problem-solving ability with the client (Lawrence, 2014). Lawrence (2014) studied dissonance in therapists and other practitioners providing service in domestic violence. According to Lawrence (2014), therapists may develop preconceived ideas about an issue with their client that may affect the therapeutic relationship. Not being able to let go of these preconceived ideas presents a struggle for the therapist. For example, therapists are expected to empathize with victims of abuse and not be judgmental, the victim may place more judgement and blame on the perpetrator, and suppress negative feelings or judgement about the victim. In faith-based communities, religious leaders experience conflicting feelings between providing care and wanting a successful intervention in domestic violence situations, but often the intervention may still end in divorce (Nason-Clark, 2009). The researcher interviewed female clergy to better understand their experiences when working with families who are victims of domestic violence and working through feelings of moral conflict.

## **Significance of the Study**

Grounded theory was used to answer the research question, of how female clergy describe the process of dealing with moral conflict in domestic violence cases. Grounded theory seeks to provide an explanation about a phenomenon based on shared experiences of participants and creates a theory about the process (Creswell, 2013). Studies on clergy and domestic violence have focused on perspectives, experiences, perceptions and interventions within the church. A few studies have focused on moral conflict and addressed how a clergy's religious beliefs may sometimes help or hinder in providing care in domestic violence (Levitt & Ware, 2006b; Shannon-Levy & Dull, 2005) Several studies examined African American clergy's response to domestic violence (Brade, 2009; Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009; Gilbert, 2011). Mena (2013) examined the effectiveness of clergy in the Hispanic Christian church.

Several studies examined clergy experiences and perceptions regarding domestic violence; while studies include both male and female clergy, male outnumbered female clergy (Levitt & Ware, 2006a, 2006b; Peterson, 2009; Rotunda et al., 2004). Many studies such as Brade (2009), Gustafson (2005) used participants that were in seminary schools. Therefore, an area of scholarly deficiency appears to be in studies representing women clergy, diverse denominations, and moral conflict. The current study focused on subjects providing pastoral care in their present congregations and communities, and examined how clergy described moral conflict while providing pastoral care to families who are victims of domestic violence.

Studies on the perspectives of religious leaders on domestic violence emphasized the need for further study among diverse denominations and gender (Brade, 2009; Levitt & Ware,

2006a). The study of moral conflict is important in areas of domestic violence and pastoral care because of findings from previous studies. According to Walker and Aten (2012), reoccurring themes in religion, spirituality and IPV are: a) women receive mixed messages on how to deal with abuse in their marriage; b) clergy received limited to no training regards to how to providing care in domestic violence; c) women often receive advice from clergy to remain in abusive marriages because of Biblical teachings.

Walker and Aten (2012) also discussed a need for Christian mental health professionals to collaborate with clergy in developing counseling ministries to assist both survivors and perpetrators of abuse. The researchers suggested developing more research related to the understanding of practice, religion/spirituality and trauma. Clinicians and researchers must create dialogue on the topic and discuss ways to develop integrative best practices. The article also concluded the need for the church to gain more insight into understanding how spiritual/religious beliefs regarding abuse toward family members do directly affect and conflict with biblical teachings. There was a need to better understand the moral conflict that clergy experience when providing pastoral care in domestic violence situations.

### **Research Questions**

Because female clergy may experience dissonance when providing pastoral care in domestic violence situations in their congregations, the primary research question in this study was: How do female clergy describe the process of dealing with moral conflict in pastoral care of domestic violence situations? Dissonance may occur when there is a struggle to maintain consistency between worldview, their spiritual beliefs, and the beliefs and behavior of others.

The subquestions for this research were: (a) what is your understanding of moral conflict as it related to your own religious beliefs and (b) How do you empower women who experience domestic violence?

### **Definition of Terms**

**Clergy.** Clergy is a group of individuals ordained in the Christian church to perform spiritual counsel, guidance and ceremonies (Clergy, 2009).

**Domestic violence.** Domestic Violence is repeated aggressive behavior used by one individual to intimidate another individual in an intimate relationship. This behavior may result in physical or emotional harm to an individual (Peek-Asa, 2004).

**Intimate partner violence** is defined as multiple types of abusive behavior used in relationships by one partner to control another partner. This may be a current or past partner. , U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Violence against Women, 2006, (as cited in, McAllister & Roberts-Lewis, 2010).

**Moral conflict.** Moral conflict, moral dissonance or cognitive disequilibrium are terms used interchangeably to define an individual's psychological discomfort that occurs where there is inconsistency between beliefs and actions (Alipoon, 2001).

**Pastoral care.** Pastoral Care is defined as providing spiritual counseling and guidance to individual part of a church congregation and the community (Stansbury, Harley, King, and Nelson & Speight 2012).

## **Research Design**

The qualitative methodology for the study was grounded theory. Grounded theory is a type of qualitative methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 for the purpose of providing a theoretical explanation from data collected (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The foundations of grounded theory originated from pragmatism and symbolic interactionism (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The assumption of pragmatism is obtaining information about a process through observations and interactions. Pragmatists are concerned with processes and the accumulation of collective knowledge. Two important principles of grounded theory are: the principle of change and determinism. Change is continuous in response to evolving conditions. Determinism is an individual's decision-making ability and how they make inferences about situations and concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Some researchers utilizing Strauss and Corbin grounded theory method decided to go in a different direction than positivism (Charmaz, 2006).

Charmaz's approach to grounded theory allows for an explanation of the studied phenomenon from the point of view of participants. Grounded theory seeks to understand the process of a phenomenon. According to Charmaz (2006), data collection on participants' experiences allows for the researcher to generate abstract ideas and assumptions about these experiences to develop a theory. Elements of grounded theory are being actively engaged in data collection and interpreting concepts, creating codes about data, and placing them into categories. Throughout data collection, the researcher continues to compare and analyze concepts, making inferences about categories they generated to move toward the development of a theory. The researcher engages in memo writing to further abstract ideas during code analysis and giving

meanings to categories during each stage aimed at developing a theory about the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006).

For the purpose of this research, the researcher sought to understand how female clergy describe the process of moral conflict when providing pastoral care in domestic violence situations. Grounded theory is the best method for this study because it allows the researcher to analyze the process. Grounded theory provided an understanding to the processes female clergy adopt in dealing with moral conflict in domestic violence situations. The researcher utilized Charmaz's method of coding to analyze data. The coding is a structured, but allows flexibility during data collection and coding (Charmaz, 2006).

Charmaz's method of coding defines and designates what the data is revealing about the phenomenon. Grounded theory coding examines actions and events. The guidelines for coding are as follows: (a) Initial coding is the beginning process of seeking to understand "What is happening?" during early data collection; the researcher determines which concepts in the data are important to the developing theory, (b) Focused coding looks at the most significant codes developed during initial coding to sort and combine, (c) Memo writing occurs throughout the research to continuously analyze ideas and earlier codes. Memo writing aids in developing abstract categories in the emerging theory, (d) Theoretical sampling seeks pertinent data and develops and refine categories. (e) saturating theoretical concepts means that further data collection reveals no new properties in core theoretical categories and, (f) theoretical sorting and integrating involves connecting theoretical memos to analyze and determine relationships,

determine their significant and refine categories in developing a theory about the process (Charmaz & Heywood, 2010).

Charmaz's basic principles for grounded theory include becoming closely acquainted with the phenomenon and becoming knowledgeable about the experience. being considerate, and showing empathy to research participants as they share their experiences, being able to see the participant's worldview rather than our own, commit to studying and understanding the process, and the researcher remains open to producing new theoretical concepts. Familiarity with the collected data allows the researcher to experience the phenomenon from the participant's worldview. The researcher searches for the participant's meanings and understanding their actions as they see them and not placing our own assumptions and beliefs in the phenomenon we are studying. Establishing theoretical perspectives help the researcher to learn actions and processes while conducting fieldwork. Lastly, researchers rely on in-depth interviews to gain a deeper meaning into a phenomenon (Charmaz, 2004).

Data collection for grounded theory is primarily interviews and observations that allows the researcher to answer research questions. Other sources such as letters, video or government documents can be used if they help to gain insight into the studied phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Data for this study was collected through interviews with female clergy from diverse religious backgrounds and denominations who agreed to participate in the study. The researcher utilized an open ended conversational interview and field notes. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and stored in a password protected file on a computer. The researcher

recruited eight female clergy from eight different churches in the Southwestern region of the United States.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

The study described the process of female clergy dealing with moral conflict in providing pastoral care in domestic violence situations. The theoretical framework used for this study was the theory of moral development and the theory of cognitive dissonance.

The assumption for this study was that the theory of cognitive dissonance might provide some insight into how female clergy can work through the process of moral conflict in providing pastoral care in domestic violence. Another assumption is that female clergy's stages of moral development might determine their response and outcome of care. Understanding how female clergy describe the process of dealing with moral conflict in domestic violence situations helped to develop a theory of the process and added to ongoing knowledge in the area of moral development. Female clergy may be a sense of empowerment for women who are dealing with domestic violence.

Despite the findings of the study, some limitations were encountered. Results of this study are limited to a small sample of Christian clergy in churches around the city where the data was collected. Only eight female clergy participated in this study. Therefore, one cannot generalize the findings to all female clergy. The selection process was based on female clergy who have experienced moral conflict when providing pastoral care in domestic violence situations. The results of this study cannot be generalized to a larger sample of clergy. Despite these limitations, key findings may help both community mental health professionals and clergy

providing pastoral care to better understand ways to collaborate and have success in domestic violence interventions.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding and insight into the concept of moral conflict and how female clergy deal with it while providing pastoral care. Because of this research, practical implications for female clergy and other helping professionals may occur. Clergy and other helping professionals in the field of domestic violence may develop a better understanding of the phenomena being studied. The study may also implicate how women clergy may empower women who are victims of domestic violence. Previous research implicated how social workers may assist pastors and other religious leaders on the best way to treat domestic violence in their congregations. These studies recommended the need for enhancing training, domestic violence awareness and creating strategic partnerships among clergy and social workers.

VanderWaal, Hernandez, and Sandman (2012) explored how clergy's understanding of psychiatric and addiction disorders and to find ways to collaborate with Christian social workers and other helping professions. The results indicated clergy can play an important role in educating their congregation as well providing care and resources for mental health and substance abuse disorders while social workers can strengthen their relationship with clergy and offer some of the same services. The results of this study should benefit practical implications not just for social workers but, other professionals such as professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, and advocates who all service domestic violence victims.

## **Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature on the research topic to female clergy describing the process of moral conflict in domestic violence. Research focused on articles on religious leaders both male and female, domestic violence and moral conflict. The review of literature describes previous studies on perceptions, experiences and perspectives on the research topic. The literature supports the formation of the research problem, the research question and the significance of the study.

Chapter 3 describes the methods and procedures that the researcher employed to conduct the study. The step by step process of grounded theory provides clarity of the current theory. It also describes the research design, target population and participant selection. Included in this section are also procedures, instruments, research questions, data analysis, and, expected findings.

Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and results of the study. The research from the study formulates a theory based on the research question. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the findings, conclusions, implications of the research and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To address the research topic and answer questions regarding female clergy providing pastoral care and dealing with the concept of moral conflict in domestic violence situations, a review of previous literature in this chapter addressed clergy, pastoral care and/or counseling, domestic violence and studies related to moral conflict and cognitive dissonance. A search in ProQuest psychology databases generated over 150 articles related to domestic violence, clergy and pastoral care; and 200 or more articles related to cognitive dissonance and moral conflict.

There are a growing number of articles in psychological and religious literature on female clergy, their leadership role in the church, and their role in pastoral care. Few articles though address the social issue of domestic violence or the issues of moral conflict and the clergy experience. Olson, Crawford, and Guthrie (2000) identified that studying female clergy are important because historically the experiences have been provided for both by one gender. Many American religions such as the Catholic Church, evangelical Protestantism do not ordain women. Ordained female clergy are mostly in the Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian, and evangelical Lutheran denominations. In 1890, about 7% of US denominations granted women the right to be ordained as a clergy. In 1956, women were given full rights to be ordained as clergy in the United Methodist Church. In 1970, 3% of clergy were female and 10% by 1990. Today, 52% of the individuals enrolled in seminaries are women (Frame & Shehan, 2004). Systematic research that focuses on the psychological aspects of female clergy is lacking.

Moran, Flannelly, Weaver, Overvold, Hess, and Wilson (2005) investigated the knowledge and skill level of professional clergy providing pastoral counseling in an outpatient

community setting. The study explored the kinds of problems they address, and how competent they are in dealing with these problems. In a survey conducted in the New York City area, 179 clergy responded and talked about their pastoral care duties. Common problems addressed in a community hospital setting were situational stressors such as relationship problems and bereavement. Secondary problems addressed were; addiction, psychiatric disorders and family violence. Most clergy felt competent in dealing with issues related to marital problems, death and dying and grief. On an average, clergy split their time between visiting parishioners in the hospital and in the office providing pastoral care/counseling.

According to Streets (2015), traumatic experiences for Christians may cause them to lose or question their faith in God. Traumatic experiences cause intense or negative emotions in individuals. On the contrary, an individual's religious faith or beliefs can be a source of strength and guidance. Pastoral care and counseling aims to provide healing, guidance and reconciliation.

### **Theoretical Orientation of the Study**

To address the phenomenon of female clergy describing the process of moral conflict when providing pastoral care in domestic violence, the researcher used the theory of moral development and cognitive dissonance as a guide for the qualitative study. The theory of moral development by Kohlberg provides a guideline for how our moral reasoning and decision making mature and development over the lifespan. It is the natural, long term process of psychological growth and an individual's capacity to make good or bad choices (Berger, 2005). Kohlberg developed 3 levels and 6 stages of moral reasoning. The three levels of moral development are: (a) preconvention level, (b) conventional level, and (c) post conventional,

autonomous, or principled level. Kohlberg states how a person reasoning determines their stage of development (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Each level has two stages. Stage one and two of moral development is the pre-convention stage in which decision making is based on rewards and punishment. Moral decision making during stages one and two is an individual determines whether to do right or wrong is based on its consequences. It is guided by one's own self-interests, but to obtain their objectives, one must engage in exchanges with other people. Conventional reasoning during stage three and four is moral decision making based on social norms.

Stages three and four are influenced by trying to live up to societal standards. The individual seeks to please others by their behavior and following rules. The individuals seek to follow rules by larger social systems, such as family, peers, government or community. The roles and rules of larger social systems are important for maintaining order. Post-conventional reasoning which are stages five and six, an individual is able to form more logical judgements. Stages five and six, moral decision making is more mature. Individual's moral reasoning is related to being able to understand their own values and ethics. An individual also understands universal rules in regards to their rights as human beings (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977).

It is the researcher's belief that female clergy's stages of moral development may determine their response and outcome in how they approach dealing with moral conflict in domestic violence situations. In moral development theory, early childhood moral reasoning is naïve, gradually developing more complex reasoning skills in adolescence and early adulthood to comprehensive and logical decision making in adulthood.

## **Review of Literature**

A study conducted by Glover (1997) used Kohlberg's theory as a framework to examine the relationship between moral reasoning and religion. Two arguments were presented for this study that may affect the relationships between religion and moral judgements. Kohlberg stated that religious reasoning is influenced by what we learn from our religious leaders. Religious reasoning is relevant to moral judgement. For this study, 273 participants were selected from diverse religious groups using a quantitative analysis, ANCOVA. The results indicated a significant difference in moral reasoning between religious groups. The study revealed that conservative religious groups ability to use moral reasoning over religious beliefs were less than the two other groups. Conservative groups within Kohlberg's framework displayed preconvention and early conventional levels of reasoning.

The second theory, cognitive dissonance developed by Festinger defines that holding inconsistencies in beliefs, attitudes and behaviors arouses psychological tension and irrational beliefs. The basic principles of dissonance are: the occurrence of dissonance develops as a result of differences in attitudes and beliefs, and sometimes an individual's own cultural norms and values. Differing opinions among individuals and past negative experiences causes dissonance to occur (Festinger, 1957). The researcher believes that past experiences may cause female clergy to experience dissonance in providing pastoral care in domestic violence situations. The theory of cognitive dissonance provided some insight into how female clergy work through beliefs and conflicts in providing pastoral care in domestic violence.

Several studies on cognitive dissonance exist related to mental health, medical and healthcare workers. Lawrence (2014) conducted semi structured interviews to explore ways practitioners understand and defined their experience in working with domestic violence victims. 20 practitioners were interviewed. The focus was to explore possible situations that cause conflict among therapist and client when discussing issues that may trigger strong emotions or conflicting viewpoints and develop problem solving approaches to reduce dissonance. Results revealed that most participants did not realize their reaction to information that conflicted with their own beliefs and often ignored issues that did not agree with their personal or professional worldview. Some participants managed their potential dissonance by drawing on their personal experiences. Findings also support the view that one approach does not relate to every situation. The idea is that flexibility allows for best practices in treatment.

Zaitman (1998) examined cognitive dissonance in domestic violence victims. The researcher hypothesized that women in domestic violence situations who avoid information on domestic violence may have the potential to increase or create cognitive dissonance. Seventy-one women participated in the study and were divided into two groups. The first group were women who were actively in an abusive relationship and the second group were survivors of domestic violence. The women recruited were in group therapy and support groups. Results did not see a significant difference in women from both groups. All women despite being a survivor or actively in an abusive relationship avoided receiving any type of information on domestic violence. According to Festinger (1957), “if dissonance exists, the person should seek out information that reduces dissonance and avoid information that increases dissonance (p. 22)..”

Krause (2015) studied the effects of religious doubt on an individual's well-being. This study did not address IPV, but looked at how religious doubt creates cognitive dissonance when emotional distress occurs at a global level. Krause (2015) examined practicing Christians 50 years of age and older in a general helping role to determine if religious doubt may be reduced. Like dissonance, religious doubt occurs due to conflicts regarding an individual's spiritual beliefs. Helping people in need is a part of the Christian faith. Behavioral Scientists argues that an adult's faith is stronger as they get as they age. The results indicate that offering help to individuals experiencing spiritual struggles does reduce religious doubt. It suggests that helping others is an important dissonance reduction strategy.

A grounded theory research study conducted by Gramley (1994) focused on the experience of dissonance and congruence in female clergy in their roles of parish pastors. Gramley's specific focus was on lesbian clergy. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight female clergy serving as pastors in three Protestant churches: United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, and Presbyterian Church. Though this study was not directly connected to domestic violence, it did explore cognitive dissonance by female clergy in a special population. Dissonance emerged around personality and identity issues, call to ministry, theology, authority/power/leadership, conflict, being lesbian in the ministry and relationships with the lesbian/gay community.

Moreno (2005) tested the theory of cognitive dissonance in physician's treatment decisions of psychological disorders. The purpose of the study was to determine if cognitive dissonance is a factor in physician's influence on the treatment decisions of their peers, and

whether to refer to psychologists or prescribe medication. The general hypothesis is that cognitive dissonance is created by a differing professional opinion from a colleague. The study sought to explain the success or failure of using feedback to shape physician's treatment behavior. Fifty-one physicians were recruited for the study. A quasi-experimental design was conducted. Results revealed that cognitive dissonance was present in normal medical protocol of assessing, and treating the patient, and being critiqued by another physician. Attitudes, experience and level of confidence increased or decreased the internalized discomfort of dissonance. There was a resistance among physicians to change their attitudes if provided with the freedom to make an initial diagnosis.

Previous studies in psychological literature have explored dissonance in medical and mental health professionals. Dissonance appears to be present in different disciplines when it comes to domestic violence. While many studies did not address moral conflict or cognitive dissonance among clergy, some studies did examine clergy burnout, stress and secondary trauma in pastoral care. Hendron, Irving, and Taylor (2012) reviewed literature that focused on the relationship between trauma work and its effects on clergy in pastoral care/counseling roles. Compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma were some of the psychological effects of pastoral care addressed in this study. Compassion fatigue is a lack of emotion displayed by individuals who become aware of trauma experienced by another individual. Vicarious trauma is when individual experiences intense emotions by another's individual who has experienced a traumatic life event or situation. The term is used to explain secondary stress experiences within the helping profession. Like moral conflict, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma may cause

stress within the field of mental health and counseling, and the need to want to help a suffering person. Vicarious trauma increases a professional's vulnerability and alters professional's identity, worldviews, and beliefs.

Compassion fatigue symptoms may cause avoidance, re-experience and hyperarousal. Some of these experiences are like an individual experiencing dissonance. Results from this study suggests limited information on this subject due to clergy not being open to discuss difficult situations they may have experienced during counseling clients. Religious professionals are reluctant to deal with their own emotions in a difficult situation. They may also be unwilling to admit their limitations in counseling or ask for help. Clergy often do not recognize the need to work on their own self-care.

Kinman, McFall, and Rodriguez (2011) investigated how clergy managed their emotions and balanced the demands of their jobs in a caregiver and/or counseling role. One hundred eighty-eight clergy were interviewed for this study. The study also investigated clergy experiences and training in areas of counseling. Results revealed that clergy who perform frequent and extensive emotionally distressing work do experience dissonance, psychological distress and less job satisfaction.

### **The Response of Women Clergy to Domestic Violence**

Clergy involvement in the domestic violence movement was pioneered by Rev. Maria Fortune with the opening of The Center for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle, Washington in 1977. This was the beginning of the church's involvement in domestic violence. Rev. Fortune was a minister in the United Church of Christ who advocated for women

who were in abusive situations from within the religious community. Women's shelters were established by the Al-Anon group in the 1960's, a bilingual battered women's support group in 1977 and a state coalition of advocates begin forming during 1976 to 1978. Around the late 1980's religious leaders became socially conscious of domestic violence occurring within their congregation and the communities. The awareness of domestic violence among clergy and pastoral care providers grew around the late 1980's (Cooper-White, 2011).

There are limited studies that address female clergy in pastoral care roles and domestic violence. Existing studies do address female clergy in pastoral care roles in the church or community. According to Frame and Shehan (2004), previous research reveals female clergy in pastoral care roles as approachable, accessible to parishioners and comfortable with self-disclosure. Female and male clergy differ in the amount of time they spend between pastoral care/counseling and administrative duties. Female clergy tend to make more time for counseling.

Galbraith (2005) conducted a qualitative study to explore the experiences and responses of Protestant clergy women with women who were victims of domestic violence. Galbraith wanted to further explore how strong of an influence that woman clergy play in their response to domestic violence. Grounded theory was used to develop a theory about these experiences. Eighteen female clergy who were currently working in ordained positions in a parish ministry or had recently left that position. The process of actions, strategies and struggles experienced by clergy women generated seven major themes. The categories are: (a) offering a distinctive ministry, (b) acknowledging abuse, (c) building trust, (d) responding to abuse, (e) promoting safety over marriage, (f) supporting women on their healing journey, and, (g) facing challenges

and dealing with frustrations. Findings reveal that female clergy are being regularly approached by women who are victims of domestic violence. Victims are not just part of the congregation but also a part of the community. Female clergy view themselves as providing a distinctive ministry that is different from male ministers. Female clergy believe that as women they have a different set of like experiences than males. Female clergy described a ministry that was open, compassionate, approachable and sensitive to the needs of women who are victims of abuse. Female clergy used their own interpretation of theological doctrine removed from traditional interpretations of the Bible to promote safety over the preservation of marriage (Galbraith, 2005).

Thomas (2014) explored effective ministries for women by African American female clergy in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Thomas discussed the need for spiritual empowerment to address social issues that women face such as stereotypes, myths, exploitation, health disparities, poverty, violence, and depression. A qualitative study was conducted and surveyed seven African American female clergy to gain insight into ways to develop a ministry devoted to women issues. The participants attended a one-day seminar called African American Clergy Training and Empowerment Seminar. The seminar was to help clergy develop a ministry for women targeting specific issues. After attending the seminar, and participating in a pre-and post-survey regarding their attitudes and behavior, African American female clergy felt more confident in developing women ministries unique to their area. They were open to learning how to develop these programs and that coaching within women clergy helps to share information, ideas and concerns on helping with women related issues. The results

also revealed the significance of seeking support from a network of individuals from within their social setting or the community. A multiple network of support is important to developing ministries to address women issues.

### **Perceptions and Experiences of Clergy in Response to Domestic Violence**

A study conducted by Stansbury, Harley, King, Nelson, and Speight (2012) explored African American clergy perceptions of pastoral care and pastoral counseling. The study used a grounded approach and interviewed 18 African American clergy. The study focused on African American clergy's knowledge of mental health and interventions through the church. Results suggest that pastors perceive pastoral counseling and care as an important part of the pastoral duties. The study also suggests that pastors who lack appropriate training and licensure for pastoral counseling may put clergy in danger of legal/ethical issues. Overall pastoral care and counseling may assist congregants with psychiatric and social issues that cause moderate to extreme emotional distress.

Studies conducted by Leavy, Loewenthal, and King (2007); Openshaw and Harr (2009); focused on clergy as a resource in mental health care. Marriage and family issues are the most common problems that clergy counsel members of their faith (Openshaw & Harr, 2009). The study examined the relationship between clergy and mental health professionals and how they attempt to consult with one another on mental health issues. The study explored the types of mental health issues clergy have assessed, and being able to make an appropriate referral outside of the church. The study also examined the knowledge base of outside resources and the

relationships with social service agencies and interaction with outside mental health professionals. Twenty-four clergy were selected from rural and urban settings.

Results of the Openshaw and Harr (2009) study indicated that clergy receive many requests for assistance with mental health problems, but felt uncomfortable with addressing these issues among their other functions as a clergy. Clergy make referrals to mental health professionals who will provide spiritually sensitive approaches. Clergy in rural communities feel isolated and do not always have an opportunity to collaborate with other mental health professionals. Most clergy feel counseling is necessary in the right circumstances. Clergy were aware of their limitations and the need for outside intervention.

Another study conducted by Taylor, Ellison, Chatters, Levin, and Lincoln (2000) examined research highlighting the process by which the church community deal with mental health problems. The article reviewed literature on mental health services within African American churches and how much responsibility the clergy participates in addressing these issues. The research concluded that the delivery of mental health services determines the clergy's ability to identify the seriousness of mental illness. Also, a clergy's training and background determines their ability to detect and refer members of their congregation for psychiatric treatment. Black churches also focus more on economic and social problems rather than mental and emotional problems.

The following study discussed providing pastoral care in mental health situations. Leavey et al. (2007) examined how clergy from different faith communities working in inner city areas conceptualize mental illness and provide pastoral care. The study seeks to explore the

experiences and perceptions of clergy dealing with mental health problems. A qualitative approach using thirty-two clergy in the inner-city areas of London were interviewed. The study was all male clergy that consisted of Christian ministers, Rabbis and Imams. The study concluded that while clergy play an important role in the care of individuals with mental health problems, clergy are often not prepared in their training for these types of issues. Clergy provide substantial support and comfort in times of crisis or loss, but clergy seem to feel anxious about mental health. The research stressed the need for a better understanding on how clergy may engage with mental health professionals in their community.

Some studies have focused on whether clergy involvement in mental health serves as a help or barrier to treatment. Park (2015) analyzed the role of clergy in mental health interventions. The researcher looked at the types of mental health interventions and referral practices, and common attitudes and beliefs of clergy and its impact on mental health interventions. Park hypothesized that clergy with more personal resources and relationships with other mental health professionals are more likely to engage in mental health services. The researcher interviewed 301 clergy from faith-based organizations in a quantitative study. The interviews and surveys focused on: types of services provided by faith-based organizations, demographics information of clergy and faith-based organization, beliefs and interventions about mental health, pastoral care and collaborations with other organizations. The research confirms that the level of education of the clergy plays a significant role in mental health interventions and increases clergy understanding and competency in understanding mental health.

There have been some efforts to study the role of social workers collaborating with the church in domestic violence issues. McAllister and Roberts- Lewis (2010) presents an article in which they offer solutions to the church by developing relationships with social workers to assist with the issues of domestic violence in the church. The article examined the effects intimate partner violence and the role the church plays contributing to ongoing violence in the home. The researcher addressed the victims and perpetrators perceptions of violence in the marriage, separation and safety issues. Spiritual undertones may stifle the victim and hinder her from leaving a dangerous situation. The article also identified four common belief structures in Christian literature that condone abuse:

(a) God intended for women to be subordinate to men because Eve was created second to Adam, (b) Eve's fall from grace suggests that women are morally inferior to men and the cannot trust own judgement, (c) suffering is a virtue and women are designated as "suffering servants," and (d) Christians must forgive and reconcile with those who sin against them. (McAllister & Roberts-Lewis, 2010, p. 177)

The article also suggests that it is important for social workers to be aware of social dynamics related to male elders/leaders in the church, learning to collaborate with clergy, increasing knowledge of how scriptures perpetuates violence in order to advocate for victims. To improve the working relationship between clergy and social workers regarding family violence, the researchers developed a list of recommendations for clergy. Victims must feel protected and trust the member of clergy to whom they are disclosing that domestic violence is occurring in their home. Clergy must remain nonjudgmental and trusting to whatever the victim

discloses about incidents of violence. Clergy discounting or minimizes victims' claim of abuse may create shame in the victims or create further barriers to care.

Another safety practice clergy should consider is to seek assistance when caring for victims of domestic violence. Clergy should seek out senior clergy members, domestic violence service providers or law enforcement when they feel the issues is out of the scope of their practice. Clergy should also avoid providing interventions with both the victim and perpetrator together at the same time. This may put all parties at risk. Clergy should increase their knowledge of community resources so that they may refer to counselors, family therapists and domestic violence servicing agencies.

Clergy should increase their awareness of domestic violence by, understanding the cycle of violence, family dynamics within violent families and the behavior of battered women. Clergy must be prepared to deal with these dynamics when they present themselves with both the victim and perpetrator. It is important that clergy use their roles in the church to empower victims of domestic violence, utilize their spiritual resources to promote compassion and understanding for the victims' wellbeing. Lastly and most importance is the wellbeing of clergy. Clergy must use their healthy coping skills to maintain their own physical and emotional health when dealing with difficult issues such as violence. Any provider engaging in trauma work must be aware of their own feelings and emotions and be willing to reach out to their peers or other professionals for support(McAllister & Roberts-Lewis, 2010).

Jones and Fowler (2009) presented ideas for different disciplines experienced in domestic violence services to collaborate and develop programs that assist in training religious leaders and

staff on how to respond to domestic violence. The purpose of this program was to develop strong community relationship between the faith and therapeutic communities in areas of domestic violence. The program was to include an overview of domestic violence, directed discussions on appropriate responses to domestic violence, presentations on religious roadblocks (scripture misconceptions and misunderstandings) and presentations by both clergy and secular counselors. The goal was for Christian social workers and clergy to network and build trust between the two disciplines.

“Domestic violence is a pervasive reality that knows no boundaries in regard to class, color, and country or faith perspective” (Nason-Clark, 2009, p.379). There have been several efforts over the years to develop community projects in response to domestic violence by developing a task force of skilled professionals in family violence from multiple disciplines. However, clergy still are often the first point of contact for individuals who have experienced domestic violence (Nason-Clark, 2009). Clergy provide a variety of mental health services to the community such as substance abuse counseling, counseling for prisoners, military personnel, health issues, crisis intervention, sexual identity, anger and stress management, IPV and other mental health issues. Parishioners initially approach clergy with any type of mental/emotion and family crisis more than psychiatrists, general practitioners, and medical doctors collectively encounter (Park, 2015).

Teachings by faith-based leaders impact our spiritual, family, and societal beliefs. Perceptions about violence are often influenced by these teachings. Both potential perpetrators and victims use scriptures about marriage to justify violence (Shannon-Levy & Dull, 2005).

Studies on domestic violence have focused on victim experiences and barriers to services. Knickmeyer, Levitt, Horne, and Bayer (2003) examined religious coping and survival strategies by Christian battered women. The study concluded that when women reached out to the church for assistance with family violence, received support and/or community referrals, and others were shamed bringing up the issues of family violence and further isolated or placed in unsafe situations. Survivors of domestic violence have been advised by religious leaders to stay in abusive relationships despite being in severe physical or emotional danger (Pyles, 2007). A literature database search indicated several studies on domestic violence, clergy, religious leaders and/or faith-based communities. Brade and Bent-Goodley (2009) conducted a quantitative study that interviewed African American clergy enrolled in seminary school on their personal experiences dealing with domestic cases. The results from this study added to a larger study that explored clergy's understanding and approach to providing prevention and interventions in domestic violence. The study consisted of 88 females and 52 males from a seminary school on the east coast. This study consisted of more women due to the school had a larger number of women in their program. The study suggested that Clergy in the church acknowledge that domestic violence occurs in their congregation, worship services should include prayer for victims of intimate partner violence, the need for additional resources available and education to facilitate domestic violence initiatives.

Brade (2009) conducted a mixed method study to examine attitudes and perceptions toward domestic violence among African American clergy who were also seminary students, and the relationship between their perceptions and experiences. The study revealed that the church

does little to prevent violence, 82% reported that they are not prepared to help members of interpersonal violence, 25% of clergy are trained to respond to incidents of violence and 96% agreed that the church needs training on how to identify early warning signs of violence. The study did indicate that clergy are open to outside intervention from mental health professionals and law enforcement.

Bent-Goodley and Fowler (2006) conducted a qualitative study using participants from the congregation, community and faith-based leaders to explore how to provide prevention and intervention strategies in domestic violence. The focus group included 19 African American Clergy, out of the 19 participants, only two were women. Major themes identified in this qualitative study were: (a) understanding the meaning and effects of spiritual abuse, (b) manipulation tactics used by the perpetrator toward their victim (c) people outside of the family using scripture to condone and justify abuse and, (d) long term effects of spiritual abuse on the victim.

Other studies that examined minority ministers were Behnke, Ames, and, Hancock (2012) to exam how they perceive and understand and intervention to family violence in their congregations. The researchers interviewed 28 Latin American clergy and their staff (seven women and 21 men) was presented with different synopsis on domestic violence situations to determine how they would intervene and handle these cases. The themes that emerged from this study were: pastoral counseling/care, legal consultations, and referrals to community and vocational resources. Results indicated that Latin American Clergy differ in their approach to caring for domestic violence victims. Some participants in this study provided responses to

domestic violence perceptions based on cultural beliefs about marriage and handling conflict. Perceptions of clergy based on cultural beliefs pose difficulty in treating victims of violence. An example of potential gender and cultural bias revealed during this study by respondents: “women could avoid being beaten if they changed their behavior” (Behnke et al., 2012, p.1269). This type of response suggests such as in previous studies involving attitudes and perceptions of clergy that it is the women’s responsibility to stop and prevent domestic violence in their home.

Gengler and Lee (2001) sought to include female protestant ministers in their study, but also included Protestant and Catholic male clergy. The quantitative study examined several aspects of ministers understanding of spousal abuse. The researcher measured the following variables: (a) perceptions of women in the church, (b) strict interpretation of the bible, (c) ideas about violence in marriage, (d) ability of the church to assess abuse/domestic violence, and (f) comprehensive understanding of abuse. Total male respondents were 95% and female respondents were only 5%.

Gengler and Lee (2001) also examined the differences in minister’s responses regarding the variables. Results revealed a strong relationship between gender and clergy’s interpretation of the scripture influences their approach to family violence. There were also differences revealed in how clergy defines IPV, interpretation of the bible and their view of male and female roles in the family.

Ware, Levitt, and Bayer (2003) conducted a grounded theory study with 25 faith leaders’ perspectives of IPV within their congregations. The study also asks faith leaders to describe their intervention strategies for dealing with intimate partner violence. Out of the twenty-five faith

leaders, only three were women in this study. Results suggested that faith leaders discussed several interventions on making the congregation aware of domestic violence, but few leaders have implemented their ideas. Faith leaders in this study felt that domestic violence was rare in their congregation and even fewer had helped a parishioner through an IPV situation. This study also suspects that based on responses that clergy may be minimizing the occurrence of domestic violence among their congregation.

Clergy with rigid or strict religious beliefs about family and social issues may be reluctant to develop collaborative working relationships with community counselors and domestic violence workers. Female ministers appeared to have a more comprehensive understanding of abuse and were more comfortable bringing up the discussion of abuse than male ministers. The researchers did acknowledge that a larger sample size would provide a better understanding of the variables studied. The current research by this writer interviewed only female ministers being that most studies about domestic violence has included large sample sizes of male ministers. Miles (2003) stated that clergy members who do not take advantage of education opportunities offered through seminars, workshops, article and books to learn how to provide care to women and children will not be effective in domestic violence interventions. These interventions may include holding the perpetrator accountable as well.

Peterson (2009) studied the experiences of Clergy and domestic violence within the Anglican church. Sample size for this study consisted of six males and four female clergy. Clergy in this study perceived the cause of domestic violence as an oppressive controlling behavior and reported that their challenges in dealing with domestic violence were a limited

education on social issues such as IPV in seminary school, unclear rules set by the church in regard to pastoral care/counseling and no clear direction on how to distinguish between societal and scripture beliefs about marriage. The study did not identify any differences in male and female responses. Overall clergy discussed feeling overwhelmed, confused, frustrated and sometimes burnt out by domestic violence help seekers.

A grounded study was conducted by Levitt and Ware (2006b) to develop a theory to gain insight to the perceptions of clergy on family violence and how this effects their beliefs when marriage ends behind violence. A diverse group of mid-level and senior clergy from six different denominations was interviewed in a Southeastern state. The majority of the participants were male with only three female participants. Results from interviews with religious leaders revealed that although intimate partner violence was a huge concern, they struggled with being in favor of divorce and separation. Clergy still believed that the victim played a role in ongoing family violence in the household.

Rotunda et al (2004), surveyed clergy who have counseled individuals who had experienced domestic violence. A large percentage of clergy reported offering pastoral care to individuals, but a low percentage of them made referrals to outside professional resources. Clergy also reported feeling frustrated about victims' ambivalence to seek help. Martin (1989) conducted a study in a suburban neighborhood in a northeastern state on clergy response to intimate partner violence. The study found that clergy are aware of domestic violence in their congregation, but they wait for the victim to seek assistance. Clergy were limited in their intervention efforts for dealing with family violence within the church. Clergy were unaware of

family violence resources to provide further assistance. Asay (2011) explored Evangelical clergy in Romania and Moldova to determine how much knowledge and experience they possess in areas of domestic violence. Clergy lacked knowledge of domestic violence issues and did not have clear guidelines set by the church on how to deal with these issues in their congregations.

Homiak and Singletary (2007) examined the amount of family violence cases that clergy received and the type of interventions they utilized. The researcher conducted an exploratory, cross sectional study for a family abuse center. The goal of the study was to develop new collaborative and educational relationships with local churches. Quantitative findings for this study revealed that 83% of clergy estimated that domestic violence happens in less than 10% of their congregations which was inconsistently low compared to other family violence statistics. Only 30% of the pastors had domestic violence reported to them and only 4% reported the abuse. In the qualitative findings of this study, pastors described their encounters with abuse. Clergy confronted abuse and reported abuse, especially of a child. Clergy also discussed offering assistance.

Marks (2012) conducted a study on rabbis' perspectives on domestic violence, intervention/prevention programs and marriage. One hundred and four rabbis from 26 states participated in the study. Although Rabbis did not condone IPV, their views on equality in marriage were low. Male Rabbis seem to have a higher tolerance for abuse, but Reform Rabbis believed in equality and fairness in marriage. Rabbis in this study did receive training on domestic violence, but did not feel it was adequate to provide effective interventions to their congregants.

## **Addressing Moral Conflict in Domestic Violence and Clergy Research**

Many studies have examined perceptions and experiences of clergy related to domestic violence. Although many studies have revealed moral conflict/dissonance present in these studies, few studies have further explored these results. Nason-Clark (2000) conducted an overview of previous literature of domestic violence in faith-based communities. Some of the results revealed evidence of moral conflict. When violent men are unwilling to change their abusive behavior, clergy feels they have failed as pastoral counselors. Clergy are often conflicted over their own theological beliefs about marriage and dealing with the conflict within marriages. Levitt and Ware (2006b) conducted a grounded theory study to gain insight on how clergy deal with domestic violence and the consequences of violence within the family. This was a grounded theory study to develop a theory about these experiences and develop an understanding into the ways that religious leaders perceive the responsibility of violence within couples and their views on divorce if domestic violence is involved. The results revealed a moral conflict. Religious leaders struggled with the breakup of families, especially if divorce was an option.

Levitt and Ware (2006a) explored the role that social and cultural factors play in the marriage and family violence from the perspectives of religion. The researchers conducted a grounded theory analysis interviewing 25 clergy within three different denominations. Participants were both male and female and from Protestants, Catholic and Muslim faiths. The interviews explored religious leader's experiences in counseling individuals of intimate partner violence in their congregation. The researcher's main questions were developed to gain

understanding of clergy's perception of the effect their decision to provide safe interventions toward domestic violence and the end of a marriage.

Religious leaders did describe a healthy marriage as one of respect, communication and love. Religious leaders in this study also felt that if they preached submission in marriage, it could be interpreted as accepting violence in marriage. Other religious leaders who emphasized the sanctity of marriage encouraged partners to practice according to biblical scriptures. In situations of IPV, religious leaders believed that the husband is responsible for the family and when IPV happens, leaders believe that they had to accept that it was something out of their control and not to question God's reasoning's for the women being in such a relationship.

According to Shannon-Levy and Dull (2005) clerics feel conflicted about action of separation or divorce which they feel threatens the sanctity of marriage. Religious teachings and beliefs often effect cleric's responses to domestic violence. The researcher reviewed previous literature on Christian clergy and their response to domestic violence. Literature suggests that while clerics are a valuable resource for domestic violence victims, their theological beliefs may help or create barriers to receiving help.

Horne and Levitt (2003) integrated findings from three studies to examine various religious coping mechanisms. The study surveyed Christian women's coping mechanism, Christian women who were past or present IPV victims and faith leader's perceptions about how often IPV is happening and the interventions used to support victims of violence. The results from faith leaders of these three studies were reviewed. Twenty-two faith leaders were interviewed from Islamic, Jewish and Christian faiths to examine how religion and IPV intersect.

Religious leaders minimized the occurrence of domestic violence in their congregation but did admit their concerns about family violence. There was a belief that was rare among either religious, educated, or affluent groups. Results from this study were mixed approaches and beliefs. Religious leaders believed that protecting the victim was a priority, but while some clergy encouraged divorce, other forbid divorce. Marriage was important for some leaders even if it came at a cost.

A quantitative and qualitative study conducted by Choi (2015) on Korean American Clergy practices in domestic violence within their congregation. Choi conducted a cross sectional survey with Korean American clergy to explore their practices regarding intimate partner violence within their congregation. Few studies have focused on Korean American community, but mostly on other people of color such as African and Hispanic Americans. For this study 93.4% were male ministers. The study found that victims of family violence received pastoral care/counseling from Korean American Clergy but rarely received referrals to other community resources. Clergy in this study attempted to help couples find solutions for their marital conflict but referred to outside resources when their interventions were not successful. The results also revealed moral conflict among Korean American clergy. Clergy found it difficult dealing with domestic violence as a minister. The clergy struggled with maintaining family and protecting women from violence. The results of this study also demonstrated Korean American clergy willingness to be educated and trained in domestic violence care and counseling.

## Synthesis of Findings

An article published in pastoral psychology over 20 years ago developed a course of action to improve the care provided to victims of domestic violence within church congregations. (Cooper-White, 1996). The goals were in addressing these needs were to incorporate a family violence curriculum in seminary schools, develop strong community relationships with domestic violence serving agencies and promote safety and advocacy services for women within the church and education on counseling, gender roles and reducing barriers to care. Research on domestic violence awareness begin in the 1970's and studies on religion and intimate partner violence since the 1980's (Cooper-White, 2011). Since that time, researched literature in religion and intimate partner violence have focused on help seeking behavior of victims, the experiences of victims, clergy, mental health professionals and perpetrators. Research for the current study has focused on clergy, pastoral care, moral conflict and domestic violence. Two hundred or more articles were generated related to clergy and domestic violence related topics. Primary focus was on female, pastoral care and addressing the issues of domestic violence (Frame & Shehan, 2004; Galbraith, 2005; Olson et al., 2000; Thomas, 2004). Galbraith (2005) emphasized that female clergy could be more open to the needs of women in situations of abuse. Studies that focused on females found that their experiences were unique and brought a different set of experiences than males. Female clergy use their own interpretation of the Bible and used the Bible to promote safety over marriage. Thomas (2004) emphasized using spiritual empowerment to address social issues that are specific to women. Previous literature on women clergy are limited in terms of social issues, domestic violence and mental health issues. The

current research that exists reveals positive outcomes in female clergy working with women. The current researcher felt that interviewing women on the issue of domestic violence may further allow their voices to be heard and their experiences shared (Frame & Shehan, 2004; Galbraith, 2005; Gengler & Lee, 2007; Olson, et al., 2000; Thomas, 2004).

There are several studies that have examined experiences, perceptions, and attitudes on clergy and intimate partner violence (Asay, 2011; Behnke et al., 2012; Brade, 2009; Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009; Gengler & Lee, 2001; Mark, 2012). Some studies examined pastoral care in mental health issues. These studies focused on mental health issues as a whole and included grief, bereavement, and marriage and family problems (Leavy et al., 2007; Openshaw & Harr, 2009; Taylor, et al., 2000) Clergy often were a source of support, but did not always feel adequate to address mental health problems and did not always collaborate with outside resources such as agencies and other mental health professionals. Studies emphasized better collaboration with community resources and mental health professionals and social workers. Most of the studies sought to develop stronger relationships with social workers and is limited in regard to counselors, marriage and family therapists, and domestic violence professionals (Jones & Fowler, 2009; McAllister & Roberts-Lewis, 2010).

Overall the attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence among clergy acknowledge that domestic violence is a problem and some clergy have more of an understanding of domestic violence than other clergy. Studies also suggested the need further training and additional resources to support congregations. There is also a low percentage of domestic violence victims being referred to outside providers and services (Asay, 2011; Brade, 2009; Brade & Bent-

Goodley, 2009; Martin, 1989; Peterson, 2009; Rotunda et al., 2004). These studies also included majority of male clergy than female clergy.

Many of these studies also revealed how clergy use scriptures to keep women in abusive marriages (Ware et al., 2003; Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006; Nason-Clark, 2000; Peterson, 2009; Pyles, 2007) Clergy often felt conflicted about divorce or separation due to domestic violence. They do not view their interventions during pastoral care/counseling as successful if the relationship ends. Though studies have revealed moral conflict or dissonance when providing domestic violence interventions, there are little to no follow up studies addressing the issue of moral conflict among clergy. Studies by Levitt and Ware (2006); Shannon-Levy and Dull (2005) have revealed results of clergy who religious beliefs affect their decisions regarding the marriage and relationships. This includes their views on domestic violence as well.

Studies on cognitive dissonance and the theory of moral development exist in the field of mental health, medical and health. Krause (2015); Lawrence (2014); and Zaitman (1998) addressed cognitive dissonance in individuals in helping roles and domestic violence victims. Results suggested that there is avoidance and self-doubt during uncomfortable topics of conversations. Olson et al. (2000) suggest that studies on female clergy and social issues such as domestic violence may be approached in a different way. Women are able to be a source of empowerment in the church and challenge old scriptures that promote violence. Frame & Shehan (2004); Galbraith (2005), suggested that female clergy are more approachable, and victims may feel more comfortable talking to a woman about domestic violence. Previous research has yet to explore moral conflict and study dissonance among female clergy only. The purpose of the

current study sought to explore moral conflict in pastoral care with female clergy. This is an area that is lacking in the studying pastoral responses to domestic violence.

### **Critique of Previous Research Methods**

Overall, studies related to clergy and domestic violence has been conducted to learn more about how clergy deal with these issues in the community. Several of these studies have focused on African American churches. Bent-Goodley, St. Vil and Hubbert (2012), conducted a review of previous research studies regarding clergy's response within the Black church and concluded that breaking the silence and promoting awareness and enhancing clergy training may adequately address domestic violence in faith-based communities. Brade (2009) investigated the attitudes and perceptions of clergy who had experienced and provided care to domestic violence victims.

Brade (2009) concluded that clergy must engage in interventions with other mental health professionals such as social workers to provide support for individuals impacted by domestic violence. Gilbert (2011) conducted a grounded study on the experiences of African American clergy with domestic violence and revealed that women must leave their abusive environment and the importance of seeking legal and professional help. This study also dispelled the belief that the church wants women to submit to their spouses and that prayer and obedience are remedies for abuse.

Peterson (2009) and Levitt and Ware (2006b) examined perceptions and experiences of clergy's dealing with domestic violence in the Anglican, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic faith. Levitt and Ware's (2006b) study included four female clergy out of 22 from the Jewish, Christian and Islamic faith. Religious leaders did show some difficulty in being supportive of

divorce and separation when all strategies to stop domestic violence have not been exhausted. Studies addressing the experiences and perceptions of clergy are limited and studies have not been conducted on a diverse group of clerics. According to Brade and Bent-Goodley, (2009); Levitt and Ware, (2006b); and Rotunda, et al. (2004), there is a need for more diverse perspectives in the faith communities, such as multiple ethnicities, gender and dominations.

Few studies examined the moral conflict that clergy may experience when dealing with domestic violence situations, but results from studies on clergy experiences and perceptions in domestic violence cases did reveal moral conflict with their decisions, thoughts and beliefs. Clergy in the Nason-Clark (2009) study discussed the double bind of feeling unsuccessful in their interventions in domestic violence cases if the marriage ended in divorce. Religious leaders interviewed by Levitt and Ware (2006a) found it difficult to be supportive of divorce in domestic violence cases. Another study conducted by Levitt and Ware (2006b) explored the understanding of religious leaders understanding of how relationship dynamics related to intimate partner violence and how religious teaching are interpreted to support IPV. Twenty-two religious leaders (four females and 18 males) were interviewed. The results of this study highlighted the conflict and rationale of religious leaders while providing pastoral care in intimate partner violence cases. The core theme in this grounded theory analysis was conflicting emotions felt by religious leaders in staying with their religious principles on marriage or encouraging women to leave abusive marriage or relationships. This study focused on female clergy describing the process of dealing with moral conflict in domestic violence situations will add to an ongoing body of research in this area.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, several studies exist on domestic violence and clergy. Studies conducted on clergy's awareness, experiences, perceptions and approach to domestic violence revealed mixed results from the church. Religious leaders were aware that domestic violence exist but was not always sure how to provide effective interventions. Clergy's theological perspectives often interfered with safe options for women and children. Victims of domestic violence often received mixed messages about staying in violent marriages. Studies such as Levitt and Ware (2006a, 2006b) concluded that moral conflict is present when clergy are attempting to provide care in domestic violence situations. Other studies have also revealed conflict by clergy, but few studies have explored these feelings of conflict any further. Understanding conflict/dissonance from several disciplines including the religious community will add to ongoing research in this area.

## CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

### Purpose of Study

As discussed in chapter one, previous literature on clergy and pastoral care in domestic violence suggests that while clergy are supportive in providing pastoral care, they are often not trained to deal with these situations and sometimes provide conflicting advice regarding safety versus staying in an abusive marriage (Bent-Goodley, et al., 2012; Brade, 2009; Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009; Levitt & Ware, 2006b; Rotunda et al., 2004). Results from studies on experiences, perceptions and perspectives of domestic violence from clergy revealed evidence of moral conflict while advising on domestic violence issues. For example, two studies conducted by Levitt and Ware, (2006a, 2006b) revealed moral conflict in dealing with domestic violence in the church. Levitt and Ware (2006a) suggested clergy experience conflict over supporting divorce despite the presence of IPV and the struggle with maintaining their beliefs about marital relationships.

To further explore the issues of moral conflict among clergy in domestic violence cases, the researcher sought to understand how female clergy from diverse faith-based backgrounds describe their experiences in moral conflict and domestic violence. The research question and sub-questions used to further investigate this phenomenon were: How do female clergy describe the process of dealing with moral conflict in pastoral care of domestic violence situations? The subquestions are: (a) what is your understanding of moral conflict as it is related to your own religious beliefs? (b) How do you empower women who are experiencing domestic violence?

## **Research Question**

The primary research question was: How do female clergy describe the process of dealing with moral conflict when providing pastoral care to individuals in domestic violence situations? Grounded theory methods for this study included interviews using direct open-ended questions. Consistent with Charmaz's method of interviewing, the questions were designed to be emergent and flexible (Charmaz, 2006). To answer the research question, the researcher developed a set of questions to explore further into the phenomenon in hopes of developing a theory. According to Charmaz (2006), grounded theory questions must emphasize on learning about the participant's views, experienced events, and actions.

## **Research Design**

### **Grounded Theory Approach**

To answer the research question and further understand the process of moral conflict and female clergy in domestic violence cases, the qualitative method, grounded theory was used for this study. Grounded theory research was developed by sociologists Glaser and Strauss in 1967 after conducting studies in the hospitals on death and dying (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory procedures outline a process using abstract ideas for the purpose of providing an explanation of the phenomena being studied. Grounded theory explains or describes the phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The foundation in which grounded theory is based on are pragmatism and symbolic interactionism (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Straus, 1990).

Pragmatism uses language, ideas and thoughts to gain different perspectives on a real-world situation or phenomenon occurring in our society. Symbolic interactionalism provides an

explanation for human interaction, through their thoughts, behaviors and actions (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory allows the researchers to explore relevant thoughts and ideas of individuals' experiences. The result of grounded theory is the development of a theory to further explain a certain phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

### **Charmaz's Approach**

The model for the following grounded research study is Charmaz's method. Charmaz, Clarke, and Bryant moved away from the positivism of Strauss and Corbin. Charmaz's approach assumes that any theoretical perspective is open to interpretation in trying to understand a certain phenomenon. These explanations come from actual experiences, words and behaviors of the individuals involved (Charmaz, 2006). Data is collected through interviews from individuals to understand their viewpoints in their actual setting and determine what things mean to individuals, look for the significance in those meanings, and determining the relationships between those meanings (Charmaz, 2004).

Charmaz's presents several arguments for using grounded theory research. The first in conducting grounded theory is to develop extensive knowledge of an individual's experiences or life. As researchers, we enter in the participant's world to gain the knowledge from their perspective. In studying a phenomenon, it means fully being present during the interview and deep inside the data afterwards. The researcher must become actively involved, make sense and feel what the experience is like. During data collection, the researcher is constantly learning and gaining insight into the experiences of people from their own perspectives. The more engagement in the phenomenon, many ideas and thoughts are discovered about what is being

studied (Charmaz, 2004). The researcher's plan was to develop greater insight into the experiences of female clergy in the role as pastoral care providers in their church. The researcher specifically explored and studied pastoral care and moral conflict in domestic violence situations.

The next premise of Charmaz's approach is to understand that meanings matter. The researcher sought to understand the meanings and actions of participants from their own perspectives. The researcher must enter the phenomenon without drawing early conclusions about situations or experiences. These concepts mean that the researcher is entering the phenomenon to gain insight into the actual experiences and develop meanings and concepts (Charmaz, 2004). The third premise is that significant meanings may not be perceptible or recognized. To learn participant's meanings, researchers are reflexive about their own beliefs. Charmaz states: "to understand their experiences, the researchers must be aware of their own internalized views" (Charmaz, 2004, p. 982). The researcher is aware of his or her own assumptions. The researcher must understand the reasoning behind the experience and maintain some objectivity.

The fourth premise of Charmaz is actions make taken-for-granted meaning being mindful and observant of participant's words and actions in their natural setting. The environment, sometimes provides more of an explanation than the individual's words. Interviewers seek more extensive explanations for what is occurring. The fifth premise is relationships between meanings and actions are constantly changing. The researcher seeks to understand individual's thoughts and actions related to larger social contexts. It is important to observe and listen closely

to what participants are saying. How the researcher develops and constructs the interview questions dictates how much information we obtain about the experiences. Questions that are open-ended and nonjudgmental encourage more story telling about their experiences (Charmaz, 2004). The next premise is the questions we ask of the empirical world shape the answers we obtain. The phenomenon being studied, the researcher's own experience, knowledge and biases sometimes determines what we see and hear during the interview. Gaining multiple perspectives on the phenomenon substantiates and helps to strengthen the study (Charmaz, 2004). The researcher gained these diverse perspectives by interviewing eight female clergy. The last premise is truth is relative, multiple and subject to redefinition. The researcher's approach to the interview determines the accuracy of the information we obtain about the phenomenon.

Similar to the premises of grounded theory, Charmaz's basic principles for grounded theory are becoming closely acquainted with the studied phenomenon, respect for the research subjects must take priority over the actual objectives of the research, extant theoretical perspectives by searching for meanings through the responses from the interview questions, and constructionist renderings by being fully committed to the phenomenon. Intimate familiarity requires the researcher to gain in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon and learn the actions and processes that create these experiences. We acknowledge participant's values and beliefs as we are attempting to understand their worldview. The researcher seeks to understand the significance of the participant's words, thoughts and actions and not place their own biases about the phenomenon. Established theoretical perspectives help the researcher to explore in threads in

our fieldwork. Lastly, researchers rely on intensive interviews to collect rich data that helps us to understand thoughts and actions (Charmaz, 2004).

General guidelines for collecting data in grounded theory are: engaging in simultaneous data analysis which allows the researcher to define and follow leads in the data and develop categories, make comparisons at each level of analysis from data to codes, categories and concepts, develop emergent concepts by analyzing data to successfully construct more abstract concepts arising from researchers interactions with the data and interpretations of participants, and adopting an inductive -abductive logic by analyzing cases and checking emergent analysis to come up with possible theoretical explanations and constructing a theoretical interpretation of the data (Charmaz & Henwood, 2010).

A strength of using Charmaz's grounded theory method that it allows for a more analytical and formative approach. Grounded theory studies are helpful when there is a lack of information or theoretical explanation about a situation or event. A weakness of grounded theory is that the researcher may have problems determining when saturation has occurred in their categories. Researchers may also struggle with setting aside his/her own theoretical ideas disabling the analytic substantive theory to emerge (Creswell, 2013).

The credibility of qualitative research establishes that the information presented is reliable and accurate (Morrow, 2005). In qualitative research, credibility depends on three distinct elements: rigorous methods, the credibility of the researcher, and, philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). To establish credibility for the proposed grounded theory research, the researcher will use the following strategies: prolonged engagement with

participants, and persistent observation in the field, researcher flexibility, and participant's checks. Credibility is also enhanced by thick descriptions of the phenomenon (Morrow, 2005). According to Charmaz (2006), to obtain credibility in grounded theory studies, the research questions must address: is their sufficient knowledge on the topic being studied, does the data justify what is being investigated, a structured plan for sorting categories, discovering relationships working toward reaching a conclusion, and sufficient evidence collected to support the research and provide new information to the field (Charmaz, 2006).

### **Target Population and Participant Selection**

The population for this study was female clergy who provide pastoral care to members of their congregations who were victims of domestic violence. The study used a theoretical sampling to recruit participants. According to Charmaz (2006), theoretical sampling seeks participants from whom the researcher can collect data that is important and relevant to the research question to elaborate and refine categories to develop an emerging theory. Sample size was eight female clergy providing pastoral care in churches in a city in the Southwestern part of the United States. Previous research on pastoral care and domestic violence consisted of very few female clergy in their sample size. Both studies conducted by Levitt and Ware (2006a, 2006b) consisted of only four female clergy interviewed out of 22 and 25 participants. Levitt and Ware (2006a) also discussed the need for diverse racial, gender, and faith traditions in future studies. The researcher is seeking to add to the needs of diversity in pastoral care and domestic violence by choosing female clergy for the population. Brade (2009) sample size consisted of 75 female clergy, but was limited to only African American clergy.

Data was collected through 1 to 1 1/2 hour recorded interviews. Open ended questions were used for the interviews. The researcher also used any journals, pictures, or spiritual material the clergy wished to share during the interview that is related to moral conflict, pastoral care and domestic violence. Participants were recruited by sending flyers to local churches in a major city in the southwestern part of the United States. The research specifically targeted church congregations with female clergy and diverse denominations. The researcher remained flexible, and gave the clergy the option to meet at their office or the meeting room at the local public library. As long as it was a confidential meeting place, the researcher agreed to travel to their location.

### **Data Collection and Procedures**

To start the process of collecting data for the study, the researcher developed a flyer and sent to several churches in the local area. Theoretical sampling was used for the purpose of the study. Theoretical sampling searches for significant themes in the data and attempts to further expand on these categories in the development of a theory (Charmaz, 2006). Sampling size consisted of eight female clergy from about five different churches.

The researcher sent flyers to three different counties in the city where the study was conducted. The researcher also sent out an invitation to members of the International Association of Women Clergy who live and practice in the state and posted an invitation to the study on my personal LinkedIn account. To meet the criteria for selection of the study, participants: (a) must be at least 18 years or older, (b) a female clergy who performs pastoral care in her congregation, (c) has performed pastoral care in domestic violence situations, and has

experienced some form of moral conflict, and (d) is able to articulate and talk about moral conflict experienced in pastoral care.

Consistent with Charmaz's grounded theory method, the following is a step by step of the recruitment process: the researcher created an informed consent form informing participants the purpose of the study, research design, and participant expectations, received IRB approval for the study, and, sent an invitation to the members of the International Association of Women Clergy who reside in the Southwestern part of the United States. An invitation to participate in the study was also sent through the researcher's personal Linked In account to female clergy. The researcher obtained site permission from local churches to post flyers for recruitment of female clergy. Potential participants contacted the researcher via email or phone number listed on the flyer. The researcher conducted a telephone screening to see if potential participants met the selection criteria. Based on prescreening via telephone: researcher selected participants, scheduled a meeting time, discussed confidentiality, obtained informed consent, and discuss potential length of time for interview. Researchers and participants decided on a meeting location, obtained permission to record the interview, permission to use material in dissertation, and, participants filled out a demographic form. Demographic form included their age, sex, marital status, religious affiliation, socio economic status and education.

## **Procedures**

Data collection for grounded theory includes what is being studied and what type of information is being studied. Data collection for grounded theory requires several individuals with the same shared experience of the phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 2013).

Participants were selected using theoretical sampling. According to Charmaz (2006), the researcher recruits individuals with experiences, life events, or situations that are the same and use this information to create categories. The data collection procedures for the grounded theory research recruited eight female clergy working in churches in a city in the southwest and its surrounding areas. Typically, in grounded theory, 20 to 30 participants are interviewed to achieve detail in the theory (Creswell, 2013). Capella Psychology Department requires a participant range of “8 to 14” or until data saturation has been achieved. For data collection, the researcher contacted potential participants by phone and sent letters by U.S mail to local churches that included female clergy on staff who provide pastoral care families within their church congregation. The researcher obtained permission from several local churches to post recruitment flyers. Participants were chosen by the following selection criteria: (a) at least 18 years or older, (b) must be a female clergy who performs pastoral care in her congregation, (c) participant has performed pastoral care in domestic violence situations and has experienced some form of moral conflict, and, (d) participants were able to articulate and talk about moral conflict experienced in pastoral care.

The research was conducted using the following steps for grounded theory. The first step was to obtain informed consent from participants. The elements of an informed consent include: participant’s rights to continue or withdraw from the study, purpose, procedures, anonymity, benefits and risks associated with the study. Both the participant and the researcher sign the consent form agreeing to the guidelines (Creswell, 2013). The next step was to conduct and record the interview. Charmaz (2006) discusses choosing questions carefully to foster

participant's reflections. To stay on tasks, the researcher should make sure he or she stay on topic to the related researcher question, use the allotted time and maintain professional behavior and ethics. (Creswell, 2013). The interview for this study was a direct conversational interview using open ended questions and the meeting site was initially a media room at the local public library. Because of time restraints and commitments of the clergy, the meeting place was their office at the church except for two participants. Interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. The purpose of using a tape recorder was to allow the researcher to give the participant their full attention and steady eye contact. Tape recording the interview also allows for detailed data (Charmaz, 2006). The interviewer later transcribed the tape recordings. The transcribed interviews, researcher notes, and personal documents were gathered and stored in a secure place by the researcher. According to Creswell (2013), the proper protocol for storing data is to ensure the researcher has created a hard copy and computer file as a backup, a coding system to protect identity of participants and good quality recording devices. Any hard copies or audio recordings should be locked away in a file cabinet.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Coding**

Charmaz's method for analyzing data is initial coding, focused coding, memo writing, theoretical sampling, saturating theoretical concepts and theoretical sorting and integrating (Charmaz & Henwood, 2010). Coding is a way to classify thoughts and concepts found significant in the collected data (Charmaz, 2006). Initial coding interprets early concepts to determine their thoughts, feelings and actions from the participant's own perspective. Initial

coding examines data for potential theoretical importance. The researcher must remain open to all possibilities during the initial phase. Codes are short, analytic and active (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Henwood, 2010). During initial coding, line by line coding is used to name each line of written data. Using flexible strategies helps to code by breaking data into components or properties, defining actions, searching for meanings and making comparisons to determine the most importance out of the data. Line by line coding helps the researcher avoid engaging in his or her own biases and accepting respondent's worldviews without question (Charmaz ,2006). Focus coding is the second phase of coding. Focus coding evaluates reoccurring themes in the data found during the initial coding phase, compares and contrasts data, develop and group together new codes. Focused coding develops more tentative categories to explore and analyze. Focus coding requires determining which codes from initial are most important in developing categories

### **Memo Writing**

Memo writing is an ongoing process throughout data collection in which the researcher uses these notes to write the draft of the paper. To write memos, the researcher starts by developing the focused codes and searching for similar patterns in data. Using memos helped the researcher to think about the data and to discover ideas about them. Memo writing occurs throughout the research to build a theory about the studied phenomenon.

## **Theoretical Sampling and Sorting**

Theoretical sampling reviews the most relevant data and creates categories in building a new theory. This process seeks to develop the emerging theory by elaborating and refining categories. Theoretical sampling continues to develop new categories until they no longer exist. The next phase of coding is saturating theoretical concepts meaning data is completely saturated when there are no new concepts, insight, properties or core categories. Saturation means not seeing anything new.

Theoretical sorting and integrating gives the researcher logic for organizing their analysis. Sorting allowed the researcher to create and refine theoretical links. Through sorting, the researcher worked on theoretical integration of the categories. Sorting also allowed the researcher to compare categories at a more abstract level. Lastly, integrating the memos allows the researcher to show how the theory fits together and make relationships between categories. When sorting through information and ideas in the memos, this allowed for the researcher to write the report and theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Henwood, 2010). By following the guidelines of Charmaz's grounded theory procedures, the researcher was able to answer the question regarding female clergy providing pastoral care in domestic violence cases and develop an emerging theory about the experiences of this phenomenon.

## **Instruments**

According to Creswell (2013), the researcher acts as a key instrument. The qualitative researcher collects data, examines documents, observes behavior and interviews participants. The instruments for this research are a brief screening questionnaire, demographic questionnaire

and a sixteen-question open ended interview. The screening questionnaire was used for verifying if the potential participant met study criteria. After initial contact with potential participants, the researcher contacted them by phone and asked the following questions: is the participant over the age of 18; a female clergy providing pastoral care in a congregation in a city in the southwest or surrounding areas, and has experience with domestic violence and has experienced moral conflict.

Qualitative researchers use demographics as a supplementary source of data for their research (Charmaz, 2006). For the research on female clergy and pastoral care, the researcher obtained demographic information on name, gender, marital status, and level of education, clergy training, and religious affiliation, name of congregation and years of training. The researcher's interview questionnaire consists of 16 open ended questions which included initial open-ended questions, intermediate, and ending questions.

According to Charmaz (2006), intensive interviewing in grounded theory is open-ended, directed, shaped, emergent and paced. The approach must be flexible. The demographic and interview questionnaire allowed the researcher to ask questions related to participants experiences in order to understand the phenomenon and develop an emerging theory. For this study and the information obtained, the researcher was able to develop an emerging theory about the phenomenon of female clergy providing pastoral care in domestic violence cases.

### **The Role of the Researcher**

The researcher had some preconceptions and biases about the topic of domestic violence on a professional level. As a mental health professional, the researcher has worked with both the

perpetrator and the victim. The researcher planned and attended ongoing continuing education related to domestic violence and faith-based ministries.

As a counselor, the researcher has worked with families and individuals with mental health and trauma issues for the past 15 years. Additionally, the researcher has conducted assessments, interviews and provided individual, group therapy and crisis management. The researcher is currently a licensed professional counselor in the state in which they reside. Recently the researcher became a board approved supervisor for her state of residence to supervise interns obtaining their 3000 clinical hours as required by the state. The researcher has conducted clinical and non-clinical interviews and feels comfortable asking questions related to the topic.

The researcher maintained an awareness of her own thoughts, feelings and beliefs by keeping a journal, and writing thoughts after each interview was completed. The researcher utilized professional consultation with other mental health professionals in the field to process any bias that may have come up during the data collection/interview process. The researcher wanted to be able to identify bias when her thoughts and perceptions were different from the actual data being collected about the subject of faith, moral conflict and domestic violence.

### **Ethical Consideration and Issues**

The researcher obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study. In accordance with The American Psychological Association ethical guidelines, the researcher followed 8.02 and 8.03 for consent to conduct research and consent to

record voices and images in research. Consent to conduct research included, rules and guidelines, participant's rights and focus of the study (American Psychological Association, 2015).

According to Leedy and Ormond (2013), ethical issues in qualitative research may occur in areas of professional conduct and integrity, participant's right, confidentiality, and protection. The researcher conducted a study on female clergy describing the process of moral conflict when providing pastoral care in domestic violence situations. The sample population the researcher worked with was female clergy. The researcher protected the sample population by treating participants in a courteous and respectful manner, obtaining informed consent and providing a description and benefits of the study.

The research participants were at minimal risk in this study. The researcher protected the privacy of the participants and any information they shared about their experiences in providing care to domestic violence victims. The researcher kept data collected by the participants private and refrained from using names on the reports. During data collection, the researcher assigned code numbers rather than using individual's name. Data was stored on a flash drive and on a password protected computer file. Data was kept on the flash drive and stored in a locked file cabinet.

### **Expected Findings**

The expected findings of this study were to gain further knowledge of the experiences of female clergy providing pastoral care in domestic violence cases. The researcher's expectations were to utilize the responses from the research questions on their experiences and gain a deeper understanding of female clergy's role in pastoral care in domestic violence situations. Further

implications for this study may help other professionals working in the field of domestic violence how to deal with moral conflict.

### **Conclusion**

This study utilized grounded theory, a qualitative research design to examine the process of how female clergy describe the process of moral conflict in providing pastoral care in domestic violence situations. The study sought to explore participant's narratives to better understand their experiences. This study allowed female clergy an opportunity to describe their experiences with moral conflict, understanding, and describing the process of working through moral conflict and domestic violence in their congregation and the community around them. The next section will discuss the presentation of data collection, data analysis and findings of the study.

## **CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF DATA**

This chapter presents the nature of the data collection, the data analysis and the results in a manner that responds to the research question: How do you describe the process of dealing with moral conflict in pastoral care of domestic violence situations? The study also included the following sub questions: (a) What is your understanding of moral conflict as it relates to your own religious faith? and, (b) How do you empower women who are experiencing domestic violence? The components of the chapter include information on the study and the researcher, the sample, the research method, presentation of the data, and the results of the study. The overall goal was to provide a better understanding of female clergy from diverse congregations on their experiences providing pastoral care in cases of domestic violence.

### **The Study and the Researcher**

#### **Researcher in Relation to the Study**

The purpose of the study stemmed from the researcher's deep interest in the investigated phenomenon. As a therapist and an advocate against violence of women, the researcher seeks to understand how other disciplines study emotions related to domestic violence. Clergy is often the first point of contact for a victim of family violence and female clergy could be a source of empowerment for victims. Interviewing female clergy provided an opportunity to hear their voices and further understand their roles as pastoral caregivers in their congregations. The researcher has experience in interviewing individuals for the purpose of obtaining and gathering information. The collected information was primarily used to determine eligibility criteria for the study. The researcher also engaged in field study by conducting grounded theory interviews.

## **Recruitment of Participants**

To recruit participants, a flyer describing the purpose of study was developed and posted at various churches in a major southwestern city. The researcher contacted the church administrators to request permission to post flyers to recruit study participants. The researcher also posted flyers in Linked In website to female clergy. An email was also sent to pastoral care programs at local churches with a copy of the flyer attached.

When volunteers called, the researcher screened participants to see if they met the eligibility criteria of a female clergy, over the age of 18, had experienced moral conflict while providing pastoral care and had experienced working with domestic violence victims. The researcher interacted with potential participants via email and telephone over a five-month period. Ten participants responded via email, were screened, and interviews were scheduled. The researcher met face to face with nine participants at their offices. One participant was interviewed via Skype. One interview was canceled due to time constraints and another interview was canceled due to the participant not meeting the criteria of the study. A total of 8 participants were selected from the recruitment process to participate in the study.

## **Description of the Sample**

Eight women pastors participated in the study from different denominations within a city in the Southwest part of the United States. Two participants in the study were in the (30-39) age range, three were in the (50 to 59) age range and three were in the (60-69) age range. By ethnicity, participants were Black, White, and Hispanic. Their vocational backgrounds are as canon, executive, senior pastors and chaplain. Each clergy had additional training and vocational

backgrounds in mental health, hospital settings, criminal justice, social work and corporate settings. The educational background of participants was: two with bachelor degrees, three with master’s degrees, two with doctorate degrees and one in the process of completing a doctorate degree. The following Table 1 describes the demographic information for each participant in the study.

Table 1

*Demographic Chart*

Participant	Marital Status	Level of Education	Clergy Training	Religious Affiliation	Years of Practice
Participant 1	M	ABD	Seminary School	Anglican	18 mos
Participant 2	M	Bachelors	None	Church of Christ	5
Participant 3	M	Masters	School of ministry	Episcopal	8
Participant 4	S	PhD	School of theology	Pentecostal	35
Participant 5	M	Doctorate of ministry	School of theology	Methodist	16
Participant 6	M	Masters	Seminary School	Episcopal	7
Participant 7	M	Bachelors	Ministry training	Disciples of Christ	5
Participant 8	M	Masters	Seminary	Methodist	9

## **Participant Profiles**

The following is a profile of each participant. To protect the confidentiality of each participant, names were not used, and each participant was assigned a number.

Participant 1 is a clergy in a pastoral care program in an Episcopal church. She has served in her pastoral role for less than two years. She oversees several prayer ministries in her congregation, conducts weekly Bible study and visits homebound parishioners. Participant one also provides pastoral counseling to women from diverse ethnic backgrounds in and outside of the church. She also shared that she has advised friends who are also struggling with domestic violence issues and the moral conflict this poses as a clergy and a friend and/or family member. Participant one has access to many resources to assist with working through issues related to moral conflict and utilizes them on a regular basis.

Participant 2 is affiliated with the Church of Christ in a small congregation. She has been in the role of a clergy for five years, and was previously a member of clergy at another church in another denomination. She has an extensive background in domestic violence, was previously in a management position before being called into ministry. She was already very active in church when she began to search for answers regarding women in ministry. She read and studied extensively on domestic violence, church history and the theological thinking of ministers. She is very involved in social issues within the community and is a strong advocate against domestic violence. Participant 2 provided many examples of moral conflict from the struggle of dealing with victims, the abuser and the role the church has played in both. Participant 2 provided thorough insight on the issues of dealing with moral conflict in situations of domestic violence.

Participant 3 was the only participant that the researcher interviewed through Skype due to time constraints. She is a clergy who was called to ministry and became very involved in the church as an adult after a life changing event. She was previously in education before becoming a full-time minister. She provides a need to women in her community and the church allows her the flexibility to counsel victims of domestic violence. She has established good community relationships that allow her to help victims in her community and congregation.

Participant 4 is a clergy in the Pentecostal church and also works as a Chaplain. She had the longest length of years in the ministry. She talked about how her childhood experiences played a role in being a part of the ministry. Participant 4 also discussed her own personal experiences that shaped her role as a minister and an advocate against domestic violence. She volunteers her time with domestic violence agencies/shelters. She discussed in length the role moral conflict plays in the lives of domestic violence victims. During the interview, she spoke from both the professional and victims point of view on the subject.

Participant 5 is a Methodist minister with a previous background in the healthcare industry. Prior to becoming a ministry, she talked about her experiences of witnessing abuse in her role as a healthcare professional. As the executive of the church she sees her role as being there to support everyone from staff, fellow clergy to lay congregation. She openly discussed her feelings of conflict when challenged by antiquated views on marriage by male elders. The primary goals of this clergy are to offer safety, and resources for emotional and spiritual growth. Participant 5 states that in her years as a minister, she has not had a lot of incidents of domestic

violence, but has met with some victims and worked hard at keeping the awareness up around the church campus.

Participant 6 is a canon pastor at an Episcopal Church. She provides pastoral care for the surrounding congregation and greater community. She discussed how her church provides several social service programs to the community including human trafficking. Before her calling to the ministry, she always desired to work in areas of social justice. Her position as a clergy in the current congregation allows her to advocate for a multitude of individuals in crisis or in need. The researcher met with participant six for the longest length of time. She was extremely helpful and provided several instances of moral conflict and instances of dealing with violence against women.

Participant 7 is a clergy in the Disciples of Christ Church which she describes as a progressive church which recognizes women in several roles in the ministry. She previously worked in the criminal justice field which allowed her to have a broader view of domestic violence situations. She was on leave from the church and invited the researcher to her home to be interviewed. Participant 7 spoke of limited experience in areas of domestic violence and spoke mostly of verbal abuse situations that she had dealt with in support and spiritual care to families. She also reported having close access to community resources such as women shelters, housing resources, and other social services readily available to women and families in need. Her experience with moral conflict has been both personal and professional when it comes to issues of domestic violence.

Participant 8 is a senior pastor in a Methodist church with an older established congregation. She has worked to learn the needs of the community around her church in order to better serve the community. She has a previous background in social work, and she stated that having a background in social work always compelled her to care about the struggles that people are facing. Participant 8 discussed how she is always prepared to do an assessment of situations. She has a passion to help children suffering from violence and has also worked with women in her congregation experiencing violence.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected using semi structured face to face interviews with each participant. Participants were asked to respond to sixteen questions.. The participants were interviewed only once, and the interview took place in the pastor's office or personal residence. Only one interview was conducted via Skype. Once interviews were scheduled, the researcher emailed consent forms to participants to be signed prior to interview. The researcher collected consent forms at the beginning of the interview.

Interviews were recorded on a handheld digital voice recorder. Each interview lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. The researcher kept a journal to take additional notes such as body language and affect that could not be captured by the recorder. Each interview was personally transcribed by the researcher. Once transcripts were completed, a copy of the transcript was sent to the participant to verify that the researcher reflected the perspectives of the participant. This process is a type of credibility called member checking (Patton, 2002). Completed transcripts were saved in a researcher folder on the researcher's personal computer which was password

protected. Each transcript was assigned a number rather than using personal names. O transcribe was used to assist with transcribing interviews. Transcripts were also saved on a flash drive which were stored along with the researcher's journal in a locked file cabinet in researcher's office. Transcripts were edited to begin the data analysis as outlined in Chapter 3.

### **Participants Characteristics**

The goals were to recruit enough participants to reach data saturation with the anticipation of 10 participants. One individual was scheduled but was never interviewed due to multiple reschedules and conflicting schedules. By the time the researcher interviewed eight participants, data saturation was reached. The other participant was scheduled but found not to meet the eligibility criteria for the study. The researcher received emails from clergy who received the flyer, responded that while this was an important and interesting study, their schedule did not permit time to participate in the study.

Participants interviewed were engaging and interested in the topic. Many of the participants not only had professional experiences with domestic violence, but also personal experience that made them very passionate about the topic. Some participants needed a more thorough explanation of the concept of moral conflict and the researcher provided an explanation of moral conflict/moral dissonance and how it relates to domestic violence. Participants were very open about the experiences of moral conflict and providing care in domestic violence situations. They spoke about both their professional and personal experiences. Several examples were provided about how moral conflict and domestic violence in pastoral care has affected their live.

A directed conversational style interview was used for data collection. The researcher used open ended interview questions to loosely guide the conversation and allow participants to share their experiences and describe the process of the phenomenon being studied. A conversational style interview with these types of questions allowed for participants to provide as much detail regarding their experiences.

### **Research Methodology Applied to the Data Analysis**

The purpose of grounded theory analysis is to construct a theory from the data (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Coding is an important link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory. During the coding process, a technique called constant comparative methods was used to establish analytic distinctions and make comparisons. Comparative methods were to data to form advanced concepts between codes and categories in building a new theory (Charmaz, 2006). No software program was used to assist in coding the transcripts. Initial coding was completed to analyze data and search for meanings within it.

During this process, 177 initial codes were identified for the first initial phase of coding. A chart was created in Microsoft Word to document initial codes and meaning units. Initial codes allow the researcher to separate data into categories and allow for the next phase of coding (Charmaz, 2006). Focused coding is the second phase of coding which the researcher used to make decisions and make use of the most significant codes (Charmaz, 2006). In making decisions about the most important codes from the initial coding phase, the researcher developed 12 categories and concepts during the second phase of focused coding). The next phase of coding was axial coding in which the researcher took the 12 categories and created sub categories. Table

2 on pages 76 and 77 illustrates the development of categories and subcategories in the development of the theory. According to Strauss, axial coding closely forms relationships within each category (Charmaz, 2006). Categories in axial coding were condensed into six categories.

Table 2

*Results of Axial Coding*

Categories	Subcategories
Condone Abuse misconceptions	Family Disconnects Challenging male elders Advocates for women and victims Questions theological history Self-awareness Ability to cope Honesty and Trust
Recognizing conflicts in care	Personal and Professional experiences Insight into abuse Resourceful
Awareness of emotional conflicts	Approachable Awareness of feelings Compassion Struggle to stay in role Identifying with abuse/victims Seeking outside help Self-care Dealing with own issues
Use of Consultations	Recognizing transference Strengthening community relationships Mental Health Professionals Domestic Violence workers

Categories	Subcategories
	Police
	Knowing your community
	Journaling
Utilizing Coping Mechanisms	Rest
	Prayer
	Affirmation/meditation
Promoting Safety	Empower
	Building Trust
	Confidentiality
	Advocates for victims

The first category, advocates for change represents the clergy experiences dealing with scriptures misconceptions, gender inequality among female clergy, interacting with male elders of the church and family disconnect which all cause moral conflict among family, victims, abusers and clergy staff. In the second category, awareness of emotional conflict, clergy discussed their emotional conflicts when providing care in domestic violence. Recognizing conflicts in care category examines clergy's emotional response when dealing with victims of domestic violence. Clergy described their experiences of recognizing and dealing with their emotions in order to be objective and help the victim. The consultation category consists of female clergy describing how they seek information from other disciplines to work through feelings of moral conflict.

The healthy coping category described ways on how female clergy discuss the various coping mechanisms they use to deal with moral conflict in pastoral care. The last category is promoting safety in which female clergy described the various experiences they implore to keep

families safe from abusive situations. *Figure 1* is a hexagon radial used to highlight themes in the process of how female clergy deal with moral conflict while providing pastoral care in domestic violence situations. The following is an explanation of each category that describes clergy's experiences of dealing with moral conflict in pastoral care and domestic violence situations



*Figure 1.* Hexagon highlighting major themes discovered in process of dealing with moral conflict.

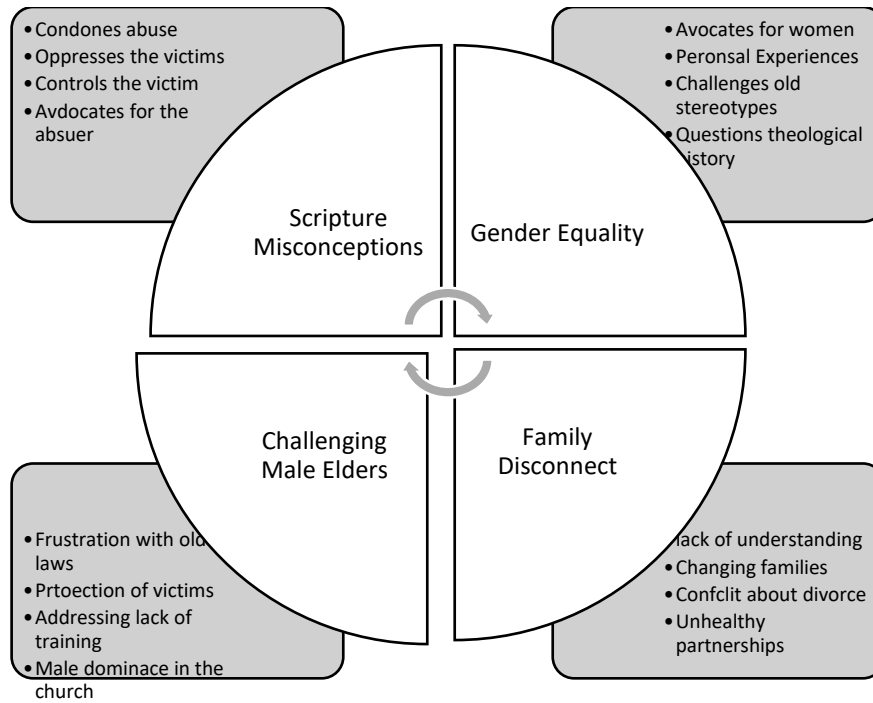


Figure 2. Cycle matrix illustrating how clergy identified issues that required advocating for change.

The first category is female clergy advocating for change in areas of scripture misconceptions, family disconnect, challenging male elders and gender equality. *Figure 2* displays themes for this category. *Figure 2* highlights categories and subcategories for theme one. Female clergy discussed the importance of being aware of how these challenges affect and cause conflict with pastoral care when assisting families in domestic violence situations. Participants reported conflict over scriptures being used to keep victims in abusive situations. Participants see this as a problem because both the victim and the abuser have misconceptions about how the Bible interprets marriage, divorce and violence. Several participants mentioned the process of helping victims understand the social context of the Bible rather than fearing what scripture says about divorce. Participant 2 commented on how abusers and pastors have used the

Bible against the victim. “the Bible is still key but seen in a bigger context with history, while that does not sound important, but is very important because abusers use the scriptures in a very profound way, to make women submit to abuse” (P2).

Participants also commented on how victims fear what the Bible says about divorce which keeps them in abusive relationships. They believe that victims misinterpret what the Bible says about divorce and justify staying in these relationships. “I think faith is more important at that time, they misunderstand how God works”(P4).

Participant six discussed how scripture misconceptions about divorce keep victims from leaving an abusive marriage. She contributes this is individuals providing a brief version of what the bible says about divorce, and not a full understanding of scriptures that talk about divorce.

It is still to me your worth, because, let’s say if you believe, God says no divorce, I take them to the scripture, I ask where did you get that from, Ok let’s read, so I want to talk to you about what the social context in that community from the Bible....We are really quick to throw these words out, you really need to understand the social context (P6)

Another participant discussed how biblical understandings of divorce ignite fear in victims and they view divorce as a sin. Below she discusses how victims use this concept of divorce to stay in a marriage before making the decision to leave.

Just an example of being with somebody whose living with idea that divorce is a sin, living with idea that someone is beating her and fearful of her life, at times, leaving at least 3 times that I know of, then went back each time she never made it the tenth time of leaving before she left for good (P5).

Participants also discussed while families are an important part of the family system, there is a disconnect due to changing trends and religious beliefs. Families can often keep victims in abusive relationships. The following participant shared her perspective on how changing family trends send inconsistent messages about relationships and possibly violence. I don’t think we teach young people, i.e.

children, adolescents about family, I think until we do that, we will keep having people get together, thinking they will live happily ever other in the same house, because they live in the same house and then they deal with their differences and their family, they don't talk about it before they get together, and I think anybody to grow in their relationships and be a family that is a loving safe family to be in, I think anybody can be taught that if they so desire (P3).

For some participants, family no longer fit the old belief that man is head of the household and the importance of acknowledging that families are different and fit many modes. The following participant explains her view on the family.

For me it is male and female, a good family is people who are there to raise young people and encourage and protect one another and sometimes there is discipline in that. I do not believe ever anymore that the man is the head of the family; I think that is a very bad distortion of a scripture. I know where it comes from, but it isn't, it never had the connotation of authority over a woman until the 2nd century after Christ (P2).

The next participant explained how moral conflict affects the family and how parents still have influence over adult children.

full divorce is a moral conflict for so many and over a period of time she tried to get away, she would leave, she would leave to go to her parents' home, who then would say, you have a husband, you need to be at home with your husband (P5).

The following participant described how family beliefs keep victims in marriage and place their views on the victim despite knowing abuse is occurring in the household. Themes of submission are evident in this participant's comments.

They sometimes have family members telling them to stay. That you just have to deal with it. Then they have family members who try to counsel them on what they need to do as a wife or what they wifely duties are, to try and keep him from doing that. Well if you just make sure the house was clean or just make sure the food is read (P8).

Female clergy also acknowledged how male elders still have old beliefs about scripture and families which sometimes conflict with their beliefs about helping victims get to a safer place. Female clergy recommend using several outlets for seeking help than using the Bible to make women submit to their spouse who are abusing them.

Participant described her emotions connected to how male elders handle abuse in the church and how they are unable to move away from old scripture teachings.

When you hear the church hammer women to submit and only offer them Bible studies on their emotions, tell them they have this framework to be a part of those things are not good, it is like, they need to be safe in their church and it bothers me when they have more an allegiance to the church than themselves (P2).

Female clergy also discuss the difference in views from male elders on how to handle marital conflict.

I would like to add, except for that frustration level of having a fellow clergy who was older, much older, elder pastor who look at it from antiquated eyes of having a marriage 52 years, God wants us to pray through it (P5.)

Because of male elder's antiquated views of marriage, participants reported conflicts with male elders promoting marriage over acknowledging abuse.

There was a family who was going to a male pastor because the mother had teenage daughters had gotten remarried and found out her husband was molesting the girls. The Pastor said, you made a covenant with this man, stay with this man so we are going to pray, send him to me (P8).

Participants also identified a lack of training in areas of domestic violence as a reason male elders send victims back into abusive homes. One suggested that there are other avenues for helping victims in need of pastoral care. "So there are times even though, I haven't experienced

something like that myself, knowing this has happened because pastors weren't trained adequately" (P8). "Helping this pastor understand that prayer is an avenue of healing, in this situation, it needs to be other avenues besides prayer, and you can't prayer this one away" (P5).

Several of the participants felt that being a woman and a clergy helped to advocate for women in the church or individuals who are broken or wounded. While advocating for victims, many experienced conflicting feelings over their calling to the ministry. One participant stated: "I was going against God and just couldn't see it, you barely have women in this denomination and no women of color in this diocese" (P6). One participant discussed her struggle with going into the ministry because of the societal views on what a minister looks like.

I was not trying to be any type of clergy, when we moved here, I was trying to go to law school, and do something in social justice, that's what I knew I was called to do, and I that, I just getting the door closed, you know, it was just timing, everything, and I then I kept focusing on the church because I was raised in the church here, I was involved in the church community, um and so, I really wasn't looking, to do that at all, my husband is Catholic, so even if I was considering it, this would be the opposite because, a priest would be something so different, to him as a male, and as a Catholic and I love Catholic and I love being a priest, I also say that God has quite a sense of humor (P6).

Other participants sought information on female roles in the bible and ministry.

I felt a call to be a minister and in a nice small town they did not happen, women had no worth, so it was a calling but I didn't pursue it, but I have always pursued, unity and diversity is the best way to put it, it is more than gender justice when I was in my early twenties, it was this part that says, I want to know what the Bible says about women and if it says (P2).

I read deep and wide Christian writers mostly on domestic violence, church history, the theology, and the ministers thinking, folks we got this backwards, from a scripture point of view, women in ministry was what God intended, that's what I got out of it (P2).

Because of the old male stereotypes, some participants questioned their calling to the ministry and discussed the process of making the decision to become a minister.

I started interacting with the Methodist pastor. I watch women become accepted and ordained and a pastor of that church, I still had this mental block of being able to see myself in that role I was being called to ministry to something in ministry, but having a hard time identifying that as a pastor and actually got into seminary school and remember sitting in orientation and having someone asks, so those of you that are here, raise your hand if you think you want to be a pastor and I did not raise my hand (P8)

Participants describe these concepts as reasons for conflicts in care and how they work to reduce some of the misconceptions about divorce, the Bible and challenge elders who still minister with an antiquated view of families although families have changed in the past 50 years. Female clergy work with victims to help them understand the Bible in terms of scripture, but also safety and what the Bible says against violence.

### **Female Clergy Recognizing their own Conflicts in Pastoral Care of Domestic Violence Victims**

The second category is female clergy being able to recognize their own conflicts when it comes to providing pastoral care in domestic violence situations. *Figure 3* is an alternating flow diagram used to group sub categories related to conflicts in care. Many clergy discussed the importance of recognizing their own conflicts in care to avoid causing any further harm to the victim. Many participants also were able to recognize feelings of conflict and identify with the victim due to their own personal experiences with domestic violence. Professional experiences also were connected to any moral conflicts that the clergy may experience.

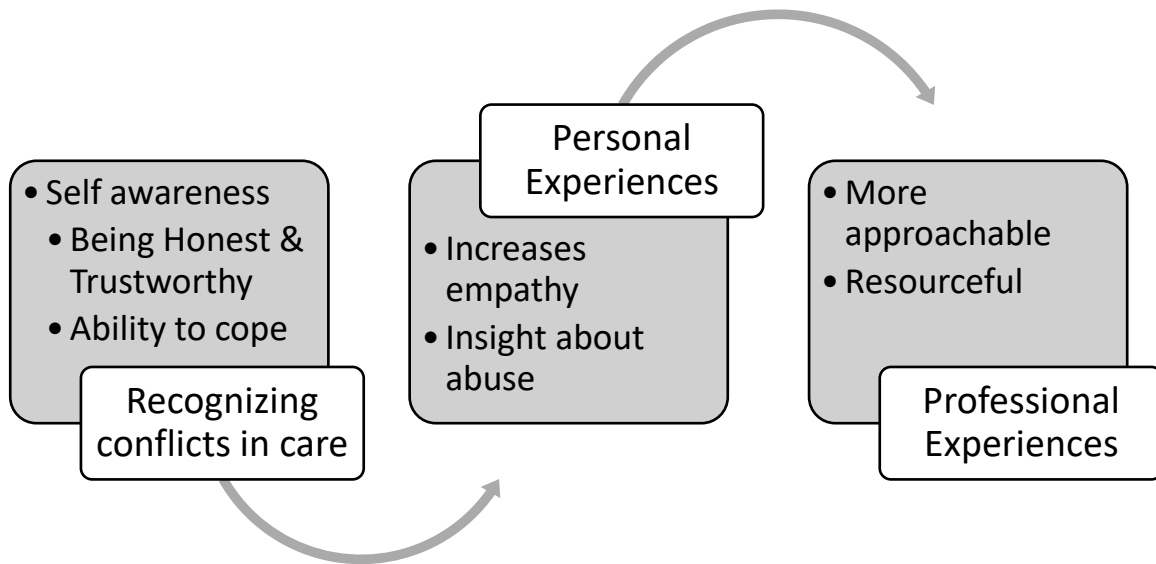


Figure 3. Alternating flow diagram of conflicts of care

Participants discussed being able to identify and recognize that they are struggling with client’s decisions, the importance of keeping their own feelings in check and creating a trusting environment. Participants indicated the importance of handling victims with care when you recognize a conflict in your own emotions and the client’s emotions and feelings surrounding the situation they are in. *Figure 3* described categories of conflict in care and emotions clergy expressed.

The following clergy talks about her approach when she is experiencing a moral conflict or difference of opinion with another clergy.

When it is a moral issue, I try to handle it with care, but when it crosses a line, for me, when I feel somebody has been abusive, defined by our society without integrity, my moral issues is to try and sit with that person and try to have a conversation, not about me, but about us (P2).

One clergy who counsels women in the community explained the struggle she has with being an advocate for family but knowing the reality of keeping families together when abuse is involved.

To me this is a moral conflict because I am supposed to help people stay together, but I don't think everyone should stay together. So, I struggled with that one because, I struggled if I was pushing too hard or were we working on things she just did not want to talk about (P3)

One participant talked in detail about being aware of her emotions when providing care to a victim of domestic violence. She talked about praying before she started any type of pastoral conversation. Another participant acknowledged that she has to be aware when a situation is out of scope of her skills as a pastoral counselor. Many of the participants were able to admit when situations required further interventions and were okay with referring clients out to other domestic violence resources.

So I also understand that my professional skills are limited when it comes to counseling and so I try to always explain to people so I can be a pastoral counselor, where it is talking about scripture and biblical principles but if it needs to something long term or more in-depth, then I may refer to you to a professional (P6).

You have to be a professional; you can't lead by your emotion. You have to keep your head level and understand that you are there to help not to solve the problems but to help offer the best advice in leadership that you can (P7).

There was a strong relationship between participant's personal and professional experiences and feelings of dissonance/moral conflict. Several participants have professional and educational backgrounds in the criminal justice field, social work, psychology and education.

Many participants have worked as chaplains in nursing homes, hospitals and other social service settings. Other participants have worked in counseling, education and social work. Another participant worked as a medical professional in a healthcare setting.

Two participants worked directly with domestic violence victims and understood the dynamics and cycle of violence which increases their struggle when victims justify staying in these situations. They shared some of those experiences working directly with domestic violence victims. “From a pastor’s role, it has been here, this is the only place I have been in the ministry, from a former healthcare professional, I have seen it on the operating table, child abuse, domestic abuse, the evil” (P5).

“Acknowledging the eye was darkened and the bruises on her arm just based on my experience with the mental health agencies, it appeared to me that there was some aspect of abuse” (P5). One participant provided insight into domestic violence among the homeless population. “When I first started working here I worked across the street at the homeless center as a Chaplain, I came across unspeakable types, not just domestic violence, but violence against women living on the streets” (P6).

The personal stories of abuse shared by female pastors revealed a greater sense of empathy for victims of abuse. Participants were open about their own abuse, and acknowledged struggling with victim’s choices because of their own experiences. One participant was very open during the interview about her own experiences of abuse and her need to help other victims seek safety and make healthy relationship choices. She also shared her story with her colleagues who seek out her assistance when dealing with victims of domestic abuse.

One of the male chaplain had gone to see the patient and once he found out she had been abused, he came and got me and ask if I would talk to her...she was afraid of talking and sharing any information.....being a person who was abused, I tried my best to make her see, that life has more to offer her than for her to sit and take abuse (P4)

Personal experiences caused conflict in care because of the struggle participants felt when speaking with victims. As pastors, they did not like the idea of divorce, but strongly believed that domestic violence was a justifiable cause for a woman to leave their home. Participants felt that safety was more important than the scripture or societal ideas of marriage.

### **Female Clergy Understand and are Aware of their Emotional Conflicts in Pastoral Care**

Several participants expressed experiencing strong emotions when listening to victims talk about family violence in their home during pastoral care sessions. Many participants reported that some of the emotions were a moral conflict because they would not react on any of these emotions while providing care. Participants described many of their emotions while providing pastoral care as angry, fearing for the victim, sadness, disconnect, violent thoughts, emotional, feeling tearful, and helpless. The most reoccurring emotion expressed by most clergy was anger. One participant stated: “When they are not ready to leave, and they are being hurt really badly, they are the expert, it is their life and I respect that but it is really hard” (P2).

These emotions show a sense of compassion for the victim. It also reveals empathy, female clergy are able to identify with the victim’s emotions and feelings regarding the abuse. As women, female clergy can identify with abuse. Female clergy’s emotional conflict also reveals a struggle to stay in a pastoral role but all are able to keep a healthy boundary on their emotions during pastoral care. Below are some comments that participants expressed about understanding

and recognizing their emotions to deal with feelings of moral conflict. A participant described the strong personal emotions she felt when hearing stories of abuse from the women she provided care to. She felt her feelings were a conflict due to her role as a clergy.

The most recent case was a Mexican women I was counseling with, and having spent 45 minutes to an hour with her, I just wanted to take the guy out, that was a moral conflict, the conflict, in the context of what I do, of course I would not do that, it was a desire (if only life worked like that) it not a very Christian response, but an emotional response (P1).

One participant addressed the conflict of being in a pastoral care role and dealing with issues of gender, sexism and racism within the church.

I really struggle with it I really do. And a lot of it is because, like I said growing up in a small rural area of town. And of course, always being in church that were male dominate in leadership. I think that it's always cost frustration in me when people are made to feel less than their age, gender and race so anything like that ends in "ism" really bother me. You know the ageism, racism, sexism . Now those things really bother me and this is me. I don't understand how anybody can read a Bible as a whole and take away (P8)

The following clergy provided an example of her struggle with her own emotions about abuse and providing appropriate care to an individual in an abusive situation.

I have to keep my emotions in check...so I have prayer before I meet with them. I try to pray every morning but definitely before I have any type of pastoral conversation. I don't react with what G.. would do, because I could find myself getting angry, being impatient with not getting to the right decision. So, sometimes it is very difficult for me not to just get upset, especially if I get fearful for someone or if my heart is just breaking, because they feel they are worthless, that is hard for me more than anything (P5)

The conflict of fear and struggling with the decision of the clergy and the client's decision was a reoccurring theme in discussing awareness of emotions. One participant described her feelings with victims returning to their homes.

Oh gosh, I have had two women who came from the police station, C.. sent them, both of them went back to their situation and I did a lot of going back over the conversations. One felt like I was pushing too hard, she did into want to come back, but then I was out of the country and I got a phone call from her, so I am still not really sure to this day what that was about, but I was never able to get in touch with her again....I don't even know where she is...so I struggled with that one because I struggled if I was pushing too hard or was we working on things she just did not want to talk about (P3).

### **Female Clergy seek help and consultations to deal with moral conflict**

One of the most significant ways that clergy described the process of dealing with moral conflict was to seek help from other professionals and consultations. Consulting with outside professionals, such as police, shelter workers, other domestic violence professionals and mental health professionals were resources female clergy accessed to process feelings of conflict and professional and/or personal limitations with a case.

Female clergy who develop a network of people and access the help of other professionals strengthen community relationships. Female clergy that are open to establishing these relationships within and outside their church improve the access and help for victims in their congregation or the surrounding community they service.

While interviewing clergy, the researcher noticed that congregations that had established social services and counseling programs have a better understanding of getting victims help outside of the church. One participant has an extensive previous

background working in domestic violence and still has strong relationships within the domestic violence community. As a minister, she provides spiritual care to meet the needs of the victims, but is willing to refer to other community resources when it is out of the scope of her professional boundaries. Another participant has strong relationships with her community police and is in regular communication with the social worker at the police station. Several of the participants had no problem contacting the police if there was an immediate threat.

One of the participants talked in detail about her experience with utilizing other resources when she feels she is unable to further help the victim. “Referring people to other people, because I want them to not be dependent upon me but to actually seek advice from people who can help them” (P8) A participant associated with a larger congregation discussed the benefits of having access to additional resources to help domestic violence victims.

Yes, and we are in a very privileged position because we have The Counseling and Social Service center. I would consult with them if I needed to, the director here, he has a lot of expertise and knowledge as well as connections. I think if there was somebody who was resistance to getting help, I don't force people to do what they don't want to do, so on the one hand, if people don't want to do anything, I say, come back to me, when you are ready if you every really want to get help. I also suggest things, and I see events that might be useful for people or activities (P1).

The participant below shared various community resources that she provides to victims of domestic violence.

So, I refer to that group and I refer to the women's center/shelter, I often give websites, so that they can begin to research. It goes from acknowledging that

violent situation to getting counseling, even if you could help people to read literature, see things and get little snippets of what reality is, then I guess that is a good thing, and they could be at peace along the way (P1).

Participants reported that when they are struggling with a domestic violence situation that has caused feelings of conflict, they use consultations in the form of other mental health professionals, the support of their clergy team, spiritual advising from a senior clergy member and personal counseling. Participants are able to identify when moral conflict is present and they are in need of some type of intervention from other professionals to work through their own feelings and emotions. The majority of the participants stated getting counseling from a member of another cleric if needed. “I have a spiritual director that I meet with not as much as I should, so the point of it all is I have someone else who is objective to help process what I am going through” (P8).

One participant discussed various outlets she uses in certain situations of conflict and seeking assistance for herself: “If it is someone in the congregation, I would choose to debrief with a spiritual director. If it was something spiritual on my part, debrief it with another counselor.”(P3) The participant below discussed using a therapist to work through her own issues of countertransference.

I am able to recognize it when it is happening right now so some of my steps is to be in communication with a therapist so that I am able to work out my own stuff because even my own issues with mother if I don't work that out, I can step over boundaries (P8)

The participant below seeks multiple options for consultation to take care of her own emotional needs.

Well, if it is the women who he police sends, I talk to the social worker, she spends a lot of time with them, we find of debrief together, those situations and decide if we can do anything else, whether we need to let it come until a later time (P3).

### **Female Clergy utilize various coping mechanisms to deal with moral conflict**

Participants reported using various strategies to cope with feelings of moral conflict and conflicts during pastoral care. Participants use self-care strategies such as prayer, rest, journaling affirmations and meditation. Several participants reported prayer as a way to deal with feelings of conflict. All eight participants reported prayer as a way of coping and dealing with issues of moral conflict in domestic violence cases. One of the participants discussed how she expresses her emotions, cries if needed, , and makes sure she gets plenty of rest and journals. A few participants commented on being open and honest and taking time for self-reflection. One cleric reported maintaining good boundaries as a way of coping with moral conflict.

A few participants stated keeping a journal of a way of expressing thoughts and feelings related to caring for parishioners and women in domestic violence situations. Other participants stressed the important of a good support system, not leading with your emotions and seeking outside help if the problem is bigger than what you are able to handle. A common theme in coping with moral conflict for most participants was recognizing their own biases and prejudices when providing care. “I think that it is really important that people, great support systems, whether it is coworkers or people in the field, good staff” (P2).

This participant discussed the pastoral supports for managing conflicting emotions related to pastoral care.

You have to be a professional you can't be led by your emotions. You have to keep your head level and understand that your there to help not to solve the problem but to help Offer the best advice in leadership that you can. We have our area Minister and if there was a big huge problem we will go to her and she will meet with all the parties involved. We can just go to her and say, I have this problem I don't know how to handle it She will advise or step in and help us (P7).

The participant below shared her experiences as a social worker in how she deals with her emotions and conflict.

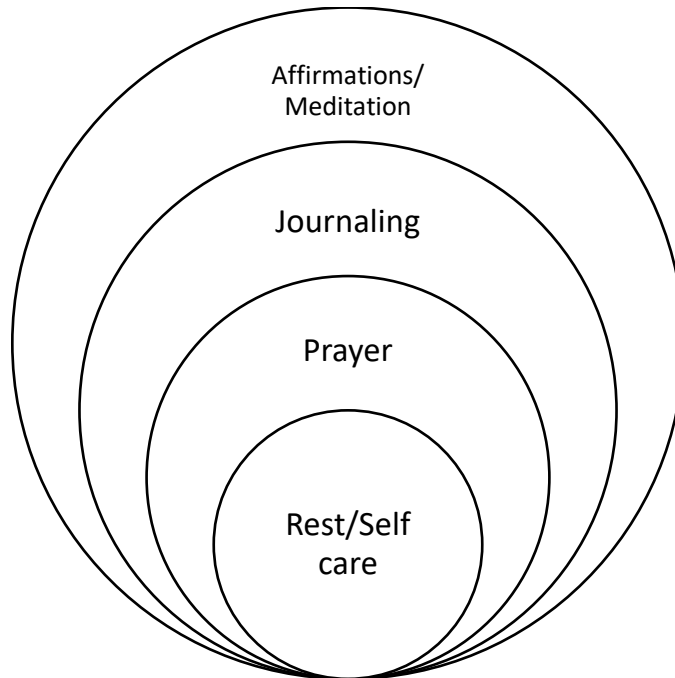
Because what I realize is when.. And this is what I've learn from my social work education we don't understand our own biases and our own prejudice. When we don't understand our own struggles then we will more likely to project them onto other people. But when I understand what those biases are what my struggles are what my prejudice are and I have somebody I can work that out with. Then I'm able to recognize it when it's happening right so some of my steps is to be in communication with a therapist so that I'm able to work out my own stuff, if I don't work that out I can step over boundaries (P8).

One participant shared a quote/prayer she uses before going into each session.

so I have a prayer that I prayer before I meet with them....I try to pray it every morning but definitely before I have any type of pastoral conversation. " I bind my mind to mind of Christ, I bind my will to the will of the father, I bind my attitude, my responses, my reaction, my feelings, my all and all to the those given to me by the Holy Spirit" " and I lose all that is not of God" and so if I am able to do that and I do that, I don't react with what I would do, because I could find myself getting angry, being impatient with somebody for not getting to the right decision (P5).

Overall, female clergy used several self-care techniques to work the process of dealing with moral conflict. These coping mechanisms, (shown in *Figure 4*) help to deal with the difficult task of helping domestic violence victims. The following diagram was used to show the significance in how these coping strategies overlapped in clergy responses to dealing with moral

conflict. All of the participants were able to recognize when they needed to take a break and deal with their own emotions.



*Figure 4.* Stack Diagram of various coping strategies used by Clergy.

### **Female Clergy promote safety to reduce feelings of moral conflict**

The last category is promoting safety. Female clergy reduce moral conflict in pastoral care by promoting safety and empowering victims of domestic violence. A reoccurring theme among pastors was to help victims through empowerment, building trusting relationships, maintaining confidentiality during pastoral sessions and advocating for their safety.

Female clergy expressed their feelings about marriage and are advocates for healthy marriages and relationships. One participant commented: “I am not a preacher or

pastor who first goal is that the family is sacred and we have to keep them together. I would never counsel an abusive couple to stay married” (P2).

Several participants stated that as clergy they did not like the idea of divorce but would never encourage victims to stay in abusive relationships. The overall goal is to make sure the victim is safe and emphases are placed on their safety. Several participants voiced their thoughts and feelings about divorce and safety of a victim.

I think to in terms of the family, get people beyond a simplistic view, of “ I am married and I got to stay married” “ I have to stay because that is the faithful thing to do” and I don’t like divorce and will not counsel anybody into divorce, but I would not equally want to counsel someone into staying in with a domestically abusive partner, and I would want them to be able to get the space they need to mature and get the healing they need to make any decision they want to make with a sound mind and a lot of healing under their belt. So, I think for me, that is the priority, making sure they are safe, and they are getting the help they need to recover from the emotional and psychological damage as well as the physical bruises (P1).

Participants also discussed the danger of putting a batterer in the room with their victim. One Clergy felt that this was no longer a marital issue, it was a safety issue. One participant explained the process of how she handles situations during premarital counseling when she sees signs of potentially abusive behavior. Clergy also stated that she does not marry couples until they seek outside professional counseling with a therapist. Participants felt that providing victims with a confidential and safe place to talk help to develop trust. A few participants stressed the importance of developing a trusting relationship and offering victims a safe place to talk. The following participant stressed the importance of confidentiality in building trust with victims.

This most important thing is that they need to be able to know that they can come in this place and know that they are loved....and they can be, just be, there is no expectation for them to tell me anything...just here, it is a safe place, everything is confidential....unless of course it has to be reported, um but I think first and foremost, that most important, this is a safe place, confidential but nothing they share will leave the room and they can tell me anything they want....and that I am going to be there to journey with them as much as they would like me to, I think that is the most important besides the fact that Jesus loves them and so do I (P5).

Another participant uses the bible as a resource to build faith and trust. This is an example of how she feels the bible should be used as a source of empowerment.

I don't think I can do anything without building trust....and I think trust shows up in the Bible all the time....so if it was someone of faith, I would talk about the fact that there are lots of people who Jesus was involved with that were not married, who came from terrible situations and were able to make a life for their selves (P5).

In developing trust, one participant discussed the issues of being non-judgmental which is what most victims fear, being judged.

What I've learned is if I can create a space where they can be who they are and they can be authentic, they can say what they are struggling, they can say what they are feeling and not feel judged (P8).

Participants also used their time in pastoral care to empower victims. They used the Bible to encourage and empower victims of domestic violence rather than preach against divorce and other misconceptions that most victims have been previously taught. Participants felt that helping victims see their worth was an important step in choosing safety over staying in an abusive relationship. Participant 4 talked about how she does not use the Bible as much as she uses pieces of literature such as inspirational quotes, people's testimonies and any other information that will empower them to make healthy choices. Several participants use the Bible and

scriptures from the Bible to help empower victims. One participant expressed how individuals should walk away from the Bible feeling empowered and not oppressed.

To empower victims, one participant places emphasizes on self-worth from a biblical and society point of view.

I think the biggest things in this population is trying to help women and men understand that they are worthy, we live in a shame based society, by the time I see people who are in abusive situations, they are already filling they are not enough, or not worthy or think they are paying for past sins, and I think if I can ever help them see themselves as God sees them then they would be able to move forward (P3).

A participant shared her favorite scripture that she uses to help empower victims:

my very favorite scripture is:

in everything you do, work as you are working for the lord not for man...it is God that you are pleasing, I think that is in Colossians 3:4 and then there is one, I cannot remember what scripture it is but it talks about you are beautifully and wonderfully made, you are knitted together (P7).

### **Conclusion**

A grounded theory analysis was performed on the collected data to understand the experiences of female clergy working through the process of moral conflict in pastoral care with domestic violence victims. The study highlighted the process of dealing with moral conflict. To understand these experiences, eight participants were interviewed based on their previous experience dealing with moral conflict in pastoral care and providing care and/or counseling to domestic violence victims. Participants answered and discussed the 16 guided open interview questions developed by the researcher to gain further insight into the issue of moral conflict and domestic violence and how female clergy work through the process of dealing with this issue.

The questions asked helped to further understand the participants' experiences and answer the primary research questions and sub questions.

The use of grounded theory analysis discovered six themes regarding moral conflict in pastoral care and described the process of dealing with this phenomenon. The primary research question was: How do female clergy describe the process of dealing with moral conflict in pastoral care of domestic violence situations? Female clergy describe the process of dealing with moral conflict by recognizing, understanding and having an awareness of emotions and feeling that conflict with providing care to domestic violence victims. Female clergy used healthy coping mechanisms, advocacy and promoting safety within their communities and congregations to reduce moral conflict.

Female Clergy's understanding of moral conflict is when victims, families and people in the faith community have certain beliefs about what the bible says about abuse. If these beliefs condone or justify abuse, it often keeps an individual in an abusive situation. Female clergy view these beliefs as misinterpretations of bible scripture and feels it conflicts with their own beliefs about faith and violence. Female clergy use inspirational resources such as the Bible, and faith-based inspirational documents to inspire and restore hope to victims of domestic violence.

The research questions were answered as a result of the six themes discovered through the grounded theory coding process. Chapter five will provide a further discussion of results and answers to the research questions. The next chapter will also discuss implications for further research in this area.

## **CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to gain insight and understanding on how female clergy describe the process of moral conflict in pastoral care in domestic violence situations. The study provided further insight and knowledge of female clergy's understanding of moral conflict in relation to their religious affiliation and how they may be a source of empowerment to victims of domestic violence. A goal of this study was to fill in the gap in literature on the study of moral conflict in pastoral care and domestic violence. In previous studies on domestic violence and clergy, female clergy were an underrepresented sample. The study also adds to ongoing body of knowledge to the study of clergy and domestic violence treatment.

The data analysis presented in Chapter 4 provided insight into the process of dealing with moral conflict. The following categories were developed during data analysis: advocates for change, recognizing conflicts in care, awareness of emotional conflicts, consultations, healthy coping mechanisms and promoting safety. Chapter 5 will present a discussion of the conclusions, related implications and limitations of the study. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for futures studies in this area.

### **Summary of Results**

The data from the study suggests that female clergy recognize and acknowledge moral conflict while providing pastoral care in domestic violence cases. Female clergy discussed various ways to work through the process of moral conflict. Six themes were discovered as important processes of dealing and working through moral conflict. The first category was

advocate for change in which female clergy discussed the need to recognize and deal with conflicts in domestic violence related to scripture misconceptions, equality for women, challenging old beliefs that condone abuse and oppress the victim and changes in family structure. The second category is female clergy being able to recognize conflicts in pastoral care. Female clergy in this category described their experiences dealing with domestic violence in pastoral care through their personal and professional experiences and trying to maintain a healthy balance between their personal self and their pastoral role.

The third category is awareness of emotional conflict. Female clergy described various feelings when hearing stories from victims affected by domestic violence. Participants were aware of their emotions during pastoral care in domestic violence situations. They expressed such feelings of fear, anger and sadness and discussed the importance of being aware of these emotions during counseling and/or pastoral care sessions. The fourth category is the use of consultations to work through the process of dealing with moral conflict. Female clergy work with various individuals in their field to consult with on different cases of domestic violence when they recognize a conflict in their personal or professional emotions related to providing care.

The fifth category is utilizing healthy coping mechanism to deal with moral conflict in pastoral care of domestic violence. Female clergy utilize several coping techniques such as prayer, journaling, self-care and meditation as ways to deal with moral conflict. The last category was promoting safety among the congregation and victims of domestic violence. Female clergy were strong advocates for promoting safety against domestic violence in their congregation and

the communities they serve. Female clergy felt that promoting safety and empowering victims of domestic violence was also a way to reduce feelings of moral conflict/dissonance.

## **Discussion of Results**

The primary research question was: How do female clergy describe the process of dealing with moral conflict in pastoral care of domestic violence situations? Sub questions included in this study that helped to develop a theory were: a) What is your understanding of moral conflict as it relates to your own religious faith, and b) How do you empower women who are experiencing domestic violence? The data analysis for this study helped to develop a two-dimensional theory regarding the processing of dealing with moral conflict in pastoral care in domestic violence situations. The findings from this study emerged through the process of coding in which data was grouped into categories and theoretical coding. Six themes emerged during the data analysis. The following themes: advocates for change, recognizing conflicts in care, awareness of emotional conflicts, consultations, healthy coping mechanisms and promoting safety will be discussed.

The first category was advocating for change, in which female clergy advocate for changes to work through the process of moral conflict of gender justice for victims and female clergy, challenging male elders, scripture misconceptions and dealing with family conflicts. These ideas create conflict and promote ongoing violence in families. Misconceptions of scripture are used by both the victim and the abuser. Female clergy in this study worked to help educate victims of domestic violence to develop a healthy understanding of scriptures on family and marriage. For example, per the participants, a bible scripture that constantly comes up from

the abuser, male clergy and the victim is the Holy Bible, “Women submit yourselves to unto your husbands” (Ephesians, 5:22, King James Version), and Ephesians, 5:23, “For the husband is head of the household”. The interpretation of these scriptures has been known to condone abuse and keep the victim in an abusive environment. Clergy in this study provided a healthy interpretation of these scriptures and encouraged victims to keep reading further down the scripture for further clarification and understanding. Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands love their wives even as Christ also loved the church”. Participants wanted to provide a more objective understanding of the Bible and empower victims through the scriptures. This study is consistent with a previous study by Knickmeyer et al. (2003) on women receiving mixed messages and double binds in regard to domestic violence by faith leaders. Clergy in this study admitted to not liking the idea of divorce and believed in the sanctity of marriage but choose safety over staying in an unhealthy abusive marriage.

Female clergy were also willing to challenge male elders on what they felt like were old antiquated views of marriage and beliefs about abuse that protects the abuser rather than the victim. While female clergy have good established relationships with their male counterparts, they are outspoken about biblical beliefs about violence. If a male pastor is saying to a victim “you made a covenant with this man, you must pray through it”, female clergy spoke out against violence and were willing to help beyond the church if needed. Families also contribute to victims staying in abusive relationship which poses a conflict for female clergy. The participants recognized that families look differently from 50 or 60 years ago, but families can still have a strong influence over behavior and decisions that individuals make. It is important to clergy to

adapt to changing trends in the families to work through conflict that condone abuse. The family role in ongoing abuse is consistent with the qualitative study conducted by Agoff, Herrera, and Castro (2007), on the role that family relations play in the promotion of traditional gender roles that promote violence. Findings in this study suggest that families sometimes create barriers to interventions and often may generate situations of vulnerability for women. Agoff et al. (2007) and the present study are similar in identifying families as often a contributing factor to violence against women because of gender roles and biblical scriptures.

Lastly, female clergy advocate for gender equality among women in ministry. Female clergy experiences were different from their male counterparts in pastoral care roles and they tended to be more compassionate and understanding in matters of domestic violence. The following study confirmed results from the Frame and Shehan (2004) study on female clergy in pastoral care roles where it was found that female clergy were found to be more approachable and compassionate. Galbraith (2005) also found women to be more approachable and sensitive to the needs of women who are being abused about domestic violence.

Female clergy admitted to their feelings and emotions that may cause conflicts in care, especially when there was a clash of spiritual and emotional differences about violence. Female clergy stressed the importance of recognizing their emotions, situations, both professional and personal experiences that may create a conflict during pastoral care. As a professional providing pastoral care, it is important to recognize your own conflict that may be different from the individuals you are providing care to. The study suggests that reducing conflicts in care is recognizing your own beliefs, prejudices and biases that may contribute to causing further harm

to the victim. Female clergy suggest being aware and being able to manage your own feelings. Conflicting feelings and beliefs between the victims and clergy presented were: (a) the struggle over client's returning home to the abuser, (b) when professional lines are crossed by other clergy, (c) spiritual obligations over helping families stay together, (d) recognizing limits on pastoral care/skills, and (e) your own personal experiences with abuse. Female clergy who have personal and professional experiences with domestic violence have a greater sense of empathy for victims and are able to have a more objective view in the process of seeking help and safety for victims. Education and previous career background in fields outside of the ministry increase clergy awareness of their own moral conflict in domestic violence situations as well as their understanding of the need for safety for victims.

Clergy in this study had education and vocational experiences in criminal justice, psychology, nursing, and social work which increased their insight into identifying their own feelings as well as the feelings and/or emotions of their clients. Miles (2003) suggested that clergy without proper training may not correctly assess the danger of a violent situation. Untrained clergy may suggest that both parties are responsible for the conflict that caused violence or recommend marriage counseling. Clergy's experience in previous careers gave them more insight into client's overall needs, both in the church and at home. According to Taylor et al. (2000), a clergy's level of education played a role in their involvement in social and community issues outside of the church.

The use of professional consultations was another way participants reported dealing with moral conflict in domestic violence. Participants sought professional consultations from spiritual

leaders, mental health professionals, police, shelter workers and other domestic violence professionals. Participants were open to establishing community relationships and alliances. Nason-Clark (2004) stated in the past, secular domestic violence professionals did not like working with Christian families often due to their religious beliefs often creates barriers to receiving effective treatment. On the other hand, clergy professionals are slow to refer parishioners to outside secular resources because they believe that shelters are unsafe places to claim faith. Participants in this study had no problems contacting the police if the client needed further intervention. They recognized their limitations and knew when to seek help for their feelings and emotions that conflicted with the clients. This study also revealed that when the church and cleric staff are active in the community and had established social service programs within the church, were more open to dealing with their own conflicts relating to domestic violence. The support of a team of professionals in the field from various disciplines and a strong supportive spiritual team helps participants to work through any feelings of moral conflict related to domestic violence.

Participants in this study stressed the importance of being able to learn and utilize coping skills to deal with moral conflict. They identified several ways to cope with feelings of moral conflict. The following coping mechanisms are implored by clergy in this study in their daily practice of pastoral care:

- a) The most important coping strategies were self-care. Self-care strategies reported by female clergy were prayer, rest, journaling, meditation and the use of affirmations.

- b) The next coping strategies used by clergy were being open about feelings and expressing emotions related to conflicts during pastoral care.
- c) Self-reflection was another way participants coped with their feelings. Participants felt being able to identify their own issues that may conflict with care.
- d) Maintaining good boundaries between yourself and the client is a good way of dealing with their own feelings of conflict.
- e) Having a good support system keeps clergy grounded and able to process any conflicted emotions when needed.
- f) Recognizing their own biases and prejudices when providing pastoral care.

Promoting safety was the last theme in the process of dealing with moral conflict. As stated in previous studies, participants did not like the idea of divorce and had strong beliefs in the sacredness of marriage, but promoted a healthy and safe marriage over an unhealthy and abusive marriage. Emphasis in this study was placed on safety of victims and their family. Participants stated in good conscience they could not encourage a victim to stay in the marriage because of what biblical scriptures say about marriage. To reduce their feelings of moral conflict clergy promoted safety through empowering victims, building trusting relationships and maintaining confidentiality. The feelings of conflict are reduced by feeling that they were giving victims a safe and confidential place to open up about the abuse and not feel judged on their decision whether they stay or leave their marriage by the church. Participants also used pastoral counseling/care as an opportunity to empower victims of domestic violence. Participants empowered victims through teaching positive interpretations of the Bible. In addition to the

Bible, participants empower victims through inspirational quotes and literature as well as other people's testimony of survival and recovery from domestic violence. Participants felt that the Bible should be used as a source of hope, and not oppression.

### **Conclusion Based on Results**

The results of this study suggest that female clergy are empathetic and compassionate toward situations of domestic violence. They tend to be very approachable and open to talking about sensitive topics such as family violence in the church. Female clergy describe the process of negotiating and dealing with moral conflict by having awareness, acknowledging and recognizing their feelings of moral conflict and being proactive in helping victims in domestic violence situations. Female clergy use various coping strategies to deal with their own emotions that may conflict with victims and the pastoral care process. They also empower victims through positive biblical teachings and advocate for safety.

### **Comparison of the Findings with the Theoretical Framework and Previous Literature**

The current study expands on two previous studies that revealed the issue of moral conflict in clergy when dealing with domestic violence situations in their congregation, but few studies explored this concept any further (Levitt & Ware 2006a, 2006b). Many studies sought to understand religious and faith-based organizations on their interaction with domestic violence victims. The current study expounded on the Levitt and Ware (2006a, 2006b) investigation of understanding the interaction between religions and intimate partner violence. Levitt and Ware (2006a) results revealed that clergy did view domestic violence as a problem, but still were unwilling and struggled with marriage ending in divorce because of abuse. Religious leaders also

felt the responsibility of abuse was to the victim. Levitt and Ware (2006a) results revealed that religious leaders struggled with promoting safety and their religious principles about marriage. Nason-Clark (2009) study looked at religion and domestic violence from a variety of perspectives revealed that pastors felt obligated to preserve the sanctity of marriage despite the presence of violence. Clergy in this study felt that they failed in their role as a pastoral caregiver when the couple made the decision to end their marriage. Pastors did advocate for safety in some cases even suggesting separation while going through therapy for family violence

In comparison with these two studies, clergy in the current study struggled with their feelings about the sacredness of marriage but advocated for safety and did not have conflict with a marriage ending if abuse was present. Clergy in this study promoted healthy marriage and were strong advocates against violence. Participants in this study discussed the importance of safety which was a reoccurring theme throughout this study. Many respondents in previous studies expressed conflicted feelings over their worldly and spiritual beliefs regarding marriage and family violence (Shannon-Lewy & Dull, 2005). Clergy in this study seem to have a more objective view of marriage and abuse based on their own personal and professional experiences. In this study, many of the clergy had previous careers in other areas such as mental health, social work, criminal justice and hospital settings. They possessed a greater understanding of a safe healthy marriage and did not strictly follow historical context about gender roles in marriage. Female pastors taught the concept of a mutually respectful marriage. Another study in the literature conducted by Knickmeyer et al. (2003) found that female victims within church congregations possessed ineffective coping skills. This is partially due to mixed messages

received by pastors. A sub-category for the present study in dealing with moral conflict in domestic violence was scripture misconceptions and gender equality. Clergy in this study elaborated further on how scripture misconceptions condone abuse and oppresses the victim. The second sub-category, gender equality, clergy discussed advocating for women and fighting old stereotypes about marriage. Clergy discussed using the Bible and scripture teachings to empower victims, highlighting mutual respect in relationships and promote safety. Clergy were more flexible in their teachings about marriage, abuse and dealing with their own moral conflict on these issues.

Many of the studies regarding clergy perceptions and understandings of domestic violence included few female participants (Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006; Brade, 2009; Levitt & Ware, 2006a; Peterson, 2009; Rotunda et al., 2004). Olson, et al. (2000) addressed the dominance of one gender in the church. The current study was conducted using female clergy only to develop more of an understanding of female clergy dealing with domestic violence issues and the conflict of theological versus secular coping strategies. The purpose of this study was to add the experiences and perspectives of female clergy to the ongoing topic of domestic violence and pastoral care.

The theoretical perspective for this study was the theory of moral development by Kohlberg and cognitive dissonance by Festinger. The theoretical assumptions of the study were that cognitive dissonance would provide a framework for how female clergy dealt with moral conflict in pastoral care. The theory of moral development would also help to understand how the clergy's stage of moral development determined how they handled moral conflict in pastoral

care and how female clergy may be a sense of empowerment for domestic violence victims. Female clergy experienced several incidents of moral conflict in pastoral care and were able to use various resources to negotiate and work through the process of dealing with moral conflict. In Kohlberg's Theory of moral development, the level of experiences in domestic violence, years as a practicing clergy and personal and professional experiences determined the stage of development that each clergy was in how they approached and provided pastoral care to victims. The assumption that female clergy were able to provide a sense of empowerment to victims was valid based on responses to how they handled domestic violence and moral conflict.

Few studies have challenged cognitive dissonance theory with clergy as participants. Lawrence's (2014) study with practitioner's revealed unawareness, avoidance or overall dismiss of information that conflicts with their own personal and professional worldview. The current study revealed an awareness of moral conflict to their personal and professional worldview during domestic violence issues, but in comparison, some of Lawrence's participants did draw on personal experiences to manage this potential dissonance as in the current study. Gramley (1994) examined the experiences of dissonance and congruence in female clergy in their pastoral care roles, but the focus was not primarily on domestic violence. The current study confirmed some similar results in Gramley's study such as conflicts related to theology, authority, and leadership and being a lesbian female in the ministry. The current study core categories revealed gender justice, conflict with theological doctrine related to relationships and male dominance in the church. Other previous studies looked at dissonance from the perspectives of domestic violence victims (Zaitman, 1998) and practicing Christians (Krause, 2015). Because cognitive

dissonance and the theory of moral development are present across multiple disciplines, exploring dissonance in clergy was important to add to previous and current literature.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The study conducted on female clergy used theoretical perspectives, Cognitive Dissonance, the Theory of Moral Development and previous literature to make assumptions about moral conflict in pastoral care with domestic violence situations. The study was guided by the assumptions that the stages of moral development determines the approach to dealing with moral conflict in domestic violence situations. For the theory of cognitive dissonance, it was the belief that past and current experiences with domestic violence and being a female may cause some instances of moral conflict to develop. Results indicated that female clergy experience moral conflict and were aware of their feelings connected to this conflict. The study substantiated female clergy do experience moral conflict in domestic violence situations due to personal and professional reasons (Levitt & Ware, 2006a; Shannon-Lewy & Dull, 2005). The study expanded our knowledge and provided some new insight on how clergy deal with these conflicting emotions. Like most studies (Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006; Brade, 2009; Peterson 2009; Rotunda et al., 2004) clergy discussed their experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. The current study sought to have clergy describe the process of ways to negotiate the issues of moral conflict during pastoral care. In describing the process of negotiating and dealing with moral conflict in domestic violence cases and providing pastoral care, clergy found that advocating for changes in scripture teaching, other clergy and families, recognizing conflicts in care that affect pastoral care, being aware of their own emotional conflict whether personal or

professional, seeking help from other professionals including other clergy and secular counselors, promoting safety within the church and developing their own healthy coping and self-care skills to reduce dissonance.

Levitt and Ware (2006b) discussed the need for a more racial and gender diverse sample for future studies. The sample in previous literature on the topic of clergy and domestic violence was dominated by male participants (Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006; Levitt & Ware 2006a, 2006b; Rotunda et al., 2004). The current study interviewed all female clergy from diverse religious backgrounds to add to the gap in research. Interviewing gender on the topic of moral conflict and domestic violence also related to the study by Olson et al. (2000) which identified in their study that male clergy typically have spoken for both genders in past research studies. This study also sought to test the theory in Frame and Shehan (2004) study that female clergy are more approachable and understanding to situations of domestic violence. The Frame study also indicated that female clergy allocate more time to pastoral care/counseling while men managed the administrative side. The current study supports this previous study on the approach that female clergy take in providing pastoral care and dealing with their moral conflict. This study also provided further support and insight into Galbraith (2005) study on female clergy about their experiences. Galbraith concluded that female bring a different set of experiences than men. This was evident in the current study in which female clergy's personal and professional experiences dictated their approach to helping women who were victims of domestic violence. Safety was a theme in the current study and Galbraith's (2005) study on female clergy. Female clergy in this study promoted safety over preserving a marriage that is abusive.

## **Limitations**

Limitations in research often impact the validity of the results of the study. They are a few limitations to the study. First, the sample size was relatively small and limited to one city in the Southwest part of the United States and its surrounding counties. This limits the generalizability of the findings. The sample consisted of women only. This was based on the recommendation that future studies include more women clergy. The sample of participants were from diverse denominations, but limited to those denominations that women are allowed to be ordained into. The researcher's use of moral conflict in studying cognitive dissonance may have created some limitations. There were some responses to clergy that ask for further clarification of the term moral conflict, but decided not to participate in the study. The fourth limitation was, the term moral conflict and the sensitive topic of domestic violence may have caused some potential participants to decline being interviewed. Participants in the study also ask for further clarification of the term moral conflict. The researcher using the terms cognitive dissonance and moral conflict interchangeable helped participants to open up about their experiences of moral conflict in pastoral care of domestic violence cases.

## **Implications of the Study**

This research has helped to provide insight into the issue of working through the process of moral conflict during pastoral care in domestic violence cases. The research allowed for female clergy to share their experiences about moral conflict and the topic of domestic violence in pastoral care which is often a sensitive and complex topic. The results of the study indicated that clergy have to be comfortable with having open conversations about their emotions and

conflict that affect pastoral care. There is a clear need for additional research in this area. Having open conversations with a broader group of clerics from multiple faiths, gender, race and age about the sensitive topic of domestic violence and dealing with moral conflict or emotional conflict that may affect care is important. Although this study revealed positive responses in clergy opening up about the issues of domestic violence and moral conflict, there still tends to be a cultural and spiritual divide between clergy and community mental health professionals.

As stated throughout the paper, cognitive dissonance/moral conflict was present in the results of many studies that involved conflicted feelings and emotions for clergy who have experienced caring for domestic violence victims. Prior to the findings in this research, there were several studies on cognitive dissonance in other social science disciplines, but limited studies on religion and clergy. They were even fewer studies on female clergy. This study explored the concept of moral conflict further and gave voice to clergy who have experienced these feelings and were willing to open up and talk about ways to work through it. The current research sought to fill in this gap related to gender and theory. Implications from the results of this study are to develop a plan to provide spiritual and cultural strategies for education, clergy, mental health professionals and practice.

### **Implications for Education**

Domestic violence curriculums should be included in CPT (Clinical Pastoral Training) programs, seminary schools and in faith-based communities. Participants in this study wanted to see more training in the area of domestic violence to deal with the challenges of working through crisis and family violence situations. Per participants, CPT does provide some basic training on

domestic violence, but more extensive training is needed. In this study, many of the participants worked in previous careers that helped them to understand the issues surrounding domestic violence which prepared them for working in pastoral care roles in the church, but also, they are faced with working with clergy where experiences have been limited, which also causes a conflict. A professional from the mental health or domestic violence field should be able to offer training in seminary schools or faith-based communities. The researcher feels this will give clergy an opportunity to become comfortable with recognizing and processing their own feelings of moral conflict that may affect pastoral care in domestic violence cases. A collaborative effort must be made between clergy, seminary and the mental health community to reach out to one another and develop educational programs that deal with family violence. This curriculum must include the history of domestic violence, social, cultural and spiritual context of violence, consultations, referrals and resources. The goal is for clergy graduating from seminary and working in faith-based communities to feel more prepared to deal with not just their own conflicting emotions but to also help families find the support and resources they need in order to feel safe. Additional training also provides clergy with the support they need to deal with the sensitive topic of domestic violence. A recently published article before the completion of the current research looked at curriculums to better incorporate family violence training in seminary schools and continuing education classes on family violence topics for clergy (McMullin, Nason-Clark, Fisher-Townsend & Holtmann, 2015). Positive responses came from administrators of seminary schools that agreed that there is a lack of training and need for domestic violence classes before clergy provide pastoral care. Researchers from the study were invited to provide

guest lectures at several seminaries. Reaching out to the clergy community is important to fill this need in the schools.

### **Implications for Clergy and Mental Health Professionals**

It is evident that victims of domestic violence are not just within the congregation of the churches but the surrounding communities the churches serve. A recent phenomenological study (Jackson, 2015) evaluated perceptions that licensed professional counselors held about pastoral counseling in the African American church. The study interviewed 31 Licensed Professional Counselors lived experiences on their own perceptions of pastors conducting counseling. Results of the study revealed that Licensed Professional Counselors understand the importance of the role that clergy play in the African American community. Participants felt that clergy are more sensitive to social and cultural factors than mental or emotional factors. The study did suggest that counselors would like to build better relationships and community partnerships with clergy. Individuals still view the church as a safe haven and place of comfort. Clergy must recognize and acknowledge their own biases when it comes to family violence. Clergy must promote safety in the church and the greater community. Since this study focused on female clergy, it is the belief of this researcher that female clergy could be a catalyst for change. Female clergy developing support programs for other clergy (both male and female) to provide support, education and resources in the area of domestic violence. Clergy must emphasize safe communities to prevent domestic violence. Clergy must be open to reaching out and establishing relationships with domestic violence workers, mental health professionals and law enforcement. Participants in this study discuss the need to learn and obtain more information about mental

health/domestic violence resources in their area. Clergy should not feel they must handle a domestic violence situation alone. In larger congregations, clergy must find out the strengths and experiences in areas of specialty care among their peers and seek help if needed. Clergy should seek consults from other clergy and develop relationships with mental health professionals to consult with as well. Clergy must recognize their own limitations and know when to referral to a social worker or professional counselor. Pastors must understand the complexities of domestic violence and the barriers it creates that sometimes prevent women from leaving unsafe family situations. Participants in this study emphasize the danger of using scriptures that confuse victims and condone abuse. Clergy must use spiritual language, biblical stories, and metaphors to empower victims and promote healthy marriages and relationships. Dahm (2011) recommended clergy include in their sermons discussions about domestic violence and develop committees to provide resources and support.

Mental health professionals must work to strengthen relationships between themselves and the clergy community. Participants in this study discussed wanting more information about mental health professionals in their area who are willing to work with domestic violence victims. Participants also discussed that they feel professionals in the field of counseling do not give ministers/clergy much credit for helping domestic violence victims. Per Nason-Clark (2004), secular counselors and domestic violence workers and clergy must understand one another's language in order to collaborate and work together. There needs to be more conversations and interactions between clergy and mental health professionals. This can happen by mental health professionals reaching out to communities of faith in the areas they serve. Mental health

professionals need to share information and offer assistance to clergy. Both clergy and mental health professionals must recognize their limitations in areas of cultural and spiritual issues related to domestic violence and know when to refer to one another. The relationships must be reciprocal. Mental health professionals should offer seminars on mental health, domestic violence and other social problems to clergy.

Lastly, mental health professionals can strengthen relationships with clergy by speaking at clergy training institutions and seminaries. Mental health professionals may also lend their expertise on domestic violence issues to faith-based journals, Christian websites and organizations. If mental health professionals and clergy develop more collaborative relationships with one another, and develop multi discipline consulting groups, this may help them to be able to admit to conflicting feelings, having open conversations and develop problem solving strategies.

### **Implications for Practice**

Based on the research on female clergy and the issues of moral conflict, there is a need for more clinical support for clergy of all gender and diverse faith-based denominations. Many clergy in this research had both personal and professional experiences dealing directly with domestic violence and moral conflict. Mental health professionals must continue to reach out and develop seminars and programs to support clergy who also provide counseling and pastoral care services. Researchers must also continue to conduct grounded theory research to develop theoretical perspectives to understanding challenges and issues that clergy face in their daily practice of pastoral care.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings in this study provided additional insight into the female clergy providing pastoral care in incidents of domestic violence. The knowledge gained from the study provided a theoretical perspective in the process of female clergy dealing with issues of moral conflict in pastoral care of domestic violence victims. Insight into the knowledge, awareness and coping strategies of dealing with moral conflict was identified through interviews with female clergy. There are four recommendations the researcher has for future research. The first recommendation is for researchers to conduct more studies with female clergy. This study conducted research with eight female clergy. Studies like Levitt and Ware (2006a, 2006b) suggested the need for more studies on religion and domestic violence with diverse populations of gender, and denominations. The second recommendation is to conduct studies using female non-Christian spiritual leaders. This study was limited to only female Christian clergy. Another recommendation by the researcher is to conduct focus group studies with both male and female clergy about moral conflict in pastoral care. It is important to have more open conversations about the topic of moral conflict in pastoral care. The third recommendations are more studies that look at the legal and moral responsibility of clergy in pastoral care roles. Greene (2001) examined potential causes of action for clergy liability in domestic violence cases. The study raised the question: Can clergy be held liable for the results of bad counsel to victims of domestic violence? The study concluded that rather than legal action, educating clergy would be a more feasible solution. The overall goal was to create a healthier congregational family.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of the study suggest that moral conflict does exist for female clergy when providing pastoral care in domestic violence situations. The study revealed that female clergy are able to work through the process of dealing with moral conflict by being aware and acknowledging their emotions that conflict with care during domestic violence interventions. Clergy used healthy coping mechanisms, advocated for victims and promoted safe and healthy marriages to work through the process of moral conflict. Female clergy viewed moral conflict in domestic violence cases as a conflict of beliefs about violence that may affect care during the pastoral care/counseling process. Clergy did acknowledge that their negative emotions and experiences may hinder the victim from getting appropriate care and interventions.

Advocating, promoting safety in the congregations and empowering victims are ways to help victims and reduce moral conflict/dissonance. Female clergy in this study were strong advocates against domestic violence. Female clergy advocated for women in ministry, challenged old biblical stereotypes relating to family and sought to build relationships with professionals in the domestic violence community. They were concerned about how the church approached domestic violence and work to make changes. Female clergy were found to be more approachable and compassionate to issues of domestic violence.

This study summarizes female clergy are a source of empowerment for victim's due to their different set of life experiences and skill set from their male counterparts. Their professional and personal experiences increased their awareness of family violence and the need for safety. While there is an increase in awareness of domestic violence in pastoral care in the

church congregations due to previous studies, the approaches to moral conflict in dealing with violence is still a difficult topic for pastors to open up and talk about or even admit that it exists among them or their peers. The lessons learned from moral conflict/dissonance from other disciplines may help clergy to better understand that conflicting feelings are a normal part of care.

Moral conflict may be addressed by clergy building strong relationships with domestic violence and mental health professionals in the community. Clergy may also address their feelings of moral conflict by being willing to join multi-disciplinary consulting groups so that clergy, counselors, family therapists, law enforcement workers, and domestic violence workers may all learn from one another and work through negative feelings to bring about change to victims and their families.

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## APPENDIX A. STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL WORK

### Academic Honesty Policy

Capella University's Academic Honesty Policy ([3.01.01](#)) holds learners accountable for the integrity of work they submit, which includes but is not limited to discussion postings, assignments, comprehensive exams, and the dissertation or capstone project.

Established in the Policy are the expectations for original work, rationale for the policy, definition of terms that pertain to academic honesty and original work, and disciplinary consequences of academic dishonesty. Also, stated in the Policy is the expectation that learners will follow APA rules for citing another person's ideas or works.

The following standards for original work and definition of *plagiarism* are discussed in the Policy:

Learners are expected to be the sole authors of their work and to acknowledge the authorship of others' work through proper citation and reference. Use of another person's ideas, including another learner's, without proper reference or citation constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty and is prohibited conduct. (p. 1)

Plagiarism is one example of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own. Plagiarism also includes copying verbatim or rephrasing ideas without properly acknowledging the source by author, date, and publication medium. (p. 2)

Capella University's Research Misconduct Policy ([3.03.06](#)) holds learners accountable for research integrity. What constitutes research misconduct is discussed in the Policy:

Research misconduct includes but is not limited to falsification, fabrication, plagiarism, misappropriation, or other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the academic community for proposing, conducting, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. (p. 1)

Learners failing to abide by these policies are subject to consequences, including but not limited to dismissal or revocation of the degree.

### Statement of Original Work and Signature

I have read, understood, and abided by Capella University's Academic Honesty Policy ([3.01.01](#)) and Research Misconduct Policy ([3.03.06](#)), including Policy Statements, Rationale, and Definitions.

I attest that this dissertation or capstone project is my own work. Where I have used the ideas or words of others, I have paraphrased, summarized, or used direct quotes following the guidelines set forth in the *APA Publication Manual*.

Learner name

and date Shannon R. Smith 1/24/17

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**APPENDIX B. RESEARCHER- DESIGNED DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Highest Level of Education: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Clergy Training: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Religious Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Name of Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Years of Practice: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C. RESEARCHER-**  
**DESIGNED GUIDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Primary Research Question:**

How do female clergy describe the process of dealing with moral conflict when providing pastoral care to individuals in domestic violence situation?

**Initial Questions:**

1. Describe the faith-based organization you are affiliated with.
2. What current activities or programs are you involved in within your church?
3. What made you decide to become clergy and advice individuals in your congregation?
4. What is your current experience in providing pastoral care to individuals in domestic violence situations?
5. Describe the population of domestic violence victims you have worked with.

**Intermediate Questions:**

1. What are your current thoughts about the family?
2. How do you define moral conflict in pastoral care?
3. What are your thoughts and feelings when the family is affected by domestic violence?
4. How do you describe the process of dealing with moral conflict when involved domestic violence situations?

5. Tell me a time you experienced moral conflict while providing pastoral care to an individual who was a victim of domestic violence.

Ending Questions:

1. What do you think is most important when working with an individual who are struggling with domestic violence issues and their faith and beliefs about the family?
2. Tell me a time, if any that you struggled with an individual's decision related to violence occurring within their families.
3. What resources do you utilize when you are dealing with moral conflict or an individual's resistance seeking help?
4. Do you have a favorite scripture that helps you to deal with individuals who are experiencing domestic violence?
5. Is there anything you would like to share to help me understand your personal experiences better in working with this population?
6. Are there any questions that you would like to ask me?

## APPENDIX D. GROUNDED THEORY ANALYSIS CODING CHART

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
Advocates for Change (11)	<p>Scripture Misconceptions</p> <p>oppress victims and condones violence (11)</p>	<p>“the Bible is still key but seen in a bigger context with history, while that does not sound important, but is very important because abusers use the scriptures in a very profound way, to make women submit to abuse” (P2)</p> <p>“one women whose husband attempted to murder her were in Christian “quote/unquote” families (P2)</p> <p>“I spend a lot of time talking about the fact that God does not cause those things to happen. That they are not being punished, that God cannot go against his own nature, and beating people up” (P3)</p> <p>just an example of being with somebody whose living with idea that divorce is a sin, living with idea that someone is beating her and fearful of her life, at times, leaving at least 3 times that I know of, then went back each time she never made it the tenth time of leaving before she left for good (P5)</p> <p>From a pastoral perspective, helping people live in God’s preferred future for them, if you focus more on fully on what God’s desire is for you, you are thinking less about right and wrong and being disappointed in yourself or disappoint God (P5)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
		<p>It is still to me your worth, because, let's say if you believe, "God says no divorce", I take them to the scripture, I ask where did you get that from, Ok let's read, so I want to talk to you about what the social context in that community from the Bible... We are really quick to throw these words out, you really need to understand the social context (P6)</p>
		<p>let's say the person who is being abused, saying that the Bible says... and I try to talk to them about it, they talk about the scriptures, I try to go there with them, and Jesus always talks about love, I did not say this, Jesus said this, let's go to the scripture... I am going to give you some of these, and think about who was Jesus always in contact or in relations with, the least of these, the person that was being abused, the person that was poor, the women that Mary Madeline, the women they claimed was a prostitute, who was it that Jesus with... he was always, always on the side of the victim(P6)</p>
		<p>and so when I started pushing those things, she would try to bring up a scripture from Ephesians and I would say, ok keep reading..you can't just take the one text where it says about the man is supposed to be the head of the wife, keep reading where it says, the husband is supposed to love the wife (P8)</p>
		<p>" I don't understand how anybody can read a Bible as a whole and take away that it is good to be in control of somebody else because you're a woman, child, elderly, whatever the situation is" (P8)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
Recognizing Conflict (7)	Identifying emotional conflict (7)	<p data-bbox="967 344 1546 415">“ I think faith is more important at that time, they misunderstand how God works” (P4)</p> <p data-bbox="967 453 1546 596">“I have to keep my emotions in check...so I have prayer before I meet with them..I try to pray every morning but definitely before I have any type of pastoral conversation” (P5)</p> <p data-bbox="967 634 1546 777">“ I don’t react with what L would do, because I could find myself getting angry, being impatient with not getting to the right decision” (P5)</p> <p data-bbox="967 814 1546 999">So, sometimes it is very difficult for me not to just get upset, especially if I get fearful for someone or if my heart is just breaking, because they feel they are worthless, that is hard for me more than anything (P5)</p> <p data-bbox="967 1037 1546 1142">“I kind of separate them, because I think you know, most woman, they get back together, but I separate” (P6)</p> <p data-bbox="967 1180 1546 1436">The second thing was her husband he was not attending church but he started coming for a while, I really struggled...like I had violent thoughts on what I wanted to do to him. So I probably wasn’t very pastoral to him at all because all I can think about was my anger (P8)</p> <p data-bbox="967 1474 1546 1583">“In terms of anger, that becomes something which my way of dealing with that is to cry if I need to , pray it out if I need to” (P1)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
Advocates for Change (9)	Seeking gender equality (9)	I felt a call to be a minister and in a nice small town they did not happen, women had no worth, so it was a calling but I didn't pursue it, but I have always pursued, unity and diversity is the best way to put it, it is more than gender justice (P2)
	Challenging old stereotypes & theological history (6)	<p data-bbox="964 569 1549 674">“when I was in my early twenties, it was this part that says “I want to know what the Bible says about women and if it says” (P2)</p> <p data-bbox="964 716 1549 852">“read deep and wide Christian writers mostly on domestic violence, church history, the theology, and the ministers thinking, “folks we got this backwards” (P2)</p> <p data-bbox="964 894 1549 999">“from a scripture point of view, women in ministry was actually what God intended, that's what I got out of it” (P2)</p> <p data-bbox="964 1041 1549 1178">“ My husband is Catholic, so even if I was considering it, this would be opposite because a priest would be something so different to him as a male” (P6)</p> <p data-bbox="964 1220 1549 1356">“ I was going against God and just couldn't see it, you barely have women in this denomination and no women of color in this diocese” (P6)</p> <p data-bbox="964 1398 1549 1581">“started interacting with the Methodist pastor..I watch women become accepted and ordained and a pastor of that church, I still had this mental blog of being able to see myself in that role” (P8)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
Recognizing conflicts in care (11)	Self-Awareness (11) Conflict during pastoral care (11)	<p>I was being called to ministry to something in ministry, but having a hard time identifying that as a pastor and actually got into seminary school and remember sitting in orientation and having someone asks, so those of you that are here, raise your hand if you think you want to be a pastor and I did not raise my hand” (P8)</p> <p>“ they did recognize women, elders, women clergy...you are free to interpret scriptures” (P7).</p> <p>“and I saw horrific abuse to non-horrific abuse. I have seen women where the men had set their house on fire with their children inside or beat them with pipes, just horrific stuff” (P2)</p> <p>“acknowledging the eye was darkened and the bruises on her arm just based on my experience with the mental health agencies, it appeared to me that there was some aspect of abuse” (P5)</p> <p>“from a pastor’s role, it has been here, this is the only place I have been in the ministry, from a former healthcare professional, I have seen it on the operating table, child abuse, domestic abuse, the evil” (P5)</p> <p>“I understand families that I talk to, there is a large population of young girls on the street, cause some family member has molested them” (P6)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
		<p>“When I first started working here I worked across the street at the homeless center as a Chaplain, I came across unspeakable types, not just domestic violence, but violence against women living on the streets” (P6)</p>
		<p>“I understand that families that I talk to, there is a large population of young girls on the street, cause some family members molested them” (P6)</p>
		<p>“currently I see a few people about the struggles they’re experiencing and especially a couple of women” (P8)</p>
		<p>another woman who lived in the same town, we grew up in, was killed by her husband she had been going to a male pastor, she told the pastor he kept abusing her, the pastor kept telling her to stay there, she needed to pray with him, so the man killed her (P8)</p>
		<p>“I counseled and still counsel a woman who just came out of a 20 year marriage of domestic violence” (P1)</p>
		<p>“I was in the office, a couple that was traveling had stopped by the church. I don’t remember what state they came from but they were auguring real bad....we couldn’t reach an agreement”(P7)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
Awareness of Conflict (10)	Self-Awareness (10)	<p>One of the male chaplain had gone to see the patient and once he found out she had been abused, he came and got me and ask if I would talk to her...she was afraid of talking and sharing any information.....being a person who was abused, I tried my best to make her see, that life has more to offer her than for her to sit and take abuse (P4)</p>
	Sharing professional & personal experiences that trigger conflict (10)	<p>When it is a moral issue, I try to handle it with care, but when it crosses a line, for me, when I feel somebody has been abusive, defined by our society without integrity, my moral issues is to try and sit with that person and try to have a conversation, not about me, but about us(P2)</p>
		<p>“To me this is a moral conflict because I am supposed to help people stay together, but I don’t think everyone should stay together” (P3).</p>
		<p>“So, I struggled with that one because, I struggled if I was pushing too hard or were we working on things she just did not want to talk about” (P3)</p>
		<p>We had a staff years ago had a husband that was very abusive....she was raised in a family of devout Catholic where divorce was not an option and worked in a Methodist Church where we recognized that in our faith what is mandated by law, or what God desires for us in our life and the expectations places on us by our family and our religion that we grew up in may be different (P5)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
		<p>“I have to keep my emotions in check...so I have prayer before I meet with them..I try to pray every morning but definitely before I have any type of pastoral conversation” (P5)</p>
		<p>“someone is crying out for help, and we miss it because we are using a ruler, or some check mark...we start peeling layers and finding out what is really important (P6)</p>
		<p>So I also understand that my professional skills are limited when it comes to counseling and so I try to always explain to people so I can be a pastoral counselor, where it is talking about scripture and biblical principles but if it needs to something long term or more in-depth, then I may refer to you to a professional (P8)</p>
		<p>Because what I realized is when...and this is what I learned from my social work education, we don't understand our own struggles, then we'll likely to project them onto other people. But when we understand those biases are what my struggles are, what my prejudices are, and I have somebody I can work that out with (P8)</p>
		<p>you have to be a professional, you can't lead by your emotion. You have to keep your head level and understand that you are there to help not to solve the problems but to help offer the best advice in leadership that you can (P7)</p>
		<p>“To work through conflict, you have to find a foundation to agree upon, people in domestic violence need somebody to see it the way they see it” (P4)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
Advocates for change (8)	Challenging beliefs that protect the abuser (8)	<p data-bbox="964 338 1520 443">“There was a women wo has been battered for 25 years, she called the police....within 15 minutes, the elders bailed him out” (P2)</p> <p data-bbox="964 485 1520 590">“..they stood behind the batterer saying she was supposed to submit, it was a slippery slope” (P2)</p> <p data-bbox="964 632 1544 852">I would like to add, except for that frustration level of having a fellow clergy who was older, much older, elder pastor who look at it from antiquated eyes of having a marriage52 years, god wants us to pray through it (P5)</p> <p data-bbox="964 894 1544 1146">There was a family who was going to a male pastor because the mother had teenage daughters had gotten remarried and found out her husband was molesting the girls. The Pastor said, you made a covenant with this man, stay with this man so we are going to pray, send him to me (P8)</p> <p data-bbox="964 1188 1520 1325">“so there are time even though, I haven’t experienced something like that myself, knowing this has happened because pastors weren’t trained adequately” (P8)</p> <p data-bbox="964 1367 1544 1690">the hardest thing for me to watch the church fail them” When you hear the church hammer women to submit and only offer them Bible studies on their emotions, tell them they have this framework to be a part of those things are not good, it is like, they need to be safe in their church and it bothers me when they have more an allegiance to the church than themselves (P2)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
Consultations (10)	Seeking Advice/consultations to deal with moral conflict (10)	<p data-bbox="964 310 1565 457">“helping this pastor understand that prayer is an avenue of healing, in this situation, it needs to be other avenues besides prayer, and you can’t prayer this one away” (P5)</p> <p data-bbox="964 489 1565 709">“We are in a very privileged position, because we have the counseling /social service center “ I would consult with them if I need, M, the director, he has lots of expertise and knowledge as well as connections” (P1)</p> <p data-bbox="964 741 1565 814">“I would get counseling from a member of cleric myself (P1)</p> <p data-bbox="964 846 1565 1108">then I am able to recognize it when it is happening right now so some of my steps is to be in communication with a therapist so that I am able to work out my own stuff because even my own issues with mother if I don’t work that out, I can step over boundaries (P8)</p> <p data-bbox="964 1140 1565 1297">“I have a spiritual director that I meet with not as much as I should, So the point of it all is I have someone else who is objective to help process what I am going through” (P8)</p> <p data-bbox="964 1329 1565 1444">“...so one of the things I that I try to be intentional about is speaking to someone on a regular basis about my own issues” (P8)</p> <p data-bbox="964 1476 1565 1617">”it just comes from different places, comes from seminars, I go to those, any type of workshops, I go to them, host them here” (P6)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
Healthy Coping (5)	Utilizing coping skills (5)	Well, if it is the women who he police sends, I talk to the social worker, she spends a lot of time with them, we find of debrief together, those situations and decide if we can do anything else, whether we need to let it come until a later time (P3)
		“If it is someone in the congregation, I would probably choose to debrief with a spiritual director” (P3)
		“If it was something spiritual on my part, debrief it with another counselor” (P3)
		“I think that it is important that people have great support system, whether it is coworkers or people in the field, good staff” (P2)
		“Well, I do a lot of praying, but I am always going back to two mammoths that God has left us with...to love yourself and love your neighbor” (P3)
		“I bind my mind to the mind of Christ, I bind my will of the father, I bind my attitude, my responses, my reaction, my feelings”(p5)
		“If I experience something in the church that I don’t know how to deal with, I try to write it down” (P8)
		“getting rest, journaling, I find journaling helpful, sometimes I don’t” (P1)

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
Consultations (8)	Strengthening community relationships with the domestic violence community (8)	<p>“I would say that if they could meet at more points, they could be more meeting points between pastors, lay people in the congregation...there needs to be more connection points” (P2)</p> <p>“Most of the women I worked with are sent to me from the police. I have a relationship with the social worker at the police station”. (P3)</p> <p>“when they come here and it is domestic abuse, true DV of any kind...offering a small safe group, counseling, women’s shelter” (P5)</p> <p>“Referring people to other people, Because I want them to not be dependent upon me but to actually seek advice from people who can help them (P8)</p> <p>“I show up every day trying to create a culture and an atmosphere around us. Not me against them because I am clergy” (P8)</p> <p>“...if there was an present or immediate need, I would go to the police” (P1)</p> <p>“We are in a very privileged position , because we have the counseling /social service center “ I would consult with them if I need, M, the director, he has lots of expertise and knowledge as well as connections” (P1)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
Promoting safety (13)	Reducing conflict through safety of victims (13)	<p>“I went online and started googling things that churches could do and that was one of the researches on how churches starting putting information in the women’s restrooms. So we leave them in the restroom” (P8)</p>
		<p>“I don’t like divorce, and will not counsel anybody into divorce, but I would not equally want to counsel someone into staying with a domestically abusive partner” (P1)</p>
		<p>“I would counsel families to leave, to get somewhere safe “ (P1)</p>
		<p>The most important thing is that they need to be able to know they can come in this place and know that they are loved and they can just be, there is no expectation for them to tell me anything, just here, it is a safe place, everything is confidential (P5)</p>
		<p>“I would never put a batterer and a victim, in a room to try and counsel them through it, it is not a marital issue, it is an issue of somebody wanting control” (P2)</p>
		<p>“I don’t think I can do anything without building trust and I think trust shows up in the Bible all the time” (P3)</p>
		<p>“If I think there is a problem, I will tell them, I am not going to marry you if you are too far apart” (P6)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
		<p>“if they start to bring you scriptures then I help them with interpretation because usually, interpretation has been one text pulling out and leaving the context of the other passage out” (P8)</p>
		<p>“I was preaching from Ephesians...you know his manhood isn’t determined by how submissive I am “ (P8)</p>
		<p>“I am not a preacher or pastor who first goal is that the family is sacred and we have to keep them together”(P2)</p>
		<p>“I would never counsel an abusive couple to stay married” (P2)</p>
		<p>I don’t think I ever agreed with it, to stay, because I have always believe there is a life after that, the first step is to say “ I want out” when you are ready to make that step, so I have never agreed it because usually that also means that the other person is not going to get help that they need (P6)</p>
		<p>What I’ve learned is if I can create a space where they can be who they are and they can be authentic, they can say what they are struggling, they can say what they are feeling and not feel judged (P8)</p>
		<p>“if they start to bring u scriptures then I help them with interpretation because usually interpretation has been one test pulling out and leaving the contact of the other passage out and pulling that one text out for justification” (P8)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
Promoting safety (9)	Reducing conflict through empowerment of victims (9)	<p>I would talk about the fact that there are lots of people who Jesus was involved with that were not married, who came from terrible situations and were able to make a life for their selves. I would bring up stories of faith and I would bring up communities of faith (P3)</p> <p>I think the biggest things in this population is trying to help women and men understand that they are worthy, we live in a shame based society, by the time I see people who are in abusive situations, they are already filling they are not enough, or not worthy or think they are paying for past sins, and I think if I can ever hep them see themselves as God sees them then they would be able to move forward (P3)</p> <p>to tell her to divorce her husband is not my place, even if that was my gut reaction, my place was truly helping her to just embrace that she was a value that god desired, much more for her than she was allowing herself (P5).</p> <p>“My favorite scripture is in everything you do, you are working for the Lord, not man” (P7)</p> <p>“Psalms, 7, 8, 9, and 10 talks from the point of victims point of view, if a stranger was doing this to me, but it is my companion, those are powerful structures about being victimized” (P2)</p>

Thematic Code	Focused Codes	Meaning Units
		<p>So, yeah, it bothers me when I see domestic violence from families because a lot of time, I see it coming from ignorance of the interpretation of the Bible, A lots of time, that bothers me, I just don't understand how anybody can walk away from reading the Bible feeling empowered to then oppress someone else...use it as a tool of oppression instead of liberation (P8)</p>
		<p>I think the first things to do is just listen. Because what I realize is if they're in a domestic violence situation whether they're being abused emotionally or physically, verbally, whatever the situation is most likely their not being heard, they don't have a voice or a place where they can be honest about what they are going through (P8)</p>
		<p>I use a lot of literature, as a clergy of course, I don't use the Bible as much as I use different pieces of literature that I feel would be of help to an individual's in that position, I use a lot of inspirational things (P4)</p>
		<p>"I use them when I see a person walking forward, to make a different in their life, empower them to make a healthy choice and move forward because God will be by their side" (P4)</p>