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# Demarginalizing Black Ordained Women's Voices in the Black Baptist Church: A Phenomenological Study of Black Women Ministers' Lived Experiences When Seeking Cleric Leadership Roles

Angela Mosley-Monts

*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

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Demarginalizing Black Ordained Women's Voices in the Black Baptist Church:  
A Phenomenological Study of Black Women Ministers'  
Lived Experiences When Seeking Cleric Leadership Roles

A dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature and Culture Studies

by

Angela Mosley-Monts  
University of Arkansas  
Bachelor of Arts, Broadcast Journalism, 1980  
Webster University  
Master of Business Administration  
John Brown University  
Master of Ministry

December 2022  
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the.

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Calvin White, Ph.D.  
Committee Chair

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Luis Restrepo, Ph.D.  
Committee Advisor

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Anna Zajicek, Ph.D.  
Committee Co-Chair

## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation sought to understand the living experiences of Black Ordained Women in the Black Baptist Church. The study employs a phenomenological perspective and interviews to gather the voices and lived experiences of ordained Black women ministers who have served in the Black Baptist Church at various times. Womanist Theology and Black Feminism form the theoretical basis of the study. Black ordained women interviewed in this study are currently or formerly associated with the Antioch District Missionary Baptist Association, the Antioch District Congress, and the Regular Arkansas Congress of Christian Education. Although some Black ordained women remain with the Black Baptist Church, others have gone to other churches to pursue leadership positions. Using phenomenological interviews to collect the data and crafted stories approach, this study centers on the experiences of Black women ministers within the Church to better understand the challenges and institutional structures they may have encountered in their roles. The study focused on two groups of Black ordained women clergy—ministers and senior pastors.

The participants' ages varied from 46 to 70, covering the age range established in the participants' criteria. Five ministers of the Black Baptist Church comprise one group. The second group comprises two pastors. One pastor is affiliated with the Black Baptist Church. Another pastor left the Black Baptist denomination and became a member of another denomination. She did not leave the Baptist Church to pursue a senior leadership role as a pastor; however, her beliefs no longer aligned with the Baptist doctrine. The research explored the limited power Black Baptist ordained women possess when it comes to being considered and participating in the senior-level cleric decision-making process. In their in-depth interviews, both groups of Black Baptist ordained women ministers voiced their lived experiences concerning the

patriarch's senior cleric decision-making processes within the Black Baptist Church. There are four significant contributions of this study. First, the study contributes detailed, in-depth information about the challenges and barriers that seven ordained Black Baptist women ministers faced and still encounter as they are seek gendered occupations in the Black Baptist Church. Secondly, this study is the collective and practical perspectives from the participants' voices. Black women can take the disparities they encounter to develop and implement strategies to address those issues at the local, state and national governance bodies of the National Black Baptist Convention. Thirdly, Black male pastors, senior leaders, and congregations can use this study's findings to better understand and assist in demarginalizing the disparities participants encounter as they seek senior leadership roles within the church and conventions. Fourthly, the participants unaminously indicated education is key to dismanteling the myths and misinterpretation of scriptures when it comes to leadership roles Black ordained women can hold in the Black Baptist Church. The primary focus of the trainings is to provide teachings on how to recognize gender and racialized sexism biases, removal of barriers, and addressing disrespect issues associated with Black women seeking leadership roles within the Black Baptist Church.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Howard P. Monts, and our daughters, Melisa Diamond Monts, Megan D. Mayfield, and Melanie D. Watson. Over the past seven years, you have prayed for me, listened to me, and patiently provided me with love, support, and spiritual guidance. I appreciate your patience and love so much. My grandmother, Mother Susie Matthews, my father and mother, Bro. Sterling Mosley, and Mother Otha Lee Sussix Mosley, tell me, "Ann, yes you can. Allow Jesus and the Holy Spirit to comfort you." These are their voices. They are in Heaven with my older brothers and sister, Rev. Chaplin Sterling Mosley, Jr., Brother David Mosley, Sr., Brother Floyd Anthony Mosley (who died at birth), and my sister, Sis. Lydia Mosley Stevenson with her husband, Bro. Verna Stevenson. While my grandmother only completed third grade, she ensured her grandchildren received the highest education. As a domestic worker and a proud entrepreneur, she owned property, a part of our family legacy. My mother called me a doctor before I even considered pursuing a Ph.D. This degree manifested itself into existence through her.

I thank my brothers, Dr. Joseph Mosley, Senior Pastor (the first in our family to receive a doctorate) and Deacon Kevin T. Mosley. Kevin is a pillar of strength and encouragement for Joe and me. Even during the most challenging times, Kevin continued to celebrate us and keep us moving forward.

My sons-in-law, Markaus Mayfield, Sr., and Quintarius Watson, and my eight grandchildren, Areli, Markaus Jr., Amiyah Mayfield, Audriana, Noah, and Aubrielle Watson, Airiel (my angel in Heaven) and Zian Hughes deserve special thanks.

I am thankful for the sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law in my life: Missionary Cynthia, Betty, and Brenda Mosley, Maxine Wilkins, Carolyn Nichols, Dora, Jean and Michelle Monts, Jenifer

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My Sista Circle members are Kammi Shannon, Princess "Maria" Walker Brown, Keisha Osborn (Goddaughter), Dr. Margaret Clark, Dean Cynthia Nance, Dr. Synetra Hughes (spiritual daughter), Shatara Portia-White, Lindsey Leverett-Higgins, Melanie Hoskins, Dr. Barbara A. Lofton, Julie Preddy, Terri Dover, Deb Euculano, Dr. Erika Gamboa, Dr. Marcia Schobe, Dr.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

I am a pulpit preacher.

I do not come down to the floor in an effort to connect better with the congregation. I do not wander around the sanctuary with anxious energy meandering through my sermon, like a child in a corn maze. No, I stand firmly in my pulpit. Because when I am preaching from the pulpit, I am standing on the shoulders of women who are the propagators of the Black church.

Reverend Tiffany Thomas<sup>1</sup>

### A. Context of Problem

The Black Church is an institution established for Black men and women to receive inspiration for spiritual nourishment, community, empowerment, social justice, encouragement, and professional training to aid in their daily and spiritual walks. The Black Church was the focal point for enslaved Africans that supplied a cultural cauldron for Black people, with the organization created to combat a system designed in every way to crush their spirit. The enslaved Africans refused to allow those systems to destroy who they were (Gates 2021, xxiii).

The Black Church is not homogenous or monolithic. The Black Church is as diverse as the churches' denominations, membership, cultural, regional, and demographic make-up. The term "the Black Church" evolved from "the Negro church," the title of a pioneering sociological study of African American Protestant churches at the turn of the century by W.E.B. Du Bois. In its origins, the phrase was essentially academic, with little practical implications. Many African Americans did not think of themselves as belonging to "the Negro church." Instead, they described themselves according to their denominational affiliations such as Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and even "Saint" of the Sanctified tradition. African American Christians have not only been diverse, but their churches have been highly decentralized (Mellowes 2012). Today,

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<sup>1</sup> *Tiffany Thomas is a native of Columbus, Ohio. She earned her BA from Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. She pursued her MDiv from Duke University. She is currently serving as senior pastor of South Tryon Community Church in Charlotte, North Carolina.*

"the Black Church" is widely understood to be comprised of the following seven major Black Protestant denominations: the National Baptist Convention, the National Baptist Convention of America, the Progressive National Convention, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and the Church of God in Christ (Mellowes 2012).

Over the years, as a result of the historical focus on Black men's contributions, the role of Black women has been marginalized in general. Yet, Black women have been integral to the Black Church's inception (Abernethy n.d.). The Black women's voices and narratives shaped the Black Church through slavery, emancipation, the Jim Crow laws, the Civil Rights Movement, and Black Lives Matter. As in the case of some Black social movements, Black women play a significant role either by creating the organizations, providing support, and by giving organizations a voice. Ransby (2015) stated in *The Class Politics of Black Lives Matter*:

In 2012, three Black women launched the original Black Lives Matter Hashtag, Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrice Cullors. Black Lives Matter includes nearly a dozen Black-led organizations and is an example of a U.S.-based class struggle as Occupy Wall Street was. To focus on the Black poor is not to ignore others who also endure economic inequality. The organization focuses on racial justice, economic justice, racial violence, and inequality in the United States. Cullors insisted BLM is not just about respectability politics. BLM is about incarcerated and formerly incarcerated Black people. It is about access to shelter, food, and mobility.

Black women have been the cornerstone of the Black Church surrounding the family, politics, social movements, spiritual formations, education, courage, and empowerment. Currently, women in Black churches outnumber men by more than two to one; yet in positions of authority and responsibility, the ratio is reversed. Moreover, according to the National Congregations Study "Gender of Religious Leader" (2018-2019), male leaders consisted of 86% of the leadership while women leaders only consisted of 13.5%. The gender distribution of religious leaders for Black Protestants stood at 83.8% men and 16.2% women. Answering the

question of whether women can be religious leaders, 56.4% of respondents said “Yes” while 40.9% voted “No” and 34% answered “Did Not Know” (Chaves n.d.). Moreover, while women are gradually entering the ministry more often as bishops, pastors, deacons, and elders, many men and women still resist and fear that development (Lowen 2019, ThoughCo 2019). All in all, traditional Black religious denominations tend to have predominantly women congregations and primarily male leadership (Green 2003).

The gender hierarchy in the Black Church appears to be based on the idea that patriarch and matriarch have two distinctive roles. This distinction is used when deciding governance for senior cleric leadership positions (Martos and Hegy 1998). Higginbotham (1994) states:

The very nationalist discourse that unified Black men and women betrayed inherent gender conflict. As a deliberate arena, the National Baptist Convention sought to speak for both men and women, but it did not encourage expression from men and women as equals. The convention’s masculine bias was evident in its institutional structures and discourses. Positions of authority and power were monopolized by men. Thus, women sought to develop their own voices and pursue their own interests, which at time overlapped and at other times contested the men’s. Rising gender consciousness was part of a complex of ideas that informed Black Baptist denominational work as a whole.

Further, especially the pastorate of the church, was typically dominated mostly by Black men. Hence, for Black women to pursue clergy positions, they would compete directly with Black men (Ngunjiri, Gramby-Sobukwe, and Williams-Gegner 2012). This hierarchy stripped enslaved and free Black men and women of their self-empowerment, intellect, and self-worth. More specifically, in the denominations where the leadership roles are based on gender hierarchy, Black women have not successfully secured those senior pastoral leadership positions (Hoehner 2007).

Despite these challenges, women are increasingly becoming ordained and appointed as pastors and bishops. Reverend Gina Stewart, the senior pastor of Christ Missionary Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, is the first women president of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign

Mission Society, a major Black Baptist organization (Press and Religion News Service 2021). The appointment of Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie in 2000 as the first women bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was an essential step toward gender inclusivity (Abernethy n.d.).

Black women were preaching in Black churches as early as 1819. Most major Black Christian denominations in the U.S. have no doctrinal bar to ordained women leaders like Catholicism and some other denominations. These Black women preachers made significant contributions to the pastoral roles through their ministries. One Black women minister is recognized as one of the “100 Most Significant Americans” of all time. One is coined with the phrase “first Black international woman evangelist,” and another is instrumental for her role in the infamous Azusa Street Revival. These Black women pastors are Jarena Lee, Isabella Baumfree, also known as Sojourner Truth, Amanda Berry Smith, and Lucy Farrow, all born into slavery (Perry 2018).

Jarena Lee became the first African American woman authorized to preach in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. She is the first African American woman to preach publicly. She preached to racially mixed Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Wesleyan audiences across the mid-Atlantic states, lower Canada, Cincinnati, Detroit, and New England. Her preaching occurred when slavery was legal, and neither African Americans nor women could own property or vote. Lee often expressed her calling to the ministry to Black church leaders but was never allowed to speak from the pulpit. One Sunday in 1817, while attending a service at the Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Philadelphia, Lee was provided the opportunity to address the congregation and deliver a sermon when the pastor

scheduled to preach that Sunday, Reverend Richard Williams, could not deliver (Washington 2017).

Richard Allen was in attendance when Lee addressed the congregation (Washington 2017). Allen was the founder, pastor, and denominational bishop for the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Lee asked Allen on numerous occasions to allow her to preach from the pulpit. Eight years earlier, Lee heard God calling her to preach; however, Allen did not feel comfortable allowing women to preach from the pulpit citing the denomination's policy on women preachers. She beseeched him, "If the man may preach because the Savior died for him, why not the woman, seeing he died for her also? Is he not a whole Savior instead of half of one?" (Washington 2017).

Lee married Joseph Lee, an African American Methodist pastor. She and her husband served in Snow Hill, New Jersey congregation. After Joseph's death, Lee again requested Allen's permission to preach publicly seven years later. By this time, Allen had become the bishop of the AME church and was free to decide the matter himself. He permitted Lee to hold prayer meetings in her home and exhort when the occasion presented itself. After Lee's first time at the pulpit, Allen publicly affirmed her calling to preach the gospel. In proper Methodist form, Lee began preaching at house meetings and was permitted by Allen and other elders of AME churches to preach on Sunday mornings. However, she occasionally received opposition from church leaders (Patterson 2013; Washington 2017). Washington (2017) writes:

Lee's preaching career occurred during the Second Great Awakening signifies a willingness and desire people had to hear the gospel preached—even if by an African American woman. Though Lee did encounter resistance at times, the audiences in the West (at that time Michigan, Ohio, and Western New York) received her. Historians have argued that displaced settlers on the frontier were eager to hear preaching, and that frontier women had a particular affinity for itinerant preachers. Lee's ministry fits neatly within this spatial context. She found success in her ministry by owning her message and style. As revival preaching in the West had to excite audiences, Lee was no bland

preacher. She recounted one service in Portsmouth, Ohio in 1839 where “the first Sabbath, I spoke to the class, five fell to the floor under the influence of God's power.”

She would not accept that Black women could not be ordained. She would not accept her voice being erased. She was persistent and vigilant (Perry 2018; Washington 2017).

Lee was the first African American woman to have an autobiography published in the United States. Notably, Lee’s autobiographical texts connect women’s religious narratives of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with those of the later nineteenth century, and moreover, expose the differences between the captivity narratives of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well as the slave narratives of the nineteenth (Davidson 1993).

Patterson argues that in a triple-twined re-appropriation of language, literary convention, and biblical metaphor, Black women such as Jarena Lee inserted themselves in the realms of African American men, white women, and women’s civil rights in ways that displaced the centrality of the Black male subject in African American political and cultural histories. By turning to nineteenth-century Black women’s writings, contemporary womanist theologians further glean about how Black women’s writing historically has envisioned the Black enfranchisement movement in terms that reveal Black women’s active roles in shaping the Black community’s political possibilities (Patterson 2013).

Isabella Baumfree is Sojourner Truth. Baumfree was born into slavery in New York, and was repeatedly sold as a property, suffered beatings, and experienced separation from her children. After emancipation, Baumfree became a devout Christian and co-founded the Kingston Methodist Church. In 1843, she took the name Sojourner Truth to signify her calling from God to travel and preach, telling her friends: “The Spirit calls me, and I must go.” Truth spoke prophetically on the abolition of slavery. The *Smithsonian* magazine lists Truth as one of the



“100 Most Significant Americans of All Time.” She is also remembered annually in both the Episcopal Church and Lutheran Church calendar of saints (Painter 1994).

The first Black woman international evangelist in 1878 was Amanda Berry Smith. Smith was born in Maryland as a slave, although her family was able to buy their freedom. The Berry family resettled in Pennsylvania, where they became a station on the Underground Railroad. After becoming a Christian, she joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1869, she received her inner calling to preach.

Domestics and waiters who served white attendees often attended Smith's "colored people's" meetings. During these meetings, Smith could pay for her room and board by cooking for white families. As a preacher and singer, she made a favorable impression at the meetings and developed herself to become a prominent speaker at holiness camp meetings. According to one estimate, Smith held an 8,000-person camp meeting service at one of her camp meetings in 1875; as her celebrity status grew, so did the white crowds that came to listen to her (Pope-Levison 2011).

Smith's voice as a Black women minister was significant during the Progressive Era. Over her career, Smith became a popular speaker at churches and camp meetings from Maine to Tennessee. As an evangelist, she worked in England, Ireland, Scotland, India, and several African countries for 12 years (McFadden 1993).

Lucy Farrow was born into slavery in Virginia and was the niece of prominent Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass. In 1905, she was the pastor of a Holiness church in Houston, Texas, when Charles Parnham of Bethel Bible College hired her as governess for his children. Parnham left her church in the care of a friend named William Seymour. In 1906, Seymour asked Farrow to come to Los Angeles to teach glossolalia to the people he was praying with for revival.

Her arrival sparked what came to be known as the Azusa Street Revival. Her touch filled people with the Holy Spirit, and her ministry showed overall symptoms of healing and the power and realization of prayers. From Azusa Street, her ministry spread throughout the Southern United States, Liberia, and West Africa. In the social, political, and civil rights movements, Black women who were not silent paved the way for other Black women who were the forerunners (Perry 2018).

Within the Black Baptist church are women's agencies that work in this area. While their voices are marginalized and confined, there is a gap in the literature regarding the number of Black Baptist women ministers in leadership positions. By raising awareness about the marginalization of Black women ministers in the Black Baptist Church, Charmaine Webster provides insight into how and why this occurs:

We've been sexually harassed too much. We've been overlooked too often. We've been encouraged to be first ladies too many times. We've had to start too many ministries from scratch to believe there is enough support. We have received too few invitations to one-on-one mentoring sessions and to preach. We've witnessed our brothers in the ministry be silent when they should have stood up too regularly. We've received too few notices about pastoral openings to believe there is enough support (Webster 2019).

Webster defines what she considers leadership roles in the Black Baptist Church. Her description defines leadership roles for women as senior pastor roles. Reverend Parthia Hall acknowledges Webster's definition of a senior pastor. Patrick J. Sauer describes Reverend Prathia Hall as an activist and as the first women field officer for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

Reverend Hall used her orator skills, voice, and advocacy in the civil rights movement. Hall and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. were keynote speakers at the first anniversary of the Albany Project. Hall led a prayer, and she consistently said, "I Have a Dream." Her prayer was powerful; in fact, Dr. King asked and received Hall's permission to use the phrase "I have a dream" in his

preaching style. The “I Have a Dream” speech was delivered in August 1963 during the iconic march in Washington D.C. (Sauer 2021).

Furthermore, Hall became one of the first African American Baptist women ordained by the American Baptist Churches in 1977. She was the first woman accepted into the Baptist Minister Conference of Philadelphia and Vicinity in 1982. Hall used her orator skills and her voice to gain prominence in the pastoral realm. *Ebony* named Reverend Hall one of the 15 Greatest Black Women Preachers. Additionally, one other Black Baptist pastor joined Reverend Hall in receiving this prestigious award, Reverend Arlene Churn of Faith Baptist Church (Sauer 2021). Reverend Hall and Reverend Churn are quintessential examples of Black women using their voices when given an opportunity whether they are recognized for their contributions or not.

In 1983, Reverend Suzan Denise Johnson became the first Black woman in the 197-year history of Mariner’s Temple Baptist Church in New York on May 23 to be appointed to pastoral leadership by a major denomination church. Reverend Carl Flemister, the executive minister of the American Baptist Church of Metropolitan New York, hailed the occasion as a new era for Black women who have long been denied the opportunity to serve as ministers. A search of the church records does not indicate that a mainline denominational church has ever appointed a Black woman to a senior pastor position. Prior to this evening, a woman’s only path to senior pastor hood was to organize her own church, often suffering rejection, isolation, and resentment from men and women who believed that a woman’s place was not at the pulpit. Experiencing controversy in the sacred pulpit is something that Black women ministers can attest to through their lived experiences.

Women pastors are not a new phenomenon, but some Christians are unaware that there is a long tradition of women pastors. Women in history were faithful to their pastoral calling despite the odds being against them. Many pursued ministries against the cultural tide of patriarchy in the church. These tenacious women are a vital part of our Christian legacy. As Christians today commemorate and celebrate women pastors throughout history, more opportunities surface for women in ministry today, aiding in dismantling the gender hierarchies and marginalization that some view as instrumental in the pastoral and senior leadership roles (Perry 2018).<sup>2</sup>

## **B. Statement of Problem**

The limitations of novelty, isolation, gender bias, and image perception are key factors in the disempowerment of Black women in leadership positions (Campbell-Reed 2019; Green 2003; Ribble 2010). These factors have contributed to Black Churches practicing behaviors that perpetuate racialized sexism against Black women while exalting them as matriarchs. Researchers and theologians have found that racialized gender hierarchies play a role in patriarchal clericalism, built on a model that disempowers women and their voices in leadership and ministries (Hockenos 2011; Ruether 2010). Accordingly, one must also consider religion when studying intersecting oppressions of racialized sexism, racialized gender, class, and sexuality (Collins 2002). Racialized sexism and religion must be viewed as social structures shaping the lived experiences of the marginalization of Black women (Avishai, Jafar, and Rinaldo 2015, 5-25). Religion plays a dominant role in devaluing Black women seeking

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<sup>2</sup> Some argue that this limitation is based on the number of leadership positions available for Black women in the Black Church (Association of Religion Data Archives n.d.). However, if cleric leadership roles are not open to the voices of Black ordained women ministers, Black women will continue to have limited pastoral opportunities, be overlooked and marginalized as congregation leaders, and receive a lack of support for leadership roles (Hoegeman 2017).

leadership roles within the Black Church. This study contributes to an understanding of how racialized sexism not only affected the U.S. educational and economic institutions but has also been present in the Black Church.

Most studies examining Black women's experiences and their lack of power in the Black Church may not be able to determine how these disparities affect the spiritual and theological structures of the church or influence biases among the congregants (Martin 2021). The multi-dimensional nature of the marginalization of Black women in the Black Baptist Church underscores the importance of understanding Black women leaders' voices and perceptions of the Black Church (Conner-Knox 2014).

### **C. Research Questions and Phenomenon**

In this qualitative phenomenological study, I examine the lived experiences of Black women ministers in Black Baptist Churches. The phenomenon guiding this study was that marginalization occurs when Black women's voices are not heard, and their education, leadership skills, and capabilities are not recognized. The overarching research question was: From the standpoint of Black ordained women ministers, how have marginalization, racialized gender, racialized sexism, and/or traditional matriarchal roles may be preventing Black women from becoming senior pastors?

R<sub>1</sub> According to the Black women ministers, is there a relationship between the origin of the Black Baptist Church and the lack of Black ordained women ministers?

R<sub>2</sub>: What are the main barriers preventing Black Baptist women ministers from becoming senior pastors?

R<sub>3</sub>: How have Black Baptist women ministers who become senior pastors overcome the barriers to assuming cleric leadership roles?

R4: How can Black Baptist women ministers who aspire to be senior pastors pursue leadership positions?

R5: Do Black women ministers feel they must take on subordinate roles to support the Black Baptist Church?

R6: How do Black Baptist women ministers respond to groups of women who believe Scripture calls for women to stay submissive and not be involved in cleric decision-making?

The research questions were answered by studying the lived experiences of seven Black women ministers ordained in the Black Baptist Church, which is one of the seven significant denominations of Black Protestants. The seven Black Baptist women ministers are divided into two groups: 1) a group of ordained ministers without pastoral responsibilities; 2) a group of ordained Black ministers who serve as senior pastors. I interviewed seven ordained Black women ministers. Six Black women had been ordained as ministers in the Black Baptist Church at various times. Notably, one Black woman left the Baptist denomination and was ordained as a pastor in another denomination. Their perspectives and voices were shared through their lived experiences during the in-depth interview process.

#### **D. Definitions of Key Terms**

***Black Church.*** Gates (2021) states that no pillar of the African American community has been more central to the history, identity, and social justice vision than the “Black Church.”

There is no single Black Church, just as there is no single Black religion, but the traditions and faiths that fall under the umbrella of African American religion, particularly Christianity.

***Black Women Ministers’ Call.*** Some defined the call as a lonely process, isolating experience that begins an ongoing, life-long journey of discovery; others describe it as a single joyful moment of enlightenment when they felt God’s presence and their voices were

empowered. Still, others see it as an initially painful but ultimately fulfilling necessity that could not and cannot be resisted or ignored – a kind of “urging.” The women do not choose to become ministers; they are chosen (Cummings and Latta, 2010).

**Feminist Theology, 1880-1900.** During the last two decades of the nineteenth century Black Baptist women increasingly challenged such examples of gender inequality. Working within the orthodoxy of the church, they turned to the Bible to argue for their rights – thus holding men accountable to the same text that authenticated their arguments for racial equality... They challenged the “silent helpmate” image of women’s church work and set out to convince the men that women were equally obliged to advance not only their race and denomination, but themselves. Thus, the Black Baptist women developed a theology inclusive of equal gender participation (Higginbotham 1994).

**Black Woman’s Voice.** Embodies pain, strength, tirelessness, marginalization, courageousness, and empowerment that portrays the sensitivity of her uplifting the Black male and the Black Community and the power to tell a compelling story of perseverance (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2009).

**Clergy.** A Group ordained to perform pastoral or sacerdotal functions in a Christian church

**Centeredness.** A concept that explains finding one’s voice amidst confusion and uncertainty (Cummings and Latta 2010).

**Demarginalization.** Ending the marginalization, mistreatment, and exclusion of Black women ordained women ministers of the church in the manner of treating them as unimportant, invisible, isolated, excluded, and unfit for senior leadership positions.

***Gendered Occupation.*** For centuries, leadership in the Black Church has been almost exclusively male. Many did not question the status quo. In recent decades, however, women are beginning to challenge this paradigm and have begun to create change. Black clergywomen still lack opportunities to lead congregations, are limited in the opportunities to be selected for employment and are restricted from advancement in ministry Leadership. Gender and race are methods of subjugation, which has the dominance to control, and that dominance is ruled by clergymen (Smarr, Disbennett-Lee, and Hakim 2018).

***Leadership.*** A perfect practitioner and teacher of effective leadership is Jesus. Jesus embodies the heart and methods of a fully committed and effective servant leader who inspires, directs, and equips people to produce good results (Blanchard, Hybels, and Hodges 1999). Black and White ministers, with Black ministers playing a more social and political role in their communities. Leadership preparation is significant for efficacy and satisfaction, with mentoring being a key component (Cohall 2007).

Pastors are expected by their congregations to play complex leadership roles, similar to those in secular institutions. These roles include administrators, political strategists, social activists, economic advisors, and educators.

***Racialized Gender.*** Racialized gender is a sociological concept that refers to the critical analysis of the simultaneous effects of race and gender processes on individuals, families, and communities. This concept recognizes that women do not negotiate race and gender similarly (Hopper, Robinson, and Fitchett 2021).

***Racialized Sexism.*** Racialized sexism occurs when Women of Color (or WOC) are targeted not as gender minorities or as People of Color, but as both simultaneously. Men of Color perpetuate racialized sexist ideas, even those who claim to be progressive. It is invalidating for



women of color to have their experiences with race denied based on their gender. They remain unrepresented in a movement that needs to include them. Racialized sexism creeps into spaces purporting to serve women and people of color even when generalized racism and sexism are eradicated (Uwujaren 2013).

***Religious Marginalization.*** Both a condition and a process that prevent individuals and groups from fully participating in social, economic, and political life enjoyed by the wider society. There are sub-cultures in mainstream cultures or religions. Black women have been historically marginalized both in the church and by society, and this trend continues today in theological education and the church (Encyclopedia.com 2018; Palmer 2021).

***Minister.*** A minister is a clergy member, especially in Protestant churches (Collins English Dictionary 2018).

***Ordination.*** In Christian churches, a rite for the dedication and commissioning of ministers. The actual ceremony consists of laying of hands of the ordaining minister upon the head of the one being ordained, with prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and of grace required for carrying out the ministry. The service also usually includes a public examination of the candidate and a sermon or charge concerning the responsibilities of the ministry (Britannica n.d.)

***Pastor.*** A pastor is an individual who provides spiritual leadership for a church community, evangelizes an area where there is no church, and provides spiritual leadership to a church community. Christian priests, ministers, pastors, and deacons may lead weekly services and conduct marriages and funerals (Chimoga 2019; Lexico n.d.).

***Patriarchy.*** The “rule of the fathers,” today sociologists view the value of a Bourdieu approach to the church as a cultural field, with positions of power and prestige, autonomy and social capital. Systems contributing to men's social, cultural, and economic superiority or

hegemony as patriarchal. Scholars today explore how patriarchy, or male domination, has become institutionalized; that is, built into the major social systems, including the family, religion, the economy, government, education, and the media (Sociology Research n.d.).

***Silenced.*** Form of subordination preventing someone from speaking, speaking up, intentionally reducing someone to silence.

***Womanist Theology.*** Emerging in the mid-1980s, womanist theology is the work of African American women theologians, church historians, ethicists, sociologists of religion, and biblical scholars. The term was coined by Alice Walker, who offered a definition of the word in her 1984 book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. Womanists explore the Christian faith in view of the unique experience and contributions of African American women (Encyclopedia.com 2022, Townes 2006).

## **F. Significance of the Study**

This study addresses research questions aimed at providing ordained Black women opportunities to voice their experiences regarding marginalization, racialized gender, racialized sexism, and traditional matriarch roles that create exclusivity for Black-ordained women leaders when seeking pastoral positions within the Black Church. Black ordained women's voices provide insight into the obstacles to becoming senior pastors in Black Churches. While women commonly manage church committees (matriarch roles) and take on other essential roles, only a small minority of senior pastors in predominantly Black Churches are women (Palmer 2021). I agree with the statement in the article *Gender and Race in Ministry Leadership: Experiences of Black Clergywomen*, “The views of clergy women have been a theme of research for many years, there lies a gap in the consideration of clergy experiences, especially of Black clergywomen” (Nelms, Disbennett-Lee, and Hakim 2018, 377).

In February 2021, the Pew Research Center published results from a national survey of 8,660 Black adults (ages 18 and older) featuring questions designed to examine Black religious experiences.<sup>3</sup> The vast majority of respondents (86%) say they believe women should be allowed to serve as the senior religious leader of a congregation, while 12% say they should not. Large majorities of both Black men (84%) and Black women (87%) say they approve of women as senior religious leaders (Mohamed et al. 2021).

Dr. Erika D. Crawford, senior pastor at Mount Zion AME Church in Dover, Delaware, says, “We are a culture that has historically put more value in the men’s voice. People still see men as leaders and women as followers. Dr. Crawford participated in a Pew Research Center interview with Black pastors. Dr. Crawford’s voice illustrates the significance of the study by having Black women speak on the issues of achieving leadership roles in the Black Church.

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<sup>3</sup> The sample consists of a wide range of adults who identify as Black or African American, including some who identify as both Black and Hispanic or Black and another race (such as Black and White, or Black and Asian).

The survey was complemented by guided, small-group discussions with Black adults of various ages and religious leanings, as well as in-depth interviews with Black clergy.

The survey finds that most Black Americans who attend religious services go to congregations where most of the other attendees and the senior clergy are Black. At the same time, most Black Americans also indicate, in their answers to other questions in the survey, that they value diversity in their religious congregations. Even among those who regularly attend Black congregations, a majority say that historically Black congregations should try to diversify rather than preserve their traditional racial character.

However, other survey findings suggest that the culture at many Black congregations emphasizes men’s experience and leadership more than women. Black Americans are much *less* likely to have heard sermons, lectures, or group discussions about discrimination against women or sexism than about racial discrimination.

Among the groups analyzed in this survey, the largest exception to this pattern is Christians who identify with a tradition other than Protestantism or Catholicism. Within this group (which is mostly Jehovah’s Witnesses), 58% say women should *not* be able lead congregations. n.d. *Association of Religion Data Archives*. Accessed February 23, 2021. [https://www.thearda.com/ConQS/qs\\_8.asp#D88](https://www.thearda.com/ConQS/qs_8.asp#D88).

Tamura Lomax (2021) outlines the stigmatization and marginalization of Black women in the Black Church. The analogy Lomax uses as she refers to the Black Church is “the Baptist hierarchy” and Martin Luther King, Jr. as the Black messiah. Lomax stated:

The SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) was ultimately run like a Black Church, with King at the top and other prominent ministers, depending on the size of their congregations, next. In this model, women were to be secretaries, fashion plates, or useful in terms of male/women interest – not in terms of their knowledge.

The Black Church is a component of gendered politics, one that reveals the ways, ideas, and practices around gender-specific leadership rested on contests about family and sexuality shaped by the political, economic, and social complexes of slavery and freedom. Not only is the political Black Church a construction, but women’s exclusion was part and parcel of its creation (Turner 2021).

This study addresses the dialogue surrounding gender disparities in the Black Baptist church by focusing on Black women’s voices and their role in dismantling the institutional racialized sexism (Barnes 2015). To move this dialogue forward and dismantle patriarchal practices in Black Baptist Churches’ tradition, governance, and policies, the church must address the voices of Black women to better understand the power dynamics associated with the male-dominated senior leadership positions (Martos and Hegy 1998). This study provided insights regarding these women’s voices through in-depth interviewing of the participants under the lens of phenomenology.

Seidman (2006) argues that for in-depth interviewing to be effective, interviewers must use primarily open-ended questions. Their primary tasks are building upon and exploring participants’ responses as a way to reconstruct their experiences. People’s behavior becomes meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them. (“Emotions that experienced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers ...”)

This study is significant because it addresses the gap in the extant literature by giving a voice to Black Baptist women ministers. Black Baptist women ministers must often deal with the effects of racialized sexism in the Church in addition to historical, social, and religious movements.

Thomas (1998) surmised that Black women in America are calling into question their suppressed role in the African American Church, the community, the family, and the larger society. Womanist theology is an emergent voice of African American Christian Women in the United States. But womanist religious reflections are more than a mere deconstruction. The reflections are, more importantly, the empowering assertion of the Black woman's voice.

Ordained Black women ministers' voices allude to the issues of gender occupations in the Black Churches, the controversies of patriarch versus matriarch, traditional-bound territorial landscape when it comes to women in the pulpit – occupying the sacred space and assuming what some consider to be the most revered role of faith. This sacred place of the pulpit is often an exclusive space that Black women are not allowed to enter due to tradition and patriarchy. Therefore, Black women “Preach the Word” or deliver sermons from the floor of the church sanctuary rather than from the designated pulpit, an area set apart as a Divine revelation (Cummings and Latta 2010). Some Black women pastors are “breaking out of the bonds,” using their voices to express overt resistance. Black women pastors refuse preaching engagements that do not allow them to preach from the pulpit. Mary Moore, a pioneer women pastor who became the first woman pastor at New Salem Missionary Baptist Church, no longer accepts preaching engagements that do not allow her in the pulpit (Parker 1999; Smarr et al. 2018).

This framework provides the foundation for dismantling barriers and fostering an inclusive spiritual environment that acknowledges the disparities of hegemonic structural

practices such as marginalization, disempowerment, racialized gender, and racialized sexism (Cummings and Latta 2010; Seidman 2006).

### **G. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The research goal, then, is to rely on the participants' accounts. The Black women ministers' lived experiences help them understand why they feel their voices are not heard when assuming leadership roles (Cresswell and Poth 2018, Peoples 2021). The phenomenological approach with in-depth interviews will be used to understand the essence of the lived experiences among the ten Black ordained women ministers and pastors. Since phenomenological interviews provide deep insights into the intricacies of ministers' lived experiences, this approach is best suited to exploring and identifying the barriers women face in this dominated cleric patriarchal hierarchy (Billups 2021; Cresswell and Poth 2018; Moustakas 1994; Peoples 2021; Seidman 2006).

The framework for this study is grounded in the Black feminist and womanist theories, and related concepts that address areas of inequities and disempowerment. Additionally, this study is grounded in a phenomenological approach to qualitative research that allows researchers to get as close as possible to the subjective experience of participants (Cresswell and Poth 2018).

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 summarized the context of the problem to be studied, the purpose of the study, the historical narrative of Black women, and the social and theological contributions of Black women to the Black Church. Furthermore, it was noted that the Black Church does not represent a homogeneous or monolithic group. The church is also diverse in the same way that its membership is. Many Black churches have been described as places where some Black women are marginalized, denied the opportunity to serve in gendered occupations, and unable to take

part in patriarchal religious structures. This chapter also provides an overview of key definitions, the overarching research question, sub-research questions, and a theoretical framework. The review of the literature will be presented in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature and Theoretical Foundations

### Overview

As a primary institution of Black women, the historical influence of Black women is a vital component of the backbone of the Black church as well as the social and civil movements that emerged throughout history under the leadership of Black women. However, Black women's extensive and significant contributions were achieved as lay leaders, not religious heads of churches (Lowen, ThoughCo. 2019). Higginbotham (1994) depicted the roles Black women played in the movement of the Baptist Church in her work *Righteous Discontent The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Brooks expressed that much has been written about the importance of the Black Church in Black people's social and political life, but much less has been written about Black women's significance in the church. These roles were not only in the social justice spaces but also in spaces for leadership and social change.

Higginbotham (1994) detailed how Nannie Helen Burroughs, a Black suffragette, organized women to do forms of social work. Burroughs founded the National Training School for Women and Girls and was a part of several organizations, such as the National Baptist Convention and the National Association of Colored Women. She wrote about the need for Black and white women to work together to achieve the right to vote. Burroughs believed suffrage for African American women was crucial to protect their rights. She mentored civil rights leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Curiosity Kit: Nannie Helen Burroughs 2021). As an ordained Baptist woman minister, Higginbotham's statement resonated with me: "Black women in the church must be viewed from a corrective perspective that left unheard are women's voices within the public discourse of racial and gender self-determination" (Higginbotham 1994).



*African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race* also contained the following passage from Higginbotham:

Black Americans widely held the notion of "racial uplift" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such a view shows the difficulty of portraying Black women as a group. The motto of the National Association of Colored Women paradoxically expressed racial uplift: the belief in the common cause of Black womanhood and the recognition of social differences. Despite invoking a discursive ground in which to explode negative stereotyping of Black women, racial uplift remained bound up in hegemonic conceptions of gender, class, and sexuality. Women educators, missionaries, and members of the Black Club promoted temperance, sexual repression, and polite manners among the poor (Higginbotham 1992)

Barnes (2006) wrote *Whosoever Will Let Her Come: Social Activism and Gender Inclusivity in the Black Church*. An examination of the relationship between Black Church involvement in racial and social justice issues, and support for women in the pastorate, is presented in the study. According to Barnes (2006), despite the vast literature which describes the role of the Black Church in religious and spiritual needs, economics, outreach, and providing a refuge from discrimination and social inequities, much research remains to be conducted concerning the role of contemporary Black Churches in addressing women in ministry, which is often controversial.

Barnes and I agree that further research is essential to address the controversial issues surrounding Black women ministers serving in gendered leadership roles. Research is identifying several factors that explain why patriarchal roles continue to exist at the top leadership levels of the Black Church. These factors can be attributed to tradition and history.

However, more research is needed on how to dismantle the marginalizing and gendered positions held by Black women in leadership positions. Also, research is needed to examine how Black women and men are finding ways to close the gender leadership gap.

## **Gaps in Extant Literature**

To understand the gap in the literature and analyze the data of the lived experiences of the Black ordained women ministers, I reviewed Digital Humanities, Goggle Scholar, Google Books, academia.edu, JSTOR, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, Ethos along with journal articles from other academic databases on Black Baptist women in leadership roles, books on the history and struggles of Black women, the Black Baptist Church, racialized gender and sexism attributed to Black women pastors, University of Arkansas Research Guide: Humanities & Performing Arts, and Voyant Tools. The literature review provided substantial evidence and data to provide a baseline and foundation for the research questions.

The literature review examined sources related to historical and current documents, theories, the conceptual framework, methodology, and research design. To effectively analyze and evaluate the lived experiences and voices of the ten Black ordained women ministers, I used keywords in the search engine to generate scholarly literature about challenges Black Baptist ordained women have when seeking ministry leadership roles: (a) Marginalization (b) Racialized Gender (c) Racialized Sexism (d) Matriarch (e) Patriarch (f) Baptist Church ordained women (g) Black Baptist Church, (h) Intersectionality (j) Respectability (k) Black women voices.

Based on a review of the literature, I identified the Black feminist/womanist theories as the most appropriate interpretive framework that would help to reveal a gap in the literature for representation, transformation, and progressive changes for Black ordained women ministers' seeking senior pastoral positions or leadership roles established for patriarch occupancies (Barnes 2006; Campbell-Reed 2019; Collins 2002; Lomax 2021). Through the application of these theories, the researcher identifies inequalities within the Black Baptist Church. The findings of this study focus on the experiences of Black ordained women ministers in relation to

patriarchal roles, racially racialized genders, and racialized sexism (Cuffee 2006; Cummings and Latta 2010; Gates 1994; Hommerding 1999).

The Womanist Theory, which is a version of the Black feminist theory, looks at the lived experiences of the Black ordained women ministers' lenses, not through a Eurocentric Theory, but with authority to question the glorification of the Black Church and the relationship between sexism and the limitation of a woman's agency (Gonzalez 2014). The womanist theology questions the marginalization of the Black woman's role in the Black Church, her lived experiences as a human being, and the harmful and empowering dimensions of the institutional church (Thomas 1998). The Black feminist theory calls for the empowerment and leadership roles of the Black woman in her communities (Collins 2002). These theories and theologies implore the importance of decolonizing Eurocentric ways of knowing in qualitative inquiry (Summerville et al. 2021).

### **Black Feminist Thought**

Patricia Hill Collins<sup>4</sup> defined Black Feminist Thought as a term applied to selected African Americans – primarily women – who possess a feminist consciousness. Black Feminist Thought clarifies the standpoint of and for Black women. Collins published *The Black Feminist*

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<sup>4</sup> Patricia Hill Collins in 1990 published *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, which won American Sociological Association's Jessie Bernard Award, the SSSP C. Wright Mills Award, and garnered other awards from the Association of Women in Psychology and Black Women Historians. Collins has pushed scholars to identify the ground on which they stand, rather than claiming neutral space. *Black Feminist Thought* clearly identifies an intersectional analysis, rather than hierarchical formula where race is primary over gender or where social class trumps all. Her theoretical analysis shows how oppression operates in various spheres—political, economic, and ideological. Thus, although we can appreciate that social class may offer some protection or resources to battle the sexism and racism that Black women experience, achieving middle class status does not remove one from the political, economic, and ideological operations. Most importantly, *Black Feminist Thought* illuminated how Black women have looked at and analyzed their lives in the past challenging the sociological thinking that rendered them invisible, making them witnesses but not analysts of their own lives. The clarity of her discussion of power, including how oppressed people understand the power that engulfs them and develop alternative self-definitions of themselves and their situations, has turned the tide of theoretical analysis. In sharing the voices of Black women, Collins exposed many scholars to a literature and history that was new.

*Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* which contained the definition as well as a comprehensive analysis of Black women's racialized gender, challenging dominant thought, it is reflective of power relationships and understanding the counter-narratives held within more subordinated communities (E. Higginbotham 2008). Black Feminist Thought focuses on systems and structures within the social context that reflect gender inequalities within the Black Baptist Church, Black communities, and the hierarchical relationship that undermines the Black woman's power (Collins 2002). Black feminist thought looks at the social context of intersecting power and captures the meaning of Black women's lived experiences and community for social action (Collins 2019).

Lindsay Hien analyzed, *Black Feminist Thought and Why it Matters Today*, through the following lens, "Unlike White, middle-class women, Black women remain in the distinctly unique position in society in which they are marginalized via their sex, class, and race. The Black feminist thought and the Womanist Theology will respond dually to the challenges of power between Black men and Black women through the framework of utilizing a tripartite analysis examining racialized sexism and as it relates to Black women lived experiences (Gonzalez 2014).

### **Womanist Theory**

When Walker (1983) coined the term *womanist*, she was clear about her intention to magnify and expand on a theoretical perspective that privileged only women. Walker (1983) perceived Black women as bold, courageous, capable, and instrumental in the lives of others. Walker's (1983) analogy of colors got the point across to the audience. Unlike in the broader feminist tradition, which marginalizes Black women and is based on bourgeois access to culture and its interrogation, womanist principles embrace a non-bourgeois set of experiences, are

interideological (Cummings and Latta 2010), and are open to ordinary women whose names and lives are little known. In addition, womanist thinking is focused on territory enlargement, strategies of survival, and principles of justice for the entire community, although centered in the perspectives of women.

Emilie M. Townes stated:

Womanist Theology is a form of reflection that places the religious and moral perspectives of Black women at the center of its method. Issues of class, gender (including sex, sexism, sexuality, and sexual exploitation), and race are seen as *theological* problems. Womanist theology takes old (traditional) religious language and symbols and gives them new (more diverse and complex) meaning. This form of theological reflection cannot be termed "womanist" simply because the subject is Black women's religious experiences. The key for womanist theology is the use of an interstructured analysis employing class, gender, and race. This kind of analysis is both descriptive (an analysis and sociohistorical perspective of Black life and Black religious worldviews) and prescriptive (offering suggestions for the eradication of oppression in the lives of African Americans and, by extension, the rest of humanity and creation (Townes 2006).

The Womanist Theory and the Womanist Theology provide additional theoretical lenses for ten Black ordained women ministers to tell their lived experiences in their pursuit to leadership within the Black Baptist Church. By using their lived experiences during their in-depth interviews, they bring light to areas that have been darkened and silenced because of racialized gender and racialized sexism. Through the application of these theories, the researcher can identify inequalities within the Black Baptist Church. This study examines the experiences of Black women ministers regarding patriarchal roles, racialized genders, and racialized sexism.

Scholarly works anchored in the womanist perspective have been published by Black women scholars in religion since 1985 (Sanders et al. 1989). Narratives, novels, prayers, and other materials talk about Black women's traditions, values, and struggles during slavery. Researchers of womanist theory interpret and analyze Black women's historical struggles and strengths in three ways: 1) celebrating the struggle and strength of Black women; 2) critiquing a

variety of manifestations of Black women's oppression; and 3) constructing the claims of Black women in theological and ethical terms. Black women's strength and resourcefulness are hallmarks of womanist ethics and theology, regardless of the challenges they face (Sanders et al. 1989).

In his study, Burrow (1999) reported that the womanist values herself, other women, her experiences, and the Black community. In addition, she is both a particularistic (concerning Black women in particular), as well as concerned with other women as well. Yet, it is imperative to emphasize that the focus on Black woman's experiences does not imply any hierarchical relation between that of the Black community and that of Black women. Womanists, then, are perfectly entitled to stay focused on their own experiences while staying open to others as well.

### **Related Literature**

#### **Black Baptist Church**

The original Baptist movement, originated in England and evolved from a group of Puritans and took refuge in Holland as a result of persecution in their homeland. The Separatist Puritans became persuaded that only Baptist of adult believers and baptism by immersion were doctrinally correct. The first known Black Baptist, identified only as Quassey, was listed as one of fifty-one members of the Newton, Rhode Island Church in 1743. There are eight conventions identifiable conventions: National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.: National Baptist of Convention of America; Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention share a common ancestry and are the principal focus of Baptist development. Of the remaining four, the largest is the National Primitive Baptist Convention, U.S.A., which withdrew from the White Primitive Baptists in 1865 and organized formally in

1907, the United Free Will Baptist Church in 1870 and formally organized as a denomination in 1901 (Ford 2012; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990).

The national conventions have not taken a formal stance either for or against the ordination of women. The conventions have not taken an official report of women pastoring churches affiliated with the conventions. The only exceptions are three women who replaced their deceased husbands as pastors. Black women may serve in matriarch roles within the local church and national level.

### **Black Church Matriarch**

Some leadership roles within Black Baptist Churches are held primarily by women. Sometimes, the women's leadership roles are a part of the church. Those roles may be traditional policies that are unspoken or unstated. Normally, a male minister or pastor in the church is the ultimate overseer of the department when it comes to making policies and decisions (Abernethy n.d.). Banerjee writes the concept of matriarch emerged among European thinkers in the nineteenth century, a Swiss anthropologist Jakob Bachofen published a study of ancient societies in which he argued that women rule was one early stage in social development (Gershon 2020). However, the matriarchal role in the Black Church may be viewed as the marginalization of Black women because those roles are not held or preferred by males in the church.

In the Black Baptist Church, women may serve in any lay matriarch leadership role) in the local church, such as trustees, Sunday School teachers, Youth Directors and ushers. While some Black Baptist Churches are ordaining Black women as ministers and deacons, Black women officers at the National level hold matriarch roles. Those matriarch roles consist of usher's auxiliary, the women's convention movement, except that in some conventions, a Black woman may serve as executive director of the Sunday School Publishing Board, Congress of

Christian Education, and the constitution specifically states that women, clergy or lay, may hold any office of the convention (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990).

## **Racialized Gender**

The Gendered Politics of “the Black Church,” by Nicole Myers Turner brings into fruition the origin of racialized gender. The racial limitations of gendered roles set the stage for debates within Black Churches and that the politics of Black Churches have long been gendered from within as much as they have been constructed from without. In the early nineteenth century, gender roles were formed by Christianity and Victorian ideals of femininity. Women preaching was not the norm. Women’s space was created among enslaved people through labor and laboring. And yet this space of enslaved labor did not afford enslaved women the “protection” of femininity or enslaved men the “privileges” of manhood.<sup>5</sup>

Collins (2002) challenges others and emphasizes the importance of transcending relationships to empower Black women to create a self-definition, and to become transformational in creating continuous change and inclusivity. The author argues Black women are uniquely situated at a focal point where two compelling and prevalent systems of oppression come together: race and gender. Located at the intersection of race and gender, Black ordained women ministers can see where systems of inequality come together. Race and gender influence knowledge through the lens of Black feminist epistemology. Black epistemology has four tenets: 1) Connected knowers, those who know from personal experience 2) The story is told and preserved in narrative form and not torn apart in analysis 3) Knowledge is intrinsically value-

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<sup>5</sup> Nicole Myers Turner is assistant professor of religious studies at Yale University. “The Gendered Politics of “the Black Church”, published April is an essay that is a series co-sponsored by the Center on African American Religion, Sexual Politics and Social Justice (CARSS) at Columbia University and the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University. The series is co-curated with CARSS Director Josef Sorett of Columbia University and Ahmad Greene-Hayes of Princeton University.



laden and the presence of emotion validates the argument: emotion indicates that a speaker believes in the validity of an argument 4) Requires personal accountability: all knowledge is based upon beliefs, things assumed to be true (Collins 2002).

However, the marginalization of Black women's voices continues to constitute a major barrier. Those barriers leave the Black women's voices in the category of subjugation. These voices are left unheard, erased, and sometimes removed from the equation of empowerment when it comes to their spiritual, physical, emotional, and professional ministerial career aspirations. Self-definition allows Black women to define who they are and not the definitions of others is essential to empowerment. Voice, then, has the potential to heal, to create new life, to bring about justice (Collins 2002).

Providing Black ordained women a platform through in-depth interviews to share their experiences provides opportunities for their voices to no longer be silenced. Seidman (2013) provides the following tools for crafting a profile that defines the participants lived experiences by 1) focusing on life histories that shed light on the topic up to the present time, 2) detailing present lived experiences that pertain to the issue at hand, and 3) reflecting on the meaning of their lived experiences to reframe and expand the literature review by finding meaning in the phenomenon. As Bustamante and Gamino (2018) write, storytelling and in-depth interviews enable the researcher to engage more deeply in the analysis of the data through crafted profiles. Thus, the researcher assembles the pieces of each in-depth interview and develops a narrative in the participants' own voices using first-person narration (Seidman 2013). Crafted profiles present unique and firsthand articulation of how ordained women ministers discuss their experiences within a racist and patriarchal society.

Although the Black Church has been the haven for seeking political and social justice for all African Americans when leadership empowerment and equality are the topics for class and gender equities for Black women, these issues are still unresolved (Green 2003). Palmer (2021) outlines the marginalization of Black women in the Black Church. As reported by Palmer, the marginalization of the Black woman is present throughout the history of the Black Church and remains prevalent in today's society. Black women have been historically marginalized in the church and society, and this trend continues today in theological education as well as the church. Neither the church nor the world of theology will survive if things continue in this direction (Palmer 2021).

The senior leadership roles for women are highly debatable among those in leadership, for their congregants, and some Christian media outlets (Rankin 2008). For some denominations, Biblical debates are still ongoing when it comes to the leadership roles of the Black women in the Black Church (Conner-Knox 2014). The Black Church, heterogenous is the one agency, the Black woman should not have to be silent but have the opportunity to seek senior cleric leadership empowerment and pursue the role of senior pastor (Butler 2007). When it comes to gender roles, Black adults typically express egalitarian views, but many Black congregations emphasize men's experiences and leadership more than women. About seven-in-ten Black Americans say opposing racialized sexism and discrimination against women is essential to being a faithful or moral person, nearly the same number say opposing racism is essential (Mohamed et al. 2021).

Those debates center around questions, such as, should the Black woman be allowed to occupy one of the highest roles in the church's hierarchy as the senior pastor if she is spiritually and academically equipped to lead a congregation (Hoegeman 2017)? Should Black women

ministers be content and continue in their traditional roles within the church by using their voice in those matriarchal positions for overseeing the administrative duties, but not the decision-making duties of the Women's Department, singing, ushering and/or teaching and remaining in the pew (Ribble 2010)? Leadership, employment, and empowerment of Black women do not exist in the Black Church if those leadership roles are patriarchal and dictated by gender (Martos and Hegy 1998). The Black pulpit should not be interpreted by some as a space for high-ranking clerics to perform their duties. Those cleric roles should not be associated with marginalizing Black women by excluding their voices, segregating them, and placing limitations on them regarding cleric duties, empowerment, and employment based on gender hierarchies and biases (Hoegeman 2017).

However, in conducting the literature review, not all Black denominations have questions (Masci 2014) in regard to Black ordained women ministers. Pew Research interviewed Black Pastors in 2019 and 2020. The findings showed Black women comprised about half of Black enrollment for master's degrees at seminaries in the United States, up from around a third in 1989 and 1990, according to data provided by the Association of Theological Schools. Furthermore, the findings showed major historically Black Protestant denominations, the AME Zion Church were the first to ordain women, in 1894. Two other Black Methodist denominations, the AME Church and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, followed suit in 1948 and 1954, respectively. Baptist denominations have traditionally ordained fewer women (and they are harder to track through time because of the independent nature of Baptist Churches). Outside these historically Black Protestants denominations, women can be pastors in the United Methodist Church, the Episcopal Church, and several other mainline Protestant denominations (Mohamed et al. 2021).

## Racialized Sexism

Nicole Myers Turner, author of *The Gendered Politics of “The Black Church”*, says, “We have recognized that the racial limitations of gendered roles set the stage for debates within Black churches and that the politics of Black churches have long been gendered from within as much as they have been constructed from without”. Myers Turner further states:

“The Black Church” is a construct. It was born out of a critique that Black churches should do something to address the problems Black people faced. This interpretation of Black churches has tended to focus on the politics and social engagement of Black churches, but I suggest that such interpretations do not fully engage how gender roles and dynamics were shaping and being shaped by the political and social context. Thus, the marks of race inflected gender roles and delimited the prospects for Black people—which is not to suggest that these patriarchal Victorian arrangements were even ideals worth striving for or that all Black people pursued them. Churches, however, became key sites in which we can see how the contests over these ideas played out. Within churches, the discourse about women’s roles existed in this racialized gendered context.”<sup>6</sup>

The National Baptist Convention states on its website that it leaves the matter to its member churches because interpretations about who can serve in the ministry “tend to be particularly emotional and divisive”. In reviewing the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., Cabinet Officers for 2020, this researcher found that women are relegated to patriarchy and gendered occupations. These include the positions of President, Woman's Auxiliary, President, Music and Worship Arts Auxiliary, and President, Ushers and Nurses Auxiliary. Among the 38 cabinet positions, three are held by women, representing merely 7% of the leadership role.

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<sup>6</sup> Nichole Myers Turner is assistant professor of religious studies at Yale University. Her first book, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Post Emancipation Virginia*, was published in 2020 with the University of North Carolina Press.

Neither the Bylaws nor the Constitution of the convention disallows women from holding positions as preachers or pastors (National Baptist Convention USA, Inc. 2020).

The convention gives autonomy to the local churches to make their own decision about the governance of their churches. The convention does not make official positions binding on its member congregations, state conventions, and institutions. Many women are ordained and/or licensed to serve in the convention's affiliated congregations. ("National Baptist Convention | Center for Religion and Civic Culture") A number of women serve as Pastors of congregations and as Trustees on the boards of American Baptist colleges. "Some congregations do not ordain or license women as ministers." ("National Baptist Convention | Center for Religion and Civic Culture") Other congregations have women deacons (National Baptist Convention 2019).

Green (2003) stated that although the National Baptist Convention does not have official policies prohibiting women ministers, most of their congregations' object to women's preaching and pastoring churches. This is despite the fact that most of the congregation is composed overwhelmingly of women. The state of clergywomen is varied in historically Black denominations. Century (2018) says data shows that women are 50 to 75 percent of members in Black Baptist congregations, but less than 10 percent of church leaders and as little as 1 percent of pastors. However, the African Methodist Episcopal Church has ordained women since 1960, and a 2016 report estimated they were 26 percent of congregational pastors in the global denomination.

Turman (2017) says Black women are consistently exploited in Black churches (and in white churches too). They are regularly excluded from leadership and critical conversations at the highest denominational levels. Black women's intersectional identity casts them as both racially and gender subordinate. Sacralized misogynistic Black Church practices marginalize,

demonize, and morally paralyze Black women and Black girls every day. Some Black Baptist women, whose churches are associated with the Black National Baptist Convention, have had to seek ordination in denominations not affiliated with the convention.

### **Respectability and the Black Church**

Du Bois explains the development of the Negro church going through a metamorphosis of the “heathenism of the Gold Coast to the institutional Negro church of Chicago. “The Methodists and Baptists of America owe much of their conditions to the silent but potential influence of Negro converts ... The Negro church of to-day is the social center of Negro life in the United States... and the expression of African character”, said Du Bois.<sup>7</sup>

As Blacks became educated, they also wanted their education to be represented in their church services and styles of worship. No longer did they want their worship to reflect that of the African culture with the loud noises, raising of hands, and overly expressive body movements. If respectability was to be incorporated into the elite and middle classes' everyday routines, based on literature, this concept should also be embedded in the Black religion. The Black Baptists and Methodists preachers were adhering to a change in the “emotional worship services.” They moved more towards a worship style that was quieter and more reserved.<sup>8</sup>

Not only was there a class distinction in the professional and community lives of Black Americans, but now at the turn of the twenty-first century, this distinction was also a part of the Black church. The concept of respectability affected how each domination was viewed and classified as either a Methodist or Black church.

Methodist churches had the connotation that the members were of the elitist Black class. Baptists categorized members of the middle class. Leadership roles, such as pastors or elders,

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<sup>7</sup>ibid; 136; 137.

<sup>8</sup>ibid

were reserved for Black males. Those roles were leadership, developing church policies, or decision-making. Women were not allowed to hold those roles but were in charge of the women and youth departments. They were only in charge of the church's leadership as a missionary and performing church "planting." After the church was established, a male would replace the woman as the pastor. Males used bible scriptures to show women could not hold these positions or be placed in a role over a man. Although women started social movements and program implementations, sometimes in the church, the church did perceive it as respectable for a woman to lead the congregation.

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham author of *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*, said:

For the Baptist women, respectability assumed a political dimension and may be likened to the variant of politics described by Nancy Fraser as follows: 'There is the discourse sense, in which something is 'political' if it is contested across a range of different discursive arenas and among a range of different publics ... the discourse of respectability disclosed class and status differentiation'.<sup>9</sup> This reform for respect? not only effected class and status differentiation but also for the "structure system of American race relations ... and a continuum of African American resistance."<sup>10</sup>

Should the concept of respectability be challenged in early Black religion? This dissertation takes the stance of "no contest" when it comes to establishing programs to uplift the race, dedicated to education, civil rights movement, and providing cultural awareness for Black members of the church. During the Jim Crow era in the South, programs were created and labeled as respectability programs in order to teach, educate and provide the skill sets Black people needed. Those programs were established by the first institutional churches, such as, the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Wheat Street Baptist and The First Congregational

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<sup>9</sup> Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*; 187.

Church. The programs consisted of employee domestic programs, a home for the elderly women and a day and a night school that attracted hundreds of laborers.<sup>11</sup>

In 1909, the Woman's Convention, Auxiliary to the National Baptist Church, opened the National Training School for Women and Girls. Today, it is not agreed upon that specific skills should only be established or limited for a group of people based on their gender; however, during Emancipation, Reconstruction and the Jim Crow era, this social concept was acceptable because plantation owners had trained the slaves for gender specific skills. Therefore, after the turn of the century, freed people needed those skills to be transferable from the plantation to jobs in the cities. The church took on the obligation of providing the training and establishing processes and procedures for the dignity of menial work for Black women identifying themselves as skilled laborers.<sup>12</sup>

However, this study takes a stance against programs created by Black religious elitists and the middle classes directed at academic snobbery, directives against telling Black members how to live their lives based on individuals' definitions of uplifting the Black race and respectability. An example of this process of snobbery is illustrated in *Righteous Discontent*:

The politics of respectability tapped into the Christian teachings that exalted the poor and the oppressed over the rich and powerful. Christianity had historically advocated political submission to the laws of governments, while it simultaneously demanded the autonomy and transformative power of the individual will. This seeming contradiction stood at the core of respectability's meaning to African Americans.<sup>13</sup> Although, those practices were in place after slavery, the Reconstruction, and the Jim Crow eras, Nannie Burroughs, corresponding secretary of the Woman's Convention did emphasize lessons on inferiority is never acceptable.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Hunter, Tera W. *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997; pg. 143.

<sup>12</sup> Sharpless, Rebecca. *Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South, 1865-1960*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010; pg. 27.

<sup>13</sup> Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994; pg. 191.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*: 191.



Previously, the Methodist and the Baptist denominations were identified as Black religions practicing the concept of respectability. Additionally, another denomination will be introduced into the conversation for practicing respectability within the Black religion.

The denomination is the Church of God in Christ. That denomination was established in 1907 by Charles Harrison Mason and Charles Price Jones. The Church of God in Christ or Holiness denominations identify is derived as having its origin from slave religion and keeping some aspects from the religion. In the early twentieth century, was it still appropriate to continue to have a religion centered around slavery as African Americans were reinventing themselves by focusing on education and uplifting the Black race? Does slavery religion disrupt the respectability concept?<sup>15</sup>

This dissertation challenges those questions and puts forth one more question. Is it appropriate in this day and time to continue to hold on to some of the beliefs from slave religion? The answer is yes based on the author, Calvin White, Jr., author of *The Rise of Respectability: Race, Religion, and the Church of God in Christ*. White says, “Despite disapproval, Holiness preserved, and congregations composed of rural uneducated Blacks in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee laid the foundation”.<sup>16</sup>

White provides extensive evidence and arguments on why the Church of God In Christ, although having its roots in slave religion and conservatism actively practiced the concept of respectability. As other denominations were in conflict with their members when it came to respectability, COGIC was at inception of “academic monograph and exploring class, respectability and uplift.”<sup>17</sup> The 1880’s represented a crucial and critical transformative period

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<sup>15</sup> White, Calvin, Jr. *The Rise to Respectability: Race, Religion, and the Church of God in Christ*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2012; pg 3.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*; 3.

that brought both religious and cultural changes for Blacks ... the church was the center of Black's public and private spheres. The church was also deemed as the most important aspect of racial uplift, Blacks' pursuit of formal education after slavery became the number one priority," says White.<sup>18</sup>

Research shows COGIC led the international missionary efforts, the inception of the civil rights movement, while continuing the march toward respectability, the city of Memphis while home of the COGIC movement, remained conducive for the growth of denomination. During the years of the Great Migration, Memphis became a popular destination for poor rural Delta Blacks ... who transplanted their religious customs and traditions once practiced on plantations into urban Memphis. As the largest denomination presented in the city, giving it local respectability among white population and in later years, even among the Black middle class.<sup>19</sup>

While this study agrees with the progressive movement of COGIC in civil rights and developing programs of respectability and uplift. This study continues to disagree with gendered leadership and occupational roles in Black Churches. Like the Methodist and Baptist Churches during the turn of the twentieth century, the place for a woman was only in the Women's Department. Anthea D. Butler author of *Women in the Church of God In Christ: Making a Sanctified World*, states, "... it was the COGIC church mothers' quest for spiritual empowerment by means of the "sanctified life" provided the moral, spiritual, and physical fuel that enabled them to negotiate for and obtain power both within the domination and outside it".<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid*; 14.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*; 7.

<sup>20</sup> Butler, Anthea D. *Women in the church of God in Christ: Making A Sanctified World*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007; pg 3.

Butler continues with the concept of having power by stating COGIC women did not have to be ordained to have power within the confines of the denomination. Again, this dissertation argues, whenever the concept of respectability or the uplifting of the Black race implements standards and guidelines not applicable to all, the concept of respectability should not be adhered to either. Unfortunately, the ordination of women as pastors, elders, or bishops is still not a part of the theological or cultural norm in the COGIC. Because of this gender practice, this dissertation does not agree that at this particular time this is a process for uplifting the Black race.

One practice this study agrees with is the COGIC did not confine itself to the concept of respectability when it came to the education of clergy leaders during the early formation of the church. Although Mason felt during that time members of the congregation spiritual needs were more important than following education restrictions in order to have a check box for respectability. Mason had the courage to stand up against other educated leaders and provide the services that were applicable for his congregates.

This study does not imply education and respectability were not important to COGIC. Later, it was very appropriate for pastors and bishops to obtain degrees in higher education, hold bachelors, masters, doctoral degrees, and start their own seminary colleges. COGIC is still the largest denomination and is very profitable.

The church also has gained notoriety through its leadership. White states, “Bishop G.E. Patterson became one of the most well-liked ministers in Memphis who led the denomination. He represented the modernity of the twenty-first century ... the leadership had, in fact, come a long way since the times of Mason. Respectability is when a leader of the church dies and

dignitaries at the services includes President Bill Clinton, Governor Phil Bredsen of Tennessee, future first lady Michelle Obama, and Reverend Jesse Jackson”.<sup>21</sup>

An enslaved people for over 400 years is still pulling themselves up from institutional policies, laws and procedures that were instituted to keep the knee on the neck of Black America. Carter Goodwin Woodson author of *The Mis-Education of the Negro* says, “It does not matter so much what the thing is called as what the thing is. The Negro would not cease to be what he is by calling him something else; but, if he will struggle and make something of himself and contribute to modern culture, the world will learn to look upon him as an American rather than as one of the underdeveloped elements of the population”.<sup>22</sup>

The Negro has struggled and made something of himself in this America that he and she built. The Negro who is now referred to as the African American who received their roots out of slave religion is making a difference. Education, civil and voting rights, racial and pay equity, social and cultural equalities, and anti-racism are still the priorities of all Black people and allies. No longer is the Black American requesting permission from White America to replicate her, but Black Americans are demanding respectability based on the definition of this is long overdue, we are not an “undeveloped element of the population” but because of our existence, this America exists off the backs of slaves, this economy exists off the back of slaves, and it is now time for reparation to be made for the plantation capitalistic our people were beaten, raped, and died for.

The women’s movement within the Black Church showed African Americans how to stand up, defend and die for their rights. One of the greatest civil rights leaders that has ever lived, John Lewis, said, “Make Good Trouble”. The women’s movement in the Black Churches

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid*; 136.

<sup>22</sup> Woodson, Carter Goodwin. *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. Tribeca Books, 1933.

showed Black people how to make “Good Trouble”. The Black Church is responsible for continuing the movements from yesterday to today. As the young people of America are now marching in the streets as in the past, Black Lives Matter just as they did during Emancipation, Reconstruction, Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movements, they still matter today.

The concept of respectability gave the enslaved Africans and African Americans a guideline on how to “fit” into a society that was not created for them. Whether some of those guidelines were right, wrong or indifferent, they provided strategies to uplift the Black race through education, developing strong education leaders, and a Black religion that seeks to empower its people spiritually, socially and by uplifting the race.

### **“Excuse Me, I’m Speaking”**

This study defends the concept of respectability for Black ordained women ministers and the guidelines that made it necessary for the survival of Black people. Also, this study defends there must be updated guidelines and voices included for respectability of Black ordained women ministers to remove racialized gender, racialized sexism, and matriarch roles that do not give the Black woman a voice in the Black Church to pursue senior leadership roles.

Ayanga (2016) believes that truth comes from others, even truth about their own identity, fears, and expectations. Getting a voice suddenly throws one in the limelight and makes them more vulnerable than when they were hidden behind the shroud of silence. "The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (the Circle) formally came into existence in 1989 in Accra, Ghana." The Circle sought to be the voice of African women at the grass roots level. They aimed to make the African woman visible, and her existence given its rightful recognition and dignity. The telling of the story gives voice to women and their lived experiences. It makes the women, their lives and their experiences both audible and visible.

Just as Vice President Kamala Harris, the first Black and Asian American to hold the second highest position in the United States of America, said to then Vice President Mike Pence during the 2021 Vice President debates, “Excuse Me, I’m Speaking” became buzz worthy. President Harris reclaimed her voice, time, and power and recentered the attention and took back the microphone during a very high-stakes debate when Pence was speaking over her. Pence continued to talk until Harris said: "If you don't mind letting me finish, then we can have a conversation (Harris 2020; Medoff 2021). And these words will forever go down in history (Harris 2020; Medoff 2021). The Black ordained women ministers must make their voices heard in the Black Church by speaking up and silencing those who are taking away their right to speak when it comes to senior pastor roles and decision-making policies and procedures in the Black Church.

The Vice-Presidential debate is an example of how white male dominance can silence and divide women, how white fragility can sustain racialized sexism, and how Black women may confront multiple jeopardies in pursuit of political or cleric leadership. Black ordained women ministers must counteract the gendered display of White or Black males’ privileges in high stakes debates will support Black women’s equal voice and influence on policy (Yount and Sharma n.d.)

### **Review of the Literature/Themes**

The study is worth conducting because the results and findings can provide insight into the ways intersectionality of racialized sexism, gender, and the religious movement continue to affect the career trajectory for Black Baptist women pursuing leadership roles within the Black Church (Hoegeman 2017). The study assesses how Black Baptist women ministers view leadership, marginalization, racialized gender, racialized sexism, and respectability in pursuit of

senior-level positions. This researcher examines from the perspective and voices of Black Baptist women ministers how to eliminate implicit bias from pulpits and how to provide effective career leadership pipelines (Campbell-Reed 2019). The literature shows that Black women ministers hold prominent positions within the Black Methodist Church (Banks and Smith 2021). Specifically, this researcher's primary objective is to determine whether the voices of Black Baptist women who have been ordained in ministry are being heard when they seek senior leadership roles within the Black Baptist church.

## **Summary**

Chapter 2 included an outlined purpose of the literature review. Firstly, the literature review was to provide background for why the study should take place. Second, the review helped in determining what focus was missing from this area of study. Furthermore, it discusses prominent themes, such as racialized sexism, matriarchal versus patriarchal institutional systems, and limited pastoral opportunities. As part of the research study, the researcher provided a detailed analysis of the themes derived from the literature reviewed in this chapter in conjunction with the findings presented in Chapter 4.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

In Chapter 3, I discuss the rationale for using the phenomenological approach as a research methodology, my positionality as a researcher, and the methods of data collection and analysis.

#### **Phenomenological Approach**

Under the phenomenological philosophy, knowledge and understanding are embedded in the everyday world. In other words, the philosophy does not take the position that knowledge can be quantified or reduced to numbers or statistics (Byrne 2001). To address my research questions, I used the phenomenological approach as the research methodology due to the belief that further understanding of my research questions can be gained by observing the everyday world. Phenomenology focuses on people's lived experiences and how these experiences show in consciousness as an object of reflection (Peoples 2021). Under the phenomenological philosophy, knowledge and understanding are embedded in our everyday world. In other words, they do not believe knowledge can be quantified or reduced to numbers or statistics (Byrne 2001). Importantly, the phenomenological research design provides space for examining the ideology of power and privilege structures.

"Reflective use of this method suggests that it has both investigational and interventional qualities, with transformative potential for both researcher and study participants."

("Transcendental Method for Research with Human Subjects A Transformative ...") Patricia Hamilton (2020), a Black feminist researcher, argues that a reflexivity is a tool for navigating shifting power dynamics. Reflexivity provides insight into how power can manifest during the research process and how an intersectionality is also a tool that offers reflexive space for exploring and navigating power in the research process. In this context, the methodology used in



this study allowed me to articulate not "what we already know" but "what we could know" (Perry 2013).

In this context, the reason for undertaking a study through a phenomenological approach is to allow the silenced voices to be counted as knowledge and center such knowledge claims through the lived experiences of research participants, in this case, seven Black Baptist ordained women pastors. Phenomenology also involves the detailed study of a subject (i.e., an individual, groups of individuals, societies, or objects) to discover information to achieve a new understanding of the subject (Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio 2019). Using phenomenological interviews allows researchers to get as close to participants' experiences (Cresswell and Poth 2018). Moustakas (1994) suggested that a comprehensive literature review should be conducted as part of the phenomenological research process. Through this comprehensive literature review, I have become aware of the history of marginalization of Black ordained women ministers in the Black Baptist Church (Moustakas 1994; Rankin 2008). Moreover, the phenomenological study can be enhanced by understanding the experiences of others so that we can glean new insights into a particular phenomenon (Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio 2019). Consequently, to enhance interpretations of the meaning of the information provided by respondents, I use information from the extant literature to compare the historical context and data on Black Baptist ordained women's voices as well as their lived experiences and challenges (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, 2000, 2005, 2011). This approach enabled me to better understand the lived experiences of Black ordained women ministers and the challenges they faced when seeking leadership roles within the Black Baptist Church (Peoples 2021; Seidman 2006; Smarr, Disbennett-Lee, and Hakin 2018).

In-depth interviews are a method of data collection within the phenomenological approach. In-depth interviews are a suitable method to bringing the voices of respondents, or the interpretation of the subordinated hegemonic/subaltern voices of the Black ordained women, to the forefront to learn about their lived experiences (Barnes 2006) when it comes to seeking leadership roles within the Baptist Church.

Cole (2020) defines cultural hegemony as it relates to the subordinate domination or rule maintained through ideological or cultural means:

Cultural hegemony functions by framing the worldview of the ruling class, and the social and economic structures that embody it, as just, legitimate, and designed for the benefit of all, even though these structures may only benefit the ruling class. This kind of power is distinct from rule by force, as in a military dictatorship, because it allows the ruling class to exercise authority using the "peaceful" means of ideology and culture.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, to address the research questions, I examined “what we could know” about Black ordained ministers by centering the voices of Black women ministers.

### **Researcher Positionality Statement**

Before I present the findings of this research, and under full disclosure and transparency, I acknowledge my standpoint as an ordained Black women minister. I am an active minister in a Black Baptist Church and participate as a guest minister for the Church of God in Christ. I have participated in and observed spaces that have been inclusive and exclusive when discussing Black women ministers actively seeking and serving in senior leadership cleric roles within the churches. My positionality influenced this study. I have lived experiences of feeling

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<sup>23</sup> The Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci developed the concept of cultural hegemony out of Karl Marx’s theory that the dominant ideology of society reflects the beliefs and interests of the ruling class. Gramsci argued that consent to the rule of the dominant group is achieved by the spread of ideologies—beliefs, assumptions, and values—through social institutions such as schools, churches, courts, and the media, among others. These institutions do the work of socializing people into the norms, values, and beliefs of the dominant social group. As such, the group that controls these institutions controls the rest of society. Cole, Nicki Lisa, Ph.D. "What Is Cultural Hegemony?" ThoughtCo. <https://www.thoughtco.com/cultural-hegemony-3026121> (accessed October 26, 2022).

marginalized, excluded, and placed in traditional roles for Black women leaders. I have been asked not to speak in the pulpit because this is not the role for a woman. As a result of these experiences, I could relate to participants, build trust, and identify the meanings underlying their experiences.

### **Research Questions**

As previously stated, the overarching question for this study is: From the standpoint of Black ordained women ministers, what are the ways in which marginalization, racialized gender, racialized sexism, and traditional matriarchal roles create exclusivity and biases that prevent Black women from becoming senior pastors?

Specifically, I interviewed a group of ordained Black women ministers to learn about lived experiences while utilizing the interview guide with a set of open-ended questions eliciting information with investigational and transformative potential by: 1) building rapport with the participants, 2) asking questions that allow the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire to share, and 3) asking follow-up or probing questions based on responses to pre-constructed guiding questions.

### **Sample Size**

The number of respondents in qualitative research methods is typically smaller than the number used in quantitative research methods. This discrepancy is because qualitative research methods usually aim to garner an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and focus on meaning, especially the how and why of a particular issue, process, or situation. Also importantly, deciding how many subjects to interview is a value judgment that requires an explanation (Cobern and Adams 2020).

For instance, the term theoretical saturation is used in the grounded theory approach. Theoretical saturation refers to the point in data collection when no additional issues or insights emerge from data, and all relevant conceptual categories have been identified, explored, and exhausted. This signals that conceptual categories are “saturated,” and the emerging theory is comprehensive and credible. However, this approach has some challenges, including the fact that, in reality, saturation is rarely achieved and that it can only be operationalized during data collection. Still, sample sizes need to be stated in advance research proposals and protocols (Hennink, Kaiser, and Marconi 2017).

As the critical factor determining the sample size, others refer to other concepts, including data sufficiency and information power. The data sufficiency approach relies on the following principles: (1) the data are sufficient for meaningful comparisons across main concepts and constructs; (2) the data come from a range of participants so that others outside the sample can connect to the lived experiences of those interviewed; (3) the data are sufficient to answer research questions (Paterson et al. 2001; Seidman 2006). The information power approach assumes that the more relevant information the sample holds, the fewer participants are needed. The concept is based on the size of a sample with sufficient power depending on (a) the aim of the study, (b) sample specificity, (c) the use of established theory, (d) quality of dialog, and (e) analysis strategy (Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora 2016).

Hence, while some qualitative methodologists insist on “data saturation,” I made three value judgments in establishing the sample size for this study. First, given that the population I study has extensive knowledge of their experiences with the specific institutional context of the Black Baptist Church. A large sample size is unnecessary to gain sufficient information from the participants’ lived experiences to be analyzed and presented as crafted profiles. Second, the two

frameworks I used—the Black Feminist Thought and Womanist Theory—provided established theoretical frameworks for this inquiry. Third, the open-ended interview protocol with follow-up probing questions assures the openness of the process, allowing for a quality dialog. Fourth, the crafted profiles approach that I used to analyze and present the data focuses on lived experiences before, during, and after encounters with the institutional setting.

This approach does not require a specific number of participants. Finally, small cases or subjects may be precious and represent adequate numbers for studying hidden or hard-to-access populations. Black ordained women ministers fall within this category. Hence, qualitative researchers have differences of opinions about a sample size ranging from a minimum of one to 60 participants, given the limited number of Black ordained women ministers in the Black Baptist Church associated with the Antioch District (Baker and Edwards 2012, 2016).

### **Informed Consent and Confidentiality**

The University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines were followed. In the study, I ensured the protection of human subjects in accordance with the board's guidelines and ensured the participants' informed consent to research procedures. I also prevented violations of confidentiality and anonymity, violations of privacy rights, and deception. I recruited the study participants after receiving approval from the IRB committee (Appendix A). Participants volunteering to be a part of the study were given the rights of the participants and the guidelines for participating in an in-depth interviewing process. To participate in the study, participants must have signed a mandatory informed consent document (Appendix B). The federal guidelines and general requirements for informed consent, whether written or oral, are outlined in Protection of Human Subjects, 46.116-117 (Code of Federal Regulations 2017; Seidman 2006) and were designed primarily with the risks and benefits of biomedical research in

mind. Consequently, the guidelines had stipulations that are appropriate for experimental research using human subjects but benefit from adaptation when applied to qualitative research.

I protected any personal identifying information pertaining to the participants. I protected the identity of the participants by choosing seven pseudonyms, starting with Participant #1 – Participant #7. Participant #3 and Participant #6 are pastors. I have also been cautious not to reveal the participants' identities when sharing their crafted stories and narratives. A function of the interviewing process and its products should be to reveal the participant's sense of self-worth and dignity (Seidman 2006, 123). I kept in mind the research audience, as stated by Kaiser (2009), and followed the informed consent process as described. Additionally, I adhered to the ethical concerns associated with qualitative research by protecting the participants, their identities, privacy, and the way the data is used (Billups 2021).

### **Respondent Selection and Recruitment**

Respondents included five Black women ministers and two Black women pastors currently or previously associated with the Antioch District to address the research questions. The respondents were selected using a combination of convenience, snowball, and criterion sampling. Convenience, snowball, and criterion sampling techniques are subcategories of purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, reflecting a group of selection techniques that rely on the researcher's judgment. Convenience sampling is a recruitment technique relying on recruiting known subjects to participate in research. The convenience sampling technique is often used to collect data promptly and efficiently, especially when the research questions do not necessitate obtaining additional information outside the group.

Snowball sampling relies on referrals from known subjects or existing respondents. The convenience and snowball recruitment techniques are particularly suitable when the population of interest is hard to reach, and compiling a list of the population poses difficulties for the researcher (Dragan and Alexandru 2013; Etikan, Rukayya, and Sulaiman 2015). Given the nature of my research questions and the focus on a specific population, I combined these two recruitment techniques with the criterion recruitment technique that delineates which respondents will be interviewed to address the research questions. The criterion-based respondent selection requires an explicit statement of inclusion/exclusion criteria. These are listed below:

- Black or African American
- Ordained women ministers or pastors who are or have been associated with the Antioch District Missionary Baptist Association, Regular, the Antioch District Congress (local governing bodies), and the Regular Arkansas Congress of Christian Education (state governing body)<sup>24</sup>
- A minimum of two years of experience in a ministry leadership role<sup>25</sup>
- 46 to 70 years old<sup>26</sup>

To recruit participants, I emailed acquaintances, church associates, and family members, asking them to recommend potential participants and academic peers. The email stated, among other things (see Appendix E for the text of the email), the purpose of the study, the research question, criteria for study participation, an invitation to participate, and a request to provide other names. Participants agreeing to participate in the study received a consent form.

### **Demographic Data: Black Ordained Women Ministers**

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<sup>24</sup> The Antioch District of Arkansas is the most progressive district in allowing Black women to become ministers.

<sup>25</sup> The purpose of the requirements of ordination and serving in a minimum of two years in ministry leadership roles help preserve consistency and cohesion relative to the research.

<sup>26</sup> Typically, Black women are ordained by the Antioch District in their mid-40s.

The demographic breakdown of the Black ordained women ministers is as follows:

- All participants were Black or African American ordained women ministers
- All participants agree that a strong support network is essential for Black women ministers to thrive
- All participants agree they have lived experiences of being marginalized and disrespected by the Black and White males in the ministry
- Five ministers and one pastor (86%) agreed, that their support systems were initiated by Black male senior pastors.
- All ministers at various times lived in Northwest Arkansas or the River Valley.
- Four ministers (57%) have remained in these areas
- One minister has relocated to the Northeastern Corridor of the United States
- Two pastors (29%) live in the Southeastern regions of the United States.
- Three ministers and one pastor (57%) are married.
- Two ministers and one pastor (43%) are single.
- Five ministers and one pastor (87%) are affiliated with the Black Baptist Church.
- One pastor is affiliated with a non denominationa church:13%

**Table 1: Demographic Data: for Black Ordained Women Ministers**



<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Gender Identity</b>	<b>Generation</b>	<b>Member Affiliation</b>	<b>Leadership Role</b>	<b>Highest Level of Education</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>
<b>Participant #1</b>	Women	Generation X	Black Baptist	Associate Minister	Masters	Married
<b>Participant #2</b>	Women	Generation X	Black Baptist	Associate Minister	Bachelors	Married
<b>Participant #3</b>	Women	Generation X	Non Black Baptist	Pastor	Doctorate	Single
<b>Participant #4</b>	Women	Generation Jones	Black Baptist	Associate Minister	Masters	Single
<b>Participant #5</b>	Women	Generation Jones	Black Baptist	Associate Minister	Bachelors	Single
<b>Participant #6</b>	Women	Baby Bommer	Black Baptist	Senior Pastor	Juris Doctorate	Married
<b>Participant #7</b>	Women	Baby Boomer	Black Baptist	Associate Minister	Some College	Married

## **Data Collection**

Each participant was interviewed only once. According to Seidman, an in-depth, phenomenological interview should be conducted over three separate sessions. The three individual interviews were focused on: 1) Focused Life History, 2) Experience Details, and 3) Reflection on Meaning. By utilizing the interview guide (Appendix C), the researcher combined all three interviews into a single collective interview. Open-ended, unstructured questions were included in the interview guide and the opportunity for follow-up questions as needed. In the

interview guide, the researcher provided the participants with questions designed to contextualize their lived experiences.

Consequently, the participants could reconstruct the details of their experiences according to the context in which they occurred (focused life history), which allowed them to represent the meaning their experiences had for them. The researcher believed that the goal was achieved by having the participants reconstruct their lived experiences by exploring complex issues. The details of the participants' experiences are examined in a social setting. During the interview, participants were asked about their relationship with their ministries and their lives emotionally and intellectually. In Seidman (2006)'s opinion, one interview with an individual would not be recommended if this was the researcher's first contact with them.

The range of topics provided the structure for the participants to reconstruct the experiences relevant to the topic under study (Seidman 2006). The participants' lived experiences provided the context to analyze, identify connections, and personal craft stories (McCormack 2012). Seidman (2006) emphasized that the advantage of in-depth interviewing is that we can gain a deeper understanding of people's experiences based on their perspectives.

## **Interviews**

The interviews provided a foundation for individual behavior to become meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them. The three-part interview approach as outlined by Seidman (2006) includes the following:

1. The interviewer's task is to put the Participant's experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present,
2. The purpose of the second interview is to concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experience in the topic area of the student,

3. Participants are asked to reflect on the meaning of their experience, addressing the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants' work and life.

The same concept was used to produce the in-depth interviews for this study; however, due to time constraints, the three-interview prong process was combined into one interview per Participant.

I used an interview guide to adjust the questions according to the conversation dynamics, observations, and interactions. The open-ended interview guide also allowed immediate follow-up during the interaction (Billups 2021; Blee and Taylor 2002; Seidman 2006). I used a combination of instruments, including audio-recording, videotaping, and transcribing, the data for analysis.

All participants were interviewed via Zoom. No personal or organizational conditions may have influenced the research participants' experiences. I could not detect nor do the participants indicate that any setting issues prevented or influenced how they discussed their experiences (Peoples 2021). My approach was transcribing the interviews, closed captions, and audio recordings with voice memos. During Participant #4's interview, I had issues connecting with Participant #4 via Zoom. The Participant used her Zoom account, and the video recording started. Unfortunately, the video did not record; however, I recorded the interview with an audio recorder via voice memos. Participant #4 did have a transcript from the voice memos.

As Kaiser (2009) noted, the confidentiality of respondents is imperative when dealing with rich, detailed accounts of lived experiences. Zoom Video Communications, Inc. (2016) places security as the highest priority in the lifecycle operations of its public and hybrid cloud networks. The primary investigator can secure a meeting with end-to-end encryption (E2E), lock a meeting, open or password protect a meeting (provides great access control to prevent uninvited guests

from joining a meeting, provides visual identification of every Participant in the meeting, and secure videos, transcripts and/or audio for each in-depth interview (Zoom Privacy Statement 2021)

The interviews were transcribed using Otter.ai. Otter.ai is compatible with Zoom and provides real-time captions and notes for in-person and virtual meetings. The software allows the researcher to record and review transcripts (Corrente and Bourgeault, 2022). I also used a digital, web-based textual analysis tool, Voyant. Voyant provides a critical awareness of text exploration, text mining, and detecting patterns and themes (Miller 2018). I reconnected with the seven participants by actively listening and rewatching the transcribed Zoom interviews.

### **Data Analysis: Crafted Stories/Profiles Approach**

Data analysis is a process of gathering, modeling, and transforming data with the objective of accenting and highlighting useful information, suggesting conclusions, discussing strategies and supporting decision-making (Graue 2015). According to Seidman (2006), first-person narratives used for crafting profiles and vignettes of participants' experiences have been found to be an effective method for sharing interview data and enabling the analysis and interpretation of the data. Analyzing a profile, as well as presenting and commenting upon excerpts arranged in categories, is part of the process of creating a profile. A key consideration in crafting a profile is ensuring that the participant's identity is protected as stated on the consent form (Appendix B).

### **Data Analysis: Coding and Themes**

The seven participants' interviews were coded to find themes that could be combined. In Vivo coding is a method commonly used for analyzing interviews conducted under the phenomenological approach. Vivo provides an opportunity for interview transcripts to be

analyzed as a method of attuning yourself to participant perspectives and actions. In Vivo coding keeps the researcher grounded in the participant's voice. It seems more authentic and instinctive than other methods to code this way, regardless of the research question and methodology (Saldana 2021).

Also, In Vivo coding is a form of qualitative data analysis that emphasizes the actual spoken words of the participants. This form of coding can be constructive when researchers interact with participants from a particular culture or microculture to help highlight how those participants use specific words or phrases in their interactions that might not otherwise be understood when using other forms of coding. In Vivo coding is championed by many for its usefulness in highlighting the voices of participants and for its reliance on the participants themselves to give meaning to the data (Manning 2017). ("In Vivo Coding - Manning - Major Reference Works - Wiley Online Library")

In-depth interviews were conducted to provide insights into issues, structures, processes, and policies contributing to the participants' experiences. As illuminating as in-depth interviews can be, as compelling as their stories, and as intriguing as the themes they can raise, the themes in Table 2 emerged from the analysis of the transcripts (Seidman, 2006). In Phase I, I approached raw data management by reviewing the transcripts and notes from the interviews.

A transcript of the interview is prepared using the raw qualitative data. The researcher must holistically immerse themselves in the data by reading the transcripts and notes. Phase I is the data collection phase, and Phase II is the data reduction phase. During this phase, an initial set of codes or categories is developed to cluster the raw data into similar categories or chunks, "a process known as winnowing." A researcher may start with many codes that will be reduced to a smaller number due to duplications or similar meanings (Billups 2021).

Each interview was manually coded. Codes were written in caps and quotation marks to remind the researcher which codes belonged to which participants. Under In Vivo coding, the researcher manually arrived at 161 codes. The codes were arranged alphabetically according to the order in which they appeared. The duplicate codes were deleted, and codes that shared similar meanings were organized into coded groups in an Excel spreadsheet. It was noted that some of the codes and themes were similar.

**Table 2: Themes, Unexpected Findings, Key Words**

Sub Questions	Themes	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
R <sub>1</sub>	Tradition	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R <sub>2</sub>	Gendered Occupations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R <sub>3</sub>	Perseverance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R <sub>4</sub>	Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R <sub>5</sub>	Gendered Occupations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R <sub>6</sub>	Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Unexpected Findings	Accepted My Calling				✓	✓		✓
	Second Guessed	✓	✓	✓			✓	
	Voices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Key Words	Mentorship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Patriarchal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Church Planting (Founding)						✓	
	Gender	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Disrespect	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Work Life Balance		✓	✓			✓	
	Resistance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Support System	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Struggles	✓	✓	✓			✓	
	Marginalization	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Spiritually Focused					✓		

The third and fourth phases of data management and analysis consisted of specific strategies designed for the qualitative research design. The process at these phases cannot be entirely separated from the data reduction phase, as it involves the continuous review of the data as the codes and clusters are developed. In the final analysis, it was found that many codes overlapped and could theoretically be used in more than one category (Saldana 2021).

## **Limitations**

Researchers' studies require credibility and trustworthiness. A study's credibility and trustworthiness determine its rigor, authenticity, and verification of its findings. The term trustworthiness is a concept developed by Lincoln and Guba (1986) as a quintessential framework for evaluating qualitative research; however, qualitative method researchers believe that the same principles of validity, reliability, and generalization can and should apply to qualitative design (Billups 2021). Stahl and King (2020) ask, "Why should researchers worry about their trustworthiness?" Different researchers can analyze and interpret a given data set differently, even when the same data is collected and shared. As a result, most qualitative researchers consider reality constructed. Triangulation promotes credibility.

The triangulation process involves combining information from multiple sources or procedures from the field to establish repeatable patterns. According to Stahl, King, and Billups (2020, 2021), this effort is imperative in qualitative studies to corroborate findings and develop a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon. This study presents some limitations, despite the precautions taken to ensure credibility. Triangulation uses several methods, including interviews, journals, focus groups, observations, and documents. In the future, a focus group with Black ordained women ministers is an additional triangulation method to establish more repeatable patterns and collect additional data.

It is not easy to find literature describing the advancements Black ordained women ministers are making in their profession. The literature indicates that Black ordained women ministers continue to face some of the same obstacles as women of the eighteenth century. Several themes emerged during participants' in-depth interviews. Themes include Black Baptist women seeking leadership positions encounter patriarchy, matriarchy, racialized gender, and

racialized sexism. In the field of religious practice, clergy tends to use gender bias. The advancement of women clergy is inhibited by religious rules and policies controlled by males (Smarr, Disbennett-Lee, and Hakim 2018).

Furthermore, the study has limitations that affect its transferability: 1) The researcher may only provide adequate data for the reader to determine whether the findings apply to other situations; 2) The sample did not include Black Baptist ordained women ministers from all geographical regions; The study was conducted in Northwest Arkansas, the Southeast and Northeastern Corridors of the United States only. Other geographical regions may have provided evidence of experiences of Black Baptist ordained women ministers that differ from those of the participants of this study in terms of their lived experiences. 2) there were no ordained women ministers from other ethnicities or denominations in the sample; only Black ordained women ministers, so the results may not apply to women ministers from other ethnicities and cultures.

In addition to being a Black Baptist ordained woman minister, the primary researcher holds the same positions in ministry leadership as five of the participants. The researcher also belongs to the same denominational background as six. As such, there was awareness of some of the participants' faiths, beliefs, and experiences as obstacles to ministry leadership. This may be a potential bias of the qualitative study. Although participants' lived experiences, phenomena, and struggles enabled data analysis that others who are not members of the Antioch District Missionary Baptist Association, the Antioch District Congress, and the Regular Arkansas Congress of Christian Education may not fully understand.



## Summary

Chapter 3 describes the methodology, the research design, the questions, the setting, and a description of the seven ordained Black women ministers who participated in the study. The participants included five ordained Black Baptist ministers, one ordained Black Baptist pastor, and one ordained Black, nondenominational pastor. The number of Black women ministers totals seven. There were two groups of ministers and senior pastors between the ages of 46 and 70. The chapter discusses the methods of collecting data, the data analysis, the sample size, the study's credibility, its trustworthiness, its triangulation, and its limitations. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study.

## Chapter 4: Findings

Without Black women administering the ministry, praying for the pastor, teaching the children, singing in the choir, cooking in the kitchen, answering the phones, photocopying the bulletin, and testifying to the goodness of the Lord on Wednesday nights, there is no Black Church. Reverend Dr. Eboni Marshall Turman<sup>27</sup>

### Overview

In Chapter 4, I present the findings and connect the findings with the research questions. Based on the transcribed interviews, 13 codes were identified. As a result of in-depth interviews, the following In Vivo codes emerged: accepting my calling, organizational validation, cultural barriers, gender biases, gendered occupations, lack of leadership, respectability, high support system, education, pursuing senior pastor positions, perseverance, proven, and a message for future Black ordained women ministers.

Overarching and sub-research questions organize the chapter. The overarching research question is: From the standpoint of Black ordained women ministers, how have marginalization, racialized gender, racialized sexism, and traditional matriarchal roles may be preventing Black women from becoming senior pastors? To address this question, I asked the following sub-questions:

R<sub>1</sub> According to the Black women ministers, is there a relationship between the origin of the Black Baptist Church and the lack of Black ordained women ministers?

R<sub>2</sub>: What are the main barriers preventing Black Baptist women ministers from becoming senior pastors?

R<sub>3</sub>: How have Black Baptist women ministers who become senior pastors overcome the barriers to assuming cleric leadership roles?

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<sup>27</sup> Eboni Marshall Turman is Assistant Professor of Theology and African American Religion at Yale University Divinity School in New Haven, CT. She formerly served as Assistant Research Professor of Theological Ethics, Black Church Studies, and African & African American Studies and Director of the Office of Black Church Studies at Duke University Divinity School. An author, ordained minister, professor, and public theologian, the Reverend Dr. Marshall Turman is a refreshing addition to the most pressing national discussions of faith, race and gender

R<sub>4</sub>: How can Black Baptist women ministers who aspire to be senior pastors pursue leadership positions?

R<sub>5</sub>: Do Black women ministers feel they need to take on subordinate roles to support the Black Baptist Church?

R<sub>6</sub>: How do Black Baptist women ministers respond to groups of women who believe Scripture calls for women to stay submissive and not be involved in cleric decision-making?

Participants responded to open-ended questions and follow-up questions following the interview guide. Answers to the questions led to the development of study themes. For the development of themes and subthemes, direct quotes from participants support the findings. As a result of reviewing the transcripts, the following themes are evident: patriarchy, traditions, gendered occupations, sexism, respectability, inclusion, and dissatisfaction.

Black women ordained ministers find it difficult to listen to the disparities, gendered remarks, and isolation they have encountered when accepting and announcing their calling to Black male ministers, leaders, and pastors. A superior level of professionalism and research integrity was displayed throughout the interviews.

### **Participants' Interviews and Themes**

**R<sub>1</sub>: According to the Black women ministers, is there a relationship between the origin of the Black Baptist Church and the lack of Black ordained women ministers?**

Participants in the study reported that the Black Church is a religious institution with traditions and hierarchies originating from its founding. By placing women in matriarchal positions, the Black Baptist Church is allowing the past to dominate the present. As indicated by the participants, this is a result of Black men not wanting Black women to have authority over them. An example of this authority would be a Black woman in a senior leadership role within the church, such as a senior pastor.

*“I was a little hesitant ... from what I could see, women were not welcome in the pulpit, not until around 2003, actually, to be honest with you, what, what I felt or what I saw was that the only roles that women were able to have been serving in the church. You know, feeding people, singing in the choir, or reading the church announcements. I saw our pastor look at a woman soloist who was singing and she approached the pulpit. Our pastor at the time watched feet, as I watched him, and I knew women were not welcomed in the pulpit.” (P2)*

*“I think Black women ministers and pastors are sidelined when it comes to some saying, we cannot teach men. Although Black women can teach boys, we are not permitted to teach men, which is one of the silliest things I have ever heard. Women ministers and pastors are unjustly marginalized whenever the assumption is made that they cannot minister to men. In other words, it is as if men have never read the Books of Esther and Ruth in the Bible or heard about any other women who have held leadership positions within the Bible. The Bible speaks to each one of us. We can learn from those women’s circumstances and situations. Women are not expected to serve as senior pastors according to some Black men. Therefore, they do not affirm women as senior pastors.” (P3)*

*“I have always been clear eyed about the Baptist Church, and I understand the history of the church, and why some people hold on to the old ways. So, I understood early on, which is why I resisted becoming a minister. I understood early on there would be resistance. And I knew that either I was going to meet it head on, or not meeting it would not be fulfilling the call on my life. You know, I think about the titles ... had it not been for the women, particularly in the Black church. So, I would say to women who think being in position, whatever that may be the Black church should not be daunted by the narrative of what it has meant. The church continues to evolve, and we have a place and major place in the church.” (P4)*

## **R<sub>1</sub> Question – Vignettes: Theme Results: Tradition**

Considering the origins and traditions of the Black Baptist Church, all participants acknowledged that ordained women in the church are typically relegated to matriarchal roles. A few of those roles include childcare, women's ministries, choir, and reading the church announcements. The participants agreed that the origins and traditions of the Black Church marginalize women and exclude them from leadership positions perceived as gender specific.

## **R<sub>2</sub>: What are the main barriers preventing Black Baptist women ministers from becoming senior pastors?**

Most participants agreed that the Black Baptist Church and some nondenominational churches still maintain separate roles and positions for Black ordained women. In Black Baptist churches, women ministers have traditionally been treated differently from men. Although senior pastors of local churches acknowledged participants' callings, other church leaders refused to accept them. As ordained ministers and reverends, their status is not acknowledged at district, state, and national conventions. Among these roles are those designated for women as well as roles specifically targeted at men and occupations associated with a particular gender.

The analogy of sports was used by one participant as an example of how the church's mentality must be changed. There is a need for the church to change its mentality regarding what girls are capable of versus what boys are capable of. Many Black women who have been ordained as ministers encounter significant difficulty in gaining experience and developing their skills. This lack of experience and skill makes it difficult for them to assume leadership roles or become senior pastors.

*"I guess, when I first accepted by calling and I was preparing for my first sermon, I invited a member from my family to attend the service. But I never heard back from them. After a*

*while, I asked my husband about the non-responsiveness. He stated, I would never hear back from our relative because they did not believe in women ministers. This relative is the most resistant individual that I have noticed or encountered. And so, when the ordination process came up, I just did not share this information. The individual has never supported anything in terms of my ministry.” (P1)*

*“A patriarchal system is in place. My question is why God would put half of his creation on the sidelines. In such a crucial area of society, is it possible for the other half to do all the work in ministry? I am baffled as to why God would do something like that. Why do we not ask that question more often? In addition, I believe that Black women have been marginalized, not only within the Black Baptist Church, but also in general, from Whites.*

*A woman cannot impart knowledge to a man. The idea that women will not instruct men is absurd. Nevertheless, they can teach boys who are likely to become men. Every woman mentioned in the Bible, including Esther and Ruth, speaks directly to us. Tradition is the only word that can describe this absurdity.*

*“... sometimes you can even be a co-pastor ... and I was just in a conference the other day and you know, with some co pastors, and guess which pastor was taking care of the baby just little stuff like that, you know, I mean seriously, we always have to be women, multiple things to do in life, and men seem to be able to focus on the task at hand, which usually, is their job, right? Tradition is the only word that can describe this absurdity”. (P3)*

*“Black men in the Black Baptist Church believe that Black women should remain in their place. The role of Black women should be to help Black men, not to compete with them. When it comes to preaching, there is a hierarchy between Black women and Black men. Why?*

*Consequently, some Black men view themselves as the head of their households and as the only representatives for the House of God.” (P5)*

*“My pathway in the ministry, it was complicated, it as complex, it was brutal, it was disrespectful. I have served in local and district areas in many capacities. I was shown no respect by some male counterparts, and they were very callous about how they spoke to me. At times, I wanted to fight back, but I learned a while ago. If they want to be ignorant, let them be ignorant by themselves. They do a rather good job at being ignorant.” (P7)*

### **R<sub>2</sub> Question – Vignettes: Theme Results: Gendered Occupations**

There were several common themes mentioned when discussing the key barriers within the Black Baptist Church that prevent Black Baptist women from becoming senior pastors, namely are gendered occupations. Key words associated with gendered occupations are patriarchal system, gender, disrespect, and work-life balance. The pastor participant noted that women pastors and co-pastors are expected to fulfill matriarchal responsibilities, such as childcare. In contrast, the wives’ husbands can devote more time and resources to the development of their spiritual and professional capacities. The interviews indicate that several participants have been verbally abused and disrespected.

### **R<sub>3</sub>: How have Black Baptist women ministers who become senior pastors overcome the barriers to assuming cleric leadership roles?**

The two Black women pastors shared how they have overcome barriers when it comes to assuming pastoral leadership roles. The other five participants shared their thoughts on what they thought a Black ordained woman needed in order to become a senior leader since they do not desire to assume the role of pastor.

*“Black Baptist women aspiring to be a senior pastor ... get your knee pads out. Make sure God is surrounding you on all sides. I will say “go baby, go, go!!! If God has called you to do that, do not let anybody stop you. But oh, my goodness, oh, my gosh, what a call on her life. I would say persevere, do not stop, do not give up. If God has honestly said that. If that is your battle, I would support you all the way. But do not stop, and do not give up.” (P2)*

*“My road to being a senior pastor was not difficult. I was actually in a denomination that I won't name. You know, sometimes I look back and say I shouldn't have been there but it all worked for my good and it helped me to become who God wanted me to become”. (P3)*

*“Spiritually focused ... God called me to preach and I happen to be a woman within the preaching culture. Where he leads me, I will fall. I am not going to position myself anywhere but where God has called me to go. I am not going to step below His Calling. I do not have a desire to be a senior pastor. If God put it out there that this is where He wants me to go, He will supply me with what I need to move forward. I'm not pushing to try to be anyone's pastor. I'm not. I'm not gonna lie, I'm not. But at the same time, I am not there. But I believe women ministers can preach and become reverends, but you do not usurp the authority of a man by becoming pastor. Because that means you are going to be over everybody in the church of Jesus Christ as the head of the church. So it's not out of order. So, I am only under Jesus Christ, and I'm going to do what He says. I am more concerned with my steps and making sure I am in line with God all the time.” (P5)*

*“I chose to become involved in church planting as a means of overcoming the obstacles I faced in obtaining a senior pastor position in a Black church. As a result of church planting, I was able to establish a church. When I founded the church, there was never a situation in which someone walked into our church and said, “Oh, so a woman pastor.”. I cannot listen to that,*



*pastor. That has never happened to me. Most of our members are unchurched people who have not been attending church and have not been baptized. It was wonderful to see such a diverse group of individuals. Members of the congregation were both white and African American, and as I said, what struck me the most was that they were not concerned whether there was a woman or male pastor, they only wanted to hear the word of God. To them, it made no difference whether the word came from the mouth of a woman or a man". (P6)*

### **R<sub>3</sub>: Question – Vignettes: Theme Results: Perseverance**

The ability to achieve leadership roles as senior pastors requires perseverance on the part of women ministers. As leaders, these women must not allow anything or anyone to impede their progress. One participant stated that Black women ministers seeking cleric leadership as senior pastors should have a strong spiritual focus. In the opinion of the participant, women ministers ensure that their roles are God-ordained. For women ministers to achieve leadership at the highest level as senior pastors, they must devote considerable time and effort to prayer. According to a member, founding a church is an option when barriers arise to becoming a senior pastor. The emerging themes are perseverance and prayers.

### **R<sub>4</sub>: How can Black Baptist women ministers who aspire to be senior pastors pursue leadership positions?**

An ordained Black women minister pursuing a position as a senior pastor received very thoughtful advice from the participants. Participants discussed the importance of receiving genuine feedback and maintaining authentic relationships. Upon review of the crafted stories, this group of ministers concluded that to advance to the position of senior pastor, a woman must possess certain qualities. This individual may be required to meet a higher educational requirement because of her gender. She would need to be aggressive in her pursuit of the

position she is seeking. An individual's spiritual and family life must be beyond question. To have mentors and coaches with whom she can be authentically herself, an individual must establish relationships outside of the church. Keeping a close connection with God is essential for this individual.

*"I believe for a woman to become a senior pastor; she would need a minimum of a master's degree to be considered. She would need a doctorate." (P1)*

*"Have a person one or two people that whether they are in the church or not, that she can always talk to me and always be herself." (P4)*

*"As a first step, I would advise her to maintain a close relationship with God. Second, do not let anyone hinder you from pursuing what you believe God is calling you to do. Both the evidence and her life would support that she lived her life the way she did. It was God's will for her to serve as a senior pastor. Her daily walk will provide evidence of this. Whether a man or woman is called to lead, it is about their ability. To put it another way, if she keeps her focus on God in her daily walk, rather than on her environment or what others say about it. Yes, I believe that a woman can serve as a senior pastor." (P5)*

#### **R4: Question: Vignettes: Theme Results: Education**

In the opinion of one participant, women ministers wishing to serve as senior pastors should possess at least a master's degree, but a doctorate should be preferred. Throughout the interviews, education was emphasized as a key component for eliminating misinterpretations of the Scriptures. Historically, Black male pastors and others have marginalized Black women ministers by using scripture to justify their patriarchal practices. Another participant recommended cultivating a close relationship with God, remaining prayerful, and seeking mentorship both within and outside the church. For a Black women minister, there is no greater

necessity than to reflect her faith in God in her daily walk. Four out of seven participants interviewed indicated that mentoring others and having a mentor are essential to Black women ministers and senior women pastors. According to one participant, Black women pastors in senior positions should seek mentorship outside of their church. In this way, the senior pastor is provided with a space in which she feels comfortable and can confide in trusted individuals.

**R5: Do Black women ministers feel they must take on subordinate roles to support the Black Baptist Church?**

Most participants agreed that the Black Baptist Church and some nondenominational churches still maintain distinct roles and positions for Black ordained women. Among these roles are roles designated for women and roles specifically targeted for men or occupations associated with a gender.

*“In my experience, when I speak with women in circles and have these conversations, one of the things we do not appreciate is the fact that sometimes men look at us differently. Whenever you step out of the pulpit after you preach, you do not need to hear people say “that a girl” or anything like that. The words you spoke should have a genuine impact on people, so that they may be touched by God. Wouldn’t you agree? Consequently, you do not wish for others to say, “Oh, great, you did a great job.” What does that mean? I am more likely to receive this kind of communication from men than from women. Listen, women are and of course, we have a, I do not know, I just think we as women have a deep well with the Lord. The truth is that we recognize genuineness. There is no word to describe the genuineness of other people, and of other women. I just have had so many compliments from women that just go straight to my heart. And the compliments from men, most of them are dumb. And they are trying to be tough, and they are not trying to feel what is going on. Nevertheless, I sit in circles where a lot of women say the same thing.” (P3)*

*“There are pastors that do not agree with women ministers, I worked with those pastors on all levels. Those levels include the state and national roles. But once I announced and said, I have been called to preach, the doors, the friendships doors immediately closed. I’d say almost 90% of the preachers that I was friends with, men, we are no longer friends. I would sit down and do paperwork, you know cards and stuff them to fill out and use for classes. I did this all the time at the state level. But the minute that I became a minister, all of that was closed. The preachers started shunning me. I mean, I had close male pastors as friends and now, they do not talk to me. Now, the conversation is very generalized and bland. I decided early, I am not going to make you understand what God has called me to do.” (P5)*

*“No, ma’am. A subordinate role is not for me. Not for me personally. If you stifle yourself in a subordinate role, you draw back and fit yourself in a small box. Others will allow you to function in that small box ... some of us do not exude what we have. We’re just not willing to push to get the things necessary for us to be successful. This is not only just in the Black Baptist Churches, as in all churches, I’ve been told on more than one occasion”. (P7)*

### **R<sub>5</sub>: Question – Vignettes: Theme Results: Gendered Occupations**

The participants do not feel compelled to assume subordinate roles to support the Black Baptist Church. In their view, Black women ministers, pastors, or themselves should not participate in submissive leadership roles. The participants generally had the view that they should be given equal opportunity to participate in any leadership positions they are qualified for. In addition, they should be able to lead in those roles as well. As one participant described, she feels marginalized as a preacher when she departs from the pulpit and receives no genuineness from some men after she leaves the platform. She acknowledges that women provide her with a great deal of support.

**R6: How do Black Baptist women ministers respond to groups of women who believe Scripture calls for women to stay submissive and not be involved in cleric decision-making?**

Throughout the in-depth interviews, all participants offered their perspectives regarding their responses to not only groups of women but men as well who use Scriptures for women to remain in submissive roles and not take on leadership positions within the Black Baptist Church.

*“Historically, Black women have initiated the glue that binds family members together, serving as the center of the family. If you were to return to a Black Baptist Church, or any Black church, you would find that approximately 75% to 85% of the congregation were women. So, there is an expectation from a standpoint of how many women you have, that must be in a leadership role. It is okay for them to cook, serve guests, and greet them with a smile if they focus on the positions that pertain to women and children. As a rule, I consider women to be women. There is no doubt that women can bring order to chaos. There are a lot of things that are out of order in churches. However, there is a part of me that would not have minded being able to share leadership duties with my husband equally. Having equal respect and recognition is an imperative characteristic of senior leaders and co-senior leaders. Despite her qualifications as a minister, a Black woman cannot serve as a senior pastor in a Black Baptist church because only Black men are eligible for these positions. However, many individuals feel that a woman should not be a pastor or be in a position of authority. Despite what they perceive to be the teachings of scripture, she cannot and should not have authority over men based on what they believe to be true. This topic is the subject of much debate. If I were seriously considering becoming a senior pastor, I would need a double dose of courage. There is a great deal of work involved in becoming an ordained minister. As a senior pastor, I can only imagine*

*how much work it takes to attain this position. Work involves putting up with the attitudes of those who do not believe that women are qualified to hold the position of pastor.” (P2)*

*“I can only say that there are still places that do not accept women, especially in ministry, and I am a Black woman. In addition, there are places that do not accept, you know, people of color. As a result, we continue to deal with that issue frequently. I find this to be unfortunate. God can call anybody. And you never know what God is doing in your life. It’s certain he was right on with that prophetic word. But because again, because of my upbringing, I have had over the years, some real issues, that should I be doing what I’m doing. And so, it led me to really tackle scripture. It led me to find books about women preachers. I read a book not all the way through about when women were priests. I read about 25 books and about the lies; the church has told women. I mean, I really, really struggled initially. Because I had been brainwashed into believing that women were not supposed to do the same things as men. And of course, we live in the south. So, I struggled with it, and I studied and studied and studied, but what I came back with ... you go to Scripture, tradition, reason and one other word, experience. Experience is what I’m looking for. If it wasn’t for my experience with God, that God himself put this on me. I would never have done it. But I know that it was God who called me. I need Scripture, I was still searching. And tradition was telling me no, but God was telling me yes. Thank God I listened to him. Listen to God”. (P3)*

*The Bible speaks to at least some interpretation to things that women should not do. Paul writes that women should be silent in the church. And that’s where Bible Study and Sunday School come in. If you just read that one verse, you will come away from that verse thinking, oh, am I supposed to be quiet, they’re definitely not supposed to be teaching a man. If you read one verse, you read one verse, you don’t get the message. What I want to tell women and what I*

*would tell women is to be different from their male counterparts. Take your congregations beyond that one verse and tell them the whole story. Because when you tell them the whole story, they'll put the dots together, they will connect. Women are more thorough teachers than men.*

**R6: Question – Vignettes: Theme Result: Education**

All participants agreed women and men must be educated on Scriptures that have been misinterpreted when it comes to women taking on leadership roles,

**Key Words: Support Systems**

All participants have a support system from current and former pastors, other women ministers, family, friends church and outside mentors. The nondenominational pastor received support from a pastor and her congregation.

*“There were four women ministers before me who paved the way and made things different for me. As a result of their experiences, I have found it to be easier for me. Because of this, I have not experienced some of the trials mentioned by them.” (P1).*

*“My husband supported my ministry decision. It meant a lot to me. No door is closed when your spouse is on your team. This helped me to find a balance in my own space. My children begin to recognize if I am studying. During that time, my senior pastor supported me. I was able to move forward in my ministry, within the church, and then within the district. I also value the support of my fellow women ministers. There are women ministers who follow in other women's footsteps.” (P2)*

*“If my mother were still alive, she would be my strongest supporter. My congregation supports me.” (P3)*

*“Even though my father is deceased, I know he would support me in my ministry if he were still alive. I would like to acknowledge that one of my dad's best friends, who is a reverend,*

*has provided support for me. He is like an uncle to me, and if I have a problem, I can call him. I refer to him as “uncle”. Throughout my life, he has consistently and without fail supported me in every endeavor that I have undertaken. In fact, he is one of my father’s closest friends. As a result, he has always been around me. He has always been a source of guidance and inspiration for me.” (P5)*

### **Key Word Results: Support System**

The participants feel that their support system is very strong. There is a strong sense of community among their senior pastors, spouses, some family members, and members of the congregation. As a result of the outpouring of support from their women ministry circles, both formal and informal, they feel they have received a lot of encouragement.

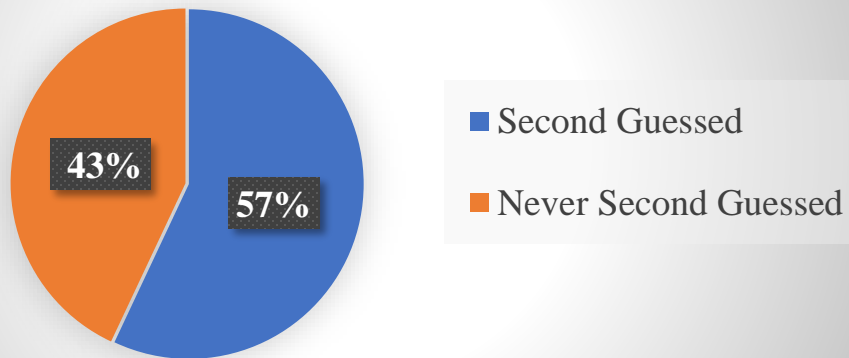
### **Unexpected Findings and Outcomes**

I identified three unexpected outcomes when analyzing the results and findings of the study. There have been unexpected findings relating to 1) accepting my calling, 2) the voices of ministers, and 3) advice for ministers seeking pastoral leadership positions. The findings of the study are based on extensive interviews that were conducted with ministers who were stepping into spaces that are typically considered patriarchal or associated with gendered occupations. In the Black Church, Black women who have been ordained as ministers have historically been marginalized due to the Church's history and the absence of inclusive governing documents. Although all of the ministers confirmed their call, I found that 43% had no doubts regarding their call, while 57% expressed doubt or struggle regarding Scripture, tradition, the 2020 pandemic, and their reason for accepting the call.

Figure 4



## Ordained Women Ministers' Calling



The following statements support the decision of the participants who did not second guess their choice:

*“I do not know that I have ever second guessed this decision. I have been clear eyed about the Baptist Church. Because I understand the history of the church.” (P4)*

*“The very first thing I did was approach my senior pastor and tell him that I had been called by God to become a minister. Through the guidance of my pastor, I was able to gain a thorough understanding of everything I needed to know about becoming a minister. At the same time, I wanted to make sure this was in accordance with God and my pastor. We went through that, and he helped me to start training on how to form and write sermons... No doubt in my mind. This is something I want to make clear from the beginning. The fact that I am a woman, and a minister has led to some displeasure with some people who have tried to push me into a different area. There is no doubt that this is present. The answer is no, I am not. I do not second guess God.” (P5)*

*“Throughout my life, I have never once doubted my calling to be a minister. Having received confirmation from God’s Word, I stand by my calling.” (P7)*

Participants’ doubting their calling is supported by the following statements:

*“I accepted my calling and wrestled with it. Just because I was a good teacher did not necessarily mean a call to preach.” (P1)*

*“The tendency is to doubt your ability to answer the call. You ask yourself, “Why me?” For me, serving in the background is more comfortable. It is my nature to work behind the scenes at the back of the church. In my heart, I only wanted to contribute, not to lead, but God took my heart. As a result, I answered the call to the ministry. My husband and I discussed the matter. My encounter with God convinced me that I should do this. As a result, God revealed to me that I would become a minister. The purpose of my ministry was to restore lives and preach the gospel.” (P2)*

*“I struggled with it. So, I studied and studied and studied. My decision-making process was based on the quadrilateral method. In addition to studying scripture, I also examined tradition, reasoning, and my own personal experience. Furthermore, I would not have been able to accomplish this if it were not for my own personal experience with God. If I had to do this on my own, I would not have been able to do it. However, I am certain that God has called me. Yes, I am aware of this. This is the deal, in the words of one of my senior leaders: “You win.” At this point it is obvious what should be done. My experience with God and my relationship with God were telling me to walk in this direction. If it were not for God and my experiences with God, reasoning was telling me to refrain from taking this action. I was still searching for Scripture. I was being told no by tradition, but I was being told yes by God. Thank you, Jesus. After listening to Him, I acted accordingly.” (P3)*

## **Accepted My Calling**

There were 43% of participants who did not second guess their calling, one of whom stated they had knowledge of the church's history. The other participant reported that she received guidance from her pastor; as a result, she was able to gain the knowledge she needed to recognize her calling. According to another participant, she received confirmation from God. The remaining 57% of participants said they wrestled, doubted, and searched the scriptures for the confirmation of their calling.

## **Voices**

In the literature, it has been demonstrated that ordained Black women ministers in traditional matriarchal roles have voices within their ministries, but not within the overall decision-making process of the church. The participants gave a resounding "yes" in their in-depth interviews to being involved in decisions and processes not just in their respective ministries but the overall church.

Their respective ministries affect the structure of the church, surrounding communities and finances. Research indicates that approximately 75% of the church is composed of Black women, so developing ministries and strategies to support the needs of women, children, and youth is crucial. In addition, these ministries contribute to the overall purpose, vision, mission, core values, education, and outreach decisions made by the church.

According to the participants, Black women ministers encounter racialized sexism, marginalization, and disrespect in the church from Black male leaders. According to the participants, Black women ministers in the church experience racialized gender, racialized sexism, marginalization, and disrespect. Despite these encounters, they are committed to providing the congregation with a solid spiritual foundation and the opportunity to grow

spiritually through Christian education. Participants indicated they are members of senior leadership boards within the church that assist with finance and governance. These services are provided by Black women ministers to fulfill their ministry responsibilities. As a result of God's guidance, they are spiritually guided. At state and national conventions, Black Baptist women ministers are aware that their voices are not utilized at these levels as they are locally. Even though they are faced with these challenges, they remain committed to fulfilling their ministry calls.

According to the nondenominational pastor, their voice has been effectively utilized during the decision-making process:

*“Because I belong to a nondenominational church, I am unable to address the Black Baptist Church. With my present denomination, my voice, and my seat at the table, I can speak with them directly. As a representative of my district, I can have my voice heard. As an ex officio member of the District Board of Administration (DBA), I am not eligible to vote. Despite this, I do have a voice. We have a powerful DBA, which is the highest board in our district. As a result, people pay attention to what I say when I say it. It is an environment in which I am extremely comfortable.” (P3)*

Black Baptist women ministers stated that they believe their voices are highly effective in the decision-making processes for their ministries on a local level in their churches:

*“In a variety of situations, I believe that my voice would be heard and respected. My pastor is a person with whom I feel comfortable discussing matters. As far as policies and procedures are concerned, I do not believe I am able to influence them. However, I may be able to share my views on the matter. The pastor has listened to me, we hold leadership meetings, and I have participated in those meetings. As we plan around ministries, I have shared my*

*experiences during those leadership meetings. There has only been one instance in which I have had to intervene. I am involved in a ministry that operates outside of the church. My efforts are supported by the pastor, and I do not face any resistance from him. The freedom to lead this ministry in a way that is effective has been very encouraging.” (P1)*

*“I am a game changer. The status quo does not work for me. My role as an ordained minister leading the women’s ministry requires me to do things differently. Therefore, I challenged many things as a result. Honestly, it was welcomed since our church is situated at the crossroads between tradition and non-tradition. The purpose is to provide people with exposure to a variety of ideas and approaches. Those who are creative do not take no for an answer. So, I’m not afraid to go up against the leaders in the church to say, hey, guys, let’s try something different. My approach is very inclusive, and I welcome women of all ages. In today’s world, COVID requires you to rethink ministry in a new way. It is our church’s responsibility to reach out to our community. According to the Bible, Jesus instructs people to go. Getting people in is our goal. As a result, we need to take a different approach. To achieve inclusion, one must first be inclusive. Everything changed after a global pandemic shook the world. It was imperative to me that my voice be heard after having my ears to the ground and hearing the problems women are facing. Right now, I am observing the world around me. The Supreme Court recently rendered a crucial decision. The ruling has caused confusion among many individuals. Women are now able to speak out. It is necessary to change the way we speak about women in the Bible. Men are primarily responsible for developing policies and procedures. A voice should be given to Black ordained women ministers in the decision-making process. To advance the Black Baptist church, it is our responsibility to work with the men to implement these policies.*

*Women's perspectives are often necessary when examining issues. If women are not involved in the policy making process, it will be a one-sided policy formulated by men.” (P2)*

*“I am always included. In the room, I am treated equally with all the other men. There is always a place for my voice, and I am heard.” (P4)*

### **Voices Results**

Participants affirmed that their voices are highly effective and contribute significantly to the overall purpose, vision, and key decision-making processes within their local churches. The fact remains that women ministers, and pastors still face racialized gender, racialized sexism, marginalization, and disrespect within the church, despite their ability to contribute to decision-making processes. Moreover, they are dedicated and committed to fulfilling their ministry responsibilities, callings and becoming change agents within the church.

## **Two Situated Crafted Stories: Themes and Barriers**

My decision to select the first crafted profile from Participant #1 is based on the lived experiences and thoughtful comments she made regarding how a woman minister might be accepted as a senior pastor. According to Participant #1, individuals who have not grown up within the church may have different opinions and may not be bound by church traditions when it comes to Black women ministers becoming senior pastors. There's a possibility that church members who do not grow up in traditional churches will not consider the following when seeking leadership positions for Black women ministers. In the Black Baptist Church, women should be considered for lower-level leadership positions rather than positions at the top of the organization. The interpretation of scripture by some Black men and women indicates that a woman should not usurp the authority of a man. A Black woman serving in a senior leadership position, such as a pastor, is usurping the authority of a man. There are also some Black Baptist churches that believe women should not teach men based on their interpretation of the scriptures. According to participant #1, a woman considering a position as a senior pastor may be expected to possess an advanced degree.

## **CRAFTED STORY PROFILE: Participant #1**

### **Most Black Baptist Are Resistant to a Black Women Pastor**

The first profile is based on an interview with Participant #1: Ordained Reverend Ministry Leader; Between the ages of 46 to 70; College Educated and Advanced Degree Married.

The Black Baptist Church, in my experience ... granted me an opportunity to lead Christian Education (which sometimes is associated with a matriarch role for women leaders). And I turned the ministry down. I accepted it, and then I had to turn it down again due to an illness. I think CE has an important role in our church. I talked to the pastor about pastoring. That seems overwhelming to me to be a senior pastor. I wonder, it's nothing that I'm seeking out for sure. But just in terms of conversations, I don't know that our church would be open for sure for a women pastor. I've been to churches and conferences where women ministers have preached, whether ordained or not. I'm not sure how a women pastor would be accepted. In terms of thinking of having a women pastor at my church ... I've thought about that in terms of if that position becomes available, what the church would do if there was a woman who applied for it. I think, maybe older members are set in their ways, and because they may be more tied to traditional gender roles, would not be in favor of a women pastor. I don't know what that would be like for relationships with other churches. ... I feel like Baptists would still hold some kind of resistance in general to a women pastor. I feel like people would be more accepting if a woman co-past. I think women pastors are probably more accepted at independent churches or church plants, but for a traditional Baptist church, I'm just not sure how that how that would be accepted. And I guess that's unfortunate because it goes against ... it's just an unnecessary barrier for persons qualified. And I feel like a women ordained minister; they would probably expect more education to in order to be accepted. I think a senior pastor requires some type of



degree, I don't know if our church requires a master's, or not or a seminary degree. But I feel like a woman wanting to do that higher role may have to have at least Master of Divinity, if not a doctorate, I think to be seen as qualified, even though that technically shouldn't be the case.

I think the younger congregation or those who did not grow up in church, I didn't grow up in the church and I didn't accept Christ until, I was 21. Many of the things' people talk about are not part of my experience. I do not have experience and history of the resistance to women ministers. The leadership maybe some deacons may not be receptive because having a women pastor that would be different. I do not know; I think it would be a tremendous change. With the changes and political structures of a Black women VP, but I do not know. I still see some traditional holes; it would be different. But because it has not been at my church, maybe because we are not as active in our local, state, and national governing bodies (the majority do not believe in ordaining women as ministers), I want the person (pastor) qualified to spiritually lead us. I have never been held back by tradition in a church.

### **Profile Synopsis**

The review of Participant #1's profile and lived experience indicated that Black Baptist Churches are still perceived to have patriarchal structures and gendered roles. A few themes are identified in the profile, including traditional barriers, resistance, gendered occupations, and the likelihood of women serving as co-pastors rather than leading congregations as senior pastors.

Participant #1 provided examples of Black Baptist Churches lacking respectability and exhibiting racialized sexism in their local, state, and national governing bodies. According to the national governing convention of the Black Baptist Churches, every local church has the right to determine how women can serve as leaders within its congregation. Nevertheless, the status quo

persists at the highest levels of the National Baptist Convention, where Black women serve in matriarchal leadership positions.

## **Second Situated Crafted Stories: Themes and Barriers**

A second crafted story profile was developed based on Participant's #6's experiences and perspectives as a minister, associate minister, and senior pastor. Of all the women in the study, she is the only woman who founded a church and became its senior pastor. This story provides an opportunity to compare her experiences in the Antioch District to those in the current location where she resides. Participant #6 describes her spiritual and leadership experiences as "journeys" in her crafted story.

A few factors contributed to her journey, including church politics, social barriers, challenges, recognition as a Black women minister, educational experiences, and balancing work and family. A local church in Northwest Arkansas provided her with a powerful support system through the combined efforts of her pastor, ministerial leadership, and women ministry leaders. Black women ministers provided her with unequivocal support. Participant #6 speaks on her interaction with Black women pastors and associate women pastors in North Carolina. In her account, she describes her experiences with those Black women pastors as encouraging. Additionally, she explains why she left a leadership group comprised of Black male and women pastors.

## **CRAFTED STORY PROFILE: Participant #6**

The second profile is based on the interview with Participant #6: Ordained Reverend and Senior Pastor; Between the ages of 46 to 70; College Educated, Advanced and Professional Degrees, Previously and currently enrolled in an online Master of Divinity Degree, Completed one year at a School of Theology. Married.

I was ordained in 2007. I am a member of a Black Baptist Church. I have served fifteen years in the ministry. I most recently founded and pastored a church. The church exists now in an online format, until we can gather the funds to resume physical worship. My pathway into ministry goes all the way back to being a young adult in a city in Virginia. I was a Sunday School teacher, and apparently very effective. Some of the members went to my pastor at the time to invite him to the class because they felt that he needed to hear me and talk to me. You know he never did that. What he did was tell me to let God call me and not let others call me. Now, that stifled my interest in ministry for several years. And what rekindled my interest was the passing of my parents within 18 months of each other. I felt a yearning, a desire to serve the Lord in a more intense and responsible manner. I talked to my pastor at the time, and he said he knew it was coming. He just didn't know when I was going to accept the call on my life. So that was around 2002 or 2003.

The decision to start a consulting business was made after my father passed away and my mother became very ill. There was no way I could continue working that nine to five job. In addition to this, I had the flexibility to attend school during this time. In our class on community relations, I was asked to write about my journey to accepting my call and explain that was a very long process. I did well at the university, loved it there, and in our class on community relations, I was asked to write about my journey to accepting my call. My journey dated back to my early 20s when I was teaching Sunday School. My response was that I was one of those stubborn individuals who heard the call but did not heed to it. And when I did, it changed my life. My

theological studies began at the university, but I did not complete them. My daughter was also in graduate school so both of us couldn't be in there together because, it became financially strenuous.

In the meantime, I was offered a work position and accepted the position at a global corporation in Northwest, Arkansas. And that was in 2005. In the Antioch District, I joined a Black Baptist Church and became acquainted with their first pastor, and later the pastor who is now leading the congregation. The pastor is a fine man of God. He talked to me. He saw God's call in me. And he asked me, "Well, do you want to be ordained?" I said, "Yes, I do." He said, "Because you are clearly ready." It goes without saying that I passed the required test and the oral examination. I followed this path to ordination.

In my experiences, I did not encounter many obstacles. The area where I currently reside has a networking organization which brings together all local ministers, not necessarily all Baptists; however, most are Baptists. This is, for lack of a better term, a boys' club. I was invited to participate in it; however, I did not enjoy it because it was so male dominated. At our meetings, it was always men who delivered the sermon. The one time I heard a woman give the sermon, the men in the audience laughed at her. That group is no longer a part of my life. I did not find it fulfilling. In my opinion, it was a social barrier, but not a barrier to carrying out my ministry. There are several women pastors in North Carolina. This is a significant difference from my experience in the Antioch District. As a result, I have had the opportunity to interact with women who are in similar positions, either as associate ministers or as pastors. This has been very encouraging.

There have been times when I have doubted my calling. Most recently, the church was not able to survive the pandemic. That was a tremendous disappointment for me; I wondered if

this was God's way of telling me that I should not be in the ministry. As a result of my experience, I have learned to discern when God is speaking to me, and when Satan is speaking to me. This led me to realize that the voice I was hearing was not the voice of God. It is sometimes necessary to wait for the timing of God, and sometimes it is necessary to prepare for the next step he has in store for you. It is this attitude that I have adopted.

My greatest support system was in a church within the Antioch District, where I was a member of a church and was fortunate enough to be in a membership that included, I guess, almost a dozen associate ministers, many of whom were and still are women. So, we formed a tight knit group. They sat on the front pew at church. I remember this distinctly when I preached, I could feel the support coming from that first pew. I never felt that as a woman I was not supported. I always was.

When I had issues or concerns, I could always talk to my pastor. I remain in touch with my pastor, and he is, is always going to be a source of support. But I also could talk to my fellow co ministers, about issues and we were very open with one another at one time, I had the women ministers over to my home, just for a social gathering, and we had a great time. So, I was never without support. In that setting. It has been a little more difficult here in this city, in North Carolina, even though there are more women pastors, there's to me, there's been more of a competitive intensity than I experienced in Arkansas. When I first joined A Black Missionary Baptist Church in North Carolina, I was not readily welcomed. Everybody was nice. The congregation was wonderful.

But there were two other associate ministers, one woman and one male. And it took them a while to warm up to me. The pastor asked me to preach quickly after I joined. And that seemed to ruffle the feathers of the women associate minister, who wondered aloud how I got to preach

so soon. And I ended up talking to the pastor about that. Because it became uncomfortable, and I wasn't there to, to upstage anybody, I wasn't there to take anybody's role, I was just there to serve God. And as time went on, things just got better. The three of us seemed to gel. It just was a little longer coming than I had hoped for. But it did come. As a matter of fact, I've preached at another church on Mother's Day of this year, and the pastor of that church used to be one of the three associate ministers at my church. So that's how far we've come as in gelling together, and I got support, it took a long time to come. Even so, I did receive support to establish my own church.

The ending was much better than the beginning. As far as my family is concerned, my husband has always supported me. When I preach, I am usually able to get him to church if I am unable to do so at any other time. He listens to the sermons he remembers, and he is always encouraging and complimentary. If I am down on myself and do not think I delivered the Word well, he hushes me up and says it was great, you should have seen the response. I consider him to be one of my greatest cheerleaders. Having a husband who will support you in your ministry is important, as this is not something you can easily find. Do you agree?

Becoming ordained and going through the ordination process was really my goal. From the moment I accepted my call, I felt like ordination was what it is, in the Bible. If you're set apart to do what the Lord has called you to do, ordination puts a sort of official status to that. And that is what I wanted. I had not had that opportunity at my first church. I was licensed at another church in South Carolina. But I moved to Arkansas. I was ordained in a Black Baptist Church in Arkansas and that impacted my ministry because this may or may not have been true, but I felt it gave me greater credibility, and that people would receive me as any other minister who was ordained, I did not feel any different.

Because I was women, I was not, for the most part treated any differently. But I did feel it was important to be ordained, to show that I had gone through the process, I had demonstrated my knowledge, I had passed the test, kept the faith, and was now ready to go out into the world and preach the gospel. And so that, that had a lot to do with how my call intensified. I was always serious about it. But I really became serious after I was ordained. I wanted to live my life, to project my life, as a minister of the gospel, as a good Christian, and as a good minister, realizing that I was set apart and I could not be, I could not be influenced by the world. I had to be transformed by the renewing of my mind. And that's what I set out to do.

I was able to relocate and work remotely. During the seven years, I was at the church in Arkansas, I was extremely active as an associate minister. Sometimes I look back and wonder how I could work and do the church stuff too. But I did and I remember enjoying every bit of it. I looked forward to Sunday's because that was when I could exercise my ministry. I was the director of Christian education. So, I taught Sunday school and really developed interests and increased class attendance, it was wonderful.

I was able to delegate the responsibility for teaching to other ministers and lay people so that they would have an opportunity to do that. I enjoyed what I consider to be a great deal of respect. And an honor I would say at the church. The women ministers used to call me Dean. I used to think because I was old. But I learned that it was because of the respect they had for me. I taught ministers classes at the request of the pastor on Saturday mornings. And we all had a little portable book seminary. I remember preparing for those lessons. In addition to preparing for Sunday School, it is teaching the Word that really got me to know and understand the Word. The church provided me with ample opportunities. Over the course of seven years, I was able to grow in ministry, grow in knowledge, and grow in the Word, which prepared me for whatever



was to come. As Dean, I was also blessed to be able to engage in a number of preaching engagements.

I was asked to preach often. I usually attended the eight o'clock service. But it got to the point where pastor asked me to preach at the 11 o'clock service, which I did. I enjoy that and one sermon I can remember distinctly. In matter of fact, the gentleman who said this to me is now a minister himself. I was preaching at one of the Sunday morning services. And it was getting intense in there and I was feeling the Spirit. I think my voice must have raised a little beyond normal. The congregation was very responsive. They were into the flow. And whoever the guy that was working the audio visuals called our pastor who was out of town. He says you need to hear this woman; you need to be here and hear this woman. And it was the pastor who told me about that. Not the guy who called. That is one of those times when I felt, yes, I have been called. Not a doubt. And I'm not going to be squeamish about it. That's when it was all over me that I certainly was called. And I remember telling the gentleman in the AV booth, he did compliment me on the service sermon after the service. And I said, it is my dream to do this full time.

Now I was working full time. But in that moment, I saw that my passion was to minister full time to preach and pastor full time. This didn't come soon enough for me. Because if there's one place, there's a barrier for women, is pastoring churches. While there are women here who pastor churches, in my community and in my community of ministers, most of the pastors are men. The associate minister of a church close to the one where I am currently running, who had been serving there for years, had worked hard for the church to lose, and the pastor won by one vote, because the congregation voted for the male candidate, who they had never met until he preached once. That was all there was to it. There were enough opportunities for me to preach.

As I was given opportunities to preach and other people heard about it, they invited me to speak at their churches.

So, I was a frequent guest preacher, in churches in this area. I found that to be very fulfilling. It was fulfilling to be able to spread the message beyond my own congregation. And it was absolutely rewarding to see that the message, God's message was so enthusiastically received wherever I went. This helped me a lot to build up my confidence. And certainly, I had no doubts on my calling. But I became weary. Because it became clear to me like that, unlike my pastor in Arkansas, the pastor I had in North Carolina was not as inclined to promote me and give me opportunities that I felt I deserved. As a matter of fact, when I left, because I had founded my own church, I planted, I should say, my own church. The last Sunday I was there, he said, not a word. He had formally recognized my husband and me, like four weeks before I left, and during church service, and all the members came by and shook our hands. But on the very day I left, my last Sunday, he said nothing. And that bothered me. But at the same time, I felt well, therefore I got to go and start my own church, and that I did.

For three years, it did well, it did well, better than most people thought because the pastor I left said to someone who then told me that I wasn't going to last that long. I's not going to work. She'll be back here. But it lasted three years and the pandemic pretty much wiped out everybody. So, while I was disappointed that it was just three years, I feel a sense of accomplishment, and that it lasted that long as a church that was planted from the ground up. So, I think this wraps up what I've been doing in my ministerial career. Since ordination, it's been diverse, but it's having different levels of what'd I say pleasure, but as I learned in Seminar in seminary, preaching and ministry isn't about us enjoying it. It's about us doing God's work. What we enjoy is doing God's work.

Sometimes it's harder than other times and we don't get the feedback we want. Sometimes we don't get the applause from the congregation we want. Sometimes we get tired. We wonder how much longer I can do this, but I will be 70 years old next month, and I am still a candidate for a pastor position here. My attitude towards that is, if God doesn't want me to do that, he'll let me know. But until he tells me otherwise, I'm going to go for it. He's given me health. He's given me strength. I've told the pastoral search committee at that church that I will not commit to more than five years, and we'll see where we are in five years. But this is the same church, I wasn't welcomed, and now I'm a candidate by and large, because this pastoral search committee reached out to me and asked me to apply. I thought given the circumstances under which I left with the pastor, I just, I just thought, this is God's way of saying, I told you everything was going to be alright. So here I am trying to get back to that church, not just as a member, but as their pastor.

I've had a long journey. But it's been a fulfilling journey. I believe, as I've been intentional, God has done with me what he intended to do. And wow, I don't understand all the curves and nooks and crannies I had to take. I think all of it had to do with him preparing me for whatever step is next in my future.

Most of my professional life, 32 years of it was spent in law. I wanted to be a lawyer, so I studied to be a lawyer. I was successful in corporate environments. My last position was a corporate job. I was there for 11 years. By the time I got to the corporation, though, I had a yearning to for ministry, it was stronger than it had ever been. I had already accepted my calling. I had completed some classes in seminary. But I realized more and more every day that being a lawyer was not exactly how I wanted to. In my life, I wanted to do something in ministry, but I didn't quite know what I was going to do. I was new in the area and didn't know people. All I

knew how to do was be a lawyer. That had been so important to me, it was sort of a shock. But suddenly, I was more interested in being a minister. I just had to daily, do the work of Corporate America. I had to see some things and experience some things that are just typical of corporations.

The crabs in a barrel syndrome were very much present. I realized that I did not have the slightest desire to advance. Everybody was going, oh, I want to be a VP. That never hit me. I didn't want to be a vice president. I said to a fellow minister, I don't know why God sent me here. For me not to really enjoy what I'm doing. The minister said to me, he sent you here to enjoy it. He sent you here to position you for your ministry, and a truer statement has never been made. Because when I look back on my time in Arkansas, what has the most impact on me is my time at the Black Baptist Church and my interaction with the ministers there. That is where my growth took place. I believe that God sent me all the way to Arkansas, where I didn't know anybody where I was all alone. He sent me there to allow me to depend on him and on him alone.

I wasn't going to be an effective minister if I had everything I had when I was a lawyer. If I had the home and cars, but there was a time when those things just were not important. That's because God said, you don't need them. You need me. By the time I got to Arkansas, I was living a completely different life, humble life. I mean, eventually, after I married my husband, we bought a nice house, but I wasn't thinking about my most enjoyable period, were the times I spent in church while working for church. I can truthfully say that I thank God for giving me the talent and the ability to become a lawyer and to practice law. But I am more deeply grateful for the opportunity to get to know him better through ministry.

To some degree, my experience has been that women ministers may be accepted. The Black Baptist Church accepts women as ministers, but not necessarily accept women as pastor. So, it doesn't translate necessarily into pastors. There are things in the Black Baptist Church that the attitude is that only men should be pastors. But I see progress because at least women are allowed to be ministers. Subordinate roles? I guess. I'm thinking about the Word. Most Baptist churches, Black Baptist churches are going to have a senior pastor, and then some pastors under him, and those pastors under him will be male and women. It will be interesting to have pastors' underneath that were male, because that's never been my experience. So, I would have to say yes, I think the Black Baptist Church is more accepting of women, when they are subordinate to a male senior pastor.

Yes, there's a difference in women and men roles in the Black Baptist Church. Black men, and this is only men in my experience. Black men in ministry are far more likely after they're ordained to be offered a pastor at somewhere. Women ministers are and in subordinate roles for a much longer period and they may be there permanently. I may still be in an associate subordinate role had I not chosen to leave and plant a church. That is how I feel. I said I can't wait on a church to call me because that's not likely to happen. So, I wanted to pastor I wanted the experience of pastoring. I felt that the only way I could get that was to go out on my own. Everything I have experienced and observed, tells me that unfortunately, there is a difference between men and women who are ordained, the men will get invited to speak at other churches more frequently, they will be invited to ordain deacons, they will be invited to speak at other services, the women not so much.

As for me, I have worked hard to establish a reputation beyond the walls of my church. This has helped me but I'm not aware of any other women who have done that, who are invited

as frequently as I am to churches, they just sort of stay with their own home church, and they do what the pastor says, do. I feel that God called me as a woman to do what he called me to do, not what someone else tells me to do. So, that vein may be a little different. I wasn't afraid to step out on my own. I see the disparity. I even understand the disparity particularly in the south, but it is there. In ministry, women who undergo the ordination process must understand that ministry is not different from other professions, and women are treated differently from men.

In my experience, I think the following barriers prevent Black Baptist women ministers from becoming senior pastors within the Black Baptist Church. One, I think is acceptance of their subordinate role. I think there are women who are in the role of sterile and because they have not been assertive, and climbing toward anything higher they, in many cases, women in a Black Baptist Church are simply satisfied with where they are being as an associate minister. Now, there are probably good reasons for that. One of the reasons I've already alluded to is that there simply aren't that many opportunities to become a senior pastor.

There are a lot of pulpit vacancies in the area where I live. I live sort of outside of the city in a rural area. And there must be a church at every corner. There are vacancies in the pulpit often not a one has ever been filled by a woman. And there a significant number of women associate ministers within those churches. I mentioned acceptance, but I think among women, it's even at least a woman around here. It's not just acceptance but that's the way it's supposed to be, the male. The male is going to lead us, and we will follow the male. So, it's, I can't say its men holding us down. Sometimes I think we hold ourselves down. So clearly, the acceptance of that is a barrier.

In addition to the fact that some men feel that's the job for them. Being a pastor is man's work, and that feeling is strong. So, in the Black Baptist Church, it's going to be unique to see a

woman leading a church. I've seen women here, who are second in command, so to speak. They are called executive pastors. And they are very talented, very good, but their talent is confined to a spot below the pastor. I think it's a matter of tradition. It's always been this way. It's a matter of acceptance by women. It's a matter of expectation by men. I say that to say we impose our own barriers; women impose barriers on themselves. Men impose barriers on us and the traditions and customs that we've grown up with and become accustomed to dictate how We think about certain things and that can be a barrier. If we feel we've been brought up to feel that women can't be pastors, then that's what our culture says. That's what our tradition says. So that's it. So those things, I think, are the most important barriers.

Based on my experience, I would say to a Black Baptist woman minister who aspires to be a senior pastor, if she can find one, my first suggestion would be that she interact and partner with another women senior pastor. If that is not feasible, my suggestion would be that she talk to other women associate ministers to gauge their interest in becoming a senior pastor and to ask them, what have they done, to position themselves to advance to a senior pastor level, I would suggest that that person take advantage of any opportunity to speak at other churches to preach during the morning service, or a women's day service, Mother's Day of whatever, because that is how you get exposure.

If you have something to say, and if you're preaching God's word, if you got something to say, and you spread that word, if you deliver that word, at another church, when they call you back to preach at that church, you move a step toward becoming a senior pastor somewhere, because you won't be a senior pastor at all, if you only preach four or five times a year at your own church. And you may have to be aggressive about this. But if you know people in other churches tell them if y'all need a speaker for Women's Day, I'm available. Being seen being

exposed, and don't wait for your pastor to give you an opportunity, look for the opportunities yourself and see what you can do to get in front of diverse congregations. Because that gets your name out there that gets people to know you. That is what has happened to me. And I think that that is the main way that women can position themselves for senior pastor ships.

I can say that in both churches where I had a substantial role as an associate minister, I have had considerable opportunity to use my voice to impact, influence, and create policies. My input has been welcomed. I think it's a woman who is respected, a woman who shows she has the knowledge, and the drive to understanding the Baptist Church. They are not going to be obstacles to allowing you to express yourself, and to express your ideas. I've never experienced that, you know, there may be obstacles, of course, to becoming the senior pastor. But I've never had a senior pastor that didn't want to listen to what I had to say. And a lot of my ideas in both churches were incorporated.

I remember at one church, I thought we should do something different. In the summer about the adult Bible study classes. We were teaching, and I had contemporary topics series, where we looked at movies, books, things that were going on in the news. And we sought to relate those to what God says in the Bible. This was a new experience for most people, and they enjoyed it. The pastor allowed me to do that. He even sat in on a couple of classes. I remember he attended the movie. We analyzed the movie, called *The Green Mile*. I was of course always delighted to see him because he was so supportive. But that's not something that we had done before. I was pleased that an idea that I came up with was not only accepted but implement at my next church.

When I arrived, they were using a Sunday School book that had been in print for years, King James Version. I could tell that the Sunday School members did not understand a word



they were reading. I asked the pastor if I could suggest another text. He said, “Sure, just let me take a look at it”. This is how I know the senior pastors will let you implement changes. He was sort of the controlling type and what he says is what he expected others to do. But I showed him some samples of the materials I was suggesting, and he looked at it and he said, “You know what? Take this and run with it, do what you got to do, because we need something different.”

In both of those examples, it took initiative on my part, because nobody's going to stand and say, I want to do something different. Or what do you think? You must take your idea to the senior pastor, and I say more, it's more likely than not to be accepted. If the idea is a good one, if the idea teaches people more about God, they understand what they are reading and it brings more people to Christ, then it doesn't matter that a woman had the idea. I've been fortunate in that regard. Plan, preach, provide background, do not simply cease to preach because your congregation does not understand. You are more familiar with the Bible than they are.

Last but not least, I would urge women to use what God has given them. Read the entire chapter, not just the verse, and get excited about it. Share it with church members, whether it is in a Sunday School Bible Study or from the pulpit, and someone will be touched.

### **Profile Participant # 6 Synopsis**

According to participant #6, Black Baptist churches have a gender bias against Black women ministers and pastors who accept their callings, preach, and take leadership roles. Participant #6 reenacts a situation where male pastors sneered at a Black women pastor while she was delivering a sermon at an educational forum intended for both Black men and Black women. Black pastors, however, were not treated with disrespect when they preached. Several themes are identified in the profile, such as traditional barriers, exclusion, education, inequality, sexism, resistance, gendered occupations, and church planting as a strategy for Black women who are

persistent about becoming senior pastors. As stated by Participant #6, people, especially people who are unchurched and diverse, want to hear the gospel regardless of whether it is preached by a man or a woman. Additionally, Participant #6 stated Black ordained women ministers must amplify their voices through proactive measures including being spiritually focused, praying, trusting one another, and providing support to one another. Black ordained women ministers can be powerful pastors and ministers. It is paramount that ordained Black women preserve traditions and patriarchy. Ordained Black women ministers should not be confined to one verse of the Holy Bible. The role of Black women, whether they are ordained or not, should not be restricted to that of matriarchs within Black Baptist churches or within state and national leadership structures dominated by men.

## Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented participants' vignettes illustrating the main themes that emerged in my study and two crafted story profiles. The themes associated with the overarching and sub research questions were tradition, education, gendered occupations and perseverance.

The keywords used in the vignettes and crafted stories were marginalization, disrespect, patriarch and matriarch roles, gender, mentorships, support systems, and struggles. These are issues that Black women ministers encounter in seeking their leadership positions. Some of those positions may be viewed as matriarchal, but the participants did not view them in that manner. Instead, they saw them as positions associated with their callings, to which they are committed and dedicated.

### **Key Word: Support Systems (Received the most comments)**

All participants have a support system from current and former pastors, other women ministers, family, friends, church, and outside mentors. The nondenominational pastor received support from a pastor and her congregation.

*“There were four women ministers before me who paved the way and made things different for me. As a result of their experiences, I have found it to be easier for me. Because of this, I have not experienced some of the trials mentioned by them.” (P1).*

*“My husband supported my ministry decision. It meant a lot to me. No door is closed when your spouse is on your team. This helped me to find a balance in my own space. My children begin to recognize if I am studying. During that time, my senior pastor supported me. I was able to move forward in my ministry, within the church, and then within the district. I also value the support of my fellow women ministers. There are women ministers who follow in other women's footsteps.” (P2)*

*“If my mother were still alive, she would be my strongest supporter. My congregation supports me.” (P3)*

*“Even though my father is deceased, I know he would support me in my ministry if he were still alive. I would like to acknowledge that one of my dad's best friends, who is a reverend, has provided support for me. He is like an uncle to me, and if I have a problem, I can call him. I refer to him as "uncle". Throughout my life, he has consistently and without fail supported me in every endeavor that I have undertaken. In fact, he is one of my father's closest friends. As a result, he has always been around me. He has always been a source of guidance and inspiration for me.” (P5)*

### **Key Word Results: Support System**

The participants felt that their support system was very strong. There was a strong sense of community among their senior pastors, spouses, some family members, and members of the congregation. As a result of the outpouring of support from their women ministry circles, both formal and informal, the participants felt they have received a lot of encouragement.

### **R<sub>3</sub> Key Theme: Perseverance: Key Words Mentioned Once: Church Founding and Spiritually Focused**

Keywords associated with the theme, perseverance, and receiving a rating of one are church planting (founding) and spiritually focused. Both key words are listed under the sub research R<sub>3</sub>: How have Black Baptist women ministers who become senior pastors overcome the barriers to assuming cleric leadership roles? Participant #6 stated one can overcome barriers leading to senior leadership roles by starting a church on your own. Also, spiritual focused received a rating of one as well. Participant #5 stated if one is focused on what God has in store for you, then keep moving forward until you accomplish your dreams as a senior pastor.

Another perspective may be taken that only two pastors have served as a senior pastor, and this may account for the limited perspectives presented. Yet another explanation is that the theme of perseverance is essential for ministerial work, as all participants stated in their interviews.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Overview**

Ultimately, this study aimed at understanding how the respondents experienced and interpreted the history, marginalization, patriarchy, and traditional practices that silenced Black women's voices when seeking senior leadership roles in the Black Baptist Church. Through research, I identified the barriers and harsh treatment faced by Black ordained women ministers in the Black Baptist Church. This study provides an account of experiences related to Black Baptist Church leadership, the hurdles women pursuing leadership go through, and processes to improve their standing in the church and deal with the various challenges presented to them while responding to their calling from God.

Each participant in the in-depth interviews identified the pain, rejection, disrespect, and hostility they experienced when publicly acknowledging their calling. According to Participant #7, the door was slammed in her face when she attempted to enter a classroom for Christian Education training involving all men. A woman told her that women are not permitted to attend Christian Education training designed for male ministers. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that the ministers experienced physical and emotional isolation following the announcement of their ministry callings.

### **Overarching Research Question**

This study reveals through the research questions that Black women ordained ministers are still not accepted for seeking gendered occupations in the Baptist Church. Based on existing literature, no indication that racialized gender, racialized sexism, or matriarchy is declining. Also, the study revealed no decline in historical and traditional practices, marginalization, and the expectancy of some Black male pastors and Black congregations to appoint ordained Black

women ministers to senior pastoral roles. Furthermore, the study indicated that these practices are prevalent in the Northeast and Southeast Black Baptist Churches and not just relegated to the South.

The research study's principal question is: From the standpoint of Black ordained women ministers, how have marginalization, racialized gender, racialized sexism, and traditional matriarchal roles may be preventing Black women from becoming senior pastors? By addressing the research question and sub-questions, this study contributes to the existing literature on gender disparities and challenges associated with ordained Black women ministers pursuing leadership and pastoral roles. The study addresses the gap in the extant literature by giving a voice to Black Baptist ordained women ministers in Northwest Arkansas affiliated at the local, district, state, and national levels of Black Baptist Churches.

Furthermore, the participants' voices heard through in-depth phenomenological interviews addressed the overarching research and sub-research questions by highlighting and addressing the issues of gendered occupations in Black Churches. I discovered that verbal and mental abuse, disrespect, and isolation affected some of the participants' lives. It is essential to understand that these disparities did not influence them to give up on the ministry affirmation God gave them. They offered encouragement and empowerment to other Black women ministers interested in ordination, how to operate in a patriarchal church environment, and how to remain persistent when seeking leadership positions in the Black Church. **The Contributions of This Study**

There are four significant contributions of this study. First, the study contributes detailed, in-depth information about the challenges and barriers that seven ordained Black Baptist women ministers faced and still encounter as they are seeking gendered occupations in the Black Baptist

Church. By utilizing the phenomenological approach, the study enabled the researcher and readers to view these challenges through the participants voices, lived experiences and understand their unique perspective of their experiences without the constraints that occur naturally through traditional beliefs and gender disparities.

The second contribution from this study is the collective and effective perspectives garnered from the participants' voices. Black women ministers and leaders can be informed by this study's findings to know they have a voice and their voices are powerful. Black women who use the collective impact model can make their voices even more effective by collectively acknowledging the disparities in the Black Church. Taking those disparities to develop and implement strategies to address those issues at the local, state and national governance bodies of the National Black Baptist Convention.

Thirdly, Black male pastors, senior leaders, and congregations can use this study's findings to better understand and assist in demarginalizing the disparities participants encounter as they seek senior leadership roles within the church and conventions. Although the convention states local churches are responsible for selecting their own pastors, the National Black Baptist Convention can allow for the inclusion of women at the highest ranking levels in the church leadership in order to eradicate discrimination, resistance, sexism and exclusivity within Black Baptist congregation.

A fourth contribution of this study is that the participants unanimously indicated education is key to dismantling the myths and misinterpretation of scriptures when it comes to leadership roles Black ordained women can hold in the Black Baptist Church. Also, education is also needed on whether Black ordained women ministers have the authority to teach men. Specifically, strategies such as diversity, inclusion and equity training are essential at all levels



within the Black Baptist Church. These trainings provide teachings on how to recognize gender and racialized sexism biases, removal of barriers, and addressing disrespect issues associated with Black women seeking leadership roles within the Black Baptist Church.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings are consistent with the literature, which indicates that Black ordained women ministers have traditionally been marginalized. Black women ministers have encountered numerous challenges and barriers in their attempts to assume senior leadership positions usually held by Black male pastors.

As stated by participant #3, Black women ministers are not respected. Both Black and White men in leadership positions expect Black women to fulfill the role of matriarch. Additionally, women still face a few barriers in the ministry due to their race and gender, apart from their matriarchal roles. As a result, Black women remain invisible in some local churches and on the boards of state and national Black Baptist organizations. Local churches and state and national governing bodies have acted as barriers to the advancement of Black Baptist ordained women in the pulpit rather than providing support and strategies for their advancement.

Furthermore, Black women who are ordained as ministers are not perceived as capable of filling vacant pulpit positions. Among Black women who are ordained ministers, there is a perception that they are not qualified to assume vacant pulpit positions. During the in-depth interviews, participant #6 alluded to the marginalization of associate women ministers. A few Black Baptist churches in the area where she lives have openings in their pulpits. Several of these pulpits remain vacant, in part because pastoral review committees do not consider their associate Black women ministers to be viable candidates.

Moreover, there is a growing number of educated Black women who are ordained ministers, as documented in the literature. Along with a large number of Black women in the Black Baptist Church, ordained women ministers have demonstrated their ability to establish strategic processes within the Black Baptist Church and National Black Baptist Convention to propose recommendations for dismantling the marginalization of women (Smarr, Disbennett-Lee, and Hakin 2018).

This study contributed to the literature on Black women ministers and leaders by conducting in-depth interviews with participants and crafting profiles that provide context for their lived experiences upon accepting and confirming their calling. According to respondents, their home churches provide them with various support. However, they did not receive the same support from church governing bodies or state and national associations. Black male pastors who served as the women's friends when they were serving in matriarchal roles in the governing bodies disassociated themselves from them when the women announced their calling to the ministry. Over 75% of church memberships are Black women, yet they are underrepresented in patriarchal leadership positions (Mohamed, Cox, et al. 2021).

The findings provide insight into why there are so few Black women pastors and leaders. According to the most recent National Congregation Study, Faith and Religion Among Black Americans (Mohamed, Cox, et al. 2021) conducted in 2018 and 2019, 16% of religious leaders at Black Protestant churches are women, compared with 84% who are men. Women make up a small minority of religious leaders at Black Protestant churches, according to the National Congregations Study, and media accounts suggest it is uncommon for women to be named to lead large Black congregations. Yet the survey shows that the vast majority of Black Americans – women (87%) and men (84%) alike – say women should be allowed to serve as senior

religious leaders of congregations. However, other survey findings from the Faith and Religion Among Black Americans from the Pew Research Center suggests that the culture at many Black congregations emphasizes men's experiences and leadership more than women. Black Americans are much less likely to have heard sermons, lectures, or group discussions about discrimination against women or sexism than about racial discrimination (Mohamed, Cox, et al. 2021).

Following the literature and research, women appointed by men in patriarchal roles supervise women's ministries, ushering ministries, and children's ministries. There may be limitations on the exercise of certain forms of authority over Black men by Black women ministers or pastors. As a result, Black women in the Black Church do not have access to senior leadership positions, resulting in the silencing of their voices, talents, and expertise.

Additionally, Black women research participants provided disturbing direct quotes regarding gendered occupations in this study. Not only Black men provide these disturbing quotes, but also Black women did so. Individuals made these assumptions based on their understanding of the church's history and their lack of education regarding the interpretation of Scripture. This study examines the issues of women serving in leadership positions held by Black male pastors.

Participant #6, an ordained senior woman pastor, pointed out that one scripture, based on Paul's call for women to remain silent in the church, is misinterpreted because of a lack of education on how to read and analyze the verse. According to participant #6 and theological research, this passage has been misinterpreted. To fully understand the meaning of this verse, it is necessary to read the entire chapter and consider the period during which it was written.

The literature also stipulates that one must also be familiar with the landscape of the Early Church to comprehend the nature of the writing of this scripture. The reason for this is that one needs to understand the reasons why the women were speaking in church. Within Black Baptist churches, it is imperative to conduct a research study and analyze biblical passages relevant to women serving in roles perceived by the church as usurping men as pastors. There may be a possibility of dispelling myths regarding the role of Black women in pastoral leadership as a result of upcoming research.

Throughout the history of Black women pastors, ministers, evangelists, and leaders, the literature and this study demonstrated that despite resistance and marginalization from Black male leaders, many of these women accepted their calling and preached regardless of those resistances and marginalization they encountered. These Black women preached not only to church congregations but also at other venues, including campground meetings and social activism events. This proactive measure was taken despite attempts by some Black male leaders to silence and marginalize them by refusing to accept and affirm their calling. Moreover, research participants consistently stressed the importance of affirming their calling. The participants did not allow themselves to be intimidated despite resistance from several senior pastors and church leaders at the local, state, and national levels of Black Baptist churches.

### **Implications for Practice**

Through qualitative in-depth interviews and crafted narratives, I gained a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the seven Black women who participated in the study. The participants' findings are consistent with earlier research that depicts the history of the Black Baptist Church. The dominant paradigms throughout the history of women in the Black Baptist

Church included mistreatment, isolation, and silencing of Black women ministers by putting them in matriarchal roles.

Further information provides an analysis of the stories of research participants. The study's findings determined that the following gaps within the Black Baptist Church must address the marginalization and disrespect of Black women ministers. Until the Black Baptist Church speaks out against racialized gender and racialized sexism, it will remain non-progressive and inaccessible. Sacred spaces are not inclusive and created when church structures and governance remain stagnant. The Black Church exists to represent its members, but it does not create an environment where every member feels welcome, valued, and essential. Black Baptist Churches and National Black Baptist Convention lack broad diversity, equity, and inclusion training. In contrast, other institutions place a high priority on training and education related to DEI. The lack of curriculum and culturally competent classes that address, analyze, and interpret scripture based on tradition, marginalization, and gender inequities hinders the growth and advancement of women in ministry.

To bring about change, the Black Baptist Church and the National Black Baptist Convention should critically review and act to dismantle practices, policies, procedures, structures, and barriers within the church that facilitate gendered occupations. Black Baptist churches and the National Black Baptist Convention can shatter stained glass ceilings by integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion scholarship into their educational and training programs. In addition, empirical studies can incorporate data on diversity within the Black Baptist tradition. Their experience may also provide insight into removing racialized gender and racialized sexism barriers.

## **Recommendations for Research**

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the in-depth interviews and crafted stories:

I recommend expanding the study of in-depth interviews with Black ordained women ministers to a broader group of women, with increased representation from Generations X and Z and diverse geographic areas. The area of focus is to study the literature, research, theories, and lived experiences through the voices of Black ordained women. Focusing on inclusivity, mentoring, and obtaining support from local, state, and national conventions helps dismantle patriarchal, matriarchal, and church traditions that address Black women in leadership.

Religious institutions such as the National Baptist Convention and state and local churches should provide collaborative and transformational leadership training to ordained ministers of both genders to become gender inclusive. Implementing positive educational programs emphasizing demarginalizing and correctly interpreting biblical passages is crucial to avoiding portraying women as subordinate leaders. Additional studies are needed to determine the extent to which the Black Baptist Church implements advancement initiatives to overcome barriers that prevent Black women ministers from achieving senior leadership roles within the organization. Additional data is needed to determine if there is a decline in the marginalization of Black women ordained ministers.

## **Conclusion**

Participants in Northwest Arkansas and those who have relocated to the Northeast and Eastern regions of the United States shared their experiences and how they are overcoming barriers to advancing their ministries in gendered occupations within the church through in-depth interviews. The study participants relied on their faith, commitment, and determination to

achieve their dream of becoming ordained ministers. Tradition, patriarchal systems, and historical practices would not be a barrier to them reaching their goal of becoming ordained ministers. It is imperative that after a participant has reached a specific goal, they do not stop there but instead continue to pursue what God has in store for them next.

These dreams included dismantling the narrative that Black ordained women cannot hold senior leadership positions. Both struggle and joy reflect the participants' crafted narratives. Despite their obstacles, they advised other Black ordained women ministers seeking leadership roles as senior pastors. The participants expressed their belief that Black women ministers should support and uplift their fellow Black women.

They shared personal details about their experiences so other Black ordained women ministers may have more positive experiences when accepting and confirming their call. These stories do not include a progressive and supportive environment where senior Black Baptist leaders and governing bodies encouraged them to become pastors. Although their initial motivation remains, their motivation will continue if they wish to become a pastor in a Black Baptist Church.

The Covid-19 global pandemic proved secular and religious brick-and-mortar institutional structures could quickly pivot from a physical space to digital media. Just as the virus taught the world how to move differently, the Black Baptist women's movement and Feminist Theology also showed over a million women how to create spaces in the social and public sphere in the last two decades of the nineteenth century (Higginbotham 2019). Today, Black Baptist ordained women ministers have an opportunity to take advantage of the digital Black Church network landscape. Sampson (2020) writes:

Non-cisgender, non-heterosexual, non-male bodies are not safe in Black churches. The digital Black church must be different from its physical landscape and historical

institutional status. In the digital age, forward-thinking Black preaching women are going live on social media to preach in multifaceted ways and “bypass traditional systems of legitimization and historically recognized gatekeepers.” A natural progression from the clandestine clearing to phonograph preaching, to radio and televangelism livestreams—online streaming media broadcast in real time and simultaneously recorded—serve as agential sites. Black preaching women are making use of networked space to circumvent interlaced oppressive religious structures and theologies. Acting as curators, they are deploying livestreams ... challenging traditional hierarchies of Black church authority and changing the nature of religious space. The offering concludes that when Black preaching women couple digital media with spiritual agency, they sacralize their lived experiences in ways that colonized religion and the offline Black church have not fully recognized.

Black ordained women ministers are aware that others are watching. Their purpose and destiny must be pursued and paved for the next generation of Black women ministers. They believe that the next generations, Generation Z and Generation Alpha, are diverse, inclusive, and unlikely to be influenced by rhetoric based on the history and traditions of the Black Church. These generations are tech savvy. Digital churches may be successful in shattering the Stained-Glass Ceilings that prevent some Black ordained women ministers from achieving senior pastor leadership roles and in dismantling gendered occupations.

Generation Z and Generation Alpha are intentional and authentic and value individuals as individuals. Generation Alpha ushers in a revolutionary era rather than returning to the old ways (Jha 2020). Cultural competence, appreciation, and knowledge of other cultures and identities help these generations overcome the barriers of marginalization, racialized gender, racialized sexism, and patriarchal society. A strong sense of belonging, mattering, and community is evident in Generation Alpha, our future.



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# APPENDIX A

## IRB Approval Letter



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**To:** Angela Mosley-Monts  
**From:** Douglas J Adams, Chair  
IRB Expedited Review  
**Date:** 07/12/2022  
**Action:** **Expedited Approval**  
**Action Date:** 07/12/2022  
**Protocol #:** 2206406065  
**Study Title:** Demarginalizing Black Ordained Women Voices in the Black Baptist Church  
**Expiration Date:** 07/07/2023  
**Last Approval Date:**

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution, then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Calvin White, Investigator  
Luis F Restrepo, Investigator  
Anna Zajicek, Investigator

# APPENDIX B

## Participant Consent Form

Title of Research: Demarginalizing Black Ordained Women Voices in the Black Baptist Church:  
A Phenomenological Study of Black Women Ministers'

Principal Investigators Name: Angela Mosley-Monts  
University of Arkansas

You are invited to participate in a research study of Black or African American ordained women ministers, leaders, or pastors' experiences who are or were associated with the Antioch District Missionary Baptist Association, Regular, the Antioch District Congress, and the Regular Arkansas Congress of Christian Education. You were selected as a possible participant because of your affiliation as a current or past Black woman leader in the Association and/or Congress.

Angela Mosley-Monts, a doctoral candidate at the University of Arkansas, is conducting this study.

### **Background Information:**

The overarching research question guiding this research is: From the standpoint of Black ordained women ministers, what are how marginalization, racialized gender, racialized sexism, and/or traditional matriarchal roles may be preventing Black women from becoming senior pastors? The purpose of this study is to learn through in-depth interviews the Black ordained women's experiences on their journeys to become ordained and how they experience the Black Baptist Church in relation to ordained women assuming the leadership roles, such as the senior pastor.

### **Procedures:**

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

1. Agree to participate in an approximately 90-minute interview with the researcher based on your availability.
2. Agree to an audio recording during the in-depth interview via Zoom 2

### **Risks and Benefits of Participation**

There are no foreseeable risks of this research to you. There are no correct or incorrect answers, just your personal view, and experiences. Some of these questions may cause you mild discomfort. If there are any interview questions that you do not feel comfortable answering, these questions may be skipped.

### **Compensation**

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

### **Confidentiality, Data Storage, and Security**

IRB#: 2206406065 APPROVED: 12-Jul-2022 EXP: 7-Jul-2023

Participants must consent to participate in this study by signing this Informed Consent form or stating their consent on record before participating in this project. Before the interview begins, each participant

will be given a pseudonym. No identifying information will be revealed in publications unless you specifically request that your name and/or identity remain public. All information collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study**

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

### **How to Withdraw from this Study**

During a research study, the participant can leave at any time. It is important that you let the researcher know that you wish to withdraw from the study. It is not mandatory to provide a reason for leaving, but the researcher can ask for it if they wish. Transcripts, transcription notes, and consent forms will not be used in this research.

### **Contacts and Questions**

At the conclusion of the study, you will have the right to request feedback about the results. If you have any questions about this study or want to learn more about the research results, you may contact Angela Mosley-Monts, the principal investigator. You are welcome to contact her with any questions. If you have questions later, please contact her via [REDACTED] or [ammonts@uark.edu](mailto:ammonts@uark.edu).

Dr. Calvin White is the student and research project's Chairman, and Dr. Anna Zajicek is the Co-Chair. If you wish to contact Dr. White, you can do so at [calvinwh@uark.edu](mailto:calvinwh@uark.edu), or Dr. Zajicek, at [azajicek@uark.edu](mailto:azajicek@uark.edu).

For questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ro Windwalker:

Institutional Review Board  
Coordinator Research Compliance  
University of Arkansas  
109 MLKG Building  
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201  
479-575-2208; [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu)

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

### **Statement of Consent:**

Signature

IRB#: 2206406065 APPROVED: 12-Jul-2022 EXP: 7-Jul-2023

I have read the information above and agree to participate in this research project. My signature indicates that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this study and my participation, that my questions



have been answered to my satisfaction, that I have decided to participate, and that I have received a copy of this form for my records. The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Participant Name (PRINT)

---

DATE

---

Participant Signature

*Archives*

Investigators are required to have available original and signed consent forms, from all participants, for a period of not less than three years following the expiration date of any project approved by University of Arkansas' Institutional Review Board.

IRB#: 2206406065 APPROVED: 12-Jul-2022 EXP: 7-Jul-2023

# APPENDIX C

## QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE Semi-Structured Individual Guide

**Dissertation Research: Demarginalizing Black Ordained Women’s Voices in the Black Baptist Church:**

**A Phenomenological Study of Black Women Ministers’  
Lived Experiences When Seeking Cleric Leadership Roles  
in the Black Baptist Church**

### Introduction Script

#### Opening Comments

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. Before we begin, let me remind you that your participation is voluntary and you can discontinue your participation at any point in the process, and all information that you share will be confidential.

The interview should take approximately 90 minutes. I will be recording the session because I don’t want to miss any of your comments. Although I will be taking some notes during the session, I can’t possibly write fast enough to get it all down. Because we are recording, please be sure to speak up so that we don’t miss your comments. Only my dissertation Chair Dr. Calvin White and co-chair, Dr. Anna Zajicek, and I will have access to the recording.

I will begin by asking some demographic questions (e.g., education, age, roles in the Baptist Church). I will continue with a set of questions about your lived experiences on a pathway to becoming an ordained minister and in different areas of engagement, including leadership and service, within the church.

Again, all responses will be kept confidential. There is no right or wrong answer. You can request to skip or pass on any question. Remember, you don’t have to talk about anything you don’t want to, and you may end the interview at any time.

**Are there any questions about what I have just explained?**

- STATE THE DATE AND NAME OF THE INTERVIEWER (YOUR NAME)
- STATE THE PARTICIPANT’S PSEUDONYM

**Are you willing to participate in this interview?**

**I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about yourself that will assist with the research.**

#### Demographic Questions:

1. Please tell me your year of birth.
2. What is your gender identity?
3. What race(s) or ethnicity do you consider yourself to be?
4. What is your current marital status?
5. What is your highest non-seminary education level?
6. Please tell me what Christian or Seminary education you have completed.

7. What are your total years as an ordained minister?
8. Please tell me the status of your service or employment in your ministerial role.
9. Are you currently a member of the Black Baptist Church?
10. (If not) Which denomination, are you currently affiliated with?
  - a. Why have you left the Black Baptist Church?

### **Pathways to Becoming an Ordained Minister**

- In as much detail as possible please describe your pathway to becoming an ordained minister, starting with when you began considering your calling and continuing with your experiences as a woman on the pathway to becoming an ordained minister.
- In as much detail as possible, can you tell me about any barriers that you have encountered barriers or about any experiences that made you second guess your decision for becoming an ordained minister?
- I am also interested in learning in detail about your support systems as you have been pursuing this calling.
- Overall, please tell me has your journey to becoming ordained impacted your calling, dreams, and expectations?

### **Examples of Potential Follow-Up Questions:**

- Can you give me an example?
- Tell me more about that.
- What was that like for you?
- How did you feel?

### **Experiences as an Ordained Minister**

- Could you please tell me in detail about your experiences as an ordained minister, how it's been for you to be an ordained minister, your greatest satisfactions, and the challenges you have experienced?
- Thinking about your time prior to becoming an ordained minister as well as the time as an ordained minister, can you tell me in some detail about your experiences or thoughts contributing to having or not having a desire to become a senior pastor?
  - (Possible follow-up questions for those who have stayed) Why have not you left?
- (Question for only those who have left) – earlier you mentioned that you have left the Black Baptist Church. Can you tell me more about the reasons for your leaving, that is, the experiences that you have had that led to it?
- (Questions for those who have left and became senior pastors or apostles, etc. somewhere else)
  - Please now tell me about your experiences on the pathway to becoming a senior leader ...
- In as much detail as possible please describe your pathway to becoming a senior leader in your current denomination.

- I am also interested in learning about your support systems as you have been pursuing this leadership position.
- I am also interested in any barriers that you might have encountered in achieving this leadership position.

Examples of Potential Follow-Up Questions:

- Can you give me an example?
- Tell me more about that.
- What was that like for you?
- How did you feel?

### **The Black Baptist Church in your Experience**

- Some people claim that Black women ministers should take on subordinate roles to be supportive of the Black Baptist Church? Describe if this has been your experience or an expectation toward you?
- Some people observe that there is a relationship between how the Black Baptist Church has defined Black women's and Black men's roles and the experiences of Black-ordained women ministers. Can you talk to me about that from your perspective?
- In your experiences, what are the main barriers that prevent Black Baptist women ministers from becoming senior pastors within the Black Baptist Church?
- Based on your experiences what would you say to a Black Baptist woman minister who aspires to be a senior pastor?
- As a Black ordained woman minister, describe your experience on the effectiveness of your voice when it comes to decision-making pertaining to the policies and procedures in the Baptist Church?
- (Questions for those who have left) –As a Black ordained woman minister, could you compare and describe your experiences with the effectiveness of your voice when it comes to decision-making pertaining to the policies and procedures in the Baptist Church and your current denomination?

Examples of Potential Follow-Up Questions:

- Can you give me an example?
- Tell me more about that.
- What was that like for you?
- How did you feel?

Is there anything you would like to add before we conclude?

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS INTERVIEW**

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Clergy, Ordination and Leadership Interview Questions**

The overarching research question is:

From the standpoint of Black ordained women ministers, how have marginalization, racialized gender, racialized sexism, and/or traditional matriarchal roles may be preventing Black women from becoming senior pastors?

To address this question, I ask the following sub-questions:

R<sub>1</sub> According to the Black women ministers, is there a relationship between the origin of the Black Baptist Church and the lack of Black ordained women ministers?

R<sub>2</sub>: What are the main barriers preventing Black Baptist women ministers from becoming senior pastors?

R<sub>3</sub>: How have Black Baptist women ministers who become senior pastors overcome the barriers to assuming cleric leadership roles?

R<sub>4</sub>: How can Black Baptist women ministers who aspire to be senior pastors pursue leadership positions?

R<sub>5</sub>: Do Black women ministers feel they need to take on subordinate roles to support the Black Baptist Church?

R<sub>6</sub>: How do Black Baptist women ministers respond to groups of women who believe Scripture calls for women to stay submissive and not be involved in cleric decision-making?

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS INTERVIEW**

## APPENDIX E

### Invitation Letter from the Researcher to Become a Research Participant

Email to Black Ordained Women Ministers/Pastors to Determine Their Interest in Participating in the Study

Angela Mosley-Monts  
University of Arkansas  
Completion of Doctoral Requirements  
Fayetteville, AR

#### **RE: Study of Black Women Ministers' Lived Experiences When Seeking Cleric Leadership Roles**

Dear Reverend \_\_\_\_\_,

Greetings. My name is Angela Mosley-Monts, a doctoral candidate at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Ar. I am in the process of recruiting Black or African American ordained women ministers who are active, retired, or formerly associated with the Antioch District Missionary Baptist Association, Regular, the Antioch District Congress and the Regular Arkansas Congress of Christian Education. Also, I have enclosed a letter of explanation pertaining to my research.

Please read the letter and respond to me by email at [ammonts@uark.edu](mailto:ammonts@uark.edu) if you are available to participate in the research.

Sincerely,  
Angela Mosley-Monts

Greetings,

As part of my requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree, I am conducting a research study. The purpose of my research is to understand the experiences of Black or African American ordained women ministers, leaders and/or pastors currently or formerly associated with the Antioch District Missionary Baptist Association, Regular, the Antioch District Congress and the Regular Arkansas Congress of Christian Education. I am writing to invite you to participate in the study.

The overarching research question guiding this research is: From the standpoint of Black ordained women ministers, what are how marginalization, racialized gender, racialized sexism, and/or traditional matriarchal roles may be preventing Black women from becoming senior pastors? The purpose of this study is to learn through in-depth interviews the Black ordained women's experiences on their journeys to become ordained and how they experience the Black

Baptist Church in relation to ordained women assuming the leadership roles, such as the senior pastor.

- The requirements to participate in the study are: 1) Black or African American woman ordained minister, 2) Between the ages of 46 to 70, 3) A minimum of two years of experience in a ministry leadership role; and 4) Currently or formerly associated with the Antioch District Missionary Baptist Association, Regular, the Antioch District Congress and the Regular Arkansas Congress of Christian Education.

The interview will take approximately 90 minutes. I would like to capture your thoughts, perspectives, and experiences on being a Black ordained woman minister. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview will be assigned a pseudonym to help ensure individuals are not identified and the identities not revealed in any published materials, unless explicitly asked by respondents.

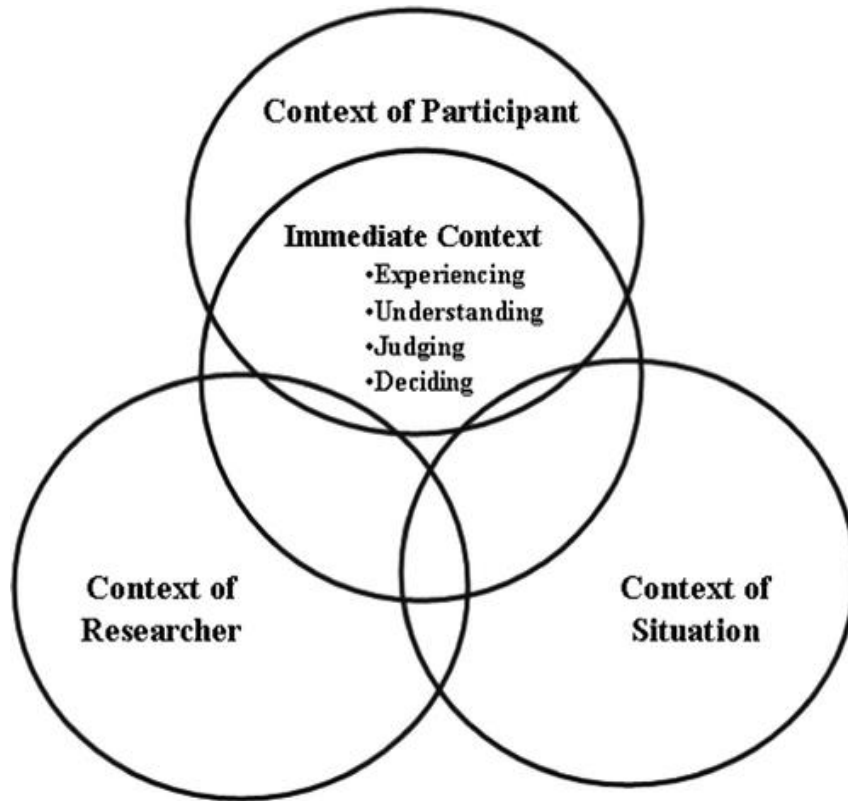
There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be valuable in understanding the experiences of Black women ordained in the Black Baptist Church. The findings will assist with a greater awareness of the experiences of Black ordained women leaders, the roles they play in the clergy and the Black Baptist Church.

If you are willing to participate, please suggest a day and time for your availability. All interviews will be conducted via Zoom.

Thank you,  
Angela Mosley-Monts

## APPENDIX F

**Figure 1.** Developing an interview guide: the importance of context





**Figure 2.** Parameters of saturation and sample sizes.

