

**VOICES OF FOUR AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE CLERGY AND THEIR  
PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER, EQUITY, AND LEADERSHIP STYLES  
IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN URBAN CHURCH**

A Dissertation

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to give voice to the experiences of African American female pastors of African American churches and their perceptions of gender and equity as it pertains to their role in the pastorate. This phenomenological study identified the lived experiences of each participant through her personal narrative, which reflects her path from birth to present. Participants' experiences as a senior pastor provided a personal historical path of the journey of female pastors for a span of four decades. This dissertation shares the challenges, barriers, and support to female pastors.

This study examined personal characteristics, acts of leadership, and acts of negotiating the system within the African American church. The participants' ages ranged from 40-70+. The findings of this study indicated that there has been a slow change in the acceptance of female pastors. Female pastors have been a part of our culture since biblical times, but resistance is still present.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Mrs. Lela Mae Battee Horn, who went to be with the Lord at the age of 57. At the age of 11, I witnessed my mother, a single mother of three, return to night school to get her GED and her LVN degree. After performing domestic work for a really nice lady, Mrs. Ballard, she began working as a nurse at Children's Medical Center in Dallas, Texas. Her perseverance and hard work have given me the strength to become the best I can be and to pass these characteristics on to all of my children and grandchildren. As a result of her personally taking me to college and insisting I get my college education, I now have four children and their spouses who are all college graduates and beyond. This dissertation reflects African American women like her, who were pioneers for those coming after them. I write this dissertation in hopes that those who come after me will push forward to the next level no matter what age they are.

I want to also dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful husband, who has been a great example of what a man of God looks like. He has supported me in this effort, even though it has not been easy or popular with his male peers. I thank him for standing up for what is right and being an advocate for women all over the world. He is an African American pastor and came up in a period when women were banned from stepping into the pulpit. He licensed me, ordained me, and together we work for God to spread the gospel and make disciples of all nations.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my three sons, who are all ministers of the gospel, and their wives, to my one daughter, who has not accepted her call to the ministry yet, and her husband, to my seven granddaughters and three grandsons, and to those grandchildren who have not arrived yet. The bar has been set high. Reach for it and hold it high for others to follow after you so that God will always get the glory out of this study!

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Church has been one of the foundational institutions of our nation, especially in the African American community. Within the African American community, the church has impacted individual lives, the family, and the community. The Black church serves as a microcosm of the African American community, while framing the critical roles of the congregation and its members. The church has also served as a progressive vehicle for its community. In Black churches across America, effective programs such as tutorial programs, job training, health clinics, housing developments, and businesses offer services to the parishioners (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Gilkes, 2001). The church has become one of the most prominent agents for socialization in the African Community; thereby defining a myriad of social norms including gender and familial roles (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Taylor, Lincoln, & Chatters, 2005).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), although the number of women pastors is steadily increasing nationally, the majority of United Methodist pastors are men. In 1998, 20% of pastors in the United States were female. By 2008, the number has increased to 29% of practicing pastors. Even though women parishioners make up 52% of the African American population attending church and 63% of the American Methodist Episcopal Church membership are female, the number of women serving as pastors is less than the number of male pastors.

Within the church, the African American woman has played an active role in the advancement of this institution. Though frequently deemed the backbone of the family and the church (Gallup & Lindsay, 1999; Marbley, 2005; Walter & Davie, 1998), the African American woman has encountered trials within the church, which have limited the number of available opportunities. Lack of opportunities in church leadership is directly attributable to the female status (Daly, 1985; Manning, 1997). Specifically, African American women who are pastors experience gender inequity of leadership positions in the Black church, thus affecting salary and responsibilities (Ecklund, 2006). Gradual improvements have occurred in recent years, but discrimination, based on gender, is still present in mass across Black Protestant denominations in the United States (Gallagher, 2004). These instances of oppression have reduced the number of opportunities for African American women to participate in their church communities as pastors.

### **Sexism**

Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) state that gender disparities in the pastor membership of the African American church are commonplace in the religious community. They articulate that the lack of upward mobility of the female pastor reflects the legal, economic, and social status of African American women. This lack of upward mobility has led to African American women missing opportunities for promotions, pay increases and assignments for the larger, more progressive churches. Sexuality, cultural roles, and gender relations become central problems early in the organizational and

cultural structure of the church (Higginbotham, 1993). According to Higginbotham (1993), gender disparities in churches fashion a complex community, in which diversity issues have lived in historical tension for more than a century.

Historically, women have been officially accepted as pastors and preachers in Black churches; however, their desire to serve larger Black churches, along with the privilege of serving in higher positions, such as Bishop, remains limited. A survey conducted by Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) reported that nearly half of the Black pastors nationwide approved of women as pastors and preachers, but negative attitudes continue to exist among some pastors and laity regarding female leadership in church. As a result of the opposition encountered by Black female pastors within Black denominations, a growing number of seminary trained Black women have opted for job assignments in White churches, which have shown more progressive attitudes on the issue of sexuality. Even though female leaders are leaving the African American churches, the issue of gender disparity in the leadership of the African American church remains a low priority. This low priority makes solving this issue affecting African American female pastoral leadership difficult, if not impossible. The irony of this issue is that discrimination directed at this group comes from African American men rather than from White men and women. These are the same type of men who themselves have suffered from incidences of discrimination. While nearly half of Black pastors approve of women serving as pastors, some African American men oppose African American women desiring to be trained and hired as senior pastors, even though more women are

active than men in the congregations of Black Protestant churches (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

### **Sociocultural Theories**

To address the issues and divergences of African American female pastors, the socio-cultural theory of Black feminism, as embedded in the work of Hill-Collins (1990) and Womanist Theology guided this qualitative study. According to Hill-Collins, Black feminist thinking within the Black women's communities is validated and produced with reference to a particular set of historical material and epistemological conditions. African-American women, who adhere to the idea that Black women must be substantiated by their own experiences, have produced a rich tradition of Black feminist thought.

This framework was selected because, as a Black woman, it is important for me to attain validation produced within my historical past and the epistemological conditions in which I grew and developed in becoming an advocate for women. I understand the paradoxical view that Hill-Collins (1990) refers to as she expresses the ability to oppose the oppressive conditions within a culture and, at the same time, love and promote the value of good and worthy traditions. Hill-Collins expresses that perspective in this manner:

An ongoing tension exists for Black women as agents of knowledge; a tension rooted in the, sometimes, conflicting demands of Afro-centricity and feminism. Those Black women, who are feminists, are critical of how Black culture and

many of its traditions oppress women. For example . . . the lack of self-actualization that can accompany the double-day of paid employment and work in the home . . . and the emotional and physical abuse that many Black women experience from their fathers, lovers, and husbands all reflect practices opposed by African-American women who are feminists. But these same women may have a parallel desire as members of an oppressed racial group to affirm the value of that same culture and traditions. Thus, strong Black mothers appear in Black women's literature and Black women's economic contributions to families are lauded. (p. 224)

It is also important for me to understand and ground my work in Black women's experiences, which contribute to the advancement of African American scholarship and to enhance the opportunities, creativity and liberty within the ever expanding boundaries of the academy. Hill-Collins (1990) states:

Increasing numbers of African-American women scholars are explicitly choosing to ground their work in Black women's experiences, and, by doing so, they implicitly adhere to an Afrocentric feminist epistemology. Rather than being restrained by their . . . status of marginality, these women make creative use of their outsider-within status and produce innovative Afrocentric feminist thought. The difficulties these women face lie less in demonstrating that they have mastered White male epistemologies than in resisting the hegemonic nature of

these patterns of thought in order to see, value, and use existing alternative Afrocentric feminist ways of knowing. (p. 228)

Black Feminism asserts that dual roles burdening Black women renders their experience of being female and Black as a unique one, with the two characteristics influencing one another consistently and through several channels (Edwin, 2006). African American feminists essentially dismiss the wealth of Euro-American feminist discourse as at least partially irrelevant to their position, with unique sociocultural characteristics of the female Black experience being defining mechanisms for the path toward gender equality (Edwin, 2006). The pervasiveness of racism and sexism that existed in the Black and women's liberation movements rendered Black women almost nonexistent in both worlds. As a consequence, those “racist and sexist narratives remain in the consciousness of present-day African American feminists” (Marbley, 2005, p. 605).

Cole and Guy-Sheftall (2003) also identify distinguishing features of Black feminist ideas, namely that of Black women’s experiences with both racial and gender oppression resulting in needs and problems distinct from White woman and Black men. Therefore, Black women must struggle for equality both as women and as African-Americans.

### **Womanist Theology**

An underlying goal of Womanist Theology (Burrow, 1998) is the interrogation of the social construction of African American womanhood in the Black community, thus

creating space for voicing the life stories of women and affording particular attention to their contributions to church, community, and history. Womanist theology validates the histories of African American women by acknowledging and celebrating their contributions using primarily qualitative research methods. By gathering data from a reservoir of Black women's experiences, knowledge pools can be constructed, which enhance the quality of life for modern African American women. Emerging from the rightful recognition that the female experience was not a universally similar one, womanist theology aligns closely with African feminism. Both frame the Black female experience as divergent from the White female experience (Burrow, 1998).

Alice Walker, "a prolific writer-activist who was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for her instructive and provocative book, *The Color Purple* (1982)," first coined the term *womanist* (Burrow, 1998). Burrow (1998) describes Womanist Theology as women in church and society appropriating a way of affirming themselves as Black, while simultaneously owning their connection with feminism and with male and female members of the African-American community. The concept of Womanist Theology allows women to claim their roots in Black history, religion and culture.

The key assumption in Womanist Theology that is not present in African feminism; however, is that racial and gender prejudices which are essentially present in our society today are sins against God. Womanist theologians assume that the humanity of African American women needs to be affirmed by the Black church, rather than



denigrated (Burrow, 1998). Religious theorists have posited that marginalized people are better able to understand the spiritual path. The Bible is permeated with the marginalized peoples' perspective and, according to Douglas (2001), African American women are undoubtedly a marginalized group.

Womanist theology teaches Christians new insights about moral-life based on ethics supporting justice, survival, and a productive quality of life for poor women, children and men. It allows Christian Womanist theologians to identify and reflect upon those Biblical stories in which poor, oppressed women had a special encounter with divine emissaries of God (Appiah, 2005). Black women in America are now questioning their suppressed role in the African American church.

### **Personal Story**

I was born in the red clay dirt city of Tyler, Texas, in 1954 to a mother and father who did not finish high school. I was raised in the south during the height of the Civil Rights Movement and witnessed first-hand, the racial discrimination, gender discrimination, fight for equity in education and living surroundings and the quest for social justice in our community during the 1950s and 1960s. I was a part of integration; I lived through it and I am a product of it.

My maternal grandfather was a successful farmer. He placed emphasis on his male children working the farm and getting a job, rather than finishing public school. The girls were encouraged to get married and find a good White lady to work for, so that is what my mother did.

My mother was very fortunate to find a very good White lady, Mrs. B. She picked us up every day, took us to the babysitter, and then brought my mother home. There was no public transportation and my mother did not have a car. My mother cleaned Mrs. B.'s house, cooked her food, raised her children and assisted with Mrs. B.'s privately owned kindergarten. She became her friend and confidant. Working in Mrs. B.'s kindergarten gave my mother a love for working with children and a desire to send us to private kindergarten. She was somehow able to get the money to send my sister and me to the only private kindergarten for Black children in Tyler. My kindergarten was featured on the local TV station one day, which was unheard of at that time, and I was the featured soloist singing "Jingle Bells." I wondered if Mrs. B. had anything to do with that.

My mother working for Mrs. B. became fun days for me. We would go to her home and enter through the back door, never understanding the symbolism or reasoning and got a rare glimpse of what the "other side of the tracks" looked like. Her home was a dream that we never expected to belong to us. Recently, I went back to that house and spoke at length with Mrs. B. It was amazing walk through the house where my mother worked as a maid 50 years ago. My oldest aunt still works for Mrs. B. and her grown children today. I thought to myself, this White lady is a vital part of my family and a legacy that can never be erased. When my mother quit working for her, another aunt took her place. When she died, my other aunt then replaced her. Even today, she continues to work for Mrs. B. and now her children, even though she is feeble and old.

It's as if my family was born to serve Mrs. B. until she died. We had a wonderful visit and she told me stories about my mother, which brought back memories as though it was yesterday. I now live in a house that is much larger than the home I was only able to occasionally visit, the one I used to dream about. My mother would certainly be beside herself if she could get a glimpse of my home and those of her grandchildren.

From the time of singing "Jingle Bells" in kindergarten, I emerged as a leader. As I remember, I always had the lead in every activity I was a part of. I was not afraid to lead. Leading was a natural part of who I was and those around me respected and followed my lead. I can remember getting upset at a new girl in the community because she wanted to be the teacher. She evidently was not aware that I was the teacher on that block. She was favored with long curly hair and fair skin, but I was the best teacher for our group, not her.

Once when a male classmate hurt a little girl in my class, I got into a physical fight with him to protect her from this bully. I was usually very quiet and never bothered anyone, but the act of him hurting this little girl really angered me. I felt I could take care of the situation since the teacher was not in the room at the time. Little did I know, I had become an advocate. During my elementary school years, I took up for all of the girls who were not popular the ones the other students made fun of in the class. While I got along well with popular students, I chose to be friends with girls whom others did not want to be around because of the way they looked or dressed. I would always stand

up to bullies even if they were boys, and protect the other girls, and my sister.

Academically, I was very successful and was a leader in my class.

My views of men and goals for having a male relationship were formed through my personal experiences with my father, stepfathers and pastors in our church. Growing up, my dad was not a constant presence in my life; he came around only once or twice a year. He would make promises he would not keep and never paid child support. Possibly due to this experience, my perception of men was not a positive one. To acquire this view, I observed my mother being abused by all three husbands. Because I failed to have much contact with responsible male role models, I found it difficult to automatically give unearned respect to men. My grandfather on my mother's side was the only positive male role model I had. He worked all day, provided for the family and never abused them. Therefore, I vowed that when I grew up, a man would never hit me and abuse me.

As a child growing up, people in the Black community were disheartened by some of the leaders of the church. My first memory of the pastor at my church was that he was a womanizer. I watched his wife cope with the embarrassment and hurt that this caused. The next pastor dated several women, while his wife spent many days in a mental institution. Again, the church members were aware of his actions and his behavior was accepted as normal. My mother's second husband was also a pastor. He was abusive to her and made me very uncomfortable when I was alone with him. Even though my paternal grandfather was a minister and my father eventually became a

pastor, because of my prior experiences, I did not respect male pastors and vowed I would never, ever marry one.

When I was 11 years old, my mother went back to school to earn her General Education Development Diploma, which later led to a nursing degree. My mother modeled the sacrifices and drive required to progress from being a maid to becoming a nurse. In the nursing profession, she earned enough money to buy and furnish a three-bedroom house and drove a new car. After many years working at the Children's Hospital, my beautiful mother was forced to retire and later died from cancer at the age of 57.

Because my mom worked all day and went to school at night, I was put in charge of the house at the age of 11 and helped raise my younger siblings. Before walking to elementary school each morning, I would roll my baby sister around to the neighbor's house a few streets away. When school was over, I would return to pick up my sister and go home to cook dinner and put the children to bed. To get the respect of my younger siblings, I had to run a tight ship. Even today, I tend to do that when I am in charge of a project, a classroom, or any other situation.

Due to observing my mother's arduous work and tenacity, I graduated from college and entered the field of education. My early kindergarten experiences with Mrs. B. and my private kindergarten education, must have left impressive examples for my future. I became a kindergarten teacher and enjoyed the profession so much so that I later went back to school and earned my Masters of Arts in Guidance and Counseling.

This seemed a natural occurrence since even as a child, I was always the one sought out by others to listen, counsel, or offer advice. I often prayed to God to give me the words to help others. People of all ages and stages of life have been drawn to me and I seemed to always be able to say something to make life better for them. Because I enjoyed counseling and helping others, I later opened and served as the director of several day care centers. I also seem to have a gift for event planning and organization.

After being married for seven years to my husband the lawyer, he announced he was being called to the ministry and, eventually, he became a pastor. Later, I became a minister and so did two of my sisters, and now two of my sons. Ministers and pastors, both male and female, surround me. So my roles, serving as a pastor, a leader, an advocate for women and helping people in need, have developed into a way of life for me. When I look back over my life, I can see the evidence of my natural predisposition to be an advocate for women. It is amazing to see how even at a young age, my experiences all pointed to me becoming a teacher, businesswoman, counselor and pastor, who seeks equality for all people.

Currently, I serve as Executive Pastor for a large church, along with my husband, who is the Senior Pastor. We have four grown children, who have earned college degrees, and have given us 10 grandchildren. I have ultimately become someone I said I would never become, the wife of a pastor as well as a pastor myself. We started our church 25 years ago. With a supportive husband, I have progressed from being a silent,

oppressed pastor's wife to an Executive Pastor helping to lead the church, preaching messages before a congregation and teaching alongside male and female pastors.

Witnessing the lack of racial freedom and gender equality in the social, educational, political, pastoral, and professional arenas during the latter half of the twentieth century has boosted the personal relevance of this study for me. As you can see, the parallels between the fight for women's rights and racial equality remain a significant part of my life.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Great strides have been made to bridge the gap in gender equity, but studies show that disparities between males and females continue to exist in pastor positions (Lincoln & Mayima, 1990). As women have been forced to leave congregations or withdraw from leadership positions due to discriminatory practices based on gender (Marbley, 2005), they have had to move from the traditional denominations they are accustomed to and helped to build. In current studies, the central focus of research has been primarily focused on males, but fails to give voice from the female perspective (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Considering the high percentage of African American female members in churches and the increased numbers of females training for leadership positions, additional research is warranted to reflect the voices of African American female pastors in African American churches.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine and interpret the life experiences and leadership practices of four African American female pastors in the African American Church Community (Dillard, 1995). This study sought to explore those narratives as valid and valuable within the context of the African American church, thus affording female pastors an opportunity to articulate their perspective of the convergence of personal characteristics, leadership and acts of negotiating the system within the African American church. This qualitative study explored the voices of African American female pastors regarding the issues of gender equity and freely expresses their lived experiences.

### **Significance of the Study**

A void exists due to the scarcity of lived stories and experiences of female pastors, which may inform others about pertinent issues of leadership in the African American Church community. Therefore, this study sought to help fill that void by providing voices and insights from African American female pastors as a contribution to the literature. These voices can provide an essential model and a better understanding of the construction of the leader persona within the African American church. Through this study, research can add to the literature of lived stories that may have been traditionally excluded in research on women leaders. Further, the results may bring voice to African American female pastors, who silently lead through oppression. As a result, the impact on future female leadership within the African American Church may be enhanced.



## **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this study:

1. How do African American women pastors describe personal characteristics attributed to their success in the pastorate?
2. How do African American women pastors exercise and interpret their acts of leadership?
3. How do African American women pastors negotiate their role in the church environment?

## **Definition of Terms**

The following key terms are used throughout this dissertation as defined below:

- African American —United States citizens who are non-Hispanic and classified as Black by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. African American include individuals descending from any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Nettles & Perna, 1997).
- Protestant Church—A member of a Western Christian Church whose faith and practices are founded on the principles of the Reformation and the foundational doctrine of Christianity; Christian bodies separated from the Church of Rome during the Reformation, or of any group described from them.
- The Black Church—“A distinctive community whose faith is rooted and grounded in an interpretation viewed through the lens of a people victimized

by almost three centuries of slavery” (Woodson, 1985, p. 27). The Black Church represents a collective reality of Black Christianity across denominational lines.

- **Voices**—In this dissertation, voices are referred to as the framework of detailed expressions of one’s way of knowing, which includes life experiences, such as personal and professional experiences, which may be expressions of one’s values, perceptions, beliefs, needs and concerns.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the background of this qualitative study was discussed. Further, the theoretical framework, statement of the problem, purpose of the study and the significance of the study were set forth. Research questions and definition of terms were listed. Chapter II reviews literature and pertinent research studies that are reflected in the research questions. Chapter III presents the methodology of the research design, data collection, and methods used for analysis. Chapter IV shares the findings of the study. In Chapter V, practical applications and implications flowing from the research are discussed. This chapter also offers recommendations and implications for future study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Plantation Worship**

Black churches date back to the mid part of the 1700s and existed as part of the standard white denominations. The first congregation was founded on the plantation of William Byrd III in Mecklenburg County, Virginia and was known as the African Baptist of Bluestone church. The history of the Black Church can be traced back to the times before, during, and after the Civil War: 1861-1865. The times are reflected geographically as The North and The South. According to Maffly-Kipp (2001), the historical account begins in the decades after the American Revolution, as Northern states gradually began to abolish slavery. As a result sharper differences emerged between the experiences of enslaved peoples in the south and those Northerners who were not relatively free. The period known as the “awakenings” in the southern states signaled an increasing number of slaves being converted to evangelical religions primarily Baptist and Methodist because they promoted Christians as equal in the sight of God.

In the slave quarters, Africans organized their own “invisible institution” (Maffly-Kipp, 2007; Mitchell, 2004). Their secret place of worship was referred to as “hush harbors” where they used secret signals and passwords, while praising God in their own way of hand clapping, African dancing, and singing.

The organization of plantation missions led by Black preachers began as independent slave owners reluctantly permitted an evangelistic program with the utilization of Black preachers. On a plantation in North Carolina the first Black to receive permission to evangelize his race was Uncle Harry Cowan, who was a servant of Thomas L. Cowan. He granted him privileged papers to preach anywhere on his four plantations (Fitts, 1985). For the most part, generally slaves were not permitted to have their own churches, pastors, and preachers. It was the common practice throughout the slave territory to permit them to attend preaching services in the white churches at the time designated under conditions prescribed under their masters (Fitts, 1985). The pulpit vitality of certain black preachers, or exhorters, was so potent that white Baptist churches could no longer be able to contain them. The emergence of independent black Baptist churches gradually appeared on the scene of Christianity.

The slave churches were issued two certificates. The first certificate gave them permission to have a church whereas the second certificate from the slave owners gave the African preachers the authority to do the work of a gospel minister including the right to administer the ordinances of a Baptist church.

Not many Black denominations existed before the Civil War (Brackett, 1889; Brinks & Harris, 1963). In 1821 the African Methodist Episcopal church was formed by Blacks who left the original Methodist denomination because of the segregated St. George Methodist Church in Philadelphia. This group was led by Richard Allen and was formed in the North.

Most Blacks lived in the South and found it difficult because of slavery to have their own worship services. In the South, whites usually refused to allow Blacks to meet separately, including assemble for worship. In areas where Blacks did worship they worshiped with whites. The church at Cane Ridge, for example, built a balcony and Blacks climbed a ladder to it from outside. Some white owners allowed the enslaved to worship in white churches, where they were segregated in the back of the building or in the balconies. Occasionally persons of African descent might hear a special sermon from white preachers, but these sermons tended to stress obedience and duty, and the message of the apostle Paul for slaves to obey their masters.

Southern Blacks attended Presbyterian churches prior to the war because their owners did. After the Civil War Black membership in Presbyterian churches dropped dramatically—from 31,000 to only about 1,700 (Black Churches, n.d.). After the Civil War, Blacks began to develop denominations and have more control of their churches and its pastors. Methodist churches from the North began organizing Methodist churches all over the South and grew very quickly (Brackett, 1889; Brinks & Harris, 1963). In the 1830s and 1840s, Southern churchmen undertook an active campaign to persuade plantation owners that slaves must be brought into to the Christian fold.

Methodists were the most active among missionary societies, but Baptists also had strong appeal. The Baptists' insistence that each congregation should have its own autonomy meant that Blacks could exercise more control over their religious affairs. Yet the independence of Black churches was curbed by law and by the white Southern

response to slave uprisings and abolition. Most Black denominations began after the Civil War.

By 1860, about 11%, or 500,000, of America's 4,400,000 Blacks belonged to independent black churches (Hines, n.d.). Methodist churches for Blacks multiplied before and during the Civil War. They continued to grow after the war ended. The African Methodist Episcopal and the African Methodist Zion churches organized congregations throughout the South even while war raged. The Colored Methodist Church began about 1870 (Mitchell, 2004). Northern Methodists allowed Blacks to form their own conferences but patronized them and Northern whites kept a watchful eye as they exercised continual guidance over the Black conferences.

The Methodists licensed Black men to preach. During the 1770s and 1780s, Black ministers began to preach to their own people, drawing on the stories, people and events depicted in the Old and New Testaments (Pegues, 1892). No story spoke more powerfully to slaves than stories of liberation, with its themes of bondage and deliverance brought by a righteous and powerful God who would one day set them free.

Some of the Black preachers in the South succeeded in establishing independent Black churches. In the 1780s, a slave named Andrew Bryan preached to a small group of slaves in Savannah, Georgia. White citizens had him arrested and whipped. Despite persecution and harassment, the church grew, and by 1790 it became the First African Baptist Church of Savannah (Johnson, 1897). In time, the Second and a Third African Churches were formed, also led by Black pastors. The Methodist Churches and

missionaries were welcomed by the African Americans, but many chose to join the Baptist denomination, which became the very large and powerful National Baptist Convention of America, the largest Black organization in the world (Adams & Talley, 1952).

Today the Black church is widely understood to include the following seven major Black Protestant denominations: (a) the National Baptist Convention, (b) the National Baptist Convention of America, (c) the Progressive National Convention, (d) the African Methodist Episcopal Church, (e) the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, (f) the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, and (g) the Church of God in Christ (Brisbane, 1970; Brockway, 1947).

### **Conventions**

Most American Blacks joined some sort of Baptist church. Black Baptists, however, worshiped with their white counterparts for many years before forming their own congregations. Virginia Blacks established a separate Black Baptist church by 1867 (Adams & Talley, 1952). This group became the National Baptist Convention (Jackson, 1980). Black conventions began multiplying rapidly after that time period. Americans soon heard of the National Baptist Convention, a Progressive National Baptist Convention and the National Primitive Baptist Convention of the U.S.A. Baptists often started new churches. All Black Baptist organizations contain about 90% of American Blacks claiming Christianity. During the 1800s and 1900s, the African American main

denominations were primarily Methodist or Baptist. There were not very many other denominations that welcomed Blacks to be equal to that of its white members.

Blacks generally stayed away from Catholicism until after the Civil War. Black Catholicism grew steadily since the civil war. The African denominations became very popular and met the needs to the African American community and congregations and thus started the expansion of the African American churches.

In the Northern part of the United States, Blacks had more authority over their religious affairs. Many worshipped in established, predominantly white congregations, but by the late 18th century, Blacks had begun to congregate in self-help and benevolent associations called African Societies. Functioning as quasi-religious organizations, these societies often gave rise to independent Black churches.

In 1787, for example, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones organized the Free African Society of Philadelphia, which later evolved into two congregations: the Bethel Church, the mother church of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination, and St. Thomas Episcopal Church, which remained affiliated with a white Episcopal denomination. These churches continued to grow. Historian Mary Sawyer notes that by 1810, there were 15 African churches representing four denominations in 10 cities from South Carolina to Massachusetts (Rupp, 1844).

In the North, Black churches organized missions and sent them to the South to help newly freed persons find the skills and develop the talents that would allow them to lead independent lives. Education was paramount. African American missionaries, along



with AME Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne, worked hard to establish schools and educational institutions for the children. White denominations, including Presbyterian, Congregational and Episcopal congregations, also sent missionaries to teach reading and math skills to a population previously denied the opportunity for education. Over time, these missionary efforts gave rise to the establishment of independent Black institutions of higher education, including Morehouse College and Spelman College in Atlanta.

### **The Role of African American Women in Society**

The societal role of African women has a history of independence and leadership. After the civil war, African women controlled the marketplace, lived in a dual-sex political system and were involved with military campaigns. After the Civil War, women continued to be regarded equally by Black males. As caretakers of the family, they also worked in the fields along with the Black males. It was not until African Americans received their freedom and began mimicking the institutions of the white majority that sexual equality became an issue (Brockway, 1947).

Patriarchal behavior did not originate in Africa. Gender roles in many African countries were more fluid and complex. Cole and Guy-Sheftall (2003) noted how women and men did what was needed in order to keep the family and community moving in the desired direction. Therefore, the role of Black men being placed in a position of power over others actually developed when they were brought to the West as slaves. The move to the New World brought with it an exchange in gender roles, whereas Black women were treated as the male slaves and lost much of their ability to

exercise the political power they possessed in Africa. While slavery leveled the playing field in gender issues for male and female slaves, it also paved the way for African men to find their only refuge of power in the pulpit. Most Africans in America were slaves, and the conditions they faced as a part of slavery framed their worldview and thus their theological discourse and reflection (Ross, 2007).

According to Cole and Guy-Sheftall (2003), in the newly formed black church, most of the church pastors were men who were chosen by white men to take on this leadership role. The church was the only institution that allowed Black men to exercise authority as religious leaders during slavery. This power, however, was authorized by white slave owners in an attempt to maintain mental and physical control of the servants (Cone, 1990).

The African American female has fought for the rights of all African slaves; male and female. However, after slavery was abolished, she realized her fight for equality continued at a different level but this time from a different master (Brockway, 1947). From this point, on the African American female has worked under a subservient relationship with her former partner on the plantation. At the Seneca Falls Convention of July 1848, prominent abolitionists and feminists of the era, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton authored a Declaration of Sentiments patterned after the Declaration of Independence which asserted fundamental rights often denied to women, including the right to vote (Penn, 1902). A question for 19th century feminists was whether it was acceptable to promote Black civil rights over women's rights.

This divide obviously left out Black women, whose basic rights were compromised both because they were Black and because they were women. White men remained in control, partly because Black civil rights and women's rights were set against each other. Activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1997) is quoted as complaining about the prospect of Black voting rights in 1865: "Now, it becomes a serious question whether we had better stand aside and see 'Sambo' walk in the kingdom first" (p. 54).

In 1896, a group of Black women, led by Mary Church Terrell and including such luminaries as Harriet Tubman and Ida B. Wells-Barnett, was created out of a merger of smaller organizations. But, despite the efforts of the National Association for Colored Women and similar groups, the national feminist movement became identified primarily and enduringly as white and upper-class (Brockway, 1947).

As 4 million young men were drafted to serve as U.S. troops in World War I, women took over many jobs traditionally held by men. At the same time this occurred, the women's suffrage movement experienced a resurgence that dovetailed with the growing antiwar movement. As a result, some 72 years after Seneca Falls, the U.S. government ratified the Nineteenth Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. While Black suffrage was not to be fully established in the South until the 1965 and continues to be challenged to this day by voter intimidation tactics, it would have been inaccurate to describe the United States as a true representative democracy prior to 1920

because only about 40% of the population—white males—were allowed to elect representatives.

It's a sad fact of American history that our greatest civil rights victories came after our bloodiest wars. The end of slavery, for example, came about only after the Civil War; the Nineteenth Amendment after World War I; and the women's liberation movement only after World War II. As 16 million American men went off to fight, women essentially took over maintenance of the U.S. economy. Some 6 million women recruited to work in military factories, producing munitions and other military goods. When the war was over, it became clear that American women could work just as hard and effectively as American men—and the second wave of American feminism was born while male dominance over women continued.

The Black church is still led primarily by African American males who have made it a practice by word and deed to determine women's roles in the church (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003). African American women seeking solace for what has been labeled the triple threat of racism, classism, and sexism still face the same challenges within the church. Some examples of this treatment of Black women can be seen in several historical events. The Black Feminist Movement was started during the Abolitionist Movement in the 1800s. During this time, Black women were fighting for the right to vote and the right to have equal rights in the community, which included the church. It was church leaders, men, who challenged women by telling them to beware of taking

leadership roles in the church. Sojourner Truth also defended women's rights to vote, as well as women's rights to act and speak in the church. She stated the following:

There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about colored women; and if colored men get theirs, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be the masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as before. So I am for keeping the thing going while the things are stirring; because if we wait until it is still, it will take a great while to it going again. (as cited in Cone, 1984)

Along with Sojourner Truth, other women were also fighting for the freedom of all slaves. Harriet Tubman was reported to have led over 300 slaves out of bondage for which she was nicknamed Moses. Ida B. Wells-Barnett was known for her fight against lynching. Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary Church Terrell and Francis Ellen Watkins Harper were instrumental in the organization of Black women in clubs. Terrell and Harper were leaders in the establishment of the National Association of Colored Women in 1897 (Grenz & Kjesbo, 1995). It is undeniable that Black women have a history of leadership and fighting for the rights of their people. However, Black women in the church had to contend with the negative connotation of women's rights. For example, women were not licensed in the African Methodist Episcopal denomination until 1884. In 1888 the General Conference wrote this position on the ordination of women.

Years later, on July 11, 2000, the AME Church elected its first female bishop, Dr. Vashti McKenzie. McKenzie prepared for the post by attending Howard University

in Washington, DC and earning a Master of Divinity degree. She then went on to earn her Doctor of Ministry degree from Union Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. She was ordained a deacon and assigned to a seven-member congregation in Chesapeake City, Maryland. African American men, who were prohibited from exercising power in other public arenas, were adamant about maintaining authority in the one institution they did manage to control, Black churches. Their embrace of patriarchy in Black churches was aided by passages in the Bible that support the subordination of women (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003).

During the 19th century, however, the African American Baptist church began to mirror trends from the white Christian church, restricting the freedom of its female members considerably and moving toward an exclusively male clergy (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Black community centered around the church. As the institution for racial self-help in political, spiritual, economic and social spheres, it provided multiple services. Among these services were schools, restaurants, concerts, political rallies, libraries, insurance companies, newspapers, and athletic clubs. While men occupied many of the positions of authority, women in the church were responsible for providing funding for various programs and running programs such as schools. Much of the work, social and political, performed at the state and local level was represented at the Women's Convention, a subset of the National Baptist Convention of the late 19th century (Wolk, 1979).

## **Current State of African American Church Populations**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), the current U.S. population is over 311 million people, so the United States has the world's third largest population (following China and India). As the world's population is approximately 6.8 billion, the current United States population represents a mere 4.5% of the world's population, so about one in every 20 people on the planet is a resident of the United States of America.

The number of people who are identified as Black, either alone or in combination with one or more other races in the 2010 Census are 42 million and make up 13.6% of the total U.S. population. The Black population grew by 15.4% from 2000 to 2010. The projected Black population of the United States (including those of more than one race) for July 1, 2050, is to be 65.7 million people. On that date, according to the projection, Blacks would constitute 15% of the nation's total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

From 1974 to 2004, the median income fell 12% for Black men while rising 75% for the women. One partial explanation is that twice as many Black women as men graduate from college. Because a high-earning woman has little incentive to marry a low-earning man, Black families will continue to rely primarily on one income (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). More than half (55%) of the African American population live in the South. Although the Black Population has increased in all US regions since 1990, the South has had the most growth. In 1910, 89% of all Blacks still lived in the South, and 80% of these in rural areas.

Gallup daily tracking also documents that church attendance varies significantly across subgroups of the U.S. adult population. Attending church is verified as a vital part of most African American weekly practices. The January–May of 2010 report revealed that 47% of women and 52% of Blacks attend church frequently (Gallup Poll, 2010).

### **Benefits of the Black Church**

#### **Community Institutions**

Over two-thirds of elderly African Americans in urban communities receive some form of assistance, financial or otherwise, from their fellow church members (Taylor et al., 2005). Church has been the most important and influential institution in the Black community and the one we've always been able to control. It instilled values, dictated how we should and should not behave, often on the basis of gender. It also provided a safe space for worship, given the dictates of segregation; and was an important site of resistance to racism as it challenged the limitations that the dominant society placed on African Americans. Social, critic, religious scholar and ordained Baptist minister, Michael Eric Dyson, argues that the Black church continues to occupy the center of Black culture and remains our most precious institution (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003).

Historically, churches have served as centers for the lives of the African American people. No phase of African American history would remain untouched in a definitive history of the church (Woodson, 1985). For the Black community churches offered a place of worship and spiritual guidance, but also served as a forum to work for



civil rights, social justice, and community benevolence and improvement. Friends and families gathered in churches and recorded important events in their lives) Black churches have provided various experiences that support families; economically, spiritually, socially, and culturally, through customs unmatched by other social institutions (Williams, 2003).

The American founders viewed churches as a central institution within American life, because religion provided the moral foundation of self-restraint and community awareness necessary for the success of republican self-government. Many believed that the American experiment would not succeed without the moral training churches provided to citizens (Lewis, 2008). Coupled with the observation that congregations are often among the strongest institutions in otherwise disadvantaged communities, has stimulated growing interest in increasing faith-based involvement in community development. Yet the role of faith-based organizations remains among the least well-researched aspects of community development (Aaron, Levine, & Burstin, 2003).

In recent years, policymakers have begun looking to churches, synagogues, mosques, and other faith-based organizations to play a greater role in strengthening communities (Aaron et al., 2003). In fact, if it were not for churches, government would have to expend public funds to replace the community benefits that churches provide. Overall, it is clear that churches bring positive benefits to communities, and their role in the community as a beneficial, nonprofit institution should be maintained (Lewis, 2008).

## **Support for Women and Families in the Church**

According to the Pew Forum (2009), the African American church is very important in the lives of men and women, but reveals statistics that women have a greater level of need and appreciation for the Black church. This is evidenced by their great attendance each Sunday. The church is meeting a substantial component of needs in the lives of African American women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), many of which are single parents. While the decline of marriage is clearly an American problem, statistics point to the glaring truth: African Americans are disproportionately devaluing the importance of marriage nationwide. The marriage rate for African Americans has been dropping since the 1960s and today has the lowest marriage rate of any racial group in the United States. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 43.3% of Black men and 41.9% of Black women in America have never been married, and Black women are least likely in American society to marry. These figures are double that of white men and women. Between 1970 and 2010 the overall marriage rate has dropped, overall by 17%. However, for African Americans during this same time period, the marriage rate dropped a staggering 34% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Families have always been very important to African Americans. While there have been many challenges to the family structure of Africans Americans, family is still vital to the cohesiveness of the African American community. The African American female has taken on many of the challenges to keep the family together. Women have many times been the bread winner, church leaders, community advocates, and the glue

that has kept its families together. The stresses of life have brought great challenges to the African American family; some of which are divorce and poverty. The church has always been there to provide support and guidance to the children, men, women, and families through food banks, workshops, and counseling centers.

Research findings have indicated that formal religion (i.e., the Black church) is a primary contributor to values that create supportive and responsive family relationships (Brody, Stoneman, Flor, & McCrary, 1994). According to Brody et al. (1994), this support system is based in the formal religious structure that helps African American families cope with life and social stressors, such as economic and racial inequalities. Many churches provide basic needs, such as, food, shelter, and clothing in the community.

### **Spiritual Development**

Church has traditionally been looked upon as the place where people gather to worship their God. Spiritual teaching and guidance from the Bible has always been at the center of the beliefs of the African American people. They have always looked to their church and their Pastor for spiritual guidance and enlightenment. During the times of slavery, spiritual guidance gave them hope that one day their God would deliver them from the oppressive slave masters just like He did the children of Israel. Prayer was a daily part of their lives as they lived in fear for their life and the lives of their family and livelihood. On Sundays the slaves did not have to work in the field so they were free to go to church. Church was so crucial to their survival and it was the only thing they had

for spiritual uplifting, fun and socialization. The church building provided means for the education building for their children, a place to have weddings, bury their dead, and gather for meetings and celebrations. The church was, and remains the central part of the African American community and their families. The pastor, many times was their spiritual leader as well as their community advocate. The role of Pastor was respected in their community and somewhat by their oppressors. He was usually educated or could at least read the Bible. The pastor taught them, encouraged them, counseled them and advised them.

Lessons from the bible on forgiveness, non-violence, love your enemies and how to be a good person kept the people from retaliating. Sundays were filled with family, food, and fun. This gave the slaves something to look forward to. At the church they were taught to look out for each other and share what they had with each other. When one person was in need, they were taught to give and make sure no one in the village went lacking. These teachings and principles taught in the church have continued even today in the African American community (Ogletree, 2010). According to Ogletree:

Paul taught that peace should characterize the community of believers. He puts forth that peace be the criterion for recognizing God in the life of the individual as well as the community of believers. Therefore, when people come to the campus of the local church, they should sense the manifestation of peace in the community. They should be able to smell it, see it, hear it and feel it. (p. 255)

## **Social Support**

In addition to their spiritual mission, Black clergy and churches have long stood ready to meet pressing human needs in the community including food, clothing and shelter. They are fully aware that social conditions all too often mean the difference between good health outcomes or chronic illnesses among their parishioners. It thus comes as no surprise that within hours of Katrina's landfall, African American ministers and other pastors in the Gulf region became the disaster's de facto first responders.

Congregations, denominational organizations, and other faith-based organizations represent the third largest component of the nonprofit sector in the U.S., after health and education. Congregations alone number about 350,000; collectively, their estimated yearly expenditures exceed \$47 billion (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1993).

Church attendance is an important correlation of positive health care practices, especially for the most vulnerable subgroups, the uninsured and chronically ill. Community- and faith-based organizations present additional opportunities to improve the health of low-income and minority populations (Aaron et al., 2003). Participation in church activities may reduce anxiety, provide rural African American youth access to more educated peers and adults who support learning, and reinforce the importance of education. Coupled with the historically high levels of reliance upon and participation in church among rural African Americans in the Deep South, church activities may be a potential source of support readily accessible to and frequently utilized by youth in the current study. Adult members from participating students' communities viewed the

church as a key resource for and central to cultivating youth programs (e.g., mentoring) that can help students be successful (Farmer et al., 2006).

The church provides many opportunities for leadership and leadership development by hiring and training staff to work at the church, in leadership positions, church groups and activities. The governing body of the church varies per denomination, but basically consists of pastors, elders, deacons, evangelists, teachers, board members, finance teams and leaders, youth leaders, etc. In some denominations, leadership positions are elected from within the African American church; however, in others they are appointed by a religious hierarchy. Many decisions are made by the leaders of the church. Leadership development in the African American church begins in the early ages and continues throughout the senior ages. In African American children are mentored by African American leaders who talk, look and think like they think. Many times the church is the only place African American people will have an equal opportunity to become the leader of a group or taught to become the leader.

More than half of all congregations and many other faith-based organizations provide some form of human services. Congregational participation in providing human services is greater among worship communities that are larger (and hence have more resources), are located in low-income neighborhoods, are theologically liberal, and are African American. Supportive pastoral leadership is central (Aaron et al., 2003).

In human services, the most frequently offered are youth programs (including camps), marriage counseling, family counseling, and meal services or food kitchens.

Visitation or other supports for sick persons and shut-ins are the most widespread health-related activities. When one looks in more detail at specific activities, the most common ones are food programs, housing/shelter, and clothing provision. Only 18% of congregations participate in any type of housing program, which is the most common community development activity, and only 11% engage in employment-related programs. Working with church congregations brings distinctive advantages to the table; they offer a place to house the program. Between 5 and 15% of congregations, depending on their size, that are involved in some community development activities conduct some of those activities through an independent nonprofit organization (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1993). Congregations also bring potential access to volunteers, potential access to the financial resources of the congregation and its affiliated organizations, and a context that engenders public trust. Policymakers have increasingly viewed congregations as vital community institutions that should play a greater role in building stronger communities (Aaron et al., 2003).

Religious participation reduces the mortality risks and improves health status and quality of life for African Americans. A longitudinal study of White and Black Americans showed that those who attended church weekly had reduced mortality risk as compared to those who attended church less frequently, even after controlling for demographic characteristics, health conditions, social connections, and health practices (Aaron et al., 2003).

After researching African American churches throughout this nation, these programs were consistently found in churches that offered assistance from the church to the community (Lewis, 2008): (a) mature adult day classes and services, (b) affordable housing, (c) grants, (d) recreation activities, (e) children and teen ministries, (f) young adult and singles ministries, (g) daycare centers, (h) afterschool care, (i) summer camps, (j) cultural enrichment programs, (k) voter registration, (l) food pantry, (m) clothes pantry, (n) classes on finance, (o) classes on marriage and family, (p) classes on parenting, (q) health clinics and classes, (r) women's and men's conferences, (s) prison ministry, and (t) parks and sports programs.

Churches bring important benefits in the community. The presence of churches in the community brings direct economic benefits to the local area. Church organizations provide jobs for the community and churches support a variety of local businesses. Churches bring individuals from surrounding areas to the community where the church is located, and these individuals provide economic support to local establishments. Thus, churches aid in bringing additional revenue to communities (Lewis, 2008).

Beyond direct economic benefits, churches also provide social benefits that have economic value. Several researchers have identified the social benefits that churches bring to communities, including: providing help to poor and vulnerable individuals in the community, improving marriage relationships, decreasing violence among women, increasing moral community obligations, and promoting charitable contributions and volunteering (Lewis, 2008).



Educationally, religious involvement is positively correlated with higher math and reading scores and greater educational aspirations (Regnerus, 2000, 2001). Students who frequently attend church have improved ability to allocate time and achieve goals (Freeman, 1985). Religiously connected students are five times less likely than their peers to skip school (Sloane & Potvin, 1986). Parents' involvement in churches also improves their children's educational capacities and achievements. Parents with higher levels of religiosity raise children who more consistently complete homework, attend class, and complete degree programs (Muller & Ellison, 2001). Churches provide educational, psychological and moral training, and resources which result in positive present and future educational outcomes for students.

Several cross-national and community based studies also show that churches help members obtain civic skills, such as public speaking, networking, organizing, and participating in politics (Schwadel, 2002). The church environment provides a training ground for individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds, affording individuals the skills to succeed in industry, business, education, and politics (Lewis, 2008).

Churches support crime reduction. In addition to providing social programs and community volunteers, churches decrease the occurrence of crime and deviance in communities and among local youth. Reduced levels of crime and deviance make communities more safe, stable, and productive, and safe and stable communities encourage economic growth, through business expansion and attracting new residents (Lewis, 2008). Being involved in a church consistently decreases levels of deviance and

crime. Religious involvement decreases domestic violence among both men and women, according to a national study (Ellison & Anderson, 2001). Church attendance has also been associated with decreased levels of assault, burglary, and larceny (Bainbridge, 1989), and religiosity promotes decreased levels of violent crime both at the individual and the state level (Hummer, Rogers, Nam, & Ellison, 1999; Lester, 1987). Increased levels of religiosity also directly decrease deviant behavior, such as drug use, violence, and delinquency among at risk youth (Fagan, 2006; Lewis, 2008).

Churches also promote a variety of health benefits for the community, improving the vitality of the community and decreasing government expenditures. Studies have consistently shown that religiosity is related to increased longevity (Fagan, 2006). The average religious individual lives seven years longer than the average nonreligious individual, and this increases to fourteen years for African American individuals (Fagan, 2006; Hummer et al., 1999; Lewis, 2008).

In a comprehensive survey of mental health studies, 81% of 91 studies showed that religion is positively associated with mental well-being. Religious attendance has been shown to decrease stress, increase self-esteem, and give individuals hope and a greater sense of life purpose (Fagan, 2006). Increased religious practice also is associated with decreased levels of depression and suicide (Ellison, 1995; Lewis, 2008).

Social capital is the outcome of trust, social networks, and social health. It encourages economic and social opportunities for communities. Scholars have frequently referenced the role of religion in creating social capital and developing the

positive societal impacts of social capital (Fukuyama, 2001). Social capital, which churches promote, has been shown to increase economic growth (Zak & Knack, 2001), and it also improves government performance, according to an evaluation of the 50 states (Knack, 2002; Lewis, 2008).

### **Political Support**

According to Adams (1985):

The church and its pastor have also served as an advocate for civil rights:

The church to Black people over time has been political party, social club, strategy and planning meeting, a place to be somebody, a community inside the community, the rebuilder of dashed hopes, home base for the freedom movement, leadership development seminar, promoter of education, stimulator of economic development and the advocate of a philosophy of self-help and self-determination.

Known as the spiritual center for the Civil Rights Movement, African-American churches in Atlanta were very influential in the prosperity of the nonviolent protest initiative. Home to both Martin Luther King's pulpit at Ebenezer Baptist as well as the headquarters of the nationally acclaimed Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Black churches in Atlanta have provided solace and strength during adversity and times of struggle. Additionally, church leaders have advocated for groups when civil and human rights were violated (Williams, 2003).

These attributes build norms and values that encourage political stability and economic performance. Churches contribute to vitally important components of successful societies, and their presence in communities provides many benefits that cannot be measured solely by direct revenue (Lewis, 2008).

### **Shield Against Oppression**

The role that Black churches played in the early 20th century was multifaceted. They served as a harbor that temporarily shielded African Americans from the harsh realities of a nation filled with bigotry and mistreatment. They provided a place where people who were otherwise oppressed could find a voice and dignity among their own. The Black church was a shelter that gave a sense of belonging, security, and power to its members (Williams, 2003).

Research has begun to accrue that demonstrates a positive relationship between participation in school, community, and church activities and student achievement (Regnerus, 2000). Benefits from such activities have been purported to increase achievement through numerous mechanisms (Irvin, Farmer, Leung, Thompson, & Hutchins, 2010). The church has a village opportunity to provide positive experiences for youths. Churches in the African American community traditionally have served as places of worship and education, worship and civic development, worship and political participation, and worship and community mobilization (Williams, 2003).

## **Church Group Affiliations**

Protestantism in the U.S.—and in the Black community—is not homogeneous. By several measures, including importance of religion in life, attendance at religious services and frequency of prayer, the historically Black Protestant group is among the most religiously observant traditions. In fact, on these and other measures of religious practices and beliefs, members of historically Black Protestant churches tend to resemble members of evangelical Protestant churches, another highly religious group. Outside of the historically Black tradition, an additional 15% of African-Americans are members of evangelical denominations, such as the Southern Baptist Convention or Assemblies of God, and 4% are members of mainline denominations, such as the Disciples of Christ. Overall, the membership of historically Black Protestant denominations is 92% Black, while African-Americans make up relatively small portions of the membership of evangelical (6%) and mainline (2%) churches. The majority of African Americans attend Methodist and Baptist denominations. Pastors are assigned to congregations by Bishops, distinguishing it from Presbyterian government. Methodist denominations typically give lay members representation at regional and national meetings (conferences) at which the business of the church is conducted, making it different from episcopal government. This connectional organizational model differs further from the congregational model, for example of Baptist, and Protestantism in the U.S.—and in the Black community—is not homogeneous. Rather, it is divided into three distinct traditions - evangelical Protestant churches, mainline Protestant churches and historically Black Protestant

churches. More than three in four African-American Protestants (and 59% of African-Americans overall) belong to historically Black Protestant denominations, such as the National Baptist Convention or the American Methodist Episcopal Church. In fact, 40% of all African-Americans identify with Baptist denominations within the historically Black tradition (Pew Forum, 2009).

### **Black Women Leaders in the Church**

The role of the African American woman in her religion is an important one, as she comprises the large majority of the congregation in the Black Church, yet does not generally hold a position of leadership (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Women outnumber men in the pews, yet are rarely seen in the pulpit (Lowen, 2000). In a narrative exploration of African women's experience with the Christian church in Africa, Crumbley (2003) highlighted that several intersecting forces promoted the lack of female leadership. These forces include disempowering gender practices in African culture as well as the Christian religion and the emphasis on the African woman as first and foremost a mother. According to Cummings (2008):

Women have always served in the church and have been noticeably recognized as the backbone of the church. Their service to the church has come in many forms. In light of the fact that women have made up the greatest percentage of congregations in America since the mid-seventeenth century and the tremendous work and effort of the Civil Rights Movement, the matter of equality among the sexes continues to be a hotly debated topic in the church.

The Black Church has in many ways perpetuated perceptions of its women as self-sacrificing subordinates to their men. With gender injustice throughout the African American culture, as well as the Black church and the lack of female leadership positions in high offices, the African American female leadership positions remain an uphill climb. As a critical social institution, the Black Church is integral in molding African American culture; and yet, while the Church has been a source of liberation for the African American people as a whole, it has been a converse source of oppression for Black women leaders in the church (Marbley, 2005).

Oppression faced by African American females in the Black Church is difficult to imagine because the Black female has always been seen as invaluable to her family, her church and the Black community as a whole. Despite her great contributions to the church, she is still primarily viewed as a willing worker, as a wife, a mother and a supporter of her man, her church and her community, but not the pastor of a church.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s is viewed as one of history's most effective movements of activism. Many professors and pastors compare what is or is not happening in the country to what happened as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. However, the Civil Rights Movement, which was led by various groups of African American ministers including Dr. Martin Luther King, was not without fault as it relates to the treatment of women. The stance that Black men had toward women in the movement had already been established by the societal norm, which was patriarchy (Cone, 1992). The view of women keeping in their place in the home and supporting the

movement from the background became an unpopular one because the Feminist Movement was just beginning to contest this whole idea in the mainstream society. There was conflict over which was most important—the fight for racial equality or the fight for women’s rights.

Black leaders viewed the emerging Feminist Movement as a movement of bored white middle-class suburban housewives and believed that race instead of gender was the main determiner of Black people’s life chances (Cone, 1992). There was an underlying myth also of the emasculation of Black men by racism, which thrust them into a stance of claiming if not demanding their position as “man.” Although equally mythological, it did not help at all that women were seen as privileged because of their positions as matriarchs who were undergirding the Black male. It was indeed a struggle to assert one’s rights as a woman in the 1960s when Black men (as well as some women) viewed the emergence of the Feminist Movement as trivial in comparison with the Civil Rights Movement (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003).

It is clear that the emphasis on manhood during the Civil Rights Movement was led by well-respected religious leaders such as Martin Luther King, Ralph Abernathy, Andrew Young, and Ben Gay. Cole and Guy-Sheftall (2003) mentioned that the marginalization of women in the Civil Rights Movement was apparent when one considers the March on Washington in 1963. There was only one woman on the planning committee for the march. After a written protest concerning the participation of women in the march because of their contributions, wives of the Big Six were added as



platform guests and a quickly planned tribute was placed on the program. Cone (1990) explains in his writings that Dr. King failed to give written credit to the women arrested with him in Albany and he left no record of gratitude for the women's political council such as leaders Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Jo Ann Robinson, Mary Fair Burks, who played in the success of the Montgomery bus boycott.

Civil rights' leaders were role models for future pastors and leaders to follow as they began shaping and molding the framework and operations of their churches, even in the years that followed when many congregations consisted of a majority female membership. Cone (1969) added:

Contrary to what many Black men say (especially preachers); sexism is not merely a problem for white women. Rather it is a problem of the human condition. It destroys the family and society. . . . Any Black male theologian or preacher who ignores sexism as a central problem in our society and church (as important as racism, because they are interconnected), is just as guilty of distorting the gospel as is a white theologian who does the same with racism.

For years Black women could be teachers and nurses, but being a doctor, dentist, lawyer, scientist, or engineer was off limits. Similarly, driving a truck or a bus, working on the assembly line in a manufacturing plant or working in the construction industry was taboo. These were considered men's jobs. To the degree that when Black women aspired to enter these professions and occupations it was often considered a threat to the

role of the Black man as head of the family/household. In the church, the idea that a woman could be a minister was unthinkable (Daniels, 2000).

During the civil rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s, Black women increasingly proclaimed that they would not be confined to the clerical and administrative work and risk their lives as organizers while being excluded from leadership roles. Though the debate and tensions over the issue of gender inequality was inevitably influenced by the women's liberation movement unfolding in the larger society, Black women evolved their own agenda for equality within the framework of the Black freedom struggle. While some aspects of the women's liberation movement were decidedly anti-male, overall, this was not the case within the Black community. Black women have simply not been content to play a secondary role in the Black freedom struggle or to settle for anything less than the right to fulfill their dreams and aspirations as Black women free of the prejudices, misconceptions and constraints of patriarchy and male domination. Equality, collaboration, cooperation and partnership should be the values which guide Black male-female relationships, not patriarchy. Being put on a pedestal by Black men is not a substitute for genuine equality, power and leadership in the Black community (Daniels, 2000).

### **The African American Female Pastor**

CBS News (2009) reported that even though 60% of American churchgoers are women, the clergy remains overwhelmingly male. Only 25% of pastors in the United Church of Christ are female. Less than 20% of clergy in other major denominations are

women (19% of Presbyterians, 15% of Methodists, 12% Episcopalians, 11% of Lutherans, and fewer than 5% among southern Baptists). Leadership in general has been traditionally placed within the context of the masculine, with the category of female leadership compartmentalized from general leadership that is implicitly male (Parker, 2005; Yang & Smith, 2009). Women are slightly more involved than men in religious congregations and the participation and general leadership recently have even outpaced men in enrollment in seminary programs (Sullins, 2000). This pattern stands in stark contrast to the observation that less than 5% of all head clergy in U.S. congregations are women (Chaves & Wineburg, 2007).

Some argue that women are not able to reach senior pastoral leadership because of “patriarchy, sexism, classism, and gender barriers” (Bragg, 2011). Their embrace of patriarchy in Black churches was aided by passages in the Bible that are interpreted as the subordination of women.

The obstacles African American women face in the secular workplace, in many ways, parallel those faced by women in the Black Church according to Grimes (2005), the four categories of problems faced by African American female leaders are under representation, lack of power to change their situation, prejudgments based on both race and gender, and gender segregation resulting in isolation and, therefore, a lack of potential to collectively address the problem. While the African American church has been a positive influence (e.g., a source of spiritual guidance, support, and sociopolitical action), it has also been instrumental in subjugating African American women.

Consequently, certain leadership roles in many churches and denominations remain unavailable to Black women despite their untiring support over the years through financial contributions, time, talents, and resources that have been utilized within the church.

It is a well-known fact that Black women have most often been the backbone of the churches and civic organizations in the Black community, the worker bees that have made Black institutions and organizations viable and effective. For much of our history in this country, however, leadership was seen as a role reserved for men. Hence, Black women often performed the tasks essential to the survival and success of Black institutions and organizations while Black men enjoyed the fruits of their labor by being the leaders (Daniels, 2000). The large majority of African American women identify themselves as Christians, and, though they make up over half of the Black community, Black women represent over three-quarters of the church community (Lee, 2008). Given their extreme underrepresentation in positions of leadership in the Black Church, their converse overrepresentation in the church community is particularly interesting (Crumbley, 2003; Lee, 2008). Women have emerged in every African-American religious tradition as persons with significant power in spite of the overwhelming resistance of the largest church bodies to women's ordination (Gilkes, 2001).

In 1989, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church became the first institution to ordain women officially, defending the right of women to be leaders in the same way that men were leaders (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Over half of a century

would pass without any other institution following suit in any of the other denominations; acknowledging the right of women to preach until 1948. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church did not allow ordination of women until 1954, and it was a limited type of ordination that was hardly equal to that afforded men (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). According to Niemela (2011):

The first women were ordained to ministry as early as in the middle of the 19th century. Their service to the church has come in many forms. Literature on women in the church continues to show disparities in leadership. Research often indicates the absence of women senior pastors in the church and lack of acceptance. The number of female clergy has increased markedly in many denominations. However, women do not have the same impact in practice than clergymen have in the policies and actions taken by churches. Much can be determined from women who desire to lead in the church. Present-day leadership involving women restricts them to subordinate positions in relation to clerics.

(p. 4)

Among denominations in the Black Church, Pentecostal denominations were and remain the most restricting of women in positions of church leadership. Many churches in Pentecostal denominations have firm policies against female leadership, generally referencing scripture as mandating the inferior role of women in the church. Throughout the 20th century, African American women left the Pentecostal Church to begin their own independent churches. In Chicago, Philadelphia, and Atlanta in particular, several

churches started by women discontent with policies against their leadership during the 1920s and 1930s remain strong and successful in the 21st century (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Throughout the years, Baptist Preachers have vocally made known their displeasure with females desiring to be preachers. Becoming a female senior pastor is beyond the thoughts of most Black Pastors and their congregations. In Chicago during 1971, an African American Baptist church stated that no women would be allowed near the pulpit from then on or for any reason, emphasizing specifically that the clergy would remain exclusively male. Women have been silenced and the many men remain silent when it comes to supporting women preaching. This has been the message throughout most African American churches and denominations; the pew is the place for women to work hard, sit down and keep silent, while the pulpit is reserved for men and their voices only, with all mainline Black Churches having an overwhelmingly female membership and conversely, dominantly male leadership. Methodists and Baptists were generally much more accepting of female clergy members than Pentecostals, though the largest Baptist body in the Black Church had the highest, single disapproval rate of female clergy members, at nearly 74% (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

By extension, women, when allowed to preach, do so in parallel with Biblical, gender arrangements that continue to frame them as submissive to men. While they are divine, spiritual vessels, they are also not as authoritative as men in their same position (Nesbitt, 1997). Typically, women face rejection from males in their congregation;

therefore, female pastors find it difficult to keep their male members. Statistically, men are drawn to conservative congregations while women make-up over two-thirds of comparatively, theologically liberal congregations.

Within the Black Church, African American clergy women are struggling to advance beyond entry-level appointments, ranking far below their male, clergy counterparts in terms of professional advancement. Women are usually appointed to marginal urban or rural churches with small congregations immediately following ordination, and they are far more likely to only make lateral moves in their congregations. The large established churches usually have men in the highest positions within the mainline denominations of the Black Church (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Freedom and liberation in the Black Church are more pronounced themes than they are in the White church, with liberation theologies interpreting scripture in order to inspire and mobilize marginalized groups (Nesbitt, 1997). African American women many times believe that their silence, hard work and commitment to their church will one day bring them freedom and liberation in the Black church. An illusion of access to senior leadership is maintained strategically through what Nesbitt (1997) calls tokenism, carefully placing African American clergywomen in positions of visible, though socially confined leadership.

The acceptance of women as leaders in the church has been slow and resistant, yet there has been progress. On July 11, 2000, the AME Church elected, its first female

Bishop, Dr. Vashti McKenzie. Dr. McKenzie had prepared well for the post because she had attended Howard University, in Washington, DC, and received a Master of Divinity degree. She then went on to earn her Doctor of Ministry degree from Union Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. In 1984 she was ordained a deacon and assigned to a seven-member congregation in Chesapeake City, Maryland (Turner, 2010).

The critical voices and stories of many African American women who have struggled to survive and who have participated in the struggle toward liberation throughout the years have been lost. To reclaim these stories, womanist theology has engaged in a serious critique of various systems, structures, barriers, and ideologies that have been oppressive to Black women. Moreover, womanist seeks to construct and articulate a theology that embodies the everyday life experiences, cultural expressions, and spirituality of Black women. The dilemma faced by African American women seeking leadership positions in the church or gender equality in the church are faced with the same dilemma with which their racial and gender groups have grappled for centuries (Insel & Fernald, 2004); in order to birth social change, a certain level of status and voice is warranted.

In the absence of status and voice, social change is unlikely to occur (Insel & Fernald, 2004). Men commanded the pulpits of the Black church; they also dominated church power and politics, therefore the only voice heard in the African American church is that of male leadership.



History reveals that African American church leadership has often perpetuated dominance and oppression of its congregation and church structure; protecting the power and authority of its leadership by maintaining the status quo rather than evolving to a system that treats everyone equally.

Denied the chance to preach, growing numbers of women, mostly middle class, found ways to participate in religious life. They organized social services, missionary societies, temperance associations and reading groups. They fought for suffrage and demanded social reform. They wrote for religious periodicals, promoting Victorian ideals of respectability and womanhood. Like that crusading newspaper reporter Ida B. Wells, they protested racial injustice, lynching and violence, which greatly benefited the African American male (Bates, 1997).

Throughout the Bible we see women in leadership in the Christian church. Our country was formed with the leadership of men and women. It is said the church could not be what it is today without the women, yet she is denied equity with those she fought for and alongside of. Harriett Tubman led men and women to freedom and said "Ain't I a woman?" Throughout the years gender has been used by males to their advantage. When a Saturday worship service could or would not be led by a man, they asked a woman to fill it. The Catholic church will not allow women to perform services on Sunday, but Saturday when the men have other things to do; it is alright to let her speak. During the war when men were away, it was the women who stepped up without training and ran the businesses, the companies, as well as the farms, all while continuing

to raise the children and taking care of her house. Given the opportunity, it has been proven that women can do the same jobs as men. As a matter of fact they in most cases are currently doing that job, while a male is getting all of the credit. History has taught her to be silent about many things, especially when it comes to getting credit over a man, even if she has done all of the work. Women have sat quietly and ignored a lot of injustices to make her man look good when she knew she could do a better job if given the opportunity. She has been accustomed to playing dumb while working hard just to remain on the team. One of the most influential women who stood up to speak out was Nannie Burroughs, corresponding secretary of the Woman's Convention of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. In a major address to the convention, she chastised Black ministers:

We might as well be frank and face the truth. While we have hundreds of superior men in the pulpits, North and South, East and West, the majority of our religious leaders have preached too much Heaven and too little practical Christian living. In many, the spirit of greed, like the horse-leach, is ever crying, "Give me, give me, give me." Does the absorbing task of supplying their personal needs blind leaders to the moral, social and spiritual needs of our people? Men, she argued, must welcome women into the affairs of government. Women must organize and educate. There will be protest against politics in the Church, she predicted, but insisted, it is better to have politics than ignorance. (as cited in Mellowes, n.d., para. 22)

Yet, the women wait faithfully for the man to accept them and tell them when they can have a turn. Faith is a strong guiding force in the lives of many African American women, and for all that they receive from their spiritual communities, they give back even more. In fact, Black women have long been regarded as the backbone of the Black church. But their extensive and significant contributions are made as lay leaders, not as religious heads of churches.

Today, as in the case throughout the history of the Black church, men dominate in the pulpit, in published religious scholarship, and in the leadership in both the sacred and profane worlds (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003). Present-day leadership involving women restricts them to subordinate positions in relation to clerics (Bragg, 2011). Hines (2003) stated that African-American women have always served as the developmental leader, and have thrived on helping silenced people. Hines argued that society has often tried to silence African American Women. As a result they have had to overcome two stigmas-racism and sexism. Thus, of all interactive ethnic and gender-driven experiences, the African-American woman's experience is most closely aligned with the everyday struggles of disenfranchised people.

Around the beginning of the 18th century, Black women lost access to the pulpits and their leadership in churches became even more seriously challenged. This silencing of Black women's voices coincided with regularizing the presence of Black male preachers. One response by Black women was the emergence between 1885 and 1900 of what historian Evelyn Brooks Higgenbotham calls a "Feminist Theology, "which contest

the masculinism that threatened them with silence and marginality” (as cited in Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003). A part of the religious experience of African-Americans involves coming to workable terms with European organizational forms that presume the subordination and marginalization—that is, silence of women (Gilkes, 2001).

Male dominance in African American churches was expressed most clearly by the fact that Black women were forbidden to be ordained and to preach from a pulpit. While there are some in Black churches who continue to speak out against sexism in their faith communities, there is an even more significant impact when Black religious and spiritual leaders address this question. Despite serious resistance, Black women have continuously created roles for themselves that become essential for the functioning of the church (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003). Canon, Townes, and Sims (2011) illustrated how the Black church and community have also excluded or often devalued the experience and contributions of Black women even though they have freely invested their time, talents, resources, and expertise in these communities, and offers some important suggestions for moving toward a model of Black liberation that includes the ethical realities of Black women. Some of their suggestions include (a) acknowledging questions that are unique to women; (b) examining Black women’s contributions across multiple disciplines within theological study; (c) researching and reporting Black women’s contributions to the Black church and community; and (d) analyzing and critiquing gender discrimination in the institutional church, theological scholarship, and within the various practices in the Black church.

It appears the female pastor does not have many advocates who are willing to risk their ties to their religious supporters and affiliates, so she has no one to reach out to for direction. She is virtually alone in her quest, even the mega churches don't seem to have the time or resources to help with newly organized churches, especially if it is led by a female pastor.

According to Smith (2006), there was an active discussion concerning the models of ministry that have developed over the last 20-30 years. The discussion is about the prophetic versus what is perceived to be a Neo-Pentecostal movement that has attracted large numbers of followers to individual ministries. The mega-church model has many members, but is characterized as a prosperity model that ignores or glosses over the perils of Black people in America while demonstrating the middle class members' wealth or potential for wealth to their faith. These churches also have the influence of the dominant society by virtue of the fact that they too receive conflict of interest funding. Politics has even sanctioned this movement and funded it, as was apparent in President Bush's executive order. According to Smith:

President Bush signed an executive order in 2001 creating the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to help funnel millions of government dollars to religious groups providing social services in the communities. Black mega-churches have been a major target of that outreach.

(p. 34)

The point intended is that the Republican Party targeted large mega-congregations by offering financial support in hopes that the returned favor would be their votes. Research shows, however, that the congregations did not seem to be influenced by these offerings because Bush in the year of 2000 still did not garner the Black vote (Smith, 2006). It is not the number of votes that is important in this discussion. It is the fact that people continue to be offered the donations, loans, and offerings, just as they did in the Post-Civil War Era, and we fail to recognize or verbalize the potential to be caught up in the conflicting relationship. Over the years we have heard older people say we must know our history so that it will not be repeated. The leadership of the Black church continues to become entangled in an obvious web of internalized oppression while many surrounding communities continue to suffer in poverty and distress. Cone (1969) condemns the Black church for its inability to address this situation. While some researchers have studied what keeps women out of the top positions in congregations, they do so largely with small qualitative studies or single denomination analyses (Finlay, 2003; Sullins, 2000). By focusing on denominations, variation may be masked, a problem that has been noted in studies of congregational growth (Adams, 2007; Iannaccone, 1990).

Within Christian traditions, both those arguing for and those arguing against women's holding congregational leadership positions frequently draw support from the Bible (Chaves, 1997). Those who support women's involvement in congregational leadership claim Biblical support for the notion of gender equality and non-difference (Galatians 3:28). They also point to passages that show women in New Testament

churches clearly serving in positions of authority (e.g., Titus 2:4-5; Romans 16: 1-6; Acts 21:9), suggesting they provide implicit support for women's inclusion in ordained ministry (Witherington, 1988). Furthermore, they point out that passages dealing with prophecy in a congregation do not address whether women should participate in this form of leadership but instead prescribe how their participation should take place (e.g., 1 Corinthians 11:4-5; Acts 2:16-18). Those who contend that congregational leadership should not be open to women focus on passages that they claim support the submissiveness of women within the congregation (e.g., 1 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35), which they claim is best summarized with one verse: “The women are to keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak” (1 Corinthians 14:34). Those arguing for only men in congregational leadership also suggest that the inclusion of “being the husband of one wife” (1 Timothy 3:2, 3:12; Titus 1:6) in lists of qualifications for being a deacon or elder implicitly eliminates women from eligibility to fill those (or any other) leadership positions. Interestingly, the majority of these passages do not address leadership but focus on the inclusion or exclusion of women from speaking roles in a congregation (whether teaching, prophecy, or other speaking). While this has been mentioned briefly in previous literature (Chaves, 1997), it has not directly influenced the ways models have been developed.

From the turn of the 20th century to now, various Baptist and Pentecostal communities have differed and splintered on the issue of women’s ordination. Although gender inequity may not be of concern to many women in the Black church, it is

apparent to the men who preach from its pulpit. In an article entitled “Practicing Liberation in the Black Church” in the *Christian Century*, James Henry Harris (1990), pastor of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church in Norfolk, Virginia, and adjunct assistant professor of philosophy at Old Dominion University, wrote:

Sexism against Black women should...be addressed by Black theology and the Black church. Women in Black churches outnumber men by more than two to one; yet in positions of authority and responsibility the ratio is reversed. Though women are gradually entering ministry as bishops, pastors, deacons and elders, many men and women still resist and fear that development. (p. 1)

When our church licensed a woman to the preaching ministry over a decade ago, almost all the male deacons and many women members opposed the action by appealing to tradition and selected Scripture passages. Black theology and the Black church must deal with the double bondage of Black women in church and society.

Two ways they can do so are, first, to treat Black women with the same respect as men. This means that women who are qualified for ministry must be given the same opportunities as men to become pastors and to serve in such leadership positions as deacons, stewards, trustees, etc. Second, theology and the church must eliminate exclusionist language, attitudes or practices, however benign or unintended, in order to benefit fully from the talents of women.

In a genuinely landmark study, authors Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) surveyed 2,150 churches, Black clergy members were asked how strongly they approve of female



clergy, with just under 15% of male clergy citing that they strongly approve of female clergy members. Over half of male respondents cited that they either disapprove or strongly disapprove of women as clergy members. Of those that approve, the large majority was both college educated and under age 30. The study thereby reflected that older male members of the clergy who were not college educated were more likely to disapprove of female clergy members. This study brings hope that the future will bring about a change in favor of female pastors. Time will bring about the silence of the voices of these older men, thus allowing for the younger, more educated and liberal men to hear clearly the voices of female pastors and the power to make denominational changes that continue to oppress women and seek to keep women subservient to men. Their only hope is to indoctrinate and mentor those young people in the churches or denominations with tradition and keep them uneducated.

While some Black churches have been in the forefront to change the face of leadership, Baptist denominations, especially larger ones, have not. This continuous theme has been a barrier for many African American women aspiring to senior pastoral leadership. One should question in the 21st century why the role of the African American woman as senior pastor is not commonplace based on their contributions to the church throughout history. As the questions remain, researchers assert it has a lot to do with the patriarchal society of the church. Historically in society, women were not thought of as capable leaders: With a widening biblical and theological view, many Black Baptist churches are no longer asking questions surrounding the issues of whether

God calls women to the gospel ministry or if women should be allowed to function in the role of senior pastor (Cummings, 2008).

Time and education will bring about a change in the way society views women and their ability to function as pastor of a congregation. Indeed, Black men have all affirmative duty to fight against sexism/gender inequality and to advocate for full freedom for Black women. Such a commitment by Black men will give authenticity to our salutes and tributes to contributions of Black women to the survival and development of Africans in America. Only when Black women are able to proclaim “free at last” will the entire race be truly liberated.

Silencing withholds questioning actions of the church leader and could be viewed as disobedient, defiant, and disrespectful from both the perspective of the questioner and the person viewed as the authority. This practice of silencing or devoicing does not promote personal investigation, reflection, or questioning—the very skills needed in order to navigate life in a country with a history of marginalization of minorities, the perpetuation of slave-like mentality, and continued discriminatory practices (Freire, 1993). As early as 1830s Black women orators refuted biblical arguments demanding their silence as public speakers (Gilkes, 2001).

Silencing the voices of the followers causes the politics of the leadership to be skewed toward the promotion of the leadership’s social and economic gain at the expense of the welfare of the people within the system. Cornel West (2004), in *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*, demonstrated that this

battle in Christianity is not new. This manipulative attitude has been evolving since 312 A.D. when Roman Emperor Constantine brought Christianity into the empire as the official religion. According to Hooks and West (1991), West is correct in asserting that most of today's Christians are not aware of the parallels between the Constantine era and the imperialism of Western Christianity: "West's assessment of the typical individual's understanding of church Nihilism is everywhere...these feelings of alienation and estrangement create suffering." We must ask what types of suffering are the congregations in the Black church living through because of their experiences with authoritarianism and silence? Authoritarianism takes away the natural inquisitiveness that we develop as children and keeps us from searching and questioning—rendering us devoid of liberty (Freire, 1998).

### **The Merit of Voice**

Voice is the ability to speak out and to be heard by others for which the message is intended. Voice is the ability of a speaker to control one's own breath to release a sound, a facial expression, a body posture, that articulates a message that is understood by someone else. It entails a certain amount of control and power over oneself in the communication process. Voice is the ability of a group, such as African Americans or women, to articulate experiences in ways unique to it (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). A person's voice provides the opportunity to authenticate one's uniqueness by the ability to freely use the sound of voice, to express an opinion, to state a case, or just to respond to others in one's own way.

Voice entails power—the ability to engage in discussion and support thoughts. The use of voice enables a person to make their mark upon others, shaping their thoughts and their ideas as well as their future responses. Historically, voice has been used as a means of intervention in a variety of discriminatory contexts such as slavery, where ministers were sometimes given the right to interpret the Bible, the Women’s Rights and Suffrage Movements, and the Civil Rights Movement (Myrsiades, 1998). However, speaking out during these times and stating a controversial or opposing view from the dominant culture’s view often resulted in beatings, lynching, or burning of crosses. The power of the voice was evident as early as 1852 when William Grant Allen told students to “be diligent and cultivate oratorical skills because it would be this ‘weapon’ that would make America free in both word and deed” (as cited in Foner & Branham, 1998). To be able to express oneself eloquently, to participate in the art of persuasion and to generate and transform ideas have worth in great historical movements such as the Civil Rights Movement (Foner & Branham, 1998). Critical theorist Hooks (1989) emphasizes its importance in this quote:

Speaking becomes both a way to engage in active self-transformation and a rite of passage where one moves from being object to being subject. Only as subjects, can we speak. As objects, we remain voiceless—our beings defined and interpreted by others. (p. 9)

The defiant voice was the means for African slaves to develop committed followers focused on the prize of freedom across a number of states. According to Cone

(1984), it was Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, Henry Highlander Garnet, David Walker, Henry McNeil Turner, and others like them, who helped young Black radical preachers articulate a Black version of the gospel. However, it may spawn the conversation needed to move beliefs and practices to a higher place of social justice. The way out is to talk about the acts perpetrated upon us, the atrocities, the injustices, and the personal violations of the soul (Pierce-Baker, 1998).

Without the voices of these who have spoken on behalf of freedom, equality, and access, African American people could not have moved from a place of servitude. The ability to listen, to be silent, affords us the opportunity to hear the views of other people given their history and their experiences across time. There is also value in the ability to respond effectively after patiently listening. Freire (1998) speaks of a silencing tactic that endeavors to crush constructive diversity, constructive criticism, and ultimately freedom. Freire speaks about a disturbing trend toward silencing of the membership is taking place in the Black church. Some leaders are promoting themselves through aggrandizement and hegemony while demeaning the value of the voices of the congregation. It is clear that the use of voice gave way to transformative action when Charlotte Hawkins Brown addressed the women's conference in Memphis. Now, what are the consequences of the lack of voice in the microcosm of the Black church if voice is silenced? Before answering this question, it is necessary to look at whose voices have typically been silenced, how it happened, and why?

In order to determine who becomes silenced, it is advantageous to look at who has the privilege of shutting down the voices of those who need to be heard. When Cornel West (2004) speaks of the perpetrators of free-market fundamentalism and authoritarianism, he defines these people as plutocratic leaders, corporate elites, elected officials, arrogant authoritarians. Basically, they are those who are in socially constructed leadership positions who have the ability to silence those who are not in those positions. In the miniature version, the Black church, the perpetrators of de-voicing would be the pastors, ministers, bishops, overseers, and any other in-charge person who has assumed the caretaker position of leader over a congregation. Cone (1969) says that these leaders do not understand or even recognize their complicity in the oppression of their members by being silent while remaining connected to a debilitating social structure. It is not difference which immobilizes us but silence and there are so many silences to be broken (Lorde, 1984). Michel Foucault believes that abuse of authority by the dominant group over others has intended purpose, such as:

Disciplinary control is a modern mode of power that comes into existence with the formation of the bourgeois democratic state as a technique of regulation particularly suited to a form of governance predicated on the idea of formal equality. Under this type of regime, our status in a hierarchical system is no longer formally ascribed by birth but appears to be derived from how we measure up with regard to institutionally generated norms. (as cited in Ferguson, 2000, p. 53)

Of interest in this discussion is whether the Black church functions as a microcosm of the dominance model of American society. Freire (1993) reminds us that we must be watchful that the oppressed does not become an oppressor. In general, the church's failure to permit critical analysis and critical questioning within the church tends to silence members. The church begins to look like, act like, and reproduce the environment of the dominant culture that attempts to silence those who are powerless.

### **Summary**

As we reflect on the extraordinary contributions of African women in America to the Black freedom struggle and the sustenance of the Black community, it is also important to note that Black women have had to confront and overcome double oppression: racism and sexism. Though there is some evidence that women enjoyed greater status and rights in ancient and traditional African civilizations and societies, in large measure the experience of African women in America has been conditioned by the patriarchal values of the system of male domination operative.

There has been a limited amount of literature on the African American female pastor and her experiences. The church has resisted her role and continues to keep her out of senior leadership roles and rather relegated to the role of mother, wife and supporter of her family and her man.

When compared to white populations, the African American populations have been significantly underrepresented in studies of the religious experience. The religious practices of African American women, in particular, are rarely the subject of empirical

investigation (Lee, 2008). The voice in the narratives of these African American women with respect to their religious experiences is critical in articulating how this population frames religion within its social realm.

Social research emphasizes the importance of the spoken and written word in fueling motivations to improve social justice ills (Darlington & Scott, 2002; Lee & Poynton, 2000; Turner, 2010). While the literature reviewed herein clearly demonstrates the African American clergywoman as an oppressed person within her own religious organization, it is also heartening in that it reflects a slow-coming change in the Black Church.

The literature provided in this chapter is relevant and supportive to my study as it addresses the issues revealed in the narratives of the four participants I interviewed. This literature is not exhaustive but brings awareness and ultimately dialogue, which will give voice to African American female pastors.



## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This phenomenological, qualitative study was conducted in the southwestern section of the United States. The purpose of this study was to examine and interpret the life experiences and leadership practices of four female African American senior pastors leading African American (African American) Church congregations (Dillard, 1995). The study seeks to explore their narratives as valid and valuable within the contexts of gender and the African American church; thus, affording female senior pastors an opportunity to articulate their perspectives of the convergence of personal characteristics, leadership, issues of gender equity, and acts of negotiating the system within the African American Church.

#### **Background**

The communities in which the churches are located consist of two-parent, single-parent, and extended family households living in moderate to lower income homes and apartments. Many one-story homes incorporate security bars over the windows. However, other parishioners live in upper middle class homes and own property, rather than rent. Children are often seen playing in the streets or at nearby parks.

These communities include neighborhood schools, parks, restaurants and other businesses found in the traditional African American neighborhoods. Families enjoy the convenience of community shopping centers, multi-culturally owned businesses along

with a high number of pawnshops, as well as discount convenience and grocery stores. Some family members travel by foot or use public transportation to get to their destinations, while others have cars.

The African American Churches in which the participants minister are located in areas populated by different cultures; therefore, the demographics of the populations near the church are not predominately African American. The church buildings range from very small to large; some church buildings are in disrepair, while another is newly constructed. The size of the congregations range from a limited number of controlling parishioners to a large supportive congregation. Some congregations include older, financially-strained, traditional parishioners, while another consists of supportive families. All the churches are located in neighborhoods where some African Americans live. However, members of these congregations reside throughout a large urban area. Parishioners no longer feel obligated to attend a neighborhood church; rather they attend the church of their choice.

## **Participants**

### **Purposeful Sample**

The participants in this qualitative study represented a purposeful, rather than random sample. Purposeful sampling attempts to include participants who have experienced the phenomenon under consideration and from whom the researcher can learn the most (Bogdon & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1988). The participants' ages ranged from 40 years of age to 70. The criteria for the selection of participants consisted of:

- Being an African American female.
- Functioning as senior pastor in an African American church.
- Serving in the pastor's role for a minimum of 3 years.
- Ministering to a congregation of 200 people.

### **African American Female Pastors**

Society, as a whole, has slowly changed its views regarding the roles of women. In the past few years, women have earned titles of presidents of corporations, chief financial officers and chief executive officers. While a limited number of church denominations accept women as ministers, the role of senior pastor in an African American church has been out of reach. Allowing a woman to lead the church as a senior pastor has been unwelcomed, even to the point that some denominations have used the courts to ban women from practicing their calling. Primarily, men continue to fill the position of the conventional African American pastor, while only a few are women. This phenomenological qualitative study focused on the stories of four female African American pastors, who serve as senior pastors in African American Churches, who shared their stories with me. The following paragraphs include a brief description of each of the participants.

**Pastor CA.** Pastor CA grew up in a traditional African American Baptist Church. Her dad still ministers at the same church. She left her family church to join the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME) due to disagreements with her father and the philosophy of this traditional church. Her father believes that women can serve as

ministers. Due to other family dynamics, she left her home church to find a church of her own which shares her belief.

Pastor CA was assigned to a small, financially strained CME church by the governing authorities of that denomination. She now serves as a senior pastor of a traditional congregation with a small membership governing the church. She was trained by the seminary and earned her degree in theology.

**Pastor HB.** Pastor HB also grew up in a traditional African American Baptist Church, but later moved to the apostolic denomination. She left the Baptist denomination because of their stance of unaccepting women as pastors. She now pastors at a church located in the heart of an African American neighborhood in a nice, well-kept building. Through her leadership skills, a new church building was erected. She led the construction phase of the new building from planning to completion. The congregation she serves is small, but warm and supportive. Pastor HB received her training from the church, from conferences, from conventions, and from personal mentors.

**Pastor PC.** Pastor PC serves as co-pastor with her husband. She too grew up in a traditional African American Baptist Church, where her father was the pastor. She left that church and became a member of the Methodist Church. After examining the teachings of several denominations, she resolved to serve a non-denominational church. This established church has been serving the community for many years. Pastor PC was also trained by the seminary and earned her degree in theology.

**Pastor WD.** Pastor WD was raised in the traditional African American Baptist church. She now proclaims that she practices the Baptist/Word Denomination. Her worship service appears to be more aligned with the Pentecostal doctrine, rather than Baptist. The church is located on a busy street surrounded by small businesses and a few homes.

A large congregation supports this well-established church. Her training came from Bible schools, local conferences and being mentored by several well-known and respected pastors.

### **Procedures**

Prior to the selection of the participants, a working plan was developed, which included participants to be interviewed, sites where the interviews could be held, the time frame for collecting the data, and possible variables to be considered (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). While a working design of the research plan was created, I realized that it had to be flexible enough to accurately record the participant's responses without imposing my assumptions and biases upon the emerging data (Hale & Astolfi, 2011). Therefore, primary questions were based on a review of literature, while additional ones were developed through my own experience as an African American female and pastor of an African American Church. These questions served as the primary source of direct information from the participants' lenses in this study. The questions were worded so that they were open-ended and encouraged conversation; thus, allowing additional topics to emerge. This action further minimized any predetermined responses on my part.

To obtain participants for the study, female pastors were recommended by key community leaders, as well as the utilization of acquaintances, business leaders, and friendships acquired through the years of service in the ministry. After identifying possible participants, they were contacted by phone (Appendix A) to determine whether they would be interested in participating in this phenomenological study. Participants were informed of the need to obtain information from the lived experiences of African American females serving in pastoral leadership at African American churches. Through a phone conversation, the date, time, and location for the interview were determined. These interviews were held in natural settings, which were non-threatening, quiet where uninterrupted conversations could take place. Two pastors elected to meet for the interview at other locations, rather than their church. One of those meetings was held near the pastor's home, while the other two pastors were interviewed in their church offices.

I selected the interview guide approach to naturalistic interviews (Bloom & Munro, 1995) to collect the data for this study and used the developed framework for my position as it directly related to narrative research:

The task of the narrative researcher is to make sense of the telling rather than the tale. This is done both by recording and interpreting how an individual has lived and made meaning about her life and by creating an interpretive test that explicates how and why individuals construct stories about themselves to serve

particular purposes and fulfill particular needs brought on by one's social positions and personal desires. (Bloom & Munro, 1995, p. 311)

The interviews with the participants served as the primary source of direct information regarding the experiences of becoming senior pastors, the training received, and the assignments given as leaders in the African American Church. Their responses to the interview questions became the narratives of this study. Sarbin (1986) defined narrative as:

A way of organizing episodes, actions, and accounts of actions; it is an achievement that brings together mundane facts and fantastic creations; time and place are incorporated. This narrative allows for the inclusion of actors' reasons for their acts, as well as the causes of happening. (p. 9)

A thick description of their responses to the interview questions were recorded both through written field notes and an audiotape.

### **Positionality**

Qualitative research was selected since it is a system of natural inquiry seeking to build a holistic view of the phenomenon being studied. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated:

Naturalistic inquiry is always carried out—logically enough—in a natural setting. Such a contextual inquiry demands a human instrument, one fully adaptive to the indeterminate situation that will be encountered. The human instrument builds upon his or her tacit knowledge as much as, if not more than, upon propositional inquiry and used methods that are appropriate to humanly implemented inquiry;

interviews, observations, document and analysis, unobtrusive clues, and the like.  
(p. 187)

Because this study was a phenomenological qualitative research, I, the researcher, have a “significant personal interest” (Leedy, 1997, p. 161) in the phenomenon under study.

Because I too, am an African American female who serves as a senior pastor of an African American congregation of more than 200 parishioners, I was aware that I was human, and therefore, limited and prone to make mistakes, miss opportunities and impose my own biases. Because I was cognizant of ways my personal experiences could affect the results of the study, I was careful to accurately record the participants’ responses as objectively and unbiased as possible. Not doing so would affect the research positioning of the study (Hale & Astolfi, 2011).

### **Data Collection**

At the beginning of each participant’s first interview, the process of gathering information was further explained. The Consent Form (Appendix A) was discussed along with the Interview Protocol (Appendix B) with each participant. After completing the forms, copies of each of the documents were left with the participant for their files. Any questions that the participant had about the study were answered. Furthermore, participants were assured that their personal information would remain confidential and secure. Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, safeguards for each participant’s psychological and professional well-being were followed. Therefore, safeguards, including each participant being assigned a pseudonym were instated.



Data was collected through pre-developed, open-ended questions so that those topics and others could emerge during the flow of the interview (Turner, 2010). This action minimized predetermined responses as data was gathered. Because I kept the interview conversational, the participant could interject additional information. This also allowed me to ask questions based on the information they were sharing. As each pastor answered the questions, I took copious notes even though the interview was being audiotaped. During the interviews, I adhered to the stance of an objective observer and reminded myself to seek discovery, rather than seeking to confirm my own beliefs (Josselson, 1995). During each audiotaped interview, non-verbal cues were also noted in the field notes and were used to gain additional information through nonlinguistic signs.

Through member checking, the participants were provided an opportunity to review the generated information for accuracy by receiving a copy of the interview transcripts. They were also encouraged to share any additional information, correct any errors or misinterpretations and to evaluate the overall adequacy of this research process. Each interview lasted between one and two hours.

As the interviews and field notes were transcribed, additional notes were made related to needed clarification of the responses. Participants were again contacted to answer these questions. This information was then added to their transcripts. After the data were transcribed, each participant was given a final copy of the transcript. Transcripts, copies of tapes and a list of the participants' identities were kept in a

securely locked location to protect the individual's identity, resources and confidentiality.

### **Research Design**

This study was based on the phenomenological method of qualitative research by interviewing four female African American senior pastors serving African American Churches. This research design strategy was utilized because I have a shared similar experience with the four participants (Hale & Astolfi, 2011). Being an African American female, I am a senior pastor in an African American Church and I minister to more than 200 parishioners. The qualitative research design was selected to recognize the participants' interpretations of their experiences and broaden the knowledge base of pertinent issues that directly affect females serving as senior pastoral leaders. The issues addressed included pastoral preparation, job assignments, salary, gender equity, leadership, and relationships with the members of their congregations. Further, this study examined constructed meanings of the relationships between the participants' lived experiences as well as interactions with male counterparts as viewed through the Black feminist, womanist and interpretive theories.

### **Data Analysis**

After the data was gathered from each participant's scripted interview and audiotape, they were transcribed by typing the participants' authentic responses into a document. Strategies used to establish the data's chain of evidence included outlier analysis and coding check (Hale & Astolfi, 2011). It was determined that each

participant in this study matched the parameters of the research design; therefore, no outliers were used in this study. After printing the transcripts of each participant's interview session, highlighters and colored pens were used to denote common themes and patterns found in "meaningful units" (Hale & Astolfi, 2011, p. 207). Even though, I read through the interviews several times, additional information was found each time the transcription was reread. Further, another researcher coded these interviews so that a high level of agreement was found through this coding check (Hale & Astolfi, 2011).

### **Complementary Data Gathering Techniques**

Several qualitative research techniques were used to gather data for this study including audiotaped recordings of the interviews, development of field notes, and recording non-verbal cues. This information was then gathered, transcribed and coded. From these, meaningful units were then linked as themes and patterns emerged. The purpose of these techniques enhanced the collection and interpretation of the data.

**Field notes.** Detailed field notes were developed to record the individual participant's authentic responses to the interview questions along with descriptions of the participant and observed behaviors. Further, the field notes included recordings of the unvoiced feelings and thoughts, or non-verbal cues observed during the interviews of this study and additional information from follow-up questions.

Field notes also consisted of recruitment materials, signed consent forms, interview profiles, interview recordings, observations and transcriptions of interview

questions and coded notes. All of the field notes have been added to other sensitive information and kept in a secure location known only to the researcher.

**Non-verbal cues.** Non-verbal communication techniques, or non-verbal cues, were noted during the interviews. These included body movements, or kinetics, spatial relationships, or proxemics, use of time as in pacing, probing, and pausing, or chromatics, voice volume, voice quality, accent and inflectional patterns, or paralinguistics, and touching, or haptics (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These cues indicated the possible presence of emotions concerning the questions being asked during the interview. Non-verbal cues were noted in the field notes.

**Taped recordings.** A cassette tape recorder was used to audiotape the individual interviews of each participant. The recorded narrative was immediately transcribed, reread and resubmitted to the participant for any corrections or misinterpretations. The data was then added to the field notes and coded into meaningful units.

### **Transcribing**

According to Darlington and Scott (2002), transcription is a time-consuming process requiring the recording of the participant's responses to interview questions, inclusion and identification of long pauses, bracketed indications of emotional expression, and the inclusion of non-verbal cues garnered from field notes or audio or videotaped recordings. Further, Darlington and Scott described transcribing as not only "a specialized technical skill, [but] also hard work emotionally" (p. 144). When sensitive topics were raised in interviews, I was prepared to spend extra time allowing the

participant to talk about their emotional responses to the interview questions. Further, I was cautious to be objective regarding the emotions that arose related to the experiences of each participant. While I realized transcribing all the collected data would take time, I did not expect it to take the amount of time that it did. However, I was careful to transcribe only the information as it was stated to me and not add any subjective personal views.

### **Trustworthiness**

Building trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry is critical. Trustworthiness is comprised of transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Hale and Astolfi (2011), trustworthiness can be increased as data analysis and conclusions are verified through techniques in a systematic order and then triangulated. Trustworthiness consists of triangulation, member checking and chain of evidence. When multiple data collection techniques are incorporated into the plan for analysis, the validity of the findings increases. In this study, an audit trail which included interviews, observations, recorded field notes, and follow-up individual interviews, was compiled. Further, member checks were initiated so that the participant could approve, clarify or make revisions to the collected information. The chain of evidence technique used in this study included outlier analysis and coding checks. Through the use of coding checks, more than one person assisted in searching for meaningful units, which ultimately led to the development of themes and patterns. In an effort to meet ethical standards, participants were assured of privacy, confidentiality, and inclusiveness. The

information gathered from them along with their identities was held in a secure location known only to the researcher.

Member checking is a vital technique for aid in the establishment of credibility because it provides participants an opportunity to review the information collected through the interview process. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), it is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility. It is a process in which participants verify data and interpretations, or assessing intentionality, as collected by the researcher.

### **Transferability**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), subsequent researchers determine whether transferability has occurred as they compare the essential situation being investigated and applying the study's findings. When examining this qualitative study, researchers may conclude that transferability has occurred if they are researching a similar concept, in a similar context, and if the study is written with enough detail to determine whether it is similar to the study they are conducting. To do so, each section of this phonological qualitative study would contain a highly detailed written objective description written by the principal researcher. If so, then transferability relevant to qualitative research occurs.

### **Dependability**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that dependability is found in qualitative research as the naturalist's substitution for reliability. It is identified by "taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change"

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 299). Repetition of coding was applied to the same raw data. The records were carefully examined for accuracy and objectivity.

### **Confirmability**

Based on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) research, confirmability was used to verify and construct findings that may be important and could add to the researched knowledge base of studies examining female African American pastoral leadership. The prominence was moved from the researcher to "the data themselves" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 300). Confirmability was utilized during the data collection and the analysis phases. All interview records, taped interviews, and notes were maintained in the process to show confirmability and are available upon request.

### **Summary**

This study utilized phenomenological, qualitative research design to investigate the perceptions of four African American female clergy serving as senior pastors at African American churches. The study seeks to explore their narratives as valid and valuable within the contexts of gender and the African American church; thus, affording female pastors an opportunity to articulate their perspectives of the convergence of personal characteristics, leadership, issues of gender equity, and acts of negotiating the system within the African American Church.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

In this chapter, I will analyze the lived experiences of four African American Female Pastors as they share the story of their personal journey to becoming a Senior Pastor of a church. Each participant shared her personal narrative during a prescheduled one on one interview. Every participant was able to voice her perspective on issues she deemed relevant to her story of becoming a Senior Pastor, as well as other scripted interview questions. Through analysis of their data I sought to examine closely the thoughts of these women by assessing, analyzing and bringing meaning to their voice. The data will be outlined in the order of the participants' profile, the context, the research question, responses from each participant's interview. At the end of each participant's response I will do a summary analysis. This chapter will analyze their responses which will speak to their challenges, barriers, progress made, training, gender disparities, and their success. Further, I will explore their comments on people they feel had the greatest impact on them becoming a Senior Pastor. I have used the actual words of each participant to relive their stories.

#### **Participants**

The participants for this study consist of four African American female pastors ranging from the ages of 40+ to 70+ who pastor African American churches. When I selected the participants I did not know their ages. Each participant turned out



representing a different decade. The 70 year old represents the years of 1940, when women were just 20 years into being able to vote, and on the heels of Jim Crow laws. The 60 year old represents the 1950s, when Blacks lived in their own neighborhoods however at that time Black women were not accepted in most colleges, everything was segregated. The 50 year old represents the 1960s, integration was in effect and Blacks had just received their Civil Rights. Negroes were feeling proud of their race, standing up for their rights, and renaming themselves Black. It was also doing the feminist movement, so African American women were having to choose to fight for their gender or to fight for their race. They chose their race. The 40 year old represents the 1970s when Blacks were enrolling in college like never before. I attended college during this time. Affirmative action was in full swing and Blacks were progressing more than ever before. Our mascot in college was the rebel flag which they waved at all of the games. My husband was the vice President of student government, and things looked better for Blacks. There was a professor at the university who used to bring a paper bag to class and told us to drop the class if we were darker than the brown paper bag. Because each of these women are at least a decade apart, their responses are diverse and reflect their experiences of their time. These age differences have become a great help to me and my research, as I look and compare the differences in their journey toward becoming a female Pastor. The participants who are in their 70s and 50s are still married. The participants who are 40s and 60s are divorced. The participant in her 40s still as a child living at home. Participants that are 40 and 50s both have seminary degrees, while the

participants who are in their 60s and 70s do not have seminary degrees, but attended bible schools and were trained and mentored by other Pastors at conferences and workshops.

The participants are all energetic, love what they do and evidence a strong calling on their life to lead God's people. Their ministry is a vital part of their community and they all have some form of outreach to the people in their community. They were all pleasant and upbeat in the interview, which made my time with them rewarding as well as informative. After interviewing each of them, I gave them a pseudonym to protect their identity. Each participant was given her own personal profile so the readers would have a personal glimpse of her background, experiences, and personality.

### **Participant 1: Humble Servant**

**Context.** Humble Servant and I met at her church on a chilly morning in her office. No one was there so the Pastor had to turn on the heater and lights. I kept my coat on for a while, until the small office warmed up. She was such a warm person, that after talking for a while, I soon took off my coat and the interview became very personable. Humble Servant was not very talkative at first. I think she was trying to understand what all of this would mean when she would later read it. As I introduced myself and went over all of the protocol, I saw a smile from her face and I knew the interview was going to go well. She was very kind and gentle with her answers. She spoke softly but had fire in her words as she told her story. It was such an interesting story and I think the both of us realized the depths of what she had experienced being a female Pastor at a time when

no one really accepted women pastors, not even women themselves. She journeyed through many decades just serving as an assistant to her appointed pastors. She had to live with her denial, and disobedience to God; refusing to accept her call from God to be the senior Pastor of the church. She had raised to please her Pastor and the men in her life. She seemed to be a little embarrassed to say what really took place in those early days, or maybe she too was in disbelief at the sound of her words. I really enjoyed listening to her story, as she gave her perception of what happened over the span of 40 years being disobedient to God and placing other men in her place. I could certainly see the changes and the effects that still linger with her personality, in the way she speaks and carries herself. She is humble, but she is strong! I called her several times to follow-up and sent her some correspondence by mail. I tried to convince her to use e-mail, but she firmly said the mail was better for her. She is not an e-mail person and prefers communication by phone or mail, so I was happy to accommodate her wishes, but our communication took longer.

**Her story.** Humble Servant is the oldest of all of the Pastors. She is a seasoned pastor who has been around for a number of years and experienced a number of oppressive actions from those who don't believe in female Pastors. Much of her life has been spent running from her assignment of being the senior Pastor. After about twenty years of faithfully serving her pastor and being told many times she could not leave to start her own church, she finally got up the nerve to tell, and not ask, her pastor that she was leaving to start her own church. It was then she realized the pastor she was serving

did not believe in women Pastors and wanted to keep her humbly serving him. She is the founder of her current church, but in the beginning refused to serve as its Senior Pastor because she was taught and felt “a man could do it better.” After founding her church, she asked her son to be the pastor, then her husband and later her brother over the years because she was taught and felt “A man could do it better.”

Before starting her own ministry, many of her years were devoted to serving her Pastor’s every wish and attend to all of his personal needs. After forming her church, she served for more than 25 years as an assistant to the pastor, and has only pastored the church for the past 10 years. She was raised, as a child, to be humble and submissive to pastoral leadership and men. Therefore, so much of her life has been lived trying to liberate her own mind from its traditional bondage. She too grew up Baptist and later moved to the Apostolic denomination. She is not seminary trained, so she has learned everything from life experiences as assistant to the Pastors in her life and by attending classes and seminars. She has spent the majority of her life fighting the acceptance of the Senior leadership position. Her upbringing and the lack of support from her male pastors, who benefited greatly from her hard work and unquestionable dedication, kept her from leaving to start her own church. Before she left to start her own church, she wanted to make sure her pastor and his church had everything it needed to function successful. She desperately needed a covering; his permission, financial support and the blessings from her pastor.

She is very kind and stated her success if because of her character. She feels she does not have a lot of males in her church because she is female, but makes sure the men in her church are respected as the head. Her call to ministry came at a very difficult time for women so she has had to fight battles within herself as well as her church and her denomination along with its leaders. She has a sister and a brother who are in the ministry, but she is the only one who is a senior Pastor. Humble Servant's life is a typical example of what happens in many churches. The men have the title, but the women run the church and are content to do so, because they have been indoctrinated to take pleasure is sacrificing to make sure their men look good and want for nothing.

### **Participant 2: Triumphant Shy Giant**

**Context.** Triumphant Shy Giant's interview was held at her church in her private office. Her office was very neatly kept, with soft accents throughout. Everything was orderly. As I drove on to the parking lot, her secretary and custodian met me and led me to the waiting area as the Pastor was running a little behind schedule. When she arrived, she was greeted by her staff that updated her and provided her with a cup of hot tea or coffee. As she drank her tea, she invited me in and I sat in front of her desk face to face. She was just as in order as her office and staff. She greeted me with a warm smile and a genuine hello. Her smile was so inviting, it put me at ease and I was able to start the interview without any hesitations. Even though it was midday on a weekday, Triumph Shy Giant was dressed in expensive white attire that looked like it came out of a magazine. Her purse and her shoes matched. Her make-up and accessories were

matchless. She embodied the persona of a very successful Pastor who was attending a very important meeting. I was honored! I later had follow-up phone calls with her and some e-mails.

**Her story.** Triumphant Shy Giant is a very polished woman who is full of faith, yet she too has met her share of challenges along the way to her success as a senior pastor. She is very seasoned as she has been a pastor for 30 plus years. She is next to the eldest of the pastors. She grew up in the Baptist church but now says she is a Word church more than Baptist church. The traditional part the Baptist denomination cannot be found in her church. She is now a Bishop and has her own ministry and support from other female and male Pastors. Her training has been on the job while working under a very well- known and respected pastor for about 6 years prior to starting her church. She has always had the support and training of this prominent Pastor, who took her under his wing and has been a strong male father to her when she needed it, even to this day. She was originally in ministry with her husband, but went through a very difficult and very public divorce. She survived the divorce, and has never remarried.

Through it all she managed to work through the divorce and keep the church growing; bringing it to the successful healthy church it is today. The church is more than 25 years old, so one can imagine the decades of triumphs along with the decades of struggles all of which she has overcome while leading her church. During the time when women preachers were ostracized and shunned, she was surviving abandonment and starting her church. Nevertheless with the support of her mentor, she continued to

move forward to pastor her church. Women ministers all over the city were watching to see if she survived without her husband. She is truly a trailblazer! Along her trails you see her legacy of faith, resilience, wisdom and success left behind for other women to follow. She is very nurturing, yet firm. Her ministry appears to be very structured and orderly. She is also fortunate to have a church with a good number of men, woman and children who are proud to follow her leadership. Her recollection of her earliest experience of church is a woman gathering the children in the community to take them to church on Sunday. She says she could feel God drawing her to Him and she always “wanted to be moving toward things that involved the Lord because she wasn’t saved.” She doesn’t talk about her parents bringing her to the Lord; rather, it was the “other women” at the church who made sure she went to church. She later grew up and became the first female to preach in her home church where as a child she met the Lord. This was a great accomplishment, because it was in the 70s and women preachers were not well accepted. Triumphant Shy Giant does not talk very much, she is very guarded; yet she is very open when she reflects on her journey. I can see the fruit of her labor over the years in her church. She has encountered great victories along her journey, yet I know there are obstacles hidden deep in the background of her stories. She shares some of them with me, yet some she has chosen to keep to herself. She is very careful to not complain, but to have an “I can do this” attitude. Her story is a great encouragement to women pas, who believe they too can become a successful senior Pastor. It is evident by looking at her church and her staff that she has had to face many barriers but her strong

faith in the Lord has helped her overcome those obstacles and become a triumphant trailblazer for other female pastors coming behind her.

### **Participant 3: Pioneer Pistol**

**Context.** Pioneer Pistol chose to meet away from her church at a restaurant of her choosing. She loves quaint places that serve tea and crumpets. The place was decorated with teapots and flowers throughout. Each table was unique with most of them seating only two people. We both had chicken salad. It was so good! We were really relaxed after a few crumpets and tea. She has a wealth of knowledge and history that she was eager to share. She was so inviting and kept a beautiful smile on her face even when she was eating. If I am ever asked to do an interview while eating in a restaurant, I will have to think twice. Although it was a pleasant atmosphere, it was too noisy and the tape recorder revealed just how noisy it was when I began to transcribe the data. It was then I realized I would have to really depend on my field notes. I followed up with several phone calls and e-mails to verify the transcribed information was correct. She was such a joy to interview and gave me a lot of insight on the journey of female pastors in her story.

**Her story.** Pioneer Pistol is a prominent North American Pastors kid. She grew up in the Baptist denomination like the other Pastors, but would later move to the Methodist denomination. After seminary, her father helped her get an internship at a friend's church and later a male classmate connected her with a job at a Mega Church. She would later move from that church up North, for a prominent position at a Mega



church in the South. After working for many years in this church she was let go after she returned from maternity leave. She does not really know why. After that she moved to the Methodist denomination and obtained a staff position at her third Mega church. She and the Pastor did not see eye to eye, so when she asked him to sponsor her in starting her own church, it was again suggested she quietly resign. The Methodist church offered her a very small church up North and she refused. This led to her organizing her own church; a non-denominational church. She spent about 13 total years of on the job training as Associate Pastor in progressive mega churches. She was on the fast track to becoming a Senior Pastor who is fully able to run a mega church, when to her surprise her fast track career came to a halt. When she came to the South she found that she was a little more prepared to Pastor than Southerners was ready to receive. She had a very good start in her career; great plans, great experiences, great training, great education and great preparation. She was not easily intimidated by male pastors as she had worked closely with men and felt acceptance by them. This is a positive attribute for her, but it also caused a barrier as she was very outspoken and assertive. When she saw her opportunity to get ahead, without hesitation she asked for and expected their assistance. These prominent Southern African American pastors were determined to make sure she understood her behavior was not accepted in the South. Now she finds herself having to leave three great prominent positions that paid well, to start her church without any support. It appeared she was being told she by these pastors that she could assist or work for them, but she could not lead her own church as a senior pastor. These pastors needed

her assistance to help them in leading their mega churches. They were not interested in helping her start her own mega church. She spoke up for herself on these issues and received a quick goodbye with a little severance pay to start a church of her own.

Two reasons finally emerged as the possible reason for two seemingly supportive pastors to totally remove their support by asking this pastor to leave their church without their blessings. It appears she was moving and progressing too fast and she was pushing too hard to get her own church. She wondered if some of these Pastors felt she was after their congregations, because she had such a strong relationship with their members. It appeared there may have been some fear from these Sr. Pastors, so she met resistance from some of the leaders and the Pastor, when she asked for support in starting her own church. Never the less, she started her church and it is doing well, however she had to start the church alone from scratch without the much needed support from her Pastor friends and past employers. Even though her church is successful, it has never become the mega church it possibly could have been with proper support.

She and her husband now work as a team and he is very supportive of her. She depends on him a lot especially when it comes to male issues. Having a male in leadership alongside of her has proven to be very beneficial to her and the ministry.

#### **Participant 4: Young and Beautiful**

**Context.** Participant AC and I met at a relative's home. I had a wonderful time getting to know her story. When she arrived, she was well dressed, very professional, carrying herself in very confident posture as we greeted and exchanged pleasantries. She

was tall and her beauty was one that could not go unnoticed. She congratulated me for taking on this challenge and encouraged me to hurry and get this information out there for others to view. She had no reservations about the interview and in fact, was eager to share her story with me. The room was quiet, very comfortable and decorated in lively warm colors. Taking field notes on Participant 4 was a challenge because she was pouring out so many interesting stories that it was hard to remember we were having an interview. I was so happy we were taping the conversation, because I did not want to miss anything. We also spoke many times after the interview by phone and I followed up with a few e-mails. She loves to talk, so interviewing Participant 4 was not difficult.

**Her story.** Participant 4 is young, beautiful, and educated. These three attributes not only describe her but they embody her energy and spirit. However, in our interview these attributes are described by her as a barrier to her position as Senior Pastor. Her young life was spent in a Pastor's home, which was not a good experience for her. Her dad is still pastoring in his old age. He is ill and needs help but, refuses to hand the reigns of Sr. Pastor over to her. Participant 4 left the Baptist denomination because she perceived it failed to accept women as pastors, even though her father did except women ministers. His treatment of her, and the abuse of her mother caused Young and Beautiful to leave her father's church as soon as she was of age. Her father had affairs inside and outside of the church resulted in him fathering children out of wedlock. Her mother was the church musician and worked hard in the church, trying hard to hide the emotional and mental abuse experienced in front of her family and church members. Young and

Beautiful immediately joined the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church denomination thinking her problems with traditional male pastors and denominations would be over. At an early age she got married to an abusive man and had a baby, which ultimately led to an early divorce. Leaving the Baptist denomination and newly into the CME denomination appears to be the answer to her prayers. She is busy learning new people and new a new denomination that promotes female ministers and pastors. She is accepted in the program there and is transferred to the West Coast and later to the East Coast. It is there she finds and marries her next husband. She is young, but seems to be enjoying her new life away from the dysfunctional life she lived growing up in a Baptist church family. The abuse she faced evidenced itself in her second marriage; as her husband did not believe in female pastors and sought to make her change her mind about being a pastor. He did not support her and would publically ridicule her in front of the members by taking her pay check. Since this interview Young and Beautiful has become divorced for the second time. Her divorce was due to the resistance from her husband to accept and support her in leading the church. She was assigned to a small struggling traditional church by the CME overseers. Problems with the church members seem to stem from her gender, her beauty, and education. It appears she is sometimes perceived as a threat to male leaders and she has received jealous responses from females in her church. Her beauty has caused some of the men in the church to not take her seriously, while the women appear to be jealous of her beauty. Her appearance has had a great impact on her leading her church; some positive and some negative. Young and

Beautiful is very anointed in her preaching, is outgoing, aggressive, educated and moving up in her denomination and community.

Young and Beautiful knows where she wants to go in her career, and refuses to allow hardships and the lack of support from male and female leaders hold her back. She takes her trials in stride and continues to faithfully strive toward reaching her goals. Unlike the other Pastors, she is not the founder of her church, however the church she was given to pastor was an assignment that required a great amount of work to rebuild. She worked hard to undo traditional family ties in the church; which were a large part of the challenges facing the church. Future promotions to a larger and better church, was unlikely and would depend solely on the decisions of the top male leadership of her denomination; the Bishops. She is seminary degreed and fully trained by her father and family: which is full of pastors. She has their support, and her denomination for consistent training; which is sought by African American female ministers seeking to become Pastors. The Methodist Church has a reputation of approving of women pastors. Young and Beautiful attends all of the denominational conferences and is very actively seeking advancement in her denomination. She is highly sought after to preach in her community. It is not unusual to find her preaching for a revival or annual day when she is not at her own church. The future looks bright for her, but she is still facing those hovering traditional bias and family secrets that keep her striving, yet unsure of her future career. Pastors in the Methodist denomination can be moved at any time to another church without warning. Moving to another denomination was supposed to

provide a safe place for her to be accepted and learn to lead as a Senior Pastor. She was searching for a safe place to serve and lead in her church without sexual abuse or gender discriminations. Looking for equity, acceptance and support from her new denomination and assigned church is still something she continues to search for.

### **Individual Analysis of Findings**

#### **Research Question 1/Participant 1—Humble Servant**

Humble Servant describes personal characteristics attributed to her success in the pastorate as (a) can work with all people, (b) wisdom, (c) respect men, (d) obedient, (e) humble, (f) gaining the trust of men, (g) patience, (h) perseverance, (i) resilience, and (j) faith in God.

Participant 1 spoke about these characteristic traits in her interview and made the following statements about some of her personal characteristic:

Probably I would say it was my character, being able to work with all people. I think that would be one of the main things. I made everyone feel comfortable. You've got to be able to reach all people.

You have to be smart, rather wise not smart. Certain things that you can't do, you got to be wise enough to include the male to do. Except there are certain things as female; now, for instance, in the smaller church the little building which we used to have, we were able to have what you call a portable baptism and I would

baptize and I could stand on the floor and baptize. Now we have a pool that you have to go down into and that's water. So unless, it is an emergency, I won't do that one. Because I got men here that will go in and you just sit back and be a female, and let them do it.

Respect for men even in the business areas whatever, I respect them, you know, they give me advice. I respect that and let them know, you are our leaders men you are our leaders. I honor them as our head you know. They watch over this, they watch over that, pastor so and so. Because I give them the respect, they are the men.

It's been a challenge; I've had great challenges, first obeying God that was I was supposed to pastor, but I was disobedient to God. I still didn't want to pastor. I just thought a man; you know I was raised that way Baptist. I was raised that way that men do it better whatever, it was in me, tradition. But I didn't realize it, so tradition has to be worked out of you; you have to be trained and taught. I had to get a lot of tradition out of me, lot of it in order to obey God.

Your character speaks very loud, tells who you are really from your outward and your attitude. You want to make everybody feel comfortable. You can't look at

this one that way because they are dressed beautiful and this one . . . you got to be able to reach all people.

In the church I did Sunday school teacher, building fund president, mission president, um what else, pastor aide, I did everything, altar worker, went out and visited homes, prayer for people, cleaned their houses, I did everything, served my pastors well. I was in his every need. I used to work all his appreciations, all his love services, if they needed to be carried to the doctor, I took them. If their house needed to be cleaned, I cleaned it. I sought to their needs. That was way back under the late Bob before he died, then when the next pastor took over, I did the same thing. I came in 1959 the late Bob the other pastor. I had to pray for him to get him saved. I taught, I preached in the church many, many times. There were no drawbacks, I mean, I preached Sunday mornings, nights, evenings. Whatever had do to done, I was very trusting. I was licensed under them. I attended many conferences, councils statewide, national. I did a lot work, that's how I got my spiritually. It was by experience, experience.

I see it being more open to women; to accept women because when it first started out, women had an extremely hard time. Very difficult time! Let alone not pastoring, you didn't stand in the pulpit to preach. I see some churches now that



the lady has to start out on the floor to minister. Some think the elevated place is more holy than the other place. To me the whole place belongs to God.

I was supposed to pastor, but I was disobedient to God. I founded the church. He probably spoke to me about 6-7 years before I made the move to go and do what He had asked me to do. And that was probably, about 25, that was probably about 35 years ago.

#### **Analysis of RQ 1/Participant 1—Humble Servant**

Participant #1 Humble Servant is a very loving, humble and submissive person who prides herself with getting along with everyone, especially male pastors and leaders. She places a lot of emphasis on how she behaves, what she does, and how she reacts, being extremely careful to portray a person who is humble, trustworthy, helpful and loving. She believes her character as extremely important to her personal ability to acquire her past positions as well as her present position; pastor of her church. She is always thinking about the feelings of others and desires to make them feel comfortable and cared for. She is well respected by her family and the people she knows throughout the community

Her wisdom to think through the best ways to make men in her church feel needed and welcome is instrumental in her role as Sr. Pastor. Her wisdom has come from studying men and knowing how men function best. She has taken those 30 plus

years of serving and watching men and now uses that same wisdom to help make sure her church is a good place for men and women to worship.

Respect is something that is usually earned, but this pastor has sought to give men respect first and in turn the men began to respect her and support her ministry. Because she is the oldest pastors in the study, I can see the difference in her thought process when it comes to unconditionally giving men respect just because they are males. This has been ingrained in her and she feels this is the right thing for women to do, especially if women want the support of men. She is 70 plus and has a track record of the characteristics that she feels is needed to survive as a successful African American female Pastor.

This pastor is humble, patient, humble, and perseverant. This is evidenced by the fact that she served silently for 35 years before she took over her own church as the Pastor. She is in her 70s and has only been the senior pastor for 10 years. When she first heard her call to Pastor she was in her early 20s, but the church world was not ready to accept and support female pastors, so she has waited patiently and persevered for several decades to finally get what is and has always been hers; the head position of senior pastor.

Humble Servant has been trusting and loyal to her pastors. Her hard work and humble spirit made a safe place for her to fit into the role of personal assistant to her Pastors, and ultimately led to her having their blessings as she ventured out to start her

own church. She did everything for them so they had a really strong relationship which one day led to the Pastor giving her his blessings.

### **Research Question 1/Participant 2—Triumphant Shy Giant**

Triumphant Shy Giant describes personal characteristics attributed to her success in the pastorate as (a) faith, (b) dressed to kill, (c) educated but not seminary graduate, (d) resilient, (e) leader and mentor, (f) trailblazer, (g) love people, (h) giver, (i) wise, and (j) shy.

Participant 2 spoke about these characteristic traits in her interview and made the following statements about some of her personal characteristics:

I came from the Baptist. They were not common in my community and it was amazing that years later I was the first female to preach at this Baptist church I grew up in. There were a lot of years in between.

Yes, we still have to eat. And I think that one of the things that we need to try to do is try to see ourselves as having of needs met, which is a part of our faith, because if we don't have faith to eat, we're not going to have faith to keep the doors opened.

Let me tell you, maybe I need to tell you this, everywhere I go I'm always put in a position of authority. I don't understand it but it usually happen. But this

particular pastor and his wife were at a conference that I was asked to be a member of and on the board and I was the only black female. But I met this particular pastor and he was telling me about some work that he was doing that which I was not interested and I told him that I was interested in. And so it was about three or four years he called me, he and his wife would call me all the time you know and I would wonder why they kept calling me. But finally I decided that I would go, and he said if you come one time I will leave you alone. He had this big conference and so I said ok. So I went to the conference and there was pain that was in me released and we just have a beautiful relationship. I respect them so highly.

Wherever I have gone I have always been put in leadership and so like I say being a shy person I shy away from that and say ok I don't need this. Is there anything else?

You got to remember now that it was like that I was out in front running with the baton toward the people who were sitting down wondering how it was going to turn out. Like a trailblazer.

And when I came I was alright as far as education is concerned but the education that I have learned was not formal education. It's that everyday education

walking with the common man its learning as you go. I have to say this is funny because I was wearing designer clothes and he gave me a job. I just think He (her spiritual mentor) knew that I need some submission, (laughter) some humility, some really understanding of what ministry is. Because a lot of people go into the ministry and they think it is some glamorous something but it's not, it's not at all.

But I think that really loving people because I really do love people and I want to see them be at their best. I'm concerned about the child that's crying that get screamed at or something, just to help their lives, their daily lives be different.

See we never had a past due bill, I'm not saying anything's wrong, and so there's some things I can't do. But I have seen them across the room and there are a lot of people that I have helped to get started because I know or thought they needed help.

### **Analysis of RQ 1/Participant 2**

Triumphant Shy Giant has beautiful characteristics. She has used her feminine quiet spirit to gain the favor of men and she does not appear to be threatening to them in any way. She is quiet, well dressed and carries herself in a way that says look at me I am a leader, I am important, I have power. She is strong, but she does not use it in a physical way. She is has the perfect set of characteristics for a female pastor of her times. She is

patient and full of faith, so she waits on the Lord and does not rock the boat when it comes to making changes. When she is given the opportunity to take the lead, she does, but she is often sought out. She rarely seeks attention or positions.

She is one of the first women in her city to be accepted and respected as a female Pastor. Every time you see this Pastor she is dressed in the finest from head to toe. She looks prosperous and always carries herself in a professional manner. When people see her they know she is not just an ordinary person, she is a leader and they respond to her as such; a giant in her own right. She is very wise and has some college, but she is not seminary degreed. Her pastor helped her with training and support while getting started.

Her resilience kept her going in the midst of discouragement from men and women around her. She and Her husband started off leading the church together, but he left the church. She went through a very difficult divorce, but refused to give up on her church. The city saw her fall and the city saw her rise up as a gentle giant led by the hand of her God

Triumphant Shy Giant is a natural leader. People want to put her in the leadership position wherever she goes. Pastor DW genuinely loves all people. She is truly a trailblazer.

### **Research Question 1/Participant 3—Pioneer Pistol**

Pioneer Pistol describes personal characteristics attributed to her success in the pastorate as (a) intelligent, (b) daddy's girl, (c) radical, (d) hard worker, (e) feminine, (f) could play the game, (g) adaptable, (h) aggressive, (i) broken, and (j) persistence.

Participant 3 spoke about these characteristic traits in her interview and made the following statements about some of her personal characteristics:

Bold Seminary was very radical and they prided themselves in that. At one of my assigned churches, the women had to wear bennies. I refused to cover my head. I did wear the robe so I had to teach in children's church. They did go on and refer to me as reverend. I did get my license, my dad licensed me.

I did two years of teaching at that church. It was then I said ok God I'll do this. If this is what you want me to do, it was not that I desired to do it but it was clear to me the pulpit; the church was my arena for ministry. So, it forced me to really get out. I am really hard on my ministers when it comes to language and on language perception.

As a woman, I was in front basically. If they were doing communion, if they were doing baptism I was up front. They could not run the games that they ran.

You know I was shy and trying to figure it out. One of the things God always convicted me of in the assembly of pastors, he use to always tell me whatever you do be a lady. And I understand that God had given me the gift of femininity. And so that was the gift . . . a lot of those women that came after me in seminary

acted like a man, dressed like a man. That was always something for me I did not feel like I had to do. That was probably a struggle for me was trying to be what I sensed people thought I should be verses what I felt inside because I am what I am regardless of.

Billy Bob was pretty much a dictator. He would tell us “if I say so it’s gonna be so.” I think there was a lot going on because the Southern Baptist piece, he was moving up in the Southern Baptist piece. And it was clear that was a real variable because he sent me to be trained. And in that environment I was told not to tell them what my role was; assistant pastor, that I was sent as an education worker... whatever, and if they came over that’s how I was presented. I believe that all those variables . . . they can train you but you can’t tell them what you really do. Yes, Southern Baptist never knew. That’s how they responded to me. They never heard anything. He has always tried to introduce me and I always felt resistance.

It got to the point that we end up having to go to a lawyer. We didn’t solicit the lawyer they were actually members of the church. The lawyer was really good. We didn’t know her. But, she said to us basically you got a family, let’s not personalize this...and that’s what you need to do and she rewrote the contract. She asked for the money up front, all of it. Actually, she asked for more money but they didn’t want to give it. We decided the deception part, we couldn’t lie.



Statement of release, we went back and forth with that cause, he didn't like that statement. God led us to another direction. The church had decided to ask us to leave and we respected the church's decision. He was not in the service and we never really got to say goodbye. So that was always...Billy was always introducing him...it was always a public. Our members didn't know nothing, they were clueless.

When I entered there in 1976, our class was one of the first class of women. They had a large number, I think it was 50%, and there were three blacks there. It was a very difficult time. The brothers did not want us there and every day we had to prove ourselves. There were some strong feminist groups there and the black caucus. We were always torn between the feminist and the black caucus. The men didn't merge with the women and the women did not merge with the men.

During my first year we were given, a month to find what they call internship in the field of education and no campus ministry or counseling ministry wanted to take us women so I started looking at churches. We only had four weeks to find one so I started looking at the Baptist church. Of course, the pastor didn't want us to come in unless we were teaching Sunday School or something educational and I really wasn't trying to do that.

So my dad knew a pastor in Harlem, it was a small church and he agreed to let me come on. And so it was then that God convince me that maybe a church is part of the deal. For a year I sat at that church, he did not let me preach and he did not let me sit in the pulpit. The only thing he did was introduced me and said want to preach, what y'all think about that. I taught a new membership class, I taught a bible study, and that was it. After that, I told the Lord no church. I can't do church, I can't put up with the ostracism.

This pastor was always venturing out on new and unknown territory to advance herself. Opportunities seem to always find her. She was educated and very skilled at what she did. The word was out on her and mega churches welcomed her so they could utilize her skills in their churches. She was short and cute so she appeared feminine, shy unthreatening, but she had other leadership traits that these mega church were not yet ready for.

When God led me to Spring Valley, it was like starting over, it was like a desert. It was like starting at ground zero. They were not friendly at all. The atmosphere was very negative, very negative. There were not very many at all. I asked God why would you move me there. I came down here to Mountain Top Baptist Church, that's why we moved here. We didn't like Spring Valley but we moved here anyway. My husband always said we were going to go back. It has been...I

have found when we transferred from Baptist to Methodist partly because trying to—. We left Mountain Top; we had stayed at Mountain Top for five years. I was 22 and frankly we were without a church and we were thinking about leaving Spring Valley and moving back east because at that time Billy had just been called to the ministry. He had been called to a church in Rockville but at that time, we had two little babies. Rockville was not a good place to go it was very cold. Kevin Jones at that time asked me to fill in for him for a few Sundays which then led to why don't you think about coming on staff part time. You don't even have to be Methodist; I'll just take you in. For a year, I served as just a Baptist on a Methodist staff. And then the conversation became why don't you consider becoming Methodist. We thought because of the commitment we had to jobs with the Baptist church our association could put you out when they want to. You got this special relationship, and I'm saying what's going on? When we left Bethlehem, we were really broken. I went and talked to Kennedy. Each time I met with Kennedy it was really good.

### **Analysis of RQ 1/Participant 3**

Pioneer Pistol is a natural born leader and has such a rich background of pastoral experiences; growing up in a pastors home which gave her a great sense of confidence and a healthy dose of self-esteem. She is a born leader and next to the youngest of the participants. Her characteristics are bold and confident which should be great attributes

for a senior pastor of a church. Her father originally did not agree with her becoming a minister and going to seminary. He had other plans for her education and when she told her dad she was going to seminary, he told her she would have to get her own financing, and she did. She eventually won him over and he became her greatest supporter.

This pastor was unlike the oldest participant who was so respectful of men. She is next to the youngest participant in her 50s. She sees no gender, just a person and she feels comfortable in saying what she feels and asking for what she wants. This pastor is very feminine and I wonder if it made the pastors felt comfortable inviting her to their staff. Was she accepted on staff at three different mega churches, paid well, given a lot of responsibility and authority because they felt she would be appreciative, work hard, be feminine and submissive to men?

Pioneer Pistol had great potential to make a great senior pastor of a mega church. These skills got her in the door, but the rules for a female pastor had not been explored. The mold she had been given did not fit well for a female senior pastor and was rejected by the male pastors. Her characteristics backfired on her when she tried to use them. She refused to play the quiet and content game so she got kicked out of the game. It was one of her characteristics she had played when trying to get in the door, but when she got in the door, she realized there were different standards for her, the female. It appeared these strong characteristics only looked good on male pastors. The female pastor's mold had not been formed yet. She was a qualified woman who was before her time.

### **Research Question 1/Participant 4—Young and Beautiful**

Participant 4 describes personal characteristics attributed to her success in the pastorate as (a) seminary graduate, (b) older women mentors, (c) a gleaner, (d) youth, (e) overcomer, (f) beauty, (g) learned to be secure, (h) perseverance, (i) excellent speaker, and (j) actively involved with male leaders.

Participant 4 spoke about these characteristic traits in her interview and made the following statements about some of her personal characteristics:

The older women who laid a foundation, those who fought, and who paved the way are her mentors. My Bishop would always say we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us with soft shoes not ones that pushed them in the ground. I really do believe that they paved the way because they opened the doors. I've been pastoring four years. Initially the congregation responded well but never a system of deliverance. Hurting people hurt people, and so eventually they began to go into their old habits of rebellion children in the wilderness.

When I first went to the congregation I was married. What I found with a lot of the men there, they would look at me and think pretty and make comments about my looks, and that I am pretty and I am this. They would make stereotypical comments. They did not know that's what they were doing. They didn't know me. They did not know their comments were not uplifting, but degrading. They were doing what they thought they knew to do.

I was a young pastor, female pastor, seminary educated and uplifting as a promising pastor in the church. It takes a very secure man; to be the husband of a pastor who is a female and it takes a very secure female pastor to be the wife of a man who is not a minister or a pastor. And I am going to tell you that on both levels some of the challenges that I see that were some of my own issues and also knowing that they were probably following him. Thinking that maybe they thought he was smarter. Those are some of the ways that I contributed to the demise of my marriage. Those were my insecurities as it relates to being a female pastor. What I should have done, hindsight, is just gone in there pastored the church, been a wife at home. Now I didn't really have the problem with being the wife at home but the insecurity piece was huge.

It was not just that my husband sat down it was a lot of the neighboring churches did not fellowship with us no matter how much we asked. They really isolated us.

#### **Analysis of RQ 1/Participant 4**

Young and Beautiful is the youngest participant. She is in her 40s and has been on her journey since she left her father's Baptist church almost 20 years ago to join the CME denomination. She has had to learn a new order and procedure, so her first goal

was to go to seminary and immerse herself with education and training. She is now working herself up the ladder and learning how to become a successful pastor in this new denomination. She is kind and respectful to her leaders, most of whom are males. She brings to this role her background and experiences of growing up in the home of a Baptist Pastor. Participant ac is eager to learn and is experiencing the things the other participants have already gone through. The African American church has changed a lot since the other participants began in their role as senior pastor. Things have gotten better, but there are still many struggles participant ac has to face.

She relies heavily on the older women who have gone before her. She studies them and seeks to learn from their experiences. She has been in ministry the least amount of years and her church is the smallest yet she is still searching, gleaning and learning. She is a great learner, seminary graduated, and on the job training throughout her day as a senior pastor. She is in the beginning stage of her profession and is benefiting a lot from the pastors who have gone before her.

Young and Beautiful has not had the years of experience I saw with the other participants. Along with the fact that she has been placed in a difficult church situation and is experiencing the effects a lot of hurt and rebellion, she is very feminine, soft spoken and beautiful. Her success has depended on her being able to overcome the hurt she has experienced because of these two circumstances. Her beauty appears to be an asset, but could be seen as a curse. She is so beautiful, the men may not have taken her seriously, while the women could be jealous.

Young and Beautiful has experienced a lot of insecurity in who she is as a female senior pastor. Her husband accepted her as a minister but refused to accept her as a senior pastor. His insecurities have caused her more insecurity about her position. This has led to them going through and getting a divorce in the midst of her obtaining and carrying out her position as a young Senior Pastor. She has had a lot of disappointments, starting with her husband who she felt would be the one who would be her greatest supporter and protector. She has grown from the experience and is now more secure with herself and her role as senior pastor.

She entered the position with a strong determination to be successful. She has learned how to persevere from growing up in a Pastors home and seeing what a pastor goes through. Her strong preaching skills, feminine ways, her beauty, and her education, have brought her favor from a few of the males in leadership and they respect her and think highly of her. The denomination placed her with a traditionally rebellious congregation and she has remained persistent in her quest to lead them. She has a long road ahead of her but she has the characteristics she needs to see her through.

### **Research Question 2/Participant 1—Humble Servant**

This African American female pastor exercises and interprets her acts of leadership based on the following: (a) studying under her pastor or bishop, (b) Bible school, (c) grew up in a traditional Baptist church, (d) raised to be a servant to pastors, (e) taught man is the head of woman, (f) taught to obey and respect men, and (g) sister and son were role models.



Humble Servant exercises and interprets her acts of leadership by studying under her pastor or Bishop who in turn licensed and ordained her. She interprets a lot of her leadership acts based on her traditional male led Baptist upbringing, her belief that man is the head of woman, her sister who is a minister on staff at a large church, her young son, and her on the job training experiences assisting male pastors.

The men in her life were traditional African American pastors under the direction of traditionally led denominational groups. Traditional men trained her and taught her from the time she was very young. She grew up believing men were better equipped to teach and lead in the church. When she got older, her son helped her get rid of some of her traditional thinking and taught her the truth. This training along with the experience she has serving the pastors in her life modeled for her how to lead. Humble Servant learned to interpret and exercise her leadership by observing her culture, the men around her, and her Baptist teaching and trainings from male leaders. She was originally taught women could not be a pastor of a church. When the Lord called her to pastor, she knew man's teaching had to yield to Gods voice. She remarks about the African American men in her life with these statements:

I was supposed to pastor, but I was disobedient to God. I founded the church. He probably spoke to me about 6-7 years before I made the move to go and do what He had asked me to do. And that was probably, about 25 that was probably about 35 years ago.

I founded the church; I asked my son who lived in Louisiana, Kansas to move here at the time and pastorate it. Because my raising and rearing, I wanted the church to be, because I was raised that way, traditional raising, I always thought a man could do it better and that is why I went to get a man. It wasn't what God had said. And when he told me to go, I was hesitant to leave this church I was at for years and years. And each time, I went to the pastor and told him I wanted to go and start this outreach, he would always disagree and I didn't want to go without him agreeing with me. I wanted his agreement and I was loyal to him and I wanted to do it right. And so each time I found a building that I felt would be appropriate. He would always find some reason that it was not appropriate and that was only because, I found out later that he really didn't agree with women pastors and he was trying to shield me from going into pastoring.

My sister has been with me all the way. She has really been there. I need to say this, years and years before I ever got to be a minister. I did take some seminars, biblical teaching, and Bible school classes. I even taught. I did teach some. The place that I taught did the teaching for pastors, ministers. It was a school for anyone that wanted to learn. It was taught at a conference and they had classes for pastors only and it was open to women as well.

I was licensed under them. I attended many conferences, councils, statewide, national. I did a lot of work, that's how I got my spirituality. It was by experience and experience. I was always trained to be very submissive and obedient to leadership. I did take some seminar, biblical teaching, and bible school classes.

I don't disagree that the man is the head of the woman. I totally agree with that.

### **Analysis of RQ 2/Participant 1**

Humble Servant did not have the support of her pastor and male family members at first. They did not believe in women preachers; however her sister has been her support through it all. Humble Servant learned to teach and preach from her Bishop and on the job training. She has no formal seminary training, but has attended special bible classes for preacher, other seminars and worked closely with many pastors observing them for many years. Being raised in a traditional setting during the 30s, 40s, and 50s has really impacted the thinking pattern of this Pastor. During that time, women were fighting to vote, obtain equal pay and rights as men, to be educated, so her interpretation and how she exercises her act of leadership is quite different from the three other pastors. She believes man is the head of woman and woman is to be submissive to men. Anything we get from men we should ask politely and be grateful if they give you anything. This should be taken into consideration in every area except in spiritual matters, so she gives and depends a lot on male advice and leadership in the church just

because they are males and she considers them to be the heads. The women in the church respond to the men the same way when it comes to making decisions and having authority. The man is the head of woman so women have to honor and respect them. She has changed her opinion over the years when it comes to who the pastor is. If she is a female, she can be spiritually over the man.

Humble Servant interprets her leadership role with a little of tradition and a little of liberation. Some traditional things about her role she still follows and believes, while some traditions she has abolished all together. She is content to wait on the next generation to complete the final piece of the puzzle, the act of accepting women as Bishops and other high ranking offices in our church and denominations.

### **Research Question 2/Participant 2—Triumphant Shy Giant**

This African American female pastor exercises and interprets her acts of leadership based on the following: (a) father was a minister, (b) was originally in ministry with her husband but then divorced, (c) a prominent male pastor took her under his wings, (d) a well-known female Christian leader, and (e) prominent male and female mentors.

She had this to say during her interview on how she interprets and exercised her acts of leadership:

And when I came I was alright as far as education is concerned but the education that I have learned was not formal education. It's that everyday education

walking with the common man, its learning as you go one of the most valuable things that has happened to me, we had a godly school of ministry and would turn out 8–20 per year and those women helped other women. And that makes the difference. One of the thing I'm beginning to see and I'm very happy with is I'm beginning to see people go to school and really put themselves in a place wherein that they can do the work of the Lord because it does take more than usher out or something.

When I was small I had an encounter with the Lord when I was eight years old and I thing that registered in m...I always wanted to be moving toward things that involved the Lord because I wasn't saved and I didn't know what salvation was...One of the most interesting things, a lady who lived in the block I lived in she had no money, but she would gather up all of the children and take them to church and Sunday school on Sundays. So that's my earliest revelation of anything to do with the Lord and as I grew older, I could see that God seemed to have been drawing me to Him and I had some experiences in which I doubted it, but because women ministers were not common in our community.

Well I guess it was me that was fighting the fight. You know I fought the fight like a fight before it became a fight (laughter). You know what I am saying. I knew that was a lot of anger and distrust and confusion with women being

pastors. Ok and so what I mean when I say I fought the fight before I got in the fight was that I wanted to be sure that the fight that I was fighting originated with God and not with man. You know because if God was calling me, I could take a stand and having done all to stand, I could keep standing. But if I was doing something that somebody outside then it was totally different because I wasn't going to enter that fight. I believe that, all of us have a particular calling and we need abide in our calling. Well I want to go back to the one that I was talking about we accepting ourselves, I think that there with me there was a lot of competition because there were so few places. So where are you going to apply? Yes, that's what I'm saying that demon of jealousy, he show up; the women do not want to accept other women. Well it's thoughts in the church they don't understand and if they don't understand, when they go to be with their relatives or friends . . . then be comfortable with who you are and confident in who called you. It's competition. But I think what happened is that the women don't even know that they are in competition. They're just struggling to be alright. And a lot of time when you don't accept yourself. You don't know how much depression and confusion and anger and frustration that is there simply because you don't know how you relate. I think it has gotten better. But I think that education is always the key. I see people that are better educated. I see people that are not as emotional as some were. I see walking into definite goals and accomplishing

them. I think that one of the things that has happened is that we have accepted ourselves.

No, I didn't grow up in that church. When I moved here to Spring Valley to go to school, graduate school, so what happened was that he was ministering to a lot of teenagers and young adults and I became one of them. Yes at Popular University and at Hill top Ave. I learned a whole lot under him. We had to go to school and that kind of stuff but he was good. I took the classes that George Washington had at the time. They stabilized me; every once in a while I would really ask myself was I fulfilling my purpose and I think I was. I think that was exactly what God would have me to do.

I was licensed by Kennedy at Hill top Ave. Baptist Church. I was licensed and then I was ordained. He and I still have a very good relationship. That's my home church. We had a little school that was tied in to, I can't even think of it, but it was tied in to. Yes, Christian education. There were two of us there that were there. One I called my mother in the Lord and she has gone on to be with the Lord. Her name was Rev. Lela Wilson, most people have heard of her. As of this day, she and I are the only two females that pastored ever, really recognized fully. He has some that worked with him but he did not recognize them fully like ordained or licensed. If I don't have to reinvent the wheel and you already know

how to do ABC, then you can tell me how to do it rather than me figuring it out over the next 20 years, then I can be that much further along.) And the other thing is that I don't have to go back to the original, ok you got two people, ok well your chances of getting back to that original are very slim but now you got someone who was taught under them and you will probably have a better chance of being taught by that person then you will mentored by that person. Yes, I think that there is a cry. There is a definite cry.

We can go on down the list but I really believe people not understanding roles and gifts in the body of Christ. And I believe that a lot of times we find ourselves doing things because we've seen other people do them or having an attitude because we saw someone else with that attitude, not because we really researched it in the bible.

I want to talk about finances and I really do not want to talk about it from my personal perspective but I just want to talk about them generally. And I believe that this is one of the main barriers because you know that you have to have money to run a business (laughter).

You know and yet I have seen areas where in there was just almost no money and people just trying to scrimp along and this kind of thing and seemingly,



because they were female that other people did not relate to them. Because they were female and because they were African American. Well I don't know but I felt for a while that was a demon called jealousy that we tried to do things. Everything that we put on here, empowering to keep the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace because that's one of the main things that we have to try to do to stay in unity with the body. And peace. We are just bumping our heads up against the wall because there is a lack and the needs are not being addressed.

I think that I would like to just say briefly that the difference between salaries, if it is a salary, salaries, the difference between the salaries might be more than what most people would believe. Well now the IRS is trying to set them to tell the truth, but trying to pair education. Yes, based on your education. The other thing is most churches I think should have a board and that is one of the things that it deals with. I personally think that a person should be paid according to what they bring in, Amen. So if you can bring in \$50,000 a year, you should get paid more than the person bringing in \$50,000 a year. And to me that's one of the greatest disparities right there, you see what I am saying and some...that's something that has to be dealt with eventually. Seminary graduated males get paid so much more than seminary graduated females; they get the big church, who gets the little church, who gets the church in the country that is struggling. Everything is a trickle-down effect. They are predominately males. They look at

the female with a lesser ability to do things; you see what I'm saying. I really don't think that it has to do with the profession. I believe it has to do with the overall gender. I think it's just a great big ball of gender prejudice.

They give us the little tasks and they'll do the work. (Important decisions preach and teach) They did the work but they don't get paid. We love it. They don't ask for it or demand it. I believe that they think it's impossible so they don't want to upset the boat. Just take me as high as I can go and I'll be alright. But I just didn't have that attitude. And so a lot of times I think we get what we expect as some people haven't been taught to expect anything else.

My dad was probably in the same denomination (laughter). You need to master this now, that's my daddy. That was my daddy. Well, yes he was a minister. He was a Methodist minister who went to do a revival at this church and you know I had been in the Baptist church with my mother and he told me that I didn't know the discipline. I didn't even know what the discipline was. So here again you find things that you are judged by that you don't even understand.

### **Analysis of RQ 2/Participant 2**

This African American pastor is a born leader who caught the eye of a prominent male pastor who took her under his wings and taught her everything she needed to know

about Pastoring. Triumphant Shy Giant has a lot of female pastors across the country who she can call on to assist her with her leadership roles. She has a great male mentor who is known all across the world and has been a mentor for other female pastors. Her training at his church has given her invaluable experience, identity and support. She can still call on him if she needs to. Over the years she has had the opportunity to experience on the job training at his church and at her church. She has pastored for over 30 years.

Education for females was better during her time but it was very limited in the field of Pastors. Women were not easily accepted in all seminaries and the spaces were limited. Triumphant Shy Giant is in her 60s. When she was coming into her career, things were better for her than they were for the participant who is in her 70s. There were seminaries who accept women, but very few and very few spots in the seminary for women.

Education is still important to the success of the pastors, but it is limited to a few and in some cases it does not exist. The only education available was in special bible colleges, seminars that would allow a woman to attend, and her church mentors who could show her the way.

Unlike the other participants, she did not grow up in a house with a father for a pastor or grow up working in the church. A lady in the community showed her the love of God and took her to church.

In order to exercise and interpret your leadership as a Pastor, Triumphant Shy Giant feels you have to accept who you are and accept others for who they are. Women

are usually the worst enemy of other women. Instead of helping each other, they compete with and criticize their own gender.

Triumphant Shy Giant feels that mentors are also key in helping you interpret and exercise your leadership roles. Mentors have gone through what you are going to go through. Past experiences, successes and failures can be invaluable advice to a new pastor.

While in college, this Pastor attended a well-known church and that pastor took her under his wings. He taught her by his example of what a pastor is like and what a pastor does. He cared for her and taught her the word of God.

Experience is the best teacher to help you interpret and exercise your leadership roles. She has pastored for 30 years. Female Pastors many times don't have a model so they believe what they have been taught and follow the mold that has been set for them by the men in leadership. They are trained and educated by men and that model does not work for women.

Triumphant Shy Giant has a wealth of knowledge and wisdom. She believes our first fight is with our self to know who we are and to accept ourselves as well as other women. We must then get educated and submit to a mentor who can take you where you want to go. Female Pastors interpret their act of leadership based on what men have taught them. They don't question or research for themselves, so she advised women to get their education and expect to be treated equal. She feels that women have been taught to be passive and to not expect what men have, rather to just be happy to be in the

group. She believes we must speak up for what is rightfully ours. She feels it's hard to interpret something if you don't know what it should be. You then have to rely on what others tell you is should be. Women have got to learn what and how to exercise their roles as senior pastors and that information may not be accurate coming from someone who thinks you are trying to get part of their money and power.

### **Research Question 2/Participant 3—Pioneer Pistol**

This African American female pastor exercises and interprets her acts of leadership based on the following: (a) grew up in a Baptist home, (b) Church greatly impacted her views, (c) learned a great deal in seminary, (d) followed closely the feminist and Civil Rights Movement in college, and (e) worked for three mega churches as an assistant to the pastor.

Pioneer Pistol spoke about her experiences that helped her exercise and interpret her leadership styles. They are as follows:

He was really just, as a matter of fact unbiased. He (her spiritual mentor) really tried to help us heal from the hurt. He really tried to help because the thing with Bethlehem, it became a financial issue because they wanted to give us two months. We went in there and they said we have this contract we want you to sign. The contract primarily said we will give you two months' severance pay. You are not to say anything negative and you can't... attend worship service, you must tell the people what we tell you to say. We can't sign this because we need

to have a conversation about this, we are not going to fight you on this...we need to know what's going on here.

We, the church, Bethlehem, and all of us...even though the men and women were open to me, they didn't want me to marry them, they would blame it on their family and when it came to baptism said ok you get in the pool but the deacons were angry with her for getting in the pool. When I was pregnant that was another whole issue because they didn't want me serving communion, there was always something.

Which is literally, what had happened to us, I went on maternity leave at Mountain Top and when I returned, I had no job. I woke up one morning, I had my baby everything seemed fine and in the middle of my maternity leave, I'm told that I don't have a job and I go and ask Billy Bob if it's true.

I thought that working at the Methodist church would give us some security but I found out that was not true. He basically said yes. It was real painful. It seemed like the Methodist church would have given us some security but we found out that was not the case. The Methodist churches were evolving but they weren't putting in significant churches with their pastor. You will find most Methodist women of two or three churches on a circuit and they are in a small little church,

still a lot of them. We were only secured because Bethlehem knew the chaplain and they weren't going to mess with us. But we were not well liked. A lot of the denominational pastors did not like us. Bethlehem was not a typical Methodist church. Most women pastors I know in Spring Valley started their own or they are a part of the AME like Ruby. She was educated in a Methodist seminary on the east coast. She started her own. Pastor Debra started her own. There are meeting in the chapel at Lakeside. A lot of them come to me because they know we started our own. I don't know that denominational support is always best because I have guy friends and the denomination didn't do very much for them either. It's very hard. I have a friend in the same situation and they treated her so bad. They treated her so bad. She is now in Chicago on a white staff.

We've had a bishop that has been in there for two years. She's made some significant changes. But there are not a lot of women DS's district. There's not a lot of women in power. Women don't have a lot of power. If it's going to be anyone they place in there they are going to be white. They've had issues until recently placing us in white churches. That was the other issued...equity. There is still a lot of racism. That's one of the reasons why Billy and I left Bethlehem. We were interested in going to the bishop. Mary Sue on the surface seemed to be in agreement but a week later asked us to leave. Of course, we complied with the wishes and the bishop told us his hands were tied. He wanted to send me to a

small church with about 25 members and he wanted to send Billy to Greenwood. In Greenwood, they had about 50 members. Our kids were little and they split the couples, we have friends who serve in two different areas. And our salaries was very small and we had a housing allowance and we just said they we must fend for ourselves. Eventually we resigned from the Methodist church.

My mother grew up AME so she was never really against it. After I graduated seminary my dad's church licensed me, I mean ordained me. I was ordained in '79 ordained American Baptist and National Baptist. My dad's church was American Baptist and National Baptist. So I have two ordinations. The National Baptist brothers refused to come most of them. Of course, the American Baptist were open, they were very open in New York. We have a group of women pastors in American Baptist who are great mentors.

In seminary, we had groups so we talked about it and then I had Janet who was working on her doctorate at that time. She was just such a great mentor to me. I spent a lot of time with Kathy and so I spent a lot of time talking to them. They were very supportive in helping me process some of that. She has a lot of influential and well known mentors and is well known and respected among the women pastors in the United States.



### **Analysis of RQ 2/Participant 3**

Pioneer Pistol also learned to exercise and interpret her acts of leadership by watching her mother and father. Growing up in a Baptist home has greatly impacted how Pioneer Pistol views her acts of leadership. She learned a great deal in Seminary and through her personal experiences with the Feminist and Civil Rights movement. This Pastor was privileged to be hired by three mega churches as an assistant staff person to the Pastor. She learned a lot from these three churches.

Pioneer Pistol grew up in the home of a pastor. She has seen him day in and day out carrying out the duties of a senior pastor. She has heard the many concerns and decisions made when it comes to members and church governance, so she has a great repertoire of observations and experiences. She is seminary trained, so education has made a great difference in how she views her leadership responsibilities. She attended school during a very strategic time for women and blacks. Her leadership reflects her seminary as well as those times; liberal, bold, radical, and on the cutting edge. Her view of the Pastors role was from a paid staff position, which was not the norm for most women ministers in those days. Black Power was strong on all campuses during this time, so she had a personal moment in time being part of history in the making. Feminist and their demands were very prevalent and exploding throughout the world. This pastor was in seminary and learning to become a Pastor during the times of the civil right movement and the feminist movement. It was a radical time of fighting for your rights. The black woman was in the fight to help her race and her gender, but there was no room

for the black woman and her issues. These times helped to interpret and develop her leadership style; that is bold and radical, yet when learning how to lead in an unyielding institution; the Black church. She was learning how to fight against injustice and to fight for what you believe in, knowing justice will prevail and you will get your rights. She learned from those she worked for in other churches which were run by males. She had to ultimately learn to depend on her heavenly father, her natural father, while learning to seek out a spiritual father who was willing to show her the way. The interpretation of her leadership appeared to change because of the roadblocks she encountered as a female on staff during radical times along with the mental transition everyone had to undergo for her to become the senior pastor of her church. She had a lot of help in the beginning, but her help diminished to just being: her family, a few friends, and a very special spiritual father who would serve as her mentor. Family and Friend were always there to give encouragement and Support. When let go by the church she served, it was a really time for her and her family. The pastor and the church had turned their back on her and wanted her gone. She was away from her family and a very well-known spiritual father to many women in the city came to her rescue to comfort and heal her.

Pioneer Pistol had made a huge decision that would cost her something in her career. The male leaders seemed to be saying in her face, Women are not going to be treated equal to men. You can work for us, at a mega church, but small churches are the only churches available for you to pastor. Your skills, and education will not be helpful in qualifying for a position of Pastor at a large church, nor will they afford you favor in

helping you start your own church especially since you have history with two of our finest churches and they both have let you go. She learned that this behavior would cause her to be labeled a trouble maker, among other things.

This pastor had a difficult time interpreting how to lead because the role of a female pastor had not been introduced and accepted. The world was in a transition with the way it treated females, but churches and their leadership had not transitioned, and refused to think about transitioning. Nothing was final on women pastors and it would take a long time for it to be defined and accepted by other male clergy and their denominations. She was at the right time, yet she was before her time. The women were ready but the church and its male leadership gave mixed signals however reality is they were not ready for the black female seminary graduate. She interpreted and exercised her leadership based on how her father led his church, but that would not work. She tried to use the education from her seminary and her experiences from the three mega church, but that backfired on her. She then left all of what she thought would be her guide and decided to organize her church with her husband assisting her. She was raised and educated under religious denominations, but found hurt and rejection from the denominations which forced her to start her own without their support. They trained her then ostracized her to go it alone or keep quiet and conform to their way of leading which was to follow gratefully and quietly.

### **Research Question 2/Participant 4—Young and Beautiful**

This African American female pastor exercises and interprets her acts of leadership based on the following: (a) traditional Baptist background, (b) grew up in a pastor's home, (c) attended seminary, (d) female relatives that are pastors/ministers, (e) her mother was a strong woman in the church, and (f) extensive training from CME denomination.

During her interview, she said the following in relation to the second research question:

Men take care of men, but women they don't help. Older women have laid foundations and sacrifices so that women coming behind her will have it better. As far as having a close tutelage, which is also what I found lacking, when men come up through the ranks in church and their ministers, men take them under their wing, teach them and talk to them about things going on in the church. And I found that I did not experience that. Now there are women that said that they did experience that. I did not experience that. I really do believe that the older women laid a great foundation, those who fought, and who paved the way. My bishop would always say we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us with soft shoes not ones that pushed them in the ground. I really do believe that they paved the way because they opened the doors.

The seminary taught you doctrine and educated you. Yes and no, I don't think that seminary can really prepare anyone to be a pastor. I think seminary gives you a good foundation of some theological and technical pieces that you need to kind of navigate your way through a process. But that's the academic part of pastoring. That's the vocational part of pastoring. The practical piece of pastoring I do not believe the seminary prepares you for even in field education. You do field education outside that context, that's one piece. That's why I said kind of a yes and a no. I did have a mentor in seminary that actually was seeing me, my professor of history and he pushed us to...he said now you have your calling. God has called you into ministry now claim your vocation. And he helped us to see both, the calling and the vocation of the pastoral ministry and the importance of being what he called an ethical witness. I did attend Christian Theological Seminary. That's on the East Coast and I was called to ministry at this church. I'm in a Methodist itinerant ministry system.

And our youth pastor at another one of our churches and the bishops and elder appointed me to this particular congregation. This church is extremely old almost a hundred years old. I became the very first female pastor, at a very traditional church that didn't want to change. It was a welcoming challenge but it was a difficult challenge. With a small membership—it once had been up to 500 members—basically it was feudalism. There were a few families that was there

bickering and all the other people simply left. In the aftermath is what was becoming of these families and bickering. And there was a lot that they would blame on pastors and surely they did have some challenges with leadership. I was their tenth in nine years, but the first female. Well, I think, the focus of the study gender equity, I would say would be my greatest challenge, inside the church and outside the church.

#### **Analysis of RQ 2/Participant 4**

Young and Beautiful interprets and has learned to exercise her leadership based on what she has learned growing up in a Baptist Pastors home. Her dad is still pastoring in his 80's so she has picked up from him the will to preservers. He has accepted her as a female pastor and counsels her when needed and she also has other females in her family in the ministry she can call on the help her interpret and exercise her leadership. She has been to seminary and has placed herself under the supervision of her Bishop while requesting help from her other female friends who are in the ministry.

#### **Research Question 3/Participant 1—Humble Servant**

This African American female pastor negotiates her role in the church environment based on the past experiences and beliefs that she has seen successfully carried out in the past. They include (a) based on her belief that the man is the head of the woman, except in spiritual matters; she is the head; and (b) she places men in

strategic positions to let them be the man and to let them know they are respected, wanted and needed as the head.

During her interview, she revealed the following when asked the third research question:

My sister has been with me all the way. She has really been there. I need to say this, years and years before I ever got to be a minister my Bishop received women very well. I preached at his.....he was very complimentary. The Pastor is the head of spiritual things. Except when it comes to the spiritual head here, let the men be men. I am the leader, okay, but in the natural, I step back. My husband is the head. He has the ability to do it, and if he doesn't thank God I have a husband say I can't handle it, you handle it. That should be with every man. That's the way I handle that. God has given me so much favor with the brethren. Because I let them be men, I let them be men. But when it comes to the spiritual part, they do respect me.

I was very young when I come to that...I was probably in my twenties, 26, 27 when I started out with them. So I was really raised up all of those years, me and my husband under their leadership. And I've always been trained to be very submissive and obedient to leadership. So I guess that's why I was I the circle so

well. Well, in the Baptist church I never did do any of it. I was only a Sunday school teacher, but I was already into the ministry.

I was raised up as a kid that way. Of course, my dad didn't believe in it, my oldest brother whom I looked up to like a dad. But God took care of that. He was discussing women preachers. He said, well I tell you I used to didn't believe it whatever, he said but then my daughter. She come to me – said daddy, say you know, God is...calling me into the ministry....she was asking for his approval. He was hesitant on his answer finally he said well, if that what you feel God is telling you what to do. That wasn't with his blessing, Now she is seated and the pastor flies her around preaching and teaching. And so he backed up, Finally he said...He didn't tell her it was okay – he didn't have to tell. But that was the hardest thing to come over because I was raised in a family with 7 brothers and 3 sisters and dad was kind of that way, you know. It's in their Bloodline. Yes, my brother was pastoring, I got a brother in Humble now. Another pastor in Lufkin, he deceased about a year ago. My sisters are not pastoring, but one is in the ministry. Mary Smith. You know Bob's wife. That's my mother in ministry and she is ordained. And in my other sister Bette, she has a doctorate degree in Theology. So in the family is full of ministers. Some very well accepted in that way.



No, the way that it worked from my son being the pastor, we were the founders. Then when my son decided, he only stayed with us for about three years. He went back to Kansas or somewhere. My son had a lot of tradition in him too. He said, okay I'm going to leave it with daddy. So daddy became pastor. I said okay, that's fine.

He was called to minister. He did pastor for about five years. I worked very closely as assistant pastor under him. My brother must have pastored for about three years. I went walking and it was over very simple stuff. There was no big problem...God....it wasn't going to be that way. They couldn't bear me working in the church....God was upon me, it was there, it was noticeable. Anyway, I went walking in the park, I went walking and my mind was going what I do. Do I start another church or what do I do? And when I...the Lord just talk to me and talk to me. I told my brother I wouldn't be able to work in this ministry, ....I just had to move on. So when I.....and came back and talked to my brother, surprisingly, he had decided to leave and turn the church over to me. I didn't even know it was happening.

Some of the people in our church were not church learned they came out of the world. So what they have learned is that the pastor is the leader. So they learned to respect that pastor is a leader and they respect leadership.

Well, I have had a lot of difficulties.....when we were going to build this building here. Only you because you couldn't .....I believe this building here is 9 million dollar building. It is a challenge, because if it had been a man – he wouldn't have done through a lot of stuff I went through. I think the contractors were not nice with my fare. I had some brethren come over because they were not the pastor, they took advantage.....but the banker was a lady – I didn't have a problem

The men's frame of mind has also come from upbringing and lack of knowledge; teaching and Training. Men were teaching other men and the women to fight and to keep the old Tradition alive by passing it down to the children.

I think it is totally a lack of understanding the scriptures. Because the scripture does say, that the woman shall be saved through child bearing. What child did she bare that brought deliverance to her, Jesus Christ – When He came, He set us free, neither male nor female.....we are all one in Christ Jesus. Well, okay we are not in the Old Testament. Women were not allowed to do a lot under the law and consequently the church is still trying to hold us back. But we have been set free, just because we're women, doesn't make us unclean anymore. Jesus came and cleansed us all of our sins. So we have to accept that. We are cleaned by the

blood of Jesus. The same blood that cleanse the man cleansed me. There is no limit to it. It is our understanding that is holding us back into darkness. Lack of knowing, and holding on to their Tradition is the big problem men have with women preachers and pastors. I think they just don't understand.....Some have studied and have come out – and since they have come out and if others would allow themselves to come out of tradition.... Your tradition has caused the word of God to be of no avail. See people, grandma taught me this, grandfather taught me that. It's that I'll never change. Grandma taught what she knew. But now the light has come, the bible says walk in the light as the light come to you. You can't walk in it if you don't have the light of it. But as you get the light of it, receive it and that's what's happening. People are clamming up on tradition, on tradition, you know. I think a lot of our African Americans won't take the time to read and research or study..... Our people will not allow themselves to study and they go with the concept they received way back, that it is what it is without receiving a better understanding about it..... how it used to be tradition, too extremely traditional.

My son has training – but he taught me and I began to meditate on it. I began to say Lord and I prayed a lot. I said I don't want a soul to go to hell because of my tradition. That's the way God got me. I don't want to be responsible that somebody be lost, I 'm saying that come in the church like this or you can't do

this because of what I think and I don't have scriptures to back me up. I didn't want to be responsible for souls being lost and so today I .....may be some there and some there.....I'm striving to get out of all of it.....tradition. I don't want to see people lost of trying to please me. I'm not the one, you got to please God. They didn't want women to be district elders, bishops – that's breaking down, it's melting down, and they are beginning to let them in. You couldn't be.....those over pastors' right. They are beginning to accept them. There are other organizations where females are called elders. So they are beginning to accept them. Elders are considered more experienced and should be walking in, what should I say a special anointing of God. When they are sick, call for the elders of the church. They can be called upon to minister.....They don't want women to be an elder or bishop? Because they couldn't find a scripture where the women were called an elder or a bishop. I think they should.

### **Analysis of RQ 3/Participant 1**

Humble Servant was full of good works of which she used to her advantage. These wonderful characteristics were under her control and greatly accepted by the men she served. They opened many doors that were closed to women and allowed her to learn the role and gain favor with men. During this time period that was all women had, so that was what she used. Her humble submissive characteristics allowed her to be accepted by male pastors and other men, her patience helped her to persevere, while her

faith in God would not let her give up. Her persistence allowed her to ultimately get the assistance and blessings of her husband, her pastor and the other members of the church. She was spiritually attuned to God and has always remained loyal and prayed up. Her faith and trust in God has guided her through these long years to finally become the Sr. Pastor. With God guiding her, she listens for the God to speak and knew when it was time to obey God. At that time she used her courage to stand up to her pastor and tell him she was leaving to start her own church. She was willing to leave her husband, because she knew God had given her a command that she could no longer ignore. She believes in and has been taught to serve men and pastors unconditionally. Her high respect for men and Pastors has gained their favor and respect from these men. Her servant attitude has allowed her to get up close and personal with male Pastors to see how they function, how they lead the church, how they prepare their sermons, the backroom discussion on how a church is governed and issues handled. She was exposed to, while at the same time, assisted in doing the work of a senior pastor before it was hers to do as the Senior Pastor. While personally serving Pastors, she learned to serve the members, learned how to interact with other Pastors, how a pastor carries himself and how the pastor is to be treated. She was humbly serving, but she was looking, listening, working and waiting on her turn. Many years after observing the role of Sr. Pastor she felt she had enough training and experience to carry out the job. Her time had come. She had watched her son, her brother and her husband pastor the church she formed. After watching them for a few years she finally realized she could do it better and she did.

Time showed her that she could do it better because she was the pastor, not the men she appointed. This Pastor gives the credit for her success in her position as senior pastor to the fact that she is able to work with all people. By making everyone feel comfortable, especially the men in her church, she feels this has helped make her job as senior pastor functions successfully for everyone involved. She has had to fight against tradition, especially the tradition in her that kept her placing family male members in her place to serve as the senior pastor because she felt a man could do it better. She did the work, but the men had the title and the credit. She was content to do this for 25 years. This pastor is the eldest of all of the participants. In the days when she was called into the ministry, the church, its members and denominations were strongly vocal about their opposition to women preaching, let alone pastoring. Reading her story gives a really good look at what women had to go through to Pastor. Her career spans 40 something years. She has only pastored for a little over a decade. She is now in her 70s and feeling like she can now do publically what she has been doing privately since she was in her 20s. She has had to wait patiently for the time when she would be given the opportunity to do what she was capable of; pastoring the church. She has been her best advocate and her worst enemy.

This Pastor leads her congregation based on the information she has gleaned from her previous traditional pastors, her family, friends and every bit of teaching she can get her hands on. Using these characteristics she patiently waits for time to lead the way to changing the hearts and minds of men in leadership. She respects men, but is waiting and depending on God and His timing. She believes men will change when they

research the scriptures for themselves and get educated. Her story is a great example of the enslavement of women in the church by men who either did not understand the scripture because of their traditional training, or by those men who knew better, but used women to their own advantage. These women were very smart and talented. They worked hard, served long, did not question men, felt they were being obedient to their masters. I was so honored to interview this Pastor. I felt like I was taking a personal look at the history and future of African American Female Pastor. Just listening to her story reflecting over the years was amazing to me. Hearing her story from the beginning and seeing where she has come in life, gives hope that 30 years from now things will be different for all women pastors. We are not there yet, but God and his timing has certainly brought about a change in her life and I know it will do the same for some young female pastor just beginning her career. They can learn a lot by listening to her story.

### **Research Question 3/Participant 2—Triumphant Giant**

This African American female pastor negotiates her role in the church environment based on the past experiences and beliefs that she has seen successfully carried out in the past. They include (a) well mentored, trained, and supported; (b) given a job by her male mentor; (c) supported her ministry; (d) a core of men, almost half and half in her church; and (d) a male assistant.

During her interview, she said the following in relation to the third research question:

Well my pastor and I were very close and she and I were very close ok, and after she died, I took some emptied spaces that were there and filled them. And I think that that was the most important thing that happened during that time because I always laughed. When I told him that I was called into the ministry, he told me that I was already to the ministry and He was preparing me for the ministry. And one of the first things that he did was to give me a job, a resale job (laughter). For a little while (laughter), I went through the resale shop. I worked a city grant project during the summer. I mean, you know I just worked wherever they put me. And they always put me somewhere, including preaching on Sunday morning, ordain people, be on the ordination counsel, including things like baptizing. You know there was no disparity. As a matter of fact, he ordained me because one of the deacons had said that I didn't need to be ordaining people and baptizing people. So he said well ok if you don't think she deserves to do it right now, I tell you what, I'll take care of it and so what he did was he took care of that situation (laughter). Well, I didn't intend to (laughter). I became a pastor because first of all, I started doing pastoral things and I was very close at the church and finally it was just on the inside of me that that is what I was supposed to be doing. I was working at Popular University and I was working in the biology department and about chemistry really. But that wasn't what I was supposed to be doing and so when I talked to my pastor about it was so amazing



to me that he was able to tell me exactly where I was and what I needed to do. And so I founded this church in the 1980s and of course he was there and he helped me. The church helped me. So it wasn't like that was anything that would be offensive to anyone of us. Yes, he supported me.

I think that we have gone through progression and I think that people are more open now than they were before. But I don't think it's half and half. Like right now I'm the office of a bishop and we travel all round and I come into contact with females but most of the females are still working under a male who a lot of times does not see them as equity.

Ok my, my, my...I was in the ministry six years under Pastor Kennedy before I started ABC Church so I didn't just jump up one day and start a church. What had happened is that I had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit at what I thought was different from what most people thought that was in my group. They begin to see the value of having the baptism of the Holy Spirit and reaching out to people and witnessing and those kinds of things. So I had no idea that any of them were going to follow me. My pastor and I had talked and we were in agreement that if any did follow me that he would not have a problem. Sometimes that's easier said than done but some of them came. I had a very large Sunday school class at Hill top Avenue and at lot of them I have now like Jackie

and Bobby and different ones there're still here. Oh yes definitely, there were men too.

We lost and even today lose a lot of people. We have men that come and get so happy, they are healed, they get delivered, they get whatever and so they're happy, you know they come or they go on their job or someplace and they say oh you are not supposed to be submitted to a woman, you're not supposed to do this, you're not supposed to do that. And so a lot of times it causes a person to think the second time to say well not I can't do that, it cost too much, I can't pay the cost. But one of the things we have as a core of men, we were talking last night that we are right at the verge of having more men than we have women. And it is simply because of the training, you know, the responsibility. What the word says about women, the truth. And not just, not just things like that, we were trying to get them to understand and believe that apart from the church but in the church also. Because you know a lot of times there's no love in the family, there's no care and various things are happening. And so there needs to be a peace and soften of things in the church. And some of it women can do better than men. I mean because we I mean we simply are more sensitive and more compassionate and that kind of thing. I believe that anyway.

Well, yes men help women upstairs (laughter). They do the security at the church. I mean you know it's not like it's a great big thing but when they come here, the men who have been trained and have gone through, they start taking the men through what they went through. So that mean you have a stable flow of people who are doing it the same way, not necessarily the same way but at least improved. (She bonds with the men cares for them teaches and trains them and gets them involved with another male mentor who does the same thing). Let me tell you something how the church is set up. I am the senior pastor. I have an assistant pastor who is a male and then we have the pastor of children female, pastor of youth and it goes on around even to family pastors because we, we, I just believe that we need to be in the groups when being nurtured. Have mentoring groups; we had teaching groups, you know and what have you. So it's always life flowing.

Well, when he took over as assistant pastor, he and I had been talking and we had bible studies together, his wife and I are real close, he has five kids. I think what sealed our relationship is that we agreed on the certain core values up front and we agreed on them and we walked them. To me it gives you a foundation and it keeps you steady. And just like I relate to his wife, I relate to him and I respect their marriage. I respect marriages wherever I find them. You know and so I

think that's very important. Be a good steward over your home and you will be a good steward over your church.

I wanted to mention very briefly about husbands, something just about husbands. I have seen something in husbands that I had never seen before until recently is that they want their wives to be in a position wherein that they can be one. That he can respect her as a full minister not just sitting on the second row with a hat on. He can accept her as being his co-worker. I talked to my pastor's wife and she said I wasn't called into the ministry. And that was her attitude about it and yet that is one extreme now. But you come over here to the other extreme and you find someone who is washing the dishes, was doing everything, keeping other folks children trying to get a position, you see what I'm saying. I've got to be in your life so this is what I'll do. And so I think that that to me shows a great improvement. Because now they are hugging and going off together and working together and just letting the Lord be the Lord.

I think that it is healthy (husband and wife working together). I do not like to see marriages separated too long. I think it is so healthy that the whole family can get involved with that one person in what he's doing, usually the male. Exactly, in traditionally the churches I grew up in, there was a high rate of divorce and promiscuity and all kinds of things going on in the church and with the wife not

being there. I think accountability on the male was one big issue. You know because if his wife is not here a lot of times women will, even themselves, approach the man. And so I think that just with a physical presence. I give you an example, as a matter of fact you know this couple, but anyway they move and went through a financial situation and they were talking about they started getting up at 5:00 every morning praying together. And so they were talking about how their marriage had changed because they were praying together. Then he gets a good idea. Yes, she's (other women helpers/assistants to the Pastor in the church) confused to. She's got to have a cherished position now because she is helping to meet his needs and that doesn't have to be true. Well you know I really have a heart for marriages. I've seen a lot of them not be marriages, then I've seen a lot that were turned upside down but I believe that more than anything that's God perfect will. That's His preferred way. And so, a lot of times I talk to people who are single, let's put another thing in there, that are single females that are black. So when you look at all of that you look at a person who has been taught and put in a little box but it's a very small box. But the thing that begins to happen is her self-esteem begins to get low because she is doing something else. And so she begins to wonder you know did I make a mistake or are we really supposed to be doing this, why don't I have any intentions and all of these things. Now this area to me needs more teaching and I believe that most things we accomplish we accomplish through teaching because you got to have

that introduced to you and then you have to have a way of getting to a place of having faith in that his word was given to us. You know I would have to say that I believe that it's easier if she's single but the other thing that I want to say is that relationships have to be worked at and a lot of times that by the time whoever is in charge comes home (laughter) they're too tired to work on the relationship.

Because ultimately we have to have the same values. I have to believe that when it comes to the bottom line that I can switch over to my husband and let him be the man of the house regardless if we've been on the job, regardless. But I would prefer being a single woman rather than trying to change and go through a lot of difficulties right there. I had training and I believe that a lot of love and support, you understand (laughter) and ....But it's harder until you get in there and do it. But I think it's very difficult for a single Afro American woman to be in the ministry by herself. I just have to be totally honest and I don't believe He called a lot of people. I read about Ruth and I read about various ones and the prophetesses and that kind of thing but I don't see a whole lot of people in the bible that God called to do those kinds of things. And I'm not saying that He picked me out of, no I'm just saying that I believe that it's difficult. It's difficult for the family, it's difficult the minister, the pastor, It's just difficult It's hard to be open and honest with relationships.

I have, I am very, I am very blessed. I have pastors that we call them my grandchildren, we go down three generations. But I am very blessed because we have real relationships and we are there and they are in the ministry and they are moving fast but we just loved on each other and we are open and honest and I think that that's one of those things that it costs us sometimes to be just open and honest. I'm having a hard time; I'm going through and this kind of thing.

Well you know I'll share this with you. One day I looked in the mirror and I told myself that you need somebody who can tell you no. And that particular day there was a minister in Indianapolis that the Lord...I felt like He was leading me to call and talk to and just to say I need someone to tell me no. I need someone who can tell me to sit down and I need someone. And His wife was here. It was the first Sunday that we came into this church and he was here to and we didn't know it and when I starting the congregation what the Lord had spoken to me he was on the back seat back there and the place was full and he got up and started walking down and it was I mean many people could verify but what it did to me was that it stabilized me into knowing that God was not going to let me be out there by myself without someone helping to watch over me. Yea I think that is very important to have somebody... because you have to give them permission. You have to come willingly especially when you are in leadership. You have to submit yourself (laughter). You are the authority but know you got to come and

submit yourself (laughter). So...now you got to help me Lord (laughter) because I'm having a hard time.

I think that another thing that really cost us is friendships because we find that we have less and less time for friendship, you know real friendships. I travel, I go visit my friends, I do things with my family, and I think you got to get balanced. You got to keep balance. I try to but I don't always, but I try. Oh definitely friends....You got to have friends and you know I am a covenant person and I believe that when you have a covenant with God, you have covenant with people and that they like fit into different places. But it's very important to know where they fit.

Well one of the things I would say is always keep God first you know because we can allow the ministry to become our God. And so keep God first. And the second thing is to just allow Him to lead us and keep us focused on what is important because sometimes we think something is important and it really isn't. You got to consult God. You got to consult God from moment to moment. And remember that, those children those grandchildren, that's your greatest investment.



I'm laughing because some days I wonder...(laughter). I'm going to take a better day. We all have those days. Give me one of both. One of the things that has really led to my success as a pastor is my job is God ordained. It was not anything I would have picked. As a matter of fact, many don't know this but I am very shy. If you watch me I am the one that will pull back especially I can take large groups or I can take one on one. But that intermediate group I don't know what to say, hello and now And I think that having been open to friendships and really asking a lot of questions.

I think that Dr. William A. Kennedy at Hill top Avenue Baptist Church, and I think Lola Nelson and she was at Hill top to but if I went outside of Hill top (long hesitation) if I went outside of Hill top it would be (pause) I got two strong contenders. I'm trying to figure out which one to choose. There is one that I call my pastor now and his name is Huffman and he has shown me the Father's love. He demonstrates and he has all these people he's over, and he has over 200 churches under him. he is right outside of Alaska. But he, I don't know, he's just full of love. His wife just, there are just awesome...Yes and he comes, they come down here twice a year and they don't do that for everybody. But they come twice a year.

I was thinking how that you can have a congregation and you can feel the jealousy and the anger and the frustration when certain people who walk in the door, you can feel it you know. And it is not yielding at all. So my question is ok where does this come from, where does it come from? She's taking my money. Yea, well I think that it's like they'll say things like well she's just a woman like me, you see what I'm saying. But that's their way of thinking. But as long as they can keep me in bondage I'll never be able to get what belongs to me. accepting yourself as who you are.

I have rejection, self-rejection and all of that kind of stuff, but I had to come to the conclusion ok you either represent God and you are going to accept what He gives you and be thankful for it. You know to me, as long as I don't hold on to anything, it's fine. And so I've seen people that they just don't understand why you can walk around say in a St. John and I don't have a St. John. Why you can have a Mercedes and I don't have a Mercedes, you see what I'm saying. Yes, because a woman somehow thinks that what she gets comes through the man. As soon as I said it, I said oh my goodness, what was that? But I guess because we are females and we are trained to be passive. (with males) That we don't think we deserve it. I think that's it. (conditioned to fee...even ladies in the church who would fight against you and you know they are not pastoring or ministering but they want a man to be over them. Is it because they have been indoctrinated to

think that way from a child up?) Yea, they've been indoctrinated, yea, they've been indoctrinated. And the other thing is that I believe that the indoctrination as well as the manifestation that I don't see anybody doing this. Ok, so since I don't see anybody doing this, this must not be right (See another female doing this). Now my girlfriend that is minister of prayer at Hill top now, one day she said to me; she said I'm going to Hill top because the pastor got a small car. He doesn't have a great big car. What does having a car have to do with it? But that means that that's the way we thought at that particular time. So we had to have improved our thinking over the years because we don't think like that as much as we did.

### **Analysis of RQ 3/Participant 2**

Triumphant Shy Giant has had a lot of experience and history behind her which is evident when she shares her journey. Her persistence, her image, her influential mentors, her love for the people and her support by other male pastors have all served as a strong foundation for her ministry. It is successful and she has grown to become a leader for other pastors. She is an ordained Bishop who travels around the world helping other female pastors, yet she is able to maintain a thriving local congregation. She is able to do this because of her wisdom and advise to carefully set up her church structure, training, and order set in her church. She has a male for an assistant pastor so the people are still under male leadership. This seems to be helpful as congregation's transition to

the idea of having a female in charge. She has staff that came with her years ago from her mentor's church who knows how to run the ministry and how to serve their pastor. She has personally disciplined them and they are committed to her as well as believe in her calling. She has a great passion for marriage and feel pastors should have their spouse in ministry with them. She cares deeply for Pastors and families and seeks to be there for them as an encourager to stay together and be accountable to each other. The fact that she is a Bishop says everything about how she negotiates her act of leadership. She is a mover and a shaker. She is shy, yet she is aggressively pursuing all that God has for her. She has come a long way and it looks like she is not satisfied with just a piece of the pie. She wants all of her pie and has put in place a structure to get it all.

### **Research Question 3/Participant 3—Pioneer Pistol**

This African American female pastor negotiates her role in the church environment based on the past experiences and beliefs that she has seen successfully carried out in the past. They include (a) models the pastors of three mega churches, (b) utilize her husband as her assistant, and (c) started her own church. During her interview, she said the following in relation to the last research question:

The people were very accepting. I think there is still some...But I'm the one they negotiate with. Bobby is a man of few words... And I still have issues where they tell me they prefer Bobby to marry them. I never think there is ever a month that I don't get a call from a member asking me to explain again why I am the

pastor so they can explain it to their family and their friends. We had couples who have left and the reason they left was because their husband just could not stand having a female pastor.

I had direction from my father. I grew up in a pastor's home. So I'm a PK, my daddy is a Baptist preacher in a church in Marrietta, Florida and retired two years ago.

But during the summer one of my classmates, Matthew, was moving to Blank Baptist church in Wellington and said I'm going to talk to my pastor about you coming in. It was a big church about 3,500 members. The pastor was 78. And sure enough, the guy hired me. In fact, he hired two of us. He hired me and a 65 year old black woman. It was an awesome experience, he was for us coming, but he was not necessarily open to us doing everything. I had to wear a robe, men had to wear robes, I didn't want them looking at my legs. I had to have my head covered.

The Billy Bob thing, I never knew what happened. I heard rumors at that time that he was Southern Baptist. Southern Baptist really wasn't that open and I was the number two person. When I was on maternity leave, I heard rumors about them demoting me from assistant pastor because we were reorganizing staff,

that's what he said to minister of congregational nurturing. And I remember questioning, what does that mean? It seems like I'm bothering somebody and I ask what's that all about and he told me not to worry. Don't worry about it because we will talk about it later. I never knew what happen. I don't know if he thought I was looking to go somewhere else which I probably was. The Kevin Jones piece; we always asked him because both of us was on staff there. Bobby did his internship there and Kevin Jones hired him. Bobby was on staff for six years and he asked him do you feel like it's time. I thought it was hard, now that I'm a pastor I understand. Where I thought he would embrace us none of that happen. It was a very painful time. It was very painful because he and I had been friends for years we have since reconciled but at the beginning it was very painful and I don't know one of the things that happen after the transition was they tried to move us as far away from Bethlehem as they could. For some reason he thought we would take some of the congregation.

I have to tell you, both of them, Billy Bob especially. He said if you leave here, you will never find another church that will pay you what we pay you. So in a sense, especially in these mega churches that they knew that they were doing something special for me. They knew I had benefitted from being attached to him and they felt I was at the top. So it was almost like I was betraying them. We went to him in confidence and I told him we would like to move forward;

whatever you want us to do however you want us to do it to make the transition smoothly. And basically that went from I'm going to help you to do that, to I don't want you to talk to the ministries ever again and I just want you to leave. Don't communicate with any other staff. I understand but still the mechanism; there is still a way to say that. If they would have said, you know I really thought about this, but the board came to us and said leave.

We weren't even thinking about starting a church at that time. The mindset was let's get together and talk. We just felt like we were trying to do what God was asking us to do. We weren't sure what that was but...so I don't know, some people on staff came to me with the rundown of what the pastor said and I wasn't interested...I'm trying to help him have a pleasant leaving but I can sense as a pastor now my frame of reference has changed towards him so I'm really...to him. So I just asked him, if you want to leave, why don't you just leave. I don't know if you're going, if you're staying...I had to pray really hard.

So now, you have this separation. You got this special relationship, and I'm saying what's going on? When we left Bethlehem, we were really broken. I went talked to Kennedy. Each time I met with Kennedy it was really good.

### **Analysis of RQ 3/Participant 3**

Pioneer Pistol started her career with an excellent foundation and a set of very strong positive characteristics that most would see as ideal skill sets and characteristics to qualify for the job of leading a mega church congregation as its senior Pastor. She had worked closely under three senior pastors of mega churches. She worked very hard on their staff and helped to run the church. She possessed a combination of those pastors leadership attributes, applied them while on their staff and now felt she was ready to use them in her own congregation. This is what men do all of the time to advance their careers. She and her husband were rejected by these great pastors and their denominations. What should have been a great time of supporting turned out to be a lonely and hurtful time, but this pastor learned to lead without the support of mega male pastors and their denominations. She came from a Pastors home and was immersed at an early age with a wealth of church information and pastoral practices. She is articulate and seminary trained. Her outstanding teaching and preaching skills, along with her persistence and feminine influence gained her many opportunities such as interns and paid staff positions at mega churches. This experience would definitely equip her to lead her own mega church one day. Along with her training, experiences and education, she was confident, bold, outspoken, aggressive, and persistent. It appears her church employers wanted a new progressive seminary graduate who would be grateful to lead like the traditional female worker from the old school; you do the work but we will lead. Her life had prepared her to lead, but the church world, its denominations and leaders



were not ready nor were they willing to accept her as their cohort in the position of fellow Senior Pastor. This was a time when women were being equipped, given new opportunities, but the men were asking the women to work under traditional ways with traditional pay. The minds of men were not ready to really accept the minds and intellect of women leaders, just workers. Her skills were needed to do the work, but not considered qualified to lead the work or wear the title of Senior Pastor. This pastor, with her bold characteristic, felt the call to leave and organize her own church. She sought to ask for the help she needed from her pastor, but did not get it. She was let go and demand her rights. This characteristic is a must for effective leaders, yet it became a negative for her when relating to the males in leadership at these mega churches. They shut her down, sat her down, and left her to fend for herself. She was forced to find and use alternative leadership skills to suitable for female leaders of that day, because these characteristics did not work to promote her, rather they could have caused her to be demoted. She had to use her adaptability skills and adapt to the times by learning to rethink now learned to rethink carefully how she will navigate her leadership career as a senior pastor at her church. She has always depended on the natural father for advice and support, but none of her supporters can advise her on this issue. It is new to them all. She had to look for a local mentor who believed in women pastors. She found one who had helped other female pastors and he took her under his wing and showed her the way. She learned to navigate under this prominent male pastor. He helped her heal and directed her on the remainder of her journey to becoming a senior pastor. She now lead with the

assistance of her husband so others would better accept her leadership and be more comfortable belonging to a church where the pastor is a female.

### **Research Question 3/Participant 4—Young and Beautiful**

This African American female pastor negotiates her role in the church environment based on the past experiences and beliefs that she has seen successfully carried out in the past. They include (a) family, friends, and mentors; (b) a male Bishop encouraged her; (c) originally had husband as assistant, now divorced; (d) had no support from her denomination or church staff; (e) she is their first female pastor, (f) works under the Good Ol Boys System; and (g) problem with males and females. During her interview, she said the following in relation to the final research question:

No support, they isolated us. It was not just that my husband sat down it was a lot of the outline churches did not fellowship with us no matter how much we ask... They really isolated us... Yes, exactly. And interesting enough the only time that those pastors even asked for a fellowship was after they heard I was divorced. And the fellowship was not a spiritual church fellowship.

I think it was personal. I think a lot of times their conversation was about how we can come to fellowship as a church begin with let's have coffee, let's have dinner first. If you refuse, that was the end of the conversation. There was no, I did not

have any specific intentions mentioned. They were all people. There were no people there in my sphere that I could call, no one to help me.

We don't love ourselves. When we dialogue our common barrier what we see as problematic in the church really are other women. Even more so than other men because women want to see their pastor as a man. I heard someone talking and one person said that we love our boys and we raise our girls. So our women never learned how to love each other or love other women. Women have not been taught to love and serve another woman leader. So you have a church that's 80 percent women and they can't figure out how to serve you because, and not that they need to serve you per say, but they can't figure out how to treat a woman with the same respect and loyalty and commitment in ministry to God as they do a man simply because it's a woman. And so we as women have yet to learn really how to love each other because so much has gone on in our lives that we have yet to learn how to love ourselves. So the love we seek is not from another woman which that love would probably be the best for us. Not in a way I know right now the whole same gender loving relationship is very, very popular. But that is not what we are talking about. We are talking about the friendship, the joy, the peace, the security, the comrade of other women. We don't know how to do that because we have yet to really learn how to love ourselves. We yet to learn how to be in community with our mothers and our sisters, and our aunts and our

cousins, let along be with women that are outside of the family. And in the leadership over us, that's right. So we bring that same attitude in the family of God. So you see a woman she is up there and she appears to be empowered by God, empowered by education, empowered by a denomination to do a job and our first thought is who does she think she is?

The majority of the seminarian graduates are females. We're coming into our own in ministry. Yes and no, I don't think that seminary can really prepare anyone to be a pastor. I think seminary gives you a good foundation of some theological and technical pieces that you need to kind of navigate your way through a process. But that's the academic part of pastoring. That's the vocational part of pastoring. The practical piece of pasturing I do not believe the seminary prepares you for even in field education. You do field education outside that context.

Years ago women are not accepted or welcomed in some of the seminaries. That has changed but some of the men attending and teaching in the seminaries still have the expectation that men will graduate and become a Pastor, and the women are there to get a degree so they can work on staff at their churches. I did not see any discrepancies in the seminaries. I went to a very liberal seminary ....Men Expect to become pastors. So that's one piece. That's why I said kind of a yes

and a no. I did have a mentor in seminary that actually was seeing me, my professor of history and he pushed us to...he said now you have your calling. God has called you into ministry not claim your vocation. And he helped us to see both, the calling and the vocation of the pastoral ministry and the importance of being what he called an ethical witness.

And we passed a resolution that clergy that were going for itinerant, deacons or elders orders which is the first level pastor and second level pastor both of those pastors, one cannot consecrate elements or handle communion or marriages but we passed a resolution that they now have to have on the itinerate level at least a bachelor's degree now. We're in the ME group churches, AME Zion, CME, AME, we're CME. Every other ME church has already moved to the point of saying you must have a Masters of Divinity. Our church is still stuck. It's who you know if you are a male; all females must have their degree and paperwork in order because it is a good old boy situation. It's a good old boy system. And there's so many pastors that are already pastoring that don't really want to go back to school and don't believe in education, and other pastors that don't want to follow the proper procedure outlined by their denomination, if they're a member of one of those eight denominations I believe it eight that is in church united in Christ, if they are from another ME church they can just take their ordination and come and grandfather in under our denomination. They can do

that that their ordination can be received. So if you have the attitude that you don't have to go to school, all these women are going to school, they shouldn't pastor, they don't need to pastor anyway. That education doesn't mean anything because we don't want to get ours..... in most of the denominations they do require you to have your masters which would allow the women equal opportunity to become a pastor. But in your denomination it is still good old boy so people will get in because of who they know and not what they know. Yes I'm grateful that my bishop gave me an opportunity to pastor I never would have. I was a youth pastor so I never would have been able to know myself or who I am now and even know that God has a great calling for me in this arena. I don't know why I didn't know I'm from a legacy of pastors. But in my mind I was content to be a youth pastor.

I was not asked to do things to get the pastor position. I was asked to do things to keep favor in that position. And not so much, I didn't want to use the words asked to do things, there were things that were suggested. Sexual favors, dinner dates where there is a possibility of becoming inebriated with the idea that in that state that it really won't matter that much. Right, so yes so I would be able to go through with it. You know I know it's a problem for you but just put it out there. You're beautiful and you're highly sensual. Oh yes I have been, to become blunt I have been told I am beautiful and highly sensual. I have been propositioned to

just have one night. I have been asked could they do nothing but have oral sex .I was recently transferred. I'm in one region and I've been transferred to another region and a pastor who I know and highly respected basically called and said I heard that you've been transferred. Now this is a married pastor of which I know his wife and his children really, really well. He said I heard that you've been transferred and he said I've been good the whole time you've been here and I got to ask you a favor, "can I be with you just one night"?

They don't just see you as their equal and respect and honor. Also, still want to subject you to become theirs? They want me to become theirs.....One of their persons that they just put in their pocket. I had even pastors imply, pastors that seemingly were mentoring pastors, but they were implying that things happened that did not happen.

It takes a very secure man, if he is not a minister or even if he is a minister.....And it spilled over into the home. And that was when I looked back on my marriage and the things that happened and the things that occurred that was part of my part that contributed to the dissolution of our marriage. It was my insecurities toward what's going on in my role in leadership and his role in leadership. And his insecurities which I think played a great part into as well as that people were going to think that I was running something at home and that I

wasn't in my proper place. He did not believe that any way that I was in my proper place. So it takes two very secure people with who they are in God, their roles in leadership and their roles in the home, in order to make a marriage where the wife is a pastor to make that piece work. I don't believe, a lot of people say she has to marry another pastor. I don't believe that. I believe that there are many good Christian men out there who are secure within themselves. Now in our denomination, I don't know how well that works because we move so much. You know I moved to The West Coast and lived there for ten years, moved to East Coast I've been here four years, now I am getting ready to move to another state. We move so much so I don't know how well that would work in our denomination. But I'm talking about overall. That's what I'm saying; I'm not supposed to follow you. You're not supposed to be the bread winner. My ex-husband said you will never ever make more money than me.... His insecurity. He has to be secure to do that.

We have a church in our city, now mind you the church is a little larger than mine but he does not have the support of the membership like I do and inevitably while I complain about some of the things they do, if I go to a district meeting or annual conference, I have a good constituency of members that will go and show their support. Even with those that don't like me, my presiding elder received a lot of calls about them moving me. So, however, I go visit the sick. I go to the



hospital. I bury their family members; I baptize their children and have done this for the last four years consistently. We have a pastor up the road, he makes about three times as much as I make. And he doesn't do anything. He's in school...He does not have his degree yet. The congregations in conjunction with the presiding elders determine the pay for the pastor.

The other female pastors don't have churches my size. They are smaller. The CME churches are under the old school system but it is what it is. It's ranked the first church is like the largest church and the most faithful church. The second church and the third church. So those are supposed to be the top three churches in the region. Well established. There are a couple of females pastoring a second church. There practically 230 churches. Now we are comprised of both of two regions, West Central Coast & South region. The South region has a lot more female pastors than the West Central Coast Region. So I am going to talk about one of those regions. They have 230 churches. Of those 230 churches, there are two female pastors in main houses, if that make sense. The number two churches number three churches. There are two female pastors, actually no, her church is not considered a number one number two or number three church. So there's one in the main church. There is one in the secondary church and the other female pastors have mission churches. And there probably 20 females with mission churches. And mission churches are churches that are in your home and you may

have one or two members. They don't get anything some of them. All the rest of them I gave you 230 churches, which gave you 22 women.

The men are in I would say pretty established churches. Even their mission churches are established. They actually have a building. Some women were told to go stand on a corner and start a church. Sometimes you can get sent to a building that is a mission church and sometimes they will tell you go stand on a corner and start a church. Oh no. You start it and once we feel that you are doing something then we might put some money behind it.

And some simple things that are cultural that are really discriminatory. And maybe this goes back to the women discriminating against themselves and not liking themselves. I think sometimes this is important to lift up. In culture, we expect the African American woman to be strong. The one that holds things together. The one who makes the difficult decision. The one who stands in the position of power. And we expect that power to move within the home and beyond the home but only as we as the people deem necessary. I guess I feel it necessary to say that the whole notion that the discrepancy between gender equity are systemic and that we clearly, but the overall long struggle is not just a struggle within the church institution. It's the struggle that we have as a cultural and the people of color, it's the same struggle. Is the man the one with all the

babies and ..... And, that's it, is the woman the one that takes care all the babies and works all the time. And then the interplay of men, men who are men of power, and our American counterpart who being in turn try to diminish their power. And sometimes that divides the African American females over them in certain positions of power and because the pastoring role has been a position of such great power in our culture, the fight becomes bigger than just the church institution. It's a bigger fight.

Mine was a mindset because it took a minute for me to come into my own in way of thinking versus that of Titus and Timothy about women. The word in Corinthians about what women could and could not do. And really I was raised to be a minister's wife and my father is a minister. And I was raised to be a minister's wife and lay out his clothes the night before and he's gonna sleep around and don't worry about it, just look at the life God give you..... those were the things that were inbred in me from a child.

Let me make another observation when you spoke historically a minute ago, even if you go back to slavery, the girls were the ones who had the babies. They were the ones that were raped. This is what we told our girl, that's the way it is, deal with, it will be over soon. We're going to clean you up, we're going to mend your sores and wounds, have that baby, and we're going to raise that baby. And

we're not going to say anything about it either. We were made to keep silent. We loved our men and raised our girl, that's what we did. But with the men we said one day you're going to be allowed to be a real man and no body's going to be there. We did whatever we needed to do to mend those wounds; not only the physical wounds; the whipping, the beating on the back the Kunta Kente not only those physical wounds, but we did what was necessary to heal those mental wounds, We raised them and had to deal with it. Get up and keep going. We loved our sons, so if that is true, if that in fact is a true observation ,that we see throughout history then we as a people are equally responsible for the mindset of the men that challenges us in the positions that seem to be positions of power. Because we've yet to deal with what is power, what is authority what is leadership? And who can have it...

This interplay of authority and leadership; is it an over you or a coming along side If that's true, our daughters need to get over it and deal with it. Keep going keep it moving... With our men it's a coming along side of in a different way. You're going to be there one day honey. You're going to do this one day. God's going to make a way for you. You're going to grow up and be a man. And if we want to get real deep, because of the movement we love our sons; I truly believe a man has to raise a man. I'm not saying a woman can't do it, but there's certain things we can't tell them about being a man. So we love them to life, but we

don't put them in a position to really hear that you're really being raised by men. And there are so many men that are going out of the family now, so you see these men going to seminary and some of them don't believe because some of these seminaries have been strict in their theology, but most of them have gone to seminary and were not evangelical contextual interpretation; some of them have even been receiving by the word of God, but they are fighting for the bible in a situation where they have been merely loved. And some of that (I can go all day) because in loving ourselves, we've made them our men. We didn't let them grow up as men.

We didn't raise them, we just loved them. We raise those girls. Girl you better get out there and get a job, as a matter of fact if you need two or three and you better take care of those babies. I don't care what you have to do and we'll go to the secular end, including making a trick. If you've got to make a trick to raise that baby that's what you do. To the men, we say be a man.

I'm entitled to love, support, positions, and when I don't get it, you're trying to hold the man back. I have a good friend now that is really a powerful story of his life, he is a recovering addict, and was a drug addict for several years, homeless and all of that. And has been going on to become clean, begin to work on himself, went back and got his masters, and now is giving back. We always

talking how Black men can't get a position because the women.....I've made an observation and I've shared this with him. When we have friends and they go to school, they get up and do what they are supposed to do and he's still talking about the sense of entitlement. I say to him your sense of entitlement comes when you go pass that licensing test when you have something to .....I said the only difference right now is that you are sitting here talking about entitlement and the women you are talking about have passed their test and they have a piece of paper in front of them. I have masters in divinity, I can do what I want to when I get in the pulpit, but I'm going to go on and get that piece of paper.

I'm gonna do whatever it takes, and we loved our boys and we have a do whatever it takes spirit. Another thing about that is when a woman has raised a son, or when a man has raised a son, often women don't know what to do with them. What do you do with them? Females don't fit into the mold of what society has for a male. It's a larger internal struggle – That's what I'm getting back to – It's a larger piece that is cultural and anthropological; it's a larger struggle than just what is going on in the church institution. It's a total cultural struggle.

My husband, he ultimately did not believe in female pastors and later on when we decided to dissolve the marriage, he mentioned that he thought I would get

over it and that it was just a fad. It was a church full of women. And what they really were following was my husband. I think there was some who were comfortably because of the man. But often women in congregations who aren't married have these kind, what do you call it? What is the word I am looking for, subconscious fantasies, when men are standing up front? So in their mind here was this woman, the man is standing by her so she must be ok. But once the man sat down, that she wasn't worth following. I have five men in my church. Many of the men were officers. Stewards handled the money, trustees handled the building, and most of the men were either trustees or stewards I found that not many men handled the building, mostly the stewards did everything. The system that was set up was a great system for checks and balances but it was not working at that particular congregation. It hadn't worked in a while.

Hmmm I think that there is going to have to be, I would like to see, some intentional dialogue where men are not simply saying the bible says you are wrong sit down....but there is some dialogue that gets into this greater culture .... uh huh we need to be honest, we need to be open minded and look at what happened historically. We need to be completely honest about where we are now. Admit, yes I'm scared because all of you women are going to school and I might not have a job as a Pastor. – I think that is some of what it is. Fear and losing power, Losing the Power oh yea, because this is the only place I have kept my

power, I don't really have power on my job, I'm not the CEO, I have some power here, these women worship me, fix my plate, bring it to my office, they press my robe, they take it ...I have some power here. I might not have power at home, my child might be on crack, my home may be (excuse my French) to Hell in a hand basket. But I have some power here, I am truly the king. These dialogues need to happen intentionally where people are open minded about things what come to the floor, honest about where they are and willing to do something about it. But then on the flip side of that I would preach and then they would give my check to my husband.

So it was interesting they wanted to keep me in the place of being a beautiful woman with the man as the head. Now that's not necessarily a negative place but when you are the senior pastor of a church. There were many Sundays I had to say, when he preaches, then you give him the check. There was one woman that was the treasurer and she helped keep the savings. That was pretty much it; now also mind you that these people did not come to church. They came just in time to count the money. They did not come to hear my preaching or teachings.....No, not at all.....they did help me in leadership.... What they did was they helped controlled the mess in the church. My husband, he ultimately did not believe in female pastors and later on when we decided to dissolve the marriage, he



mentioned that he thought I would get over it and that it was just a fad. The members completely sat down; Stop giving, stop coming to church.

They looked to my husband as the Pastor. It was a church full of women. And what they really were following was my husband.

I think there was some comfort because of the man. But often women in congregations who aren't married have kind of these, what do you call it? What is the word I am looking for, subconscious fantasies, when men are standing up front? So in their mind here was this woman, the man is standing by her so she must be ok. But once the man sat down, that she wasn't worth following.

Female headship, Male power and control

They did not fix up things. They didn't pay the bills. They were under paying the people.

Who was in control of paying the bills? The stewards-So they were in control of paying the bills and they stopped paying the bills. They stopped paying the mortgage. They said they voted to not move to the church. They voted against. The congregation voted for the move to the new church. And there were four people that voted against it. Those four people were my finance people. And the

majority being men. My administrative assistant is female. There is one other male steward now but the rest are females. The chairman of the trustee board is male and the other women (members) on that board are male.

They need a male uneducated pastor at this church. I think this particular church would. I don't think the church institution overall would. But this particular church would. I really do believe that they need a male Pastor that is uneducated.

Gender has played a great part. And you know what, in a positive way even though I may not, I think this church would function better with a male as a pastor.

#### **Analysis of RQ 3/Participant 4**

Young and Beautiful does not have the support structure of who is assisting her, like the other participants. She is under a denomination and has limited control over what happens in her church. All of the other participants left the denominational controlled churches and organized their own churches. The people in her congregation are like the other congregations they would prefer a male pastor. Unlike the other three participants, she has a female assistant, instead of a male assistant, which does not give her male leadership support at the top. She has no stability in the church where she can develop her own leaders and develop relationships with. So ultimately she is not

navigating her leadership role alone, she is tied to the denominational leadership and its appointees. The people at the church see it as their church since they will not be moving, but know the pastor is always subject to be moved. They do not relinquish their leadership control to their pastors who move from state to state. She is hoping one day there can be some changes made but says it is going to take some intentional dialogue and study on the part of the leaders in the denomination. She is trying to understand a system that is out of date and may not work with today's seminary degreed woman. She is trying to lead with her background from a Baptist church and her background from a denomination that accepts women but does not treat women the same as they treat men. She is being transferred again, so she will have to start over with a new congregation, a new culture, a new set of Bishops in a new state. I don't see how she is going to be able to navigate her job as a pastor when it is constantly changing. It's a moving target. Once you think you've got it, it moves. The other participants started their own churches so they could bond with the people, identify and train leaders, and find the best way to navigate their roles as their pastor. This pastor may never be able to navigate a career she has not control of. She may simply have to take the ride and hold on tight until it stops or lets you off at another ride.

### **Major Themes**

I reviewed the categories in great detail to find recurring themes that were expressed by the majority of the participants. There were eight recurring themes, as shown in Figure 1.

MAJOR THEMES			
Themes and %	Categories	Themes and %	Categories
<b>1. Male Relationships</b> 4/4	They are important to career Give credibility Bring comfort to church community Provide education and training Handle difficult tasks around the church Bring balance to leadership team	<b>5. Patience:</b> 4/4	Women had to wait Permission from African American Men Acceptance from African American Men Equity from African American Men Wait on the Lord and again I say Wait
<b>2. Attitudes</b> 3/4	Men are dominant in church leadership Men are dominant in denominational leadership Men are dominant in Bishops and Pastoral leadership Women are facing a male dominated career Positive Attitudes toward male leadership	<b>6. Self-Esteem:</b> 4/4	She is the Senior Pastor See themselves as a strong Black woman Not easily offended by negative talk Not discouraged No fear of what man can do Spirit-filled Powerful Exhorter
<b>3. Strength:</b> 4/4	Can manage adversity Overcomes barriers Resilient against oppression Stands in the face of prejudice and discrimination Strong Faith In God Must believe God Called them to this position Trust and Obey God, not man	<b>7. Finance</b> 4 / 4	
<b>4. Education</b> 4/4	Education vital Seeker of credentials Attend educational institutions Seekers of workshops and training Welcome mentors	<b>8. Anointing:</b> 4 / 4	Have an "I can do all things thru Christ" attitude Be strong and courageous Lead a Strong church membership Brings forth Powerful Preaching Provide Anointed biblical teaching Rebound as a Strong Prayer Warrior Possess God's Divine Protection and Power Save, Heal and Deliver disciple for God Stand Strong in their belief in God Wait with Bold Faith that their God can and is going to deliver them

Figure 1. Major themes.

### Discussion of the Themes

The responses of the four pastors were put into categories. I reviewed the categories in great detail to find recurring themes that were expressed by the majority of the participants. The following themes emerged.

1. Male relationships 4/4—the female Pastors all revealed they had male relationships that helped them get started in ministry. The majority of their mentors and trainers were male. In some cases men helped support their ministries until they could get on their feet. Growing up men taught them the bible and church doctrine. They also taught them tradition, which is what the men were taught from the leaders of their churches growing up. Women and men were taught that women had to submit to men. The word submission became a dirty word because no one wants to submit to an abusive person who uses them to their advantage and then throws them away. Women realize the dominant position of men, but they realize that they too can be used by God. While these female Pastors are able to do whatever is needed to lead their church, society has structured it so women and men believe that a woman cannot function properly and professionally without a man leading them, or covering them. The fact is man and women are both needed for the kingdom. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Why cling to tradition and use half of the laborers when the world is need. History has taught women they must be kind, easy to get along with, and respectful of the men to get what they want. It is time for men to help women because it is the right thing to do and it brings willing laborers to help with the harvest.
2. Attitude 3/4—All four participants spoke openly about their characteristics that led to their success. All the characteristics portrayed a positive attitude

which helped to make their role as Senior Pastor one that draws people from their congregation and the community to them. As a Senior Pastor who deals with many different personalities, a positive attitude will go a long way in ministering to their congregations. Attitude reveals how you feel about people and what you are doing. These participants all displayed positive attitudes as they were honored to be called by God in this role to care for His people.

3. Strength 4/4—These Pastors realize how important it is to be strong women. They have had to call on the Lord for strength many times in their careers. Their narratives speak to their strength by the fact that they have managed to overcome difficult situations, make difficult choices and face barriers placed in their lives because of their gender. If not for their strength they would have given up a long time ago. These women are strong in their faith that God is in control of what is going on. They are strong mentally or they would have lost their minds and left the church to the men. Each day they have to keep their emotions under control and be strong in the power of God and His might. Although there is a dominance of men in control, women are finding Divine strength by networking: taking little and making much, smile when their heart is aching, be strong when they are weak with the cares of their own families, to give when they are in need, to love when people are unloving, to be kind when those they love are standing on their backs, to act

appreciative for the crumbs, when they deserve a plated dinner, to be seated in the back when they deserve to be seated upfront. When you can deal with all of this and still stand in your pulpit Sunday after Sunday, and encourage your people that God loves them and they can do all things through Christ who strengthens them. You are a Strong Woman with God's Divine authority and power. These women persevere, they are optimistic, sacrifice to get their education, sharpen themselves with training for they know God has called them. They possess a zeal for the job of leading God's people and some hate them for their anointing to be strong. They want to knock them down and get rid of them. They are anointed along with their gifts from their Fathers are making room for them.

4. Education 4/4—Education is the key to many locked doors of opportunity. Women have been locked out of these doors for years. African American women have been locked out even longer. Despite our late invitation to the table of education, we have managed to excel and surpass the requirements for education and experience in our field. Humble Servant to men and Triumphant Giant grew up in an age where African American women were not readily accepted in colleges and seminaries. They faced a double jeopardy. They were females and they were black. They were forced to go to a local Bible School or obtain special training from an African American mentor/denomination who accepted women in their classes. Two

participants had to struggle because of the lack of educational opportunity to women during their time. When Pioneer Pistol came along in the 50s she was the first class of women in her seminary. The women faced isolation from the African American males. During those times, African American women faced another obstacle, which is poverty. The doors were opening up, but many women had to work and could not afford to attend seminary or college. This is now a triple jeopardy. African American females are faced with gender, race and economic discrimination which withheld the keys to education. Pioneer Pistol had a father who could pay her way; however, when Young and Beautiful came along, there were so many avenues to get funding for your education. Integration was in full swing and affirmative action opened closed doors that allowed African Americans the opportunity to get their foot in the door to higher learning, and African American women ran in. They worked hard, received their degrees and emerged equipped to face the fight of getting a job. All of the women found it necessary to attend seminary or get the necessary training to carry out their leadership position. Women are equipping themselves making sure they are professionally educated in the word of God and prepared to impart the truth and knowledge, as well as, move the people with their dynamic sermons. This combination will qualify them for the job of Senior Pastor, when the opportunity is presented.



5. Patience 4/4—Patience is a virtue and African American women have shown more than would appear to be necessary to prove their humility. History reveals an extremely patient, yet optimistic Woman of God. Patience was evidenced throughout their stories. They had to be patient and wait for their turn without complaint. Even though they exhibit patience, they are not sitting around waiting on man. They are using every bit of their power to become educated so they can break the traditions of men and uplift the plan of God. They are guided by the Divine Power and plan of God! They know it's only a matter of time. Just as in the case when women could not vote or own property. Time will bring about a change and African American women don't mind waiting on the Lord.
6. Self-Esteem 3/4 (Triumph Giant; Young and Beautiful; Humble Servant)—One of the issues that confront males and females is keeping a positive attitude and a healthy self-esteem. Being the senior Pastor of a church is extremely stressful, and can affect your mental and emotional well-being. With women facing the kind of rejection from the men they've loved, fought for, given to, and unconditionally supported, it's hard to imagine they have never felt like giving up. 3 / 4 of the Participants openly shared their struggle to keep their minds positive. The one that did not share had stories that you know within yourself she had to face some self- esteem problems. Because of her personality, she seems to feel it should not be expressed or it is a sign of a

weak woman. I think it is a sign of a strong woman who can keep her mind when people you love are throwing darts at it. Each day they are faced with negative portrayals of who they are from the African American male Pastors and leaders in the church, and even more so from a lot the women in the church. This negative connotation caused the participants at some time to struggle with their self- esteem. Their strong spiritual conviction has kept their minds and emotions from overtaking them. It takes a strong women to keep a positive mindset and stand each week before the people who demean her; in-turn she has to preach on the fruit of the spirit. She is expected to love, forgive, be long suffering, and gentle toward those who seek to keep you enslaved to their traditional beliefs. Despite all of this negative energy, she is expected to smile and bring a strong word from the Lord. Female pastors have to keep their eyes focused on their assignment from God and lead while under attack.

7. Finance—African American Female Pastors are faced with a quadruple jeopardy; race, gender, economics and tradition. The women stressed their concern for their finances. Two of these pastors are single with one income coming into their homes. They consistently take home much less than male pastors while performing the same job and in most cases, having greater responsibilities. Many are single moms or divorcees whose men are missing

in action. This quadruple jeopardy creates a difficult situation for these women at home as well as in the operations and leading of their churches.

8. Anointing 4/4—Each of these Pastors evidenced a great anointing on their lives from their God. From the time of their birth, God has had a calling on their lives. All of them were birthed from the seed of Pastors and ministers. God has called them appointed them and anointed them before their mothers knew them, to lead His people. It is evident that God uses the lineage of God appointed fathers and mothers to produce male and female Pastors and ministers. When I was called into the ministry, my father said to me, “why are you surprised? Your father and grandfather were ministers. It’s in your blood. Your children have it in their blood. Watch they are all preachers”. Sure enough all three of my boys are preachers. The girl is also, but she has not announced her calling. The Anointing breaks the yolk! The powerful anointing on these women has drawn members to their churches, lives have been changed, families in the community have been helped, children have positive role models, and people are taught the true word of God. God has given them supernatural abilities and power to stand, overcome and persevere in the midst of oppression and isolation from the men they have always supported, worked without pay in their churches, sacrificed for and loved unconditionally. Their anointing has broken the yoke of bondage.

Several minor themes also emerged, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Minor Themes*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>% Participants</b>	<b>Participant</b>
Pursue justice legally	1/4	Pioneer Pistol
Husbands include wives as full ministers	1/4	Triumphant Giant
A man can do it better	1/4	Humble Servant
Unwanted sexual suggestions	1/4	Young and Beautiful
Radical	1/4	Pioneer Pistol
Aggressive	1/4	Pioneer Pistol
Culture	1/4	Young and Beautiful
Beauty	1/4	Young and Beautiful
Entitlement	1/4	Pioneer Pistol

**Summary**

Eight major themes emerged: (a) personal male support, (b) a positive attitude, (c) strength, (d) education, (e) patience, (f) self-esteem, (g) finance, (h) anointed.

Literature seems to agree with the findings in all except one theme, specifically a positive attitude. We see so many barriers set up to keep the African American female

pastor from becoming successful. Men are the gatekeepers and may stand the risk of being disassociated if they cross the line and help women or offer any support for them. Some denominations have barred Pastors from associating with women pastors and also banned them from ordaining women at all. In most denominations, women need men to officially ordain and license them so to meet the qualifications needed to acquire a position such as the Senior Pastor in a denominational church. In order to get ordained, some women leave the denominational church and obtain their ordination from a non-denominational church or a church outside of their denomination who will accept women. The Methodist church will ordain women. When starting a church many female pastors find it difficult to start their churches without men. All of the women report some type of male support in organizing their church and many place male leadership around them to help them run the church.

For many years women were kept away from enrolling in seminaries because they were uneducated and they did not believe in educating women. Nowadays women are educated and find it a great help to them getting positions in the church, however it does not guarantee they will get the job of Senior Pastor even if the male pastor does not have his seminary degree.

Based on the interviews of these female Pastors, female ministers need to have a positive attitude when dealing with men and women concerning the position of Senior Pastor. Their behavior should be non-threatening nor disrespectful to men. Just as in any group, when a new person joins they must come in humbly trying to find their way,

being careful to give respect to those who have been in the group for a long time. So it is with the obtaining the position of Senior Pastor. Women must portray a positive attitude.

I agree with all of the major themes that emerged from these pastors. I was surprised to hear that women really are not at a level to petition or lobby for fair play in the acquisition of a position such as Sr. Pastor. Doing so has suggested it is impossible with most denominations. Out of four participants that all were originally in the Baptist denomination, all four left the Baptist denomination to become non-denominational except one who went to CME which has a strong hierarchy of male Bishops.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Study of African American Female Pastors began with my sub-conscious awareness of biases that exist between men and women who serve in a clergy or pastoral role. As my role evolved from serving by my husband's side as a wife to serving as a pastoral partner in ministry the bias became more apparent and personal. Disturbed by the behavior of male equivalents serving in clergy or pastoral roles, my goal is to share the results of this study based on the lived experiences of four African American Female Pastors taking in consideration their backgrounds, experiences, and perceptions that have impacted their role as a Female Senior Pastor. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the lived and perceived experiences of four African American female pastors in four African American churches and to examine their perceptions of gender equity in their work environment through one-on-one interviews. Documented interviews reveal the expressions of women who speak on a weekly basis, but are rarely heard outside of their own pulpits. Devoted to listen to their spoken and unspoken voices without interruption, these women spoke openly; without prejudice or fear.

## **Narrative Reflections**

The participants' narratives were interesting to me because I can so readily identify with each of them, as well as with their narratives. Growing up in the African American Baptist church and community during the 1950s and 1960s, having a father who pastors a Black Baptist church, and now serving on staff as a female executive pastor under my husband, who grew up a traditional Baptist, has allowed me so many experiences from which to identify with my participants. These experiences are so real for me because I have lived their stories. I am an eye witness, as well as a participant, on this journey to equity for African American Female pastors.

Many times during the interviews and the writing of this dissertation, it became so real that I had to mentally take myself out of the picture and focus on gathering the data I needed from these pastors. However, my background and experiences were critical to conceptualize and empathize with the message each pastor's narrative revealed. I do not believe a person who has not experienced this subject personally could fully grasp and report the true findings.

Cole and Knowles (2001) described the conceptualization of my research project as the vehicle by which I carried my own life history. I assumed a phenomenological approach for my analysis and attempted to "make sense and interpret the phenomena in terms of the meaning that the individuals bring to these events" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3).



## **Participants' Interviews**

Interviewing four African American females who were born and raised in different decades was quite challenging. Over the span of 4 decades there have been a lot of changes that have occurred over time in society that was reflected with each response. When I gathered my participants, it was not my plan for them to be 10 years apart in age, but when reviewing each participant profile, I realized that each represented a different decade of experience. This turned out to be most unique for my study, as I am able to track the plight of the African American Female pastor over the span of four decades. The difference in their ages made their responses to the questions most powerful because each of their experiences were in a different decade governed by evolving laws, opportunities, challenges and knowledge an extensive base.

When I interviewed the participants, I was careful to communicate relationally (a) the relationship between the participants and the researcher; (b) empathy, care, and reflexivity; and (c) mutuality—"the co-creation of a conversational space where issues of researching can be openly and thoughtfully considered as they occur in the natural rhythm of the researching process" (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 29). Adhering to these principles made it possible for me to establish a mutually satisfying relationship with the participants, thereby allowing for authentic reflections during the interviewing process.

The interview process lasted over a period of two months and was facilitated with the guidance of seven interview questions. This one- on- one interview allowed for other questions to emerge based on the responses and willingness of each participant.

## **Summary of Results**

The summary of the results of the study are presented in response to three research questions that guided my interviews:

1. How do African American women pastors describe personal characteristics attributed to their success in the pastorate?
2. How do African American women pastors exercise and interpret their acts of leadership?
3. How do African American women pastors negotiate their role in the church environment?

The Analyzed and sorted data are categorized in to eight themes and reflect the participants' responses to the three research questions. Themes include (a) male relationships, (b) attitude, (c) strength, (d) education, (e) patience, (f) self-esteem, (g) finance, and (h) the anointing.

## **Discussion of the Themes**

This section discusses the relevant correlation of recognized themes to each participant's profile based on the socio-cultural theories of Black Feminist and Womanist Theology.

### **Major Theme 1—Male Relationships**

The major theme of developing personal male relationships emerged from the categories that dealt with mentors, staff, on-the-job-training, trustworthiness, respecting men, getting along with men, and gaining their trust. All of these characteristics are ones

that require a willingness to get to know a person, the ability to work with them, to learn from them, and to network with them. All four participants believed that it is beneficial to have male mentor and pastor relationships.

The participants' responses and the structure of their churches make the concept of having male relationships unavoidable for female ministers desiring to become pastors. Since this role has been dominated by males for such a long time, this study revealed that in some way, each of the participants had a male relationship to help her to get started. They all utilized males to obtain their credentials, for moral support, for mentoring, for guidance support, and to serve in key leadership positions at their church. All of them continue to have male mentors to whom they call on for needed support. Some of these males are professors, bishops, pastors, teachers, family members and even some personal friends.

Being of the opposite sex could make it difficult to have a personal relationship; however, if you are going to work with males, both pastors will have to build the trust and mutual respect that is needed to work together in leadership. Failure to do so for a female is like wanting to be on the baseball team, but not taking time to come out and meet the team with whom you will be working. If you are going to be on the team, you have to build a relationship with the other team members. On a team you have rules and regulations. Men and women must set and keep rules in mind always remembering the purpose of the relationship is to win souls for Christ. They must remember they are both on the same team of winning souls and each of them is accountable to the same boss,

their Heavenly Father. Since this assignment is a holy mission, the flesh must always be under the subjection of God. The female's ability and calling will constantly be under personal and public attack. Each day female pastors seek to gain the respect of men who are already on the team. They believed it is important to carry themselves in a way that says, "I am the Senior Pastor." They believe the men will soon see them as a team member and not as their cheerleader. The participants each understand the possible consequences they face if they force their way on the team; they know they must earn it. It may take time so they do not expect things to change overnight, but all of the participants believe that African American male leaders and pastors will eventually see them as senior pastors; and not just as women preachers.

The African Feminist theory speaks of the Black women being a marginalized group. Marginalized means the group is forced into positions of powerlessness, where they are excluded and ignored. The Black church and its male leadership has sought to make the Black woman powerless to lead her own church without, "a covering" from a man. This thought process is culturally taught in the form of tradition in the Black church and spills over as well into the Black homes and its communities. This can be seen by the lack of respect shown toward mothers, daughters, and grandmothers through the traditional Black on Black oppression shown to Black women from their Black men and their Black churches. Black women face violence, abuse, and abandonment from Black men, which many times leave them silent and void of power to function freely without the permission of a man.

## **Major Theme 2—Attitude**

The eldest Pastor interviewed spoke a lot about the importance of submission and I thought to myself that may have worked in your day, but not today. There is no way a woman in leadership is going to think about being submissive to a male. However, when I looked carefully at the words they used to describe their character and how they answered some of the questions, I found there were many words that spoke to submission from all four pastors, they just used different phrasing. From the categories of humble, feminine, shy, nice, not easily offended, get along with everyone, respect men, patient, kind, flexible, quiet, wise, adjustable, came the strong position of submission. These are words that when used could possibly speak to the submission of a person; reflect a person who is acting in a way to show consideration of another persons' feelings, thoughts, agenda, being careful to not offend, always being careful to portray a face that is non-threatening, ultimately wanting to get along with everyone and willing to act a certain way so you do not offend them. I think of the times when Black men had to shuffle and look down as to not offend White people. They were submitting to them. When this happens, that person is adapting to another person to make that person feel comfortable in their presence. The Black female pastor is submitting to that person so she can build a relationship with him so he will accept her. Today, because of past dynamics, we do not use the word submission very much. In fact, it has become a bad word in the minds of African American women. Black men and women had to submit on the plantation and the master used the bible as a tool to keep them submissive. We do

not like the word submissive and are careful about those who use a few scriptures to try and keep us happy about submitting, when there is no mutual submission. The eldest pastor, Humble Servant, actually used the terms submit and submission in a proud way. In her day and time this was not a dirty word, it represented a proper woman. The other pastors used words that spoke to having a positive attitude, with submitting in their own way, being appropriate for their decade. The bible calls for mutual submission from the man and woman so they may walk in unity with one another and with God. Men do this all the time when trying to get an advantage with a woman they want to date, when seeking a favor, seeking new careers, clients, and promotions. They even submit to other males and don't see it as demeaning; however, submitting to a female is something they usually refuse to do. So, some women do not see the need to be submissive like they did on the plantation. Black women today have had enough of the one way submission. When the word submission is spoken to a Black woman, it causes flashbacks of days of enslavement by the oppressive slave master. A positive attitude from Black women is helpful in gaining the acceptance from male Pastors and leaders. The spiritual female pastor will have to take responsibility for keeping the relationships professional and must resist using femininity to get favors. Her God will cause men to show favor toward you. Her gifts from her Father will make room for her, so she must not put her trust in man, but God alone.

The Black Feminist theory speaks about the oppression of women through the mental and emotional abuse of those in power. In the Black church the Black men are in

power. They abuse their power by keeping Black women from the Senior Pastor position, by giving them small churches that need a lot of work, with less pay than Black male pastors, making it difficult for women to have the same opportunities and privileges as Black male Pastors. This practice allows her to have limited or no access to the table when key decisions are being made.

### **Major Theme 3—Strength**

All four participants believed being strong is a critical factor. Being strong can sometimes mean appearing to be weak to get a vantage point. Many times the Black woman has been trained from childhood to pretend to be dumb or weak so that the Black man feels strong. Some men and women alike feel a person that is kind and soft spoken is weak and cannot lead a congregation. This is just another traditional teaching ingrained in the minds of our young boys and girls. These women are kind and feminine, but they are not weak. Being kind to an oppressive person, or someone trying to do you harm, is a sign of a strong, mature, spirit-filled person, and that is biblical. The bible tells us to love our enemies and to love those who spitefully use you. What appears to be a weakness can actually be a strength, and what appears to be a strength can be an attempt to hide a weakness. Some of these themes were spoken about and evidenced by the fact that the female pastor endured hardships, yet stayed committed to her calling. The categories pastors reported that referred to strength were; natural born leaders, pioneers, trailblazers, resilient, perseverance, oppression, loneliness, depression, full of faith, determination, able to stand in difficult times, not enough money, betrayals, divorces,

abandonment, members leaving, isolation, and disrespect. After dealing with her own personal issues and disrespect in her own home, a strong pastor can prepare and preach a sermon each week amid the constant rejections faced by her members and the male pastors. In addition to all of that, these Pastors have to pray for everyone else, along with their personal agendas and problems, and at the same time pull everyone together to build a thriving church. They have to speak to everyone, show love towards everyone, counsel them, serve them, forgive them, lead them, teach, train, rebuke, marry, bury, and attend to other matters that are too numerous to mention. Their work is 24/7 which means there are no off days. When family members get sick or they die, the pastor is called no matter what time of night. Their members expect them to get out of their beds, drop their families and run to be with them. Strength was revealed in statements about her not being able to quit or call in sick, or take a true vacation from her position because she is viewed as working for the Lord. Being a Senior Pastor requires a person to be strong, to persevere regardless of what comes her way. She is not easily offended and cannot depend totally on people; she must have strong faith in God and continue to move forward even when faced with opposition. These pastors have shared some difficult challenges and faced some huge barriers from the people who profess that God loves everyone, yet they act in an unloving way toward female pastors. Facing rejection from those who say they are close to God, but hate God's daughters, is difficult to handle. These ladies are ready, willing and able to help bring in the harvest, but males reject the help because of her gender. To continue serving with joy it takes strength beyond



physical boundaries. She must be strong mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. She must pray for strength and remind herself of the bible scripture that says, “I can do all things through Christ who gives me my strength.” She must have a strong belief in what she is doing; a strong belief in who she belongs to; believing she will be successful even though the odds are against her. The word of God says, “If I be for you, who can stand against you?” This kind of negative behavior from African American male pastors can disturb the mind of a person seeking to do the work of God and could cause the person to give up. Being a female requires extra supernatural strength that only comes from God. It is by His mighty hand that African American women are able to stand each Sunday in a pulpit and preach about love when much of what they face is hateful rejection; all because they seek to preach the good news. Standing before people who outwardly rebel against her being a female pastor commands a lot of strength which can only come from a person who is confident in her calling and has learned to lean and depend on God alone for strength.

The Womanist theology speaks of strong Black women who contribute to their history and have made great contributions in the history in their churches, and in their communities. Womanist feel the Black church needs to affirm the black woman and make her feel valued by acknowledging her contributions.

#### **Major Theme 4—Education**

One of the most striking traits I heard from these female pastors, was their determination to be well educated. The two older ladies expressed they were not allowed

into seminary during their time. The oldest pastor came along when education for Black women was forbidden; seminaries were not open to women, White or Black. The second oldest Pastor had limited opportunities to get accepted into a seminary because of the limited spaces made available for women, and because of the finances required to enroll in seminary. The two youngest Pastors both took advantage of the times; when enrolling in seminary for females was common and available. The next to the youngest, Pioneer Pistol, was amongst the first group of women enrolled at her seminary. She spoke of the African American men not wanting the African American women in the classes. She reflected on how they isolated them and openly let them know they were not welcome. Each day the women were faced with rejection and isolation as they sought to prove daily to the men that they belonged there also. This was during the time when The Civil Rights and Feminist Movement was going on. Everyone seemed to be fighting for their rights. By the time the youngest Pastor, Young and Beautiful enrolled, the way had been paved and she was welcomed with open arms. The male students had become more comfortable with women in the seminaries, and the universities welcomed the tuition. Today over half of the students in seminary are women. There are still some prejudices occurring in some of the seminary classes and some of the materials taught in some schools still need to be adjusted to offer a more equitable teaching and offering of classes. We are now in the time when seminaries need to hire more female pastors as professors and staff. This will provide more female mentors and give the men a chance to work with intelligent God-fearing, knowledgeable women. Categories that produced

the major themes for education were; teaching, preaching, conference attendance, seminary, schooling, training, professors who mentored them, traditional teaching, uneducated traditional thoughts, not knowing, wanting to go to school, professionalism, and Bible school. Women were denied an education for so long, that now it is available, it has become a major piece of their career puzzle. The narratives from these pastors spoke to their desire to be educated. These women all sought to grow and expand their minds with the best of what was available to them. Education will produce Pastors who are able to relate to those who are educated as well as teach to those who are uneducated. Education is the tool needed to cut the traditional chord in the quadruple knot of prejudice that silence the voices of African American female Pastors. Pastors must be use education to silence the uneducated plantation voices of those who preach and teach tradition and unconditional submission in Black churches. All participants believe Black pastor have been indoctrinated and threatened by head leaders of denominations with traditional information. Failure to transfer this traditional information could lead to them being isolated from the group. This curriculum is holding the Black church and female pastors hostage. Education will shut down the plantation mindset that even today still governs most of the African American churches. African American men must let African American females go free, so they can obey their command to go out into the world and preach the gospel to all men.

For years, the Black Feminist fought for the right to the same educational opportunities as males, beginning with the Women's Suffrage Movement. In 1848,

prominent abolitionists and feminist of the era, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, authored a Declaration of Sentiments patterned after the Declaration of Independence which asserted fundamental rights often denied to women, including the right to vote (Penn, 1902). Women have not always been able to vote or attend college and seminary. Black people were not given the opportunity to attend schools as their White counterparts. The feminist movement was a point in history when women stood up for their rights to become educated just as males, however some of these privileges did not include the Black women. When they were finally allowed to enter seminary, the school only allowed a small amount of female spaces to be filled. Later on the schools were open to Black women as well; however, Black men made known their displeasure with Black women's presence by isolating them and letting them know they were on their own. Women were not allowed to attend all of the classes, and female professors were not allowed to teach certain classes for fear they would "usurp" the authority of a man. A Black feminist will not tolerate this behavior from men and would do whatever necessary to obtain her education.

#### **Major Theme 5—Patience**

This category was full of stories where the pastors' voices spoke loudly as they reflect on the hardships they had to endure through their years as a female pastor. People expect difficult times to occur in their lives, but it is not expected from another pastor who loves God and seeks to do His will. Black women have always sought to make things better for their Black men. Sojourner Truth and other women fought for the

freedom of slaves. Harriet Tubman was reported to have led over 300 slaves, men and women, out of bondage while Ida B. Wells is known for her fight against lynching. Men benefited to a great extent from the sacrifices women made in taking the lead in important issues such as these; which men gladly accepted. Now it seems as though Black men have forgotten to reach back to rescue the Black woman from the hands of those who wish to lynch her in front of her family and her church all in the name of Jesus. African American female pastors are hated by some African American men of God who make it their mission to make life miserable for these women because they seek to do God's will. When I hear the story about the eldest female pastor being called into the ministry in her 20s and asking for permission from her pastor to leave, only to be told to wait, that took patience. When I listened to the many stories of these female pastors serving their male pastors without pay or with little pay, some with good pay, but not equal to that of the male pastor took patience. When I heard the pastor's voice about a prominent female Bishop who went to college, seminary, and her denomination ordained her as a deacon and gave her 11 members to pastor, that took patience. African American Female Leaders have been in church leadership since the mid-1700s. It is now 2012 and women are still waiting for permission, waiting for the acceptance, waiting for a covering from their Black leaders who not too long ago were still on the plantation and could not walk the streets without the threat of being lynched. When I read of the stories of the women who risked their lives, gave up their careers and their finances to support the causes of the Black church and its Black pastors, then to see them become the new

master who keeps women silent or on lock down in the plantation, as she still lovingly waits patiently for him to accept her, to speak up for her, and to protect her. For a woman who is called of God to be afraid of a man called by God is an oxymoron. God is love! I call that relentless patience. During the Civil Rights, Black women left their feminist fight for equality to fight alongside of their men for their racial justice, which brought freedom to black men, but the Black women are still waiting for their freedom and justice to be heard.

The pastors stressed patience because they firmly believe God is in control and one day this will issue will be history and will sit back and reflect on how they got over. Education will all eventually lead to their acceptance one day soon. When I heard of the female pastor who asked for help, only to be rejected into submission and defeat, I can see a need for patience. Pioneer Pistol got tired of waiting and it cost her. Being from the Civil Rights era, she felt it was appropriate to demand her rights, but the time was not right and it caused her some delay, devastation and disappointments on her journey. Black men fought for their rights, but the Black woman has been silenced by the Black man and made to wait on the plantation until he gives her permission to speak. Seminaries and the Civil Rights Movement prepared these women for a world that was not ready for female pastors and neither was the African American church. African American women are still waiting for equality in the pulpit.

When Pioneer Pistol finished seminary and obtained jobs in three different mega churches (3000+), she knew she was qualified and sought a position warranted by her

qualifications. She then asked for help from the Black pastors in forming her own church. They responded with an ultimatum which revealed their ultimate goal was to keep her working for them at their churches like the Blacks on the plantation with only pipe dreams of one day being free. They were amazed that she would want to leave their church. They had been good to her! They saw this as a threat of an ungrateful black woman who was not standing behind her Black man. She was qualified, she had served them well, and now they were withholding from her what was rightfully hers'; the right to start her own church. Having just gone through the Feminist Movement and the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, it appeared to her that this was the way to get her rights; to ask and then to demand them. This worked for Black men, but Black women had not been given permission by the Black men to voice their own opinions. The thoughts and perceptions of a Black woman's rights had never been seriously thought about by Black men nor the Black church. Pioneer Pistol found herself doing what she had been taught to do by the men; rebel against the status quo, demand her rights, at the risk of being seen as ungrateful and a betrayer to the Black male pastor who gave her an opportunity when it was not fashionable to do so. In his mind, he had risked his denominational affiliations for her, paid her well, and now she was leaving his church to start her own church. It could have been the right move for her, but the question was, is it the right time to move? This move caused the female pastor a lot of grief and the other pastors who knew this popular male pastor would not associate with her. She ended up at another mega church, and another similar incident occurred. After working there for

several years, she again asked for support from the Black pastor to help her get her church started; only to be void of support and being asked to leave again. She felt compelled to ultimately start her own church; however she now has two incidents on her record from two prominent pastors, which made her untrusting to other pastors. As always in any story, there are two sides. I do not know if Pioneer Pistol was trying to steal members, or cause problems in this pastor's congregation. Research needs to be done on those pastors who have hired African American female pastors, but her narrative is in agreement with the narratives of the other female pastors; so it appears there is a pattern of Black pastors not wanting female ministers to leave the plantation, but to remain their personal servant for life.

The feminist women would have stopped asking and started demanding her rights. Most Black women have a strong determination to not complain against, embarrass or tattle on their Black men. They would rather quietly suffer inside, pray, and pretend everything is ok. Could it be the right time now for women to stop asking for permission and start informing their male leaders they are leaving if they are not acknowledged? The slaves on the plantation had to get tired of waiting and ultimately begin to leave. If oppressed people always wait for the oppressor to feel sorry and come to their senses, her recognition will never happen. If everyone remained silent, women would not be able to vote, Black people would still be on plantations, and women would still be at home cooking, cleaning, and having babies. In addition they would not be able to own property, nor would they be able to divorce an abusive man. Many Black women



do not want to hurt the feelings of their Black men, but must demand that the Black men stop hurting them.

### **Major Theme 6—Self-Esteem**

One of the issues that confront males and females is keeping a positive self-image and a healthy self-esteem. Being a senior pastor of a church is extremely stressful, and can affect your mental and emotional well-being. With women facing rejection from the men they love, fought for, given to, and unconditionally supported, it's hard to imagine they have never felt worthless; like giving up. 3 / 4 of the participants openly shared their struggle to keep their self-esteem positive. The one participant who did not share obviously had stories that involved instances of times when her self-esteem was challenged. Because of her personality, she seemed to feel this information should not be expressed or it is a sign of a weak woman to share her feelings on it. On the contrary, I think it is a sign of a strong woman who can stay sound when the people you love are throwing darts at you. Each day they are faced with a negative portrayal of who you are from the African American male Pastors and leaders in the church. This is true with a lot of the women in the church. This negative connotation has been a common cause for the participants struggle with self-esteem. Their strong spiritual conviction has been the factor that kept their minds and emotions from overtaking them. It takes strong women to keep a positive mindset and stand each week before the people who demean her as she stands before them to preach on God's love; the fruit of the spirit. She is expected to be loving, forgiving, long suffering, and gentle, toward those who seek to keep her

enslaved to their traditional beliefs which all work to their advantage. Despite all of this negative energy, she is expected close her ears and eyes, then smile and bring a strong word from the Lord. Female pastors have to keep their eyes focused on their assignment from God and continue to lead while under attack.

Both the Womanist Theology and the Black Feminist theory give support to women taking pride in being a Black woman. They promote the Black woman being treated like a queen who is valuable and capable. They both seek to build the self-esteem of all women and challenge the Black church and its Black men to take the lead. This encouragement should come from these same Black men that Black women fought for, kept secrets for, all to keep their men from ridicule and present them as their Strong honorable Black Men. Black men have always been able to depend on the Black woman to be in his corner and to support him in whatever he put his mind to. Black women have loved their boys and men, so they cover for them, make excuses and sacrifices for them. The Black woman has been known for always putting herself last in the family. Black men have not taught their sons how to treat a Black Queen. The Black church in some cases, has not taught the complete bible on how the man should lay down his life for his wife as Christ did for the church. Instead they continue to use their favorite scriptures, for the women to be submissive to men, obey them and to serve them. These are the same kind of scriptures the slave master taught them when they were reminding their servants to be submissive and obeyed their masters.

## **Major Theme 7—Finance**

African American female pastors are faced with a quadruple jeopardy knot which is made from; race, gender, economics and tradition. Each of these components affects the other ones causing a blending of prejudices and injustice making it difficult for the African American female pastor to break free. All of the ultimately cause her to receive less pay than males, thus making it more likely for her to face poverty. The focus group women stressed their concerns for finances. Two of these pastors are single with one income. They consistently take home much less than their male pastors while performing the same job and in most cases, having greater responsibilities. They are single moms or divorcees whose men are let's say, missing in action. This quadruple jeopardy knot creates a difficult situation for these women at home as well as in the maintenance, operations and leading of their churches. Their pay has never equaled that of males. For years the Black church has used the Black woman for free labor. They do a lot of the work with no recognition and no pay. In 2012, there is a bill being enacted to ensure that females get equal pay called the Sally Ledbetter Act. Men in leadership of our country refuse to sign it. What is the man really trying to say about women? According to President Barack Obama:

Right now, women are a growing number of breadwinners in the household. But they're still earning just 77 cents for every dollar a man does—even less if you're an African American or Latina woman. Overall, a woman with a college degree doing the same work as a man will earn hundreds of thousands of dollars less

over the course of her career. So closing this pay gap—ending pay discrimination—is about far more than simple fairness. When more women are bringing home the bacon, but bringing home less of it than men who are doing the same work, that weakens families, it weakens communities, it's tough on our kids, it weakens our entire economy. (as cited in Gooden, 2012)

After the debate on October 16, 2012, I watched as women pledged their support for the candidate who refused to acknowledge questions about this bill. This candidate refused to make promises to be fair to women, but these women still consider giving him their vote. What does that say about women?

The Black feminist and Womanist theories both promote and support equity of pay for women. The findings report White women are not paid equal to men; however, they are closer to equity of men than African American women.

### **Major Theme 8—Anointing**

Taking on the job of Senior Pastor requires a person to be called by God under the power of the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit brings with it a special anointing or power from God to equip the person He calls to do His work. Pastors face persecution, and situations that require supernatural intervention as they are given an anointing from God that is strong and powerful. With this anointing they can do things that are humanly impossible even withstanding forces of evil and demonic powers. From the time of their birth, each of these Pastors evidenced a great anointing on their lives. All of these women were birthed from the seed of pastors and ministers. God has called them to lead

His people, appointed them and anointed them before their mothers knew them. It is evident that God uses the lineage of God's appointed fathers and mothers to produce like male and female Pastors and ministers. When I was called into the ministry, my father said to me, "Why are you surprised; your father and grandfather were ministers? It is in your blood and your children have it in their blood. Watch they will all preach." Sure enough, all three of my boys are preachers. The daughter is called by God also, but she has not announced her calling yet.

The Anointing breaks the yolk! The powerful anointing on these women has drawn members to their churches, lives have been changed, families helped, children have positive role models and people are taught the true word of God. God has given each of them supernatural abilities and power to stand, overcome and persevere in the midst of oppression and isolation from Black men whom they have always supported. Their anointing has broken the yoke of bondage on women to preach and it will continue until every woman God calls will not have to ask permission from a man. The Word of God says He will pour out His Spirit on all flesh, my sons and my daughters shall prophesy. Women are his daughters and prophesy means to preach. The first people to spread the good news about Jesus' resurrection were females. Jesus anointed them and appointed them to carry the good news to his disciples and all other men and women. He could have sent them to get the men, or appeared to them himself, but His choice was the women.

Womanist theology speaks to the Black church having power to overcome oppressive forces, but rebukes the black church for attacking the anointing on the life of female pastors. Womanist feel the Black church should be giving more attention to the contributions of the women in the bible, as well as in their own churches. Womanist speak about men and women in the church uncovering the abuse Black women have to face in their own churches by their own men, as well as the Black women.

### **My Narrative**

I started watching this process unfold from the eyes of a very small child as I took note of the men in my life. Please know this is not true of all Black men, this is just what I saw in my life. There are plenty of great Pastors that head our churches, but the churches I attended were dysfunctional. My grandfather had 13 children, and my grandmother died at age 42. My father and mother divorced early in my life, so my memories of him dealt with my mother trying to get child support from him. I saw my mother struggling, with the exception of a few years, to make it alone when she was married to my three step dads. She was poor and very beautiful, so of course there were other men, some good and some very bad. She took us to church regularly and I saw the men in my life and at the church take advantage of little innocent girls, maturing teenagers, and young women. I saw them rob them of their self-worth and throw them out like the garbage. I saw black men beat black women, have babies and refuse to pay to raise them, I saw black pastors sleep with men and women in the church, I saw them touch children and cheat openly on their wives in the church with the musician and other

women. I saw the usher's babes come out looking just like the pastor and the members gossiping about it. I saw pastors stealing money and living large while women worked for free, sold bake goods from their welfare check and government commodities to have baked sales and chicken dinners make money for the church. I saw my pastor's wife constantly being admitted to Terrell Mental Institution and having babies by neighbors and church members. It reminded me of the plantation stories when mulatto children started showing up. With blue eyes, black skin and blond hair. The master was having his way on the plantation and nobody said a word. They took that baby and raised it like it was no different from the other children. All of the slaves knew what was happening to the negro women and young girls, but they kept their mouths closed and were taught by the slave owner to mind their own business. When slaves became free, many remained on the plantations, because mentally and emotionally they were bound to the slave master. They were afraid of the change because they were conditioned to accept the old familiar way as the best way, so it became their choice.

When I grew up I promised myself that I would never be a pastor's wife and wanted no parts of the church life in my home. When my husband asked me to marry him, my question to him was are you going to preach; do you feel a calling on your life? He stated no, so I agreed to marry him. Seven years later, the Lord told me in a dream that my husband would preach. I was upset with God and felt deceived. Looking back from today I can see it was God's plan for me to experience the history so I could speak to it. My husband's father was a pastor, my dad was a pastor, and my husband and I both

also had step-dads who were pastors. After being surrounded by Black preachers and pastors, I had had enough! Little did I know that God had His plans. My response was, be it unto me.

When my husband started his own church it was a replica of the traditional Baptist church that I grew up in. I was miserable! I wanted out! It was made of the same kind of people I saw in the churches I grew up in. I thought to myself, how I ended up in the very place I fought so hard to avoid.

We did all of the Baptist things and followed the Baptist rules. One year we went to the National Baptist Convention our funds were really tight so we were putting multiple people to a room to save money. One of the female members who was in charge put a teenage girl in the room with me and my husband. I had had enough. Either my husband was going to get them straight, or I could and would. My husband and I discussed the happenings with him as the Lord started dealing with him on some things. Before I knew it, he had dropped Baptist from our name and started accepting women ministers. A question we must all ask ourselves is, why did all of these African American women leave the Baptist church. He started including me in the bible teaching and sometimes preaching. I was shocked when one day he presented me with my license. A few years later, he ordained me and appointed me as the Executive pastor. We were on our way to becoming examples for others to follow of what a man of God and the woman of God looks like when they work together in ministry. I do the same things he does in the church, but I recognize that he is the Senior Pastor. This union has not



been easy, as he is a product of the traditional Baptist church, so his thinking and processing will take time to change. I know that I cannot make him change, only God can; and little by little he is changing. It would be easier if his fellow pastors felt the same way, but most of them have changed in some ways, and refuse to change in other ways. It is a battle and we are in the middle of it. Considering the times we live in, we work well together. He realizes he is married to a strong, intelligent, Black woman who is willing and able to help, but refuses to be abused and misused. I was raised during the same era as Pioneer Pistol. I have had to be patient and not jump too fast with too much force at one time. I refuse to let him treat me in a way that will get him in trouble with my Father. Men will have to pay for how they treat God's daughters. We are fearfully and wonderfully made in our Fathers image. I willingly submit to his leadership because he knows how to lead me. I refuse to follow a man just because he is a man; if he is lost, he cannot lead me. I obey God First and follow him as he is following Christ. The word of God says, "You will know my disciples by their love one for another." Christ died for all. There is neither Greek nor Jew, male nor female. "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy." Look in Appendix D for the biblical explanation on what the New Testament says about women in the bible. No one should be stopping the spirit God pours out on his sons and his daughters. We are to go and make disciples. All of our energy should be put into obeying our Creator by going to make disciples unto God and not unto ourselves.

## **Conclusion**

The critical voices and stories of many African American women who struggle to survive and who have participated in the struggle toward women's liberation throughout the years were never shared in abundance in the literature. African American women seeking leadership positions and gender equality in the church are still faced with the same dilemma with which their racial and gender groups have grappled for centuries; however, in the absence of status and voice, social change is unlikely to occur. Men commanded the pulpits of the Black church; they dominate church power and politics, and remain the major voice heard in the African American church. History reveals that African American church leadership has often perpetuated the submission, domination and oppression of its female pastors; protecting the power and authority of its "male only" leadership by maintaining the status quo rather than evolving to a system that treats everyone equally and allows the female voice to be heard.

Today, as in the case throughout the history of the Black church, men dominate in the pulpit, in published religious scholarship, and in the leadership in both the sacred and secular worlds (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003). Present-day leadership involving women restricts them to subordinate positions in relation to clergies (Bragg, 2011).

Hines (2003) stated that African-American women have always served as the developmental leader, and have thrived on helping silence people. Hines argued that society has often tried to silence African American Women. As a result, they have had to overcome two stigmas-racism and sexism. Thus, of all interactive ethnic and gender-

driven experiences, the African-American woman's experience is most closely aligned with the everyday struggles of disenfranchised people (Hines, 2003).

A part of the religious experience of African-Americans involves coming to workable terms with European organizational forms that presume the subordination and marginalization of women. Male dominance in African American churches was expressed most clearly by the fact that Black women were forbidden to be ordained and to preach from a pulpit (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003).

While there are some in Black churches who continue to speak out against sexism in their faith communities, there is an even more significant impact when Black religious and spiritual leaders address this question. Black theology and the Black church must deal with the double bondage of Black women in church and society. Two ways they can do so are, first, to treat Black women with the same respect as men. This means that women who are qualified for ministry should be given the same opportunities as men to become pastors and to serve in such leadership positions as deacons, stewards, trustees, etc. Secondly, theology and the church must eliminate exclusionist language, attitudes or practices, however benign or unintended, in order to benefit fully from the talents of women.

I would suggest that African American female clergy face a quadruple knot which has emerged from racism, sexism, economic status, and Black on Black oppression. This knot is intertwined to make it a strong force to deal with and it is extremely resistant to being unwound or cut. Each strand merges with the other strands

to make a knot that is guaranteed to incapacitate, humiliate and embarrass the African American female pastor. The female pastor adorns this around her neck everywhere she goes. This knot is sealed with silencing duct tape to cover the mouths of males and females who wish to speak out against the Quadruple Knot. This last strand is placed around the necks of African American female pastors by Black denominations, traditional black churches, traditional black leaders and traditional black pastors of Black churches and Traditional Black females who make it difficult for and refuse to respect and support Black female pastoral leadership.

Denominations get with the times. We should not be doing the same things we did twenty years ago. So embrace the Lord's daughters and win the world for Christ, you can't do it alone. God sent help mates to subdue and rule the earth, not to be your personal slaves. Set the women free and together you can put Satan on the run out of our churches, out of our homes, out of our communities and ultimately out of our country. You need help so stop killing your help and allow the help to function the way God designed them and not the way you feel they should be used. You are fighting the wrong one!

As we reflect on the extraordinary contributions of African American women engaged in the struggle for Black freedom for the Black male and the Black community, it is so important to remember the women who stood by the sides of the Black men. They planned, gave, sacrificed and spoke up for their Black men; their fathers, their sons, their uncles, their grandfathers, their cousins, their nephews, the men in the

community and those men in the community as well as in the Black church. Black women have always fought for and spoken out on behalf of the men in her life. She has marched, she has been lynched, she has been jailed and sometimes even killed, all so that the Black man could be the man. She has also worked hard so he could look good; she has in some cases financed him, dressed him, loved him and covered for him. She has borne his children, cooked his food, cleaned his house, washed his clothes, and forgiven him when he did not deserve it. She has even at times let herself go without so he could wear a suit and tie because he was the Pastor. This is the same Black man that is now free and chooses to oppress the Black woman. Is this why we fought: is this our reward?

Women, I ask what have we created? We now have a man who does not respect us, nor will he speak up for us, he will not pay the bills, nor take care of the children; he abandons us, mistreats us, abuses us, cheats on us, lies to us, and we remain silent. How did the Black man learn to treat us this way? At one time the man and women had to fight side by side; racism, bigotry, hatred, and now the Black woman is left trying to defend herself from the same abuse at the hand of this same Black man. She has had to confront and overcome sexism from their own race of people; the Black Church, its Black leaders, Black denominations, and Black pastors. Women fight for equal pay to that of male pastors. They fight to preach from the same pulpits as African American males, to be given the same respect and support from the Black man. Though there is some evidence that women enjoyed greater status and rights in ancient and traditional

African civilizations and societies, in large measure the experience of African women in America has been conditioned by the patriarchal values of the system of male domination operative in a Euro-American society.

When compared to white populations, the African American populations have been significantly underrepresented in studies of the religious experience. The religious practices of African American women, in particular, are rarely the subject of empirical investigation (Lee, 2008). The voice in the narratives of these four African American female pastors, with respect to their religious experiences is critical in articulating how this population frames religion within its social realm. Social research emphasizes the importance of the spoken and written word in fueling motivations to improve social justice ills (Darlington & Scott, 2002; Lee & Poynton, 2000; Turner, 2010). While the literature reviewed herein clearly demonstrates the African American clergy woman as an oppressed person within her own religious organization, it is also disheartening in that it reflects a slow-coming change in the Black church. It reveals that Blacks are leaving traditional denominational plantations for liberating non-denominational churches.

Black Feminist assert that women have a dual burden of being female and black, with the two characteristics influencing one another consistently and through several channels (Edwin, 2006). The four participants have all experienced racial and gender prejudices in their lives. They can identify with the feminist on one of these two issues, but not the race and economic pieces. White women are nowhere near the same poverty line as Black females. They have money or ways of getting money, so White women do

not bear the same burden as those of African American females. Therefore African American feminist essential dismiss the wealth of Euro-American feminist discourse as practically irrelevant to their position, with unique socio-cultural characteristics of the female Black experience being defining mechanisms for the path toward gender equality (Edwin, 2006). The pervasiveness of racism and sexism that existed in the Black and women's liberation movements rendered Black women almost nonexistent in both worlds. As a consequence, those "racist and sexist narratives remain in the consciousness of present day African American feminists" (Marbley, 2005). Burrow (1998) describes Womanist Theology as women in church and society approaching a way of affirming themselves as Black, while simultaneously owning their connection with feminism and with male and female members of the African American community. The concept of Womanist Theology allows women to claim their roots in Black history, religion and culture. The key assumption in Womanist Theology that is not present in African feminism, however, is that racial and gender prejudices are essentially sins against God and are present in our society. Womanist see a woman as a marginalized group. Womanist theologians assume that the humanity of African American women's need to be affirmed by the Black church, rather than denigrated. It affirms and critiques the positive and negative attributes of the church, the African Womanist Theology teaches Christians new insights about moral life based on ethics supporting justice, survival, and a productive quality of life for poor women, children and men.

If change is to come, minds must seek to please God, and not fear what man can do for you or to you. Obedience is better than sacrifice and now that you know better God will hold you to do better.

As an African American Female Clergy, I have to live in a world that where the men oppress God's daughters and say they love God. They think they are helping God, but God does not need any help. He is God alone. I don't seek to help Him do what He alone can do and that is Be God. He said I will give you Pastors after mine own heart, and that does not include the hearts of man.

### **Snippets of Wisdom from the Participants**

I thank God for these female pastors, who openly shared with me their narratives. I pray that men and women of all races and denominations will take a good look at their relationship to God and His job description, repent, get in order, and go make disciples. Each participant left great impression on me. They each had their own message God sent through them. Here is a one sentence that I think describes what their message to you might be.

Participant 1—Humble Servant: Obey God instead of obeying man. When participant one was called into the Pastorate, she was very fearful of men. She had been taught to obey men and her leaders unconditionally. However, she did not realize she had made the men in her life her God. She feared them more than she feared God and obeyed them at the expense of disobeying God. She depended on them for covering, but did not ask the Lord for covering. This is fear of what man can do to you and lacking



faith in what God can do. You can become a people pleaser and not a God pleaser. Obey God and Please Him only!

Participant 2—Triumphant Giant: Love yourself and who you are. You are fearfully and wonderfully made by God in His image. Your gifts will make room for you, so have faith in God and not man. Keep a strong prayer life and use your anointing!

Participant 3—Pioneer Pistol: Learn everything you can, and wait for Gods signal to move. Pioneer Pistol was so eager to quickly get everything in place to start her church. She had the credentials, the mentors, the ordination, and training. She believed in getting all of her ducks in a row; crossing every t and dotting every i. She does not waste time and seeks to move immediately. God's timing is not our timing..

Participant 4—Young and Beautiful: People will hurt you and mean it for bad, but God is always working things out for your good. Don't let anyone or anything shake your faith. Shift! Learn from your experiences, and keep moving. She was young and beautiful, yet her husband left her. She was great at what she did, but people were jealous.

## **Recommendations**

### **Denominational Recommendations**

The following traditional recommendations are made based on my findings in this research. These recommendations will bring about a slow, but sure change toward full acceptance of females as Senior Pastors one day.

1. Female pastors should consider putting male leaders around her to assist her in leading her congregation
2. A dialogue between male Pastors and female Pastors needs to take place so a model can be put in place to include females in the pastorate.
3. Females should seek a strong female pastor as mentor. There should be a level of respect and appreciation for men pastors that are willing to serve as mentors for women.
4. Pray and wait on the Lord.

### **Non-Traditional Recommendations**

The following non-traditional recommendations are made based on my findings in this research. These recommendations will bring about a speedy change toward full acceptance of females as Senior Pastors.

For equity to take place for the African American female clergy the following must take place:

1. The Black man must erase all traditional teachings, fast, pray and re-read the Word of God with an open mind to please Him and not his brother.
2. The Black man must become educated to the reality of the plantation teaching and leadership development given that have kept our churches enslaved; committed to traditions and not God.
3. The Black church must repent and be retaught the truth through the Word of God by men who have truly heard from God and seek to please Him only.

4. The Black church, its leaders and denominations must hold everyone accountable for treating women like Christ would want them to be treated. This includes female pastors, as well as the women on the streets.
5. The Black woman has got to demand to be treated like the Queen she is. She is a daughter of the Most High God, so women stop acting and dressing like Satan is your daddy. Act, speak, dress and carry yourself in a way that everyone knows who your Father is.
6. Stop waiting, stop settling. Women make up the majority of the churches. Respect yourself and respect your sister. We have the power to sit down if we can't speak up. Then let's see who does the work of the church. When the slaves left the plantation, the plantations were forced to shut down, or master had to pick his own crops
7. Realize how much your Black Queens love and honor you as their black men. Be the kind of man God made you to be. We want a man who can lead without manipulation and a strong hand. We just want a man who will treat us like God is our father.

### **Implications for Future Research**

More research needs to be conducted to bring clarity and closure to this topic. Women have moved forward in all other careers, and the church needs to accept her. Jesus has, so why not His followers. See appendix for study on New Testament women leaders and the biblical response.

1. The study was done with a small number of female Pastors from two denominations. It is recommended that a study take place across all denominations.
2. There should be a study to compare the training and classes females found to be helpful in preparing them for their roles.
3. A study on male pastors who support female pastors is suggested.
4. A study of female Hispanic pastors (or other women of color) and their perceptions is suggested.
5. A study of the sermons of female pastors to determine the threads that emerges in their sermons and their selection of scriptures. How have their narratives impacted their sermons.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**CASE STUDY CONSENT FORM**

CONSENT FORM

Voices of Four African American Clergy and Their Perception of Gender Equity and Leadership Styles

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying the perceptions of African American Female Clergy as it related to gender equity in the profession of Clergy. The purpose of this study is to **examine the life experiences and leadership practices of four African American female clergy in the African American Urban Church**. You were selected to be a possible participant because you are an African American Female Pastor of African American church.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an one on one interview with me. The interview will last no longer than two hours. Your participation will may be audio/video recorded

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated with this study are minimal and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, your participation will help to further research in this area.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Evelyn Ogletree will have access to the records.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio [/video] recorded. Any audio /video recordings will be stored securely and only Evelyn Ogletree will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for one year and then erased.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

if you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Evelyn Ogletree at ladyo@tamedu.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or ir@Anu.edu..

Version: Rae (The version date must be changed each time the form is modified.)

Signature

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

I agree to be audio / video recorded.  
I do not want to be audio / video recorded.

Signature of Participant Data: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

P

CENTRE OF RESEARCH CO-ORDINATION

PROTOCOL

APPROVAL DATE 11/2/00

EXPIRES 11/2/01

BY



**APPENDIX B**  
**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

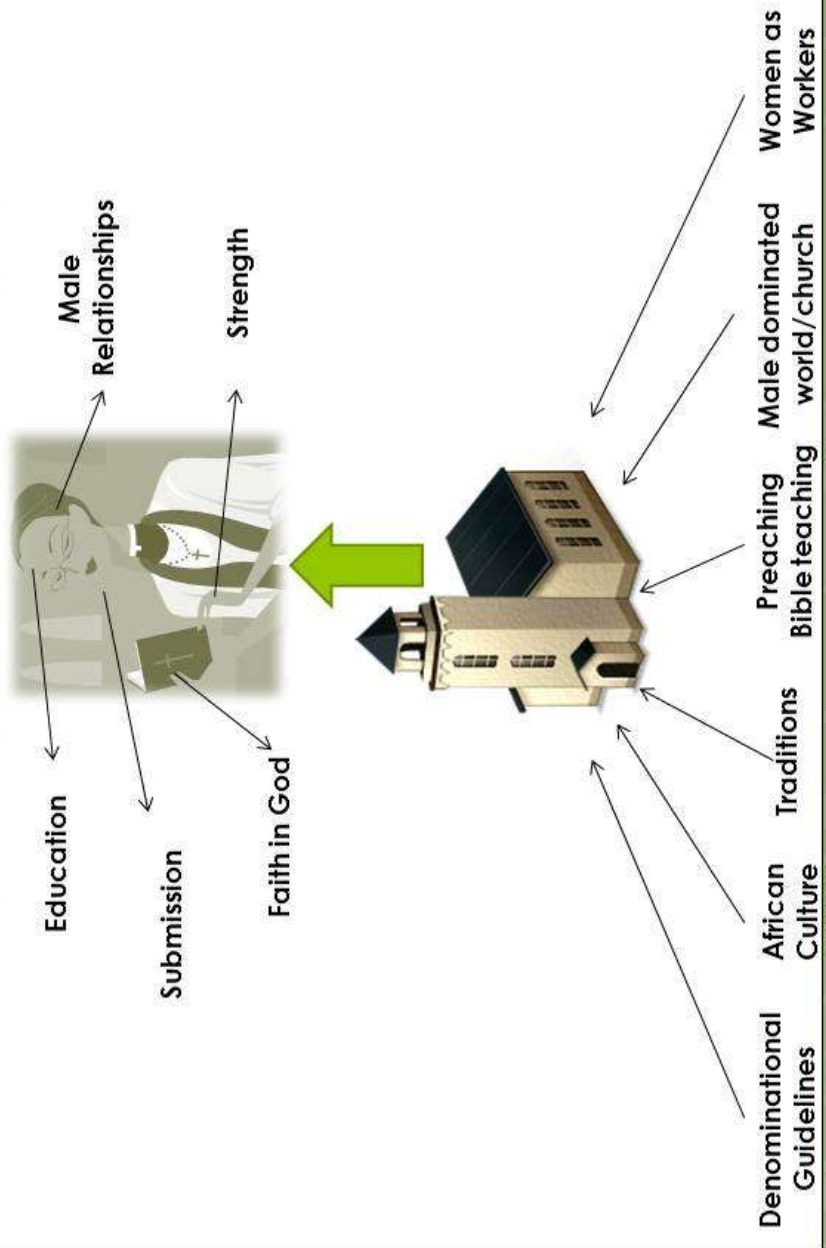
### Pastor's Matrix

1. What do you view as the primary challenge or concern you face as an African American Female Clergy?
2. What are the barriers that African American Female clergy face in African American Churches?
3. What progress have you witnessed or experienced that related to women in clergy?
4. Do you feel your training prepared you to pastor a church?
5. What, if any gender disparities have you experienced in the role of clergy?
6. What factors in your life as an African American Women led to your success?
7. Who or what had the greatest impact on you becoming a pastor?

**APPENDIX C**  
**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**



# Conceptual Framework



**APPENDIX D**  
**WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS ABOUT WOMEN**

## **What the New Testament Says About Women**

Disagreement continues to exist on the role of women in ministry especially relating to preaching, leadership, and serving as a pastor. Most of the discussion on this subject springs from two controversial texts by the Apostle Paul. In 1 Corinthians 14:34, Paul writes: *“women should remain silent in the churches.”* He also says that women should be submissive and if *they* had any questions, they should *“ask their own husbands.”*

The other controversial text is 1 Timothy 2:11-12 where Paul tells his preaching protégé Timothy: *“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.”*

These two are traditional “proof texts” are used to teach against women preaching, leading or serving as a pastor. When isolated from other texts one could rightly conclude women should be denied certain rights and privileges. In truth, there are other texts that provide a contrasting look at the role of women in the New Testament. Studying other passages of the New Testament one will discover a role beyond silence, submission and inquiry at home.

### **Jesus’ Respect of Women**

In the gospel of Luke 8:1-3, we are told as Jesus traveled from town to town that he was accompanied by more than the Twelve disciples. The Twelve were his hand-picked disciples. They were his leadership team. Luke shares the fact of women traveling with Jesus. They had been recipients of the healing and delivering ministry of Jesus. These were prominent women who gave financial support as an act of gratefulness.

Women were in the crowds of people as he taught and miraculously fed the five and four thousand. (Matthew 14:21, 15:38) While visiting the home of Martha, he took time to teach her sister Mary. (Luke 10:39) He broke custom and defended women who men looked down on or wanted punished. (John 4:27, 8:7-10) Women were at the empty tomb on Resurrection Sunday and given instructions by the risen Christ. (Matthew 28:10, John 20:17)

### **Women in the Early Church**

Luke also wrote the Book of Acts that records the history of the early church. His record has women including Jesus' mother meeting with the Twelve minus Judas Iscariot (now they are the Apostles). (Acts 1:14) Luke gives the number of disciples meeting at that time to be 120. It is clear that they were involved in prayer with the men and in the discussion of Judas' replacement. It is also clear that the women along with the men were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:4) Peter the lead Apostle explains to the amazed onlookers that what was happening was prophesied by the prophet Joel: *"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. (2:17)* The word "prophesy" means a message imparted to one by the Holy Spirit to be proclaimed to others.

We are given several prominent women in Luke's historical record: Tabitha who helped the poor (9:36); a businesswoman named Lydia who was the first European convert (16:14); a woman named Damaris in Athens (17:34); Priscilla who served with her

husband Aquila partnering with Paul (18:18); and four unnamed unmarried daughters who prophesied (21:9).

### **Paul's Recognition of Women**

One must look at the other textual writings of Paul when as it relates to women. In Romans 16, the book is closed with his personal greetings to both men and women. He begins mentioning Phoebe who he calls a servant. (16:1) He proceeds to mention Priscilla (16:3); Mary acknowledging her hard work (16:6); Junia a prominent leader among the apostles (16:7); Tryphena and Tryphosa who were hard working sisters (16:12); and, Julia and the sister of Nereus (16:15).

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul sets order for worship in the church. In doing so he recognizes the role of women saying: *“And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head...”* (1 Corinthians 11:5) This verse seems to contradict the directive for women to keep silent. He gives another liberating text for women in Galatians 3:28: *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* In Philippians 4:2, Paul recognizes Euodia and Syntyche who he acknowledges *“contented at my side in the cause of the gospel.”*

### **Conclusion**

The Bible answers the big question: Can women serve in ministry? All one has to do is approach the New Testament texts with theological and logical scrutiny to discover a woman's place in ministry. One will find an abundance of liberating texts that release to answer their call in church dominated by male leadership.