

**How We Thrive: Black Clergywomen Experiencing Intersectionality and Influenced by the
Strong Black Woman Schema**

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Department of Community Care and Counseling, Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

Liberty University

2023

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of Black women in church leadership (e.g., pastors, clergywomen) who experienced intersectionality and were influenced by the Strong Black Woman (SBW) motif, specifically in the Black Church in the southern United States. Intersectionality and the SBW schema were the guiding theoretical frameworks in this study. With adherence to these guiding theories, the participants were asked to describe their experiences with intersectionality while influenced by SBW and to examine well-being as it pertained to their lives and ministerial calling. Despite the emergence of more women in ministry, the barriers these women faced were great. Their responses to intersectionality and the embodiment of the key tenets of SBW were crucial for efficacious leadership. The Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA) model was utilized to measure the clergywomen's well-being. Data collection included a 30-question semi-structured interview with each participant and a culminating focus group of participants to validate and refine themes developed from the interviews. Six themes and 15 sub-themes emerged from data analysis. The prevalent themes were contemporary experiences with intersectionality, responses to intersectionality, SBW influence, well-being, PERMA, and the How I Thrive mantra. The results from the study addressed the gaps in the extant literature: contemporary experiences of Black clergywomen with intersectionality, the influence of SBW, and their impact on maintaining a healthy well-being.

Keywords: female church leadership, intersectionality, strong black woman, SBW motif, positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, PERMA, well-being

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Dedication

I dedicate this manuscript to my Harden family. Thank you for your patience and forgiveness for all the missed family gatherings, postponed vacations, and abbreviated calls. Your support and continued encouragement made quitting impossible, no matter how often I contemplated saying to God, “this is too hard!” Dad, you are a great man of God and the leader of our family. Mom, you are a strong Black woman and taught me to be one. Vickie, you are the best sister who encouraged me through this process and has my back no matter what. Cephas, you are my miracle from God. Family, it is finished, and yes, mom, “We are all graduating!”

Pastor Johnna T. Davis and Life Changing Ministries International (LCMI) thank you for continuing to be a healing place and training ground for God’s people. Pastor Johnna, thank you for obeying God and being an excellent pastor so I could move into this part of my journey. I will continue to love and pray for my LCMI family as I move on to the next phase.

Bishop Bruce Claiborne, thank you for being my pastor, friend, and confidant. You are my wise, godly counsel and a true man of God who fully supports me as I chase God and what I believe He has called me to do to bring heaven to earth. Thank you for leading the expert panel. I hope that all women can experience such supportive, exemplary leadership.

Finally, thank you to all my fellow clergywomen, especially the 12 who shared their stories. Thank you for trusting me to share your narratives. It was such an honor to work with each of you. You are strong, resilient daughters of the Most High and the epitome of a faithful servant for His people. Thank you for persevering and paving the way for the next generation of young Black women that will take our place. Continue to serve and seek first the Kingdom of God. I want us all to hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I thank the Almighty God. He knew what He planned for my life. This chapter closes so another one can begin. Thank you, Abba!

Dr. Baker, I thank God for you and all of your encouragement, support, and guidance. I am eternally grateful that God chose you as my dissertation chair. You taught me so much and helped me when I did not know what to do. Thank you for believing in me and teaching me to believe in myself. You are truly a great leader, teacher, and blessing. I pray I can pay it forward to my colleagues in our cohort and future doctoral candidates.

Dr. Boyd, our interactions were few yet meaningful. Your feedback helped reframe the first research question, define my research participation criteria clearly, and clarify the significance of the study. I will continue to create awareness regarding this topic.

Dr. Volk and Dr. Chamberlin, thank you for allowing me to use the Strong Black Woman items and the Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale for my screening survey. Dr. Volk, I am grateful you discussed the Strong Black Woman schema in our EDCO 745 Intensive.

Dr. McKenna Lewis, Dr. Catherine Peters, and Dr. Stacey Rainbolt, your support was essential throughout the entire process. Kate Barrett, thank you for being a helpful editor. Dr. Neressa Darroux, Dr. Dana Hart-Raynor, Dr. Chernika Leon, and Dr. Elizabeth Martin, your assistance in the dissertation phase was instrumental to my successful completion. Elder Alycia Ali, Dr. James Burrell, Bishop Bruce Claiborne, Pastor Johnna T. Davis, Minister Victoria Edwards, Dr. Dana Hart-Raynor, Pastor Eleanor Reid, and Bishop Terri Smith, you facilitated the connections needed to recruit participants; I thank you and could not have done it without you. Prophet Maryellen Christmas, I am grateful for your prayers, words of encouragement, and godly wisdom on this long journey; thank you for being a mother in Zion.

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List of Abbreviations

Baptist Faith and Message (BFM)

Critical Theory (CT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale (MSBWS)

Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA)

Strong Black Woman (SBW)

Strong Black Woman Collective (SBWC)

Strong Black Woman Schema (SBWS)

Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

Well-Being Theory (WBT)

2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law" (*King James Bible Online*, 1769/2017, 1 Corinthians 14:34). This one verse has been the foundation of many controversial discussions, debates, and views within Christian churches since the beginning of the Church. Those churches and church leaders espousing conservatism and the complementarian view fundamentally believed women were biblically excluded from church leadership and authority over men (Grudem, 2012; Grudem & Poythress, 2000; Perry, 2020). The gender controversies on opposing sides consist of those embracing the egalitarian view that women were not restricted from leadership and that both sexes should serve interchangeably in leadership within the church and home (Grudem, 2012; Grudem & Poythress, 2000; Perry, 2020). As evident in the canon of the Bible utilized by most protestant churches in the United States, church leadership was a male-dominated vocation and culture. Despite the centuries of church leadership gender controversy, more women are serving in church leadership positions today. Yet, the gap between male and female pastors in church leadership was still very wide. The Faith Communities Today 2010 national survey suggested that 12% of all congregations in the United States had a female senior or sole ordained leader (Hartford Institute for Religious Research, 2021). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), the statistics for pastors according to gender suggested that 83.9% were male and 16.1% female. The breakdown of pastors by race was 79.8% White, 8.2% Black or African American, 7.5% Hispanic or LatinX, and 4.5% Asian (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). The data supported that Black women were less than one percent (.93%) of the total number of pastors (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Based on the statistical

data, pastoring and church leadership remained predominantly patriarchal vocations, and Black women were a minority population serving in this role. According to Ngunjiri et al. (2012), approximately three percent of the Black Church's leadership was filled by women (Ngunjiri et al., 2012).

Notably, the call of church leadership and pastoral ministry could be daunting, regardless of gender, and often led to burnout (Burns et al., 2013). To discover how pastors thrived and survived, Burns et al. (2013) embarked on a five-year in-depth research project among working pastors to understand strength, resilience, self-care, emotional and cultural intelligence, leadership, and management acumen as critical themes for efficacious and long tenure pastorship. Similar to their study, the goal of this transcendental, phenomenological qualitative inquiry was to examine how thriving Black clergywomen embraced the key tenets of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) of resilience, strength, self-reliance, and nurturing. Furthermore, how their adherence to the SBW motif while experiencing intersectionality impacted fulfilling their roles and their well-being. All participants served in church leadership in Black churches in the southern region of the United States.

This chapter began with a background of the problem from a historical and theoretical context. The acceptance of women in the American South and significant shifts in values and gender equality to accept women in ministry was vital from a historical context (Adams, 2007; Chaves, 1997; Hawkins, 2017; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Sullins, 2000). Theoretically, the intersectionality and SBW schema interpretive frameworks for addressing this inquiry were detailed, describing their relevance to the context and philosophical assumptions. A statement of the problem with a precise purpose statement guiding the study and the rationale for the selected

research design were included. The concluding elements of this chapter included a description of the research questions and the definitions of relevant key concepts and terms.

Background

A small percentage of Black clergywomen have answered the calling to head church leadership positions, especially in protestant churches (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Many clergywomen faced subjugation, discrimination, and intersectionality from their male counterparts and peers (Smarr et al., 2018). In protestant churches, there was a form of oppression and resistance in obtaining leadership positions known as the stained-glass ceiling effect. The stained-glass ceiling referred directly to the invisible barrier preventing women from achieving head church leadership roles in congregations, subordinating women to lower levels or smaller, financially strapped congregations (Adams, 2007; Sullins, 2000; Williams-Gegner et al., 2010). With the desire to see more women in leadership roles in the body of Christ, it was necessary to understand how those who successfully breached the stained-glass ceiling or circumvented it endeavored to do so. To fully understand the full scope of the problem, it was necessary to examine the historical, social, and theoretical context.

Historical Context

Historically, the role of Black women in the clergy, specifically leadership, changed over time with more acceptance of their leadership in the church over the past three decades (Konieczny & Chaves, 2000; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Church leadership had been a male-dominated vocation that excluded women from holding leadership positions in the clergy for many years (Adams, 2007; Christo-Baker et al., 2012). In the past 20 years, while most church leaders in the United States were male, Black protestant congregations accepted women more

openly in leadership (Adams, 2007). This shift has continued, and importantly, previous research suggested that rural congregations may be the most likely to have women as clergy. This is due to churches in rural areas often having limited resources and tend to be less attractive to male clergy, especially rural churches struggling financially (Adams, 2007; Ngunjiri et al., 2012).

Understanding the role of slavery in its historical and social context was crucial to discuss with Black women and their role in family, community, and spirituality, specifically in the American South. While a few pioneering Black women began ministry during slavery, controversies such as the 1845 split in the Southern Baptist Convention between proslavery and antislavery Baptists played a critical role in the religious movements in the American South (Hawkins, 2017). As Hawkins (2017) explained, the split ended in the development of two factions and new denominational entities, some following the conservative view opposing women in ministry and the moderates supporting women in ministry. Evidence supported that biblically liberal churches were more receptive to women clergy than fundamentalist religions, where gender inequality resulted from embedded cultural values (Adams, 2007; Chaves, 1997; Sullins, 2000). Many Black churches in the rural south that serve as the cornerstone for the Black community have existed since slavery and upheld these cultural values that opposed women in the clergy (Brewer & Williams, 2019; Harmon et al., 2018; Lincoln & Mayima, 1990). This study focused on Black clergywomen that served in Black churches in the South, where resistance to women in leadership was possibly an underlying cultural belief.

Black women entered United States history with the perpetuation of slavery, discrimination, racism, and sexism, attributing negative stereotypes such as Mammy and Jezebel as a method of subjugating Black women (Nelson et al., 2016; Thomas, 2001; Thomas et al., 2004; Townsend et al., 2010; Walker-Barnes, 2009; West, 1995). These two terms covered both

spectrums of Black women in a negative light, and in this era, African American women were seen as Mammy or Jezebel. Those identified as the Mammy stereotype were caretaking, hardworking, obese Black women with a dark complexion in a bandana epitomized by subordination, caring for everyone, and self-sacrificing (Jewell, 1993; Thomas et al., 2004; Walker-Barnes, 2009; West, 1995). On the other end of the spectrum, the Jezebel image depicted European featured light-skinned complexion Black, seductive women and bad girls who exploited men's weaknesses (Thomas et al., 2004). Any enslaved person typified as Jezebel proved highly lucrative and valuable for her slave owner when auctioning (Thomas et al., 2004; West, 1995). Any White slave owner wishing to increase his slave population desired a Jezebel because of her great capacity for childbearing and her ability to sustain rape by both her White slave owners and Black men (Thomas et al., 2004; West, 1995). She was strong and productive despite sexism, racism, and degradation. Yet, the demoralization and destruction of slavery designed to promote Black women as caretakers, nurturers, and breeders did not hinder key women from overcoming this limiting and controlling image. These Black women embraced their spiritual beliefs and pursued preaching the gospel, abolishing slavery, and freeing Black men and women trapped physically and spiritually in the confines of slavery. Thomas (2001) examined how the spiritual beliefs of African American women interacted with the negative images and stereotypes that evolved from the legacy of slavery, specifically, Mammy, Sapphire, and Jezebel. His research supported the premise that spiritual beliefs were a vital source of support for African American women (Thomas, 2001).

In the face of opposition, oppression, discrimination, sexism, racism, and many other barriers, strong, independent, resilient Black women, the precursor to the SBW ideology, began to rise. Many did so in the slave-supporting southern region of the United States, and America

was divided over the legality of slavery (Maffly-Kipp, 2001). In the southern states, as early as the 1770s, slaves had begun to convert to protestant religions such as the Methodist and Baptist denominations, and these groups were all led by men (Maffly-Kipp, 2001). The first Black woman to begin to pave the way for Black women in ministry, known as simply Elizabeth, was born in 1766 in Maryland as a slave; however, she was freed in 1796 (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Showing signs of resilience early in her life, she was converted at the age of 12, a fervent intercessor and prayer warrior devoted to a life of prayer, holiness, and steadfastness to the mission of preaching the gospel (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). At the age of 42, she had begun not only preaching at home, but despite threats of imprisonment, enslavement, and expulsion from the church by male leaders in the Methodist faith, she traveled to Virginia and deep areas of the South, preaching the gospel and supporting the abolitionist platform (Collier-Thomas, 1998). Elizabeth continued for 50 years, answering her calling (Collier-Thomas, 1998). She stated, "A commission from the Lord, not men's hands" (Collier-Thomas, 1998, p. 42).

The next pioneer for Black women preachers, Jarena Lee, while born free in 1783, she set a standard for Black women preaching in the face of opposition and oppression of their male counterparts in Black protestant churches. Bishop Richard Allen, a prominent Black African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) leader, initially allowed Lee to preach yet refused to license her as a minister because of the denomination's rules against women clergy (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; World Methodist Council, 2016). Despite his initial refusal to license Lee, Allen used her gifting to increase the church membership, and in 1819 licensed her; Lee was posthumously ordained by the AME church (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; World Methodist Council, 2016). Despite the

AME church's position on women preachers, Lee was a powerful itinerant preacher for over 30 years. With slavery still thriving in the South, Lee preached to mixed congregations as far north as Baltimore and broke many barriers, including racism, sexism, discrimination, and the strong resistance from male clergy and their desire to uphold traditional roles for women in ministry (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Hardesty et al., 1979). Like Lee, Zilpha Elaw, in 1821, accepted the call to preach the gospel and travel far and wide to complete her mission (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Elaw relinquished her roles of mother and wife despite harsh reproach from family, fear of imprisonment, persecution, and enslavement to begin preaching to Black congregations in small southern towns for almost 20 years (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Ngunjiri et al., 2012).

While not popular in the Black community and the AME church, Sojourner Truth, became one of the most powerful preaching Black women born in slavery. Born Isabella Baumbree in 1797, Truth was a slave for 30 years, yet eventually freed in 1826, and became one of the first Black women to be portrayed as a strong, self-willed, spiritually enlightened, itinerant preacher and proponent of freedom for African Americans (Cervenak, 2012; Collier-Thomas, 1998). She was often criticized by Frederick Douglass and Martin Delany, fellow abolitionists, for her broken speech, methods, and tactics, yet she was widely known today as a God-fearing, spiritual, abolitionist, proto-black feminist, activist, and Black woman who stuck to her own pace (Cervenak, 2012). Sojourner Truth also became an itinerant preacher and, as early as 1849, would speak on women's rights while preaching and on abolishing slavery (Cervenak, 2012; Collier-Thomas, 1998). Collier-Thomas (1998) explained that her call to answer the Holy Spirit included changing her name from Isabella Baumfree to Sojourner Truth. This name indicated her call to preach the truth and go wherever the Spirit led her. As many other women mentioned, a

woman preaching during the early 1800s was not popular, especially one traveling alone (Cervenak, 2012; Collier-Thomas, 1998). Yet, Truth left behind her family and former life to fulfill her call, preaching the gospel and becoming a prominent figure in the antislavery movement (Cervenak, 2012; Collier-Thomas, 1998).

Amanda Berry Smith was one of the most renowned Black women preachers born during slavery. At an early age, her father bought their freedom, and after the death of her second husband in 1869, Smith began to preach and hold revivals in the North and soon became a well-known evangelist (Collier-Thomas, 1998). She faced much ridicule from male leaders at the AME conference (Collier-Thomas, 1998). She was greatly despised because of her agitation at the AME conference regarding the question of the ordination of women (Collier-Thomas, 1998). In 1870, Smith joined the holiness movement, where she faced severe humiliation, prejudice, and discrimination from White members, yet she immersed herself as a holiness preacher for several decades (Collier-Thomas, 1998). Smith grew in popularity and became an internationally known evangelist and a well-respected spiritual figure among White feminist reformers in suffragist and women's rights movements by 1890 (Collier-Thomas, 1998).

These women endured discrimination, oppression, male dominance, and rejection from male church leadership to pave the way for Black women to preach the gospel and empower Black women to overcome the derogatory images and depictions of African American women during slavery. Despite the resistance, in the face of adversity, their strength, independence, and resilience led them to fulfill the call of God and bring about freedom, spiritually and physically, for many in their lifetimes. Just as significant as the stories of their male counterparts, all of these preaching women had powerful conversion stories and accounts of accepting the call to preach (Collier-Thomas, 1998).

It was important to interject here that with the emancipation from slavery in 1863, significant changes in the Church accompanied the new freedom for Blacks, specifically the Black Church of the South. Male church leaders from the northern states, including Daniel A. Payne and Theophilus Gould Steward, created missions in the South, thus spurring the growth of independent Black churches, such as African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) churches, in the South between 1865 and 1900 (Maffly-Kipp, 2001). Similarly, in 1894, Black Baptists established the National Baptist Convention, still the largest and most prominent Black religious organization in the United States (Maffly-Kipp, 2001). In the middle of this Black church expansion, American racism had grown tremendously after the 1870s, significantly facilitating the cohesion and unity among these Black protestant groups despite their many theological differences, and thus the first century of the Black Church in the South was established and growing (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Maffly-Kipp, 2001).

With the great legacy of Black women preachers, reformers, and activists from slavery through its abolishment, it still took many years for a Black woman, Harriet Baker, to be appointed as the first Black female to pastor a church (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). A few years later, in 1892, Mary Small was not only a licensed evangelist and missionary, but in 1898 she became an ordained elder in the AME Zion denomination church (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Importantly, the AME Zion Church was the first Black denomination to permit women to hold clergy positions and granted women full rights as members of the clergy in 1876 and 1894, respectively (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Many of the Black women preachers from 1800 to 1970, other than the few mentioned above, were absent in Black Church literature, and it was not until 1990 that these forerunners were researched (Collier-Thomas, 1998). Collections of their sermons,

autobiographies, and experiences were published, increasing awareness of their contributions to the Black Church and pioneering efforts for Black women in ministry (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Hardesty et al., 1979; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Fast-forward to the opening of the 20th century, very few Black women were licensed to preach, ordained, and able to pastor. One such woman was Florence Spearing Randolph, a key figure in Black women's ministry. Collier-Thomas (1998) suggested Randolph was one of few women associated with mainline Black denominations to pastor a church consistently for more than 20 years in the North, while most African American women chose itinerant preaching, evangelism, or missionary work as women ordain and pastoring remained a point of contention for church leaders. While Randolph was well known for her work as a reformer, pastor, and evangelist in the North, there were conflicting stories regarding the first Black female pastor ordained in the South. Two accounts were essential to the phenomenon examined in this study. The first account was the work of Ida Robinson, who in 1924 created a new denomination, the Mount Sinai Holy Church of America, with the founding church located in Philadelphia, yet the church ordained women throughout the United States, including the southern states (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Fauset, 1970; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Her mission was to resolve the opposition with mainline denominations granting women full clergy rights to fulfill the sacerdotal duties of ordained clergy (Collier-Thomas, 1998). The second account depicted Essie Mae McIntyre as the first Black pastor who, in 1940, while facing death threats, founded Good Shepherd Baptist Church, becoming the first Black woman pastor in the South, specifically in Augusta, Georgia (DuBose, 2018). The story surrounding her accepting the call of God was much like that of the pioneers. There was significant opposition, sexism, and discrimination surrounding her as she became a licensed, ordained pastor, so much so that the mayor of Augusta

had to issue her a license to preach (DuBose, 2018). Yet, the name of the person or organization that ordained her remains a mystery because of the standing threat from male ordained pastors in the area to murder whoever defied their orders and ordained a woman because it was not God's will (DuBose, 2018). Despite the subjugation, discrimination, and alienation from other churches, the church founded by McIntyre grew from 17 to over 600 members at the time of her retirement. The church still stands today, yet no longer pastored by a woman (DuBose, 2018). McIntyre added a monumental event to the history of the Black Church while fulfilling the mission to serve God and pastor His people despite men's resistance (DuBose, 2018).

By the end of the 20th century, moving into the 21st century, other significant movements regarding women preaching and pastoring, specifically Black churches, were becoming more accepting of ordained clergywomen. The Preaching Daughters of Second Baptist in the 1980s was a movement where the male church leadership embraced allowing women to accept their calling of God (Lee, 2004). These men allowed women to preach and ordained them to pastor and assist other churches and denominations (Lee, 2004). This movement provided valuable exposure to congregations, leading to increased support of women in ecclesiastical roles and leadership within the Baptist denomination (Lee, 2004). Even with this increase of women in clerical positions and ecclesiastic leadership, a lack of mentoring and support systems in some churches and denominations became the primary reason qualified Black women chose to forego an opportunity to pursue the roles even with the implementation of policies to allow their inclusion (Lee, 2004).

Looking to churches today in the 21st century on the topic of women clergy in leadership roles, from 1970 through the next 40 years, tremendous growth, almost triple in numbers, occurred in the ordination of women in mainline denominations, yet a substantial gap existed

(Barna Group, 2009; Christian Century Staff, 2018; Germain, 2020; Zippia, 2022). Surprisingly, the Southern Baptist Churches today still upheld the Baptist Faith and Message (BFM), stating that while both women and men were anointed for church service, the pastoral role was limited to men, according to the Bible (Germain, 2020). However, 10% of their listed churches were pastored by women (Germain, 2020). No exact numbers or percentages were provided in researching data for Black women in historically Black protestant denominations. Still, Christian Century (2018) surmised that women constitute 50 to 75% of Black Baptist congregations, yet less than 10% served in some form of church leadership, and less than one percent served in pastoral leadership. Similarly, the AME Church had been ordaining women since the 1960s; however, in a 2016 report, women were a little more than 25% of their congregational pastors in the global denomination (Christian Century, 2018).

As evident from the path from slavery to the present, Black women have endured racism, sexism, often classism, resistance, subjugation, and many other obstacles in striving to live primarily in the southern United States. Moreover, even more adversity and struggle for those endeavoring to fulfill the call of God to preach the gospel, nurture the souls entrusted to them, and answer the cultural mandate of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The few pioneers mentioned demonstrated the principal characteristics represented in the SBW motif of strength, resilience, self-reliance, and caring for others beyond self in the face of opposition to overcome the structural barriers to complete their mission. These women paved the way for young Black women seeking the same opportunities for ecclesiastical leadership and fulfilling their callings. These pioneering Black women established the standard for Black clergywomen and established the foundation for the SBW and superwoman motifs that many Black women embraced in their lives even today.

Social Context

The Black Church was known as the institution of cohesion in the deep South and instrumental in bringing together the Black community (Harmon et al., 2018; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Black women have been the cornerstone of the Black community, the Black Church, and the Black family, and all of these structures have been highly dependent upon Black women (Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Black women performed the actual work of the church; they fulfilled support functions, provided organization in social reform, and maintained their families in the absence of Black men (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). Historically and currently, women comprise between 70-90% of Black church congregations, varying depending upon the data source, yet men still hold the majority of church leadership roles, reinforcing structural sexism (Barnes, 2006; Collins, 2004; Homan & Burdette, 2021; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018; Sullins, 2000).

Similar to the benefits received by the White slave owners, structural sexism served these Black male-led congregations where the pastors and men in leadership benefited from the women's strength and capabilities. Their actions perpetuated the negative images of Black women developed during slavery while subjecting all the women who served in these churches to subordination and subjugation (Homan & Burdette, 2021). The unspoken message spoke volumes to female parishioners. Through the invisible megaphone, women heard that their attendance, tithes, and gifts were necessary for the church to thrive, yet their inclusion in leadership was not welcomed. Instead of the church uplifting and building the majority of its community and its congregants, it has perpetuated the same message of the slave owners from which the ancestors of these Black men fought for their freedom. Sadly, this occurrence, whether intentionally or through ignorance, moved the Black Church away from its crucial function to

support the majority of their congregants, Black women (Adams, 2007; Barnes, 2006; Collins, 2004; Homan & Burdette, 2021; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018; Sullins, 2000).

Especially in the South, instead of the church assisting these women with shattering the stained-glass ceiling, they were hardening it (Adams, 2007; Barnes, 2006; Collins, 2004; Homan & Burdette, 2021; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018; Sullins, 2000).

Empirical data supported the premise that the stained-glass ceiling has not shattered, despite mainline Protestant denominations espousing the ordination of women as a biblical and theoretically sound doctrine (Adams, 2007; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Sullins, 2000). Yet, the sheer number of women in ecclesiastical leadership and the practical application of appointing these women to church leadership lagged far behind (Adams, 2007; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Sullins, 2000). Moreover, this stained-glass ceiling effect explained how women in church leadership were often placed or accepted by smaller congregations experiencing financial strain (Adams, 2007; Konieczny & Chaves, 2000; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Sullins, 2000; Williams-Gegner et al., 2010). Much like Allen, in hopes of increasing membership or stabilizing their financial situation, churches chose women who had all the qualifications equal to their male counterparts yet offered lower salaries that the women accepted merely for the opportunity to pastor (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Sullins, 2000).

In the past, heightened awareness resulted in some form of change and progress. Moreover, in theory, most Protestant denominations support women in leadership, yet in practicality still have barriers. Two sets of stained glass existed then and now in the Black Church. The two sets include windows in the church buildings and the stained-glass ceiling responsible for the disproportionate ratio of Black female church leaders to Black female parishioners. Several of those barriers were directly related to the intersection of their race, sex

(gender), and other social categorizations such as class, hence giving impetus to understand the experiences of the Black women who thrived in efficacious church leadership despite intersectionality while embracing the tenets of SBW. While the framework for this investigative process was not transformative, the intentionality of understanding the realities of the Black clergywomen who overcame these barriers and had broken through the stained-glass ceiling increased awareness of the phenomenon to bring about progression and positive change. For this study, the hammer strike was needed to inevitably break the stained-glass ceiling while rallying the troops for social change to bring equality and equity for Black women in the Black Church everywhere, but specifically in the South.

With all the forward progress for Black women in the 21st century, it was desired for Black Church leadership to address the underrepresentation of women in church leadership. Furthermore, eliminate the inequalities and inequities in salary and support systems and lessen the negative impacts on the well-being of the women experiencing this phenomenon. In April 2022, Ketanji Brown Jackson, a Black female, was confirmed by the U.S. Senate to the Supreme Court, the highest court in the U.S. since 1789, shattering a 233-year-old glass ceiling (Hulse & Karni, 2022). Borrowing from Hulse and Karni (2022), this appointment was one of the brightest lights in U.S. history and hopefully a metaphor for others to come. I hope and pray the future bright lights to include the shattering of the stained-glass ceiling in the church houses in God's kingdom, the highest court that existed according to God's Word, the Holy Bible.

Theoretical Context

Crenshaw (1991) and Collins (2004, 2015) examined the prejudices, social injustice, and inequalities Black women experience stemming from the intersection of race, gender, sex, class, and other social identities. Specific to this research, an intersectional paradigm supported the

nature of the subjugation, inequalities, and oppression this marginalized group of Black clergywomen endured within their church community concerning their gender and race simultaneously (Collins, 2015; Davis et al., 2018; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). Accurately, intersectionality explains how these social markers underpin these marginalized, Black clergywomen's experiences within the male-dominant church culture and the resulting oppression, limited opportunities, barriers, and struggles (Collins, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis et al., 2018; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018).

The other critical paradigm, the SBW schema, was formed in rejection of the negative stereotypes of African American women rooted in slavery yet persisted in society in 2022 (Nelson et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2004; Townsend et al., 2010; West, 1995). When describing a woman who typified the SBW motif, one pictured a woman who was strong, self-reliant, extremely independent, self-sufficient, and a nurturing caretaker while suppressing emotion (Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). This motif was embraced by many Black women (Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). The SBW schema as an interpretive framework addressed essential characteristics required for Black women, especially those called to pastor and serve in other ecclesiastical leadership roles. Specific to this research, the different realities expressed how each participant believed the SBW influenced their ability to thrive in ministry and maintain positive well-being while fulfilling their spiritual calling.

Previous studies emphasized the intersectional interpretive framework or the social intersections for Black female clergy during specific periods (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). Other studies have explored the SBW schema embraced by Black women as a marginalized group to overcome negative stereotypes (Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000;

Watson & Hunter, 2016; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Several historians and researchers have examined the history of Black women preachers, their conversion and calling experiences, adversities, resistance, and obstacles while striving to fulfill their God-given missions (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Hardesty et al., 1979; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). This study aimed to combine these two central elements exploring the multiple realities of Black clergywomen in church leadership who were influenced by the SBW schema while experiencing intersectionality in their ecclesiastical calling. The opportunity to share their varied accounts of how they were thriving efficaciously in their pursuits while maintaining healthy well-being was vital for Black women, the continuation of the Black Church, and Black communities in the South.

Using intersectionality and the SBW motif, a rich description of experienced Black clergywomen in leadership can be obtained within the context of the reality of these women's experiences which is the essence of a transcendental phenomenological qualitative study (Moustakas, 1994). This investigation aimed to harness the stories of these efficacious leaders, provide structure and guidance for other Black clergywomen entering church leadership, and discover constructs within the phenomenon that needed further inquiry.

Situation to Self

I grew up in a Baptist church in rural Virginia during the 1960s and 1970s, and women were prohibited from holding places of leadership beyond a deaconess or missionary worker. My home church, soon to be 155 years old, was situated next door to the Methodist church that the slave owners attended during slavery. Sadly, both churches existed homogenously (Black and White) and separated congregations in 2022, like most mainline Protestant churches today. Sunday morning worship is still considered the most segregated hour in America (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019; McKenzie & Rouse, 2013). In 1990, I moved to New Jersey for career

advancement. I stayed connected to the Black Baptist church and served in a more liberal church for 11 years in various offices until I accepted the call to preach in 2001. While several women were in ministry, none were in leadership beyond the office of evangelist or missionary.

Following the lead of the Holy Spirit, I returned home to the American South in 2004, where I served as the first and only female youth pastor, then the first female assistant pastor from 2004 to 2011, before accepting the call to separate altogether from the Baptist denomination and start a nondenominational church. Ironically, in 2015, four years into leading a multicultural congregation in the rural South, we began leasing the building that had been vacant for many years that served as the slave depot during my great grandparents' lifetime. This building was near the railroad tracks on the James River. During my grandparents' era, it was converted into a White-owned store; I remember visiting the store with them as a child. I was so sheltered and ignorant of racism, Jim Crow, and the social reform taking place within the civil rights movement.

In my Christian walk, I was blessed to have supportive leadership in both my childhood church and the one in New Jersey. The male leadership I received was crucial to developing an effective ministry and my matriculation into senior leadership roles within our ecclesiastical structure. While fortunate to possess positive internal support structures, first-hand experience with subjugation and discrimination existed from male counterparts in the district associations, the local ecumenical associations, the Baptist Ministers' Conference, the seminary, and other organizational structures designed to train and support church leaders. Sadly, many other Black clergywomen were subjected to similar unfavorable circumstances in their pursuits to fulfill their calling and attainment of leadership roles within their churches, especially in southern Baptist associations and other Protestant organizations in the South. During seminary, the search for

empirical data and success stories of Black women who have broken the stained-glass ceiling was minimal and virtually nonexistent for women, especially in the South. For the past decade serving in a senior leadership role, I revisited this topic far too often. Many Black women pursue leadership opportunities or seek guidance and support to provide efficacious leadership to their congregations while subjected to subjugation, degradation, and discrimination in a male-dominated vocation. Instead of encouragement and validation, their male counterparts espoused opposition and rejection. The time for change is now. I am very conscious that our omniscient God has been fashioning me from childhood for such a time as this. With almost 20 years in church leadership in predominantly Black Protestant churches in the South, this research was grounded in my extreme passion for this topic and championing future change.

This study aimed to capture the essence of successful Black clergywomen who have tenure, were currently serving in flourishing leadership roles, have efficaciously overcome intersectionality, and embraced the positive attributes of the SBW schema that influenced their ministry, their lives, and their well-being. The overall goal of this empirical research was to expand the extant literature on this topic, provide valuable insight into their ministerial path, and serve as a tool to aid clergywomen in building strong support structures within their ranks. With extensive experience with intersectionality and significantly influenced by concepts embraced in the SBW archetype, bracketing was critical. Edmund Husserl coined the term bracketing and believed it was fundamental to phenomenological reflection, phenomenological reduction, and epoché (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). The bracketing process is setting aside preconceived experiences to best comprehend the participants' experiences in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). Giorgi (2009) expressed the importance of remembering what one experienced but not allowing it to be

involved while hearing the participants' experiences and understanding their perspectives of the phenomenon.

Research Paradigm

Social constructivism was the framework chosen for this qualitative inquiry; however, a minor emphasis on critical theory was also employed in the framework of this study. The social constructivism interpretive framework was focused on the multiple realities constructed through the participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, this focused on how this reality was constructed between the researcher and the participants based on their individual experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The intended goal of this investigative research process was to allow the unique experiences of each clergywoman to be heard through the individual interviews and to understand their different experiences while recognizing the emergent ideas and themes from these conversations about their perspectives. I also believed critical theory was appropriate as these participants have real, individual experiences with oppression and inequities in their pursuits to minister the gospel based on their race and gender. That reality was the essence of critical theory when research addressed areas of injustice; the reality was based on power and identity struggles, and engaging in the dialogues helped interpret the social actions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fay, 1987). However, the objective of this study was not to call for action and change but to understand the multiple realities and to create detailed, textural descriptions of the common themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Increased awareness of the bias and prejudices these clergywomen faced can empower others with the necessary knowledge to transcend the constraints placed on them by race and gender to effectively fulfill their many roles, maintain their well-being, and initiate the development of sustainable support networks and structures among these women.

Philosophical Assumptions

First, faith in God was fundamental and critical to my philosophical and personal worldview. This faith drove my desire to explore ways to aid ministers of the Gospel striving to fulfill their callings and the Great Commission, as commanded in Matthew 28:19-20 (*King James Bible Online*, 1769/2017, Matthew 28:19-20). Moreover, God created all mankind in His likeness and image, with a purpose, and God sent His Son, Jesus, to proclaim freedom for the oppressed, renew sight to the blind, and release those who were downtrodden (*King James Bible Online*, 1769/2017, Genesis 1:26; Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18). This study of the lived experiences of Black clergywomen, conveyed the heart of God's plan to bring freedom and eliminate oppression. It was crucial to understand and communicate the realities of Black clergywomen in the South who have persevered through struggles, prejudices, and obstacles to fulfill the call of God to pastor and care for those who looked to their church as a safe haven, a place of hope and guidance (Brewer & Williams, 2019; Harmon et al., 2018).

Second, the omniscience of God meant God had all knowledge of what could happen, would happen, and will happen (Moreland & Craig, 2017). With social constructivism and critical theory as the underlying research paradigms, it was important to believe that the omniscient God would know the timing for the socially derived position that a patriarchal culture for church leadership to be challenged. The critical theory posited that people's social constructions were shaped by political, cultural, historical, and economic forces and often created by individuals in power positions (Heppner et al., 2015). Over time, the social context became what was believed to be true and became deeply embedded in culture because the

construction appeared to be real (Heppner et al., 2015). These constructions become fully enmeshed in society to the point that it is extremely difficult to comprehend that they were created in the societal context and not necessarily truths (Heppner et al., 2015). This argument can be made for the culturally embedded belief and the societal context for the male-dominated culture in pastoral leadership today. Hence, omniscient God knew that the biblical, patriarchal leadership of the church would be believed as truth and that this embedded cultural belief, this societal context would continue until challenged. Without outlining the complementarian versus egalitarian debate, the egalitarian stance was that women in church leadership were a viable alternative for this necessary role in the church, and the truth of the natural propensity for male-only pastors and church leaders was false (Heppner et al., 2015; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018).

Ontological Assumption

Second, this research was chosen and guided primarily by an ontological assumption recognizing that multiple realities existed; each participant experienced this phenomenon uniquely and had her reality and perspective to convey (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Embracing the true nature of a phenomenological study and the reality of many views was a vital element of this study. This study explored and reported the different perspectives of participants' experiences regarding this phenomenon while identifying common themes and using the actual words of the various participants in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Epistemological Assumption

From an epistemological assumption, it was ideal for conducting interviews and research in the pastor's work environment, such as the pastor's study or their home office, to reduce the distance between the researcher and the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Guba & Lincoln,

1988). Considering the ongoing global pandemic, COVID-19 safety precautions required virtual technology for interviews and focus group activities. Many of these pastors and leaders were ministering via streaming and other remote methods during the pandemic, and this forum was a familiar workspace and ministry format. Zoom was used to conduct the research interviews to gather knowledge of their experiences. As many of them mentioned, it was still their primary form of communication for worship, Bible study, counseling, and other meetings since March 2020, when many churches, businesses, and the United States transitioned to a remote work environment. This was a key mitigation strategy and safety measure in response to the global pandemic.

Axiological Assumption

An axiological assumption was characterized by the researcher conveying their value in the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a veteran pastor extremely familiar with the phenomenon in this study, it was essential to explain this position. In the investigative process, sharing personal experiences, biases, spiritual beliefs, professional beliefs, and values transparently regarding this study while bracketing was vital (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). Just as important was not allowing these aspects to impact understanding and reporting the participants' unique experiences or directly influence the themes that emerged from hearing the differing views and realities regarding the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014).

Methodological Assumption

The methodological assumption addressed the path the researcher used in this qualitative inquiry to develop detailed knowledge of the topic, including the procedures to collect and analyze the data while considering how it emerged and its inductive nature (Creswell & Poth,

2018). A key concern was the limited experience of this researcher in collecting and analyzing data when conducting qualitative research. One key aspect of the research study was mapping the interview and research questions to ensure they accurately captured the essence of the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While a novice researcher, it was unnecessary to modify the questions used for the interviews during the interview process other than adding probing prompts to the first question.

Problem Statement

The problem was that Black pastors and clergywomen, while influenced by SBW, experienced intersectionality like inequities, opposition, oppression, sexism, and subjugation (Adams, 2007; Homan & Burdette, 2021; Nelson et al., 2016; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018; Wood-Giscombe, 2010). Moreover, many clergywomen experienced structural barriers and obstacles, including abuse of power, discrimination, jealousy, lack of remuneration, and restrictions based on conventional beliefs (Smarr et al., 2018). These negative experiences impacted their health and well-being by adding stress and burnout; many early in ministry leave ministry altogether due to the adversity experienced (Burns et al., 2013; Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Hendron et al., 2011; Meek et al., 2003; Muse et al., 2016; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013; Scott & Lovell, 2015; Visker et al., 2016). These aspects were the focus of this study.

A significant gap existed in the percentage of male and female pastors in Black Protestant churches. These denominations had higher percentages of women in church leadership, yet the problem was that these women experienced significant barriers and obstacles in congregational leadership positions (Adams, 2007; Homan & Burdette, 2021; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). Smarr et al. (2018) asserted that Black clergywomen continuously undergo subjugation,

degradation, and humiliation in their leadership role by male clergy due to gender and race bias. Moreover, many participants in their study experienced barriers and obstacles, including abuse of power, attitudes of the congregation, discrimination, strenuous family dynamics, jealousy, lack of financial support, limitations based on traditional beliefs, and diminishing self-worth (Smarr et al., 2018). While female clergy expressed stress from emotional weariness, social isolation, and a lack of confidants or personal friends, female ministers often experienced the same strain as their male colleagues (Rowatt, 2001). With strong prejudices and minimal support for Black clergywomen, there was a need for increased awareness, vital support functions, and a network among fellow clergywomen to aid their effort to live healthy lives while maintaining effective ministries. This research was intended to continue the dialogue on this phenomenon to expand awareness of these clergywomen's experiences while fulfilling the call of God and maintaining their well-being. Moreover, understanding the commonalities these women faced could potentially bring progress and positive change. It could substantiate the need for building sustainable support systems among Black clergywomen in the ecclesia collectively in this region.

The sample population included in this research study were Black female pastors and clergywomen from Protestant churches in the South. A limited collection of extant literature regarding the different aspects of this phenomenon currently existed. However, qualitative research encompassing both intersectionality and SBW was practically nonexistent. This phenomenological research study was intended to capture the lived experiences directly of the participants who experience intersectionality while influenced by the SBW schema. Also, this study attempted to understand how they maintain a healthy well-being. Their stories of perseverance and the positive influence of the SBW motif in their pursuits needed to be heard, and that was the goal of this transcendental, phenomenological study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences and well-being of the Black women in ministry (e.g., pastors, clergywomen) who experienced intersectionality and were influenced by the SBW archetype, specifically in the Black Church in the southern United States, also known as the American South. A phenomenological study was designed to explore the lived experiences of several participants to accurately identify a universal description of the phenomenon from the collective experiences, precisely to capture the phenomenon's essence from the common themes and meaning of the experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The theories guiding this study were intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and the SBW motif (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Harris, 2001; Romero, 2000; Wood-Giscombe', 2010). Intersectionality focused on the experiences of Black clergywomen as a marginalized group due to their belonging to more than one subordinate or derogated social category, specifically race and gender (Cole, 2009; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; Homan & Burdette, 2021; McCall, 2005; Settles, 2006; Smarr et al., 2018; Warner & Shields, 2013).

Specifically, in this phenomenological inquiry, we examined the experiences Black clergywomen experienced with subjugation and discrimination from their male counterparts. The SBW motif defined the race-gender schema and cultural mandate these African American women embraced that focused on unyielding strength, resilience, caregiving, independence, and emotion containment (Barnes, 2009; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Etowa et al., 2017; Harris, 2001; Liao et al., 2020; Romero, 2000; Wood-Giscombe', 2010). For this qualitative inquiry, these dual factors, intersectionality, and the SBW motif were the influencing factors studied regarding their impact on the ministry and the participants' overall well-being.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was to increase awareness of Black clergywomen's experience when answering the call to pastor and lead in Black churches in the South. Intersectionality and the SBW schema combined were the interpretive frameworks for this study. They offered a unique approach to understanding the lived experiences of this marginalized population which produced practical, empirical, and theoretical importance on the topic (Cole, 2009; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; McCall, 2005; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Settles, 2006; Smarr et al., 2018; Warner & Shields, 2013). Practically, the researcher aimed to discover how thriving Black women in church leadership do so successfully despite the resistance and opposition faced. The second goal was to provide a guide for other young Black women seeking to successfully answer their pastoral calling and leadership aspirations in the Black Church. Empirically, this study aimed to fill the gap in the existing literature regarding Black clergywomen's experiences and strategies for efficacious pastoral ministry by women. Theoretically, this study approached the intersection of intersectionality and the SBW motif and how they impacted the multiple realities and different perspectives of the participants in this qualitative inquiry (Moustakas, 1994). This study was critically important and timely and viewed the phenomenon from this new lens to add valuable insight into why the stained-glass ceiling in the Black Church remained intact despite the acceptance of women in church leadership has been in existence for half of a century.

Practical Significance

Over the last 50 years, the ordination of women in mainline denominations almost tripled in numbers, yet only 16% of all pastors were women (Barna Group, 2009; Christian Century Staff, 2018; Germain, 2020; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021; Zippia, 2022). Importantly,

Black women have been instrumental in the survival of the African American church, often comprising upward of 90% of their congregations, yet only 3% serve as pastors and ecclesiastical leadership (Abernethy, 2020; Barna Group, 2009; Christian Century Staff, 2018; Germain, 2020; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Zippia, 2022). Understanding the factors behind the success of those Black clergywomen who have broken the stained-glass ceiling or circumvented it proved crucial in guiding their successors and other Black women aspiring to do the same. These accounts of endurance, effectiveness, and successful ministry were beneficial to understand. They can be interwoven into courses, support programs, and mentoring programs for female seminary students, preachers at the commencement of their ministerial careers, and seminary academicians and biblical institutions preparing future church leaders. As Ngunjiri et al. (2012) expressed, despite the increase in the education of Black clergywomen, there was a deficiency in the possibilities to lead congregations as pastors, restricting prospects for advancement in ministry leadership. Recognizing that discrimination and prejudice still existed in this patriarchal culture, institutions that prepared young, Black women for ministry having additional information to effectively formulate training and education to provide deeper learning, reality-based preparation, evidence-supported strategies, and best practices to implement as novice clergywomen begin their ministerial journeys to fulfill the call of God was necessary. The goal was to provide additional insight into the phenomenon to facilitate the efforts of all involved in the many aspects of progress and agencies of change in future ministry. These changes included academia, church polity, social reforms, conservative views regarding ecclesiastical organizations, and denominational leadership.

Empirical Significance

Empirically, there was a growing body of literature on the role Black women have played in the Black Church in itinerant preaching, missionary work, evangelical ministries such as camp meetings, their fulfillment of support functions in the Black Church, and social reform and freedom movement involvement, yet there was minimal literature on Black women who have thrived in pastoral vocations and church leadership (Cole, 2009; Collier-Thomas, 1998; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; Hardesty et al., 1979; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; McCall, 2005; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Smarr et al. (2018) provided a contemporary view of the lived experiences of Black clergywomen in ministry leadership who experienced gender and race bias by clergymen, specifically within Protestant churches in Houston, Texas. The researcher explained the limited applications for the study's findings, which provided an opportunity to increase the scholarly knowledge of this phenomenon with this study (Smarr et al., 2018).

Intersectionality, while initially applied to only Black women, became an interpretive framework that is applicable to other marginalized groups that experience oppression and bias based on race, gender, sex, or other social identities (Cole, 2009; Collier-Thomas, 1998; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; English, 2021; Govinda, 2022). These factors put this population in direct opposition to the dominant culture (Cole, 2009; Collier-Thomas, 1998; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; English, 2021; Govinda, 2022). While the negative aspects of the prejudices, bias, and accounts of significant opposition are well documented, this study aimed to address the intersectionality of their race and gender. Moreover, the overcoming of negative images painted for these Black women while positively highlighting how the core values in the SBW have aided these Black women to thrive in ministry and maintain a healthy well-being. Using this approach for investigative exploration allowed for an enlightening perspective of this phenomenon. This

study provided detailed, thick descriptions of multiple perspectives on how these Black clergywomen have become the next generation of forerunners that have enlarged the crack and continue shattering the stained-glass ceiling of the Black Church and kingdom of God.

Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, the intersectionality framework gained acceptance, especially in social science literature (Corpuz & Augoustinos, 2020; Lewis et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2008). Relative to this research, the intersectionality interpretive framework was applied when examining the experiences of Black clergywomen in the 19th century (Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Similarly, while not using the term intersectionality directly, Smarr et al. (2018) studied race and gender bias experienced by Black clergywomen in the American South, similar to one segment of the framework for this inquiry. Intersectionality was a significant contribution to feminist studies, and the phrase race–class–gender was used in academic circles often, and its frequent use gave impetus to many prescribing this phrase as a mantra (Cole, 2009; Fine & Burns, 2003; McCall, 2005; Risman, 2004; Settles, 2006).

Likewise, the tenets of being independent, self-sufficient, and able to take care of others while exercising emotional control of SBW were somewhat of a mantra, as many Black women embraced it as a cultural mandate for the fulfillment of their roles and well-being (Abrams et al., 2016; Barnes, 2009; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007, 2009; Harrington et al., 2010; Harris, 2001; Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). The SBW schema has been studied in several contexts, including Black women overall, SBW and abuse, intimate partner violence, and Black women in colleges, but never directly in the context of Black clergywomen (Chamberlin, 2019; Jones et al., 2021; Kanyeredzi, 2018; Watson & Hunter, 2016; West et al., 2016). Several studies focused on the relationship between the SBW schema and the mental

health effects on Black women, specifically the potential negative impacts (Abrams et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2018; Harrington et al., 2010; Liao et al., 2020; Watson-Singleton, 2017). This study emphasized the influence of the SBW motif in the lives of these Black clergywomen, and the positive aspects of the SBW were the central focus. However, several of the interview questions provided an opportunity to reflect on the SBW motif's impact on their leadership and well-being, providing exploration into possible mental health benefits.

Several research studies on Black college-aged women combined the intersectionality theory and the SBW motif (Castelin & White, 2022; Donovan & West, 2015). Yet this combination has not been used to study Black female clergy's personal experiences in church leadership. This study added to the limited scholarly knowledge of these two prominent frameworks, intersectionality, and the SBW schema, regarding Black clergywomen and their experiences with oppression and bias because of the intersection of their race and gender identities.

Research Questions

The research questions for this transcendental, phenomenological study aimed to understand the participants' lived experiences and to explore what those experiences meant to the individuals (Creswell, 1998). Moreover, the data was derived during the online interviews with research participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wertz, 2005). As Heppner et al. (2015) described, the data collected via the interviews used global questions to capture the essence of the participants' experience related to the phenomenon of interest without constructing meaning or interpreting the information garnered.

Research Question One for this study asked, "What is the lived experience of intersectionality of Black female clergywomen/pastors?" The historical background of Black

clergywomen was laden with resistance, subjugation, and rejection of women in pastoral leadership (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Depending upon the data set, 70-90% of congregations are comprised of women, yet there are very few in leadership (Barnes, 2006; Collins, 2004; Homan & Burdette, 2021; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018; Sullins, 2000). In 2021, less than one percent of pastoral and church leadership positions were filled by Black women, and approximately three percent in the Black Church (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). It was essential to understand the role intersectionality, bias, and prejudice had in the lives of these successful Black clergywomen who had thriving ministries. This was a critical factor in understanding resistance, structural sexism, and the barriers within the church that added another layer of difficulty and challenge to their leadership and efficacy in this demanding vocation (Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Homan & Burdette, 2021). These factors all impacted their well-being, another critical area in capturing the phenomenon's essence.

Research Question Two posed, "How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on their lives, calling, and well-being?" The tenets of SBW were strength, being independent (self-reliant), and nurturing while suppressing emotion, and many Black women embraced the schema as a cultural mandate (Abrams et al., 2016; Barnes, 2009; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007, 2009; Harrington et al., 2010; Harris, 2001; Liao et al., 2020; Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Many women, unaware of the schema, had been indoctrinated to embrace the SBW from childhood by their mothers who felt it necessary to teach their children, especially their daughters, to be tough, resilient, and able to take care of others (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Townsend, 2008; Watson-Singleton, 2017). These traits had been vital attributes for a Black woman's survival from the

inception of slavery (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Nelson et al., 2016). It was the negative, controlling images of Black women introduced during slavery that this motif was constructed to oppose and present Black women in a positive light (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Nelson et al., 2016). Several studies have discussed the relationship between the SBW schema and the adverse mental health effects on Black women (Abrams et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2018; Harrington et al., 2010; Liao et al., 2020; Watson-Singleton, 2017). Hearing how SBW has impacted the lives, pastoral pursuits, and well-being of Black clergywomen provided a critical understanding of the essence of the phenomenon.

Research Question Three proposed, "How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe well-being as it pertains to their lives and ministerial calling?" Pastoring is a very demanding vocation with many competing roles to be fulfilled (Blizzard, 1956; Burns et al., 2013; Carroll, 2006; Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Harmon et al., 2018; Milstein et al., 2020; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013; Stansbury et al., 2012; Visker et al., 2016). There were a significant number of studies conducted on role strain, pastoral burnout, and the impact of interrole conflict experienced by pastors (Burns et al., 2013; Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Hendron et al., 2011; Meek et al., 2003; Muse et al., 2016; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013; Scott & Lovell, 2015; Visker et al., 2016). This question focused on understanding well-being and how it related to their lives and their pastoral calling. PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment), a well-being theory based on the five pillars of Seligman's flourishing concept, was utilized to measure well-being. PERMA is a proven, evidence-based method of assessing well-being (Agota et al., 2017; Butler & Kern, 2016; Huppert & So, 2013; McNally, 2016).

Definitions

Several terms and concepts were key to understanding the participants' lived experiences.

Those terms and concepts included the following:

1. *Bible Belt* - A cultural region of the United States which included the states that comprised the American South or the Confederate States of America that seceded in 1861. These states included Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Other states included were Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, and Oklahoma (Ask Media Group, 2022; U.S. Census, 2020; Zelinsky, 1961).
2. *Black* - A racial description identifying Black or African American persons (Lincoln & Mayimo, 1990). The term Black was used interchangeably with African American.
3. *Black Church* - A set of historical institutions developed and maintained by African Americans, and the African American experience, which was an embodiment of ethnic consciousness and cultural awareness of being Black in a racialized society, and was a social institution as well as the cultural womb in the Black community as a whole (Lincoln & Mayimo, 1990). The cornerstone and the backbone of the Black community as a place of hope, spiritual guidance, and social support for African Americans (Brewer & Williams, 2019; Harmon et al., 2018). This set of independent churches collectively in the Black community was the central institution where African-American communities' religious activities were organized; served as safe havens for African-Americans; facilitated the creation of viable, well-connected social networks (Barnes, 2005; Nelsen & Nelsen, 1975).

4. *Calling* - The invitation by a transcendent and personal God to participate in His purposes, specifically church leadership and pastoral ministry, where acceptance of God's initiative was motivated by a desire to serve God and others (Duffy et al., 2012; Lemke, 2020).
5. *Church Leadership* - For this study, the pastoral and senior leadership offices within Protestant churches. While the titles differed by denomination, it is the leader in the congregational setting served as a senior ordained leader or any head clergy as denoted by the association, organization, synod, presbytery, bishop, or superintendent of the denomination (Barnes, 2005; Cattich, 2012).
6. *Interrole conflict* - Conflict that occurs when a person has multiple roles; often, expectations and demands that exceed capacity; causing overlapping and competing roles (Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Smoktunowicz et al., 2017; Visker et al., 2016).
7. *Intersectionality* - Complex social inequalities, discrimination, and bias, due to race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and age, specifically race and gender in this study (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989).
8. *South or American South* - The geographical part of the United States of America that formerly embraced slavery and was associated with 11 states that seceded from the original American colonies during the Civil War and formed the Confederate States of America. South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas were the Confederate States that seceded in 1861. Shortly, four more slave-holding states, Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina, joined the Confederacy (Ask Media Group, 2022; US Census, 2020).

9. *Stained-glass Ceiling* - The invisible barrier preventing women from attaining head congregational leadership positions in Christian congregations that subordinated women to lower levels and/or smaller, financially strapped congregations (Adams, 2007; Sullins, 2000; Williams- Gegner et al., 2010).
10. *Strong Black Woman (SBW) archetype or schema* - A race-gender schema, behavioral-cognitive construct, and cultural mandate specific to Black or African American women, and the traits attributed to the motif were strength, resilience, independence (self-reliant), nurturing, and caring for others (caregiver), controlling emotions (emotion containment) (Barnes, 2009; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Harris, 2001; Liao et al., 2020; Nelson et al., 2016; Nelson et al., 2020; Romero, 2000; Wood-Giscombe', 2010).
11. *Subjugation* – The dominance and discrimination toward female clergy by their male counterparts (Smarr et al., 2018).
12. *Superwoman schema* - A motif that mirrored the SBW and described women who helped others were obligated to manifest strength, resistance to vulnerability or dependence, the restriction or control of emotion, and achievement or success with only limited resources (Woods-Giscombe', 2010). This term was used interchangeably with the SBW motif.
13. *Well-Being Theory* - As defined by Seligman (2011), well-being was measured in the five domains: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.
The definitions of the PERMA pillars from Kern (2014) were as follows:
 - a. *Positive Emotion* - Feeling joy and contentment.
 - b. *Engagement* - Having psychological interest, awareness, and involvement in the world.
 - c. *Relationships* - Feeling loved, supported, and valued by others.

- d. *Meaning* - Having a sense of direction in life and recognizing that life has value, meaning, and worth.
- e. *Accomplishment* - Having a personal, subjective sense of achievement and accomplishment.

Summary

The problem was that Black female clergy were most likely to experience intersectionality (Cole, 2009; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; McCall, 2005; Settles, 2006; Smarr et al., 2018; Warner & Shields, 2013). With less than 13% of clergy comprised of women and an even smaller percentage of African American women, the ability to thrive in church leadership positions while maintaining their well-being has been challenging. This study proposed to empirically contribute to the limited body of knowledge on the Black clergywomen who remained in the profession despite the mounting barriers (Adams, 2007; Homan & Burdette, 2021; Ngunjiri, 2012; Smarr et al., 2018; Zippia, 2022). The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of the Black women in ministry (e.g., pastors, clergywomen) who experienced intersectionality and were influenced by the Strong Black Woman archetype, specifically in the Black Church in the American South. This chapter included a background on the origin of the negative images and stereotypes of Black women from slavery, the formation of the SBW motif and schema, and the emergence of Black clergywomen despite the barriers to including intersectionality. Moreover, this study discussed the shortage of Black clergywomen in church leadership in the South, a description of my situation within this study, a problem statement supported by extant literature, a concise purpose statement, a description of the empirical and theoretical significances of this study, and the definition of relevant key concepts and terms.

The extant literature and theoretical frameworks that guided this study is discussed in Chapter Two, with the research procedures described in Chapter Three. This research study aimed to expand the contemporary literature and gaps in the literature by targeting a specific population of Black clergywomen who experienced intersectionality while influenced by the SBW and how they impacted their well-being and ministerial calling. Black female pastors and clergywomen from the American South geographic area were included in this study. In Chapter Four, the research findings addressed the gaps in the existing literature by expanding on the varied experiences of each participant and how they influenced their lives and ministry. Chapter Five concluded with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

According to Smarr et al. (2018), Black clergywomen experience intersectionality in their roles as leaders within the church. This bias includes degradation, subjugation, humiliation, and discrimination based on gender and race by their male counterparts (Smarr et al., 2018). Yet, like their male counterparts, these women heard God's call to minister and pastor and had a strong desire to please their congregants while denying their own needs (Rowatt, 2001). For many of these Black clergywomen, there existed a need for strength, resilience, self-reliance, and suppression of emotions to fulfill their roles effectively; these characteristics were often ascribed to the Strong Black Woman (SBW) archetype, and many Black women embraced this schema (Nelson et al., 2016).

While Black women have become more accepted as pastors and in higher leadership roles within churches, their acceptance in these coveted positions was not at an equal level of opportunity with their male counterparts (Konieczny & Chaves, 2000). Predominantly, Black Protestant congregations have embraced the idea of women in leadership roles in churches within their denominations, yet, evangelical congregations are significantly less likely to embrace women in leadership (Adams, 2007). Although more congregations encouraged women in leadership, Black female pastors in these congregations were still impacted by intersectionality, impacting their ministry effectiveness (Adams, 2007). Many clergy members sought support from their peers and outside sources (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2013). Yet, Protestant churches often had the lowest level of support and resources for their leaders (Weaver et al., 2002). With the increase of women in clerical roles and ecclesiastic leadership, a lack of mentoring and support systems in some churches and denominations proved a source of

discouragement for women pursuing leadership roles despite amended policies allowing for their inclusion in clergy roles (Lee, 2004; Weaver et al., 2002).

Extant literature individually examined the components of the phenomena to be addressed in this study. Several studies examined how Black clergywomen experienced intersectionality in their leadership roles (Homan & Burdette, 2021; Konieczny & Chaves, 2000; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012; Smarr et al., 2018; Sullins, 2000). Likewise, studies focused on African American pastors' well-being, health, and health behaviors, including female pastors (Baruth et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2007; Weaver et al., 2002). Additionally, considerable literature regarding the impacts of the SBW schema/archetype as a cultural mandate for Black women and the fulfillment of their roles and well-being existed (Abrams et al., 2018; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Harris, 2001; Nelson et al., 2016; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). However, a gap existed in studying these areas combined and in understanding the well-being of these Black women who experienced this race and gender bias in their clergy leadership roles and were influenced by the SBW schema. Secondly, specific to all the study components, no existing body of research focused specifically on this phenomenon in southern states. It was important to address that aspect by narrowing the scope to the southern geographic region, which could limit the generalizability of the research themes. Using the views of Moustakas (1994), the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to study the essence of the experience, specifically, the well-being of Black women in ministry (e.g., pastors, clergywomen) who experienced intersectionality and were influenced by the SBW archetype, specifically in the Black Church in the southern United States, also known as the American South.

Theoretical Interpretive Frameworks

There was an intersection of two major theoretical frameworks that guided the study based on the multiple attributes of the lived experience of these Black clergywomen participating in this qualitative inquiry. The reality of each woman involved the dynamics of efficacious tenured pastoring and leadership as Black women while revealing their unique endorsement of critical attributes of the SBW schema. This study highlighted these women's ability to overcome subjugation, prejudice, and male dominance while pursuing their God-given call. Each attributing factor of this phenomenon was grounded in a specific framework as it overlapped and intertwined with the others, thoroughly capturing the essence of this phenomenon based on their varied perspectives.

To study the subjugation, prejudices, biases, and inequalities suffered by these Black clergywomen due to their intersecting race and gender social categories, intersectionality, a critical theory, was utilized. Crenshaw (1991) coined the term intersectionality; it was applied to the experiences these Black clergywomen faced and guided the exploration of their experiences in fulfilling their clergy leadership roles. Secondly, the Strong Black Woman Collective (SBWC) was also an appropriate theoretical framework for viewing groups of Black American women (Davis, 2015). The framework was developed to reframe the study using the lens of their race and gender-biased experiences (Davis, 2015). Many Black women embraced the key tenets of the SBW motif, which included strength, resilience, independence, and caring for others more than self while controlling emotions (Abrams et al., 2018; Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). One of the study's fundamental premises was that some participants embraced this archetype, often unaware of the formalized cultural mandate. Yet, these Black women exhibited the strength, resilience, and independence of SBW

while maintaining emotional control and other coping mechanisms to thrive in all their situations (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Watson-Singleton, 2017; Woods-Giscombé, 2010).

Related Literature

Intersectionality: Race and Gender Bias

The critical theory addressed the empowerment of marginalized groups to transcend the restraints placed on them by race, class, and gender (Fay, 1987). Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that investigates the experiences of marginalized persons belonging to more than one subordinate social category, such as race, gender, and class (Cole, 2009; McCall, 2005; Smarr et al., 2018; Settles, 2006; Warner & Shields, 2013). Specifically, two different identities combined to negatively impact the circumstances and experiences of the marginalized person or persons, and these intersecting identities influence social perceptions and self-perceptions (Collins, 2000, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; Donovan & West, 2015; Nelson et al., 2016). The term intersectionality was coined by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) to highlight the underrepresented experiences of Black women and how these Black women suffered from discrimination because of their unique experience of belonging to two marginalized groups, such as the intersection of their race and gender which was the focus in this study. Intersectionality focused on the experiences of these marginalized women with multiple disadvantaged statuses simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1991). Structural intersectionality is defined as the location of Black women (women of color) at the intersection of their race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989, 2016; Edwards et al., 2018).

In contrast, political intersectionality or intersectional failure resulted from the antiracist and feminist politics that facilitated marginalizing the issue of violence against Black women (women of color) instead of combatting the ongoing violence (Crenshaw, 1989, 2016; Edwards

et al., 2018). Crenshaw (1989, 1991) recognized that feminist theory and antiracist policy typically excluded Black women. Specific to the court system, Black women's experiences were considered the same as White women (gender) and Black men (race) and therefore did not allow Black women to be recognized as a distinct social group (Carbado, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989). This issue was magnified when the courts refused to permit women of color to represent a class of plaintiffs (Carbado, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989). Specifically, up to that point, experiences regarding racism and discrimination focused mainly on White women and Black men and rarely on the intersection of social identities of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989). This intersection defines Black women's experiences as a unique discriminatory experience for this marginalized group (Crenshaw, 1989). Thus introducing the intersectionality concept, Crenshaw created the opportunity to ensure the inclusion of Black women as their own marginalized group experiencing discrimination because of their race and gender identities simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1998, 1991). Intersectionality described how Black women placed equal importance on their race and gender; moreover, the Black woman identity (the two together) was more significant than the individual Black or woman identity separately (Settles, 2006). Hence, Black women created their sense of self by uniting the two as the best identification of who they are (Settles, 2006).

Collins (1990) introduced the intersectional feminist theory specific to Black women, which addressed how inequalities developed through a matrix of domination, specifically where inequalities such as race, class, and gender were mutually dependent. Specific to the controlling images of Black women, she explained how these images supplied fuel to and defended the economic exploitation, gender subjugation, and racial discrimination present in capitalism-embracing economies like the United States (Collins, 1990). These depictions of the cult of true

womanhood, which were hegemonic cultural stereotypes, were exploited by and on behalf of some women to uphold dominance based on race, class, gender, and other classifications (Collins, 1990). From within the intersectional framework, she explained how within hegemonic situations, power was distributed throughout society in that groups within the social system control each other, such as hegemonic masculinity, which suggested the subordination of women or dominance of the male gender over the female gender (Collins, 1990, 2004).

In more recent literature, Edwards et al. (2018) suggested that the idea of intersectionality can be traced to one of the pioneers for Black clergywomen, the abolitionist Sojourner Truth, when she stated, "Ar'nt I a woman" in her speech delivered during the Women's Rights Convention on May 29, 1851. This theory of intersectionality was the perfect lens to conceptualize how multiple disadvantages and social categories or identities jointly shaped the group's experiences, especially in the United States (Cole, 2009; Collins, 2004; Edwards et al., 2018). Since its conception, the theory of intersectionality has been applied to understand how a multitude of group memberships (race, gender, class, and sexual orientation) interacted, and the more groups with which one can identify, the more disadvantaged the person was (Carbado, 2013; Schug et al., 2017). Ladson-Billings (2013) posited that intersectionality in its development had become the sixth tenet of critical race theory (CRT). Precisely, intersectionality transcends race identity and the Black/White racial binary by examining race across races and how race intersects with other categories/identities, including gender, social class, and sexuality (Crenshaw, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 2013).

This study explored the unique experiences that these Black clergywomen experienced with discrimination, prejudice, bias, and oppression based on their intersecting race and gender in this male-dominated field. These Black clergywomen were accepted more in Black Protestant

churches yet had limited opportunities and faced subjugation and oppression from their male counterparts in those Black Churches (Adams, 2007; Homan & Burdette, 2021; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). It was crucial to understand how these women in leadership positions strive and thrive in fulfilling their clergy roles despite their experiences with intersectionality.

Effects of Intersectionality

There are many adverse outcomes for marginalized women that experience intersectionality. It was important to address several of these negative aspects that specifically impacted the participants of this study, Black clergywomen thriving in a patriarchal culture in the Black Church of the South. These negative experiences included the stained-glass ceiling, prejudice and bias, lack of support and inequality, and negative health impacts.

Stained-Glass Ceiling Effect

The stained-glass ceiling effect was a form of intersectionality in the church overall regarding discrimination of women and obstructing their inclusion in church leadership. This effect was prevalent, especially in Black churches where Black women comprised most of the congregation but less than 10% of leadership (Homan & Burdette, 2021). Empirical data suggested that the highest level, more prestigious positions in virtually every denomination were held disproportionately by men (Sullins, 2000). These barriers kept women from securing positions of authority within these religious institutions, often subordinating women to lower-level support positions and leading in smaller, financially struggling congregations (Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Regarding Black women, the stained-glass ceiling encompassed all of the issues that African American women faced– not only gender but also issues surrounding race, role expectations, ethnicity, and socialization (Christo-Baker et al., 2012). Women who attended male-led churches that restricted women's leadership reported significantly lower self-rated

health than those in more inclusive communities (Homan & Burdette, 2021). The health advantages of spirituality and religion were reduced when women were excluded from power and status (Homan & Burdette, 2021).

Specific to church leadership, many Black clergywomen, while qualified, lacked the opportunities to lead congregations, were limited from being selected for employment, and were restricted from advancement in ministry leadership (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). Like the clergywomen in this study, the few Black clergywomen who have broken the stained-glass ceiling embraced a daunting task with barriers and struggled to lead in a male-dominated vocation (Adams, 2007; Pinsky, 2001). They do so to complete God's plan for their life. Yet, the insurmountable barriers and resistance, such as prejudice, oppression, and bias related explicitly to their race and gender, were often accompanied by a lack of support, and inequality, resulting in increased negative impacts on their efficacy and health (Adams, 2007; Collier-Thomas, 1998; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Pinsky, 2001; Smarr et al., 2018).

Prejudice and Bias

Black Protestant congregations were more likely to have higher proportions of women in leadership, while evangelical congregations were significantly less likely to do so (Adams, 2007). Even with more Black women pastors and church leaders, these Black clergywomen still experienced intersectionality in their leadership roles (Smarr et al., 2018). This bias included degradation, subjugation, humiliation, and discrimination from their male peers based on gender and race (Smarr et al., 2018). Cannon (2011) emphasized that Black male clergy in leadership roles used male dominance to marginalize and banish women who sought clergy leadership positions in Black churches.

Moreover, these women face rejection and exclusion when striving to achieve male-dominated leadership roles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). This discrimination was often formulated from common beliefs such as men only should serve as the pastor and spiritual leader, women should be silent, and women are prohibited by scripture from leading men (Brown, 2008; Collier-Thomas, 1998; Griffin, 1993; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). A significant aspect of the ineligibility for women in ministry was based on Apostle Paul's arguments in 1 Timothy 3:2, 3:12, and Titus 1:6 (*King James Bible Online*, 1769/2017, 1 Timothy 3:2, 3:12; Titus 1:6). Conservative exegetical interpretation excluded women from church leadership overlooking that these scriptures addressed teaching and prophecy specifically, not church leadership (Adams, 2007). Without indulging in a lengthy discourse on the opposing views of complementarian versus egalitarian interpretation, research supported that gender ideology and bias often shaped the interpretation (Perry & McElroy, 2020). Other research on this premise highlighted Marxian, feminist, intersectional, and other critical theory viewpoints demonstrating how positionality and power affected interpretations text (Elliott & Boer, 2013; Mayfield, 2013). These studies were found to have ideological bias over the reader's interpretations of the Bible or any text (Elliott & Boer, 2013; Mayfield, 2013). Conservative proponents rejected the egalitarian view, despite biblical support for gender equality and women serving in positions of church authority and key proponents for the inclusion of women in leadership (Sullins, 2000; Witherington, 1988). Thus, the barriers from the conservative, restrictive view still exist for many women (Finlay, 2003; Smarr et al., 2018; Sullins, 2000; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021; Zippia, 2022).

Specifically for Black clergywomen in the Black Church, male dominance in the leadership hierarchy kept Black women stagnant (Collins, 2004; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Sullins,

2000). From a historical perspective, Black men in church leadership equated their position in leadership as integral to their struggle for freedom and acceptance, and Black women in these ecclesiastical pursuits threatened their perceived manhood and position as men (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018; Sullins, 2000). Black clergymen subjugated these Black clergywomen because they felt threatened; allowing preaching women threatened not only men's power but also the Black community's social priorities (Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Patricia Hill Collins argued that the Black Church supported the patriarchal family, projecting that men were the heads of the church and women should not preach (Collins, 2004). Although Black Church theology emphasized the message of deliverance, equality, and justice, and Jesus preached this message for the oppressed, sadly, this same Black theology reflected male dominance and a patriarchal stance that limited Black women's leadership, freedom, and equity within Black churches (Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Many leaders in the Black Church embraced this belief; even congregants and Black clergywomen had to employ survival strategies to successfully lead their congregations (Collins, 2004; Ngunjiri et al., 2012).

Conservatism was another area of prejudice based on the reality that men held these leadership roles in the church (Collins, 2004; Howell-Baker, 2005; Sullins, 2000). This movement continued to align with the male headship for clergy leadership, undermining women's leadership, hence creating an obstacle to advancement (Collins, 2004; Howell-Baker, 2005; Sullins, 2000). These barriers negatively impacted the church members' loyalty, causing opposition and damaging female leaders' credibility (Adams, 2007; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). Patricia Hill Collins (2004) explained that the Black Church supported conservative ideas regarding gender and sexuality. This bias made the idea of women as leaders and pastors in the

Black Church difficult to embrace and an obstacle for women seeking those roles (Collins, 2004).

Lack of Support and Inequality

Church leadership remained predominately male-dominated, where males still held the coveted position as an overall church leader (Barnes, 2006). This suggested that women clergy, although intricately involved in the life and ministry of these churches, could not hold the highest ranking and were not equally supported as males in the same office (Barnes, 2006). With the strong male preference and dominance, black clergywomen leaders faced opposition to their leadership and decision-making, and males in the congregations bound to conservatism defied the female pastor's authority (Smarr et al., 2018). Overall, gender inequality persisted as a problem in church leadership in the United States (Homan & Burdette, 2021). Women clergy received less support for advancement, were criticized as emotional, and were deprived of unbiased leadership ranking (Smarr et al., 2018).

Moreover, male clergymen labeled these women weak leaders and undermined their authority (Collins, 2004; Smarr et al., 2018). These prejudices exacerbated the difficulty of effectively leading their congregations and caused undue harm. Efforts to garner support were exercised more by women than their male counterparts in the same role (Collins, 2004).

While Adams (2007) suggested congregations in the South were less likely to have women leaders, women with head clergy roles were more likely to be located in resource-poor congregations lacking resources (Adams, 2007). Pay disparity was common between male and female clergy (Gonzalez, 1998; Smarr et al., 2018; Zippia, 2022). Yet, Black clergywomen pursued these opportunities to fulfill the call of God on their lives, accepting these positions in poorly financed, struggling churches that were ultimately less desirable by their male

counterparts because of the deficiencies and inadequate remuneration and resources (Adams, 2007; Ngunjiri et al., 2012).

Negative Health Impact

There was a growing concern for the health status of the clergy because recent studies indicated high rates of chronic health conditions and obesity prevailed in this high-stress service occupation (Baruth et al., 2014). Many religious institutions created and reinforced a high degree of health-threatening, structural sexism (Homan & Burdette, 2021). This aspect of race and gender bias was significant because many women in the clergy and leadership roles suffered the effects of intersectionality, which added undue pressure and more difficulty in performing their ministerial roles effectively (Smarr et al., 2018). With the existing negative impacts associated with the vocation alone, Black clergywomen experiencing prejudice, bias, and occupational stress potentially faced higher health issues (Proeschold-Bell, 2020). Several recent studies regarding stress coping for ministers found that pastoral burnout and dissatisfaction were rising (Proeschold-Bell et al., 2011). Pastors were likely more susceptible to burnout than individuals from other occupations because of the excessive demands and numerous and diverse roles in the church and the surrounding community (Baruth et al., 2014).

As more Black women graduated from seminary and formal education, they needed to understand the many prejudices, obstacles, and added burdens that exacerbated the already demanding role of church leadership and the arduous path to fulfill the call of God. These challenges can negatively impact their overall well-being. Pastoring is lauded as a demanding vocation, and empirical data suggested that internal or external dynamics such as undue prejudices and discrimination negatively impact a pastor's well-being (Baruth et al., 2014; Proeschold-Bell, 2020; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2011). In the face of these challenges to their

spiritual well-being and overall well-being, some chose to exercise spiritual well-being, while others sought professional help (Salwen, 2017). It was critical to understand these complexities, the realities of the participants, and their advice to future female church leaders.

Methods Utilized to Avoid or Overcome Subjugation, Oppression, and Resistance

Ngunjiri et al. (2012) outlined key strategies employed by Black clergywomen to fulfill their ministerial callings in the face of male opposition and resistance. These methods included refusing engagements to preach from the floor, leaving their denominations, and circumventing the stained-glass ceiling altogether by starting their churches (Collier-Thomas, 1998). Reverend Essie Mae McIntyre created her church, whereas Ida Robinson created a denomination (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Dubose, 2018; Fauset, 1970; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). The more radical the approach by these women, the more serious the consequences, such as death threats. Yet, these women were determined that the resistance would be used as a stepping stone to success and a rally for strength and resilience in the face of opposition. Other approaches were less radical and included settling for assistant and associate pastor roles that granted access to the pulpit and leadership and foregoing pastoring for alternative leadership positions such as chaplains, itinerant preachers, missionary work, and outreach (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Many of these approaches were to circumvent the subjugation, resistance, and oppression by male clergy members due to the intersection of their gender and race. These approaches provided a diverse range of ministry opportunities. Emerging alternative ministry methods were social reform, public health, and counseling (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Stansbury et al., 2012). These paths became more common as researchers examined the strong preference of the Black community to rely on their churches for addressing mental health concerns more so than seeking licensed, professional mental health counseling (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Stansbury et al., 2012). These avenues offered roles often

performed by church leaders and pastors, without male leadership's resistance, the duties of congregation leadership, and the accompanying sacerdotal functions related to ordained pastorship.

Strong Black Woman Archetype (SBW) And Superwoman Schema

As stated in the historical overview, from within the context of slavery, discrimination, racism, oppression, sexism, and harmful stereotypes such as Mammy and Jezebel were assigned to Black women (Nelson et al., 2016; Townsend et al., 2010; Thomas, 2001; Thomas et al., 2004; Watson & Hunter, 2016; West, 1995). The SBW schema, a multidimensional construct, was birthed as a positive reaction and outward rejection of the controlling images and existing negative stereotypes of Black women (Nelson et al., 2016; Townsend et al., 2010; Thomas, 2001; Thomas et al., 2004; Watson & Hunter, 2016; West, 1995). Black feminist scholars proposed that SBW was an alternate view to stereotypical images to interrupt the distortions and negative representations (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2005; Collins, 2000). Many scholars posited that the SBW was a response laden with survival and escape from the overt exploitation of oppressive slave owners (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Townsend, 2008; Watson-Singleton, 2017). It continued to be passed generationally in the socialization of Black girls, specifically inculcated by their mothers (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Townsend, 2008; Watson-Singleton, 2017). Several researchers believed the SBW schema was an empowering concept that was freeing Black women from the inception of slavery and combating the continuing negative representations in many social and cultural settings. This included an anathema, a breeder, a seductress, and an oppressed, depressed, or angry woman devoid of positive attributes (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Nelson et al., 2016). While institutionalized slavery in the American South had been abolished, Black women, particularly in the South, continued to

experience these negative stereotypes, oppressive views, and subjugation due to the intersection of race, gender, and sex (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Watson-Singleton, 2017).

Understanding the origins and impetus behind the formation of this image for Black women, Nelson et al. (2016) conceptualized that the common characteristics that defined SBW described a strong Black woman, independent (self-reliant), nurturing (taking care of family and others as sole caregiver), high achieving, overcoming adversity (resilient) while controlling her emotions. These tenets defined the key attributes that many Black women embraced, whether conscious of the SBW or Superwoman motifs or by manifestation of the characteristics in their socio-cultural experiences. This framework proposed that the Black women actively participating in the SBWC fostered a strong coalition for resistance and safety from negative outside forces (Davis, 2015). Communication was one vital instrument used in this framework. Communicating the strength and resilience of these Black women, specifically these Black clergywomen in this study, aimed to help others embrace this strength and resiliency in their efforts to fulfill their roles and lives daily.

Overall, women were expected to embrace communal norms and characteristics, such as concern for the welfare of others and being helpful, affectionate, kind, sympathetic, nurturing, and gentle (Christo-Baker et al., 2012). These qualities played an important role in the SBW schema and were essential for female clergywomen to demonstrate strength, self-reliance, and independence (perseverance) in their leadership style. Women influenced by the SBW motif were typified as possessing strength, resilience, and independence; these three characteristics were primary cognitive and behavioral expectations in the set of attributes included in the SBW schema (Nelson et al., 2016; Walker-Barnes, 2009; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2007) provided evidence that the SBW archetype influenced many Black women, and

the SBW or the Superwoman motif was a cultural mandate for Black women. Some researchers expressed their concerns that the idealization of the SBW was a moral evil in modern society and the Christian Church. This system devalued Black women to benefit others, particularly Black and White men (Walker-Barnes, 2009). It was in contrast to the Christian ideology that all human beings were created in the image of God and were made to be in communion with each other and God (Walker-Barnes, 2009). Despite these concerns, Black women embraced the SBW schema, and there were positive and negative features associated with the archetype (Davis et al., 2018; Nelson et al., 2016; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Watson-Singleton, 2017).

The adverse psychological and emotional outcomes of SBW and the concern that SBW was another controlling image were well documented in the extant literature (Nelson et al., 2016; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). However, the positive aspects were not researched to the same degree (Nelson et al., 2016; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). This study focused on these positive aspects that were well documented as critical to the survival of Black women since slavery (Davis et al., 2018; Nelson et al., 2016; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Watson-Singleton, 2017; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). As outlined in this study, the belief was that Black clergywomen embrace the tenets of the SBW schema – strength, resilience, independence, self-reliance, and perseverance in their efforts to lead, pastor, and fulfill the calling of God in the face of subjugation and their overcoming or shattering the stained-glass ceiling that exists in church leadership (Adams, 2007; Nelson et al., 2016; Sullins, 2000). Measuring their adherence to the principal attributes and allowing for the telling of their varied experiences afforded other Black women beginning their process of becoming pastors and attaining clergy leadership roles an opportunity to understand what was required to preach the Gospel and lead in the face of intersecting race and gender bias. Furthermore, this study

demonstrated how these women balanced intersectionality and managed the attributes, skills, and beliefs necessary to embrace the key characteristics described in the overcomer motif of the SBW schema. It was important to review each attribute of the SBW motif individually and their contribution to Black women who adopted the cultural mandate, knowingly or subconsciously, specifically the Black clergywomen in the study (Abrams et al., 2018; Harris, 2001).

SBW: Positive Features and Effects

Women influenced by SBW were identified as self-reliant, self-contained, resilient, and persevering in their approach to problems and goals. (Romero, 2000). Additionally, women influenced by SBW were considered resilient, often described as able to work through whatever comes, adaptable, and flexible (Meek et al., 2003; Nelson et al., 2016). Regarding perseverance, the women prescribed to the SBW image showed strength, overcame past abuse and violence, and overlooked their emotions (Kanyeredzi, 2018). Using an amalgamation of the many different terms to describe the attributes of SBW, this section aimed to provide a clear understanding of the relevance of each tenet as it related to Black women, particularly the participants in this study. Without ordering the principles, the common characteristics that define SBW were strength, resilience (overcoming adversity), independence (self-reliant), nurturing (taking care of family and others, aka a caregiver), and high achievement while controlling their emotions (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Kanyeredzi, 2018; Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Watson & Hunter, 2016; West et al., 2016).

Strength. The first attribute of the SBW schema signified the ability to meet goals and overcome obstacles. Strength in moderation was a positive attribute of a highly resilient society (Romero, 2000; Walker-Barnes, 2009). Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2007) suggested that strength experienced primarily in response to struggle was a key attribute of the SBW. SBW utilized the

term strength to describe the capacity to be goal-oriented and focused while embracing individuality (independence) and validating one's moral integrity (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007, 2009). An alternative definition proffered by Nelson et al. (2016) described strength as the ability to solve personal problems and resolve difficult situations entirely reliant on self. Walker-Barnes (2009) suggested that there was a critical difference between Black and White women exercising strength. White women mainly viewed a lack of strength as a failure to their family and themselves; however, African American women perceived it as a failure to their entire community and culture (Walker-Barnes, 2009). They must be strong despite the circumstances.

Notably, the call to ministry was daunting, and being strong was beneficial, especially in a male-dominant vocation where women in the field experienced subjugation, a lack of support, and bias. These factors undermined practical efforts to lead. Strength, a strong ethic, and moral integrity were necessary qualities in pastoring and meeting the needs of a congregation. Several studies suggested that women such as Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman portrayed the SBW race-gender schema as exemplifying strength while undertaking their God-given missions in the face of resistance and insurmountable obstacles (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Nelson et al. (2016) suggested that strength was the critical coping mechanism for Black women and their efforts to survive, and it had been since slavery. Black people, especially Black women, were treated as the slave owner's property and endured brutal conditions (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Nelson et al., 2016; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). As a result, being strong in the face of adversity and daily demoralizing conditions was crucial for survival for the Black woman and her family (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Nelson et al., 2016; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). This same strength for Black women and their families' survival was still prevalent in many Black communities. With

single-parent homes, especially in Black families led by single Black mothers increasing, strength in the face of adversity with limited resources was vital to the household and the success of the family (Balswick, 2014; Walker-Barnes, 2009). With the duty of pastoring Black families in the Black Church, it was of vital importance that the pastors embrace and promote strength in overcoming daily life; predominantly when 60-90% of these congregations were comprised of Black women who were socialized that they must possess strength (Barnes, 2006; Collins, 2004; Homan & Burdette, 2021; Nelson et al., 2016; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018; Sullins, 2000)

Resilience. Kanyeredzi (2018) wrote that Black women who were encouraged and groomed to be strong were observed to develop a hardened self-resilience and adopt the SBW persona to deal with the difficulties, problems, and challenges they faced daily. This was the critical reason Black mothers, especially when training their daughters, toughened their children as defensive and protective acts of survival (Collins, 1990). Second, only to strengthen for survival, Black women must be resilient to survive in a culture where they were oppressed and devalued because of their intersecting social identities of race and gender (Nelson et al., 2016; Watson & Hunter, 2016). Nelson et al. (2016) described that the language for examining and discussing the SBW/superwoman role must include the terms persevering and surviving.

Strength and resilience overlapped in the SBW construct, as one must be strong to survive and overcome adversity, resistance, and oppression (Romero, 2000; Walker-Barnes, 2009). According to Walker-Barnes (2009), since slavery, Black women, as opposed to Black men, had been viewed as having an incredible capacity for achievement and the ability to withstand extremely high levels of effort and stress. Over time, that idea of strength

changed to represent emotional fortitude in the face of hardship (Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Walker-Barnes, 2009). Black women were expected to endure suffering, trauma, and oppression without protest (Romero, 2000). Strength enabled the preservation and resilience of Black women despite racial and gender bias, oppression, prejudice, and discrimination, which supported the overlapping theories (Collins, 2004; Nelson et al., 2016). Also, SBW glorified strength and caregiving and was described as a critical foundation of Black womanhood (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009).

Black women were critical to the existence and sustainability of the Black Church, a safe haven and refuge for healing for the oppressed and marginalized (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Brewer & Williams, 2019). Like these women, the Black Church experienced resilience through survival despite difficulties, a lack of resources, and numerous historical threats with each social movement aimed toward freedom for Black people (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Brewer & Williams, 2019). Resilience was necessary and a needed virtue and skill to lead Black congregations.

More in terms of resilience in ministry, this trait was necessary to achieve the level of efficacy and tenure that the participants of this study have attained. Resilience was vital to continue ministry through personal and organizational conflict and adversity, overcoming discrimination and bias from male peers, and persevering through adverse experiences and struggles (Southwick et al., 2014). Lastly, resilience in ministry was defined as the capacity to adapt successfully to discord and conflict that threatened viability, function, development, and the ability to utilize resources to sustain well-being (Southwick et al., 2014).

Independent (Self-Reliant). Nelson et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of independence and self-reliance in SBW and how these attributes aided in combatting yet another

negative stereotype of Black women, called the welfare queen. The SBW schema embracing independence was the antithesis of the welfare queen relying on social support and welfare for survival (Nelson et al., 2016). Similarly, women influenced by SBW were identified as self-reliant and self-contained in their approach to problems and goals (Romero, 2000). In a qualitative study by Nelson et al. (2016), 73% of their participants believed that the SBW role included self-reliance and independence, particularly the ability to handle one's problems and work through difficulty in a self-reliant manner. Several SBW researchers addressed the need to overcome the negative images of Black women and their dependence on welfare, government programs, and social services (Barnes, 2009; Kanyeredzi, 2018; Nelson et al., 2016; West, 1995).

Every participant of this study had faced some form of subjugation, bias, prejudice, or discrimination in the pursuit of fulfilling the call to lead in the Black Church and had some experience(s) with having to be self-reliant or independent when addressing matters in their personal or professional life in the church leadership. These positive accounts of success and thriving despite the adverse circumstances aimed to provide even more evidence to the positive images of SBW and the Black women who embraced this construct in conflict resolution and goal achievement.

Nurturing (Caregiving). African American mothers, particularly grandmothers, have been viewed as religious leaders and educators in their families and the Black community (Stephens et al., 2020). During slavery, it was the role of the Black woman to care for others, including the Mammy role tasked with nurturing and caretaking for White families (Nelson et al., 2016). The SBW motif emphasized this caregiving role (Nelson et al., 2016). According to Walker-Barnes (2009), this idea first appeared during slavery. During Reconstruction, the Mammy came to represent the majority of Black women, portraying them as eager to meet the

needs of their owners or employers, even if it meant neglecting their own needs and the needs of their families. This picture of caregiving pushed the assumption that Black women had a great desire to care for others at the expense of their own needs and health (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Walker-Barnes, 2009; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Several researchers suggested that Black women feel shame, selfishness, and low self-worth when they cannot nurture and care for others (Thomas et al., 2004).

Similarly, several studies suggested that women such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida Robinson, and many of the other pioneering women paving the way through slavery portrayed the SBW to care for others and provide valuable support and care often denying the care and concern for self and some their families (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Collier-Thomas, 1998; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Woods-Giscombé, 2010).

Within the Black Church and community, the role of caregiving was vital to Black families and the extended families within the church community, especially in the American South. It was common for grandmothers and aunts to care for grandchildren and be responsible for care (Balswick, 2014). At the same time, mothers and fathers were expected to work to meet the family's economic needs, especially in single-parent homes (Balswick, 2014). Again, Black women were the key supporters of the church and its organization and functions, and these support functions were a carryover of the spirit of caregiving and nurturing (Homan & Burdette, 2021; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). It was vital to see how this attribute of nurturing and caregiving impacted and continued in the lives of these participants in their pastoral care and counseling roles.

Emotion Containment. Another key component of the SBW image was emotional regulation or self-containment of emotion. It was a critical portion of the image that was reactionary to the Sapphire or angry Black woman images and designed to overcome or disassociate Black women from those negative stereotypes (Nelson et al., 2016; Thomas, 2001; West, 1995). This constraint and control of emotions were crucial during slavery for survival (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Donovan & West, 2015; Nelson et al., 2016). Avoiding violence and abuse was a method to preserve the Black family by avoiding the auctioning off of one's children (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Donovan & West, 2015; Nelson et al., 2016). Many researchers agreed that emotion control in the SBW motif and repression was directly related to delays in preventative medicine and decreased help-seeking in African American women (Black & Woods-Giscombé, 2012; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). This was concerning because Black women often reported higher stress levels, greater incidence of depression, and related mental health disorders, higher risk of developing hypertension, and greater mortality outcomes in breast cancer (Black & Woods-Giscombé, 2012; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Moreover, Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2009) raised concerns that strong adherence to the SBW schema had the semblance of promoting Black women. Yet, the reality of appearing strong, resilient, and self-reliant negatively limited the expression of emotions and diminished help-seeking when needed (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009).

Similarly, Kanyeredzi (2018) raised the red flag that within the SBW construct, Black women were driven to overcome marginalization and social inequalities through the mask of strength and resilience. The researcher stated that this mask hid the true nature of abuse and violence when experienced by Black women and perpetuated the façade of strength (Kanyeredzi, 2018). The perception and engrained belief that vulnerability and pain were to be withheld and

not an option, regardless of the severity of the situation, plague Black women (Kanyeredzi, 2018). Several researchers used the idea that wearing the mask was an ongoing emblem of the SBW or Superwoman schema (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Romero, 2000; Watson & Hunter, 2016; West et al., 2016). Further study was necessary to determine if this wearing of the mask was due to the embodiment of the SBW construct or if it had a direct relationship to the circumstances of perpetual, generational oppression, public scrutiny, and devaluation of Black women. Therefore, this mask served as a coping mechanism. Another critical study into this common theme in Black culture was the mediating role of the perceived expectation of Black women to exhibit strength and SBW related explicitly to overcoming obstacles with very limited resources and limited emotional response to their plight (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Romero, 2000; Watson-Singleton, 2017; Witherspoon & Speight, 2004; Woods-Giscombé, 2010).

Again, as Black clergywomen empowered by SBW, a crucial aspect was exploring this attribute's influence as part of the SBW collective. Male pastors/church leaders who subjugated women clergy often criticized them as emotional and weak (Smarr et al., 2018). It was vital to the study to understand the necessity to exercise emotion containment when ministering to the congregation's needs and leading through crisis and adversity to avoid the appearance of weakness or an inability to contain emotions (Nelson et al., 2020).

Positive Support for SBW

Some studies supported the negative and positive features of the SBW motif, yet this study focused on the positivity and perceived benefits. West et al. (2016) conducted a study where 78% viewed SBW as a positive image, over half of their participants used terms supporting strength, a third promoted the independent attribute, and 26% valued nurturing and caregiving. Just as important, 38% defined SBW related to their career accomplishments or

business acumen, and 24% associated SBW with their self-esteem and self-confidence (West et al., 2016). Key empirical evidence in this study was that 57% believed embracing the SBW positively impacted their mental health (West et al., 2016). Similarly, Watson and Hunter (2016) found that overall, their participants perceived the SBW persona to provide inspiration and the desire to be more successful.

SBW Negative Features and Effect on Well-being

While there were many positive features and effects, negative features existed, as with any schema or archetype that could impact those influenced, specifically these Black women who were influenced by the SBW archetype. According to Cattich (2012), being overwhelmed was common partly because pastors were expected to function at high levels of effectiveness in various roles such as counseling, teaching, preaching, and management. He related that pastors generally felt that while meeting the expectations of the position, the need to sacrifice attention that should properly go to their families and themselves often occurred (Cattich, 2012). First, in exhibiting the strength and resilience needed to meet the demands of these roles, the women often denied their own needs, self-care, and health (Etowa et al., 2017). This form of self-denial can be difficult because it requires establishing boundaries. If these boundaries are not maintained, burnout in ministry could occur; self-care is not optional and should not be pushed aside to meet the needs of others (Swenson, 2004).

The mask of the SBW hid from view the true essence of their inner being and self (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009). Induced stress was another negative aspect of trying to meet the strength mandate of the SBW (Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Additionally, the SBW attribute of strength normalized perseverance (struggle), selflessness, and internalizing mechanisms that may

compromise the health of Black women (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007). Moreover, women influenced by SBW showed distress from trying to be strong (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007).

Women higher on the SBW scale tended to have higher psychological distress; not only was the SBW schema directly associated with African Americans (Watson-Singleton, 2017). Women's distress is also associated with perceived less emotional support that negatively influences psychological health (Watson-Singleton, 2017). Many Black women struggled with showing emotion, especially women who endorsed the SBW schema (Abrams et al., 2018). Also, women who assumed the SBW archetype had low self-esteem, especially when they had difficulty expressing their feelings of anger, disappointment, or hurt (Thomas et al., 2008).

The importance of the SBW or Superwoman archetype was well established in Black culture (Nelson et al., 2016; Thomas, 2001; Thomas et al., 2004; Townsend et al., 2010; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Walker-Barnes, 2009; West, 1995). Potter (2008) suggested, and the research of others supported the premise that the SBW construct was both a stereotype and a lived experience for African American women (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Romero, 2000; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Considerable evidence was produced that women influenced by the SBW archetype were typified as possessing strength, resilience, and independence (Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Thomas, 2001; Thomas et al., 2004; Townsend et al., 2010; Walker-Barnes, 2009; Watson & Hunter, 2016; West, 1995; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Women influenced by SBW were seen as independent, and their strength consisted of the ability to care for their problems and work through challenging situations in a self-reliant manner (Nelson et al., 2016). This reliance on the self to solve their problems while remaining strong in adversity had positive and negative effects and features. These negative aspects could impact these Black pastors' and clergywomen's efficacy and well-being.

Black clergywomen had to be strong and support the needs of their congregation despite their personal needs. This relentless need to showcase strength can be psychologically burdening (Abrams et al., 2018). The prevalence of self-silencing, self-denial, and externalized self-perceptions in Black women's necessity to produce strength resulted in depressive symptomology (Abrams et al., 2018). The traits described in the SBW were necessary for leadership, regardless of race or gender, in capturing the essence of the participants' lived experiences. It was essential to understand the dynamics of the intersecting SBW, the pastoral role, intersectionality, and the potential impact on the well-being and overall health of the participants to better understand the phenomenon studied.

Clergy Role, Well-being, And Related Factors

Role of a Pastor

Knowledge of the role of pastors in the Black Church in the American South was critical to understanding the complexities of this phenomenon. Stansbury et al. (2012) conducted a qualitative study with African American Baptist clergy from southern states. In agreement with their premise, two of the most common roles that emerged that hold today were shepherding the flock, also known as pastoral care, and counseling. According to Burns et al. (2013), there were four essential tasks of pastors: worship leading, preaching, teaching, and oversight. These tasks require various skills and talents, and the ministry influences every aspect of the pastor's life (Burns et al., 2013). The study suggested that pastoral roles and responsibilities, family and personal responsibilities, often blended together throughout the week, and pastors often failed to distinguish between when they are on and off duty (Burns et al., 2013; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013).

While conducting a quantitative inquiry on clergy role strain, Proeschold-Bell et al. (2013) compiled a list of six central roles for clergy: administration of sacraments, counseling, preaching, teaching, community participation, and overseeing church administration (Blizzard, 1956; Carroll, 2006; Milstein et al., 2020; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013). Another critical role in the Black Church for clergy is being there for individuals in the church and community (Milstein et al., 2020). Clergy is typically called first responders in times of crisis and bereavement (Milstein et al., 2020). The Black Church serves as the backbone of the community and is a place of hope, spiritual guidance, and social support for African Americans (Barnes, 2005; Harmon et al., 2018; Lincoln, 1974; Mays & Nicholson, 1933). Moreover, the Black Church operates as the social agency that disseminates knowledge about moral, professional, and educational life as well as the assembling of congregants when needing to combat social injustice (Barnes, 2005; Brewer & Williams, 2019; Lincoln & Mayimo, 1990; Nelsen & Nelsen, 1975). For this study, we compiled all of these duties for the Black Church, especially in the South, into the two categories cited by Stansbury et al. (2012), shepherding the flock or pastoral care. The primary role of shepherding the flock pertained to the spiritual or faith-based leadership of the congregation and the church community (Stansbury et al., 2012). Harmon et al. (2018) described African American pastors as gatekeepers for their community and have more significant influence than White pastors, especially in social and political areas. Also, in their study, Harmon et al. (2018) discussed how the participants shared the need to speak the language of their community, connect with the needs of their congregants and community, and build trust and influence. These were critical aspects of the pastoral role, whether male or female, if the individual planned to lead a congregation within the African American community effectively. This transcended beyond preaching, teaching, overseeing church meetings, and the sacerdotal

functions in a particular assembly into a broader scope of community leadership and social and political leadership in the surrounding community (Harmon et al., 2018; Stansbury et al., 2012).

Second to pastoral care was the role of counseling in the Black Church. While there were many different concepts of pastoral counseling, a holistic view described the need to provide guidance and counseling from a theological, faith-based perspective to assist congregants, their families, and others within the community in assisting with socio-emotional and faith-related problems (Baruth et al., 2015; Harmon et al., 2018; Stansbury et al., 2012). While many pastors in the Black community lacked formal training to address mental health issues, the church and its leadership were often the first method of counseling and treatment sought in the Black community (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Baruth et al., 2015; Harmon et al., 2018; Jackson, 2015; Stansbury et al., 2012). As visible from the mentioned lists of duties, pastoring and church leadership roles were dynamic and challenging without any additional stressors. Obstacles from external forces, such as resistance, subjugation from fellow clergy, and internal forces, such as role strain from attempting to juggle and fulfill the expectations of all the different agencies and groups (Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Visker et al., 2016).

Effects of Pastoring

While not all-encompassing of the pastoral role and function of church leadership, there are two main functions of pastorship in Black Protestant churches that are extremely demanding time-wise, physically, mentally, and emotionally. Often these pastors are bi-vocational, and many do not have an associate or assistant minister (Harmon et al., 2018; Moss & Snodgrass, 2017; Stansbury et al., 2012). In nurturing and attending to the needs of their congregations and communities, they often neglect their families and forego self-care. Protestant clergy ranked

among the highest overall work-related stress (Milstein et al., 2020; Weaver et al., 2002). Cattich (2012) similarly explained that feeling overwhelmed was commonplace because pastors were expected to function effectively at high levels in the cluster of competing roles, including preaching, teaching, counseling, and handling church business and community support functions.

Clergy members were leaders and were responsible for helping others during their most vulnerable moments, such as illness and bereavement (Milstein et al., 2020). Specific to this study addressing Black clergywomen influenced by the SBW schema, having multiple roles and responsibilities was characteristic. While female ministers felt much of the same pressure as their male counterparts, female clergy were more likely to report stress from emotional exhaustion, social isolation, and a lack of confidants or intimate friends (Rowatt, 2001). Negatively, clergy experiencing occupational distress or depression were less able to support others yet still attempted to do so (Milstein et al., 2020). Protestant clergy had the highest overall work-related stress and were next to the lowest in personal resources to cope with the strain of the ministerial call (Weaver et al., 2002). Moreover, boundary stress was higher for Black clergy, especially for those pastors who have served 11-19 years, yet higher work stress was more prevalent in those clergy that served 6-10 years (Wells et al., 2012). One study regarding women clergy examined how many pastors/ministers, even those with debilitating health issues such as cancer, continued to minister while tired, stressed, hurt, and challenged (Moss & Snodgrass, 2017). As mentioned earlier, female clergy obligated to the SBW mandate believed they can overcome their problems, may forego seeking assistance for their own needs, or deny them altogether in pursuit of fulfilling their call and meeting the needs of those entrusted to their care (Etowa et al., 2017).

Improving the health of pastors assisted them in successfully managing and carrying out their numerous and diverse responsibilities within the church (Baruth et al., 2014). Pastors were

expected to be administrators, caregivers, preachers, teachers, healers, confidants, and leaders of workshops, worship services, Bible studies, and church retreats, among many other tasks (Baruth et al., 2014). It is nearly impossible to successfully carry out these responsibilities if one is not in good physical health (Baruth et al., 2014). Yet, several studies showed that pastors often were overweight or obese, hypertensive, had at least two chronic health conditions, and had waist circumferences that put them at an increased risk (men) or substantially increased risk for disease (women). Furthermore, a significant percentage (20-35%) of pastors in their respective studies had diabetes, arthritis, and high cholesterol (Baruth et al., 2014; Wells et al., 2012).

Pastoral Role Strain Studies

Several studies and their results were essential to this study regarding the stressful demands of fulfilling the pastoral and clergy leadership roles. First, in comparing the duties and roles of clergy in the different Protestant denominations, several studies revealed that vital factors such as clergy roles, use of time, and work expectations were similar for United Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and United Church of Christ denominations, as well as with Catholic priests (Carroll, 2006; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Kuhne & Donaldson, 1995). This was important as women from Protestant faiths who met the other inclusion criteria were studied. It was an essential premise that the expectations and roles, regardless of the Protestant denomination, were congruent.

Secondly, stress related to the role of the clergy has been studied extensively. Heck et al. (2018) studied stress in Seventh-Day Adventist clergy and identified the most common types of clergy stress in order were (1) lack of support systems and social support, (2) financial stress, and (3) time and work demand stress. Similarly, Proeschold-Bell et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative study using the effort-reward imbalance theory with all United Methodist clergy in

North Carolina. Their findings supported the premise that clergy burnout was often related to difficulties with parishioners (i.e., job stress), stressful workload, work overload to include unpredictable demands, and low social support (Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013). This study supported that regardless of gender (women clergy represented 25% of the sample), the more years they served as pastors in a stressful environment, the greater the anxiety, uncertainty, and fear regarding their future (Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013). Lastly, the study supported that clergy depression rates were higher than the national average and provided additional evidence that fulfilling the ministerial calling posed an occupational risk to mental health (Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013).

The research of Proeschold-Bell et al. (2011) with United Methodist pastors suggested that the failure to set boundaries and uphold a 24-hour-a-day pastoral expectation negatively impacted the self-care practices of the participants. Similarly, Baruth et al. (2014) conducted a study examining the health and health behaviors of South Carolinian African Methodist Episcopal (AME) pastors; 93% of the participants struggled with obesity, and 68% battled hypertension. Also, over 50% had two or more chronic health conditions, approximately one-third of the clergy struggled with high cholesterol or arthritis, and one-fifth were diabetics (Baruth et al., 2014). The negative health impacts associated with SBW coupled with these work and role-related health outcomes added validity to the concern for the overall well-being of tenured pastors and the need for self-care. Understanding how these Black clergywomen set time and work balances, maintained a healthy lifestyle, and addressed health concerns was crucial.

Burnout

With excessive demands, exhausting workloads, high congregant and community expectations, and interrole conflict, it was no surprise that there existed an extensive body of

empirical data and research that substantiated that clergy members were at extremely high risk of burnout (Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Hendron et al. 2011; Meek et al., 2003; Muse et al., 2016; Scott & Lovell, 2015; Visker et al., 2016). One specific study supported that increased demands were associated with increased interrole conflict and resulted in decreased self-efficacy and elevated perceived stress at work and in the family (Smoktunowicz et al., 2017). Similarly, burnout was a prolonged response in an occupation to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors, defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy (Maslach et al., 2001). Maslach created the most widely utilized burnout scale, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach et al., 2001). Pastors experienced burnout when disillusionment occurred when they perceived their workload was never met and doubted their effectiveness in meeting the needs (Doolittle, 2008). Age correlated with burnout negatively, and anxiety, depression, difficulty transitioning to different churches, and discontent with one's spiritual life showed positive correlations with burnout (Doolittle, 2008).

Pastors work primarily with people in a service capacity, and they were likely more susceptible to burnout than any other occupation because of diversity and the plethora of roles they fulfill in the church and community (Weaver et al., 2002). Visker et al. (2016) reported that over 65% of clergy participating in their research suffered burnout in that they suffered from depression, had an unsatisfactory spiritual life, experienced fatigue, felt depleted, and had high levels of interrole role conflict. While there were different statistics regarding burnout of Protestant clergy, pastors and clergy operating at burnout level can have deleterious effects on ministry and were prone to higher turnover (Dunbar et al., 2020). Dunbar et al. (2020) explained how role salience and satisfaction could provide valuable input for addressing clergy burnout.

Higher satisfaction, role salience, and effectiveness occurred when clergy effectively managed their work-life balance (Dunbar et al., 2020).

Moreover, pastors that focused on their primary calling when providing value-based care to those in need, and connecting those in need to the work of the kingdom of God, tended to experience higher role salience and satisfaction. Dunbar et al. (2020) posited that calling, caring, and connecting were three key ways pastors prevented and coped with interrole conflict and the resulting burnout. Burnout was a genuine deterrent to pastor retention and tenure. Again, Meek et al. (2003) reported that 50% of clergy left the ministry in the first five years, and while attrition rates vary, it was crucial to understand what factors contributed to burnout. Developing programs, interventions, and strategies to reduce burnout and those contributing factors were key (Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019).

Particularly for this study, it was essential to understand how these Black clergywomen addressed burnout and approached their work-life balance, self-care, and well-being. The positive side was that these women survived the beginning years of their ministry and were thriving well into their tenure. This will be important when training younger women in ministry, as younger pastors tended to burn out at a higher rate (Dunbar et al., 2020).

Self-care

Even with the emergence of more women in ministry, particularly in leadership roles, the barriers these women faced were significant, including the initial overcoming of the stained-glass ceiling and intersectionality. These women face biases, prejudices, subjugation, and additional stressors that impact their ability to effectively fulfill their ministerial leadership positions. Practicing self-care can avoid burnout, and balance healthy living, which includes maintaining their well-being. Understanding self-care, a much-needed strategy for high-demand and stressful

roles, is vital. Samushonga (2021) defined self-care from a calling and spiritual perspective as a process that began with recognizing life as a precious gift from God and taking God-given responsibility for it. This included continuously identifying factors that threatened one's health and well-being and responding to these factors by promoting and supporting optimum health and well-being, bringing honor to God while revitalizing the individual to help others more effectively (Samushonga, 2021). Swenson (2004) discussed the necessity of pastors to engage in regularly planned efforts for restoration and personal care to overcome the difficulty of balancing roles and the self-denying nature when meeting the demands of pastoring. Creating healthy boundaries for family and personal life was difficult for pastors who did not learn how to maintain a work-life balance (Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Swenson, 2004). Self-care can provide a holistic approach to protecting the interrole conflict and delicate blending of the spiritual, social, emotional, intellectual, and physical aspects of a pastor's fulfillment of their calling and life (Burns et al., 2013). Muse et al. (2016) suggested that seasoned clergy understood the need for work-life balance and self-care yet often failed to practice it. Jesus, our Savior and exemplary role model, practiced self-care, and several times in scripture, chose solitude to prepare for ministry, prayer, and restoration, especially when in distress and grief (*King James Bible Online*, 1769/2017, Luke 4:1-15, 5:16, 6:12, 22:39-44; Mark 6:30-32; Matthew 14:1-13). Using Christ's model for ministry, it was vital to engage in restorative practices and self-care to maintain the clergy's physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

Clergy health, self-care, and burnout were growing topics of interest, and many clergy healthy programs have developed, especially in the last decade due to burnout, chronic health disorders, and attrition (Baruth et al., 2014; Muse et al., 2016; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013). One question in the interview process was devoted to this topic. The question aimed to provide

critical information to the textural and structural descriptions relevant to how Black clergywomen thrived and overcame these health-related barriers. This data had the potential to guide any training efforts and support systems for young women seeking church leadership roles and to successfully attain the level of efficacy of the participants in the study.

Well-being

This study of the participants' well-being while experiencing intersectionality and subjected to the influence of the SBW schema was critical in understanding the true essence of the phenomenon being studied. Pastoring was identified as a high-stress, high-demand occupation, and this stress affects one's sense of well-being (Lindholm et al., 2016). One study on pastors' health and health behaviors showed no significant differences between male and female pastors (Baruth et al., 2014). Yet, when faced with additional stressors, including bias, prejudice, a lack of support, resources, financial stress, time/workload balances, or psychological distress such as low morale, negative interactions, and conflict, these negative influences may increase occupational stressor-strain relationships, potentially affecting one's well-being (Heck et al., 2018; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2013; Tang, 2014).

Well-being for this study was identified and measured by the five elements – positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA). As Seligman (2018) discussed, at least 196 elements were identified by researchers as components of well-being. Due to the high correlation with SWB, the PERMA model was instrumental in assessing the overall well-being of the participants in this study. The PERMA model was an evidence-based method of assessing well-being and has been used to evaluate well-being in other studies (Agota et al., 2017; Huppert & So, 2013; McNally, 2016).

Butler and Kern (2016) developed the PERMA Profiler using Seligman's five pillars of well-being. This measure aimed to understand the participants' well-being based on their scores on this assessment. Positively, if the pastor's profile is pleasing to the participant, they should continue doing things that proactively care for the pastor's mental health, aiming for good functioning in the long term (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). Butler and Kern (2016) provided a basic definition for each of the five pillars as an introduction to the participant's understanding of what was encompassed in the researcher's initial notion of well-being. These definitions were as follows: positive emotion (P) was defined as the general tendency toward feeling contentment and joy. Engagement (E) was the psychological absorption, interest, and involvement in the world. Relationships (R) felt loved, supported, and valued by others. Meaning (M) was having a sense of direction in life, a feeling that life and work have value, and accomplishment (A) was a subjective sense of mastery and achievement (Butler & Kern, 2016). The PERMA Profiler measured the five pillars plus health and negative emotion (Butler & Kern, 2015, 2016). As outlined on the Authentic Happiness website, scores were measured in a range from 0 to 10 and were based on the guidelines and scoring instructions on the website (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). Each participant's PERMA items were scored and evaluated (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). Permission to use the measure was outlined in Appendix E. Scoring for the PERMA instrument were as follows: a score of 9 or 10 was very high in the dimension, 7 or 8 was high, 6 was slightly above average, 5 was average, 4 was slightly below average, 2 or 3 was low, and 0 or 1, was very low (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011).

Important to the study was ascertaining what the participants in this study defined as well-being. They received an overview of PERMA by participating in the screening survey with a further introduction to the concept of well-being addressed by the PERMA model during the

interview and after reviewing their scores (Seligman, 2011). This understanding was vital as the hypotheses and research questions were based on the five elements of PERMA. However, if other aspects of well-being emerged as a common theme among the participant's answers to the interview questions regarding well-being in the study, they were considered in the textual descriptions capturing the phenomenon's essence (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Well-Being: PERMA

Theories about subjective well-being have increased over the past few decades (Diener, 2002). Likewise, many social scientists and researchers have formulated theories on well-being (Diener, 2002). With over 196 elements currently studied to describe well-being, the PERMA model proposes five measurable elements that constitute well-being (Seligman, 2011). Layard's (2006) theory defined well-being as simply amounting to happiness, yet other factors contributed to well-being (Seligman, 2018). PERMA was an exclusive but not exhaustive list; vitality and responsibility were considered additional candidates but were not included in this study (Seligman, 2011).

The PERMA Profiler was an extensive questionnaire that assessed each of Seligman's (2012) components of well-being or flourishing (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). The PERMA Profiler was a quick online self-report assessment that asked relevant questions related to each component of PERMA to assess and compare levels of well-being (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). Flourishing was one of the most critical components of resilience and well-being (Seligman, 2011). In seeking to explore the unique experiences regarding the well-being of the participants, Black clergywomen who experienced intersectionality and were influenced by the SBW schema, it was vital to look at the aspects of PERMA – positive meaning, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. These pillars spoke to the different aspects of their

experiences and aided in developing a detailed, thick description of their multiple perspectives on the phenomenon. Seligman (2011) explained that in this PERMA construct, no one pillar defined well-being; all described one's well-being together.

Positive Emotion. Within limits, Butler & Kern (2015) proposed that people can increase positive emotions about the past, the present, and the future. Positive emotion was the cornerstone of Seligman's WBT, and traditional views of happiness focus on positive emotion (Seligman, 2011). Seligman (2011) explained that happiness and life satisfaction were critical components of positive emotion.

Engagement. Engagement refers to deploying a person's skills, strengths, and attention toward a challenging task (Butler & Kern, 2015). This was an important aspect of meeting the demands and duties related to pastoring. Engagement focuses on flow, the pursuit of a precise goal, and the feedback regarding the goal (Butler & Kern, 2015; Seligman, 2011).

Relationships. A fundamental building block of Seligman's WBT was relationships. These experiences contribute to the well-being of an individual by granting joy, meaning, laughter, a sense of belongingness, and accomplishment. These attributes are magnified through one's relationships (Butler & Kern, 2015). Relationships are exceptionally critical for pastors, especially when connecting to others in their congregation, family, and community, giving life purpose and meaning (Dunbar et al., 2020). Support from relationships with others was one of the best antidotes to the downs of life and facilitated efficacy in pastoring (Butler & Kern, 2015; Rowatt, 2001; Scott & Lovell, 2015).

According to Seligman (2012), as social beings, humans were driven to connect with and serve others as part of survival, and building strong relationships was central to adaptation. This adaptation was enabled by one's capacity for love, compassion, kindness, empathy, teamwork,

cooperation, and self-sacrifice (Butler & Kern, 2015). As a pastor, building healthy relationships were vital in fulfilling the responsibility of shepherding the flock role and providing guidance, counseling, and spiritual care (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Baruth et al., 2015; Harmon et al., 2018; Jackson, 2015; Stansbury et al., 2012).

Meaning. A sense of meaning and purpose was associated with belonging, and serving something greater than the self (Butler & Kern, 2015). It spoke to the heart of a person's passion and purpose. For pastors and members of the Black Church and community, belonging to the church provided meaning as a place of hope, spiritual guidance, and social support (Brewer & Williams, 2019; Harmon et al., 2018). It was essential to hear the differing perspectives on how meaning was prescribed to the experiences of each participant in this study.

Accomplishment. People, especially pastors, and specifically those participating in this study, pursued accomplishment even when it did not necessarily lead to positive emotion, meaning, or relationships (Butler & Kern, 2015). Research supports that people with higher levels of well-being performed better at work, created more satisfying relationships, exhibited better health, experienced lower levels of burnout, and had better-coping capabilities and self-regulation (Butler & Kern, 2015; Seligman, 2011).

Finally, in researching the ability these clergywomen possessed to thrive, the well-being of these clergywomen who have endured at least five years of pastoring aligned well with Seligman's (2011) WBT based on five measurable elements he coined as PERMA. While the five pillars were not an exhaustive list of components of well-being, this WBT represented the essence of what was being measured in this study.

Summary

This study focused on strong Black clergywomen, precisely because of their intersecting gender and race identities, who experienced oppression, bias, and prejudice while fulfilling their God-given call. The dynamics of the phenomenon made the intersection of intersectionality and the SBW schema the best fit to frame the study, as both concepts were conceived out of the struggle of Black women to be represented fairly, equally, and positively by systems within the United States (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2004; Smarr et al., 2018).

Intersectionality was developed from the lack of representation in the judicial system of Black women as a separate marginalized group based on their race and gender equally and simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2004). The SBW schema was posited to formulize positive images and Black womanhood to overcome the negative, controlling stereotypes from slavery that depicted Black women as hypersexual, promiscuous, and nurturing to lessen the reality of the serial rape, violence, and abuse of their oppressive slave owners and caring for their families (Abrams et al., 2018; Barnes, 2009; Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Woods-Giscombé, 2010).

The inclusion of Black women in leadership roles has become more prevalent in recent decades. While not shattering the stained-glass ceiling of male exclusivity in these coveted positions, the participants of this study deepened the cracks in the stained-glass ceiling while experiencing race and gender bias in their pursuit of successfully fulfilling the calling of God (Smarr et al., 2018; Sullins, 2000). Many of these Black clergywomen continuously underwent subjugation, degradation, and humiliation in ministry leadership due to gender and race bias by male clergy members (Smarr et al., 2018). Also, extant literature exists on women influenced by the SBW stereotype and the positive and negative effects of upholding this schema's

characteristics (Abrams et al., 2018). To fully understand Black clergywomen's experiences impacted by intersectionality and influenced by the SBW stereotype, this study was necessary to close gaps in the existing literature. Despite race and gender, the pastor's role demands the time, emotional, physical, intellectual, and psychological resources of those called by God to this vocation. Role strain, stress, and burnout are all critical factors that impact the efficacy, retention, and perseverance of pastors (Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Hendron et al., 2011; Meek et al., 2003; Muse et al., 2016; Scott & Lovell, 2015; Visker et al., 2016). A focus on well-being and self-care was instrumental in maintaining, restoring, and supporting healthy living (Baruth et al., 2014; Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Muse et al., 2016; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013; Swenson, 2004). Well-being was measured using Seligman's PERMA tool (Seligman, 2011).

Black women tend to be better educated and possess formal seminary training at a higher rate when they decide to become contributing leaders in ecclesiastical leadership. However, there is a strong need for exposure to the full extent of the warfare, struggles, and biases they encounter in doing so and the negative impact these prejudices and embracing the SBW archetype have on their well-being. Female clergy had more negative experiences than their male counterparts, had significantly lower salaries, less support, greater feelings of loneliness, higher stress, and conflict within their congregations (Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2013). In answering the call of God, the goal of this study was to ensure that the perils of intersectionality do not blindside them. With the tenets of SBW coupled with their faith, they were fully empowered and prepared to lead the people of God while maintaining their well-being.

This qualitative research design provided a rich context to the impact of intersectionality and the SBW schema on the participants' lives, ministerial calling, and well-being of the Black

female clergywomen in Protestant churches in the American South (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Etowa et al., 2017; Homan & Burdette, 2021; Seligman, 2011; Smarr et al., 2018). All 12 eligible participants participated in semi-structured interviews to answer the three research questions. The research design, setting, participant selection process, procedures, and data analysis are described in the following chapter. In addition, the efforts to establish trustworthiness and ethical considerations are detailed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This transcendental, phenomenological research aimed to describe as accurately as possible the lived experiences of thriving, Black women in ministry (e.g., pastors, clergywomen) who experienced intersectionality and were influenced by the Strong Black Woman (SBW) archetype, specifically in the Black Church in the southern United States. The tenure of these Black clergywomen was selected to be those continuing in the leadership role beyond five years. This study focused more on describing the participants' experiences as freshly as possible and less on this researcher's experience by employing bracketing as each participant's account was captured (Moustakas, 1994). This chapter supported the selection of the transcendental phenomenological design and its alignment with the research questions. This chapter also included a thorough description of the setting, the participants, the data collection methods as they aligned with qualitative research, and an outline of the procedures for this study.

Design

First, a qualitative study was designed to examine the individual perspectives of the research participants in context to understand the phenomenon by investigating the process in which the participants give meaning to their lived experiences (Heppner et al., 2015). Moreover, the goal of phenomenology was to capture what the participants' experienced and how they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). This study aimed to study the individual perspectives of Black clergywomen in pastoral leadership in the Black Church of the South who were influenced by the SBW schema. Furthermore, how these individuals were impacted by intersectionality to better understand the phenomenon being studied (Heppner et al., 2015). Second, theoretical assumptions are required for a qualitative inquiry as they allow meaning to be ascribed to the

collected information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, the theoretical assumptions of intersectionality and SBW collectively guided the data collection process (Abrams et al., 2016; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007, 2009; Cole, 2009; Collins, 2004, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Harrington et al., 2010; Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Woods-Giscombé, 2010).

Specific to utilizing a transcendental, qualitative approach, Moustakas (1994) described that this type of qualitative inquiry meant everything being perceived as if captured for the first time. Moreover, Moustakas (1994) outlined that the process of transcendental phenomenology required bracketing out one's experiences and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon. This investigative process aimed to interview 10-15 Black clergywomen thriving in their church leadership roles while upholding the traits of the SBW motif and having experienced some form of bias and prejudice from male counterparts during their tenure. This process was undertaken in pursuit of each participant's perspective and reality of the phenomenon to be perceived. This study provided depth and insight to answer the three research questions that were posed appropriately. Critical to the process was bracketing or epoché to ensure less of this researcher's interpretation and more of the actual, rich descriptions of the participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

RQ1. What is the lived experience of intersectionality of Black female pastors/clergywomen?

RQ2. How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on their lives, calling, and well-being?

RQ3. How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe well-being as it pertains to their lives and ministerial calling?

Setting

In maintaining safety measures and isolation recommendations in the wake of the 2019 Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, face-to-face interviews were not utilized as initially desired. A Zoom call was held in the offices or designated interview venue of the pastors/clergywomen participating in this study to simulate a similar setting of ministry and church meetings during the global pandemic. The culminating focus group also occurred via Zoom on February 7, 2023. The participants were selected from Black clergywomen currently serving Protestant congregations in the Black Church as defined within the American South. Interviews were recorded with permission from the participants and transcribed professionally by Rev.com upon interview completion to ensure the data's accuracy. Participants received a copy of their transcript for verification and accuracy, and changes were incorporated as needed.

Participants

According to Creswell & Poth (2018), purposeful sampling was used in qualitative research. Purposeful sampling was designed to select individuals for a study because it can provide an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sampling strategy for this particular study was snowball or chain sampling. The researcher identified candidates of interest from people who knew people who would provide rich information regarding this qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, staying within the suggested 10-15 participants selection goal for a qualitative study, 12 participants were recruited using the snowball sampling method, beginning with the author's networks and broadening to the participants' networks (Noy, 2008). Despite the limitations of snowball sampling, attempts were made to access a diverse sample of women who had experienced the

phenomenon. The goal was met to avoid female clergywomen who had a close relationship or intimate knowledge of the researcher. The inclusion criteria were:

1. Women who were Black, female, heterosexual, pastors/clergywomen in Protestant churches.
2. Clergywomen who were actively serving in a pastoral/church leadership role, specifically in the southern United States, also known as the American South.
3. Clergywomen who embodied the SBW tenets and had experienced intersectionality.
4. Clergywomen over the age of 18 years old.

Fifty percent of clergy leave the ministry in their first five years, and younger pastors tend to burn out more (Dunbar et al., 2020; Meek et al., 2003). However, opening up the age and range of years serving allowed for various experiences at the various stages of church leadership. The women in the sample had various educational backgrounds and income levels to provide quality assurance and more selectivity in choosing qualified candidates. Criterion sampling was utilized to ensure each participant prescribed to the SBW schema characterized by strength, resilience, self-reliance (independence), caretaking (nurturing), and suppression of emotions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Heppner et al., 2015). This researcher was aware that the participants might need help understanding the concepts of intersectionality or the SBW schema.

Eleven of the 12 participants served in churches with a voluntary system regarding the pastoral appointment, retention, and tenure as opposed to those churches where appointment, retention, and tenure were determined by an outside individual(s) such as a synod, presbytery, bishop, or superintendent. However, the one candidate in the appointment system provided valuable insight into the appointment process of church leadership. Again, all participants were Black female pastors or clergywomen, both ordained and not ordained, to provide a more

thorough examination of those who had experienced the phenomenon being explored and articulated their lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). Participants received a \$25 Amazon gift card for participating in the interview process, which was paid upon the researcher's receipt of the approved transcript. Of the 12 participants, six voluntarily participated in the culminating focus group and provided valuable information that was incorporated into the final presentation.

Once the sampling strategies were employed, participants were contacted via email with contact information retrieved through snowball sampling. After potentially interested candidates successfully completed the screening survey and were found eligible to participate, an informed consent form was required for all participants selected to participate (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Heppner et al., 2015). See Appendix A for the screening survey, Appendix G for the recruitment flyer and email, and Appendix H for the consent form. All participants were identified in data analysis and the final presentation using self-selected pseudonyms.

Procedures

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the research proposal to ensure the ethical conduct of the researcher and the protection of human participants involved in the research study. The researcher used purposeful sampling to advertise the study. All documents provided pertinent information to facilitate making an informed decision regarding participation. The contact information for the researcher, including email and phone number, was included to provide potential participants with the information to contact the researcher with any questions about the study. Before data collection commenced, IRB approval was received. The following information is attached in the appendices for review: permission to use the Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale [MSBWS] (Appendix B) and the PERMA Profiler (Appendix E), a

copy of the IRB approval letter (Appendix J), recruitment email (Appendix G), and informed consent (Appendix H).

Potential participants were contacted by phone or email to determine initial interest, eligibility, and referral of other potential participants for the study. Additional individuals were contacted similarly utilizing the snowball sampling technique. The inclusion process required answering the eligibility questions (Appendix A), the MSBWS survey (Appendix A and C), and the PERMA survey (Appendix A and F), which comprised the three sections of the screening survey. The survey ensured that the clergywomen met the inclusion criteria, experienced intersectionality, and were influenced by the SBW schema that was measured by the MSBWS (Appendix C). Qualtrics, a survey instrument, was used to administer the screening survey. Following the determination of eligibility and consent process, interviews were conducted via Zoom because of COVID-19 for safety and health measures. Each participant completed a semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview was facilitated in 60–90-minute sessions; three went beyond the anticipated time, and the participants' permission to continue was received. There were 30 questions asked during the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D). After the interviews were completed, the recordings were transcribed and analyzed as a member-checking method for accuracy. Each participant reviewed their interview transcript to ensure accuracy in capturing their experiences. The reviewed and approved transcripts were entered in Delve, the software used in the data analysis process. Identifying the significant phrases, common themes, textural descriptions, and structural descriptions themes occurred using Delve's codes and snippets functionality. Delve also provided frequency counts for significant phrases and common themes, which were instrumental for identifying themes and sub-themes (see Appendix K). Again, the culminating focus group of participants for validation

and refinement of the final presentation was conducted via Zoom regarding COVID-19 safety precautions. The outline of the presentation was included (see Appendix L).

The Researcher's Role

This researcher acted as the human instrument in this study. As the researcher, I personally collected the data by conducting the interviews and the culminating focus group to develop a detailed description of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It was critical to bracket my experiences as a tenured pastor and clergywoman who had experienced intersectionality in my 12 years in church leadership (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Before beginning data collection, this researcher completed the screening survey, calculated the scores from the MSBWS and PERMA sections, and answered the research questions to identify biases and prejudices that could interfere with viewing the participants' realities freshly. Second, this researcher was well-connected with other female church leaders in the Black Church. Yet, these relationships were utilized to solicit other potential participants' accounts of their experiences to get accurate, bias-free answers (Moustakas, 1994). Liberty staff and students were not used as participants, as outlined in the IRB approval. The goal of this researcher was to examine the data with no assumptions related to prior interactions with any of the participants, as the goal of this study was to describe the lived experiences accurately.

Instrumentation

To eliminate the need for participants to complete multiple surveys in Qualtrics, the items from the eligibility questionnaire, MSBWS survey, and the PERMA Profiler were combined into one screening survey entitled Demographic Screening Survey IRB Revised. Permission to use the MSBWS survey and the PERMA Profiler was obtained from the respective authors of the

instruments. Each component of the survey was outlined regarding its importance for determining eligibility for participants.

Eligibility Questionnaire

Using Qualtrics, the eligibility section collected participant information. This included gender, sexual orientation, age, race, religious denomination/affiliation, role in church leadership, experience with intersectionality, geographic location, doctor's care, years in leadership, employment status, education level, and seminary attendance. These questions were vital to ensuring adherence to the inclusion criteria that all participants were female, Black, over the age of 18, heterosexual, pastors/clergywomen in Protestant churches, not under the care of a professional doctor or mental health professional for anything beyond managed care, had experienced intersectionality, and lived in the southern region of the United States. This region included the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. A few demographic questions added to this section were to ascertain the candidates' years in church leadership and pastoral roles, employment status, secular education, and formal seminary training; however, these questions were not inclusion-based or exclusion-based questions. Participants were required to be individuals who had experienced the phenomenon being explored and were able to articulate their lived experiences (van Manen, 2014).

Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale (MSBWS)

To ensure that each participant embraced the SBW tenets and overall schema characteristics, Dr. Chamberlin, a Liberty professor, created the Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale (MSBWS). This tool measured each participant's adherence to the SBW motif.

The MSBWS scale consisted of 32 items, addressing the following factors: faith, stoicism, femininity, strength/resilience, independence, and caretaking, synonymous with the five fundamental tenets of the SBW schema with the addition of faith and femininity (Chamberlin, 2019). The candidates, as part of the exclusion and inclusion process, were asked to respond to the items using an 11-point Likert scale from "not at all like me" (1) to "extremely like me" (11) (Chamberlin, 2019). As this scale addressed the SBW factors while exploring intersectionality and cultural considerations, it effectively determined the adherence of each candidate to the SBW items. Per Dr. Volk, no special scoring mechanisms (i.e., weighting) were necessary for this scale and required simply averaging the items from each subscale (F. Volk, personal communication, December 15, 2022).

PERMA Profiler

It was essential to ascertain what the participants in this study defined as well-being. They were introduced to the concept of well-being addressed by the PERMA model formulated by Seligman (Seligman, 2011). Well-being for this study was identified by the five elements – positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA) (Seligman, 2011). The PERMA Profiler measured the well-being of each participant, using the abovementioned five elements, along with negative emotion and health (Butler & Kern, 2016). If other aspects of well-being had emerged as a common theme among the participants in the study, they would have been considered in the textural descriptions capturing the essence of the phenomenon; however, no others emerged (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The PERMA Profiler was the only measure that focused on those five domains, including several items per domain (Huppert & So, 2013). Butler and Kern (2016) defined each of the five domains with subdomains by compiling more than 700 items from different scales rated by well-

being experts and reducing the items to 199, 70 of which aligned directly to PERMA. The current version of the PERMA assessment used a 15-item tool measuring PERMA components and eight additional items related to negative affect (emotion) and health for a total of 23 items. It took about five minutes to complete that section of the Qualtrics survey; domain scores required averaging each of the three items for the five domains, negative emotion (affect) and health, with the range = 0 to 10 (Butler & Kern, 2016). Butler and Kern (2016) explained that the 15 items demonstrate adequate psychometric properties. A series of nine studies (N = 31,966) were conducted to test the measure's psychometrics. The PERMA-Profiler demonstrated acceptable model fit, internal and cross-time consistency, evidence for content, convergent validity, and divergent validity (Butler & Kern, 2016).

The tool was available through the Authentic Happiness website (Butler & Kern, 2016). It was administered by adding this into the screening survey as the third section in Qualtrics and scoring each participant's answers through the created account on the website. There was no cost associated with using the measure; however, the authors required credit for the research (Butler & Kern, 2016). The PERMA assessment questions are available in Appendix F.

Data Collection

Data collection was a critical aspect of the qualitative inquiry and was rigorous and utilized varied data collection techniques (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Multiple sources of data were sought to aid in developing the description of the lived experiences that provided the true essence of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Data collection occurred in the following order: semi-structured interviews, transcript review, and the culminating focus group. The MSBWS and the PERMA Profiler were instrumental in developing the questions used for the interviews. The data collected from the Qualtrics survey and during the individual interviews

were used to identify the significant phrases, common themes, textural descriptions, and structural descriptions. Participants provided the necessary validation and refinement of the final presentation in the focus group.

Interviews

The open-ended interview was considered the most commonly used data collection method for qualitative research inquiry and was utilized in this investigative process (Heppner et al., 2015). Semi-structured interviews were the principal method of phenomenological research and the first data collection method used for this research study (Moustakas, 1994). Considering COVID-19 safety precautions, the interviews were conducted via Zoom, an online distraction-free setting conducive to a private conversation, audiotaping, and recording for transcription purposes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Following the interview guide in Appendix D, open-ended questions focused on gathering data were asked. These answers led to a textual and structural description of the experiences and ultimately provided an understanding of the common experiences of the participants [see Appendix D] (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). While the interviews were semi-structured with pre-scripted, open-ended questions, the participants interjected statements, details, and information that supported their experiences that were not directly related to the questions asked. However, this information was pertinent data regarding their perspective of the phenomenon. The semi-structured interviews were 60-90 minute sessions; three went beyond the anticipated time, and the participants' permission to continue was received. The interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed by Rev.com. The transcriptions were kept securely on a password-protected drive.

Significant statements, meanings, themes, and categories were identified and coded based on the initial coding systems. This process began during the interview transcription process and

continued throughout the analytic process, and this ensured consistency and reliability in defining themes and categories based on the coding system. In developing interpretations and representing the data, clusters of themes were identified then textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon were created (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Introductory

1. Please tell me about yourself. Age ____, Denomination ____, State Reside/Church ____, Title/Position in Ministry ____, Exact years in ministry ____, Other details ____.
2. Describe your spiritual journey to becoming a thriving pastor.
3. How do you describe your tenure as pastor?

Intersectionality

4. What barriers do you face as a Black female pastor/clergywoman?
5. What type of intersectionality (discrimination, bias, or prejudice due to race and gender) have you experienced in your personal life?
6. How have these experiences (intersectionality) impacted your personal life?
7. What type of resistance (if any) did you experience accepting your call and the ordination process?
8. What type of intersectionality (subjugation, discrimination, bias, or prejudice due to race and gender) have you experienced when interacting with your male clergy colleagues?
9. What type of intersectionality (discrimination, bias, or prejudice due to race and gender) have you experienced regarding your calling overall?
10. How have these experiences (intersectionality) impacted your ministry?
11. Were you ever rejected or limited in the opportunities to be selected for employment (pastoral role)? If yes, how did you resolve the situation?

12. How has intersectionality impacted your well-being? Please provide examples.

Strong Black Woman (SBW)

13. If you are aware, how did you become introduced to the SBW motif?

14. How do you, as a Black female pastor/clergywoman, describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on your life?

15. How do you, as a Black female pastor/clergywoman, describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on your ministry?

16. How do you, as a Black female pastor/clergywoman, describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on your well-being?

17. Describe your experience(s) with being self-reliant or independent when addressing matters in your personal and professional life.

18. Strength and resilience overlap in the SBW construct, as one must be strong to survive and overcome adversity, resistance, and oppression. How has the characteristics of SBW (strength and resilience) helped you overcome:

- a. Intersectionality – bias, prejudice, discrimination?
- b. Challenging situations in ministry?
- c. Challenging situations in life?

19. How has nurturing and caregiving impacted your pastoral care and counseling roles?
Your personal life?

20. How necessary is it to exercise emotional containment when ministering to the congregation's needs and leading through crisis and adversity to avoid the appearance of weakness or an inability to contain emotion(s)? Provide detailed examples.

21. How has embracing the SBW schema impacted your well-being? Has it added stress or negative aspects to your health? Please provide examples.

Well-being

22. How do you, as a Black female pastor/clergywoman, describe well-being as it pertains to your ministerial calling?

- a. What role-related experiences generate positive emotions for you?
- b. What role-related experiences generate negative emotions for you?
- c. What role-related experiences are engaging for you?
- d. How do you describe your role-related relationships?
- e. What role-related experiences are meaningful for you as a Black female pastor/clergywoman?
- f. What role-related experiences generate a sense of accomplishment for you?

23. How do you, as a Black female pastor/clergywoman, describe well-being as it pertains to your personal life?

- a. What experiences generate positive emotions for you?
- b. What experiences generate negative emotions for you?
- c. What experiences are engaging for you?
- d. How do you describe your personal relationships?
- e. Are these relationships different than your ministry peers/relationships?
- f. What experiences are meaningful for you as a Black female?
- g. What experiences generate a sense of accomplishment for you?

24. How do you balance your work and life demands?

25. What support systems and networks do you as a Black female pastor/clergywoman have organizationally (denomination), professionally, personally, and socially? With female peers? With male colleagues?
26. Pastoring is a demanding role, and how do you find yourself denying personal needs, self-care, and health?
27. What types of self-care do you engage in to avoid or alleviate burnout and stress?

Concluding

28. As we close the session, give a brief synopsis of how you have thrived in your leadership role while faced with intersectionality yet embracing the strength, resilience, independence, nurturing (caregiving), and emotional control traits that comprise the SBW motif.
29. Reflecting on your experience in ministry, what advice would you give to young women seeking a pastoral role and church leadership?
30. We've covered much ground in our conversation, and I so appreciate the time you've given to this. One final question. What else do you think would be vital for me to know about how you thrive in efficacious ministry over the years that I haven't asked you about?

The interview questions were reviewed by two members of the organization's presbytery board responsible for ordaining clergy in the researcher's church organization to ensure the interview questions were apposite to the research study. Together, these professionals have over 70 years in ministry and church leadership. Moreover, the bishop was a former professor of biblical studies in a local seminary and served in that capacity for over 10 years. He also served as the presiding moderator for a local association overseeing 22 churches for a two-year term. He

currently serves as chief overseer of six congregations from New Jersey to North Carolina, with two ministries forming in Rwanda and Germany. Likewise, the prophet had been responsible for training the incoming clergy for the past nine years and served in that capacity in other churches and associations before joining this organization. The two leaders were provided with a list of the interview and research questions. They were asked to provide feedback on the content and relevance of each question to determine whether a participant's feedback would provide the answers needed to understand the participants' experience with intersectionality while influenced by SBW and its impact on their lives, ministry, and well-being.

The bishop sent feedback that the interview questions were appropriate and could assist other segments of church leadership that had experienced similar harassment and discrimination (B. Claiborne, personal communication, July 21, 2022). Specifically, during a conversation, it was suggested to add specific probing questions to provide structure to the first question. This question asked participants to describe their age, denomination, state of residence/church, title/position in ministry, and the exact number of years in ministry for uniformity (B. Claiborne, personal communication, July 21, 2022). Feedback from leaders on the interview protocol increased the reliability of the interview questions (Patton, 2015).

Regarding the purpose of the questions, the first three questions were noncontroversial present behavior and experience questions designed to be easy to answer and prepare the participant to provide descriptive answers (Patton, 2015). These questions served as the icebreaker and informal conversation to get the participant in the frame of mind to elaborate on her recent experiences and build rapport with the participants. These questions were important, especially for those who did not know the researcher in any capacity. Eight of the 12 participants did not know the researcher, and the other four knew colleagues and that the researcher was a

pastor. For all 12, the opening questions facilitated the conversation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Also, while building rapport, these questions did not undermine neutrality (Patton, 2015). The goal of the interview was to be a social interaction based on a conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Warren & Xavia Karner, 2015).

Questions four through 21 were designed to gather essential details regarding the interpretive frameworks, intersectionality, and the SBW schema and how these influences impacted the clergywomen's experiences. While there were structured questions, probing questions were utilized as needed to elicit more details of the descriptive story (Patton, 2015). Vital in qualitative research interviews was to attempt to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, and to discover or, better yet, to uncover their lived world (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). These questions addressed the phenomenon and led to questions regarding well-being and pastoring, church leadership, intersectionality, and the SBW motif on the participant's well-being. This study of their experiences could also increase awareness of the need for existing church leadership to reassess their understanding of how they supported Black clergywomen and the obstacles these women faced in church leadership, a male-dominated institution (Smarr et al., 2018).

Questions 22 through 27 were developed using the PERMA Profiler and addressed the five pillars of well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). PERMA provided the foundation for understanding well-being and how the clergywomen viewed the aspects of their well-being, lives, and ministry calling. Specifically, the sub-questions of questions 22 and 23 allowed the clergywomen to share their role-related experiences on PERMA (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). Positive emotions have been found to increase enthusiasm and creativity,

which is essential to workplace flourishing (Seligman, 2011). It was imperative to understand what provided positive emotions in the role of head clergy for awareness of the reality of the lived experiences (Edwards, 2014; Heck et al., 2018; Smarr et al., 2018). Regarding negative emotions and engagement, understanding role strain and the experiences that increased ministry-related stress and occupational distress were crucial (Edwards, 2014; Heck et al., 2018; Smarr et al., 2018). Sub-questions about meaning and accomplishment were designed to embellish and provide an in-depth view of how they prescribe meaning and accomplishment (two pillars of PERMA) to their efficacious ministry and attribute to their thriving and perseverance. Given the nature of their workplace challenges in the churches and denominations in which they served, determining their personal view of their success provided valuable insight into why these women, while faced with resistance, oppression, and prejudice, decided to remain in their roles (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). It was important to discern PERMA-related experiences from their personal life that provided valuable insight and answered how their experiences, including their encounters with SBW and intersectionality in their personal life, impacted their well-being.

Questions 28 through 30 were culminating questions about how clergywomen thrive in ministry. Question 28 was specific to understanding what, from the participant's view, were the key factors that contributed to their continued success in leadership. Question 29 sought to gain valuable advice for future young women entering church leadership. It was desirable for Black Church leadership to embrace an agenda to address the underrepresentation of women in church leadership, the inequalities and inequities in salary and support systems, and lessen the negative impacts on the well-being of the women experiencing this phenomenon. As Smarr et al. (2018) stated, there needed to be a reassessment of the obstacles faced by women ministers in leadership

and unity among these women in the form of solid support systems to include support from male leadership, clergywomen mentors, and pastoral training. This support should prepare these marginalized women effectively to answer their call.

The final question allowed the clergywomen to open up and talk about aspects of the phenomenon that may not have been addressed in the research questions. This provided valuable input to the textural description of their experiences and future opportunities for additional research regarding the experiences of Black clergywomen (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Anticipating this interview could be a challenging session. At the end of the interview, the participants were provided with a list of IRB-approved referrals to mental health services and therapists (see Appendix I).

Reflection and Follow-Up Email

The second data collection method utilized was the participant reflection and follow-up email. First, after their respective interview, the participants received a follow-up email that allowed them the opportunity to provide additional information and a reflection that spoke directly to their interview. They also shared their experiences with intersectionality, the influence of SBW in fulfilling their roles, and how these factors shaped their path (Abrams et al., 2018; Harris, 2001). This was the opportunity to give feedback relevant to the interview process that could provide valuable insight for future interviews.

Second, the follow-up email related to member-checking, validating the accuracy of their interview transcript, and allowing for any explanations of areas that need additional clarification and preparation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This step was critical to ensure the captured data was interpreted from a fresh perspective and bias-free from the researcher's perspective (Moustakas, 1994). The final sentence included a reminder of the monetary compensation being sent upon

receipt of the final approval and a reminder of the opportunity for voluntary participation in the culminating focus group.

Follow-Up Email Detail

Thank you for participating in the Black Clergywomen Lived Experiences research study. Your feedback is essential, and every answer provided will help improve our interview process.

Transcript Review

The transcript of your interview is enclosed. Please review the transcript to ensure we captured your answers and information correctly. Please note any discrepancies below, and the edits will be incorporated into the final transcript.

Again, thank you for the time and valuable information, and I look forward to sharing your story. (Your pseudonym) will be the name used for your data.

Culminating Focus Group Interest

If you would be interested in the final presentation event, please let me know, and I will call you when that is ready. The goal is to host it in January or February 2023, Lord willing. It will be a 30-minute audio-recorded Zoom meeting similar to the interview.

Final comment

Upon receipt of your final approval of the transcript, the \$25 Amazon gift card will be sent electronically to the email address collected in the screening survey.

Thank you again for your participation and support of this qualitative research study.

Culminating Focus Group

The third data collection method was the online focus group as a culminating event (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Online focus groups have become an accepted data collection method for qualitative inquiry (Synnot et al., 2014; Wilkerson et al., 2014; Woodyatt et al., 2016). This

trend accelerated in response to the global pandemic. The impact of data collection methods from utilizing face-to-face interviewing and in-person focus groups still needed to be fully understood (Metzler, 2020). For this study, the research participants were asked to participate in this focus group to discuss the accuracy of the presented common themes, significant phrases, textural descriptions, and structural descriptions regarding the phenomenon to facilitate validation and refinement of the final presentation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). The goal was to have at least 50% of the participants participate in the culminating focus group. It was vital to understand common challenges, such as low participation and feelings of vulnerability, that negatively affect the process (Hayman et al., 2012). It was also necessary to promote constructive and valuable participation and ensure the safety and confidentiality of the information collected from the participants (Hayman et al., 2012).

Focus Group Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this focus group. The purpose of this study is to understand and create awareness of the lived experiences of Black clergywomen that experience intersectionality while influenced by the SBW schema. The purpose of this focus group is to review the results, prevalent themes, the summary of findings, and responses to the research questions. Please note that this focus group will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Please feel free to ask any questions that you may have. Thank you.

The prevalent themes are:

- Are they accurate? Representative of the phenomenon?

The summary of findings:

- Are they accurate? Representative of the phenomenon?

The responses to the research questions are:

- Does this convey a unified statement of the essence of the phenomenon as a whole?

We have come to the end of our focus group. Thank you so much for deciding to take part in this study. This may have been a difficult conversation with different emotions coming to the surface. If you feel the need for support, please refer to the list of mental health resources that were provided to you previously.

The culminating focus group was conducted via Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions and precautions. Six participants attended the focus group: Charity Grace, Diane, Dr. Gracious, Joyful, Otelia, and Molly. The culminating activity was held on February 7, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. eastern standard time. The prevalent themes, the summary of findings, and the responses to the research questions were presented (see Appendix L). Individually and collectively, the participants agreed that the prevalent themes and the summary of findings were accurate and representative of the phenomenon. The responses to the research questions conveyed a unified statement of the essence of the phenomenon with the following three amendments included in the final presentation. Participants posited that progress had been made, yet pay inequities prevailed in the South. There were exceptions made for males regarding training and seminary (men did not have to attain a high degree of training). Lastly, participants added an additional comment in the self-denial section. All three comments were added to the appropriate section. This culminating event was a crucial member-checking strategy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of the final focus group was to verify interpretations and conclusions to ensure the accuracy and valid interpretation of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Revisions were made as identified. This process increased the study's credibility by bolstering confidence in the data interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

Data Analysis

The transcendental phenomenological analysis was appropriate for capturing the lived experiences of the Black clergywomen experiencing intersectionality and embracing the SBW schema. Specifically, all interviews and the focus group were transcribed by Rev.com and housed on a password-protected drive. It was critical to accurately transcribe the files to include the minute details (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reliability was enhanced by obtaining detailed field notes through good-quality recording devices and transcribing the files (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Concerning managing and organizing data, all data began as digital files with a naming convention for each participant that protected the participant's identity and ease of retrieval throughout the analytic process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each file was logged using the Qualtrics export alias for the participant, the date collected, and the type of data (interview, focus group) and stored in a password-protected folder as a data log. These files were uploaded into Delve software for coding using the same Qualtrics alias with the selected pseudonym. This central repository allowed easy retrieval, especially when following a coding system (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Heppner et al., 2015). This process ensured the integrity of the data and ensured the original format was secure and maintained for ethical and security purposes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Delve was utilized to analyze the data and develop broader themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Horizontalization was utilized for emergent ideas, significant statements, meanings, themes, and categories (Moustakas, 1994). Each participant's statements held equal value, and repetitive statements were identified (Moustakas, 1994). All emerging ideas were identified and coded based on the initial coding systems defined (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Heppner et al., 2015). This process began during the interview transcription process and continued throughout the data

collection and analysis process. This ensured consistency and reliability in defining themes and categories based on the coding system (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, developing interpretations and representing the data required identifying common themes, which were converted into textural descriptions, which became the structural description of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Verifying the interpretations and conclusions that occurred during the focus group ensured accuracy and valid interpretation of the data was employed, along with revisions as they were identified. A transcendental, phenomenological qualitative study is required to follow the steps in phenomenological reduction to assist with bracketing (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Husserl, 1938; Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness or rigor is crucial in qualitative inquiry, and many frameworks exist to ensure trustworthiness (Guba, 1985; Heppner et al., 2015; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) used concepts such as credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to ensure a qualitative study's trustworthiness. This researcher emulated this approach and identified the methods employed in researching this topic to ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of this qualitative study.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the researcher's effort to represent the phenomenon accurately; in essence, internal consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). Several methods were utilized to address credibility. First, bracketing and reflective memoing throughout the investigative process minimized potential bias throughout the research process. In this transcendental, phenomenological study naturally designed to capture the different realities and perspectives of the participants, bracketing, also termed epoché was employed when analyzing

data (Husserl, 1983; Morrow, 2005; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). This study thoroughly explained the author's biases, values, and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The author's interpretation and how personal experiences or thoughts influenced this study was also documented. It was essential to bracket personal experiences while exploring the lived experiences of the clergywomen/pastors, hearing their stories and perspectives, and enabling a rigorous approach to reflexivity in interpreting the women's stories (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Secondly, triangulation was employed to effectively capture and respect the multiple perspectives as a measure of quality in the data collection (Morrow, 2005). Lastly, member checking and peer review were instrumental in validating the capture of the rich, raw data from each participant, the different sources, and the accuracy of that information. In qualitative research, member checks were an integral approach used in assessing trustworthiness and creating accurate and meaningful descriptions of the lived experiences and the context of those experiences (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mays & Pope, 2000; Morrow, 2005). Member checking strategies were embedded and provided opportunities for accurate interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking allowed each participant to review the transcript of their interview and the subsequent analysis for validity to ensure an accurate representation of their perspective. The focus group was another member checking opportunity.

Dependability

Dependability addresses how this qualitative study can be conducted consistently across time, researchers, and the techniques used to effectively derive explicit and repeatable findings (Morrow, 2005). While dependability was difficult in qualitative inquiry, it was necessary to attempt to create the ability for a future researcher to repeat the study (Shenton, 2004). Morrow (2005) suggested the best method to accomplish this was through precisely tracking and keeping

an audit trail of the entire research process to include influences on establishing themes, categories, memos, and data collection. A notebook of documentation from each step in the process was stored with all hard copies from the study in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. This strategy documentation could facilitate duplication of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A digital audit trail consisted of a recording and log of all revisions, including amendments of themes, interpretations, and textural and structural descriptions; results were maintained to document thinking processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Also, notes and memos were created throughout the entire process. The transcripts of the interviews were created and revisited. The process of revisiting notes from individual interviews and creating memos assisted the researcher in the initial code development process (e.g., written statements and verbatim quotes in the interview transcripts). This process was the initial step for identifying significant phrases and themes that became the final presentation in written form (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Finally, a peer review by several colleagues in pastoral/leadership roles occurred. Peer review improved the study's reliability by allowing reviewers to consider how the research might be used and duplicated in different contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Confirmability

Confirmability addressed the goal to ensure objectivity as much as possible and that the findings represented the perspectives and realities of the participants ascertained through detailed data collection and analysis (Morrow, 2005; Patton, 2015). This process ensured that the researcher's biases, opinions, or beliefs were mitigated during the research (Morrow, 2005; Patton, 2015). To achieve confirmability, member checking, triangulation, an audit trail, and peer review were employed to ensure the findings emerged through the investigative process (Morrow, 2005; Patton, 2015). Those findings existed from objective data collection and analysis

by the researcher and were verified by each reader (Morrow, 2005; Patton, 2015). Also, epoché or bracketing played a vital role in minimizing personal biases and predispositions, which was fundamental when conducting transcendental phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994).

Transferability

Transferability refers to applying the findings of this context or situation to another context, setting, or population, also known as the parallel criterion in quantitative studies of generalizability (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). Morrow (2005) suggested that this can be accomplished by the researcher giving enough details about the researcher, the research context, procedures, participants, and relationships between the researcher and participants to allow the reader to evaluate whether the findings are transferable to the reader's context or setting. Transferability was attempted in creating the final descriptions of the lived experiences and the context of those experiences in the member checking process. Each participant was allowed to review the transcript of their interview and the subsequent analysis.

Additionally, a focus group of the participants was held as a culminating event to review and respond to identified significant phrases, common themes, and final textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon. This process increased the study's credibility by bolstering confidence in the data interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The exhaustive, rich, thick description was created to understand the essence of the lived experiences and represented a unifying structure of the phenomenon (Heppner et al., 2015). The research findings were elucidated with clear language. Moreover, the study was transferable, which means that the study could be duplicated in another geographic location with a similar population, Black clergywomen in church leadership who have experienced intersectionality while influenced by the SBW schema. The opportunities for future research and duplication were plentiful.

Ethical Considerations

Finally, in reference to ethical considerations, measures were taken regarding participants' privacy, data protection, and data storage, recognizing some risks that needed to be mitigated. First, when completing the consent form, the participants agreed to the safeguards to ensure their identity remained confidential and hidden from the public when they signed their names to participate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Second, concerning participants' privacy, pseudonyms in Qualtrics were created for all participants to avoid disclosure that could harm participants or others attached to their lived experiences and protect data that may identify a particular source. Secondly, a data log was housed on a password-protected computer and accessible only by the author (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Regular data backups were performed and stored securely with the original digital files, and a sustainable plan was created to ensure ongoing security storage of data. The hard copies of the exported survey, written notes from the interviews, transcriptions, and the notebook with the strategic plan to replicate this study were kept in a locked cabinet (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

This chapter described the data collection process and research method utilized in this transcendental, phenomenological qualitative study designed to capture the lived experiences of Black clergywomen influenced by the SBW motif and experiencing intersectionality in the Black Church. First, it was necessary to discuss the rationale for selecting a transcendental, phenomenological qualitative design that aligned with this study's purpose. Next, this chapter included the research questions, a description of the setting, the participant identification process, the eligibility questionnaire, the MSBWS, the PERMA Profiler, the procedures, instrumentation, and the researcher's role.

Horizontalization was used, and several data collection methods facilitated data triangulation. Data collection began with individual semi-structured interviews, follow-up emails, and the culminating focus group (Moustakas, 1994). A detailed description of the data collection methods, data analysis, and the plan to ensure trustworthiness were provided. The ethical considerations were upheld by requiring participants to review and sign an informed consent form before participating in the study, utilizing pseudonyms to guarantee confidentiality, and retaining all data on a password-protected computer. The research findings, participants' data, the themes and sub-themes that were identified through coding, and the responses to the research questions are described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The data analysis and research findings are presented in this chapter. The first section describes the research participants with information obtained from the screening survey and the semi-structured interviews. The next section examined the experiences and perspectives of the participants with intersectionality while influenced by the SBW schema. From their experiences and different perspectives, several themes emerged and were shared in the narratives and excerpts from these women's stories. This study aimed to understand and create awareness of the lived experiences and well-being of Black women in ministry (pastors and clergywomen) who experienced intersectionality and were influenced by the Strong Black Woman archetype, specifically in the Black Church in the southern United States. Due to this phenomenon's prevalence and its impact on Black women, the Black Church, and the well-being of clergywomen, it was imperative that this issue was researched. This study is significant to church leadership organizations and academic circles training future church leaders, and medical and counseling professionals to understand the impact of intersectionality on these clergywomen. The impacts can influence their ministry, personal life, and well-being so that interventions can be better tailored to meet the needs of clergywomen dealing with this issue, and church governing organizations can create new protocols and support systems to rectify the inequities and inequalities these women experienced.

Participants

A description of each participant in this research study was included in this section. Each participant selected a pseudonym that was used throughout data collection, data analysis, and the final presentation for confidentiality purposes. All research participants met the inclusion criteria

for the study. They were required to be Black or African American, female, heterosexual, over the age of 18, and a Protestant clergywoman in church leadership in a church within the southern region of the United States. These states include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Furthermore, they believed in the Strong Black Woman (SBW) motif and were not currently under the care of a medical doctor or mental health professional for anything beyond managed care. There were 12 participants in this study with ages ranging from 36-81, and their experience in ministry ranged from 10 to over 50 years. All participants experienced intersectionality in their personal life and ministerial profession. It was evident that this topic was very relevant, and this inquiry was vital as this was still happening in the Black Church in 2022-2023.

All 12 participants thrived in ministry. While all remained in church leadership, all 12 have started their own faith-based nonprofits/ministries or publishing ventures. Four have started churches (Sherry, Charity Grace, Candace, and Dee), thereby circumventing the stained-glass ceiling of the mainline denominations. All were bi-vocational at some point in ministry, and seven of the participants were currently bi-vocational, having a secular position while actively engaged in their pastoral roles (Harmon et al., 2018; Moss & Snodgrass, 2017; Stansbury et al., 2012). Moreover, three participants have published literature, with four of them currently embarking on the journey to write faith-based books and one specifically a faith-based training curriculum. Eight participants were married, three were widowed, and one was single when the study was conducted. All strongly conveyed that they believed they were strong Black women and had experienced some type of intersectionality, bias, prejudice, or subjugation in both their personal and professional lives to varying degrees. Table 1 shows the demographic data of the participants.

Table 1*Demographic Data of Participants*

Participant	Age	Religious Affiliation	State	Leadership Position	Seminary Ed.	Years of Ministry	Ordination/Consecration (Years)
Diane	69	Missionary Baptist	AL	Associate Pastor	Bachelor*	9	-
Molly	80	Non-Denominational	VA	Prophetess	Courses no degree	40+	1989 (34)
Otelia	46	Baptist	VA	Associate Pastor	Doctorate	11	2017 (6)
Joyful	36	Assemblies of God	AR	Evangelist	Doctorate*	11	2018 (5)
Rev. Patient	81	Baptist	VA	Assistant Pastor/ Associate Pastor	Master	36	1986 (37)
Dr. Gracious	65	AME	VA	Pastor	Doctorate	23	2003 (20) 2005 (18)
Sherry	64	Non-Denominational /Charismatic	AR	Overseer/ Pastor/ Prophet	Courses no degree	37	1994 (29) 2005 (18) 2009 (14)
Precious	59	Non-Denominational	TX	Senior Pastor	Bachelor	20	2002 (21) 2007 (16)
Charity Grace	75	Non-Denominational	TX	Senior Pastor/ Bishop	Doctorate	51	1987 (36) 1989 (34) 2002 (21)
Candace	58	None	VA	Pastor	Master	17	-
Dee	55	Non-Denominational /Episcopal	TX	Archbishop / Senior Pastor	Doctorate	43	1996 (27) 2016 (7)
Harmony	59	Non-Denominational /Pentecostal	GA	Pastor	Doctorate	40	1997 (26) 2000 (23)

*Currently pursuing degree yet to be conferred

Diane

Diane is a 69-year-old who served as the associate pastor and attended seminary with an anticipated graduation date of May 2023. She will be conferred a bachelor's degree in Bible theology and Christian education. She was called to preach in 1991, and the first time she attempted to announce her calling to her then-pastor, she was told to make her "calling and election sure" because women were not called to preach. Diane left that church and joined another congregation; it was not until experiencing several traumatic experiences and her husband accepting his call to preach that Diane accepted her call. She became a licensed minister of the gospel in 2013. They started their own church, and she serves beside her husband. As Missionary Baptists, ministers are not ordained unless they were called to pastor a church or hold office in the association. The association they were members of did not openly recognize women as preachers or allow them to hold office. Diane was currently responsible for teaching Bible classes, prison ministry, church administration, building custodial care, and community outreach. She also preached and served in other capacities as assigned by the pastor.

She has experienced intersectionality, prejudice, and bias in her ministerial calling and personal life. First, growing up in the deep South, she encountered racism and discrimination, often being treated less than other races and ethnicities. Second, while Diane had full support and freedom in the church pastored by her husband, she was not allowed to preach from the pulpit when ministering in neighboring churches and was often ignored or embarrassed by other male pastors. Women in her surrounding area often have difficulty accepting women as preachers/pastors as well.

Diane has a very active ministry life. She is embarking on new ministry streams, including another Bible study via Facebook live, as she hosted a group via telephone every

morning. She also plans to implement a radio show and podcast soon. Diane strongly believed in the SBW schema. Her SBW scores were strength – 9.25, independence – 3.60, caretaking – 8, stoicism (emotion suppression) – 6.83, faith – 10.29, and femininity – 10. Her PERMA well-being scores were: positive emotion – 7.33 (high), engagement – 7.67 (high), relationships – 6 (slightly above average), meaning – 8.67 (high), accomplishment – 8 (High), with overall health – 7.33 (High), overall happy – 6 (slightly above average), loneliness – 6 (slightly above average), and negative affect – 6.33 (slightly above average).

Molly

Molly is an 80-year-old who served as a prophet for two churches, one in Virginia and one in North Carolina, five ministries in Virginia and North Carolina, and provided support and counseling for a host of other ministries. She was called to preach over 40 years ago; she was ordained in 1989 as a prophet and has served in over 31 churches in leadership offices during her tenure. She has been in her current role for eight years. Molly was a member of the ordaining body for the organization she currently served, responsible for intercessory prayer, hospital and hospice care ministry, and counseling. She also preached and served in other capacities as assigned by the pastor and overseer. She has experienced intersectionality, prejudice, and bias in her ministerial calling and personal life. Molly has full support and freedom under the current leadership of her church; however, she felt her growth in many of her other leadership positions was stunted due to intimidation, bias, and misunderstanding of her gifts/anointing. She was not allowed to preach or minister in the churches due to subjugation by male pastors. Often she was accused of teaching beyond the church doctrine or steering people away from their current church position.

Molly retired from her secular career as an educator and a successful business owner. While retired from secular work, she became a successful author, having released her second book recently while actively functioning as the prophet and member of the leadership team in her organization. She planned to minister as the Spirit led and promote her spiritual literature. At the time the study was conducted, ideas for her third book had begun.

Molly strongly believed in the SBW schema. Her SBW scores were: strength – 9.50, independence – 7.20, caretaking – 10.50, stoicism (emotion suppression) – 2.67, faith – 11, and femininity – 10.17. Her PERMA well-being scores were: positive emotion – 8 (high), engagement – 9.33 (very high), relationships – 8.33 (high), meaning – 10 (very high), accomplishment – 9 (very high), overall health – 8 (High), overall happy – 7 (high), loneliness – 4 (slightly below average), and negative affect – 3.33 (low).

Otelia

Otelia is a 46-year-old who served as an associate pastor in her home church and another ministry in Virginia. She is currently working on her own ministry and education-based nonprofit. Otelia accepted the call to preach in 2010 but did not perform her initial sermon until after her father's passing. Her father, along with her grandfather, initially did not approve of female ministers. Before his passing, he did give his blessing, and another family member told her that her grandfather had prophesied that she would be a preacher.

Otelia chose to attend seminary for her Master of Divinity and then a Doctor of Ministry to prepare her for ministry. In 2017, Otelia was ordained under the direction of her former pastor. Otelia was recently married; in the past month, she had begun attending church with her husband. She was in transition and helping her home church in its pastoral search, which has proven to be a painful experience of isolation and rejection after 11 thriving years under the

leadership of the former pastor. Otelia was the "right-hand, go-to" and was responsible for preaching, music ministry, youth ministry, and other capacities as assigned by the pastor. She had experienced intersectionality, prejudice, and bias in her ministerial calling and personal life. Although qualified to serve as the interim pastor, the committee selected a male without any explanation, suggesting a preference for a male. Otelia's ordination, seminary experiences, and current situation were laden with prejudice, bias, male preference, and preferential treatment for her male counterparts. She did not have significant experiences with intersectionality in her personal life and secular career. Otelia served in many roles, including an adult education teacher, business owner, and writing a training curriculum geared toward family and youth while enjoying being a newlywed. She served faithfully in the two ministries she had been involved and anticipates transitioning to ministry with her husband in the near future.

Otelia strongly believed in the SBW schema. Her SBW scores were strength – 9, independence – 7.40, caretaking - 10, stoicism (emotion suppression) – 9.17, faith – 9.71, and femininity – 6.33. Her PERMA well-being scores were: positive emotion – 6 (slightly above average), engagement – 5.33 (slightly above average), relationships – 5.33 (slightly above average), meaning – 5 (average), accomplishment – 5.67 (slightly above average), overall health – 5.33 (slightly above average), overall happy – 8 (high), loneliness – 8 (high), and negative affect – 6 (slightly above average).

Joyful

Joyful is a 36-year-old evangelist in Arkansas. Joyful, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, switched positions from a staff pastor (a position her husband continues to hold) to an evangelist. She is currently working on her own faith-based nonprofit. Joyful had been in ministry for 11 plus years but was ordained in 2018 as a staff pastor and has served as an

evangelist for the last two years. Joyful believed this role was more suitable for her gifts and allowed her to devote more time to her nonprofit duties and educational pursuits; she is pursuing her Doctor of Ministry degree.

She has experienced intersectionality, prejudice, and bias more in her personal life, especially throughout her school experiences in predominantly White schools. Joyful was fully aware of congregations in her state where she was not allowed to preach. She had been ignored by male preachers and pastors from other denominations and was aware of the blessing it was to have the support of her church leadership. She was one of the very few women in her state ordained for ministry in her denomination. Joyful and her husband were ordained simultaneously. Joyful was truly a multitasker and successfully managed her own nonprofit organization, her course load in pursuit of her doctoral degree, and fulfilling her many roles as wife and daughter while evangelizing globally from a pro-Israel position.

Joyful strongly believed in the SBW schema. Her SBW scores were: strength – 8, independence – 8.40, caretaking – 8.75, stoicism (emotion suppression) – 9.67, faith – 9.86, and femininity – 6.50. Her PERMA well-being scores were: positive emotion – 5 (average), engagement – 6.33 (slightly above average), relationships – 5.67 (slightly above average), meaning – 8.67 (high), accomplishment – 6.33 (slightly above average), overall health – 6 (slightly above average), overall happy – 6 (slightly above average), loneliness – 7 (high), and negative affect – 5.67 (average).

Reverend Patient

Reverend (Rev.) Patient is an 81-year-old associate pastor in Virginia. Rev. Patient was licensed and ordained in 1986, and for the past 36 years, she has served her local church, particularly in Christian education. Rev. Patient has "been in church all of her life," and upon

receiving the call for ministry, after much struggle with accepting that call, she was led to return to school to prepare for ministry. Rev. Patient completed her bachelor's degree in philosophy, went to seminary, and completed her master's degree in religion. She had the support of her pastor and her husband, who was also in ministry. She started her pastoral journey in the 1980s, which was difficult, especially in the rural area where she lived and worshiped. She became one of the first women in her area to accept the call, the first for her church, and opportunities were extremely limited for women in church leadership. Although many of the men in her church had known her all of their lives, a small percentage questioned her calling and raised opposition to a woman being licensed and ordained. Her pastor chose to ordain Rev. Patient as the assistant to the pastor, and she served him throughout his entire tenure. Under the new pastor, she still operates as an associate pastor.

Rev. Patient recounted stories of male intersectionality, mainly in her ministerial life, with pastors and deacons throughout Virginia who showed blatant prejudice and disrespect. She had to preach from the floor and not sit in the pulpit even when invited to preach and remembered her husband's "running interference" in ministry situations. Often she would not accept engagements where she knew that situation or conflict existed. Male pastors and deacons chose to recognize her as a first lady or preacher's wife but not as a fellow laborer in the gospel, pastor, or reverend. Often males would be intimidated as they had no formal education or training, yet she had her master's degree from a respected seminary in Virginia. While actively involved in ministry, Rev. Patient was engaged in several other ministry areas. She presided as the vice president of clergy in her denomination's association. She was very active in foreign missions and continued to volunteer for the Baptist General Convention. She was a true trailblazer for Black women in ministry in her community.

Rev. Patient upheld the tenets of the SBW schema. Her SBW scores were: strength – 8.50, independence – 3, caretaking – 3.25, stoicism (emotion suppression) – 2.33, faith – 9.57, and femininity – 10.50. Her PERMA well-being scores were: positive emotion – 8.67 (high), engagement – 6.33 (slightly above average), relationships – 10 (very high), meaning – 9 (very high), accomplishment – 8 (high), overall Health – 5.67 (slightly above average), overall happy – 9 (very high), loneliness – 4 (slightly below average), and negative affect – 3 (low).

Dr. Gracious

Dr. Gracious is a 65-year-old Pastor in Virginia. Dr. Gracious had been in ministry for 23 years, and she was licensed as a deacon in 2003, an elder in 2005, and began pastoring in 2012. Although Dr. Gracious initially struggled with the call to ministry, she was committed to her call and community. She is very passionate about community outreach, equipping and educating her congregation and community, emphasizing social justice and ministry to women and children victimized by domestic violence and sexual abuse. Dr. Gracious considered her academic accomplishments, especially the completion of her doctoral degree, and her varied ministry opportunities as blessings from God. She was an experienced missionary, counselor, and bivocational pastor with a love for family and her congregation.

She had experienced intersectionality, prejudice, and bias both in her personal life and professional life. Growing up in the South, she experienced firsthand the atrocities and hypocrisy of racism and genderism, including name-calling, lack of support, and discrimination in school. She has been denied advancement in her professional career, and she recalled being told to go home and have babies because she would never be promoted. Similarly, in her ministerial calling, she had experienced objectification of women, disrespect, and lack of advancement despite being a highly qualified candidate with an impressive curriculum vitae. She has done

extensive work in missions, church planting, mental health, and family counseling, specifically for women and child abuse victims. She recognized that males with fewer credentials had been provided stronger thriving congregations. While serving in her pastoral role, Dr. Gracious was also a thriving mental health counselor and social justice activist in her community while caretaking for her husband, who required daily assistance. She was still very passionate about missions, yet recognized the limits of ministry to maintain her health.

Dr. Gracious adhered strongly to the SBW schema. Her SBW scores were: strength – 9.50, independence – 6.60, caretaking – 9.25, stoicism (emotion suppression) – 6.83, faith – 9.86, and femininity – 2. Her PERMA well-being scores were: positive emotion – 9 (very high), engagement – 6.33 (slightly above average), relationships – 9 (very high), meaning – 10 (very high), accomplishment – 9.33 (very high), overall health – 8.33 (high), overall happy – 9 (very high), loneliness – 3 (low), and negative affect – 4 (slightly below average).

Sherry

Sherry is a 64-year-old overseer, pastor, and prophet living in Arkansas. Sherry has a unique 37-year ministry journey and service to various congregations and ministry groups. She accepted the call to preach almost 40 years ago, yet she was led to prison ministry for approximately 10 years because her bishop and pastor did not believe in women ministers. Under his leadership, she was offered ordination, yet she refused because her husband was not yet ready for ordination. A few years later, in 1994, they were ordained together to pastor and did so for eight years. During a relocation to Texas in 2002, she was ordained as an elder in 2005 and ordained as a prophet by her bishop in 2009. The couple relocated to Arkansas in 2009 due to an employment transition, and in 2010 the couple pastored together for 12 years until her husband's passing. Sherry resided in Arkansas yet served as overseer for ministries in Arkansas, Iowa,

Oklahoma, and California, pastored a congregation in California and served as a prophet to the nations. Her unique use of technology enabled her ministry platform to reach many states and countries simultaneously; she called her ministry style a church without walls.

Sherry had experienced intersectionality, prejudice, and bias in her personal life and professional life. She described discrimination in the workplace in Arkansas, covert racism in California, and blatant disrespect and prejudice in Texas and other southern states. Overall, in ministry, she experienced rejection, intimidation, and subjugation. Sherry shared that her husband would often joke that "she had gotten them put out of some good churches," and he often "ran interference" and protected her, especially in ministry settings where male and female clergy were intimidated because of her strong prophetic anointing.

Sherry was truly a multi-faceted overseer, prophet, pastor, and entrepreneur. Despite Covid, she regularly traveled to her congregation in California while continuing as a successful entrepreneur, businesswoman, owner, and operator of several clean and sober counseling homes in Arkansas and California. She was preparing to embark on writing her first faith-based book.

Sherry embodied the SBW schema. Her SBW scores were: strength – 9.75, independence – 1, caretaking - 5, stoicism (Emotion Suppression) – 6, faith – 9.86, and femininity – 3.83. Her PERMA well-being scores were: positive emotion – 9 (very high), engagement – 8.33 (high), relationships – 9.33 (very high), meaning – 9.33 (very high), accomplishment – 8.67 (high), overall health – 7.33 (high), overall happy – 9 (very high), loneliness – 2 (low), and negative affect – 1 (very low).

Precious

Precious is a 59-year-old who currently serves as a senior pastor in Texas. She had plans to plant another congregation in another city in Texas, a youth ministry, and a food pantry

ministry during 2023. Precious accepted the call to preach and was licensed and ordained as a prophet in 2002. Following in the footsteps of her mother, who began the ministry during the 1970s, she became an ordained pastor in 2007.

Precious experienced intersectionality mainly in her pastoral journey. She described her transition into the leadership office and the first four years as challenging and wrought with pushback, nonacceptance, and undermining of her leadership. She described how male and female church leaders from other denominations rejected a young female appointed as a senior pastor. Precious explained that they welcomed her ministry and prophetic anointing prior to her appointment as a prophet, but as a pastor, they questioned her ability to lead. Even today, few male leaders and women in the ministry have sowed seeds of discord and operate with craftiness to undermine her leadership decisions. Precious focused on Spirit-led decisions versus gender-based leadership. Precious recounted rejection and isolation in her personal life from her family, more so than bias and prejudice.

Precious has served in many roles. She is a widow actively involved with her family. She was also overseeing several new ministry projects that were underway, maintaining a demanding secular career as a successful administrator in mental health, and currently served as the president of the Texas chapter of a service organization focused on community, beautification, senior citizens, and the status of women.

Precious believed in the SBW schema. Her SBW scores were: strength – 11, independence – 3, caretaking – 2.5, stoicism (emotion suppression) – 1, faith – 10.29, and femininity – 11. Her PERMA well-being scores were: positive emotion – 9 (very high), engagement – 8.67 (high), relationships – 7 (high), meaning – 9.67 (very high), accomplishment

– 8.33 (high), overall health – 10 (very high), and overall happy – 10 (very high), loneliness – 2 (low), and negative affect – 3.33 (low).

Charity Grace

Charity Grace is a 75-year-old senior pastor and the presiding bishop in Texas. She had been in ministry for 51 years. She began preaching in 1971, was ordained in 1987, started her own church in 1989, and was consecrated as presiding bishop in 2002. During her tenure, she had served most of that time in full-time ministry, having ministered on a global platform. She shared how one year early in ministry, she preached in 35 states and 13 countries in that year alone. While fulfilling the call on her life, her husband divorced her, and her father did not understand the calling on her life to full-time ministry. She shared the terms of her divorce being documented that he left her and his five children because of her faithfulness to tithing and "praying in tongues." Like many participants, Charity Grace initially struggled with the call to ministry. Her grandmother prophesied when Charity Grace was a child that she would preach. However, during the 1970s, women did not pastor, and there was no frame of reference for what the Spirit was saying. Once she accepted the call, her pastor supported her, who also initiated ordination as Charity Grace was teaching in the seminary and taking leadership courses.

She had experienced intersectionality, prejudice, and bias in her personal and professional life. Growing up in the South, Charity Grace experienced discrimination, racism, and bias from childhood as her mother was a civil rights activist. She explained how she was intimately familiar with crosses burning in her yard, having to shelter in the basement, and techniques for active Klan events in her town. As a young college student, she recalled being flown home and charged with diffusing a mob when her mother was dragged through the streets and arrested during one of her protests. Charity Grace also recounted bias in her secular career.

Once she embarked on her ministerial career, she experienced bias from church leaders outside of her church and other denomination leaders, who often tried to humiliate and intimidate her. This ridicule caused her to become even bolder, more confident, and strong. Often recognition and monetary remuneration and honorariums were significantly less than male counterparts ministering at the same events.

Charity Grace was very passionate about ministry. She was serving her congregation, aiding others in cultivating their gifts and accepting their offices in the kingdom. She had much work to do for the kingdom as an overseer, itinerant minister, author, and mentor while serving on many boards. She maintained her roles as wife, mother, grandmother, and family matriarch.

Charity Grace adhered to the SBW schema. Her SBW scores were: strength – 11, independence – 1, caretaking – 6.75, stoicism (emotion suppression) – 1, faith – 10.29, and femininity – 6.83. Her PERMA well-being scores were: positive emotion – 9.67 (very high), engagement – 9 (very high), relationships – 10 (very high), meaning – 9.67 (very high), accomplishment – 8.33 (high), overall health – 8.67 (high), overall happy – 9 (very high), loneliness – 1 (very low), and negative affect – 1.67 (very low).

Candace

Candace is a 58-year-old pastor in Virginia. She had been in ministry for 17 years. She started her own church in 2017 in her home and moved to her current church location in 2018. She described her tenure as a pastor as a challenging journey without a roadmap to guide her. Candace had experienced intersectionality, prejudice, and bias in her personal and professional lives. Her academic years were spent at predominantly White schools and were wrought with prejudice, nonacceptance, and limited opportunities, which also existed in her chosen career path hence leading to her starting her own very successful business. Similarly, in her ministerial

pursuits, she described a very painful experience when her pastor did not affirm her call to ministry. To her dismay, during the final stages of her licensing and ordination, he aborted her process with the presbytery committee when she questioned his preferential treatment of her male counterpart. Her male counterpart was allowed to perform sacerdotal functions, but she was not allowed to do so. This experience happened in her senior year of seminary, and despite successfully completing her Master of Divinity, she was denied licensing and ordination. Candace was plunged into depression, and she was led to transition to another church. During a Sunday School lesson at her new church where she was teaching on the call of major prophets and these prophets being compelled to "go," she heard the Holy Spirit say to her, "Go!" In a confirmatory manner, her family members encouraged her to start her own church. In obedience, she embarked on her journey to disengage with the mainline denomination. She started a church with no denominational affiliation that currently ministered predominantly to families, particularly women and children.

Candace, despite her struggles with ordination, ministered passionately. She has been instrumental in helping others who have experienced similar situations in her life to overcome and achieve success. She was a very successful and sought-after entrepreneur and involved grandmother, and she had to balance work and life to maintain a healthy well-being.

Candace strongly adhered to the tenets of the SBW schema. Her SBW scores were: strength – 9, independence – 7, caretaking - 9, stoicism (emotion suppression) – 5.4, faith – 9.86, and femininity – 8.5. Her PERMA well-being scores were: positive emotion – 8.33 (high), engagement – 9.33 (very high), relationships – 7.33 (high), meaning – 9 (very high), accomplishment – 9 (very high), overall health– 5.33 (slightly above average), overall happy – 8 (high), loneliness – 8 (high), and negative affect – 4.67 (slightly below average).

Dee

Dee is a 55-year-old archbishop in Texas. She had been in ministry for 43 years and pastoring for 19 years. She began experiencing God at six or seven and knew she wanted to be a preacher. She had been a church musician from age seven until leaving for college. Having received her nomination and approval from the general board and high recommendations from her pastor for the United Methodist Church (UMC) candidacy. She did not receive the final approval from UMC headquarters. Dee did not allow this setback to keep her from answering the call to preach. In 1996, through her former non-denominational religious affiliation, she was licensed and ordained as a prophetess and evangelist. In 2016, her Episcopal bishop consecrated her as archbishop, an honor that few women in the United States have been bestowed. Dee began her own organization, was an entrepreneur and owned several businesses. She currently serves as one congregation's senior pastor and three others' overseer.

She had experienced intersectionality, prejudice, and bias in her personal and professional life. Growing up in a predominantly White neighborhood, she experienced white supremacy, racism, and injustices firsthand. These experiences were instrumental in her becoming actively involved in social justice and fully aware that while she loved God and served Him faithfully, the society in which she lived and served was not colorblind. This required her to be engaged in social reformation and public awareness of systemic racism and injustices for people of color. She was intimately aware that gendered racism was real in situations such as the rejection for candidacy early in her ministerial pursuits, being asked to refrain from taking a photo with her male colleagues, and never being invited to teach at a predominantly White church. She was grateful for the female trailblazers in ministry that cleared the path for her to stand where she is today in her spiritual walk. She expressed that she had more ministry

opportunities with males than women as she had found women often engaged in a competitive nature in ministry. She firmly believed in "coalition and not competition was desired."

Dee was a highly respected and sought-after public figure, holding several prestigious offices within several organizations, including the NAACP, a political organization. She was also a member of two honor societies for academic and leadership achievement, alongside multiple board appointments that kept her very busy. She also taught at a seminary and offered mission and vision statement guidance to other organizations. All of these priorities were managed to give time and support to her husband and family, which was her first ministry.

Dee upheld the SBW schema. Her SBW scores were: strength – 10.50, independence – 5.20, caretaking – 6.75, stoicism (emotion suppression) – 2.17, faith – 9.57, and femininity – 4.33. Her PERMA well-being scores were: positive emotion – 9.67 (very high), engagement – 9 (very high), relationships – 6 (slightly above average), meaning – 9.33 (very high), accomplishment – 8.67 (high), overall health – 5.33 (slightly above average), overall happy – 9 (very high), loneliness – 5 (average), and negative affect – 3.33 (low).

Harmony

Harmony is a 59-year-old pastor in Georgia. She had been in ministry for 40 years and described herself as having been in church all of her life and actively involved in music ministry in her earlier years. Being a strong, independent woman at the age of 25, Harmony relocated alone to Georgia, where she met her husband. Following a period of internal denial of her calling to ministry, Harmony was licensed to preach the gospel in 1993, ordained in 1997, and had been serving as pastor since 2000 with her husband.

Harmony had experienced intersectionality, prejudice, and bias in her personal and professional life. As a young woman in ministry, she was often confronted with having to prove

herself and show her ability. Her drive and desire to become a thriving, trained pastor led her to pursue her Master of Theology, Doctor of Ministry, and postgraduate certification. It was in her seminary experiences she confronted a lot of prejudice and bias, some so extreme that she was once questioned about whether she was there to take notes for her husband. This led to her posturing herself and recognizing her self-worth and the plight of women in ministry.

Also, during seminary, their church experienced a rapid growth season where Harmony and her husband maintained a television ministry, had five services a Sunday, and "doing ministry at a hundred miles a minute." Harmony realized the "Superwoman motif," as she called it, had caused her to hit a wall, burn out, and become physically sick. During that season, she implemented major changes to her pace of ministry and self-care. This period became the impetus to learn how to prioritize herself and balance work and life demands.

Harmony was a renowned pastor, life and wellness coach, author, and former televangelist and currently training for a chaplaincy position in her locale. She was passionate about teaching others to embrace holistic living and self-care, especially other women. She lovingly shared that her greatest achievement was maintaining a blessed, healthy marriage for 30 years to the love of her life and loving her family and congregation.

Harmony embraced the SBW schema. Her SBW scores were: strength – 8.75, independence – 3.60, caretaking – 1, stoicism (emotion suppression) – 2, faith – 7.29, and femininity – 2. Her PERMA well-being scores were: positive emotion – 9.33 (very high), engagement – 7.67 (high), relationships – 9.67 (very high), meaning – 9.67 (very high), accomplishment – 8.67 (high), overall health – 9.67 (very high), overall happy – 9 (very high), loneliness – 2 (low), and negative affect – 4.33 (slightly below average).

Results

The lived experiences of Black clergywomen thriving in efficacious ministry who experienced intersectionality while influenced by the SBW motif were presented in the following two sections: Theme Development and Research Question Responses. Themes were identified based on each participant's shared experiences and different perspectives. Theme development reflected the analytical process of the participants' narratives and the identification of the commonalities from those experiences. The next section, Research Question Responses, focused on the data garnered in the screening surveys and the semi-structured interviews and their relevance to the three posed research questions.

Theme Development

The theme development began with the researcher completing the screening survey and answering the research questions used for the semi-structured participant interviews. The researcher set aside her preconceived experiences to best comprehend the participants' experiences with a fresh perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The next steps included organizing the participants' data gathered during the semi-structured interviews, the initial reading and notetaking as part of the reflective memoing process, importing the professionally transcribed and participant-approved transcripts in Delve tool, and highlighting the significant emerging statements and phrases (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Morrow, 2005; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Furthermore, the researcher developed codes to identify broad themes, narrowed the broader themes and the clusters of meaning into concrete themes, and finally developed the textural description of the participants' experiences and structural description of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015).

Organizing the participants' data consisted of using Delve coding software. This began with importing the transcripts, developing codes and snippets, and identifying the relevant terms, phrases, and sentences from each interview transcript. The initial list of codes and snippets was synthesized into clusters of meaning (see Appendix K). The researcher performed a comprehensive analysis of the data to facilitate the development of the clusters of meaning into themes. The theme development process was finalized when the researcher perceived that no new themes were emerging. Six themes and 15 sub-themes emerged from the analyzed data; these represented the realities of Black pastors/clergywomen experiences with intersectionality while influenced by the SBW schema. Table 2 presents the themes and sub-themes extracted.

Table 2

Themes and Sub-Themes

Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Contemporary Experiences with Intersectionality	a. Denied Opportunities - Appointments, Preaching and Training b. Misogynistic Attitudes and Behaviors c. Remuneration Inequities d. Support Systems Significance
2. Responses to Intersectionality	a. Emotions and Feelings b. Questioning Self c. Best Fit Seeking (Circumventing)
3. SBW Influence	a. Strength and Resilience b. Self-Reliance and Faith c. Caregiving Boundaries d. Emotion Suppression Revised
4. Well-Being	a. Work-Life Balance b. Self-Denial c. Self-Care Requirements d. Self-Care Types
5. PERMA	
6. How I Thrive Mantra	

Contemporary Experiences with Intersectionality

This theme described how Black female pastors and clergywomen experienced bias, prejudice, male preferential treatment, and subjugation in their personal lives while serving in church leadership. The expectation was for all 12 to share their personal stories; however, only five of the 12 participants, Candace, Charity Grace, Dee, Dr. Gracious, and Joyful, shared their personal life encounters with intersectionality. These stories reverberated the blatant racism and prejudice of many Black women growing up in the South.

Charity Grace and Dr. Gracious dealt with the horrors of the civil rights era; Charity Grace's mother was a civil rights activist, and Charity Grace was intimately familiar "with crosses burning on lawns, having to go to the basement when the Ku Klux Klan marched through town." She "flew home from school to talk down an angry mob when her mother was dragged through the streets by her hair and imprisoned." She also suffered discrimination in her first position in the workforce. Similarly, Dee and her family, who lived in a White neighborhood, became part of a national racial discrimination story. Dr. Gracious experienced blatant racism and misogynistic attitudes in college and in her federal government positions. She vividly retold her first experience, "It was atrocious. It was horrible. I literally had my supervisor tell me I needed to get married and have children and stop thinking I was going to get a promotion. It was just incredibly blatant." Candace experienced similar prejudices in college and the workplace, which led her to "start my own business to alleviate the discrimination in my chosen career field." Joyful shared, "The most hurtful moment of prejudice that I experienced in my lifetime was from an authority figure." She attended a predominantly White private school, and her first encounter with racism was when her eighth-grade teachers told her, "It is not your fault that you're brown." She wondered what the problem was because she "loved being brown." These

experiences impacted these women tremendously, and they were very aware of the racial climate in the American South.

Similarly, a form of prejudice and bias was experienced by all 12 participants in the Black Protestant churches in the American South due to their race and gender, known as intersectionality. Historically when Black women tried to preach in the church, the opposition would force many into traveling ministries, camp meetings, and missionary opportunities abroad to be heard and respected (Ngunjiri et al., 2012). In the 2022-2023 contemporary setting, the former structural barriers against women in church leaders have slightly diminished, allowing for more women in church leadership within the framework of Protestant, mainline institutions. Yet, each participant shared varying degrees of intersectionality while serving in the highest offices of church leadership. One of the critical structural barriers that remained was attitudes and behaviors of conservatism and a desire to continue to align with the tradition of male headship for clergy leadership, hence creating an obstacle for women in leadership (Collins, 2004; Howell-Baker, 2005; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012). It was evident from the experiences of 50% (six) participants that the Black Church continued to uphold conservative ideas regarding gender and sexuality, making the idea of women as leaders and pastors difficult to embrace. The stained-glass ceiling effect served as an obstacle for women already serving in these roles and seeking new roles (Collins, 2004; Miles & Proeschold-Bell, 2012; Nelson et al., 2016). These six participants discussed specifically this traditional view.

Harmony, Charity Grace, Otelia, Precious, Rev. Patient, and Sherry spoke to the sociocultural beliefs of conservatism. Harmony shared:

Even in my own church, where my husband is the church planter, I recognize that there are some... For example, we had a family that was in our church who eventually left

because the husband did not believe in women in ministry. And after I became co-pastor, they left. And so, I think that's one of the barriers that we still face or that I face. And I would say a lot of women face in ministry.

Otelia stated:

I grew up in a church in a rural area. I feel like many of the people I was associated with, both clergy and non-clergy, prefer to have a male come in and speak and preach unless it's for children or women's day or missionary service, that typically, the first reach out is to a male.

Similarly, Rev. Patient began her tenure in church leadership in 1986 in a rural setting. She was the oldest participant in this research study and a pioneer for Black female pastors in her community and local association. Having been active in church leadership for over 37 years, Rev. Patient summed up the type of prejudices and biases in church leadership these participants faced. She explained:

Positions in the church were lacking women serving in high positions, deacons, and trustees. It just seemed cut off at that level for women. And for pastors, it was the same thing. It was just dominated by men, and I just didn't, for some reason, couldn't see that this was the way God's church should have been set up... In the Black Church, especially in the counties where I live, women were not welcome to the pulpit. Black women ministers were not welcome. When I first announced my calling, there was some but a very low percentage in the church who questioned my calling because they'd known me all my life. I was a woman ordained. I believe that it was just some prejudice from men misunderstanding the word of God [that I was questioned]. From that ignorance, I should really say. I had gone to many churches all over Virginia and experienced something

different; even the conflict [with a woman in ministry] in the church, you could feel it.

And sometimes, I would be accepted just because I was a pastor's wife, not because I was called to minister the gospel by God. My husband was a great supporter.

Her statement outlined the various experiences with intersectionality, prejudice, bias, and subjugation that the other participants discussed, including structural barriers and denied opportunities for women in leadership. Moreover, the sociocultural values in the church were related to conservatism and misogynistic behaviors, male preferential treatment and attitudes, and inequities found in society. This theme contained four sub-themes discussed below: denied opportunities - appointments, preaching and training, misogynistic behaviors and attitudes, inequities, and support systems significance.

Denied Opportunities - Appointments, Preaching, and Training. Similar to accounts from a decade ago where many Black clergywomen, while qualified, were denied opportunities to lead and serve, the participants gave analogous accounts leading up to and while serving in their current positions (Smarr et al., 2018; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Otelia shared the heart of many of the recollections of the dearth of ministry opportunities for these women in leadership. She declared, "I've shown what God has put in me, I've lived that life, but I have been looked over and over again as a female."

Appointments. Regarding appointments, six (50%) discussed women being refused or withdrawn from candidacy. There were some heart-wrenching accounts. Candace emotionally detailed the halt to her candidacy. She expressed, "A letter was written to the preparation for ministry body because I questioned the pastor about allowing a male counterpart to administer communion. It was halted." Her ordination never happened, and the church leaders ostracized her. Comparably, Dee had preached her first message at the age of 12. Although the process for

the United Methodist Church was strenuous and methodical, she knew that was her path from an early age. Despite receiving her pastor and congregation's nomination for candidacy, she was not allowed into the candidacy process. In her words:

Although I had all of the criteria, and high recommendations from my pastor at the time, that didn't pan out for whatever reason. I was never told why I was not able to enter through that process. They would tell me, "Okay, well, we have all the information, and we'll get back with you." Nobody ever got back. Months passed, and years passed. So, I just let it go. And the United Methodist Church does have female bishops, and they do have female pastors and leaders because my pastor at the time was a woman. But for some reason, I was not allowed; the buck stopped with the headquarters. They just would not allow me to go any further... I actually fulfilled all of the necessary steps to go into candidacy. But for some reason, when it went to the headquarters, to the people who actually fill out the information, for some reason, and I still don't know to this very day, I can guess about it what happened, and I'm sure it's because I was a young Black female. If I could guess, that's probably what I would say... that would've changed the whole trajectory of my walk. And where I am today, there's a possibility that if I had gone that way, I wouldn't have a church. I wouldn't be the senior pastor of a church that I founded from the ground up. And so it was bittersweet, but in the end, all things worked together and I believe that it worked in my favor not to go that route, that God had something else in mind for me.

Dr. Gracious shared similar sentiments regarding the lack of women's appointments in the AME denomination. Diane was rejected by her pastor, who told her to "make your calling and election sure," and was never accepted as a part of the ministry. She soon left due to the

onslaught of ridicule and rejection. Harmony's pastor in her Baptist church did not respond when she shared her calling, and she left that meeting believing she did not hear God, and it took years for her to do so finally. Similarly, from the beginning of "her walk," Sherry remembered how her bishop "put the men in leadership positions, but he didn't put women in leadership positions."

Joyful posited the slow progress of her denomination:

There are a great number of ordained Assemblies of God women, but I have not really been at churches where they are yet since I've been ordained with the Assemblies of God. In this church where I am now, I'm the only ordained woman. And at the one where I was before, I believe there was one other ordained woman.

Joyful was one of less than a handful of Black women ordained in her area. Otelia, while discussing her church's search for a new pastor, she remorsefully stated:

I do believe they were looking for a male, when the pastor left, and to date, I'm not the person that they call for anything. Even though I was consistently involved in conversations and everything when the pastor was there. And the pastor left, and literally, I felt like I didn't even exist anymore.

With all her credentials and years of service at her home church, she was not considered for the interim pastor position and input into the selection process. The telling of these accounts of denied opportunities became very emotional and required several participants to take a break before continuing.

Preaching. One of the primary roles of pastors was defined as preaching (Cattich, 2012). Yet seven of the participants have been prevented or discouraged from preaching in their pastoral roles. Candace disclosed, "Under the leadership of male clergy, there was an opportunity for me to be put on a list in the denomination that I was in to be a supply preacher. When I asked for

that, it never happened." Charity Grace declared, "I've been in foreign countries where they said they wouldn't accept me because they'd never seen a woman bishop." Diane was also invited to preach and was never allowed to do so. She shared, "I've been asked to preach, and they didn't let me preach (laughed). We had people sitting there waiting on me, and the pastor got up and did his own thing." In her discussion on prejudices, Dr. Gracious shared, "I would say that overall, it has just been mainly the opportunities offered to others. I would say I don't just mean in terms of opportunities to pastor; I mean opportunities to preach or even biases." Joyful sadly recounted, "Between here [where she lives now] and my mom's house, which is two hours away, I probably passed a dozen or two churches where I know I couldn't go and preach." Harmony shared:

When people invite you when male pastors invite you to their church to preach, when it comes to inviting men, they'll invite the men to do their anniversary or preach a Sunday morning service or whatever without even thinking about it. But for women, they tend to want to limit us to women's events.

Otelia, too, experienced this and explained:

I have been invited into places that have specifically said, "We needed a female here today for A, B, C, and D," and also experienced not being called in my own church to preach, even though I have the ability and credentials honestly to back it up.

Her third experience happened weeks before her interview. She shared:

And there are even churches now where pastors are retiring, the male pastor is not there, and I have been invited in to preach more than I ever have while the male pastor was there. I've recently preached in a place where I never got called while the pastor was there.

Like the pioneers before them, all these women did not give up or focus on their rejections but continued to seek opportunities to fulfill their calling to preach the gospel.

Training. All 12 participants expressed the necessity for training, and eight found it necessary to attend seminary for proper training to pastor and prepare for ministry effectively. In Rev. Patient's words regarding her training:

I sat down and evaluated what I needed and then withstood being the first woman in seminary in this area. I had no idea how I would finish college and seminary, but my faith helped me be even stronger, and all things through God.

Despite their desire for appropriate training, many did not receive it from their church leaders.

Dr. Gracious, who had her path for education determined by her church leaders, explained:

It would not take as long for male ministers in training to be appointed. There was a certain collegial atmosphere of mentoring with male ministers in training. Once I was committed, I was committed, but the path that I had to take was forced upon me. Not to say it's not on others, but there were definitely biases in terms of expectations. And particularly, I would say yes, it does apply more to women than it did to men.

Similarly, Otelia, who has a Doctor of Ministry degree, shared:

For all the years that I've been in church, I didn't know what preachers did, what was expected, or what did it mean to be in ministry. And so I wanted to be better for myself. So, I went to seminary.

It was clear that training for women was different for men, especially those from well-known churches. Otelia disclosed:

Even today, I can tell you there are male preachers and pastors who are pastoring today that didn't show up for class and didn't... There's no way in the world they could have

gotten their degrees while I watched women, including myself, fight for our voices to be heard and what we wrote to be heard. And they [men in the cohort] went through seminary and are planted in churches where there were other prominent male preachers. And you know the reason why they're in these pulpits is because of the men that they were attached to prior.

Otelia, regarding her ordination:

It was coming up to time for us to go before the ordination council. And I met with my pastor and was like, "Listen, this person [male candidate] gets ordained with me. I will not accept ordination because they don't know anything. They haven't done anything, and they're not doing any studying, whatever." The pastor halted his ordination process, yet she found out the gentleman that was going through with me had been told that he was a man, so it wasn't going to be an issue. He didn't have to do anything, just show up, but they were going to ordain him because he was a man...And then I found out that there were pastors who were willing to still ordain him for a certain dollar amount.

She went on to tell how that experience was a "blow to her" and contributed to her loss of confidence in the ministers' conference with which her church was associated. Sherry also experienced disappointment regarding training. She shared, "The females really weren't trained... The males, he trained a little bit more and gave them assignments over the people, but the females, he didn't really train." During the culminating focus group, a lively discussion ensued. Charity Grace, Dr. Gracious, and Otelia emphasized that exceptions were made for men, and men were not required to complete the same training and seminary preparation. Again, subjugation and inequality impacted these Black clergywomen's training and preparation for ministry. Yet, all have persevered and continued in efficacious leadership and ministry roles.

Misogynistic Attitudes and Behaviors. Black clergywomen encountered pushback to their leadership and decision-making due to strong male preference and dominance. Men in the congregations who were loyal to conservatism disobeyed the female pastor's authority (Smarr et al., 2018). With all the legal battles regarding allegations of sexual abuse and violation of women's rights, particularly with the "Me Too" social movement bringing exposure to the magnitude of the societal problem with sexual abuse, harassment, and rape culture is very important. It was disheartening to hear the stories of misogynistic attitudes and behaviors, comments, and actions these participants experienced.

As Candace delved deeper into her halted candidacy, she stated, "I feel that with male clergy, I was looked at more as a sex object versus a colleague." Charity Grace recalled:

I was preaching at a very large conference in the state of Texas; as a matter of fact, there were 3,500 registered guests from six countries and people all over the nation. And I was the only woman who was a keynote speaker. I was the nighttime keynote speaker, and I was preaching, and God was moving miraculously. It was just a great service, and the power of God was moving. And a man stood up in the aisle and said, out loud, out loud with all these people in the room; I'll never forget, as long as I live, "You know you are too cute to preach this good. You need to sit down and be somebody's wife."

She continued, "This man, who had just publicly humiliated me while this is being televised on a network that everybody knows about and everything, and had blurted this out, falls to his knees and is on the floor crying." God turned one of her most humiliating experiences in ministry into a healing and deliverance moment. It taught her humility and the power of God to turn a situation meant to discredit or destroy her into one of her greatest lessons in ministry. She continued:

It seems that what that man said to me, "You are too cute to preach this way." It seems that is accepted in Christendom... and this happened repeatedly. I could name numerous occasions... and I will say this, and I'm not using names on purpose. If you're of another race, you could look like a movie star, honey. And they bring you in, pay you, fly you in, put you up there and everything. But when it comes to us, if we look like a movie star, there has to be something wrong.

Diane told a different side of the same behavior, where women in her convention were ignored and objectified. She recounted:

We (the National Convention of Missionary Baptists) don't recognize our women ministers. It's one male figure that I know where I live. I don't care where I am. He'll call me Minister Diane or Reverend, but he's about the only one I have... maybe a couple more, but the majority of them, no, ma'am, they do not recognize women.

Dee's story was similar to Charity Grace's account. Dee shared:

When I walked in the door, the church was going on and the person who was preaching stopped preaching and just looked at me walking through the door. And everybody in the church turned around, and I was so embarrassed. I kept walking, and I kept my head up. I wanted to cry. I didn't feel humiliated. I just felt like, "Why did you stop preaching? Why did you do that?" I felt like he just put me out there, and I didn't even know him. And so, the pastor walked up to me after church, and he was chuckling, and he says, "Ah, don't worry about that." And he says, "Because God's anointed you to be a woman who commands attention and not demands attention." And from that moment forward, I began to embrace whom God had called me to be, the femininity. I love just being a woman and I never feel like I have to be in competition with anyone concerning anything.

Dr. Gracious shared:

People overstep boundaries more with women in terms of time expectations. I think with male colleagues, what I sense is there's this...how can I say this? There's this masculine objectivity of women that still exists. Looking at you, oh, you look nice. That kind of stuff.

Charity Grace explained with intensity:

Because it's about this thing between males and females, you can always use a female. You can use her intellect; you can use her beauty to help make you feel better. She can teach you everything. And then, when you get up to say who has taught you, you forget to give her any recognition. She didn't teach you to get the recognition. She didn't pray for you so you would recognize her. But golly, come on.

In a similar tone, Harmony exclaimed regarding one night in seminary:

My husband and I were in seminary together and we were walking across the parking lot and this is a gender thing. This is not race, I don't think. So, we were walking across the parking lot and one of our classmates looked at me and looked at my husband and then he looked at me and said, "Oh that's so nice, you're here to take his notes." And I was like, what? He assumed because I was there with my husband, that my husband was in the class and I was just there to take his notes.

Another situation she recalled:

A member of my church had family members that pass away and my husband couldn't attend the funeral. So I went, and I was asked to speak. When I got up to speak, I was asked to speak from the floor. Now I don't believe that if my husband was there, he would've been asked to speak from the floor. So that's what I mean by differences.

Joyful's shared experience with the topic "tied more to being a woman than being a Black person" and the traditional view of women in ministry. She stated:

Men say that women are not supposed to be in the pulpit. They're supposed to be quiet in church. Um, but that's not how God set it up or that's not what it says in 1 or 2 Timothy and, and on and on. And so, I have had some of that... because, you know, in the South, there are a lot of people that still belong to denominations that don't believe women should be in ministry.

From Otelia's perspective, she shared experiences of disrespectful conversations:

I have been in places with my pastor where I'm in an office full of men, and I'm the only female. And there are conversations that are taking place where my pastor literally looked at me and said, "Let's leave the room," because he knew it was going in the direction that wasn't conducive to a female being in the room.

Precious endured similar conversations where male leaders in her church told her directly, "You are a female; you don't need to be doing this. I can do this better because I'm a male. I've been in ministry 30 years... that type of thing." Rev. Patient, while doing visitation to other Black Baptist churches, proclaimed:

The pastors were reluctant of letting women come into the pulpit after being invited to give a sermon, they would want you to stand on the floor to use the mic or the low platform they had there, and they were very prejudiced when it came to women being in the pulpit. In the Black Church, especially in the counties where I live, Black women ministers were not welcome. My husband also was a great supporter. So it was some places I'd gone, and he picked it up, and I did not say anything to him about it because I didn't want him to feel uncomfortable because he was the pastor of the church and not

me. And he began to address some of these issues that I had in my heart, and I just felt so good about it.

Similarly, Sherry shared that her husband "ran a lot of interference" for her.

As the researcher and not having experienced this particular aspect, it was critical to identify the solemnity of each account. Researchers in the past called these behaviors quiet resistance, particularly preaching from the floor, preaching on women's related events only, and enduring objectification (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Williams-Gegner et al., 2010). In the context of the climate of the United States presently regarding "masculine objectivity of women," this behavior was unacceptable and led to many of these women leaving churches and other ministries to find a more conducive and accepting environment instead of quietly remaining. Too many options exist today to tolerate misogynistic attitudes and behaviors. In support of that statement, Harmony shared, "One of my friends says she stopped accepting engagements to be the women's day speaker because it appears that sometimes male pastors tend to want to limit us to women's events."

Remuneration Inequities. Overall, gender inequality remains a prevalent problem in the United States (Homan & Burdette, 2021). Women clergy receive less support and were often denied leadership positions (Smarr et al., 2018). One of the key areas of inequality and inequity discussed was remuneration, and this researcher believed it deserved to be a sub-theme because of the breadth of the disparity. Charity Grace, Dr. Gracious, Precious, and Sherry experienced this significantly. Charity Grace shared one experience when she was offered a pastoral role in a church in Florida. She stated, "I was highly recommended and offered the position. And because of my race and gender, the salary they wanted to pay me was a joke. It was an absolute joke." She later learned that the male who took the position was paid a considerably larger stipend. She

had many experiences with this undervaluing of her ministry and gifts because she was a Black woman. She shared:

I mean, I've left with checks where, when I opened the envelope, the Lord said, "Give it back." And I said, "What?" And he said, "Give it back. They have dishonored your gift. Give it back." And then I talk to the male counterparts and say, "What was your check?" And they were talking about \$5,000, \$7,000, \$12,000, and your check's \$500, \$800, and once, \$300. And you didn't go there for the money. Don't misunderstand me... Yeah, I have been at conferences being the keynote speaker and left with a check for \$500, and my counterparts leave with a check for \$5,000.

Similarly, Sherry described a situation:

The pastor had let us come in to run a revival. Well, they said okay, we would split the offering 60/40, and I would get 60%, and they would take 40%. And when they went to count the money, it was one thing, but then when we went to pick up the check,...it was a lot less.

Dr. Gracious agreed but said she could not concretely prove this. She noted:

But in terms of honorariums teaching opportunities, it really takes a lot for women. And personally, I believe I've definitely had... should have had more opportunities than I've had. A lot of this has been without compensation; other male colleagues would've been elevated to certain levels by now.

During the culminating focus group, she added, "Progress is being made; however, in regions in the country, including the American South, pay inequities persisted." Empirical data suggested that men hold the highest, most prestigious positions in every denomination, and structural barriers often subordinated women to leadership in smaller, financially struggling

congregations (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). These churches tend to be less attractive to their male counterparts because of the pay disparity and inadequate remuneration and resources (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018; Sullins, 2000; Zippia, 2022). According to 25% of the participants, that premise was accurate and could be a future study area regarding remuneration inequity and inequality for female clergywomen.

Support Systems Significance. While experiencing intersectionality, all participants stressed the high value of support. Yet, all of them reported some form of lack of support, whether from church leaders, congregants, or from family.

While eight of the 12 shared strong support from their pastors and other church leaders, Diane, Sherry, Precious, and Candace shared scenarios regarding internal church opposition to their pastoral and church leadership positions. When accepting her call, Sherry met resistance from her pastor at the time. She stated, "The pastor, bishop, that was over us came from a Pentecostal background and really didn't believe in women preachers." Despite his lack of support and training, Sherry stayed and ministered in prison ministry, which became integral to her current leadership assignment in the kingdom. Sherry recounted how she and her husband were forced to leave another church. She shared that other leaders told a lie to their pastor at the time, which resulted in their expulsion from their church while having been obedient to their pastor's instruction in their church planting process. This experience led them to start their church because they were asked to leave the fellowship by the pastor they loved and respected. Precious, in the unique position of taking over the pastoral helm when her mother retired, faced internal opposition. She shared:

During the first three years of pastoring, it was very challenging for two reasons. I was a woman, I was young, and there were other ministers that were male that had been in the ministry for some time, and they felt as if I should not have been in that position.

She shared some of the negative comments:

You are a female, and you don't need to be doing this. I can do this better because I'm a male. I've been in ministry for 30 years. You are too young, that type of thing. And I am like, and I do not have a choice.

In her fifteenth year, the internal opposition still existed, yet she felt stronger and more confident in her leadership abilities. Diane and Candace, too, faced internal struggles. Diane's pastor told her, "You better make your calling and election sure." He then had other male leaders and members ridicule and embarrass her as well. She shared, "One man told me, if you preaching, I don't want to hear you. I'm not coming." Candace's internal opposition came from a lack of support, minimal to no feedback, and painful retaliation for questioning his male preference. Candace stated:

While in seminary, I had no support from my pastor and I made the mistake, I was going to him for guidance. The pastor I had at that time was not very affirming. Instead of, I would say, grooming me for the pastorship, he put me in positions of doing committees where I was organizing musician appreciation programs and doing clerical things. When it came to preaching, when I was given the opportunity to preach, there was no feedback. While I was supposed to be doing an internship, I did nothing but sit in the pew. I was called on to pray. There wasn't like a preaching schedule or anything like that. It was because I questioned the pastor about allowing a male counterpart to administer communion, a letter was written to the preparation for ministry body because I

questioned the pastor about allowing a male counterpart to administer communion. He wasn't ordained, and I was never allowed even to serve communion.

The letter from the pastor caused her to be denied candidacy and "her ordination process to be aborted." As Candace stated, "I left one church and went to another church and kept trying to resolve the issue of being ordained, but it never happened." She resolved the situation herself by starting her own church without being ordained. Diane and Candace had similar outcomes. Diane moved to another congregation until she and her husband began their own church.

Eight of the participants had great internal church support but met opposition from outside leaders and denominations. Joyful, Charity Grace, and Sherry provided great insight into this experience, especially from the Bible Belt perspective. Joyful shared:

In the South, there are a lot of people that still belong to denominations that don't believe women should be in ministry. I definitely feel some limitation, you know, obviously, to work and go and minister. Because there are people outside my denomination, they just, they don't believe in women ministers. So, you know, I know that those are the places that I'm not going to be invited to go and speak, and I'm not going to call and ask if I can come and speak, which I think is, you know, rather sad in some ways. Between here and my mom's house, which is two hours away, I probably pass a dozen or two churches where I know I couldn't go and preach...Because I think that, really, I'm missing something that I could learn from them. And they may be missing some things they could learn from me. But my focus is not on that in ministry. I definitely focus on the places where I can go. And I focus on the places where I would be welcomed and where my ministry would be accepted.

When asked for an example of this, Joyful shared one incident:

Within the past year since we've been in this small town (Arkansas), I met a very kind Baptist preacher who pastors a church, maybe a town or two over from us. But when he found out that I was a member of the clergy, his entire demeanor toward me completely changed. And I could tell he wasn't really interested in having some conversation...I think I've really experienced that as a woman in the Bible Belt more than as a Black person.

Similarly, Charity Grace stated, "My ordination process with my pastor was established, and he was firm. The rejection would be from outside ministries." Sherry and Precious, from Arkansas and Texas, respectively, stressed the prevalence of this situation. Precious posited, "People from different denominations that are not used to having females in leadership like this like we do; they cause problems." Sherry stressed the critical nature of ministering as a Black woman in the Bible Belt; she expressed that ministry requires wisdom, discernment, and guidance to ensure you are most effective, safe, and welcomed. She even shared that she and her husband had been put out of churches where leaders were intimidated or rejected her prophetic gift and anointing.

While several participants explained how they had support from their church leadership and other church leaders, they received limited to no family support. Otelia delayed her entry into ministry because of her father, "My mother supported me 100%; I didn't officially become licensed until a year after my dad passed away because my father didn't believe in female ministers." She tearfully shared that he gave his blessing before he passed, which was important to her as she did not want to do it without his approval. She later learned that her grandfather, who also rejected women in ministry, prophesied, "I was going to be the one in the family that would be a minister, and that I would be a preacher and that I would serve God with everything

that I had." Candace also lacked family support, although her brother encouraged her to start her church to teach the family. She cried while sharing, "None of my family attended church except my grandchildren. My son, at one point, was attending, and then he just went astray." Precious shared how her marriage was filled with love and care, but her husband, until his passing, was not actively involved in the ministry. Precious exclaimed, "My husband did not support me; he supported me at home, took care of me well at home, but he never stepped foot into the church to support me as a pastor, so that put a strain on our marriage." Charity Grace passionately shared how her husband divorced her because of her love for God and was recorded in the court documents as his reason for divorce:

He stood up in a courtroom and said that I tithed his money and prayed in tongues all the time. The judge said, "Well, she must not pray in tongues all the time. You got five children." He said, "Well, she tithes my money, and she prays in tongues all the time," and he divorced me. It's on the paperwork because I prayed in tongues and tithed his money; my husband left me in a city where I didn't know people with five children. Well, this is documented history, \$12.37 in the bank and five children. He took all the money out of the bank, and that's all he left and left me with five children in a strange city. It never dawned on me to do anything else but ask God what I was supposed to do.

Charity Grace shared regarding another family member's comment, "Whoever laid hands on you is going to hell, and they didn't understand the Bible, and they are going to hell right along with you." Molly shared a close relative's attitude regarding her leadership role, "He is jealous of my position in my church and wants to manage me like a business venture."

One of the most disappointing support factors was the indication that female competitiveness was still prevalent in contemporary experiences, with 75% (nine) participants.

Dee expounded, "And for me, I'm not going to compete with anyone. I want us all to win. I don't feel that it's competition; I feel that it's a coalition." As Dee called it, women should embrace coalition instead of competition as we are stronger together than apart. Ngunjiri et al. (2012) shed light on this harsh treatment that women preachers faced – that the resistance sometimes comes from individuals one would expect to have support and be excited about seeing a woman in the pulpit. This was important because most Black churches in the South reported membership of 70-90% women (Homan & Burdette, 2021; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). Candace explained, "Females that I've experienced in Virginia are cliquish." Charity Grace posed:

Mostly if you don't preach like they preach, you're not as anointed. You're not as gifted. If you wear lipstick, I've been in many cultures where, because of the way I dress and I wear lipstick, I know this is an audio recording, but I wear lipstick and eyelashes and colored hair. And don't misunderstand me. I'm always dressed in good taste, and I'm not a frivolous woman, but I do dress, and I'm not an ugly woman. That if you look a certain way that's unbecoming, then you can really bring the house down. But if you look a different way, you ... How come we can't glorify Jesus with everything we do? And we preach the word, but we haven't allowed the word to make us free. Blatant. And it stems from slavery.

Regarding one preaching engagement when she drank out the pastor's cup, Charity Grace loudly exclaimed:

And these were African American women who served the water and who talked about who did I think I was sitting there taking a sip of water out of the glass that was sitting right next to me that they had told me was mine to drink out of. And the racism and the

genderism that you find from the guys are subtle...from our own female African Americans, it's blatant, and it's harsh.

Diane shared that before being called, she, too, did not believe in women preachers and pastors. She shared, "It's just so hard when you have so many people against you, even some of the women are the same. It's not only the men. Some of them are the same." Dr. Gracious chimed in:

But for women, I think because it is difficult, there are times when there's too much competition among females when we should be working more together. We work through it, but you can sense that that may occur from time to time.

Harmony likened it to being a part of a sorority. She exclaimed:

Kind of this, almost a silent kind of hazing, if you will. You have got to pay your dues because I had to pay mine. That kind of thing. Women play those games too. I would say that sometimes with women in ministry, it's also that having to prove yourself in a sense.

Painfully Otelia shared that when her pastor left:

Female clergy [in her conference] they didn't reach out to me. They didn't call me. There were a couple that called me, asked me did I need anything, and even still to this day, they still check on me, but most of them don't and didn't.

Positively Precious shared, "90% of the time, I have good cooperation from the females. But people from different denominations that are not used to having females in leadership like this, like we do." Confirming Diane's account, Precious recalled earlier, "So you have some Baptist females that discriminate against women in ministry." Sherry remembered two occasions where jealousy from other women arose. She shared:

At bishop's church (her current bishop) ... because I came up fast in the ranks, I guess I came up a little faster than most of them. But I had some training in ministry, and I just knew how to obey...And there was some jealousy because of the position.

The other account she shared, "She was jealous and it hurt my feelings because I thought because she and I were the only females we could work together." In every account shared, the women expressed that the lack of support or bias suffered eventually resulted in a firmer resolve, stronger faith in God, and staying the course, yet the more support, the better.

Responses to Intersectionality

This theme described the varied responses to the intersectionality the participants experienced while thriving in efficacious ministry. In contemporary church leadership, women were less bound to the limitations of patriarchal leadership and sought opportunities that allowed the use of their gifts. Much like Ida Robinson and Reverend Essie McIntyre, there was a freedom to create their own organizations, plant churches, found nonprofit organizations, and participate in more creative applications of ministry to obey the call on their lives. All participants were fully aware and felt the impact of the prejudices, opposition, lack of support, derogatory attitudes, and beliefs about their church leadership and pastoral roles, yet they chose to persevere and not cave to the obstacles. In being an active part of the change in the church leadership paradigm, these 12 participants shared that there were a plethora of emotions and feelings, often questioning their commitment and purpose, ensuring they were where God wanted them to be. This often led to finding the best fit for fulfilling the call on their life. This theme encompassed three sub-themes regarding their responses to intersectionality, which are discussed below: emotions and feelings, questioning self, and best fit seeking (circumventing).

Emotions and Feelings. With their experiences associated with intersectionality, all 12 participants reported a range of emotions and feelings as a part of their response to their encounters while operating in their ministerial calling. It was well documented that pastoring was a high-demand service occupation. Cattich (2012) explained that feeling overwhelmed was commonplace because pastors were expected to function effectively at high levels in the competing roles of pastoring, church management, and community support functions. The duties and expectations of the position alone triggered many emotions. Adding the layer of intersectionality intensified the range of emotional responses. Recalling some of their experiences invoked an emotional response as if reliving the experience all over again. There were tears, moments of silence, regrouping breaks, and two restarts. And much like their determination to face the adversities in their pastoral roles, they forged on to ensure their voices were heard in hopes of bringing increased awareness to this phenomenon. Table 3 presents those concomitant emotions and feelings and each participant reported.

Table 3*Emotions and Feelings of Participants*

Participant	Discouraged/ Disheartened	Empowered	Hurt	Isolated/ Lonely/ Rejected	Opposed/ Usurped	Sad/ Depressed	Stressed/ Overwhelmed
Diane		x	x			x	x
Molly	x	x		x	x	x	
Otelia		x	x	x	x		x
Joyful	x	x					x
Rev. Patient		x					x
Dr. Gracious	x	x			x		x
Sherry	x	x				x	
Precious		x	x	x	x		
Charity Grace		x		x	x	x	
Candace		x	x	x	x	x	
Dee		x		x			x
Harmony		x		x			x

Molly and Sherry recounted feeling disheartened or discouraged especially when operating in their prophetic gifting. Molly was told not to teach or minister to people, often told "prophecy was a strange doctrine." She said, "Because they don't want the people to grow out of their doctrine, whereas we know the word of God is for everyone. They [pastors] don't want me to go beyond what they know." All participants shared how they were empowered to continue, and those accounts were shared in the How I Thrive section. Diane, Candace, Otelia, and Precious experienced deep hurt. Diane remembered one of her first conventions as a minister,

and the men ignored the women. She said quietly, "They [male leaders] just act like we're [women leaders] not even a part of them. And that, that hurts sometimes."

In regard to loneliness, seven participants discussed their feelings of loneliness or being isolated or rejected. Research supports that women face rejection and exclusion while serving in male-dominated leadership roles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Proeschold-Bell, 2020; Smarr et al., 2018). Most participants responded based on their role as a pastor, the lack of support or opposition, and how that impacted the ministry and their personal life.

Charity Grace, who scored a one (very low) in loneliness on the PERMA scale, proffered:

It really is [a lonely walk]. And let me tell you what we're called to do. I've never seen any of us grow in a crowd. You don't grow in a crowd. So isolation. You just have to get used to being comfortable with God, comfortable with your family. Otherwise, we could live a really lonely life. And sometimes your family's the one you got to let go of and oh, that's a whole other section for a whole other degree.

Dr. Gracious, who scored low in loneliness on the PERMA scale offered this advice:

There should be a place where you can go, and it might be a therapist, maybe it's a colleague, a prayer partner. But you have to find someone that you can decompress with, with those emotional reactions, those responses. You can't just bury it in because it will creep up somewhere else eventually.

Candace, who scored an eight (high) in loneliness on the PERMA scale, shared she is working to create relationships with other women in ministry. She stated, "Close relationships, with my family relationships, are strained right now." Dee, who scored a five (average) in loneliness on the PERMA scale, shared:

Loneliness, it's a lonely walk. When you become a pastor, it's a lonely walk. Even though you're surrounded by people all the time, that within yourself, you are still so very lonely because there's just this connection that you have to have with God that you cannot disconnect from just to enjoy a worldly moment with a person. So it's very, very lonely just the role of a pastor itself.

Harmony, who scored a two (low) in loneliness on the PERMA scale, described pastoring, "It has its own occupational hazards like stress, loneliness, sometimes burnout." Otelia, who scored an eight (high) in loneliness on the PERMA scale, shared:

I'm in this self-created isolation. Because trust me, I know it's self-created. But my self-created isolation protects me... And sitting here right now talking, I realize how isolated... And maybe I've isolated myself, I'm not sure, but it feels a little isolating. Wow, in the beginning, I felt... I don't know, I felt like I had stepped out onto an island by myself. And sometimes, I still feel like that.

Precious, who scored a two (low) in loneliness on the PERMA scale, shared:

So, there are times when you just have you and Jesus, okay? But the rejection was the worst thing that I feared. But to me, I didn't have a choice. And to me, I love God more. I was already used to having to do things alone...I didn't have that friend a lot of times. Now, there were times that you could call your friend and like, "Oh, okay, you want to go out to eat?" Or something like that. But the majority of the time, I didn't have that. So I would have to either go alone, and I did a lot of things alone or travel alone...you must be dedicated. And everybody don't have that same conviction. They don't have that same dedication. So when people are not willing to really be in ministry and be accountable, they're not going to want to make that commitment.

Comparably, Candace, Charity Grace, Dr. Gracious, Molly, Otelia, and Precious shared a consensus of feeling opposed or usurped. Charity Grace shared a good synopsis of the dilemma:

You really have to be careful. And I learned this the hard way. I speak to everybody the same but when men have that man issue and then when women have that, "Who do you think you are?" You can't correct certain things. And I will say this, that this does not happen with males. When you're a female leader, everybody wants to be your friend. Everybody wants to call you and talk personal things. And one of the things I established very early on, and it was by the Holy Ghost, and I even say it in New Members [class], and even though I don't teach New Members [class] now, it is still said, I'm not your friend. I am your pastor. I'll never be your master, but I am not your friend. Your friend can't cover you... can't see into your life the way I'm called to see into your life... can't give you the type of structure and guidance that I'm called to give you. I'm not your girlfriend. But in ministry, when people join churches with men, they don't join because I'm going to be your friend and we going to go play golf every Tuesday morning. Even though we might go play golf every Tuesday morning. They understand there's still a wall there and let's not cross that line. Whereas if I want to go play golf on Tuesday mornings, then they're going to cross the line. And so we have to be very, very careful that we walk by faith and not by sight is the best way I know to say it.

Similarly, Candace, Charity Grace, Diane, and Molly had mutual feelings of being sad or depressed, and it had to do with the harsh treatment and prejudice experienced regarding ministry. Candace was undermined by her pastor, she was expecting to affirm and guide her, and he eventually aborted her ordination process. Candace responded to the situation:

I was ostracized from the church. After graduation, I went into a very deep depression... that dark place lasted for about four months. I had to admit that I needed help because I was in a place that I couldn't get myself out of. I humbled myself and went to one of my professors and told her what had happened. She recommended that I find a therapist.

That therapist helped her create self-care strategies to alleviate the depression and guided her to where she was thriving in ministry, helping women who had experienced similar experiences.

Similarly, Charity Grace, Diane, and Molly reflected on people's actions. Molly shared best:

Deception and dishonesty in people... I put friendship very high in my life, and sometimes the reactions and things that I have been touched with, they actually surprised me sometimes, and that makes me feel sad. In ministry, I think it takes wisdom to know how to heal people and how to deal with people, and that makes me sad sometimes when that is misconstrued or not handled properly.

Lastly, stress or feeling overwhelmed was a common experience shared by Dee, Diane, Dr. Gracious, Harmony, Joyful, Otelia, and Rev. Patient. The negative impacts associated with the demanding vocation alone were stress-inducing, and Black clergywomen experiencing prejudice, bias, and occupational stress faced higher health issues (Proeschold-Bell, 2020). The health implications were discussed in the work-life balance and self-care sections. Otelia, Dee, and Harmony shared how the weight of stress ended with hospitalization, managed care, and new self-care protocols to maintain their health. Harmony, Dee, and Otelia had very similar accounts that were shared in the self-care requirements section. Yet, Dr. Gracious summarized it this way:

I do find as a woman is that we end up having more commitments than men do. We end up having responsibilities for family. Just like today, for me, running a little late. ...from caregiver to parenting to continuing to work, being bi-vocational, where many men may

not have that burden because their wives continue to work. It just seems to me that it's a combination of those things that create the heightened stress and exhaustion, particularly if in ministry there is little or no compensation. In addition to that, there's no acknowledgment of the commitment that's being made.

Questioning Self. This sub-theme discussed how the participants questioned their initial call due to conservative beliefs and traditional values regarding this male-dominated role and their continuing to pastor. Research showed that many pastors, early in their calling, left ministry altogether due to the adversity experienced (Burns et al., 2013; Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Hendron et al., 2011; Meek et al., 2003; Muse et al., 2016; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013; Scott & Lovell, 2015; Visker et al., 2016). Here were the stories of the participants' internal struggles throughout their ministry years. Starting with Charity Grace, who expressed she was “raised with the idea that women didn't pastor. I would hear my grandmother's voice saying when I grew up, I would preach the gospel, but I had no point of reference for this.” She then explained how she finally accepted the call, so she believed she would “have to go overseas and be a missionary.” In her own words, “It was many years later...I was working in a mainline church here in Texas when I heard those words again.” It was through her pastor at that mainline church that she started pastoral classes to prepare for ministry.

Similarly, Dee shared:

One of the biggest barriers that I have faced, and probably has been internal more than external, of coming to the realization that people really do feel that women should not preach, women should not be leaders, women should be home raising the kids. You accept that in the world, but when that spills over to the church, it can be, therapeutically painful because it's always a teaching moment that will encourage me to keep pressing, keep

moving. I just feel like I just have to maintain and continue to operate in the level of integrity, the anointing that God has placed upon my life, that I'm able to walk in that grace and to make sure that I walk in the faith and not deterred by anybody's opinion and what people think that I have an assignment and I am laser focused on accomplishing that assignment.

Comparably, Diane told God, when she heard the call, "God didn't call a woman to preach. I'm a woman, you know? That's for a man to do. That was my first thought, and I had to wrestle with it." After several tragic losses of her children and constant wrestling, she accepted the call, only to be rejected. She even gave this reasoning for the rejection:

I guess it's because of what we've been taught for so many years. I had that same problem at one time until the Lord called me. But the more I read and the more I understand the Bible, people have gotten it so wrong.

Similarly, in her interview, Dr. Gracious shared, "I had an internal resistance at first to accepting my call and ran from it." And now, after 23 years, she disclosed:

For me, there have been times I've just wondered, is it worth it? But then I meet someone or God brings someone into my path and I know, okay, yes, I need to be still. It definitely is one of those situations where when it continues to occur that I just wonder, really, is this where I'm supposed to be? You question your calling after a while, it continues to happen.

Harmony shared similar sentiments:

Being okay with me has helped me to overcome the bias and prejudice. Yeah, I think that it was internal because, well, I'll go back to when I was 19 years old and I first told my pastor that I grew up under in the Baptist church that I felt a call to ministry to preach, and he kind of looked at me and never said anything. So I left that feeling like well maybe I missed God.

So I was not confident and sure for a while. When I finally did accept the call on my life of ministry and preaching, I did compare myself to other people, can I do this? I'm not able. So I dealt with some feelings of insecurity and not feeling like I could do the job. My issue was not so much accepting that God was calling me, it was accepting and believing enough in myself to know that I could do it.

Precious provided the spin of doubting herself because of others' opinions and derogatory statements and then counting the cost of increased loneliness and rejection. She expressed:

So when the elevation came to be licensed and ordained, I had already got to the place like, I'm going to go all the way with this. So the only resistance I felt was within myself to say, "Do you want any more rejection than you are already experiencing, really?"

Likewise, Rev. Patient explained, "Even in preparing myself, and going to seminary to prepare, it was stressful, discouraging, and always that weakness, doubting your calling, and the harshness, but I would push further."

Best Fit Seeking (Circumventing). Nine participants had an experience with finding the best fit for their gifting and call without fearing retribution and negative reactions. Historically, this circumventing took place with pioneers like Ida Robinson and Rev. McIntyre; however, Robinson endured significant opposition, and death threats were made constantly regarding Reverend McIntyre starting her own church in Augusta, Georgia (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Dubose, 2018; Fauset, 1970; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). Today, it was very common for women to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the Lord's plan and direction for life and make the necessary changes without serious repercussions as experienced historically.

Examples were abounding. Significantly, leaving behind mainline opposition and rejection, Candace, Charity Grace, and Dee left the mainline denominations and planted non-

denominational churches. Sherry created a church-without-walls, technology-based 501(c)(3) written as such that she was able actually to oversee churches. Joyful resigned from her staff minister position to become an evangelist and nonprofit ministry founder, which allowed her time to support her local church and complete her doctoral degree. Joyful said:

My husband and I had some really good heart to hearts...I decided. I am not designed to be behind the same pulpit every single week. And so I resigned from that ministry position... just took a step of faith, and stepped out into the role of an evangelist on my own. And it's been really exciting.

Also, when faced with not being accepted, Joyful continued, "I definitely focus on the places where I can go. And, I focus on the places where I would be welcomed and where my ministry would be accepted." This was a significant change as women in the past often became itinerant preachers to be heard; however, Joyful had a church staff position but was led to itinerant preaching. The key was having the choice of what was the best use of her gifts. Similarly, Diane left the church that rejected her calling and moved to another church until she and her husband planted their own church. She proudly shared, "I finally left that church, and I went to a church that would accept me." Similarly, Harmony left her Baptist church, where her minister did not affirm her call. She relocated and soon met her husband; eventually, they began their own non-denominational church. Molly, in always seeking the will of God for the best fit, shared:

I might not have been under attack quite as severely as some other people. But I have worked in 31 churches with pastors. But I noticed my gifts were usually kind of stunted, and they didn't want me to go too far. And I don't know how to do that, because I feel like the Word of God is true so I needed to speak the truth and deal with things, in a way that

I know that when I'm saying to people that the Word of God backs it and I know the Spirit is leading me in a direction.

She was at her current position for 10 years at the time of the interview, and aired, "It is good and the relationships and connections are good there; we support and encourage each other." Otelia, while not being utilized at her home church, started ministering at another church, and was praying about her transition in ministry with her new husband. Dr. Gracious, Precious, and Rev. Patient, while still serving in their denominations, have other ministries and ventures.

Ngunjiri et al. (2012) documented how many Black clergywomen just a decade ago would operate in the confines of the church with quiet resistance with a few breaking the bonds of the church to exercise the calling. While further research would be needed, the narratives of these participants show a reversal in that stance. Three participants chose to stay and fulfill their purpose despite the opposition and resistance they sometimes faced, while 75% have broken out of the confines of the mainline church to fulfill their call.

Strong Black Woman (SBW)

This theme described the impact of the SBW motif on the lives, calling, and well-being of female pastors/clergywomen. One of the study's fundamental premises was that some participants embraced this archetype, often unaware of the formalized cultural mandate. Affirmingly, all 12 participants identified as strong Black women, and whether conscious of the cognitive and behavioral construct, they embraced the tenets of the SBW motif. The belief was that Black clergywomen embraced the tenets of the SBW schema in their efforts to lead, pastor, and fulfill the calling of God in the face of subjugation and their overcoming or shattering the stained-glass ceiling that exist in church leadership (Adams, 2007; Nelson et al., 2016; Sullins, 2000). Measuring their adherence to the SBW attributes and hearing their varied experiences

afforded a deeper understanding of how critical embracing the characteristics described in the overcomer motif of the SBW schema impacted the female clergywomen. Table 4 displays the scores from the MSBWS scale for each participant.

Table 4

Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scores

Participant	Strength/ Resilience	Independence/ Self-Reliance	Caretaking/ Caregiving/ Nurturing	Stoicism (Emotion Suppression)	Faith	Femininity
Diane	9.25	3.60	8.00	6.83	10.29	10.00
Molly	9.50	7.20	10.50	2.67	11.00	10.17
Otelia	9.00	7.40	10.00	9.17	9.71	6.33
Joyful	8.00	8.40	8.75	9.67	9.86	6.50
Rev. Patient	8.50	3.00	3.25	2.33	9.57	10.50
Dr. Gracious	9.50	6.60	6.60	6.83	9.86	2.00
Sherry	9.75	1.00	5.00	6.00	9.86	3.83
Precious	11.00	3.00	2.50	1.00	10.29	11.00
Charity Grace	11.00	1.00	6.75	1.00	10.29	6.83
Candace	9.00	7.00	9.00	5.40	9.86	8.50
Dee	10.50	5.20	6.75	2.17	9.57	4.33
Harmony	8.75	3.60	1.00	2.00	7.29	2.00

It was essential to review each attribute of the SBW motif individually and their contribution to Black women who adopted the cultural mandate, knowingly or subconsciously, specifically the Black clergywomen in the study (Abrams et al., 2018; Harris, 2001). Femininity was not a significant factor, although Charity Grace, Dee, and Sherry discussed embracing their femininity; however, it was not considered a key factor of being a strong Black woman. Notably, the participants' responses conveyed that the cognitive and behavioral construct, specifically

embracing the other SBW characteristics. This served as a positive coping mechanism to decrease the stress or the negative emotions of stress associated with their high-demand occupation and the accompanying intersectionality. This theme included four sub-themes, which were discussed below: strength and resilience, self-reliance and faith, caregiving boundaries, and emotion suppression revised.

Strength and Resilience. Strength and resilience overlapped in the SBW construct (Romero, 2000; Walker-Barnes, 2009). Walker-Barnes (2009) expressed that Black women, since slavery, were believed to possess an extraordinary ability to accomplish and endure extreme levels of work and stress and emotional resilience amidst suffering (Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Walker-Barnes, 2009). The legacy of strength facilitated the preservation and enhancement of the resilience of Black women despite racial and gender bias, oppression, prejudice, and discrimination (Collins, 2004; Nelson et al., 2016). Like Black women in slavery, the clergy women's resilience could be considered a coping style or the cognitive and behavioral change that occurred while managing the internal and external stressors handling difficult situations or solving problems in their lives and ministry (Billings & Moos, 1981). According to earlier research, resilience made people better capable of handling stress and adversity while also shielding them against mental health issues (Xu & Yang, 2023). All 12 participants scored in the high and very high ranges of strength and resilience. During the interviews, the participants concurred with the expectation of being strong and able to endure opposition and struggle without complaint, whether dealing with life situations or ministry (Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Walker-Barnes, 2009). Dr. Gracious explained this strength and resilience concept as a way to cope with solving problems and stressful situations. She noted:

It's almost like a legacy. We pass it down from one generation to another. We just have to be very mindful to place realistic expectations out there...yet, survival. That's exactly right. And it's the same in the church as well. Your people are struggling; some people don't know how they're going to pay the funeral bill. And some people don't know how they're going to pay their rent. You only got a handful of members, and the mortgage is due, you just get it done. You pray, you reach out, you extend your own self, come from your own resources, but somehow you get it done...survival. Get it done...You have to get it done.

Similarly, Dee shared:

Having that strength and resilience, it gives me the testimony of looking back and saying, "Without that strength, without that resilience, I could have fainted it." I could have passed out and not made it.

Candace described all the rejection and hurt as making her the strong person she is today, she expressed, "It also helped me toughen, to get an even thicker layer of tough skin." Harmony described it as follows:

It's when you got to pick up and start over again or when you have to make it happen because the ministry has to go on. Yeah, you go somewhere in your inner self, and you pull up that strength that you need to make it through that.

Molly shared, "I think being resilient is highly important because, otherwise, we wouldn't be able to continue going on and doing whatever we have to do... We have to... have to motivate ourselves to go on and have courage." Joyful summed it up:

I think strong is something God wants us to be. I don't believe he wants us to be weak. I believe resilience is what God wants us to be... because quitting is not an option, giving

up is not an option. Sleeping all day is not an option. There is work to be done in the kingdom of God. And by golly, I'm privileged to do it, so I should get up and do it no matter how I feel.

Importantly, while many women saw the possibility of a negative impact for being strong and resilient, the positive benefits outweighed the adverse impact. Without this strength and resilience duo, these clergywomen would not be able to cope, endure, and persevere in these pastoral roles with all they faced, personally and role-specific, with the added opposition and resistance. Molly explained it best:

I think it affects your life positively because we realize positively that we must go on and do what we have to do. In my life, I think being a strong woman influences me totally... it takes strength to be able to make decisions and be able to help others.

Sherry gave the culminating point of all the women in the contemporary perspective, "I don't believe that has impacted me negatively. I really believe that in this time that you better be strong. If you're going to lead some people, you better be strong."

Self-Reliance and Faith. The MSBWS added faith and femininity items to the original tenets from research, including strength, resilience, self-reliance, nurturing, and emotion suppression (Chamberlin, 2019; Romero, 2000; Walker-Barnes, 2009; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). The self-reliance scores showed a 50/50 split, six participants scored above average, and the others scored low and very low. Looking at the scores for self-reliance alone, the prevailing view of the participants appeared inconclusive. After reviewing the data and interview responses several times, it was realized that all 12 participants, in some variation, explained that while they were independent, they were more reliant on their faith in God than themselves to get through tough situations in life and ministry. All participants scored high or very high in the faith

category. The items in the faith section included, "I pray and ask God for guidance, I believe God will help me through anything, and my faith will get me through anything." For these questions, female pastors and church leaders scored higher on faith than the items in self-reliance. The self-reliance questions included, "I can only depend on myself, I can handle things myself, and I have to make things happen for myself." While further study could provide more support, several participants added value in understanding this premise. Diane replied:

When I know the Lord is telling me what to do, ain't no sense in anybody trying. I'm not swaying, not one way or the other. The Lord done put it and placed it in my heart to do it, and I don't need nobody saying nothing to me. He has allowed me to overcome that through being who I am in Him.

Similarly, Candace, when asked, smiled and exclaimed, "Your faith in God keeps you going and looking for the door to get through!" Molly, too stated emphatically:

I do believe that the Lord might have given me somewhat of a difficult role or office, but He knew that I would not give up on it and I would try my best to do what He'd had me to do. And be determined that it's a gift to help people; I'm going to use it for that. So I had to just keep going and realize that it was not me. It's Christ in me, and that's been a blessing to me and helped me to overcome.

Caregiving Boundaries. Another key tenet of SBW was nurturing and caregiving to the point of self-denial when caring for others. Importantly, 75% (nine participants) scored above average, with seven scoring high or very high. Their interview statements supported that as pastors, they felt the need to care for their families and congregations, and as Precious stated, "I like the caring and the nurturing. That's just who God made me to be." Molly, too enjoyed the

nurturing aspect, "I have a nurturing disposition, I think, and it has been a blessing to be able to do that, to help people." Charity Grace said:

You have to nurture. You have to counsel. You have to stand on what you believe. In the same way, you counsel the people, you have to counsel your own family and stay there with them and walk them through it.

While many of the participants embraced the caregiving roles, there needs to be a balance, which was discussed further in work-life balance. Dr. Gracious provided insight:

One of the things about ministry is that you really cannot, even though you try to put the boundaries in place as far as when you're accessible and things like that. Sometimes, those boundaries have to be broken, and it impacts your family, but at the same time, when your family needs you, well, that impacts the ministry. Trying to keep that balance is really a challenge, but it's something you have to do. You have to figure it out.

Charity Grace, one of the older participants, imparted wisdom:

In the beginning, and that's evolved so much. In the beginning, I used to walk you through every step. I mean every step. You didn't have to take a step without me being right there with a Word from the Lord, a scripture or whatever. Then I realized, to step back, teach them the Word. Teach them how to apply the Word. Let them see how the Word works for them.

Emotion Suppression Revised. Stoicism or emotion was crucial during slavery for survival, avoiding violence and abuse (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Donovan & West, 2015; Nelson et al., 2016). Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2009) raised concerns that the reality of appearing strong, resilient, and self-reliant negatively was a mask that limited the expression of emotions and diminished help-seeking (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Romero, 2000; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Watson-Singleton, 2017; West et al., 2016 Witherspoon & Speight, 2004; Woods-

Giscombé, 2010). One of the premises of handling male pastors/church leaders that subjugated women clergy, often criticizing them as emotional and weak, made it vital to understand the necessity to exercise emotional containment as a coping mechanism when ministering to the congregation's needs and leading through crisis and adversity to avoid the appearance of weakness or an inability to contain emotions (Smarr et al., 2018). All 12 participants agreed that in certain crises and difficult situations, it was important not to show emotion, especially in bereavement and difficult leadership positions. Sherry shared regarding difficult ministry situations:

Because sheep will scatter. In order to lead people, you can't show that you're afraid or you're indecisive. If you don't know, you just say, okay, let me pray. I'm not sure what, but let me pray. You come back to your people and lead them; you have to lead them.

Similarly, Rev. Patient, when talking about crisis, imparted:

Because of your training and prayerful understanding with God that when you go through certain crises you know how to deal with them. It's just that inner spirit that gives you this ability that you can get over the weakness when you feel that you can't, and the strength just comes.

Joyful when sharing about the funeral of an infant she eulogized. She shared:

When we leave and when we're by ourselves with the Lord or with our family, that's when we allow ourselves to express some of that emotion when we're not going to rub off on them or, you know, drag them deeper into the grief that they're already dealing with.

Truly from the heart of pastors, there were times when containment of emotion was necessary. Still, there was equally the need for authenticity and transparency and to allow their congregations and their family to know they were human. According to earlier studies, many

Black women, especially those who supported the SBW Schema, found it difficult to express their emotions (Abrams et al., 2018). Yet, the experiences of all participants did not substantiate that research; their experiences refuted that premise. Dee, who strongly embraced the SBW schema, said, "It is okay not to be okay." She shared that recently her sibling passed, and her response was:

My only sibling passed away in August. But a couple of Sundays after the funeral, I stood in the pulpit, and boohoo cried for probably 10 minutes. Because that was my humanity that was saying that I just cannot go on as life as usual. I have to allow myself to process this pain. I don't feel that there is ever an appearance of weakness as it relates to loss. I don't think there can be.

The concern for being seen as weak or vulnerable had some validity as some of them discussed questioning their call and knowing self, but Molly summed it up best regarding ministry:

I don't know that you should always suppress your emotions. I think being truthfully yourself keeps you from appearing weak because it's all right to cry if there's a need to cry and you feel it, because sometimes that helps other people to see that you're sensitive to that situation. And, it's not always, viewed as weakness, I don't think. I think it's a deeper show of concern. You can feel what they feel. That's what I'm saying. So I don't think that it has any bearing as far as not being strong.

Well-Being

This theme explored the impacts of intersectionality, the SBW schema, and serving in a demanding service occupation. Studying the well-being components was important because many women in pastoral and church leadership roles undergo intersectionality (Ngunjiri et al.,

2012). The added pressure and difficulty in performing their ministerial roles more effectively were often impacted (Smarr et al., 2018). With the existing negative impacts associated with the vocation alone, Black clergywomen experiencing prejudice and bias coupled with occupational stress potentially face higher levels of health issues (Proeschold-Bell, 2020). Positively, the 12 participants concurred with earlier studies that adopting the SBW had a beneficial effect on their mental health as a whole and that the SBW persona inspired and motivated them to persevere and succeed (Watson & Hunter, 2016; West et al., 2016). To create a detailed description of the impacts on the participants' well-being, the work-life balance in relationship to role strain and self-denial was studied. This theme included three sub-themes, which were discussed below: work-life balance, self-denial, and self-care requirements and types.

Work-Life Balance. From the participants, pastoral roles and responsibilities, family and personal responsibilities often blended together throughout the week, and pastors often failed to distinguish between when they were fulfilling pastoral duties (Burns et al., 2013; Dunbar et al., 2020; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2013). Candace described pastoring as "challenging because I did not have a roadmap to do this." Precious was honest that pastoring required a lot of time, effort and often required more than expected. She shared:

The call, it costs you a lot. It really does. If anybody says anything other than that, to me, they're not being honest. Really, they're not being honest... You get tired. You get tired of answering the phone, answering questions; you get tired of having to be available all the time. I love ministry, and I'm always available for my flock. We know that, that is not the case because pastoring is not the only thing that I do. However, I minister all the time. Because I deal with mental health clients, and that's a ministry too. So, just to say, from the church standpoint, it's a lot of responsibilities, so you are not ready for that every day.

All the time that you need, it takes a lot from you, and yes, God will give you the strength to do what you need to do. Some people can really get mad, like, "Look, I need a break. I don't want to hear nothing else," but we cannot live like that, be in leadership, and be in the pastoral ministry. We learn as we follow on with the Lord, and as we took these vows to do whatever the Lord has called us to do, we had to learn that you just don't have the luxury to do whatever you want to do. In other words, to me, you just can't do your own thing. You have to die daily so that others may live. So, you have to learn that, you have to preach that, you have to live that.

All 12 participants spoke about the expectations of ministry and how the lines were often blurred, family needs were often unmet, and personal needs were usually last and often neglected. As Dr. Gracious posited, women tend to have more responsibilities for family needs. She explained:

From caregiver to parenting to continuing to work, being bi-vocational, where many men may not have that burden because their wives continue to work. It just seems to me that it's a combination of those things that create the heightened stress and exhaustion, particularly if in ministry.

She described that this continuous pace of serving many roles could be difficult to balance, resulting in burnout. She stated, "After a while, you get burned out. You get tired, and you get weary, you feel undervalued, you feel it's being taken advantage of."

Self-Denial. All 12 participants, in varying degrees, told their self-denial reality. In nurturing and meeting the needs of their congregations and others, they often neglected their families and forewent self-care, supporting the premise that Protestant clergy rank among the highest overall work-related stress (Milstein et al., 2020; Weaver et al., 2002). Clear boundaries

needed to be established to avoid self-denial, yet these clergywomen often had difficulty maintaining the boundaries (Swenson, 2004). The stories were testimonies to these women's commitment to ministry and family and not always caring for themselves. Diane admitted that even in 2022, with balancing church, school, family, and community, there are days she forgot to eat. She laughed and giggled when sharing about the demand:

Sometimes my hair sticks straight up on top of my head. If I have to do something for the church, I have to do some work and get the lessons done; I'll go without eating all day. I don't eat until I finish doing what I know I need to do.

Diane shared solemnly, "Since I've been in the ministry, it has impacted my health because of the stress; I've ended up with blood pressure problems." Years of serving at this pace have led to her needing managed health care for blood pressure. The more intense accounts of interrole conflict were shocking and supported the need for work-life balance and self-care. Molly shared how she had suffered a stroke (unaware of the severity of the situation) and had them roll her in a wheelchair to preach a service before seeking medical attention. Molly recalled:

I used to do [deny my needs] more than I do now because I realized that it's very important for me to take care of myself. Today, I was in prayer, and that was something the Lord spoke to me about, not always putting everybody's situation before mine. So I'm learning to do that more, to consider myself some.

Like Molly, Dee, Harmony, and Otelia had to encounter hospitalization before making critical changes in routine. Harmony shared:

When I was in seminary, I was overwhelmed and burned out, burning the candle at both ends. Our church was rapidly growing. We ended up having five worship services on a

Sunday. We were on television ministry, just doing ministry at a hundred miles a minute. And before I knew it, I was burned out, and I got physically sick, started having issues with racing thoughts, and my hand was shaking. I lost a lot of weight and went to the doctor to discover that I had developed Graves' disease, a hypothyroid condition. And it was simply because I was stressed out and burned out and not taking care of myself.

Dee trying to meet all the obligations of ministry at one point in her life, had a dangerous strategy, and she had based her maladaptive behavior on scripture. She detailed her plan:

There was a season in my life that I was very, very anemic. I've had six blood transfusions. Looking at me, people, you wouldn't even know that. And I was so strategic on being in place, being in my position. Because the Word says that, "If you're faithful over a few things, I'll make you ruler over many." And I wanted to always be faithful over every assignment, large or small, that God would give me. I would literally leave church on Sunday, go to the emergency room, and my blood would be a 3.5. I'd be like almost dead, 4.5. Normal is 12. I would strategically go after church because I already knew that it would take them three or four days to give me three or four units of blood. And I would be out of the hospital on Saturday, and I'd be back in church on Sunday, and no one ever knew.

Dee went on to describe:

Sometimes, I don't want to be superwoman. Sometimes I want to just cry. I want to fall into my husband's arms. Sometimes I want to give up, to be honest with you. And it does add stress because you sometimes feel like you need to or it's necessary to live up to unreal expectations that other people set out.

Otelia, similarly, tried to bargain with doctors before having to make serious changes. She expressed:

And so I burned the candle at both ends, as my parents used to say. And many nights and many, many days up 24 hours, 48 hours doing whatever's necessary...I said, "Well, I'm just fine." And I ended up in the hospital because my blood pressure was way too high. And found out that my blood pressure had probably been that high for at least six to eight months. But my body had gotten used to my blood pressure being at that level. And the doctor had to tell me, "I don't know why you are not dead. Okay, understand this. Because where your blood pressure is, if people come in with this blood pressure, they normally are already almost completely out the door. And for you to have walked in here, it's nothing but a miracle."

Sherry coined the perfect phrase to describe these experiences; she called it "working while wounded." As she put the problem in perspective:

At some point, you going to lose it...you can minister, and you can work while wounded. But when that anointing lifts, you are going to be tore up from the floor up. And I couldn't afford to be like that.

During the culminating focus group, Charity Grace added, "We worked while wounded, but to the glory of God, we did not wound other people, those we were nurturing." This statement contradicted previous research saying this was impossible to do (Milstein et al., 2020).

Self-Care Requirements. The love for their flock and family and denying self were the cause for more than 50% of the participants needing managed care and significant changes to their work-life balance and self-care. These changes overlapped with setting caregiving boundaries. Maturity and the learned lessons from stress, burnout, and negative health

experiences led to many self-care requirements for all participants. Prior research suggested that from a calling and spiritual perspective, self-care started with accepting the responsibility for the life that God has given us, which included continuously identifying the threats to our health and well-being and responding to these threats by taking action (Samushonga, 2021). These actions were crucial for optimum health and well-being that honored God while reviving church leaders to help others more effectively (Samushonga, 2021). In alignment with that definition, two key requirements that facilitated work-life balancing and incorporating self-care in their routines were the reliance on scheduling and learning the power of "no." First, scheduling proved very effective for managing demands and allowing for family and self needs. Candace stated, "I am very disciplined... I'll say 85%. I am very disciplined with my time and after finding life balance. I leave work at the same time every day. On the weekends, I make sure that I make time for family." Harmony shared the importance of her schedule now, "So I live by that. Now that doesn't mean I don't make changes to it. But I started implementing the calendar, which helped me greatly. Google Calendar is my friend." As for ministry, she shared:

I had to learn how to set a schedule for days that I would do ministry, like appointments. I do appointments now on certain days, and I realize if you go to your medical doctor, you can't just walk up in the office, you can't call them today and get in tomorrow...you abide by their schedule. And not that I'm not available to my congregation, but I just cannot be available 24 hours, seven days a week. And I had to learn to put that on a realistic schedule that would allow me to be the best pastor and give the best pastoral care that I can give to them without killing me.

In like manner, Charity Grace said, "When I get off schedule, I mess up. So now I just I do have more or less a schedule." Diane lived by it, too, "I have to schedule myself around my

classes. It gets hectic sometimes, but I just take my time and kind of balance it out, do what I can. That's why I get up around 5:45-6:00." Dee had a very intentional, compartmentalized schedule from a project-by-project perspective. From her viewpoint:

If I have something to do next week, I don't think about that until it's time for me to do it.

If I have to make some preparation the day before I have to do it, it's on my schedule...

so that's how I balance.

Joyful claimed, "I definitely plan ahead. Every week, I have a good idea of what needs to be done next week, and I follow a pretty good schedule." Also, Molly had a project management view:

Certain times are designated for the different things that I have to do. To have a schedule, I'm naturally a kind of organized person, and I set up limits and times. I realize that my life doesn't consist of just one thing, so I must get everything done. So, therefore, I have to give time to different things. And I get things done and know when to stop and when to start. It's important to me to have a schedule.

Precious transparently shared:

God has spoken to me about doing a schedule, and I start, and then I feel like it's so much then I just stopped doing it. I'm learning, and it's a learning process. I do not have that mastered yet.

Otelia agreed, "I keep track of my life on paper for the most part. I still don't think I have a good balance." Rev. Patient uses a journal to keep her on time, and Sherry had an informal schedule and plan to start balancing her work.

In the area of requirements for defining boundaries, several of the participants, Candace, Dee, Dr. Gracious, Harmony, Molly, and Otelia, shared that through years of pastoring, learning

to say no was crucial when caregiving to thrive and persevere in ministry, and manage health family relationships. Regarding the power of no, Candace learned to say no, which was key to "learning not to become too emotionally involved." Dee shared, "In my philosophy, no is a complete sentence." Harmony provided points for her "no" strategy:

One, learning how to say no and being okay with saying no is necessary. Two, no is perfect... and when scheduling, because I do have to sometimes move this or move that or tell people, no, I'm sorry I can't do that or whatever. I started implementing the calendar, which helped me greatly. Three, not only that, learning how to say no and being okay with saying no.

Dr. Gracious explained, "Many times, those decisions to finally be able to say no to certain things in life is when that revelation comes that the 'no' is not a bad word." She continued, "Yeah, I have to stay on top of what I'm doing, and self-care and putting those boundaries in place is so important." Otelia, when having to manage work, life, ministry, family, and self to maintain balance and her health, stated, "I learned the word no."

Self-Care Types. Focusing on well-being and self-care was instrumental in maintaining, restoring, and supporting a healthy life (Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019). When asked to share the types of self-care the participants engaged in to alleviate stress and burnout, different types were provided. Table 5 represents the types of self-care emphasized.

Table 5*Self-Care Types*

Participant	Exercise	Grooming	Healthcare Managed Care/ Diet*	Hobbies	Meditation/ Spa/ Therapy	Rest/Sleep	Vacation
Diane	x		x	Read the Word		x	
Molly	x		x, x*	Read, writing		x	x
Otelia	x		x	Crochet, dance, sing, play piano	Meditative gaming		x
Joyful	x			Read, tv time		x	
Rev. Patient			x	Read, Black history, museums			x
Dr. Gracious			x	Café time	Morning meditation, journaling, spa		x
Sherry		x	x		Meditation – ocean, beach, Journaling	x	x
Precious		x	x*	Dine out	Masseuse, spa		x
Charity Grace		x	x	Cook, Netflix binge	Masseuse, spa		x
Candace	x		x*		Therapy	x	
Dee		x	x			x	
Harmony	x		x, x*			x	

Importantly, all 12 had key self-care strategies and activities they practiced regularly.

Candace focused on:

Exercise and trying to eat right and rest. In the work I do, I use my head, after years of doing this, I've learned after my busy season I would get a sinus infection. Now, I realize I need to rest and that rest is very important. Instead of burning myself out, pushing, pushing, pushing, when I get tired, I go to sleep.

Harmony and Joyful stressed the importance of exercise in their schedule as well. Joyful said, "If I can get it in four times a week would be good." Similarly, Harmony said:

I was neglecting my own physical health because I wasn't prioritizing my exercise and eating right and rest. So I had to go back and make sure that I was doing those things before I went to the office, before I had meetings, before I had to meet with parishioners or whatever. So now my exercise and workout time is sacred.

Regarding grooming, Charity Grace, laughed, "Grooming is not self-care it is a necessity... A massage is a necessity." Sherry too, in a jovial manner expressed the importance of grooming:

I make sure that I get my nails done. I like getting my nails done and I like getting my pedicures. And I love getting my lashes done. My lashes, I enjoy my lashes. I had my eyebrows tattooed in. And I tell my children, I said, "I love being your mother." I said, "I just don't want to look like I could be your mother."

Eleven of the participants practiced preventive health care, managed care and diet to maintain their health. Precious proudly stressed how she had lost 120 lbs. as a "healthier me" goal. As pastors and church leaders, it was exciting to hear about the hobbies, family activities, and events that added joy and pleasure to their very "full lives." In this regard of learning to enjoy life, Molly shared:

I never took time to do anything, entertaining, or to read a book, or do something, or go out with people and all that. Now, I have found that I am definitely more sociable, and that is important. That is a part of life.

Similarly, Precious talked about the process of being okay with enjoying life. She exclaimed that it bothered her to enjoy life and felt she was not allowed to do these things. She recounted in learning to value herself:

So when I felt that and I got that down in my spirit man, I can preach and go home on Monday and go to the masseuse... I'm serious. Then on Saturday night, I can go to dinner at [redact restaurant name] and rest and I'm still going to be okay. I'm still going to be saved, I'm still going to be a pastor, I'm going to be fine.

Another important type of self-care was meditation, spa, and therapy. Sherry shared the power in retreating to the ocean or beach; something she shared with her husband before he passed, and something she continued for self-care. She stated, "Every six months you should have some type of respite. I love the ocean, the beach, journaling, hearing God speak to you, shutting down with God, you and Jesus days." Just as importantly, more than 50% of the participants emphasized adequate amounts of sleep and rest for self-care and vacationing. Precious and Sherry discussed mini vacations, Rev. Patient highlighted daily activities with senior groups, Molly daily outings and shopping sprees, Charity Grace and Otelia's family time, and Dr. Gracious shared about her retreats. Dee summed it up best, all of the different types of self-care:

I believe in self-care. I don't believe that a pastor should wear yourself down to the point that you are burnt out and so exhausted that you cannot fulfill your assignment. Those are the things that I've implemented to make sure that I don't experience burnout.

PERMA

This theme explored the domains of PERMA and how these measurements related to how the participants prescribed meaning to their lives and ministry as part of their overall well-being. First, there was no single definition of well-being and no exhaustive list of domains for measuring well-being (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018; Seligman, 2011). Yet, the presence of positive emotions, negative emotion, satisfaction of life, meaning and fulfillment were usually involved when defining well-being (CDC, 2018; Seligman, 2011). According to the CDC (2018), people with high levels of positive emotions and functioning well from a psychological and social perspective were often described as having complete mental health or "flourishing." In this study, the choice was to utilize Seligman's flourishing concept and to measure well-being using the PERMA model that measured the five domains of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment with measures for negative emotion (affect), loneliness, overall happiness and overall health included (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011).

PERMA was one of the measures in the positive psychology field of scientific study designed to study the strengths and virtues that enable individuals, specifically for this study, the female clergywomen, to thrive (Seligman, 2011). The fundamental tenet of this philosophy was that individuals desired to live meaningful lives, bring out the best in themselves, and increase their experiences of work, love, and play, which was the core of positive psychology and the PERMA instrument (Seligman, 2011). As part of the screening process, each participant completed the 23 items for PERMA focused on the positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, which were the five pillars discussed in the flourishing concept (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). The scores for loneliness, negative affect, overall

happiness, and overall health were represented in each participant's description as they were not part of the five domains but measured for each individual (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). The scores with the range for that score from each participant in the five domains of PERMA are shared in Table 6. Their answers regarding the five domains of PERMA for the aspects of their ministry and personal life are represented in Table 7.

Table 6

*PERMA Measurement of Well-Being Scores**

Participant	Positive Emotion	Engagement	Relationships	Meaning	Accomplishment
Diane	7.33	7.67	6.00	8.67	8.00
Molly	8.00	9.33	8.33	10.00	9.00
Otelia	6.00	5.33	5.33	5.00	5.67
Joyful	5.00	6.33	5.67	8.67	6.33
Rev. Patient	8.67	6.33	10.00	9.00	8.00
Dr. Gracious	9.00	6.33	9.00	10.00	9.33
Sherry	9.00	8.33	9.33	9.33	8.67
Precious	9.00	8.67	7.00	9.67	8.33
Charity Grace	9.67	9.00	10.00	9.67	8.33
Candace	8.33	9.33	7.33	9.00	9.00
Dee	9.67	9.00	6.00	9.33	8.67
Harmony	9.33	7.67	9.67	9.67	8.67

*Loneliness, Negative Affect, Overall Happiness and Overall Health scores represented in each participant's bio.

Table 7*PERMA Participant Answers*

Participant	PERMA Ministry	PERMA Personal Life
Diane	P: helping others, serving the Lord E: meetings the needs of fellow man R: a lot of family support M: ministry the Lord blessed her with A: ability to reach people, seeing the fruit	P: helping others, visiting grandbabies E: family, “apple of her eye” R: the respect from her male instructors, love working with them M: her 11 children, 28 grandbabies, great-grandchildren A: organizing crisis/emergency support
Molly	P: trying to please the Lord; great joy E: being in the presence of the Lord, move of God R: good relationships, honest with one another M: being an intercessor, her prayer life A: seeing other comes to know the Lord	P: rest, time alone, reflecting on the Word E: writing her books, personal letters R: few but long-lasting and godly M: nurturing, giving encouragement A: her two published books, having touched the lives of others
Otelia	P: seeing ‘aha’ moments when something clicks for people she ministers to E: (skipped) R: three groups: 1) neglected and avoided 2) put out but don’t know what to do with me 3) embraced, know and see me M: her own curriculums, writings, etc. A: delivering a message, transparency	P: people seeing her spirit and smile E: (skipped) R: her marriage M: being a wife A: making through each day, one at a time, and being okay
Joyful	P: preaching, tasks for nonprofit E: nonprofit pro-Israel calling R: exceptionally supportive, cultivated M: mission trips, nonprofit focus A: donations to Israel via nonprofit	P: marriage of eight years, friendships E: marriage, work, purpose R: healthy marriage and family M: inspiring her nieces and nephews to be what God called them to be A: personal life and marriage
Rev. Patient	P: studying and learning more Word, dialogue E: passing wisdom to the generation coming along R: excellent and grateful to work with young needing experience M: sowing seeds, seeing growth A: seeing young boys and girls she taught take on church leadership roles	P: family is number one and friends E: traveling, working with different people/denominations, learning from others R: great relationships, treat enemies as friends M: God’s touch for individuals A: her life, commitment to God and the demand on her life

Participant	PERMA Ministry	PERMA Personal Life
Dr. Gracious	<p>P: supporting community, donations to schools, Salvation Army, touching lives</p> <p>E: community outreach, social justice model</p> <p>R: creating alliances and networks</p> <p>M: empowering community/outreach</p> <p>A: pastoring, seminary, academic achievements</p>	<p>P: family, giving, fellowship</p> <p>E: “AKA” connections, neighborhood-block connectedness</p> <p>R: strong relationships, both ministry and non-ministry friends</p> <p>M: being a part of the move of God</p> <p>A: encounters with God; he always turns out for ministry</p>
Sherry	<p>P: sharing revelations from God, love ministry</p> <p>E: recovery homes, “ministry”</p> <p>R: reciprocal love – pastor and people</p> <p>M: “ministry” – global platform</p> <p>A: seeing others come up in ministry; people she ministered now moving in their calling</p>	<p>P: Her marriage, God’s speaking</p> <p>E: time with the Lord, time alone with Lord now that she is a widow</p> <p>R: ministry focused, close friends</p> <p>M: being a daughter of the King</p> <p>A: seeing her grandbabies growing, especially growing in the Lord</p>
Precious	<p>P: seeing people’s lives change, dealing with stress and their situations</p> <p>E: being the face of God, keeping abreast of what other ministry does, research</p> <p>R: love her people, reciprocal respect</p> <p>M: inner healing ministry to women; dealing with hidden issues</p> <p>A: new ministries developing</p>	<p>P: seeing lives change especially her mental health clients</p> <p>E: local ministry; doing her part</p> <p>R: a people person, big on friendships</p> <p>M: learning to deal with hidden issues</p> <p>A: loss of 120 lbs., self-care</p>
Charity Grace	<p>P: people receiving the Word of God</p> <p>E: traveling, seeing how others are achieving things; innovation</p> <p>R: love the people, always loving</p> <p>M: knowing that the Word has helped bring about change</p> <p>A: consecrated bishop, exegeting a text so it becomes real</p>	<p>P: children growing</p> <p>E: (skipped)</p> <p>R: love people, always loving (same)</p> <p>M: seeing other women come into their own especially minorities</p> <p>A: children and home, destiny in the Lord, published author</p>
Candace	<p>P: youth events, seeing them smile knowing their situations are not always good</p> <p>E: conferences, learning</p> <p>R: developing meaningful relationships with other clergywomen (intentional)</p> <p>M: being able to make a difference</p> <p>A: still maintaining the course</p>	<p>P: exercising, work, grandchildren – “good endorphins”</p> <p>E: working with her clients</p> <p>R: rebuilding family relationships</p> <p>M: time with grandchildren and pouring God into their lives</p> <p>A: successful business</p>

Participant	PERMA Ministry	PERMA Personal Life
Dee	P: growth and maturity of other people E: all things church, calling, anointing R: cultivated and sustained relationships M: next generation wanting God A: archbishop, overseer of churches	P: mother and grandchildren E: family R: desiring close circle reciprocity M: accomplishing goals, goal-oriented A: wrapped around family, “legacy”
Harmony	P: preaching E: conferences and women colleagues R: supported and loved both congregation and ministerial colleagues M: helping other women tap into their call and purpose A: role model for others to pursue education	P: time with husband and children E: civic and volunteer community service R: loves and values - husband, children, siblings, greater reciprocity desired M: children and developing environment for them to receive all God has for them A: 30-year marriage, ministry, and five degrees

P-positive emotion, E-engagement, R-relationships, M-meaning, A-accomplishment

Positive Emotion. Seligman (2011) explained that one's happiness and life satisfaction were critical components of positive emotion. In creating the table as led by the Spirit, it was powerful to see the general consensus for the 12 participants regarding ministry, sharing the Word of God, and seeing their people grow and their lives change so they could deal with their stress and situations. Likewise, in their personal lives, they were still focused on others growing, especially their family, and the next generation coming to know the Lord to continue when this generation was finished. Again, this showed how necessary caregiving boundaries, work-life balance, and self-care requirements were for these dedicated clergywomen (Dunbar, 2019; Dunbar et al., 2020; Samushonga, 2021).

Engagement. Engagement referred to the deployment of a person's skills, strengths, and attention toward a challenging task (Butler & Kern, 2015). This was an important aspect in meeting the demands and duties related to pastoring, and all 12 responded in some manner to that specific purpose. Sherry and Dee had succinct but all-encompassing answers. Sherry implied

all things "ministry," while Dee said, "all things church, calling and anointing" Regarding their personal lives, engagement focused on others ranging from internal family to meeting the needs of their clients and community. Again, these clergywomen were focused on others, and as Molly shared, "It took years to learn it is okay to do things for myself, and to enjoy social outings." From the interview answers provided, many of the participants focused on others as their psychological sense of being involved in the world (Butler & Kern, 2015; Seligman, 2011).

Relationships. A fundamental building block of Seligman's WBT was relationships and how they contributed to well-being, such as great joy, meaning, laughter, a sense of belongingness, and accomplishment (Butler & Kern, 2015). These concepts are magnified through one's relationships (Butler & Kern, 2015). Research supported that pastors and their connections to others in their congregation, family, and community gave life purpose and meaning (Dunbar et al., 2020). Moreover, being supported and having relationships with others were the best antidotes to "the downs" of life and the support systems. These networks made pastoring effectively feasible (Butler & Kern, 2015; Rowatt, 2001; Scott & Lovell, 2015). As a pastor, building healthy relationships were vital in fulfilling the role of shepherding the flock and providing guidance, counseling, and spiritual care, all key aspects of the caregiving role of pastoring (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Baruth et al., 2015; Harmon et al., 2018; Jackson, 2015; Stansbury et al., 2012). These participants concurred with the research, with many sharing the reciprocal love from pastor to people and people to pastor. As Candace and Joyful stressed, cultivating relationships in ministry and their personal life was vital. All participants valued relationships, especially in their personal life. The best moments in interviewing included Diane going off script and talking about her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren and numbered them. The researcher had to redact all the names, and the others shared the joys of

their families and relationships. Similarly, when Harmony shared that her 30-year marriage was a great accomplishment, and "they love each other and enjoys ministering with him still." That was vital as the interrole conflict with pastoring sadly causes a strain on some marriages, as Charity Grace and Precious shared in their interviews. Likewise, Candace, Dee, and Dr. Gracious were working to strengthen family relationships, both immediate and extended connections.

Meaning. In alignment with previous research, the sense of meaning and purpose was associated with belonging to and serving something greater than oneself (Butler & Kern, 2015). This spoke to the heart of the clergywomen's passion and purpose. For pastors and members of the Black Church and community, belonging to the church provided meaning as a place of hope, spiritual guidance, and social support (Brewer & Williams, 2019; Harmon et al., 2018). From the differing perspectives, all 12 shared how sowing seeds, empowering the community, ministering healing, preparing the next generation, and helping others fulfill their call attenuated the stress of demand and the sting of the opposition and resistance they experienced. This was what provided meaning, purpose, and continued perseverance in this male-dominated culture. As Molly and Harmony shared, pastoring and leading is so others get to know God, know their purpose, and how to walk in their call.

Accomplishment. People, especially pastors, and specifically those participating in this study, pursued accomplishment even when it did not lead to positive emotion, meaning, or relationships (Butler & Kern, 2015). Dr. Gracious shared:

You get tired, you get weary, you feel undervalued, you may feel it's being taken advantage of. It's definitely had to be a spiritual journey. It has to be a faith journey. Not expecting any affirmations or acknowledgments from people because otherwise, you'll burn out.

These clergywomen focused not on themselves but on seeing others come to the Lord and bearing fruit. Accomplishment was being conferred five degrees like Harmony and becoming a role model for others in their educational pursuits, or having a doctoral degree path chosen for you like Dr. Gracious. The participants were accomplished. For example, Sherry constantly travels to teach and train people around the world. Charity Grace and Dee were consecrated bishop and archbishop, respectively, so God could be glorified. Likewise, their personal accomplishments were more focused on the outcomes for others, such as developing crisis and emergency preparedness programs, publishing faith-based books and curriculums, starting ministry-based nonprofits and service-oriented businesses, and leaving a "legacy." Hearing Precious share about her tremendous weight loss and self-care was encouraging. Sadly, she was the only one focusing on self-care, which showed the magnitude of self-denial, their commitment to God, and their call. Two scriptures came to mind regarding these participants' accomplishments in church leadership. The first scripture is "so faith without works is dead" (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, James 2:26b)." Second, as the Messiah said to the people and His disciples in Mark 8:34b-35:

Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Mark 8:34-35).

These women died to self and were strong and working in the genuineness of their faith in God to thrive in efficacious ministry despite the intersectionality experienced.

How I Thrive Mantra

Ngunjiri et al. (2012) outlined key strategies such as refusing engagements to preach from the floor, leaving denominations, and circumventing the stained-glass ceiling by starting churches. Historically, the more radical the approach, the more serious the threats, yet these women were determined that the resistance would be used as a stepping stone to success and a rally for strength and resilience in the face of opposition (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Dubose, 2018; Fauset, 1970; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). As outlined earlier, most participants used the same strategies for similar purposes, yet with fewer repercussions than their predecessors. However, they coupled those strategies with their own mantras of how they thrived in their leadership role while faced with intersectionality yet embracing the strength, resilience, independence, nurturing (caregiving), and emotional control traits that comprised the SBW motif.

Charity Grace used personal hurts, her divorce, and the hate-filled comments she often received as empowering moments. With a strong reliance on her relationship with God, she shared, "I don't think there is anything I can't do... depending on the Lord Jesus Christ in every situation...leaning not to my own understanding." Similarly, Candace, despite all of her setbacks, the refusal of ordination, and diminishing family support, shared:

I have thrived because I don't know how to quit, even though it has crossed my mind, I have made it a personal goal to constantly get to know myself better and educate myself on what I don't know, and focus a lot on self-development.

In the vein of continuing to evolve and learn, Dee shared:

Well, being in a male-dominated environment, especially in America, I have learned through a process of elimination of what works and what doesn't work, what is good, and

what is not good. I'm still learning. As long as I think we're breathing, we will always be learning of how we interact with other people. Having the balance of all of those (SBW traits) that encompass the strong Black woman, not to be overbearing, but yet strong enough to maintain and be true to myself at all times.

Diane, too focused on her faith in God and strength from Him:

Through my prayers and fasting, and reading the Word of God, that has strengthened me. It has made me to be the woman that I am today. I've seen times I would have fallen apart when a lot of stuff came on me, but I thank God for the strength that He has given me, and through all the adversity, through all the being abused, talked about, lied on, through it all, I thank God for Him. Because nobody else could have done it but the Lord that have given me the strength and brought me this far. And He's continuing to give me strength. I feel strengthened day by day.

Dr. Gracious had almost the same mantra:

I've been able to thrive through faith. I've seen what God has done to keep my family and me through some very difficult times. I just believe whatever is ahead, God has already covered us in some way. Even if it's not how I would like to see it play out, I believe and trust God.

Joyful too focused on strength in God:

I think I've been able to do that because I remember how the Lord told Paul that his strength is perfected in weakness. And that's what I try to remind myself of in these characteristics...being strong and, and independent and resilient, there's still a level of weakness because I'm a human being. And I've tried to let the Lord, let his strength shine

forth through me in ministering, that's at home, that's in relationships, as in every facet of life. And that is how.

Similarly, Molly said:

I think that's the easiest to answer tonight. Thriving in anything really has to rely on our relationship with the Lord Jesus. Through Him, I have thrived. I'll tell it just as it is, just simply saying putting my total dependence in Him has helped me to thrive in all relationships.

Rev. Patient shared the same sentiments:

Oh it was definitely my belief; it was my faith in God that he would not call me out and leave me in the deep. It was my faith in God that he would give me that inner strength. The ability to do what needs to be done. So I just feel as though God just is with me. If it wasn't for his strength, I just couldn't do anything. I couldn't accomplish anything. But because of Him, I was able to be a wife, a mother, a student, and a strong church leader. I was able to do all of this as the years have passed by, and all because of God's grace and mercy, and I just felt like I've just used all of the discernment that He has given me, and put them to good use.

Otelia focused on her accomplishment and recognized that knowing yourself was the way to do anything despite what others said or did. She shared:

Changing how people thought about me, changing how people looked at me, but above everything else, changing how I see myself. And that was the thing for me regardless of how independent I thought I was, how nurturing, how caring, how giving, how resilient, none of that mattered if I couldn't see myself, understand myself, and love myself.

Similarly, Precious focused on getting to know herself. She posed:

I had to get a hold of me. I really did. There was nothing that I could leave out of the equation, but I had to learn how to handle things differently. The way I did that was to examine myself... what's going to keep me strong and how I'm going to handle people. I would no longer let someone else determine how I felt. I have to be in a place where I love myself and I can be strong for myself. Whereas I don't have to look at what nobody else thinks or how nobody reacts. Even in ministry, when I get through preaching, I have to know that I have obeyed God. I've said everything He wanted me to say.

Sherry provided a powerful closing for this theme. She stated:

I really strive to see the glass half full and never half empty. I really strive to find the grace in whatever situation that I find myself in. There's always grace to get out of the situation or to see you through the situation. If you're in it, I always remind myself that God saw this before it happened. And He has a solution to it. I don't care what it is. He has a solution to it. He knows what you're going to do about it. And, anything I face, Lord, I say, "I just have to be of good courage and don't be afraid. Because if I'm afraid I can't hear from you. But if I can hear one word." That changed my life when the Lord gave me the revelation that one word. You will live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. But that word live means revive, be restored, prosper. I was like, hold up, because if I hear one word from you, it can change this whole thing. It can change.

Research Question Responses

This section discussed the developed themes and sub-themes compiled from the data analysis to answer the three research questions. The three research questions were: (RQ1) what is the lived experience of intersectionality of Black female pastors/clergywomen? (RQ2) how do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on

their lives, calling, and well-being? (RQ3) How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe well-being as it pertains to their lives and ministerial calling? Table 8 outlines the three research questions and the corresponding themes that addressed each question.

Table 8

Research Question Responses

Research Question	Themes and Sub-Themes
1) What is the lived experience of intersectionality of Black female pastors/clergywomen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Contemporary Experiences with Intersectionality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Denied Opportunities - Appointments, Preaching, and Training b. Misogynistic Attitudes and Behaviors c. Remuneration Inequities d. Support Systems Significance B. Responses to Intersectionality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Emotions and Feelings b. Questioning Self c. Best Fit Seeking (Circumventing)
2) How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on their lives, calling, and well-being?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C. SBW Influence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Strength and Resilience b. Self-Reliance and Faith c. Caregiving Boundaries d. Emotion Suppression Revised
3) How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe well-being as it pertains to their lives and ministerial calling?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> D. Well-Being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Work-Life Balance b. Self-Denial c. Self-Care Requirements d. Self-Care Types E. PERMA F. How I Thrive Mantra

Research Question One

The first research question asked what is the lived experience of intersectionality of Black female pastors/clergywomen? The 12 participants described their experiences as bittersweet. While they experienced intersectionality in their personal lives and in their church leadership roles, they could use SBW tenets, especially strength and resilience, coupled with their faith to overcome the opposition and barriers. The two themes of contemporary experiences with intersectionality and the responses to intersectionality provided a detailed description of the prejudice, discrimination, and bias due to the intersection of race and gender social identities. The intersectionality theme had four subthemes denied opportunities - appointments, preaching and training, misogynistic attitudes and behaviors, remuneration inequities, and support systems significance.

Due to prejudice and bias, Dee and Candace were denied candidacy and ordination. Similarly, Diane, Harmony, and Sherry were not affirmed by their pastors the first time they shared their calling. All five of these women left seeking the best fit for their gifting and calling. While all 12 were thriving in ministry, Candace and Diane were not ordained while actively serving in their pastoral roles at the writing of this study. Similarly, opportunities to preach and be properly trained were experienced while striving in this male-dominated role, yet, preaching opportunities and training were not equal. Exceptions for their male colleagues were made; men were not compelled to work as hard or complete the same level of training if any education was required of them at all. Yet many of those men received desired positions based on male preferential treatment and their connections.

Nine of the participants experienced subjugation and domination in the form of misogynistic attitudes and behaviors. These negative behaviors and biases occurred in belittling,

insults, inappropriate conversations, name-calling, and, as Dr. Gracious described, "masculine objectivity of women." Charity Grace while preaching in a televised service, was told to "sit down and be quiet because she was too cute to preach" by a prominent male preacher. Candace was treated like a sex object by her pastor. These were horrendous acts and unacceptable in any field. Moreover, all participants often encountered conservatism rhetoric directly from their church leaders and others from outside leadership.

One of the key forms of inequity and male preference was the pay inequities that occurred—exponential differences in pay, resources, and honorariums. Charity Grace, Dr. Gracious, Precious, and Sherry described this in-depth. Charity Grace explained the motives of the church leaders:

By the way you have ministered, you can see the room. You know the offerings that have been taken, you know what has been raised, but you also know there's still that. And it's blatant among our people. It's blatant that I will use you and not appreciate you.

She continued that God would sometimes tell her to "give it back. They dishonored your gift." Once in the pay situation, Charity Grace's Bishop called the church and requested the unequal pay situation be corrected. Sherry and Precious described very similar situations regarding deception and unfair pay. These women ministered effectively and often longer than the men but received considerably less compensation because they were Black women.

This led to the discussion of the significance of support systems. All 12 participants explained the need for solid support systems and networks. Yet, a lack of support either from their internal church leaders, outside denomination leadership, or family and friends existed for many. Having good support was crucial. For example, in the pay situation with Charity Grace, she shared, "He [her bishop] supported me 100% of the time. He was my father in ministry, and

he covered me." Seven others described similar ministry experiences where internal leaders were just as supportive. However, Diane, Sherry, Precious, and Candace encountered internal church opposition. Diane and Candace had yet to resolve the issue of being ordained. Joyful, Charity Grace, Precious, and Sherry provided great insight into outside denominations' rejection or bias towards women in ministry. Otelia, Candace, Charity Grace, and Precious passionately shared the lack of support they experienced from family members. Initially, her father's rejection led to postponing Otelia's initial sermon, Candace's family abandoned her once she started the church, Charity Grace's husband divorced her because of ministry, and Precious' husband never supported her pastoring. Two participants feared sharing their names because of disapproving husbands, yet they all thrived in ministry. A surprise factor disclosed was the female competitiveness that 75% of the participants experienced. Candace found other women cliquish. Charity Grace and Sherry were confronted with blatant disrespect, intimidation, and jealousy. Harmony defined it as "hazing," and Otelia said, "They were just not there for me."

The theme responses to intersectionality had three sub-themes, emotions and feelings, questioning self, and best fit seeking (circumventing). The participants described emotions that ranged from feeling empowered to feeling isolated, lonely, stressed, and overwhelmed. Also, the pastor's role often, coupled with the opposition and resistance, led to questioning their purpose and whether they were where they were supposed to be. That self-evaluation often resulted in leaving places of rejection or incorrect fit, as Joyful decided to resign from one position to pursue her heart's desired role in faith. For others, it meant standing firm in their faith and trusting in God to guide them through the storms and struggles. However, they were all thriving in fulfilling their calling and walking out their purpose. Dr. Gracious summed up the essence of their lived experiences and responses to intersectionality:

I can't speak for anyone else, but for me, it always turns out to be used for ministry. So everything I believe in my life, even the trials and the horrible experiences, are turned around, just like Joseph, for good and for the purposes that God has. For His plan is not to consume me or anyone else, but if we all just operate in obedience, it'll be revealed. So yeah, it's a personal blessing, but it's used ultimately to bless someone else to really grow closer to the Lord. That's why I call them testimonies.

Research Question Two

The second research question was how do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on their lives, calling, and well-being? The theme of SBW influence explained the embodiment and subsequent impact the SBW cognitive and behavioral construct had on their lives, calling, and well-being. This theme had four sub-themes, strength and resilience dynamic, self-reliance and faith, caregiving boundaries, and emotion suppression revised. Whether introduced to SBW by maternal indoctrination or another source, and whether aware of the schema or not, all 12 identified as strong, Black women that fully embraced the characteristics of SBW.

The embracing of strength and resilience was crucial when positively coping with stress and negative emotions when addressing their internal and external stressors. This encompassed the fulfillment of their high-demand pastoral roles, the concomitant intersectionality, and the expectations to problem solve and endure difficult situations. Some participants commented that they had to "survive" the impact of all involved with their many roles and maintain a healthy well-being. Without focusing on the related stress or deleterious impact on their health, 75% of the participants talked about the reality of just getting things done and doing what you have to do. Related to this topic was the strong reliance on God and faith more than self-reliance in

handling life and ministry expectations. Precious commented on the demands of pastoral ministry and the prejudices she has endured because of the call. She noted, "So, it [pastoral ministry] could be tiring, it really can. I know God would give you the strength to do what you need to do, but in the flesh, it could be tiring."

With emotion suppression, the dynamics of the trait appeared to have similar impacts as the historical view of needing to avoid appearing weak. Yet, all 12 participants emphasized that emotion containment was necessary as the leader in those situations during crises such as tragic loss or when traumatic experiences occurred. Sherry clarified, "Sheep will scatter...you have to lead them...you better be strong." However, less importance was placed on concerns with vulnerability and being viewed as weak by male counterparts. More emphasis was on the need in their leadership for authenticity and transparency, which were key attributes for church leaders. This was a significant shift from the historical perspectives on why women suppressed emotion (Smarr et al., 2018; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Otelia gave an in-depth statement regarding these two factors from a pastoral view:

Growing up out of tradition, what I understood growing up as a child was that the person who was standing in that pulpit, when I didn't understand what a preacher was. I just knew it was a man standing in the pulpit that every Sunday had something good to say, something positive. He talked about the bereaved families and talked about when he was bereaved but never shed a tear. Always seemed like this strong person. And every person that ever stood there, that's all I saw, then that's what I got to be. If you had asked me that in 2017 or prior, I would say it was vital for me not to let people see me get emotional and for people to think that I've always got it under control. Because if you see me not in control, then how can you trust that I believe in God?... We're in 2022. How can you trust

that that's my Savior and that I know He is my Protector and Provider, all of that? But now in ministry, I believe in transparency. I believe that if something that I am ministering causes me to tear up in the middle of my preaching, then I'm just going to tear up in the middle of my preaching. And it's because people need to know that it's okay. Now I understand that I have to show you that I'm flesh and blood, and I cry, and I hurt, and that it's okay that I cry and I hurt, and that doesn't change the love that God has for me, doesn't change my relationship with God, doesn't change any of that. But what it does is it allows the people that hear me, that see me, that know me, that encounter me to understand that they can have this range of emotions too. And it doesn't mean that they don't have faith, doesn't mean they don't know who God is, doesn't mean any of those things that may have been misconceptions.

Research Question Three

The third research question asked how do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe well-being as it pertains to their lives and ministerial calling? The three themes of well-being, PERMA, and the How I Thrive mantra answered this question. The well-being theme had four sub-themes, work-life balance, self-denial, self-care requirements, and self-care types. First, it was important to review the difficulty of sustaining a work-life balance in this high-demand occupation (Scott & Lovell, 2015). Otelia called it "burning the candle at both ends" to meet the expectations of their multiple competing roles. In attempting to do so effectively, self-denial, the second sub-theme, occurred. Harmony shared that she thought getting help with maintaining her home and family when the ministry grew was not good. She worked feverishly to complete all the duties, and her health failed "simply because I was stressed out and burned out and was not

taking care of myself." Many participants shared similar stories that led to serious illness, hospitalizations, and now managed care and new self-care routines.

Also, Molly stated that "maturity and learning that self-care was necessary" led to balancing her work-life demands, as most participants have. Participants implemented required self-care strategies, the third sub-theme, to improve, restore, or maintain good health. Two effective strategies ensured the required self-care was incorporated into the lives of the clergywomen: scheduling and learning the power of the word no. Scheduling was instrumental in work-life balancing and making time for self-care. Harmony decreed she "schedules her exercise" just as she used a schedule for ministry appointments, which has improved her work-life balance goals. She declared, "I live by that [schedule]!" As Dee shared, following a schedule "was a process" she has mastered, yet Precious shared, "I'm learning, and it's a learning process. I do not have that mastered yet." Dr. Gracious expressed, "Sometimes we have to let some things go, which is different from saying no." The power of saying no was another key self-care requirement. Dr. Gracious remarked, "No is not a bad word." When practiced, saying no often prevents the overstepping of caregiving boundaries and self-deprivation, burnout, and stress, leading to health-altering consequences for at least 50% of the participants.

Recognizing that self-care was required led to the discussion of what types of self-care the participants engaged in to promote good health, and the various types fell into the following categories: exercise, grooming, and healthcare. This included managed and preventive care along with diet and nutrition, hobbies, meditation, spa and therapy, sleep and vacationing. Participants used these strategies whether it was day excursions, mini-vacations, or planned vacations. All 12 participants practiced some form of self-care, recognizing that it was necessary to maintain healthy physical, social, emotional well-being and to continue the efficacious ministry.

This research focused on clergywomen who thrived in ministry while experiencing intersectionality while influenced by SBW. Seligman's WBT was based on five measurable elements, which he coined as PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment). PERMA, the second theme, effectively measured the well-being of these clergywomen and gave depth and insight into the phenomenon studied. Tables 6 and 7 provided valuable data regarding the scores on the PERMA measure. Table 6 represented the data from the screening survey scores to the PERMA questions. The answers from the semi-structured interviews of each participant concerning the participants' views of well-being as it pertained to their lives and ministerial calling in the five pillars of PERMA were reflected in Table 7.

All 12 participants scored above average in the five domains of PERMA and the overall health and happiness categories, indicating that they all have a healthy well-being. As they began to share the experiences in their lives and ministry, clarity was provided on how they thrived in efficacious ministry and maintained their healthy well-being. The participants thrived despite the stress and role strain associated with pastoring and experiencing intersectionality. Yes, the SBW cognitive behavioral construct and its tenets served as positive coping styles to combat the negative stressors and the associated emotions of being a thriving pastor, wife, mother, and community leader with all of their competing roles that often caused interrole conflict. However, as Dee said, "It's about leaving a legacy." The call to ministry goes beyond self; it was dying to self. All 12 participants experienced positive emotions in some aspect of ministry, such as preaching, seeing others grasp the Word, and making practical application in their lives. Positive emotion was achieved for 11 of the participants through interaction with family and others. Molly "found joy in her time alone with God." Engagement was best represented by the precise statements of Sherry and Dee. Sherry answered, "Ministry," while Dee said, "All things church."

Regarding their personal lives, engagement focused on others ranging from family to meeting the needs of the community. Relationships, both in their ministry and personal life, were important. Candace, Dr. Gracious, Joyful, and Molly stressed the importance of good friendships and the value of reciprocal love, having it or desiring it. Meaning making, according to all 12 participants, related to empowering and ministering to others and preparing the next generation to do the same. Doing what they were chosen by God to do outweighed the stress of the position and the prejudice and bias experienced while serving. From a ministry and personal perspective, Precious proclaimed regarding her choice to answer the call despite the rejection she experienced from family and friends for doing so. Likewise, accomplishments, ministry, and personal were focused on being attentive to the needs of others with support programs, creating spiritual literature, ministry organizations, and legacy-making. All 12 participants stressed the need for self-care, but only one shared the major achievement of her weight loss goal of 120 pounds and increased self-care.

The final theme, How I Thrive, solidified the determination of each woman to persevere through the barriers, struggles, and stress of ministry coupled with intersectionality while influenced by SBW. All 12 participants provided their individual mantra, and both Molly and Precious, in their interviews, quoted scripture. This scripture summed up the theme and their statements best, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (*King James Bible Online*, 1769/2017, Philippians 4:13).

Summary

This chapter reviewed the findings of the lived experiences of Black clergywomen that experienced intersectionality while influenced by the SBW schema. The 12 participants in this qualitative inquiry upheld the SBW cultural mandate and have endured intersectionality in their

personal and professional life. Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions were utilized for data collection. The six themes that emerged were contemporary experiences with intersectionality, responses to intersectionality, SBW influence, well-being, PERMA, and How I Thrive mantras. The theme of intersectionality had four sub-themes: denied opportunities - appointments, preaching, and training, misogynistic attitudes and behaviors, remuneration inequities, and support systems significance. The theme of responses to intersectionality also had three sub-themes: emotions and feelings, questioning self, and best fit seeking (circumventing). The theme SBW influence had four sub-themes: strength and resilience, self-reliance and faith, caregiving boundaries, and emotion suppression revised. The theme of well-being had four sub-themes: work-life balance, self-denial, self-care requirements, and self-care types.

The responses to the three research questions were also outlined in this chapter. The themes of intersectionality and the responses to intersectionality answered the first research question. Research question two was addressed by the SBW influence theme, and research question three was answered by the themes of well-being, PERMA, and How I Thrive mantras. Chapter Five outlined the summary of the research study, the summary of the research findings, a discussion on the significance of the study, and the contributions to existing research. The research findings were linked to the theoretical frameworks that guided this study. The delimitations and limitations were addressed, and recommendations and suggestions for future research are offered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to understand further and create awareness of the lived experiences of Black clergywomen that experienced intersectionality while influenced by the SBW schema, specifically in the Black Church in the southern United States. This study was essential in understanding the prevalence of this phenomenon in the 21st century Black Church. This study provided church leadership organizations, academic circles, and counseling professionals serving these women with an awareness of the structural barriers, prejudices, biases, and constancy of the stained-glass ceiling effect experienced by Black female clergywomen serving in church leadership in Black Protestant churches. The intent was to provide evidence that significant changes in church protocols and polity were necessary, the development of crucial support systems and networks were required, and gender equity and equality have yet to be attained in church leadership. This chapter presented a summary of the findings followed with relevance to the extant literature and theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and the SBW motif. A discussion of the empirical and practical implications is addressed. The concluding section of this chapter outlined the delimitations, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

The study aimed to better understand the lived experiences shared between Black clergywomen that experienced intersectionality while influenced by the SBW schema, specifically in the Black Church in the American South. Moreover, this qualitative inquiry aimed to describe how these experiences impacted the well-being of Black female pastors/clergywomen. Data analysis using transcendental phenomenology was performed upon

completion of data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Six themes and 15 sub-themes emerged from the resulting analysis. The six identified themes and 15 sub-themes substantiated the experiences of the 12 participants. The six themes were contemporary experiences with intersectionality, responses to intersectionality, SBW influence, well-being, PERMA, and the How I Thrive mantra. The theme of intersectionality had four sub-themes, denied opportunities - appointments, preaching, and training, misogynistic attitudes and behaviors, remuneration inequities, and support systems significance. The theme of responses to intersectionality also had three sub-themes: emotions and feelings, questioning self, and best fit seeking (circumventing). The theme SBW influence had four sub-themes: strength and resilience, self-reliance and faith, caregiving boundaries, and emotion suppression revised. The theme of well-being had four sub-themes: work-life balance, self-denial, self-care requirements, and self-care types. The six themes that were developed answered the three research questions that guided the study.

The first research question asked: What is the lived experience of intersectionality of Black female pastors/clergywomen? This first question was answered by the two themes of contemporary experiences of intersectionality and responses to intersectionality. Those two themes provided a detailed account of how each participant reacted to prejudice, discrimination, and bias caused by the intersection of race and gender. First, intersectionality was a reality for all 12 participants, personally and professionally. Racism and hate were pervasive while they were growing up in the South. Second, similar to the pioneers who paved the way for these clergywomen, these participants encountered misogynistic attitudes and behaviors during their tenure as pastors and serving in church leadership in Black Protestant churches. They were also denied opportunities for pastoral appointments, received little affirmation upon accepting their

calls, and were further denied opportunities for preaching and training, with unequal pay and resources (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). In addition, all 12 participants stressed the importance of a strong support system. However, four types of opposition occurred in the areas of support, internal church support, external ministers and other denominations, limited family support, and female competitiveness (Harmon et al., 2018; Heck et al., 2018; Scott & Lovell, 2015).

The participants had several responses because of these experiences. First, many negative and positive emotions concomitant with their experiences were shared. Also, six pastors shared their stories regarding questioning their calling and the ability to serve in these roles. Positively, 75% broke out of the bias of the mainline church in search of the best fit to fulfill their call, four planting non-denominational churches, one resigned from a staff minister position to follow her passion for evangelism and itinerant preaching, and four serving in other ministries until the right platform was found. The remaining three stayed and fulfilled their purpose despite the opposition and resistance they faced (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Williams-Gegner et al., 2010).

The second research question asked: How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on their lives, calling, and well-being? This second question was answered with the theme of SBW influence. This theme had four subthemes: strength and resilience, self-reliance and faith, caregiving boundaries, and emotion suppression revisited.

All 12 participants scored in the high and very high ranges of strength and resilience (Chamberlin, 2019). During the interviews, they concurred with the expectation of being strong and able to cope and endure opposition and struggle without complaint, whether dealing with life situations or ministry (Davis et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2021; Kanyeredzi, 2018). This strength and

resilience served as a positive coping style to address or manage internal and external stressors. Watching their mothers and grandmothers handle adversity was the impetus for them to model that behavior in their own lives and ministry. Dr. Gracious shared:

I come from a very strong family, especially the matriarchs, very strong from the South. I don't even think about it. That's one of challenges is because we tend to not ask for help or recognize we might need help or need to say no. That is one of the challenges. But that hasn't ever been an issue. I just get it done.

The self-reliance scores showed a mixed outcome, six participants scored above average, and the other six scored low and very low. After reviewing the data, it was recognizable and significant that the 12 clergywomen relied heavily on faith and explained that they were more reliant on their faith in God than their independence to get them through challenging situations in life and ministry. Hence, all 12 scored well above average, with 11 scoring in the high and very high ranges in the faith category of the MSBWS (Chamberlin, 2019).

Regarding caregiving, 75% (nine participants) scored above average, with seven scoring high or very high in this category of the MSBWS (Chamberlin, 2019). Their interview statements supported the need to care for their families and congregations creating difficulties with interrole conflict, work-life balance, and self-denial (Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Smarr et al., 2018; Smoktunowicz et al., 2017; Visker et al., 2016).

Lastly, the purpose of emotion suppression as a coping mechanism was revised from historical beliefs (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Watson-Singleton, 2017). In pastoring, these leaders must be strong when leading the people, especially in crises such as bereavement and loss. Yet, all participants stressed that the need for authenticity and transparency in ministry outweighed the concerns of being viewed as weak by their male

counterparts. People needed to know it is "okay not to be okay," to "cry when they hurt does not mean they do not know God," and emulated the Messiah, who cried too ((*King James Bible Online*, 1769/2017, Hebrews 5:7-9; John 11:35; Luke 19:41). Like our Savior, the tears were a sign of our humanity, concern for others, and a need for God to provide strength and comfort to endure.

The third question asked: How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe well-being as it pertains to their lives and ministerial calling? This question was answered by three themes: well-being, PERMA, and How I Thrive mantra. The theme of well-being had four sub-themes: work-life balance, self-denial, self-care requirements, and self-care types.

First, previous research supported that by fulfilling their calling and addressing the needs of people entrusted to their care, female clergy who supported the SBW schema often did not seek help for their needs or completely rejected them (Etowa et al., 2017). In support of the empirical data, all 12 participants discussed their difficulty with work-life balance and the expectations of ministry (Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Visker et al., 2016). Due to the interrole conflict, family needs were pushed back, resulting in family strain and sacrificing their own needs (Etowa et al., 2017; Smoktunowicz et al., 2017).

Similarly, in varying degrees, all 12 participants told their self-denial reality. Pastoring is a high-demand occupation, and self-care was neglected in meeting the needs of their congregations and others (Etowa et al., 2017; Milstein et al., 2020; Weaver et al., 2002). While research supported that the SBW had negative and positive impacts on health, more than 50% of the participants shared that the SBW positively influenced their health and served as a coping mechanism. The strain of pastoring and the ensuing bias and prejudice significantly negatively

impacted their overall health and well-being (Baruth et al., 2014; Proeschold-Bell, 2020; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2011).

Regarding self-care requirements, caregiving and denying self were the cause for more than 50% of the participants needing managed health solutions, preventive care, and significant changes to their work-life balance (Etowa et al., 2017; Heck et al., 2018). Two essential requirements to assist with work-life balancing and incorporating self-care in their routines were the reliance on time-management and productivity aids and learning the power of saying no. Scheduling served as an effective tool for managing work-life balance and self-care. Second, seven participants imparted the wisdom of years of pastoring, that learning to say no was critical to thriving and persevering in efficacious ministry and maintaining healthy family relationships.

The participants' many self-care types were organized into the following categories: grooming, healthcare to include preventive and managed care, diet and nutrition, a range of hobbies, meditative therapy, spa treatment, required rest and sleep, and vacationing in several forms. As research suggested, self-care and a strong emphasis on well-being were instrumental in pastoring efficacy and supporting healthy living (Baruth et al., 2014; Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Muse et al., 2016). All 12 participants corroborated that daily self-care had improved their health and overall well-being physically, emotionally, and mentally, increasing life satisfaction while supporting their commitment to the call of pastoring and church leadership.

Healthy well-being was reflected in the PERMA scores. In the five PERMA domains as well as overall health and happiness, all 12 participants achieved above-average scores, demonstrating that they have maintained healthy well-being. Clarity on how they flourish in effective ministry and retain their healthy well-being was revealed as they started to discuss the

experiences in their lives and ministries. Key to the meaning and accomplishment domains, all participants derived meaning from these experiences through ministry, helping others, empowering others who may experience bias and prejudice, and leaving a legacy. This was why the participants persevered, being able to minister to the needs of others and pleasing God. This is the heart of any true pastor and servant of the Most High.

The last theme, How I Thrive, reaffirmed each participant's resolve to endure despite the difficulties, pressures, and obstacles of ministry intersectionality while being impacted by SBW. Each participant gave their slogan; Molly and Precious used Philippians 4:13 as a powerful verse that best captured their statements on the phenomenon (*King James Bible Online*, 1769/2017, Philippians 4:13).

Discussion

This section considered the study's findings in relation to the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The research findings supported the existing literature while revising or diverging from the SBW literature regarding its operation as a coping mechanism. The contemporary view of faith versus self-reliance with this population and emotional suppression in the role of pastoring was highlighted through this study. This study added to the combination of SBW and intersectionality as interpretive frameworks, as no study was found with this combination regarding Black female pastors/clergywomen. Furthermore, the findings supported the intersectionality theory coined by Crenshaw (1989, 1991), the SBW collective, and the overall SBW cognitive and behavioral construct. (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Harris, 2001; Romero, 2000; Wood-Giscombe', 2010).

Empirical Literature

Six themes were generated from this study to explain the shared experience of the participants. The first research question was explained by the contemporary experiences of intersectionality and the responses to intersectionality; much of this concurred with existing literature. Black clergywomen as a marginalized group due to their belonging to more than one subordinate or derogated social category, specifically race and gender, experienced bias, prejudice, and subjugation by their male counterparts in the clergy (Cole, 2009; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989). Surprisingly, 75% of the participants experienced competitiveness from female colleagues (Cole, 2009; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; McCall, 2005; Smarr et al., 2018; Settles, 2006; Warner & Shields, 2013). Moreover, Black clergywomen, while qualified, lacked the possibilities to lead congregations, were limited in the opportunities to be selected for employment, and were restricted from advancement in ministry leadership (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018).

Like the pioneering women, these participants were denied candidacy, preaching and training opportunities, endured name-calling, insults, misogynistic and conservative views of women, and paid less for the same role. As Ngunjiri et al. (2012) argued, this opposition and resistance led female clergy to circumvent the stained-glass ceiling and break out their bonds. They began operating in quiet resistance, such as preaching from the floor and taking engagements for women's related events (Ngunjiri et al., 2012). In the face of similar experiences, these participants employed similar strategies, yet at a higher rate, and four participants started new churches outside mainline church dogma. Those who questioned themselves, either due to lack of affirmation or support, sought better opportunities for ministry that fit with the call God had placed on their lives. Despite the vast array of emotions

experienced because of the strain of pastoring and the accompanying opposition, they all prevailed and continued to thrive.

SBW influence was the theme that answered question two, and much of this data concurred with extant literature. Women influenced by the SBW cognitive and behavioral construct were typified as possessing strength, resilience, and independence (Nelson et al., 2016; Walker-Barnes, 2009; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). These three characteristics were primary cognitive and behavioral expectations in the attributes included in the SBW schema (Nelson et al., 2016; Walker-Barnes, 2009; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). All 12 participants embraced strength and resilience, and the scores of the MSBWS were all in the high and very high ranges, and supported by their embracing of the tenets, especially resilience, as a positive method of coping with stressors related to pastoring in a male-dominated occupation and facing resistance for doing so (Xu & Yang, 2023). As Sherry replied, "You better be strong if you plan to lead people." Charity Grace when abandoned by her husband in a strange city with five children with only \$12.37, added, "I did not know anything but to ask God what to do and to be strong." Existing research supported this sub-theme of strength and resilience as crucial to the survival and perseverance of these Black clergywomen (Davis et al., 2018; Nelson et al., 2016; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Watson-Singleton, 2017; Woods-Giscombé, 2010).

Similarly, research supported the struggle with caregiving boundaries experienced by these Black clergywomen, as they all possessed a strong need to nurture others at the expense of their own needs and health (Dunbar et al., 2020; Samushonga, 2021; Walker-Barnes, 2009). Diane admitted, "If I have to do something for the church... I'll go without eating all day... I put myself on the back burner... I'm not taking care of myself like I should." Similar statements from other participants corroborated the necessity of these clergywomen to internalize the spiritual

perspective of self-care as God desired them to take care of their vessels to successfully complete their mission and purpose (Samushonga, 2021). Molly, Precious, and Harmony shared their apprehension about managing caregiving and prioritizing their well-being. It was difficult to embrace that their self-care was as important to God as the care given to others. Molly and Harmony had serious health situations that motivated them to realign their priorities. In addition, the well-being theme, one of the themes answering question three, was supported by research regarding work-life balance, self-denial, and the need for self-care (Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Samushonga, 2021). Harmony shared how positive changes helped her:

I was stressed out and burned out and when was not taking care of myself. I realized I had to change...my exercise time is sacred...and that's what set me on the road to changing the way I live and the way I do ministry, the way I live my life. And now I'm helping others do the same.

According to research, those with healthy well-being performed better at work, looked and felt better, burned out less, and had better coping skills (Butler & Kern, 2015; Seligman, 2011). The theme of PERMA, which also answered research question three, sought to understand well-being as it pertained to the lives and ministerial calling of the participants, and supported Seligman's flourishing research (Butler & Kern, 2015; Seligman, 2011). Seligman's work explained that humans were driven to connect with and serve others as part of survival, and building strong relationships was crucial (Butler & Kern, 2015; Seligman, 2011). All 12 participants, when answering the questions regarding PERMA expressed their reciprocal love with their flock, the need to create alliances and support networks, and the passion for serving others and seeing others thrive. The meaning and accomplishments responses in their personal

and professional lives centered on the belief that participants' connections with others are crucial to their life satisfaction and fulfilling their pastoral and familial roles. Moreover, these pastors' importance on building healthy relationships was critical in fulfilling the role of shepherding the flock (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Baruth et al., 2015; Harmon et al., 2018; Jackson, 2015; Stansbury et al., 2012). For example, paraphrasing Dee's responses, her answers regarding ministry were as followed:

- Positive emotion comes from the growth and maturity of other people.
- Engagement comes from "all things church, calling, anointing."
- Relationships are cultivated and sustained.
- Meaning comes from seeing the next generation wanting God.
- Accomplishments were being consecrated archbishop and serving as an overseer of churches.

Similarly, in answers regarding her personal life were:

- Positive emotion derives from being a mother and seeing her grandchildren.
- Engagement is centered around family.
- Relationships come from close-circle reciprocity.
- Meaning comes from accomplishing goals, as she was "very goal-oriented."
- Accomplishment is wrapped around her family and leaving a "legacy."

After answering the PERMA-related questions, she admitted, "I don't feel like I have a personal life; I feel like my whole life is surrounded by my children and my grandchildren." This attribute was exceptionally critical for pastors and how their connections to others in their congregation, family, and community gave life purpose and meaning (Dunbar et al., 2020).

Importantly, two sub-themes of data regarding SBW in this study diverged from the historical research. First, the tenet of self-reliance or being self-independent did not substantiate historical data that self-reliance was a key trait of the women that embraced the SBW schema (Barnes, 2009; Kanyeredzi, 2018; Nelson et al., 2016; West, 1995). There was a mixed reaction, with six participants scoring high and five low, and very low in self-reliance. Yet, all 12 participants supported the inclusion of faith as a key tenet in the SBW schema more than self-reliance or self-dependence. Importantly, all the clergywomen, women of faith, showed a strong reliance on their faith in God which was reflected in their scores on the MSBWS in the faith category and their individual responses (Chamberlin, 2019).

Secondly, emotion suppression was needed when handling difficult situations but not necessary when transparency and genuineness were required to convey the many facets of being a child of God. The need to rely on His strength and power when facing life's adversities and struggles did not require emotional suppression. This did not substantiate the historical view of emotion containment and suppression due to concern with appearing weak or vulnerable to male colleagues (Barnes, 2009; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Harris, 2001; Liao et al., 2020; Nelson et al., 2020; Romero, 2000; Wood-Giscombe', 2010). Subjugation may have played a minimal role in the clergywomen questioning themselves, but not to the degree represented in historical data (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). With the global pandemic and the tragic losses people have endured in the past three years, vulnerability and openness to expressing emotions were necessary traits in Black churches and the community (Brewer & Williams, 2019; Harmon et al., 2018). As Otelia framed that need, "It's okay that I cry and I hurt, and that doesn't change the love that God has for me, doesn't change my relationship with God, doesn't change any of that."

Pastors need to provide support, and the church had to serve as the place of hope and a haven in crisis, and that outweighed everything else when ministering to the people.

Significantly, a gap existed in studying intersectionality and SBW together, understanding the well-being of these Black women who experienced this race and gender bias in their clergy leadership roles and were influenced by the SBW schema. This qualitative study served as seminal work in combining the two interpretive frameworks. How I Thrive mantra answered research question three, regarding well-being as it pertains to the lives and ministerial calling of the participants. No research combined the two interpretive frameworks and studied the effects on well-being, so this data added valuable insight. This research was intended to continue the dialogue on this phenomenon to expand awareness of these clergywomen's experiences while fulfilling the call of God and maintaining their well-being. All 12 participants embraced the SBW motif and had above-average well-being scores, having served effectively in ministry for five years while having experienced some intersectionality. In the overall health and happiness categories, 50% of participants scored high or very high. This data spoke volumes to their ability to persevere opposition and resistance while serving in a male-dominated occupation. They were influenced by the SBW behavioral and cognitive construct, learned self-care protocols, and maintained healthy well-being. Seven of these clergywomen had served in efficacious ministry for more than 20 years; statistically, six should have left the ministry in their first five years, as research supported that 50% of clergy leave in the first five years (Meek et al., 2003).

One key takeaway was that these clergywomen emulated their ancestors and learned from their family matriarchs. In the past, the SBW traits of strength, resilience, and independence were used as coping strategies to survive racism, prejudice, and bias (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Nelson et al., 2016; Townsend, 2008; Watson-Singleton, 2017). For these clergywomen, the

SBW cognitive and behavioral construct, specifically the characteristics of strength, resilience, and faith, worked together as coping mechanisms for a similar purpose to persevere intersectionality. Again, intersectionality and SBW paired well in exploring the experiences of Black clergywomen.

Theoretical Literature

The theories of intersectionality (1989, 1991) and SBW (2000) guided this study. This section discussed how the findings related to the theoretical frameworks that guided the study.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality was coined by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) to highlight the underrepresented experiences of Black women and how these Black women suffered from discrimination because of their unique experiences of belonging to two marginalized groups, the intersection of their race and gender, which was the focus of this study. Despite more Black women pastors and church leaders, all 12 participants experienced intersectionality in some form of subjugation, bias, prejudice, or discrimination in their personal life and their leadership role in the Black Church (Smarr et al., 2018). More specifically, these marginalized, Black clergywomen experienced oppression, denied or limited opportunities, pay inequities, and a lack of support, either from internal or external church leaders or family, when serving within this male-dominated culture (Cannon, 2011; Collins, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis et al., 2018; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). The study extended the existing research regarding intersectionality with the assistance of the themes of contemporary experiences with intersectionality and the responses to intersectionality. Dr. Gracious explained the essence of the bias and prejudice in the mainline denominations from her specific experience in the Methodist faith:

For me as a woman, I definitely observed that there is an inequity in terms of appointments. The Methodist denomination, AME, CME, United Methodist, AME Zion, our policies and doctrines are based on connectional churches and bishops. The appointments are made based on those bishop's decisions and elders. What I observed and I think is probably still common with most churches is that males would be appointed to stronger, more thriving churches. It takes a lot of others who rally around someone who will be the advocate. And many times it may have to be a male to say, yes, we need to elevate this person to another level. Let this person have an opportunity to take a new church or take a church that can be blessed by her gifts. That's what I have observed. And most people would agree that, that's still very common. That's why we don't see very many women bishops or presiding elders, and certainly only recently are we seeing those women coming into those leadership positions.

In her other responses, she was able to give testimony of personal pay inequities, limited preaching opportunities, and masculine objectivity of women, which covered the gamut of negative experiences the Black clergywomen experienced in Black churches currently.

Strong Black Woman (SBW)

SBW was a cognitive, behavioral construct born out of the necessity to address the negative images of Black women stemming from the overt exploitation of oppressive slave owners (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Townsend, 2008; Watson-Singleton, 2017). SBW was a response laden with survival and escapism, and often passed generationally, specifically instilled in Black girls by their mothers (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Townsend, 2008; Watson-Singleton, 2017). More than 58% (seven of 12 participants) were informally introduced to the concepts of SBW by their mothers and grandmothers. The four themes furthered the existing theoretical

literature; strength and resilience, self-reliance and faith, caregiving boundaries, and emotion suppression revised. Strength and resilience overlapped in the SBW construct, as one had to be strong to survive and overcome adversity, resistance, and oppression (Romero, 2000; Walker-Barnes, 2009). All 12 participants emphasized strength and resilience, along with faith in God, as key coping strategies that facilitated effectively thriving in ministry, managing the demands and expectations, and the experiences of intersectionality associated with the demanding role of pastoring (Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Watson-Singleton, 2017). Rev. Patient agreed and said:

He [God] will give you this ability [to be strong], the determination to do what needs to be done, to just look at life and look at it fullness and all of the tribulations or anything that comes along with life and you just know how to handle it.

Significantly, self-reliance and independence were replaced with reliance on faith in both scores on the MSBWS measure and the responses as to how these women get things done (Chamberlin, 2019). All 12 relied heavily on their faith in handling their situations, especially tough ones. Precious described the tiring pursuits of the call, "God will give you the strength to do what you need to do." This shift especially can be understood as these women believed God called them to become a small percentage of women in church leadership; research stated approximately three percent of leadership in the Black Church are women (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Faith is needed to accept the call and continue the spiritual journey. Dr. Gracious attested, "It's definitely had to be a spiritual journey. It has to be a faith journey. Not expecting any affirmations or acknowledgments from people because otherwise, you'll burn out." Sherry succinctly exclaimed, "I truly just depend on the Lord."

Also, SBW glorified caregiving as a critical foundation of Black womanhood (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Walker-Barnes, 2009). This caregiving image promoted the idea that Black women possessed a strong need to nurture others at the expense of their own needs and health (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Walker-Barnes, 2009; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). All 12 participants agreed that caregiving was an important aspect of their pastoral role, often leading to denying the needs of self. Sherry synopsized:

A lot of times, having to counsel or nurture or having to deal with it, you didn't take time for yourself. I had to learn that, and I didn't learn that until I guess, in this part of ministry now. Early on, I didn't have that; you brought everything home. I was never intimidated to minister to men. And I think being a strong Black woman helps because bishop has taught us that you're neither male nor female when you step into your office. And so stepping into my office when I have to minister, it's the anointing, it's time to work. It's not time to play, and I don't play with any devils.

Implications

The research findings have implications for several groups of individuals that offer treatment, guidance, resources, and direct and indirect support to Black clergywomen and female pastors. These groups include therapists, medical professionals, clergy, pastoral counselors, and trained clinicians, especially faith-based counselors. The theoretical, empirical, and practical lenses were examined in the following sections.

Theoretical Implications

The theories which guided this research were Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) intersectionality theory and the SBW schema (Romero, 2000; Sullins, 2000; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). The study has theoretical implications for researchers examining intersectionality and the SBW cognitive

behavioral construct collectively as well as individually. The theoretical implications were explored individually in the subsequent sections.

Intersectionality

The themes of contemporary experiences with intersectionality and the responses to intersectionality extended the existing theoretical literature on Black clergywomen who experienced bias, discrimination, and prejudice from their male church leaders and colleagues. Despite women ascending to head leadership within the church, without significant changes in the sociocultural context and the continued embodiment of traditional, conservative views of women by male church leaders, subjugation, oppression, denied or limited opportunities, lack of support and other forms of intersectionality may continue (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). With less than one percent (.93%) of leadership being fulfilled by Black women, the intersectionality, prejudice, discrimination, and subjugation occurred through the male colleagues responsible for affirming, appointing, training, and leading these women (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Eight participants chose seminary to prepare them for the pastoral role. However, 25% of those participants experienced further subjugation, male preferential treatment, and training inequalities in their seminary experiences.

Strong Black Woman (SBW)

In order to create the SBW image for Black women, it was envisioned that these traits represented a Black woman who was powerful, independent, nurturing, high-achieving, conquering adversity (resilient) while controlling her emotions, and caring for family and others (Nelson et al.; 2016; Romero, 2000; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). These tenets defined the key

attributes that many Black women embraced, whether conscious of the SBW or Superwoman motifs or by manifestation of the characteristics in their sociocultural experiences.

Specific to the female clergywomen in this study, all 12 identified as strong Black women that upheld the cultural mandate of SBW and exhibited strength and resilience in their leadership style (Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Walker-Barnes, 2009; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Caregiving was crucial in pastoring for all participants (Cattich, 2012). As addressed earlier, difficulty existed in maintaining caregiving boundaries and healthy work-life balance and self-care practices (Dunbar et al., 2020; Etowa et al., 2017; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019). Self-reliance was replaced with faith and reliance on God in this study. Molly substantiated her dependence on her faith in God. She said, "I can do all things through Christ" (*King James Bible Online*, 1769/2017, Philippians 4:13a). Emotion suppression was revised to be less focused on concern with how male colleagues or other leaders viewed the clergywomen and more on their ability to utilize emotion suppression and expression as valuable tools in ministry when meeting the needs in personal and ministry situations. There was less concern for their character evaluation by others and more concern for the character building of others entrusted in their care.

Empirical Implications

There were also empirical implications for this study. For those researching marginalized women, specifically Black women, this study examined the experiences with intersectionality faced in the contemporary Black church setting (Crenshaw, 1991; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). Like their predecessors, it was found that women dealing with bias due to race and gender questioned their calling and ability to perform their roles as they tried to come to terms with being oppressed and subjugated (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). Due to the traditional view that men should lead, women in these male-dominated positions felt the need to

prove their abilities and find acceptance in their congregations, conventions, and associations. Overall, intersectionality tended to persist in their situations until 75% of these clergywomen found a better fit that attenuated some of the maladaptive experiences of pastoring through intersectionality. Twenty-five percent of the participants remained in quiet resistance (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). These Black clergywomen, while embracing SBW traits of strength, resilience, and faith in God, they also felt diminished, inadequate, and undesired in the eyes of those who should be affirming their giftings and call (Chamberlin, 2019). It was difficult, however, to find support because of a lack of understanding from those in their support networks or competition from those who should understand their situation. Otelia, when dealing with the loss of her pastor and the subsequent rejection and ostracizing from the replacement process, looked for support from other female ministers in her conference, "but they were not there, and they have not been there."

Importantly, these theories of intersectionality and SBW are complementary. This study filled the gap in the literature on the combined interpretive frameworks, intersectionality, and SBW and the impact on the well-being of Black female pastors and clergywomen in church leadership. When used together, they highlighted prejudice and bias within the church realm that can be dismissed or obscured. Second, this study showed how marginalized groups such as these Black clergywomen utilized a cognitive and behavioral construct like SBW to facilitate the management of stressors and to cope and survive the opposition and resistance. The participants thrived in efficacious ministry. In addition, these findings from this study helped to create awareness of the impact on the well-being of these marginalized clergywomen. This study can be duplicated to increase the data using the same population except for varying geographic locations or ages to compare and contrast results from different age groups. Future studies should consider

the views of Black clergywomen from voluntary versus appointment staffing and other similar studies to get a broader view to understand why 97% of Black church leadership in 2023 is dominated by men (Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018; Zippia, 2022).

Practical Implications

This study had practical implications for clinicians, mental health professionals, pastoral counselors, medical personnel, church governing bodies charged with appointing Black clergywomen, pastors, and other clergy. This study also had implications for academicians and seminary leaders who train future Black clergywomen who will enter a male-dominated role.

Therapists and medical professionals were instrumental in helping at least 50% of these women with health-altering consequences due to occupation and bias-related stress and self-denial. These counselors and medical professionals were instrumental in developing self-care strategies to restore, improve, or maintain healthy well-being (Dunbar et al., 2020). All 12 participants actively engaged in self-care strategies for similar reasons. Medical professionals, pastoral counselors, trained clinicians, especially faith-based counselors, should continue to learn and develop programs and interventions to help marginalized clergywomen address their needs related to their roles and the incumbent intersectionality experienced in those roles.

Two-thirds of these women attended seminary to prepare for pastoral duties, and 25% experienced bias and subjugation while attending seminary. Seminary leaders and professors need appropriate diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings to combat conservatism and embrace the needs of all students in these higher institutions of learning. These trainings can help adequately prepare future Black women and other marginalized groups as they endeavor to fulfill the call of God on their lives. Likewise, courses on diversity, equity, and inclusion must be added to existing curriculums and degree programs to prepare institutional leaders, staff, professors,

and students with 21st-century tools. A deeper, inclusive learning experience can help prepare future church leaders more effectively.

Thirdly, 100% of these participants were pastoring and fulfilling the call of God and experienced some form of bias, prejudice, or opposition within the confines of the church walls. The Black church was often seen as a place of refuge for all people, a place of hope and guidance (Brewer & Williams, 2019; Harmon et al., 2018). Leaders responsible for affirmation, candidacy, and training need to acknowledge the impact of intersectionality on these female leaders. Church leadership needs to understand that not everything is spiritual; people also have emotional and mental needs that must be met. Pastoring, regardless of race and gender, was a difficult role, and unlike secular jobs, it was viewed as a life calling and a permanent vocation. Add opposition and resistance to the demands of the position, and the weight was often tiring and unbearable. Yet, all 12 continued to thrive, persevere and endure the hardship for the sake of Christ (*King James Bible Online*, 1769/2017, 2 Timothy 4:5). As Precious said, "We don't have a choice. This is what we are called to do." Church leadership protocols and polity were placed on public display and failed its mission to provide a place of hope, a safe haven, and guidance for these Black clergywomen in Black church leadership (Brewer & Williams, 2019; Harmon et al., 2018). With increased awareness of this phenomenon, the response desired would entail the development of programs, support groups, and alliances geared towards ministering to the needs of these women in ministry. Enforcing zero-tolerance policies and diversity, equity, and inclusion programs that can shatter the stained-glass ceiling should be vital in every church to bring about change, true acceptance, and hope for all in the Black Church.

Christian Worldview

My faith in God and belief in His desire for freedom, hope, and release for the downtrodden convicted this researcher to increase awareness of this phenomenon (*King James Bible Online*, 1769/2017, Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19). The reconstruction of deeply embedded belief in our churches and American society regarding conservatism was needed, and God knew the right moment had come to advance this societal revolution. Women in general, even more so Black women, have been oppressed and discouraged in their pursuit to fulfill their pastoral and church leadership calling. Focusing on Black clergywomen in the South, where the controlling and negative images of slavery originated, was an essential perspective of this phenomenon. Their lived experiences needed to be heard and played an integral part in fulfilling this researcher's calling to study their lived experiences, connect their realities to the phenomenon's essence, and sound the clarion call for necessary change.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations were conscious decisions the researcher made to narrow the scope and define the boundaries of the study (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). For inclusion purposes, several key choices were made for this qualitative study. Intersectionality, in its original context regarding Black or African American women, required a race and gender exclusion of any candidates that were not Black and female (Coles, 2009; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Another delimitation was related to age. The researcher decided that participants in the study were required to be over 18 years old to avoid parental consent requirements, which allowed the participant to provide personal consent to participate in the study. The third delimitation was related to the SBW schema, the second interpretive framework. The SBW motif was developed to be a cultural mandate reactionary in nature to combat negative and controlling images of

Black women stemming from slavery (Nelson et al., 2016; Townsend et al., 2010; Thomas, 2001; Thomas et al., 2004; Walker-Barnes, 2009; West, 1995). The researcher focused on clergywomen in southern, Protestant, Black churches in the confederate states that fought to continue slavery, thus limiting the geographic region to those 11 states for inclusion in the study. These states included Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. This study did not include clergywomen in other geographic locations, particularly the other 39 states in the United States. Finally, selecting a phenomenological, qualitative study designed to study the lived experiences of the participants generally limits participation to 10 – 15 study participants, which limits the ability to interpret and generalize the findings beyond the study population (Husserl, 1983; Morrow, 2005; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015; Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019).

Study limitations represented weaknesses within a research design that potentially influenced the outcomes and conclusions, yet it was the responsibility of the researcher to provide the most accurate information possible about the phenomenon being studied (Heppner et al., 2015; Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). Moreover, the transparent presentation of limitations was also an ethical element of research that provided transferability and supported the proper interpretation, validity, and credibility of the findings (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). In this study, there were three identified limitations. First, the representation of the different geographic locations of the participants was a limitation. The goal of the study was to study participants from the 11 states that seceded from the original American colonies during the Civil War and formed the Confederate States of America, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. One participant from each state would have been the preferred representation. The 12 participants

resided and pastored as follows: one in Alabama, two in Arkansas, one in Georgia, three in Texas, and five in Virginia. With aggressive recruiting, none of the participants in Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee completed the mandatory participation criteria for the study, therefore not allowing for true representation in the data for each of those states in the participant panel, data collection, and final outcomes. Age was another limitation of this research study. Previous studies showed that age correlates with burnout negatively, and younger pastors tended to experience higher rates of attrition and burnout, which impacted efficacy, role strain, and well-being (Doolittle, 2008; Dunbar et al., 2020). Interestingly 16.6% of the 12 participants (two) were under 50, with the remaining 83.4% of the participants 55 years and older. This did not provide sufficient data for the younger age ranges to truly compare the impact of role strain factors such as burnout and attrition. Yet, the two youngest participants discussed burnout, stress, and transition in their roles and ministries. Thirdly, years of leadership presented another limitation. Similarly, research supported that 50% of clergy left the ministry in the first five years, yet 100% of the participants had served for five years or more (Dunbar et al., 2020; Meek et al., 2003). Importantly, the two pastors with five and six years in ministry, while in transition, transitioned from staff pastor to evangelist leadership and redefining roles, yet neither contemplated leaving church leadership.

Recommendations for Future Research

Statistics posed that in the United States, only 16.1% of all pastors were female, and less than one percent (.93%) were Black women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Many of these women experienced intersectionality, prejudice, discrimination, and subjugation from their male colleagues (Nelms Smarr et al., 2018; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). The participants shared in this qualitative inquiry their lived experiences with intersectionality, the influence of the SBW motif,

and the impact on their well-being. The findings affirmed that Black clergywomen in church leadership continued to be subjected to intersectionality and were strongly influenced by the tenets and embodiment of the SBW schema. Specifically, the participants used strength, resilience, faith, caregiving, and emotional containment, thus supporting the extant literature regarding intersectionality and the SBW cultural mandate for Black women (Chamberlin, 2019). While supporting the existing literature, this study provided seminal work on combining two interpretive frameworks. The delimitations and limitations of this study rendered additional information for future research.

First, the research findings were based on Black or African American women's experiences. The experience with intersectionality was likely to be experienced differently by other women of color, such as Hispanic, Latino, Caribbean, and even more significantly for women of other ethnicities. Moreover, the creation of the SBW cognitive behavioral construct was reactionary to the negative images of slavery and the Black woman's experience. It would be necessary to study the differing sociocultural experiences and motifs that were embraced and potentially impacted the experience of clergywomen from other ethnicities. Similar to this, a study that compares the cultural experiences of women of different races and ethnicities to those of women of color might provide more insight into the intersectionality that clergywomen as a whole experience. This valuable data would aid in creating a strategic plan to close the gender gap in church leadership.

Second, age was identified as a delimitation and limitation. The choice was to select participants 18 and older; however, the mean age of the 12 participants was 62.25, with only two participants younger than 55. The experiences of younger clergywomen were very limited. Black women over 55 likely represented women aware of the civil rights and Black power movements

of the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, the experiences of younger women could provide different perspectives on the phenomenon, and future exploration should examine these younger women's perspectives in-depth. Semi-structured interviews and surveys are likely effective data collection methods.

Aware that only one percent (.93%) of pastors in the United States were Black women, a research study open to Black clergywomen in the United States could provide more supportive data from a larger sample of the target population (Nelms Smarr et al., 2018; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Black clergywomen from other geographical locations could produce different outcomes regarding experiences with intersectionality while influenced by the SBW schema than the data of participants in only the American South. A quantitative study with modified questions for that format utilizing an outsourced survey such as Amazon Mechanical Turk or Qualtrics would be more appropriate for a larger sample. Similarly, regarding transferability, using this same transcendental, phenomenological, qualitative inquiry with different geographic locations could increase awareness and develop more insight into the phenomenon from a national perspective.

Another recommendation for future research would be to extend the research to all female pastors. Again, a quantitative study with modified questions would be more conducive to that design to capture participants all over the 50 states impacted by intersectionality. While reducing the study to capture experiences with intersectionality, the study would be critical to creating a greater understanding of the lived experiences of all 16% of women in church leadership (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021).

Another perspective for future research would be to further develop the understanding of this chosen population's experiences with intersectionality and SBW. Future studies should

consider a quantitative study of the effect of perceived stress on emotional, physical, and behavioral stress responses. This would highlight the mediating roles of coping style and resilience in Black female pastors' and clergywomen's well-being, similar to Xu and Yang's (2023) study regarding Chinese students and resilience.

Summary

This phenomenological research study explored the lived experiences of the Black women in ministry (e.g., pastors, clergywomen) who experienced intersectionality and were influenced by the Strong Black Woman archetype, specifically in the Black Church in the American South. It was guided by intersectionality and SBW. The study's findings generated six themes and 15 sub-themes that represented the participants' lived experiences. The six themes were contemporary experiences with intersectionality, responses to intersectionality, SBW influence, well-being, PERMA, and the How I Thrive mantra. The theme intersectionality had four sub-themes, denied opportunities-appointments, preaching, training, misogynistic attitudes and behaviors, remuneration inequities, and support systems significance. The theme of responses to intersectionality also had three sub-themes: emotions and feelings, questioning self, and best fit seeking (circumventing). The theme SBW influence had four sub-themes: strength and resilience, self-reliance and faith, caregiving boundaries, and emotion suppression revised. The theme of well-being had four sub-themes: work-life balance, self-denial, self-care requirements, and self-care types. The six themes answered the three research questions that guided the study. The findings supported the theoretical frameworks because all Black female pastors and clergywomen experienced intersectionality in their personal lives and ministerial calling. The participants utilized the SBW tenets to facilitate coping in the face of adversity and the stresses of pastoring.

The first research question asked what is the lived experience of intersectionality of Black female pastors/clergywomen. This first question was answered with the two themes of lack of intersectionality and the responses to intersectionality that provided a thorough account of how each participant reacted to prejudice, discrimination, and bias caused by the intersection of race and gender. Intersectionality was a reality for all 12 participants, personally and professionally. The women's reactions to these encounters were varied. Positively, 75% left the mainline church's bias in search of the best fit to carry out their calling, with four starting non-denominational churches, one leaving her staff minister position to pursue her passion for evangelism and itinerant preaching, four serving in other ministries until the right platform was found. Three of the participants stayed in mainline denominations and achieved their goals despite the opposition and resistance they encountered (Ngunjiri et al., 2012).

The second research question asked how Black female pastors/clergywomen describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on their lives, calling, and well-being. This second question was answered with the theme of SBW influence. First, all 12 participants had strength and resilience scores in the high and very high ranges (Chamberlin, 2019). The ability to be resilient functioned as a helpful coping mechanism to deal with or manage both internal and external pressures. They emulated the behavior their mothers and grandmothers utilized to overcome adversity. After analyzing the data, it became significantly clear that the 12 women of faith heavily relied on that faith, not self-reliance, to help them get through difficult circumstances in life and ministry. All 12 participants scored well above average, with 11 of them scoring high or very high in the MSBWS' faith category (Chamberlin, 2019). Also, caregiving played a key role in their pastoring (Cattich, 2012). Yet, the inability to set healthy boundaries led to issues with interrole conflict, developing work-life balance, and engagement in

needed self-care practices. Lastly, previous notions about the function of emotion suppression as a coping method have been modified (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Nelson et al., 2016; Romero, 2000; Watson-Singleton, 2017). Pastoral leaders must be courageous when guiding the flock through difficult times like mourning and loss. Yet, all participants highlighted that the necessity for honesty and integrity in ministry overcame the concerns of being perceived as weak by their male counterparts. People must understand that it is "okay not to be okay," that crying out in pain does not imply a lack of faith in God, and that imitating the Messiah, who wept as well, symbolizes our humanity.

The third question asked how Black female pastors/clergywomen describe well-being as it pertains to their lives and ministerial calling. This question was answered by three themes well-being, PERMA, and How I Thrive mantra. All 12 participants discussed their struggles with work-life balance, expectations of ministry, and how the lines between these things blurred, providing evidence for the empirical data (Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Visker et al., 2016). Self-sacrifice was prevalent and a major component of the deleterious health outcomes for half of the participants. Yet, the stress of pastoring and the resulting bias and prejudice were regarded as significant negative impacts on their general health and well-being, even though research suggested that the SBW negatively affected their health. Several participants shared that the SBW positively influenced their health and served as a coping mechanism to manage the other stressors that impacted them more significantly (Baruth et al., 2014; Proeschold-Bell, 2020; Proeschold-Bell et al., 2011).

Regarding self-care requirements, more than six participants needed managed care and major modifications to their work-life balance in the form of self-care due to their caregiving and denying themselves (Etowa et al., 2017; Heck et al., 2018). Importantly, the emphasis on

scheduling and understanding the power of no were two crucial prerequisites to help with work-life balance and incorporating self-care into their routines. The 12 participants shared their self-care practices, and all 12 confirmed daily self-care enhanced their general well-being, increased life satisfaction, and supported their commitment to the call. The PERMA scores were indicative of a balanced state of well-being. All 12 participants scored above average in all five PERMA domains, as well as overall health and happiness, indicating that they have maintained a robust state of well-being. Their narratives examined their lives and ministries, detailing how they focused on pleasing God and serving others. They managed the stress and anxiety of pastoring coupled with intersectionality while flourishing in successful ministry and maintaining their well-being. PERMA proved to be an effective tool for measuring the well-being of the study participants (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). The last theme, How I Thrive, underlined each woman's will to persevere despite intersectionality, ministry challenges, and demands while being influenced by SBW. Each of the 12 participants gave their own slogan. This mantra, coupled with the SBW tenets and their faith in God, was how these women guided their lives and continued to thrive. This data created new research on the combination of intersectionality and SBW as a theoretical framework to study the experiences of marginalized Black women like these Black clergywomen.

The implications from the study suggested that within the governing bodies, subjugation, oppression, lack of support, and other intersectionality-related issues persisted. Male church leaders continue to embody conventional, conservative views of women that created opposition and resistance for women serving in pastoral roles and impacted their success in effective leadership. Secondly, these governing bodies and leaders have a responsibility to ensure these

women have equitable and accessible opportunities, resources, and a robust support system that would enable their ability to thrive in their pastoring roles.

The empirical literature affirmed the experiences these Black clergywomen have endured (Etowa et al., 2017; Homan & Burdette, 2021; Ngunjiri et al., 2012; Smarr et al., 2018). The theoretical literature driving this study, intersectionality and SBW, proved appropriate for exploring prejudice and bias based on race and gender as well as the coping mechanisms to survive and thrive (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis et al., 2018; Etowa et al., 2017; Smarr et al., 2018). These women recounted their stories to empower other young women that will succeed them and increase awareness of their negative experiences to compel church officials to build on the gains already made and make policy and procedures more inclusive of women. With these new strategies enforced, sociocultural beliefs could change to reflect God's plan for His daughters accurately. He used Deborah, the daughters of Zelophehad, Phoebe, Junia, and many other female leaders in the Bible. Women have been and are significant and equally important in leading His people.

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- Zippia. (2022). *Pastor demographics and statistics in the U.S.* Zippia The Career Expert.
<https://www.zippia.com/pastor-jobs/demographics/#gender-statistics>

Appendix A Demographic Screening Survey

Please answer each of the questions with one of the responses provided.

1. Are you a female?

Yes	
No	

*Skip logic added to end survey if the answer is No.

2. Are you heterosexual?

Yes	
No	

*Skip logic added to end survey if the answer is No.

3. Age:

Under 18	
18-20	
21-29	
30-39	
40-49	
50-59	
60 or older	

*Skip logic added to end survey if the answer is Under 18.

4. Are you Black/African American?

Yes	
No	

*Skip logic added to end survey if the answer is No.

5. Are you Protestant/Christian?

Yes	
No	

*Skip logic added to end survey if the answer is No.

6. Are you currently serving in a pastoral/church leadership role? (examples: Pastor, Senior Pastor, Bishop, Prelate, Presbyter, Prophet/Prophetess, Reverend, Elder, Assistant Pastor, Associate Pastor, Evangelist)

Yes	
No	

*Skip logic added to end survey if the answer is No.

7. Have you experienced intersectionality, prejudice, discrimination, or bias due specifically to your race and gender (Black/African American female)?

Yes	
No	

*Skip logic added to end survey if the answer is No

8. Do you live in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, or Virginia?

Yes	
No	

*Skip logic added to end survey if the answer is No.

9. Are you currently under the care of a medical doctor or mental health care professional?

Yes	
No	

*Skip logic added to end survey if the answer is Yes.

10. Total Years Serving in Pastoral/Church Leadership:

1-2	
3-5	
5-10	
11-15	
16-20	
21-25	
Greater than 25	

11. Employment:

Full-time	
Part-time	
Self-employed	
Unemployed	
Retired	

Other _____

12. Non-Seminary/Theological Education:

High School Diploma or GED Equivalent	
Some College	
Associate degree	
Bachelor's degree	
Master's degree	
Doctoral degree	

13. Theological/Seminary Education:

Some College	
Associate degree	
Bachelor's degree	
Master's degree	
Doctoral degree	
None	

The Multidimensional Strong Black Woman labeled (MSBWS) questions regarding the participants embodying the Strong Black Woman tenets were added to the Screening Survey after this question. Per Dr. Volk, I took the 32 items from the original survey. These questions were answered using an eleven-point Likert scale, (1) Not at all and (11) Extremely. The items were a portion of the SBW Qualtrics survey shared with me by Dr. Volk for inclusion in my Screening Survey. To determine the embodiment of Strong Black Woman tenets, I scored based on the 32 items from The Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale (MSBWS) from Dr. Chamberlin's dissertation (see Appendix C), the document attached to the IRB application as part of the IRB Approval (see Appendix J).

The PERMA Profiler questions were the final blocks for the Screening Survey that were scored based on the assessment instructions in the PERMA Profiler document attached to the IRB application (see Appendices F and G).

Please provide your contact information below so I can schedule an interview with you:

Name: _____

Contact Information:

a. Email _____

b. Phone _____

End of survey message.

Appendix B Permission to Use Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale

Using the Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale



Volk, Fred (Ctr for Counseling & Family Studies)
Approve

Sat 3/12/2022 12:09 PM



Harden, Karen Elizabeth
All, This is great news. Thank you so much. I will await Dr. Volk's approval and speak with Dr. Bak...

Sat 3/12/2022 10:42 AM



Chamberlin, Brandi Janee (Ctr for Counseling & Family Studies)

Fri 3/11/2022 11:00 AM



To: Harden, Karen Elizabeth

Cc: Baker, Tracy (Community Care and Counseling); Volk, Fred (Ctr for Counseling & Family Studies)

Hello Karen,

Thank you for reaching out to me about this. You may certainly have my permission to use this scale. I am including Dr. Volk here as well to ensure his approval as well as some of our partner researchers.

Thank you!

Brandi Chamberlin, PhD, NCC
Adjunct Faculty
Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies
School of Behavioral Sciences



Volk, Fred (Ctr for Counseling & Family Studies)



To: Harden, Karen Elizabeth +1 other

Thu 12/15/2022 9:28 AM

Cc: Baker, Tracy (Community Care and Counseling)

Karen,

The scale is an initial pass. There are no special scoring mechanisms (i.e., weighting). Simply, average the items from each subscale.

Yours in Christ,

Dr. Volk

Fred Volk, PhD
Professor
Director of Doctoral Research
Department of Community Care and Counseling
Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies
(434) 592-4648

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY

Appendix C Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale

Of the original 66 items, 32 items were correlated with one another at greater than .4. Due to no extreme violations of normality, Maximum Likelihood (ML) extraction with oblimin (oblique) rotation was used. The original ML kept all factors having an eigenvalue of at least 1. All items kept had an absolute factor loading of at least 0.4. The weakest-loading items were iteratively removed on any of the factors that had cross-loadings less than 0.4 as a means to refine the instrument and decrease noise. The scree plot suggested six meaningful factors that consisted of 32 items together (see Table 4.2). All of these factors are expected to be positively correlated with the MSBWS subscales.

Table 4.2

Final Factor Structure (Pattern Matrix) Maximum Likelihood (ML) Extraction Factor Analysis with Oblique Rotation

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	r^2
Faith							
My faith is a top priority.	.936						.88
I pray often and ask God for guidance.	.913						.83
I believe God will help me through anything.	.871						.76
My faith will get me through anything.	.824						.68
I would describe myself as a God-fearing woman.	.801						.64
God is important to me.	.764						.58
If my faith is strong, my problems will disappear.	.477						.23
Stoicism							
I must hide my emotions.		.913					.83
I can't let people know my real feelings.		.831					.69
No one wants to hear how I feel.		.693					.48
Being vulnerable is a sign of weakness.		.585					.34

Table 4.2

Final Factor Structure (Pattern Matrix) Maximum Likelihood (ML) Extraction Factor Analysis with Oblique Rotation

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	r^2
I don't like people to see me cry.		.564					.32
I deal with my feelings by myself.		.516					.27
Femininity							
It is important for women to be ladylike at all time.			.908				.82
I have to be a lady at all times.			.879				.77
There are certain things that women just don't do, say, or wear.			.810				.66
It is important for women to be graceful.			.710				.50
I believe in traditional male/female roles.			.667				.45
It is not appropriate for a woman to show too much skin.			.637				.41
Strength							
I am capable of achieving anything I set my mind to.				.826			.68
I strive for excellence in all things.				.800			.64
I am confident.				.631			.40
I take pride in being a strong woman.				.623			.39
Independence							
No one will get things done for me.						.841	.71
I am the only one who can do what I need done.						.797	.63
I have to make a things happen for myself.						.705	.50
I can only depend on myself.						.651	.42
I can handle things by myself.						.466	.22
Caretaking							
It is my duty to be there for everyone.						.933	.87
I have to show people they can count on me.						.661	.44
I sacrifice my needs for others.						.563	.32
I am always available to help.						.543	.29

Appendix D Interview Questions/Guide

Standardized Open-Ended Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this study. The purpose of this study is to understand further and create awareness of the lived experiences of Black clergywomen that experience intersectionality while influenced by the SBW schema. The following questions will guide our conversation as you share your experience. Please note that this interview will be recorded and transcribed. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript to ensure it accurately reflects your answers to the questions. You can opt to discontinue this interview at any time and refrain from answering any question(s) with which you are not comfortable. Please be assured that your privacy is of utmost importance. Your chosen pseudonym will be used to document your experience. Please feel free to ask any questions that you may have. Thank you.

Open-Ended Interview Questions

Introductory

1. Please tell me about yourself. Age ____, Denomination ____, State Reside/Church ____, Title/Position in Ministry ____, Exact years in ministry ____, Other details ____.
2. Describe your spiritual journey to become a thriving pastor.
3. How do you describe your tenure as Pastor?

Intersectionality

4. What barriers do you face as a Black female pastor/clergywoman?
5. What type of intersectionality (discrimination, bias, or prejudice due to race and gender) have you experienced in your personal life?
6. How have these experiences (intersectionality) impacted your personal life?
7. What type of resistance (if any) did you experience accepting your call and the ordination process?
8. What type of intersectionality (subjugation, discrimination, bias, or prejudice due to race and gender) have you experienced when interacting with your male clergy colleagues?

9. What type of intersectionality (discrimination, bias, or prejudice due to race and gender) have you experienced regarding your calling overall?
10. How have these experiences (intersectionality) impacted your ministry?
11. Were you ever rejected or limited in the opportunities to be selected for employment (pastoral role)? If yes, how did you resolve the situation?
12. How has intersectionality impacted your well-being? Please provide examples.

Strong Black Woman (SBW)

13. If you are aware, how did you become introduced to the SBW motif?
14. How do you, as a Black female pastor/clergywoman, describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on your life?
15. How do you, as a Black female pastor/clergywoman, describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on your ministry?
16. How do you, as a Black female pastor/clergywoman, describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on your well-being?
17. Describe your experience(s) with being self-reliant or independent when addressing matters in your personal and professional life?
18. Strength and resilience overlap in the SBW construct as one must be strong to survive and overcome adversity, resistance, and oppression. How has the characteristics of SBW (strength and resilience) helped you overcome:
 - a. Intersectionality – bias, prejudice, discrimination?
 - b. Challenging situations in ministry?
 - c. Challenging situations in life?

19. How has nurturing and caregiving impacted your pastoral care and counseling roles?

Your personal life?

20. How necessary is it to exercise emotion containment when ministering to the congregation's needs and leading through crisis and adversity to avoid the appearance of weakness or an inability to contain emotion(s)? Provide detailed examples.

21. How has embracing the SBW schema impacted your well-being? Has it added stress or negative aspects to your health? Please provide examples.

Well-being

22. How do you, as a Black female pastor/clergywoman, describe well-being as it pertains to your ministerial calling?

- a. What role-related experiences generate positive emotions for you?
- b. What role-related experiences generate negative emotions for you?
- c. What role-related experiences are engaging for you?
- d. How do you describe your role-related relationships?
- e. What role-related experiences are meaningful for you as a Black female pastor/clergywoman?
- f. What role-related experiences generate a sense of accomplishment for you?

23. How do you, as a Black female pastor/clergywoman, describe well-being as it pertains to your personal life?

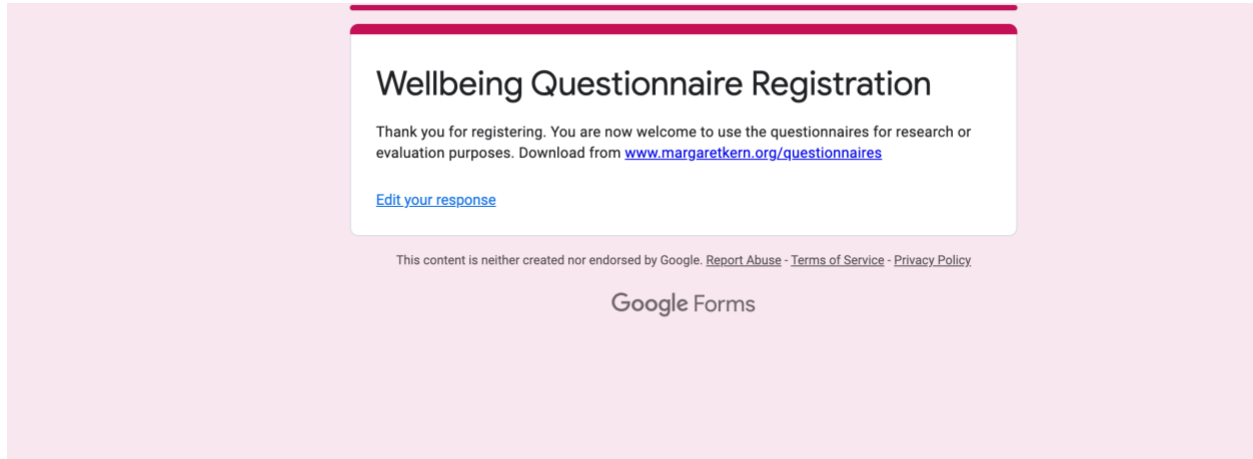
- a. What experiences generate positive emotions for you?
- b. What experiences generate negative emotions for you?
- c. What experiences are engaging for you?
- d. How do you describe your personal relationships?

- e. Are these relationships different than your ministry peers/relationships?
 - f. What experiences are meaningful for you as a Black female?
 - g. What experiences generate a sense of accomplishment for you?
24. How do you balance your work and life demands?
25. What support systems and networks do you as a Black female pastor/clergywoman have organizationally (denomination), professionally, personally, and socially? With female peers? With male colleagues?
26. Pastoring is a demanding role, and how do you find yourself denying personal needs, self-care, and health?
27. What types of self-care do you engage in to avoid or alleviate burnout and stress?

Concluding

28. As we close the session, give a brief synopsis of how you have thrived in your leadership role while faced with intersectionality yet embracing the strength, resilience, independence, nurturing (caregiving), and emotional control traits that comprise the SBW motif?
29. Reflecting on your experience in ministry, what advice would you give to young women seeking a pastoral role and church leadership?
30. We've covered much ground in our conversation, and I so appreciate the time you've given to this. One final question. What else do you think would be vital for me to know about how you thrive in efficacious ministry over the years that I haven't asked you about?

Appendix E Permission to Use PERMA Profiler Well-being Questionnaire



The screenshot shows a Google Forms interface with a pink background. A white box in the center contains the title "Wellbeing Questionnaire Registration". Below the title, a message thanks the user for registering and provides a link to download questionnaires from www.margaretkern.org/questionnaires. There is also a link to "Edit your response". At the bottom of the white box, a disclaimer states that the content is neither created nor endorsed by Google, with links to "Report Abuse", "Terms of Service", and "Privacy Policy". The Google Forms logo is centered below the white box.

Wellbeing Questionnaire Registration

Thank you for registering. You are now welcome to use the questionnaires for research or evaluation purposes. Download from www.margaretkern.org/questionnaires

[Edit your response](#)

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google. [Report Abuse](#) - [Terms of Service](#) - [Privacy Policy](#)

Google Forms

Permissions and Use of the Measures

You are welcome to use these measures for research or non-commercial purposes, giving credit as noted in the measures. There is no cost involved in using the measures for these purposes. For commercial uses of the measures, contact the [Wellbeing Lab](#).

To access the measures, simply click on the links to the relevant measures (i.e., you can access the measures, with scoring information, simply by clicking on the name of the measure below).

- [PERMA-Profiler](#)
- [Workplace Wellbeing Survey](#)
- [EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Wellbeing](#)

Appendix F PERMA Profiler Well-being Questionnaire

The PERMA-Profiler Measure

#	Label	Question	Response Anchors
Block 1	A1	How much of the time do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your goals?	0 = never, 10 = always
	E1	How often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?	
	P1	In general, how often do you feel joyful?	
	N1	In general, how often do you feel anxious?	
	A2	How often do you achieve the important goals you have set for yourself?	
Block 2	H1	In general, how would you say your health is?	0 = terrible, 10 = excellent
Block 3	M1	In general, to what extent do you lead a purposeful and meaningful life?	0 = not at all, 10 = completely
	R1	To what extent do you receive help and support from others when you need it?	
	M2	In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do in your life is valuable and worthwhile?	
	E2	In general, to what extent do you feel excited and interested in things?	
	Lon	How lonely do you feel in your daily life?	
Block 4	H2	How satisfied are you with your current physical health?	0 = not at all, 10 = completely
Block 5	P2	In general, how often do you feel positive?	0 = never, 10 = always
	N2	In general, how often do you feel angry?	
	A3	How often are you able to handle your responsibilities?	
	N3	In general, how often do you feel sad?	
	E3	How often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?	
Block 6	H3	Compared to others of your same age and sex, how is your health?	0 = terrible, 10 = excellent
Block 7	R2	To what extent do you feel loved?	0 = not at all, 10 = completely
	M3	To what extent do you generally feel you have a sense of direction in your life?	
	R3	How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?	
	P3	In general, to what extent do you feel contented?	
Block 8	hap	Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?	0 = not at all, 10 = completely

Appendix G Recruitment Flyer and Email to Participants

Research Participants Needed

How We Thrive: Black Clergywomen Experiencing Intersectionality and Influenced by the Strong Black Woman Schema

- Are you a Black clergywoman 18 years of age or older?
- Do you currently serve in a pastoral/church leadership role in a Protestant church in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia?
- Have you ever experienced intersectionality, bias, discrimination, or prejudice because you are a Black female?
- Do you believe you are a Strong Black Woman and not currently under the care of a physician or mental health professional?

If you answered **yes** to all four questions listed above, you may be eligible to participate in a research study.

The purpose of this research study is to understand further and create awareness of the lived experiences of Black female pastors/clergywomen who experience intersectionality while influenced by the Strong Black Woman motif.

Participants will be asked to describe their experience in an online/virtual interview and review their interview transcripts. An optional focus group will be offered to participants as a culminating event. Interviews will be audio-recorded. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

A consent document will be emailed to you.

Participants will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card on completion of the transcript review.

The study will be conducted via Zoom.

Karen Harden, a doctoral candidate in the Community Care and Counseling Department/School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Please contact Karen Harden at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] for more information and to be sent a screening survey.

Dear Pastor/Clergywoman:

As a graduate student in the Community Care and Counseling Department/School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. I am conducting research to understand better the lived experiences of Black female pastors/clergywomen who experience intersectionality, bias, prejudice, and discrimination, while influenced by the Strong Black Woman motif. Last week an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to complete the screening survey if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is **November 15, 2022**.

Participants, if willing, will be asked to describe their experience in an online/virtual interview (one hour) and review their interview transcript (15-20 minutes) for member-checking purposes. An optional focus group (30-45 minutes) will be offered to participants as a culminating event for member-checking purposes for the final presentation. The interview and the culminating focus group will be audio-recorded. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click here [Screening Survey](#) to complete the screening survey. I will contact you at the phone number/email address listed as preferred on the screening survey to schedule an interview. Please contact me, Karen Harden, at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] for more information.

A consent document will be sent via email one week before the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me before the interview.

Participants will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card sent electronically to the email provided upon completion of the interview transcript review.

Sincerely,

Karen Harden
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix H Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of the Project: How We Thrive: The Lived Experiences of Black Women Pastors and Clergywomen Experiencing Intersectionality and Influenced By The Strong Black Woman Schema – A Transcendental, Phenomenological Qualitative Study

Principal Investigator: Karen Harden, Liberty University, School of Behavioral Sciences

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study on southern, Black Women in Ministry that have experienced intersectionality and are influenced by the Strong Black Woman stereotype. To participate, you must be a Black, female, heterosexual pastor/ clergywoman, age 30 – 60 years old, in a Protestant church, with formal seminary training/education, actively serving for at least the past five years in a pastoral/clergy role; also you have experienced the phenomenon being explored and can articulate your lived experiences (van Manen, 2014). Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe the experiences of thriving, Black women in ministry (e.g., pastors, clergywomen) – experiencing intersectionality (subjugation, oppression, and/or bias) and is influenced by the Strong Black Woman (SBW) motif, specifically in the Black Church in the Southern United States, also known as the American South. This study can show how these experiences impact church leadership and can be instrumental in creating support networks for clergywomen with similar experiences.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Participate in a one-to-one interview to be scheduled at your convenience. This interview will take approximately one hour and be video-recorded and audio-recorded with Karen Harden.
2. Participate in journaling activities in at least two formal sessions, one before the initial interview and one before creating textural and structural descriptions. These events will take between thirty minutes to an hour.
3. Participate in a focus group at the culmination of the analysis process to verify themes and textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon to ensure accuracy of interpretations.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

This study seeks to explore Black female clergywomen's experiences and allow a platform for a group whose voice has vastly been undervalued in the study of church leadership. This study's findings can be used to aid in advancing women in ministry leadership, impact hiring practices within church leadership, and provide critical insight that can be used in formulating support networks for women with similar lived experiences. Moreover, benefits to society include additional insight into the phenomenon, ultimately providing increased awareness of the need for church leadership reform. I am hopeful that your success and the exposure to the continued bias and prejudices clergywomen face will empower others to transcend the constraints placed on them by race and gender to effectively fulfill their many roles and maintain their well-being, as

well as initiate the development of sustainable support networks and structures among these women.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?
--

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. The minimal risk includes a potential breach of confidentiality if the data is lost or stolen; however, all possible measures to guard against a data breach will be taken.

How will personal information be protected?
--

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher[s] will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms/aliases. You will be provided the opportunity to choose a pseudonym for the research process.

Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.

Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations.

After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. **Note:** Data should be retained for three years upon completion of the study.

Interviews and the focus group will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher[s] will have access to these recordings.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Confidential means the researcher will be able to link individual participants to the information they provide or are associated with, but I will not disclose participant identities or how named, or identifiable individuals responded.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Participants who complete all of the expectations outlined in this consent form will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card upon completion of the study. No monetary benefits will be given if a subject does not complete the study. Email addresses will be requested for compensation purposes; however, they will be pulled and separated from your responses to maintain anonymity.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher[s] at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be

included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Karen Harden. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at or via telephone contact at

██████████ You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Tracy Baker, at

██████████.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher[s], **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board,

1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records.

The researcher[s] will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix I Mental Health Referral List

<https://www.betterhelp.com>

<https://www.choosingtherapy.com/>

<https://www.faithfulcounseling.com/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us>

<https://www.sondermind.com/>

<https://thriveworks.com/>

Appendix J IRB Approval**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 12, 2022

Karen Harden
Tracy Baker

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY22-23-202 How We Thrive: Black Clergywomen Experiencing Intersectionality and Influenced by the Strong Black Woman Schema

Dear Karen Harden, Tracy Baker,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: October 12, 2022. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

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

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

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

Sincerely,

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

Appendix K Delve Codes and Snippets

Initial List of Codes and Snippets

Abstention - 6
 Angry Black woman - 7
 Anointing has no gender - 9
 Appointment, candidacy, and opportunities - 58
 Best fit seeking - 6
 Biases, male preferences, prejudices, and subjugation -75
 Bittersweet explanations - 15
 Calling - 17
 Caregiving boundaries - 9
 Circumventing stained-glass ceiling - 6
 Closing statements - 15
 Denying self - 33
 Emotions - 48
 Emotion suppression shift - 64
 Female competitiveness - 21
 Influence of SBW - 23
 Intersectionality lived experiences - 12
 Intersectionality personal life - 9
 Intro to SBW - 20
 Final advice to others - 26
 How I Thrive mantra – 13
 Lack of support systems – 24
 Male preference, inequities, and inequalities - 22
 Misogynistic behaviors - 35
 More educated - 11
 Negatives of SBW - 18
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 Responses to intersectionality - 5
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 Support Systems - 10
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Appendix L Culminating Focus Group Presentation

Participants Culminating Group

Standardized Open-Ended Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this focus group. The purpose of this study is to understand further and create awareness of the lived experiences of Black clergywomen that experience intersectionality while influenced by the SBW schema. The purpose of this focus group is to review the Results - prevalent themes, the summary of findings, and responses to the research questions. Please note that this focus group will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Please feel free to ask any questions that you may have. Thank you.

The prevalent themes are:

Themes	Sub-Themes
2. Contemporary Experiences with Intersectionality	a. Denied Opportunities - Appointments, Preaching and Training b. Misogynistic Attitudes and Behaviors c. Remuneration Inequities d. Support Systems Significance
7. Responses to Intersectionality	a. Emotions and Feelings b. Questioning Self c. Best Fit Seeking (Circumventing)
8. SBW Influence	a. Strength and Resilience b. Self-Reliance and Faith c. Caregiving Boundaries d. Emotion Suppression Revised
9. Well-Being	a. Work-Life Balance b. Self-Denial c. Self-Care Requirements d. Self-Care Types
10. PERMA	
11. How I Thrive Mantra	

Question: *The prevalent themes are:*

- Are they accurate? Representative of the phenomenon? Consensus. Yes.

The Summary of Findings:

Research Question Responses

Research question	Themes and Sub-Themes
4) What is the lived experience of intersectionality of Black female pastors/clergywomen?	G. Contemporary Experiences with Intersectionality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Denied Opportunities - Appointments, Preaching, and Training b. Misogynistic Attitudes and Behaviors c. Remuneration Inequities d. Support Systems Significance H. Responses to Intersectionality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Emotions and Feelings b. Questioning Self c. Best Fit Seeking (Circumventing)
Research question two	
5) How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on their lives, calling, and well-being?	I. SBW Influence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Strength and Resilience b. Self-Reliance and Faith c. Caregiving Boundaries d. Emotion Suppression Revised
Research question three	
6) How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe well-being as it pertains to their lives and ministerial calling?	J. Well-Being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Work-Life Balance b. Self-Denial c. Self-Care Requirements d. Self-Care Types K. PERMA L. How I Thrive Mantra

The Summary of Findings:

- Are they accurate? Representative of the phenomenon? Consensus. Yes.

Research Question One: What is the lived experience of intersectionality of Black female pastors/clergywomen?

A. Contemporary Experiences with Intersectionality

a. Denied Opportunities - Appointments, Preaching, Training

i. Appointments –

1. Seven of 12 experienced some form of candidacy denial
 - a. Candace's process was aborted.
 - b. Dee was refused candidacy UMC.
 - c. At the time of accepting their call, Diane and Harmony, Missionary Baptist and Baptist, respectively, were not affirmed by their pastor.
 - d. Dr. Gracious alluded to inequity in appointments in the Methodist faith, AME, CME, UMC, and AME Zion.
 - e. Sherry shared that her first Bishop “put the men in leadership positions, but he didn't appoint women in any leadership positions.”
 - f. Joyful positively shared that the Assemblies of God are making slow progress with women’s ordinations in her state.

ii. Preaching-

1. Importantly, 50% of the participants have been prevented or discouraged from preaching in their pastoral roles.
 - a. Candace was not allowed on the list of supply preachers.
 - b. Charity Grace in a foreign country was told, “they wouldn't accept her because they'd never seen a woman Bishop.”
 - c. Diane was invited to preach, but the male preacher did not allow her to speak (he preached).
 - d. Dr. Gracious shared that there were biases in pastoring and preaching opportunities.
 - e. Joyful shared that she knew of places she could not preach but did not focus on those places.
 - f. Harmony and Otelia spoke about being invited to preach at only women-themed services. “We needed a female here today for A, B, C, and D.”

iii. Training –

1. Eight of the 12 – Charity Grace, Dee, Diane, Dr. Gracious, Harmony, Joyful, Otelia, and Rev. Patient
2. Eight found it necessary to attend seminary for proper training to pastor and prepare for ministry effectively.
 - a. Dr. Gracious's path to graduate education was chosen for her.
 - b. Otelia experienced male preference and bias in seminary and her ordination process.
 - c. Harmony was subjected to misogynistic comments.
 - d. Rev. Patient had male church leaders that were intimidated by her level of education and seminary training.
 - e. Sherry's first Bishop did not want to train the women.

Revision: add that in this discipline of training, exceptions were made for men, not requiring them to have the same level of training and seminary – Charity Grace, Dr. Gracious, and Otelia

iv. Misogynistic Attitudes and Behaviors –

1. Ten of 12 commented regarding conservatism and traditional views.
 - a. Candace was treated as a “sex object” during her ordination process.
 - b. Charity Grace in a televised service was told by a male prominent figure, “You know you are too cute to preach this good; you need to sit down and be somebody's wife.” (Wrote how that was turned into a major ministry lesson).
 - c. Similarly, Dee was embarrassed by a preacher when walked into a service.
 - d. Diane explained how women in their convention are overlooked and ignored.
 - e. Dr. Gracious shared, “People overstep boundaries more with women in terms of time expectations.”
 - f. Harmony experiences at seminary being asked if she was there to take her husband's notes.
 - g. Otelia's pastor had them leave the room before an inappropriate conversation began.
 - h. Precious was told, “You are a female; you don't need to be doing this. I can do this better because I'm a male; I've been in ministry for 30 years.”
 - i. Rev. Patient and Sherry's husband supported them where they were not accepted; in Sherry's words, “her husband ran a lot of interference for her.”

v. Remuneration Inequities –

1. Charity Grace, Dr. Gracious, Precious, and Sherry experienced this significantly. p.156

Revision: Dr. Gracious said, “While progress is being made, pay inequities still exist in the regions such as the American South.”

- b. Support Systems Significance – all 12 stressed importance of viable support systems
 - i. Four types of support systems lack/strength
 - 1. Internal support - While eight of the 12 shared strong support from their pastors and other church leaders, Diane, Sherry, Precious, and Candace shared scenarios regarding internal church opposition to their pastoral and church leadership positions – p.157
 - 2. External support - Again, eight participants had great internal church support but met opposition from outside leaders and denominations. Joyful, Charity Grace, and Sherry provided great insight into this experience especially from the Bible Belt perspective pp.159-160.
 - 3. Family support – Otelia (delayed because of her father, Candace (family), and Charity Grace (divorce story), two did not want their names shared because their husbands are not supporting their ministry still today and are jealous of their success– p.161
 - 4. Female competitiveness - female competitiveness is still prevalent in contemporary experiences, with 75% (nine of 12 participants). p.162

B. Responses to Intersectionality

a. Emotions and Feelings

Emotions and Feelings of Participants

Participant	Discouraged/ Disheartened	Empowered	Hurt	Isolated/ Lonely/ Rejected	Opposed/ Usurped	Sad/ Depressed	Stressed/ Overwhelmed
Diane		x	x			x	x
Molly	x	x		x	x	x	
Otelia		x	x	x	x		x
Joyful	x	x					x
Rev. Patient		x					x
Dr. Gracious	x	x			x		x
Sherry	x	x				x	
Precious		x	x	x	x		
Charity Grace		x		x	x	x	
Candace		x	x	x	x	x	
Dee		x		x			x
Harmony		x		x			x

b. Questioning Self

i. Initial call – four of 12

1. Charity Grace, Diane, Dr. Gracious, Harmony (not affirmed so doubted in Baptist church at 19).
2. Precious provided the spin of doubting herself because of other's opinions and derogatory statements, and then counting the cost of increased loneliness and rejection.
3. Rev. Patient explained, "Even in preparing myself, and going to seminary to prepare, it was stressful, discouraging, and always that weakness, doubting your calling, and the harshness but I would push further."

- c. Best Fit Seeking (Circumventing) –
 - i. Nine participants - 75% broke out of the confines of the mainline church to fulfill their call while the remaining three stayed and fulfilled their purpose despite the opposition and resistance they sometimes face.
 - ii. Candace, Charity Grace, and Dee left the mainline denominations and planted non-denominational churches.
 - iii. Sherry created a church-without-walls, technology-based “501(c)(3) written as such that she can actually oversee churches.”
 - iv. Joyful resigned from her staff minister position to become an evangelist and nonprofit ministry founder, allowing her time to support her local church and complete her doctoral degree.
 - v. Otelia while not being utilized at her home church is currently serving at another church, working on her curriculum for family and youth, and praying about her transition into ministry with her new husband; she is a recent newlywed.
 - vi. Even Dr. Gracious, Precious, and Rev. Patient while still serving in their denominations have other ministries, positions, and ventures that allow them to utilize their gifts.

Research Question Two: How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe the influence of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) on their lives, calling, and well-being?

A. SBW Influence

Participant	Strength/ Resilience	Independence/ Self-Reliance	Caretaking/ Caregiving/ Nurturing	Stoicism (Emotion Suppression)	Faith	Femininity
Diane	9.25	3.60	8.00	6.83	10.29	10.00
Molly	9.50	7.20	10.50	2.67	11.00	10.17
Otelia	9.00	7.40	10.00	9.17	9.71	6.33
Joyful	8.00	8.40	8.75	9.67	9.86	6.50
Rev. Patient	8.50	3.00	3.25	2.33	9.57	10.50
Dr. Gracious	9.50	6.60	6.60	6.83	9.86	2.00
Sherry	9.75	1.00	5.00	6.00	9.86	3.83
Precious	11.00	3.00	2.50	1.00	10.29	11.00
Charity Grace	11.00	1.00	6.75	1.00	10.29	6.83
Candace	9.00	7.00	9.00	5.40	9.86	8.50
Dee	10.50	5.20	6.75	2.17	9.57	4.33
Harmony	8.75	3.60	1.00	2.00	7.29	2.00

- a. Strength and Resilience –
 - i. All 12 participants scored in the high and very high ranges of strength/resilience.
 - ii. During their interviews, they concurred with the expectation of being strong and able to endure opposition and struggle without complaint, whether dealing with life situations or ministry. p.176
- b. Self-Reliance and Faith –
 - i. The self-reliance scores show a 50/50 split, six participants scored above average, and the others scored low and very low. Looking at the scores for self-reliance alone, the prevailing view of the participants appeared inconclusive from the data. After reviewing the data and interview responses several times, it was realized that all 12 of the participants in some variation, explained that while they are independent, they are more reliant on their faith in God than self to get them through tough situations in life and ministry. All participants scored high or very high in the faith category. p. 178
- c. Caregiving Boundaries –
 - i. Importantly, 75% (nine of 12 participants) scored above average, with seven scoring high or very high.
 - ii. Their interview statements support that as pastors, they feel the need to care for their families and congregations p. 179
- d. Emotion Suppression Revised –

- i. All 12 participants agreed that it is important not to show emotion in certain crises and difficult situations, especially in bereavement, difficult leadership positions, etc.
- ii. Truly from the heart of pastors, there are times when containment of emotion is necessary. Still, there is equally the need for authenticity and transparency and to allow your congregation and your family to know you are human.

Research Question Three: How do Black female pastors/clergywomen describe well-being as it pertains to their lives and ministerial calling?

A. Well-Being

- a. Work-Life Balance - All 12 participants spoke to the expectations of ministry and how the lines are often blurred, family needs are often not met, and personal needs are usually last and often unmet p.183
- b. Self-Denial - All 12 participants, in varying degrees, told their self-denial reality. In nurturing and meeting the needs of their congregations and others, they often neglected their families and forewent self-care; it explains why like these women, Protestant clergy rank among the highest overall work-related stress (Milstein et al., 2020; Weaver et al., 2002). p.184

Revision: we worked while wounded, and to the glory of God we did not wound the others we were ministering too.

- c. Self-Care Requirements - The love for their flock and family and denying self were the cause for more than 50% of the participants needing managed care and significant changes to their work-life balance in the form of self-care. Two essential requirements to assist with work-life balancing and incorporating self-care in their routines were the reliance on scheduling and learning the power of “no.”
 - i. First, scheduling proved very effective for managing demands and allowing for family and self needs. p.187
 - ii. Candace, Dee, Dr, Gracious, Harmony, Molly, and Otelia shared that through maturity and years of pastoring, learning to say “No” is crucial when caregiving to thrive and persevere in ministry and manage healthy family relationships. p.188

d. Self-Care Types

Self-Care Types

Participant	Exercise	Grooming	Healthcare Managed Care/ Diet*	Hobbies	Meditation/ Spa/ Therapy	Rest/Sleep	Vacation
Diane	x		x	Read the Word		x	
Molly	x		x, x*	Read, writing		x	
Otelia	x		x	Crochet, dance, sing, play piano	Meditative gaming		x
Joyful	x			Read, tv time		x	
Rev. Patient			x	Read, Black history, museums			x
Dr. Gracious			x	Café time	Morning meditation, journaling, spa		x
Sherry		x	x		Meditation – ocean, beach	x	x
Precious		x	x*	Dine out	Masseuse, spa		x
Charity Grace		x	x	Cook, Netflix binge	Masseuse, spa		x
Candace	x		x*		therapy	x	
Dee		x	x			x	
Harmony	x		x			x	

B. PERMA

*PERMA Measurement of Well-Being Scores**

Participant	Positive Emotion	Engagement	Relationships	Meaning	Accomplishment
Diane	7.33 (high)	7.67 (high)	6.00 (slightly above average)	8.67 (high)	8.00 (high)
Molly	8.00 (high)	9.33 (very high)	8.33 (high)	10 (very high)	9 (very high)
Otelia	6.00 (slightly above average)	5.33 (slightly above average)	5.33 (slightly above average)	5.00 (average)	5.67 (slightly above average)
Joyful	5.00 (average)	6.33 (slightly above average)	5.67 (slightly above average)	8.67 (high)	6.33 (slightly above average)
Rev. Patient	8.67 (high)	6.33 (slightly above average)	10.00 (very high)	9.00 (very high)	8.00 (high)
Dr. Gracious	9.00 (very high)	6.33 (slightly above average)	9.00 (very high)	10.00 (very high)	9.33 (very high)
Sherry	9.00 (very high)	8.33 (high)	9.33 (very high)	9.33 (very high)	8.67 (high)
Precious	9.00 (very high)	8.67 (high)	7.00 (high)	9.67 (very high)	8.33 (high)
Charity Grace	9.67 (very high)	9.00 (very high)	10.00 (very high)	9.67 (very high)	8.33 (high)
Candace	8.33 (high)	9.33 (very high)	7.33 (high)	9.00 (very high)	9.00 (very high)
Dee	9.67 (very high)	9.00 (very high)	6 (slightly above average)	9.33 (very high)	8.67 (high)
Harmony	9.33 (very high)	7.67 (high)	9.67 (very high)	9.67 (very high)	8.67 (high)

*Loneliness, Negative Affect, Overall Happiness and Overall Health scores represented in each participant's bio.

PERMA Participant Answers

Participant	PERMA Ministry	PERMA Personal Life
Diane	P: helping others, serving the Lord E: meeting the needs of fellow man R: a lot of family support M: ministry the Lord blessed her with A: ability to reach people, seeing the fruit	P: helping others, visiting grandbabies E: family, “apple of her eye” R: the respect from her male instructors, love working with them M: her 11 children, 28 grandbabies, great-grandchildren A: organizing crisis/emergency support
Molly	P: trying to please the Lord; great joy E: being in the presence of the Lord, move of God R: good relationships, honest with one another M: being an intercessor, her prayer life A: seeing other comes to know the Lord	P: rest, time alone, reflecting on the Word E: writing her books, personal letters R: few but long-lasting and godly M: nurturing, giving encouragement A: her two published books, having touched the lives of others
Otelia	P: seeing ‘aha’ moments when something clicks for people she ministers to E: (skipped) R: three groups: 1) neglected and avoided 2) put out but don’t know what to do with me 3) embraced, know and see me M: her own curriculums, writings, etc. A: delivering a message, sharing her story, transparency	P: people seeing her spirit and smile E: (skipped) R: her marriage M: being a wife A: making through each day, one at a time and being okay
Joyful	P: preaching, tasks for nonprofit E: nonprofit pro-Israel calling R: exceptionally supportive, cultivated M: mission trips, nonprofit focus A: donations to Israel via nonprofit	P: marriage of eight years, friendships E: marriage, work, purpose, R: healthy marriage and family M: inspiring her nieces and nephews to be what God called them to be A: ministering impacts her personal life and marriage positively
Rev. Patient	P: studying and learning more Word, dialogue E: passing wisdom to the generation coming along R: excellent and grateful to work with young needing experience M: sowing seeds, seeing growth A: seeing young boys and girls she taught take on church leadership roles	P: family is number one, and friends E: traveling, working with different people/denominations, learning from others R: great relationships, treat enemies as friends M: God’s touch for individuals A: her life, commitment to God and the demand on her life
Participant	PERMA Ministry	PERMA Personal Life
Dr. Gracious	P: supporting community, donations to school, Salvation Army, touching lives	P: family, giving, fellowship E: “AKA” connections, neighborhood-block connectedness

	<p>E: community outreach, social justice model</p> <p>R: creating alliances and networks “power in networks”</p> <p>M: empowering community/outreach</p> <p>A: pastoring, seminary, academic achievements</p>	<p>R: strong relationships, both ministry and non-ministry friends</p> <p>M: being a part of the move of God</p> <p>A: encounters with God; he always turns out for ministry</p>
Sherry	<p>P: sharing revelations from God, love ministry</p> <p>E: recovery homes, “MINISTRY”</p> <p>R: reciprocal love – pastor and people</p> <p>M: “MINISTRY” – global platform</p> <p>A: seeing other come up in ministry; other she ministered to now moving in their calling</p>	<p>P: Her marriage, God’s speaking</p> <p>E: time with the Lord, time alone with Lord now that she is a widow</p> <p>R: ministry focused, close friends</p> <p>M: being a daughter of the king</p> <p>A: seeing her grandbabies growing, especially growing in the Lord</p>
Precious	<p>P: seeing people’s lives change, dealing with stress and their situations</p> <p>E: being the face of God, keeping abreast of what other ministry does, research</p> <p>R: love her people, reciprocal respect</p> <p>M: inner healing ministry to women; dealing with hidden issues</p> <p>A: new ministries developing</p>	<p>P: seeing lives change especially her mental health clients</p> <p>E: local ministry; doing her part</p> <p>R: a people person, big on friendships</p> <p>M: learning to deal with hidden issues</p> <p>A: loss 120 lbs., self-care</p>
Charity Grace	<p>P: people receiving the word of God</p> <p>E: traveling, seeing how others are achieving things; innovation</p> <p>R: love the people, always loving</p> <p>M: knowing that the word has helped bring about change</p> <p>A: consecrated Bishop, exegeting a text so it become real</p>	<p>P: children growing</p> <p>E: (skipped)</p> <p>R: love people, always loving (same)</p> <p>M: seeing other women come into their own especially minorities</p> <p>A: children and home, destiny in the Lord, published author</p>
Candace	<p>P: youth events, seeing them smile knowing situations are not always good</p> <p>E: conferences, learning</p> <p>R: developing meaningful relationships with other clergywomen (intentional)</p> <p>M: being able to make a difference</p> <p>A: still maintaining the course</p>	<p>P: exercising, work, grandchildren – “good endorphins”</p> <p>E: working with her clients</p> <p>R: rebuilding family relationships</p> <p>M: time with grandchildren and pouring God into their lives</p> <p>A: successful business</p>
Dee	<p>P: growth and maturity of other people</p> <p>E: all things church, calling, anointing</p> <p>R: cultivated and sustained relationships</p> <p>M: next generation wanting God</p> <p>A: Archbishop, overseer of churches</p>	<p>P: mother and grandchildren</p> <p>E: family</p> <p>R: desiring close circle reciprocity</p> <p>M: accomplishing goals, goal oriented</p> <p>A: wrapped around family, “legacy”</p>
Participant	PERMA Ministry	PERMA Personal Life
Harmony	<p>P: preaching</p> <p>E: conferences and women colleagues</p>	P: time with husband and children

	R: supported and loved both congregation and ministerial colleagues M: helping other women tap into their call and purpose A: role model for others to pursue education	E: civic and volunteer community service R: loves and values - husband, children, siblings, greater reciprocity desired M: children and developing environment for them to be all God has for them A: 30-year marriage, ministry, and five degrees
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P-positive emotion, E-engagement, R-relationships, M-meaning, A-accomplishment

- C. How I Thrive Mantra - Ngunjiri et al. (2012) outlined key strategies such as refusing engagements to preach from the floor, leaving their denominations and circumventing the stained-glass ceiling altogether by starting their own churches. Historically, the more radical the approach, the more serious the threats, yet these women were determined that the resistance would be used as a stepping stone to success and a rally for strength and resilience in the face of opposition (Collier-Thomas, 1998; Dubose, 2018; Fauset, 1970; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Ngunjiri et al., 2012). As outlined earlier, most participants used those same strategies for similar purposes, yet with fewer repercussions than their predecessors. However, they coupled those strategies with their own mantras of how the participant thrived in her leadership role while faced with intersectionality yet embracing the strength, resilience, independence, nurturing (caregiving), and emotional control traits that comprise the SBW motif.

Quoted all 12 participants from their Question 28 answer.

The Responses to the Research Questions are:

- Does this convey a unified statement of the essence of the phenomenon as a whole? Consensus with three revisions. Yes.

We have come to the end of our culminating focus group. Thank you so much for deciding to take part in this study. This may have been a difficult conversation with different emotions coming to the surface. If you feel the need for support, please refer to the list of mental health resources that were provided to you previously.