

Chapter 11: “Lifeworlds” of Seventh-day Adventist Female Pastors

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Women’s ordination was first discussed in the Seventh-day Adventist Church at a General Conference session in the United States in 1881. The debate seems to have lasted over 130 years and it still remains a controversial issue today. Over the years the Adventist Church has had a “rather strange ambivalence towards women in ministry.”¹ History reveals that early Adventism “encouraged its women to enter the ministry.”² In fact “there was no definition of ministry within nineteenth-century Adventism that excluded women.”³ Thus in the United States where, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Adventism was just beginning to emerge, women began to fill roles as leader or evangelists, while many were employed by the early Church as pastors. Among early licensed women in ministry was Sarah Hallock Lindsey who started work as an evangelist in New York State with her husband in 1868. She was a licensed minister. Others included Ellen Edmonds Lane, Julia Owens and Hattie Enoch:

Ellen Edmonds Lane in 1868 became an evangelist with her husband Elbert. They worked in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Virginia and Tennessee. She was licensed from 1878-1889. Julia Owen worked in the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference as a licensed minister from 1878-1895. And Hattie Enoch was an evangelist with her husband in the Kansas Conference and was licensed in 1879; she later served as a missionary in Bermuda.⁴

1 Roger Dudley, “How Seventh-day Adventist Lay Members View Women Pastors,” *Review of Religious Research* 38 (1996): 134.

2 Bert Haloviak, “A Place at the Table: Women and the Early Years,” in *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women*, eds Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart (Langley Park, MD: TEAMPress, 1995), 30.

3 Ibid., 30.

4 Kit Watts, “Selected List of 150 Adventist Women in Ministry, 1844–1994” in Habada and Brillhart, *The Welcome Table*, 359. Cf. also her chapter, “Moving Away From the Table: A Survey of Historical Factors Affecting Women

More than a century has passed. Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church still employs female pastors in many parts of the world, the Church has yet to embrace fully the ordination of women. Female pastors are able to perform most of their duties without the “official blessing” of the Church. Robinson makes an insightful statement in his interpretation of the attitude to ordination within Adventism: “This denomination has implemented a compromise policy. They do not ordain women as ministers, but do grant them most of the authority given to male ministers. They do allow ordination of women to the lower post of Elder.”⁵

Against great odds, Adventist female pastors faithfully serve their Church and are making significant contributions to their faith-communities globally. Dudley conducted a study that sought to understand how Adventist lay-members view female pastors. The study was carried out in the North American Division (NAD). Twenty churches served by a female pastor or associate-pastor were surveyed to determine how female pastors were received by congregations. The findings revealed that a substantial majority rated their female pastor as competent and effective in their pastoral duties, and 91 per cent gave them an overall rating of excellent or good.⁶

In many branches of Western Protestantism women’s ordination seems a distant memory. Almost five decades have passed since women were ordained in significant numbers. Graham concluded almost twenty years ago that clergywomen in the wider Christian context have made significant contributions to the life and communities where they minister. She wrote:

For the first time, clergywomen are articulating their vision, reclaiming their history and bringing a ‘theology of women’s experience.’ Women’s lived experience, encompasses considerations of the impact of women upon the pastoral ministry; reflection on ‘feminine’ religious experience and its distinctive nature; biblical interpretation; questions of inclusive language; feminist reconstructions of care, growth, human identity, relatedness and community, and their implications for pastoral practice.⁷

Today the picture of clergywomen’s contribution to the wider Christian Church remains positive. In a more recent study (2011), Niemela poses the Leaders” in Habada and Brillhart, *The Welcome Table*, 45–60.

5 Bruce Robinson, “Female Clergy in Eastern Orthodox Churches, Protestant Denominations, and other Religions,” *Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance*, accessed February 12, 2015, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/fem-clrg4.htm>.

6 Dudley, “Lay Members,” 134.

7 Elaine Graham, *Transforming Practice* (London: Mowbray, 1996), 124–125.

question, are “female clergy agents of religious change?” She reached the firm conclusion from her research that “clergywomen are modernizing the Church in various ways that include teaching, policies and practices.”⁸

In this Chapter I shall not explore further or measure whether female pastors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are contributing to ministry, nor do I wish to consider the “rights or wrongs” of female ordination and the “ongoing tensions that surround the role of women.”⁹ My interest in this paper is focused on an important question which we as a denomination have neglected to ask. That question is, how do female pastors live and function behind a controversial backdrop of a Church yet to accord full ordination to women?

In 2006 in the South Pacific Division, a research project was begun in Australia. The project was focused specifically on female pastors in the Adventist Church. The investigation centred on their “lifeworlds”—how they construct, perceive and live out their reality. For the first time female pastors were given the opportunity to articulate and to describe their experience as pastors in the Adventist Church. In this paper I shall focus on the lifeworlds of female pastors in relation to their call to ministry, their experience of theological education and present ministry challenges for them. For many of us, this will be the first time we will have had an opportunity to engage with and to begin to understand their conflicting lifeworlds. We are in a privileged position as we hear their narratives and gain perspective into their lifeworlds.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to inquire, describe and understand individual and collective meaning; to pursue the “lived experience” of Adventist female pastors in Australia. The term “lived experience” has its root in the German word *Erlebnis*, which literally means “the experience of living through something.”¹⁰ *Erlebnis* refers to the ways in which human beings assign meaning to their situation. Human beings construct meaning as they engage actively in and with the world they interpret. “Lifeworld”, then, re-

8 Kati Niemela, “Female Clergy as Agents of Religious Change?” *Religions* 2 (2011): 369.

9 David Roebuck, “I Have Done the Best I Could: Opportunities and Limitations for Women Ministers in the Church of God—A Pentecostal Denomination,” *Theology Today* 68, no. 4 (2012): 403.

10 Refer to Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (Ontario, Canada: Althouse, 1997), 2001.

fers to the human world of lived experience, which is concretely and directly encountered prior to theoretical explanations, and fundamentally characterized by meaning.¹¹ In order to understand the experiences of female pastors, their construction of meaning and how they perceive social reality, a subjective, inductive and qualitative approach was essential. For this reason an existential phenomenological design was employed for this investigation.

Participants were women who had studied theological education at an Adventist Christian tertiary institution in Australia from the year 1995 onwards. Each participant was required to have had a minimum of one year's experience either as an employed full-time pastor or a full-time volunteer in ministry. Having had this professional experience would qualify the participants to act as reliable informers through their rich descriptions of the phenomena being investigated.

There were twelve women who fulfilled the criteria, and all twelve consented to participate in the study. Throughout the study, confidentiality, ethical procedures and anonymity were maintained. Interviews began in 2006 at various locations in Australia. Each participant was interviewed for 40 to 50 minutes. The analysis of the data was guided by Colaizzi's five stages in the phenomenological method.¹²

Research Findings

The research data yielded fourteen interpretative themes. From these fourteen themes, three generative overarching themes were identified (see Tables 1 and 2 below).

11 Refer to Helen Speziale and Dona Carpenter, *Qualitative Research in Nursing: Advancing the Humanistic Imperative*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2003). For an understanding of phenomenology refer to David Smith, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University 2003), accessed November 14, 2007, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology>.

12 For an overview of Colaizzi's work refer to Paul Colaizzi, "Psychological Research as the Phenomenologist Views It" in *Existential Phenomenological Alternative for Psychology*, eds. Ronald Valle and May Kings (New York: Oxford University, 1978), 48–71.

Table 1: Fourteen Interpretative Themes¹³

Theme (1): Formulating and accepting "call" to ministry Reflecting on "call" Pursuing "call"	Theme (8): Emotional responding to theological education Emotional response to course
Theme (2): Valuing the practice of ministry Reflecting on ministry Adapting practice of ministry	Theme (9): Coping strategies for survival of theological training Accomplishing academic success Conforming to expectations of college and employers Fulfilling a "maternal" role/figure Acknowledging "Divine" help to succeed
Theme (3): Recognising ministry challenges for clergywomen Experiencing disillusionment Feeling dissatisfied by pastoral training of theological education	Theme (10): Perceiving peers Relating to female peers Relating to male peers
Theme (4): Experiencing devaluation in professional context Perceiving organisation and employers Experiencing unequal opportunities in ministry Responding to hostile environments	Theme (11): Recognising public persona Reflecting on self-consciousness of public perception Challenging male peer biases
Theme (5): Reflections on theological program Reflecting on the academic program(s) Experiencing lecturer's perception and beliefs Experiencing and reflecting on specific curriculum	Theme (12): Experiencing personal cost of theological education Deconstruction Construction Reconstruction

13 For a more extensive treatment of this study refer to Drene Somasundram and Anita Monro, "'Thirdspace' Engenders Theological Education," *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* 2, no. 3 (2013): 55-68

Theme (6): Reactions to course not designed for female students Unaccommodating to female students Faculty demonstrating difficulty in relating to female students	Theme (13): Imaging of theological education Describing an image for theological education
Theme (7): Experiencing discrimination and marginalisation Feeling silent desperation Recognising the concept of futility	Theme (14): Recommendations for theological training/education Recommending improvements to theological education

Table 2: Three interconnected generative overarching themes:

(1) Identity	(2) Epistemology	(3) Environment
Theme I: Formulating and accepting "call" to ministry	Theme II: Valuing the practice of ministry	Theme II: Valuing the practice of ministry
Theme II: Valuing the practice of ministry	Theme III: Recognising ministry challenges for clergywomen	Theme III: Recognising ministry challenges for clergywomen
Theme IV: Experiencing devaluation in professional context	Theme V: Reflections towards theological program(s)	Theme IV: Experiencing devaluation in professional context
Theme VI: Reacting to course not designed for female students	Theme VI: Reacting to course not designed for female students	Theme VI: Reacting to course not designed for female students
Theme VIII: Emotional response to theological education	Theme VIII: Emotional response to theological education	Theme VII: Experiencing discrimination and marginalisation
Theme IX: Coping strategies for survival of theological training	Theme IX: Coping strategies for survival of theological training	Theme VIII: Emotional response to theological education
Theme XI: Recognising public persona	Theme XIII: Imaging of theological education	Theme X: Perceiving peers
Theme XII: Experiencing personal cost of theological education	Theme XIV: Recommending improvements to theological education	Theme XIII: Imaging of theological education

Theme XIII: Imaging of theological education		Theme XIV: Recommending improvements to theological education
Theme XIV: Recommending improvements to theological education		

Research Discussion

Throughout this paper, for the sake of confidentiality female pastors have been given pseudonyms, while the name of the tertiary educational institution where the women studied is not given and actual wording from the participants is presented in inverted commas. In this section of the paper, specific discussion of female pastors' lifeworlds in relation to their call, education and ministry challenges as extracted from the themes researched will be presented.

A Sacred Calling

Vacillation for female pastors begins with the recognition of "calling" to the vocation of ministry. A sense of "call" is central in many religious traditions; the Seventh-day Adventist Church is no exception. However "call" has become problematic in its relation to female pastors and entry into ministry. Call is often associated with a set path leading to ordination in pastoral ministry.

All participants that were interviewed expressed a strong sense of God's call in their lives to pursue a vocation in ministry in the Adventist Church. This impression or sense of God's divine leading could be traced from their early childhood or to their teenage years, and for some it was finally confirmed through their theological training. Their descriptions of this experience are as follows: "God told me to"; "I must have been about 13 or 14 when I first sensed God leading me to some form of ministry...It wasn't something I had planned to do or something I could even see myself doing"; "I believed since I was a teenager that this is something God wanted me to do, to be in ministry"; "I came to the realisation that ministry is what God wanted for my life"; "it's God's call, without a shadow of doubt"; "on September twelfth 2001, the day after the twin towers were bombed, God spoke to me...He told me He wanted me to go to College and study theology"; "I think God had bigger plans than I ever thought. My call was confirmed during my studies".

Female pastors all held a deep-rooted conviction and confidence that God is in control of their lives and that since He has called them into ministry, he will take care of them. The results showed that female pastors felt embarrassed or uncomfortable and faced many negative views and barriers to their “call” to ministry, but they were determined to follow God’s leading. Ruth revealed how uncomfortable she felt when publicly revealing her “call” to her family, friends and church community:

When it came to telling people what I was going to do, I avoided it until I could do so no more. The reason for this was that I felt that I had a personality that didn’t quite fit to the role of a pastor. I feared ridicule and the constant questioning. I told my Dad what I was going to do; he laughed and wouldn’t believe me. He thought that it was a joke until he finally realized I was serious. This did nothing to help my confidence.

Deborah reflected how she wanted to study theology in the ‘70s, but at that time the Adventist Church had not addressed the issue of women in ministry and the Anglican Church was yet to ordain women to the priesthood officially. Clearly, at that time the barriers were insurmountable: “I wanted to do it in the ‘70s, but instead I went off to be a nurse, a music teacher, a business woman—but the ‘call’ stayed far deep in my system until I answered it and I had to go, children and husband in tow...I just had to do it.” Rosie recalled her first day at college where she experienced negativity and was blatantly told not to study theology: “When enrolling I was actually encouraged by the Registrar to do Home Economics and Bible teaching instead. He didn’t see much point in me studying Theology.” Eve was also discouraged from studying theology: “One lecturer, who wasn’t in the Theology Department, actually said to me there was always a teaching (career), because you might not get a job.”

Annabel had to wrestle with a parent who did not encourage her to ministry and who did not believe that women were “called” to such a role: “I grew up in a fairly conservative home where women didn’t do these types of things and I suspect that one of my parents still struggles with the fact that I am a pastor.” And Rosie disclosed her commitment to God’s call and her perseverance regardless of illness by stating simply, “My conviction was so strong, I was meant to be there.”

Female pastors acknowledged the difficulties that their gender presented to their denomination in the acceptance of God’s call to ministry. However Harriet was unaware of this: “I didn’t realise women didn’t become ordained ministers.” In order to work through difficulties, the women’s descriptions of their experiences revealed how influential literature helped in their initial

acceptance of God's call to ministry. For example, Annabel disclosed, "I had to work through this further that I was a woman and that God called me into the ministry and it was probably through reading books like *The Welcome Table*,¹⁴ that I came to the realisation that God did use women for mission." Mature female pastor Marie took the time to study the Bible for herself and came to her own conclusions on the ministry of women. Marie felt convinced that God is no respecter of gender. She disclosed, "Yes, I had some very strong experiences prior to coming to College, which basically made me really question God about my calling as a female and made me study Scripture. This set my feet in concrete...and I knew what I believed."

When female pastors began to accept their "call" to ministry the realisation set in that part of the "call" involved pursuing a degree program in theological education. Theological education would provide the means to equip them and to give them a theological foundation in the formation of beliefs, values and practice in ministry. A degree in theology from a Seventh-day Adventist institution would also make them potentially employable within the wider institution. Harriet recalled, "I didn't want to go to College...but I knew I had to, so I went and started my degree." Rosie in her account disclosed: "I was actually very shy so it required a huge leap of faith to go to College and study." For Marie, "God told me very strongly that He wanted me to come to College and do the degree." Nelly very factually reported, "I was called to ministry and God led me to gain formal qualifications for it." And Annabel viewed it as a privilege to study theology, "I've always wanted to study theology. I have always had a fascination for God, theology and how it fits together and the mysteries of it."

Women who pursue a ministry vocation undergo intense subjective evaluation in just simply being faithful and following God's sacred call. This study revealed explicitly the continual ambivalence and ambiguity surrounding women and the issue of identity that pertains to "call" within the organisation. Female pastors described in great detail the difficulties of trying to form a ministerial identity in the absence of female ordination. As an organisation that has yet to validate women's call to pastoral ministry, female pastors are and will continue to be misplaced, ungrounded in selfhood and to experience dissonance and vacillation.

14 *The Welcome Table* was published in North America in 1995, sponsored by "TEAM" – Time for Equality in Adventist Ministry. The book details fourteen prominent SDA historians and theologians who demonstrate that Scripture liberates women and men to full participation in the life and mission of the Church; it confirms women's call and rights to ministry. Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart, eds. *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women* (Langley Park, MD: TeamPress, 1995).

These findings are confirmed and validated by a number of other studies. Creegan and Pohl researched Evangelical women who studied theological education and later pursued academia—they found that “call” was significant for almost all women they surveyed.¹⁵ From the vast literature concerning “call,” it appears that many clergy do not feel that they made a conscious decision to pursue ministry, rather ministry—adhering to God’s call—chose them.¹⁶ Discerning a call to ministry is a significant step—a call must have context, must be discerned and tested within community. However Creegan and Pohl reveal that the Church’s affirmation is more “immediate and more consistent” when young men choose to follow their call into ministry.¹⁷ Men, in general, appear to have less conflict between “subjective experience” in relation to “call,” and affirmation within the wider Church institution. However, when a “call” is contested, women often feel betrayed within most significant communities, and women enter into an external and internal examination and re-examination of vocational paths.¹⁸ Internal pressure either to ignore a call or to suppress it is often interconnected. The subjective experience comes from the women’s own interior belief structures about ministry and culturally constructed views about gender.

McDougall, in her article *Weaving Garments of Grace: Engendering a Theology of a Call to Ordain Ministry for Women Today*, tells how surprised

15 See Nicola Hoggard Creegan, and Christine Pohl, *Living on the Boundaries: Evangelical Women, Feminism and the Theological Academy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

16 For more information see Mary Rearick Paul, *Women Who Lead: The Call of Women in Ministry* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2011); Barbara Zikmund, Adair Lummis and Patricia Chang, *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998); Martha Ice, *Clergy Women and Their Worldviews: Calling for a New Age* (New York: Praeger 1987); Gaye Bammert, “Narrating the Church: Protestant Women Pastors Challenge Nostalgic Desire,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26 (2011): 153-174; Nancy Wemm, “A Different View from the Pulpit: The Life Stories of Female Episcopal Priests,” (PhD diss., University of Ohio, 2009), accessed January 11, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304974691?accountid=26359>; Tammy Reedy-Strother, “Clergy Women of the United Methodist Church: Experiences and Perceptions of Disparities among Women of the Kentucky Annual Conference,” (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2011), accessed December 12, 2014, <http://gradworks.umi.com/34/55/34555557.html>; Petronella Jonck, Anda LeRoux and Lyzette Hoffman, “Parishioners’ Attitudes towards Clergywomen: A South African Case Study,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 144 (2012): 92–108.

17 Creegan and Pohl, *Living on the Boundaries*, 103.

18 Ibid., 103.

she was when interviewing female theology students: "it stunned me when each in turn, began to voice her self-doubts, ambivalence, and even guilt about her call to ministry."¹⁹ McDougall suggests that women inherit certain cultural normative scripts about their gender identity, and these scripts are played out both in their public and private lives. McDougall correlates self-doubt, or internal confusion, with women's gender-role socialization and identity formation:

There are fewer tensions between the demands of God and the community and less pressure to reflect on the dynamics of authority. But for women, call can become the point at which subjective experience and authoritative institutions come into painful conflict.²⁰

"Painful conflict" between Adventist female pastors' subjective experience and the Church was uncovered by this research. Discerning a call to ministry often occurs in a vacuum, and this leads to self-doubt. Zikmund, Lummis and Chang report that the few women who eventually "seek ordination do out of a feminist motivation to change church and society; most state that their call is based on a call from God."²¹

Theological Education

Female pastors reported in their interviews their deep appreciation and love for the pursuit of learning and knowledge. They also held a deep regard for the educational institution where they studied: "I loved that it was academic"; "I absolutely loved it.,I was very passionate about coming into a degree course and doing Hebrew and Greek"; "I loved every minute of the academia"; "I really enjoyed the mental stimulation and learning"; "I loved all my subjects"; "I would give College a big tick in terms of challenging their students".

Female pastors disclosed a deep appreciation for their lecturers and valued them as wise and supportive educators, and this helped them to survive the course: "I had a positive experience because I had professors and lecturers that loved me"; "every lecturer made you feel like you were valued because you were a woman and you were needed in ministry and in the Church"; "the lecturers were really wonderful"; "I just found (the Dean) to be fantastic... very affirming of women in ministry, highly approachable...I really appreciated him."

19 Joy Ann McDougall, "Weaving Garments of Grace: Engendering a Theology of a Call to Ordained Ministry for Women Today," *Theological Education* 39 (2003): 150.

20 Creegan and Pohl, *Living*, 104-105.

21 Zikmund, Lummis and Chang, *Clergy Women*, 76-77.

Female pastors experienced dissonance in relation to their theological education. On the one hand they enthusiastically reported how much they enjoyed their theological training, were grateful to have the opportunity to study theology, appreciated their lecturers and “wouldn’t change a thing,” yet on the other hand the theological experience left them wanting: “my whole world fell apart”; “it was the best and worst years of my life”.

The analysis identified a significant cause for dissonance that was epistemological in nature. Female pastors did not understand feminist issues of epistemology, nor were they exposed to feminist or womanist theologies during their theological education. It is ironic that most women felt uncomfortable and threatened by the term “feminist”—“I find it hard to relate and understand strong feminists and what they think”; “I am not one to stand up, be a feminist, burn my bra”. After completing their theological training, only two female pastors went on to further studies in which they discovered feminist and womanist theology that positively transformed their ministry. Although female pastors were not exposed to feminist epistemology, in the interviews it was apparent that, intuitively, something “felt wrong or missing.” Intuition was characterised during the second wave of feminism in the 1960–1970s: women understood in terms of physical presence, relationships and connections between ideas and feelings. Patriarchal culture can “obstruct and even silence a woman’s ability to trust her experience and value her capacities to engage her ideas with those of others.”²²

In their interviews female pastors questioned gender ways of knowing and language: “In theological education, there’s a whole new way of thinking, a language that was quite foreign to me. I felt left out”; “I never had a female lecturer in theology so it was only a male approach”; “I think it has been a shock to the theological training system to have women coming into theological training, they don’t know how to include us and they don’t know what to do with women”; “I had difficulty because [of] my female view of theology—we need to expand our view of theology—[look at it] from a female’s point of view”; “lecturers need to learn and strive for a more gender inclusiveness in language, models for ministry and feminist theology, dare I say that word.”

Female pastors felt they were disadvantaged and misunderstood by the system in which theological education is taught. They were not provided

22 Nancy Ramsay, “Truth, Power, and Love: Challenges for Clergywomen across the Life Span,” in *In Her Own Time: Women and Developmental Issues in Pastoral Care*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 279.

with the space and opportunity to construct their own thoughts or to express how they saw the area being explored in tasks, assessments and examinations. As uninvited guests, women were conscious that they entered a male-constructed world in preparation for employment that is a male-constructed, male-managed and male-governed Christian organisation. Because traditional theological epistemology lacks an (en)gendered approach, women therefore learn of an "anthropomorphically constructed deity."²³ Women disclose feelings of "isolation, desperation, feeling unsafe, a misfit, stifled, placed on the side, unwelcome" in this new unfamiliar theological world; they exist in a vacuum, "silent, despairing, having difficulty connecting." Female pastors felt excluded from inquiry and denied epistemic authority, and thus unable to view their world through their own gendered lens.

Feminist epistemology identifies the ways in which dominant knowledge practices systematically disadvantage women and other subordinated groups, and strives to reform and serve the interests of these groups. Feminist epistemology has generated new questions, theories, and methods—it demonstrates how gender has played a causal role in these transformations, and defends these changes as cognitive, not just social, advances.²⁴ Feminist epistemology offers women reconstruction and a view of their world through a feminist lens: "if epistemology is the science of perceiving knowledge, it is obvious that women have a case for establishing their own epistemology."²⁵

In 1986 Harding proposed her three-fold classification of feminist epistemology—*empiricism*, *standpoint theory* and *postmodernism*. She saw these as three fundamentally contrasting frameworks.²⁶ Feminist empiricism presupposes an unsuited, politically neutral subject of knowledge.²⁷ This model adopts empiricist principles and practices that are based on "objectivist epistemology, although with some adjustments: it employs a realist ontology, a modified objectivist epistemology, a concern for hypothesis testing, explanation prediction, cause and effect linkages, and conventional bench-

23 Drene Somasundram, "A Gender Inclusive Model in Theological Education for the Seventh-day Adventist Church," (DProf thesis, Middlesex University, 2007), 181.

24 See Sotirios Sarantakos, *Social Research*, 3rd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

25 Ibid., 66.

26 Refer to Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1986).

27 Sarantakos, *Social Research*, 57.

marks of rigor.”²⁸ The model employs “traditional social research, modified to avoid bias and sexism and to meet feminist standards.”²⁹ It accepts “empiricism critically, challenges the notion that the person/identity of the researcher has no effect on the quality of the findings.”³⁰ It challenges the “notion that science and politics should be left apart and criticises, not so much the foundations of science, but their practice.”³¹

Feminist standpoint theory reflects closely feminist assumptions and principles. This model works on the theoretical underpinning that women, as a result of their personal and social experience as females in the world, are in a better standpoint position than men to research, understand, write and interpret the world of women. This model embraces a relativism of standpoints. It rejects traditional research methods, focuses on feminist methodologies, builds on and from women’s experience, employs feminist qualitative methods, assumes research reflexivity and seeks to transform the marginalised lives of women.³²

Feminist postmodernism is a newer development within feminist theory and research. It views truth as a “destructive illusion” and the world as endless texts and stories, many of which sustain the integration of power and oppression. Sarantakos points out that writers have described feminist postmodernism as an epistemology that is “non-foundationalist, contextualist, and non-dualist, or multiplist, in its commitments”³³, and in which “epistemological assumptions of modernism, the foundational grounding of knowledge, the universalising claims for the scope of knowledge, and the employment of dualist categories of thought”³⁴ are rejected.

Over the last ten to fifteen years trends in these three feminist epistemologies have become blurred—Harding herself both predicted and advanced this. However, all three approaches embrace pluralism and reject totalizing theories and traditional epistemological projection of validating epistemic norms from a transcendent viewpoint.³⁵

These three feminist epistemological approaches have had an impact on debates and theories in feminist theological education and are continuing

28 Norman Denzin, and Yvonna Lincoln, *Strategies of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2003), 101.

29 Sarantakos, *Social Research*, 57.

30 Harding, *Science Question*, 162.

31 See Sarantakos, *Social Research*, 57.

32 Refer Harding, *Science Question*.

33 Sarantakos, *Social Research*, 59.

34 Ibid., 59.

35 See Denzin and Lincoln, *Strategies*.

to make significant contributions in areas such as spirituality, homiletics, hermeneutics, environment, leadership and related issues on authority and pastoral ministry. Feminist epistemology in theological education challenges dominant traditional knowledge, it questions and critically explores the various ways gender influences and constructs perception of knowledge. It identifies how dominant knowledge disadvantages women, and seeks to provide an alternative perspective that addresses marginalisation and discrimination of women, both in theology and through biblical interpretation. It seeks to uncover new voices and faces in history, defines new areas of research, develops new resources, hermeneutic tools and models and insists upon inclusive language and imagery.³⁶

In this the women revealed in their responses how they viewed their theological education. All the female pastors described it as a *box*, and expressed the difficulties of being unable to fulfil college and denominational expectations: "I think as a woman...I don't fit the box, it is difficult to decipher, is it my personality or is it my gender?"; "I felt like I was so far out of the box it wasn't funny"; "this is the box, get in or go away"; "it did it to the boys too, but in a different way"; "I saw how the boys were being affirmed, how they appropriately fit the box"; "I was trained as a middle-aged married man with 2.5 children"; "I hated that the program was geared for somebody who obviously wasn't me".

36 See texts: Mary Grey, *Introducing Feminist Images of God* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim, 2001); Namsoon Kang, *Diasporic Feminist Theology: Asia and Theopolitical Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014); Carol Christ, *She Who Changes: Re-imagining the Divine in the World* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Pui-lan Kwok, "Feminist Theology as Intercultural Discourse" in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Frank Parsons (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Roxanne Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003); Elizabeth Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision: Explorations in Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2011); Christie Cozad Neuger, *The Arts of Ministry: Feminist-Womanist Approaches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996); Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); Martyn Percy and Christina Rees, ed., *Apostolic Women, Apostolic Authority: Transfiguring Leadership in Today's Church* (New York: Morehouse, 2011); Wietske de Jong-Kumru, *Postcolonial Feminist Theology: Enacting Cultural, Religious, Gender and Sexual Differences in Theological Reflection* (Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2013); Kathleen Wicker, ed., *Feminist New Testament Studies: Global and Future Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave 2005).

It is clear from her response that Ruth understands that it is not necessarily the organisation's fault:

The theological education process is designed for one and all, but it doesn't really help with adapting to a man's world as a woman. All the education was exceptional but doesn't even look at the practicalities of working in ministry as a woman. It still teaches ministry within the context of masculinity, and I don't fault them for that because that is what one finds when they graduate and enter the field. It is very much a man's world, run in a man's way and there is just no room for a different perspective, a different view on the world.

A rather disturbing cost to female pastors as they pursue their theological degree was apparent from the interviews. A three-stage identity process takes place as women understand that in order to graduate with a theological degree they must somehow force themselves into the *prescribed male box*. First, the process begins with a "deconstruction" identity process. Female pastors recognised that they were "different", "female" and "in a man's world." In order to "survive the course" they felt that a somewhat conscious painful "mutilation" of gender must ensue: "For us women, they break-down our theology and...femininity"; "I came to college at sixteen, I was all bubbly and vivacious and feminine... I now shut down like a man, I think like a man"; "I...needed to sacrifice parts of myself"; "I knew God needed me to sacrifice parts of myself, in order to finish,,and in a sense I trusted Him to hold together whatever needed to be held together for the duration of the course".

Second, a consented "construction" process takes place that enables them to fit, albeit uncomfortably, into the prescribed ministerial box: "It was a conscious decision (to conform)...I didn't want to fight against it. I needed to be somewhat vulnerable to the educational experience if I was going to gain anything from it"; "I think I became very 'male-ish'... I don't think I let myself be feminine"; "it's something I endured and got through—like a hoop, I had to jump through it in order to get into ministry...it wasn't a pleasant experience...do I wish it were different? Absolutely!"

Third, when the women had completed their theological training and had accomplished their academic goal "through God's help," they felt "free" to consciously "reconstruct" parts of their fragmented identity: "I've lost a lot of my female identity and that is something I'm trying to regain...I'm trying to find other women who have gone before and how they remain female in a male world"; "I check in with the psychologist now and again...probably in the last two or three years I have regained some faith in myself"; "I had

to reconstruct a new paradigm that deals with department issues, ethical behaviour as a minister and female ways of viewing and understanding theology"; "I discovered that it is okay for me to be a woman in ministry"; "when I came out of College I felt free...I could flap my wings and fly".

The costs to women who pursue theological education appear to be great. A slow process of gender-mutilation occurs—the erosion of identity parts and selfhood must take place in order for women to reach their academic goal and professionally be able to live out their call in the practice of ministry. Female pastors recommended that theology programs should: include epistemology from a female perspective; employ of more female lecturers; have broader and fairer assessments; have a broader understanding of pastoral care and issues in regard to women; have a stronger gender-inclusive emphasis on practical ministry; develop a broader concept of evangelism; place a greater emphasis on spirituality and character-formation.

At the end of each interview female pastors in the study were asked to describe an image that best depicted their experience of theological education. Some of their responses were as follows: "an empty treasure chest"; "a beautiful flower behind bars"; "a huge empty field"; "the twin towers collapsing"; "the building of a house that was never completed"; "a stiff upper lip"; "my whole world fell apart"; "being roped in and tamed"; "walking on hot coals gagged."

Ministry Challenges

Female pastors reported ambivalence in direction and focus because there were no clear set paths for them to take in ministry: "You are supposed to find your way, but there are no sign-posted paths"; "I really believed God had led me...I was okay not knowing what would come next. But it did make me rather aimless. It meant I couldn't really focus on anything." The lack of opportunities and direction over time eroded self-belief, call and confidence in the institution of the Adventist Church. Ministry challenges for female pastors appear to be present in two significant areas: they experience hostile church settings and hostility in their Church organisation.

Many women who were placed and employed as pastors reported hostile church settings, illustrating the enormous difficulties and amount of rejection that they face. Many female pastors reported how unprepared they were for the negativity they encountered. Ruth's description is as follows:

My biggest surprise was the amount of rejection that I would encounter in just trying to do ministry. I always knew that they would be some rejection, but the amount that I have personally encountered is beyond what I expected. To be considered by a handful of my church

members to be “doing the devil’s work” is an exceptionally difficult thing to deal with and was not a mind-set that I was prepared to face...In my experience there are many different types of opposition but the one that surprised me the most is that I am the devil’s handmaiden and that I am going about doing his work in order to destroy the Church in the last days...In some ways College may be just a little optimistic, they have come a long way on this issue and assumes the rest of the Church and wider organisation has also.

For women, being placed in a hostile church-setting where women are not wanted and their role is not recognised creates a lot of anxiety and bewilderment. In their interviews, female pastors revealed that they experience inability to fulfil and function in their ministerial roles. They commented on the complex difficulties in a denomination that has not “officially” accepted the issue of female ordination and considered that perhaps the organization does not fully grasp the vast implication this has for women in church placements. Ruth’s long description of her experience provides a glimpse into the sense of inability that female pastors face in their functionality as a minister and the ambivalence and confusion members have. When Ruth was asked in her interview, “how do you feel about your role as a pastor?” she powerfully and emotively responded:

I feel like I am not one. I feel that I am being paid to do that role but can’t because it is simply a battle in every part of ministry. It is a battle to chair meetings because the church members don’t think that a female should have such a position of authority. It is a battle to visit, because some of them want nothing to do with you because they think that you are going against what the Bible says and therefore you are doing the devil’s work. It is a battle to lead out in communion, because you have to be an elder appointed in the local church and when the church doesn’t appoint woman elders it is impossible. It can even be a battle just to get up and preach...I don’t feel like a pastor because as some of my church members continually remind me, I am not ordained, and women shouldn’t have that kind of authority in the church, and therefore cannot be given the title. Even the title minister is something that they consider shouldn’t be given to women. How does one fulfil their role when what they are called is uncertain?

It is of interest that the lack of denominational confirmation through ordination was only addressed by two women who wondered why the Church does not affirm women to the priesthood of all believers. “I explored the ordination issue...I was very shocked and very angered by the *Church Manual*; it was very biased, very masculine almost to the point of excluding females altogether. A female, for example, is totally unable to perceive that they have been called by God and only male ministers can confirm whether or not they

have been called by God...I felt very, very frustrate;;" "the organisation must address the issue of ordination." However, all women through their recommendations appealed to the wider organisation asking them to address positively the matter of female ordination so that they can fulfil their God-given call and function in their ministerial positions.

A common emotion experienced by almost all female pastors serving in their local churches was loneliness and isolation—their responses suggest that women seem to accept that this comes with the territory: "I found ministry very isolating...the first year I spent most of my time by myself. It's the very (nature) of the job...I know that I'm going to move in a year, so in some ways I don't make the effort to connect with heaps of people...I don't have people I can rely on." Another said:

It was interesting hanging out with so many men or boys or whatever (during College days). During class breaks it was interesting how they all bonded together. They had to fight and hassle each other and sometimes even tried to treat us girls in the same way. It didn't worry me but it was an interesting observation, and now while in ministry I see the same thing happening at ministers' meetings, conferences, professional days, and now as I am often the only female I feel completely out of place. I don't know how to relate to these men in this way and they have no idea how to relate to me on any level...It is a struggle then in this kind of environment to fit in, when everything about you is different, and in this environment where it is a man's world it is difficult to be different.

Female pastors reflected on their organization and its infrastructure. They disclosed how misplaced they feel, undervalued by the organization and unsupported through policy and job opportunities. Female pastors who are what is termed the "first generation" to be employed as ministers in the South Pacific Division understand the enormous pressure to succeed in ministry, particularly for the sake of other women who might follow in their footsteps. They have a sense of responsibility to put as much as they can in place so that future women will reap the benefits of their hard labour, to the detriment at times of their own emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

When Deborah was asked if she felt pressure being the first women to be employed in her Conference she responded, "I knew that if I failed...it could be binding." Margaret reflected upon employment pressures and the implications of making any mistakes in her ministry context as a woman:

The expectations are not always realistic and a lot of pressure is placed on women. I was called into two offices before I left College to be told, "I am a woman, everyone is watching so make sure you represent women well," and then the Conference president gave me

the same spiel, so there is an expectation that we must perform well.

When asked in her interview, "Have you taken on that expectation?" she replied, "I think it is hard not to. There are times when I've sat down with other female pastors and asked, is it really realistic? No not really." Deborah stated, "I guess in this country there are some people that really don't want me to be here." She also pointed out the pressure and consequence for a woman in ministry to fail:

It only takes one little mistake or one day of weakness or one little tear when you should have been stronger, for people to misrepresent [you]...it's really hard to trust somebody with your weaknesses... because it will go back to the various committees...we are not honest with the fact that it is hard out there.

Female pastors were amazed at how little listening and negotiating skills administrators within the organization have and their unwillingness to support women publicly. Deborah stated that many significant decisions are often made without consultation, and there is a lack of understanding: "Image—it all comes down to a group of men making choices that affects your whole life." Ruth related:

Last year when the Conference tried to place me in a church of my own, the rejection was overwhelming. I felt that those who made the decisions of where to place the pastors didn't listen to what I needed. They were so intent on finding me a church of my own so that I would supposedly grow and develop in ministry and to use their resources better, that they couldn't see that they were destroying me in the process. Now I have a love-hate relationship with ministry. The dramas of last year have traumatized the way I see ministry.

Ruth expressed how she needed her "Conference administrators to use their 'authoritative voice' to defend and speak up for female pastors." She related, "[At College] the lecturers weren't afraid to speak in support of women in ministry and to me this was appreciated, particularly now as I look back. Being open about one's support in this area is something that I would have liked to have seen from my employers, but never did." Female pastors reported experiencing unequal opportunities in ministry. This study has shown that a majority of women work many years in the role of volunteer youth workers in many Conferences. It is surprising to discover that a substantial number of years spent engaged in this work are not counted towards their internship, remuneration and long-service leave. This has huge implications for their pension and for retirement plans. It was significant that when asked directly about years of service and what policy states, Margaret, for example, answered, "I don't know." Female pastors seem to be unaware or not informed of the wider financial implications.

Margaret provided a good example of apparent gender discrimination in placement:

I had gone through the first year, and [the Conference] told me, "We will not renew your contract at the end of the year"...so I started to look for extra jobs, then...they said, "Yes we are going to renew it." [In] the second year they said the same thing, "we don't know whether we are going to renew your contract." I felt, well, I can't leave this in their hands, I can't do another year of a youth worker, there has to be a point where they acknowledge that I have done two years as a volunteer.

Margaret acknowledged that men are also treated in this way. However, Margaret continued with her description: "... I was told at the end of my first year, 'oh, look, Margaret, we are so sorry but there is not enough money for an intern; there's only going to be one intern this year...because we sponsored him and we have no choice.'...Well I can understand that, but at the end of the year [they also hired another young guy], he gets an internship and I didn't. I thought, 'What makes him a more superior pastor to me?'" Nelly is currently working as a youth volunteer, having graduated from theological education. However she stated that, "This is my first year in ministry. For the purposes of finances I have not been given the title of pastor for my first year, which creates its own set of challenges." Nelly stated the fact that she is not given the title of "pastor" in her ministry setting, and this situation is not limited only to Nelly. Nelly is a competent, intelligent woman who holds a first degree and has worked in a profession for a number of years. Clearly, it is disheartening to her to find herself in such a vulnerable position both financially and professionally. There are a number of female pastors who find themselves working under conditions that hold no benefits for them, yet they work under these conditions because they feel a sense of "calling." They are loyal both to their God and to their Church.

Female pastors acknowledged a general lack of support from the organization that is reflected in an infrastructure that does not benefit women in ministry. Ruth's description is accurate: "Women, it seems, don't necessarily fit into the mould that has been traditionally made for ministry. It is a struggle then in this kind of environment..." Harriet stated that, "the men (Conference employers) aren't supportive out there." Deborah exclaimed, "Oh no!" There are no policies, mentors, resources that aid our survival, "you don't get very much support out here." For female pastors, various policies still need to be written and put in place in regard to credentials, pay, volunteering positions, pension plans, maternity issues, placement processes, mentors issues, safety issues, how the *Intern Handbook* can work

for women, education of churches to receive women, and strategic plans for “ordination.” In an insightful and spiritual moment in her interview, Deborah reflected, “We should be led by God’s Spirit with policies.” Marie expressed how “jolly demanding” ministry is and how it is one of the hardest professional roles and she asked, “who would do ministry unless you are called?” Deborah expressed:

I do believe that when God says that it is ok for us to be a minister then we need to train and gain the support and guidance to be the best woman pastor that we can possibly be, if we’re called. It’s a long journey, hours of study and anyone who succeeds deserves to be heard and deserves to be supported—whether they are male or female—cared for and loved.

Despite the challenges for ministry, female pastors find personal fulfillment in their ministerial roles. Through their responses they demonstrated a natural love for people and a desire to build and to support faith communities. It is apparent that women see ministry through the eyes of people and community. First and foremost, people are what matter and what counts to them in the vocation of ministry. They desire the practice of ministry to be relevant and authentic, to meet individual and community needs in their cultural context: “I think the highlight in ministry is the difference that you make in one or two people’s lives”; “oh, I love ministry now. I find it incredibly rewarding, very challenging, but the most beautiful thing is that I get to see God’s faithfulness day in and day out and that’s amazing”; “the great thrill I love about ministry is seeing the change—people coming to Christ”; “I love watching people’s lives change and that God is in control helping us to get our lives in control”; “ministry is a full-time commitment to encouraging those that are Christians to grow in their understanding and journey with God, and to be able to give a glimpse of God to others”; “I guess to be Christ to people...who yearn for love, who yearn to understand...we are his hands, his feet, his heart, his lips, and his eyes and I guess ministry is learning to look at people and to see in them the potential that God sees”.

The results of this research have demonstrated the difficulties female pastors face when they enter a ministry context and are placed in a church setting. Not only are they expected to succeed in ministry and exhibit a confident persona, but their internal world often has yet to find resolution in personal and ministerial professional identity. Female pastors have to forge new ways, new paradigms, by which they are forced to feminise their roles, often to the discomfort of traditional members, faith-communities and administrators. Entering ministry they also experience hostile settings through the lack of opportunities, lack of job prospects, lack of affirmation through

ordination and ambivalence in professional direction. They experience a hostile organisation that lacks policies to support them, that holds unrealistic expectations of female pastors to succeed in ministry and that is unable to negotiate and strategize future directions for females within the system.

These results are supported by other researchers' findings. Literature in the area of clergywomen and employment-related issues describes a situation in which women remain far from equal,³⁷ they often experience discrimination, are overlooked or not considered solely upon the basis of their gender.³⁸ Typically, women have to wait much longer for their first call or placement. Some progressive denominations have created important offices specifically for clergywomen, but, as reported by Zikmund *et al.*, these top denominational positions are often too far removed from local congregational and regional decision-makers to make an impact.

Clergywomen tend to be in a disadvantaged position simply because implicit comparisons are more likely to be made with the dominant image associated with clergy, which is male...clergy women lack the 'male character' that has been so deeply connected to ordained ministry throughout the centuries. Gender is still an ascriptive trait with the character of clergy.³⁹

Once women find a place to serve within denominational employment, discrimination usually continues: "Women regularly encounter hostility and prejudice from colleagues, supervisors, and parishioners in the church."⁴⁰ Clergywomen develop career paths that look "substantially different from those of their male counterparts."⁴¹ Administrators or district supervisors may directly discourage women from accepting a call after they graduate—they may hold off placing them in a church, or place them in a church setting that is openly hostile to women in ministry where they are "likely to become discouraged and doubt their own gifts and strength."⁴² Churches and super-

37 See Reedy-Strother, "Clergy Women of the United Methodist Church."

38 See studies: Wemm, "A Different View;" Edward C. Lehman, Jr., "Women's Path into Ministry: Six Major Studies," *Pulpit and Pew Research Reports* 1 (Fall 2002); Maxine LaRue Wallace Thomas, "African-American Women Clergy: Developing Model Ministries for African-American Women in the Twenty-first Century," (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2014), accessed November 11, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1660972559?accountid=26359>; Bammert, "Narrating the Church," 153–174; Zikmund, Adair and Chang, *Clergy Women*; Jonck, Le Roux and Hoffman, "Parishioners," 92–108.

39 Zikmund, Lummis and Chang, *Clergy Women*, 75.

40 Ibid., 70.

41 Ibid., 70.

42 Ibid., 70.

visors may critique unfairly a female in ministry, basing their assessment upon past expectations where the measuring mark was based upon a male pastor. In this situation, clergywomen are expected to conform to traditional ways of pastoring and are not able to experiment or offer another perspective or approach in ministry.⁴³

Women also experience discrimination in the area of equity of salary—women consistently earn much less than men for the same level of work. Much of the literature suggests that “one way women experience discrimination is by being systemically tracked into lower-paying and less-powerful positions and career patterns.”⁴⁴ Research results have shown that women are often appointed to small, rural churches that cannot afford to pay them very well or they call women assuming they can pay them less—and if clergywomen question the remuneration they are met with hostility.⁴⁵

Nesbitt identified gender segregation. She reports, “Both multiple ordination tracking and job partition into part-time and non-stipendiary placements have been shown to serve as mechanisms for both horizontally and vertically segregating women clergy as well as for fast-tracking young men into higher level positions.”⁴⁶ Many clergywomen are left filling part-time positions, which prevent women from being financially secure. One clergywoman interviewed in the study by Zikmund *et al.* described her experience thus: “It is disconcerting in my part-time church positions to realise that I am making less now with three advanced degrees than I was in my first year of college.”⁴⁷

Lehman writes,

The need for denominational advocacy on behalf of the interests of women clergy is virtually universal. As non-traditional candidates for placement in ministry in local parishes, women confront widespread suspicion, prejudice, and potential discrimination at the hands of search committees and other parishioners. This pattern applies both to simply obtaining a position and to financial remuneration once hired. Denominational efforts to prevent such discrimination against women have not been entirely successful.⁴⁸

Clergywomen who are tokens in traditional Christian institutions are rarely seen as individuals with particular hopes and interests. Women in

43 Refer to Lehman, *Women's Path*; Thomas, “African-American Women Clergy.”

44 Zikmund, Lummis and Chang, *Clergy Women*, 73.

45 Ibid., 73.

46 Paula Nesbitt, *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organisational Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 126.

47 Zikmund, Lummis and Chang, *Clergy Women*, 123.

48 Lehman, *Women's Path*, 21.

ministry can face extreme isolation and are treated like "zoo exhibits." Each time a clergywoman conducts a funeral or wedding, many of the congregation may evaluate her "performance" in ministry and her right to be there. Knowing that they are always being scrutinized this way, women clergy can easily slip into becoming overachievers who drive themselves excessively.⁴⁹

The literature provides some disturbing insight into the issue of harassment and clergywomen.⁵⁰ The reality is that sexual misconduct does occur and rarely at the initiation of clergywomen. Statistical evidence reveals (male) clergy sexually abuse their parishioners and clergywomen experience sexual harassment by either their colleagues or by parishioners. Van Leeuwen cites a 1990 study of American United Methodist clergywomen that revealed a staggering 77 per cent had experienced sexual harassment. Of these, 41 per cent had been harassed by male denominational colleagues or other male pastors.⁵¹ These statistics coincide with a study done in 1991 by Lebacqz and Barton in which female and male clergy across denominations were surveyed. It was shown that at least 50 per cent of clergywomen reported that they had experienced harassment either during their theological education or on the job. "Male pastors are concerned about protecting female parishioners from unprofessional advances. Female pastors are concerned about protecting themselves."⁵² Lebacqz and Barton associated sexual harassment in clergywomen with the lack of power women possess even in positions of authority. "We hope for the day when women genuinely carry the power that should attach to their professional roles. But that day has not yet arrived."⁵³

Clucas and Sharpe argue that "sexuality and gender are inextricably linked to the hierarchical power relations that privilege men."⁵⁴ They state

49 See Ramsay, "Truth, Power, and Love."

50 Refer to studies: Mary Van Leeuwen, *My Brother's Keeper: What the Social Sciences Do (and Don't) Tell us about Masculinity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002); Karen Lebacqz and Ronald Barton, *Sex in the Pulpit* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991); Karen McClintock, *Sexual Shame: An Urgent Call to Healing* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001); Wemm, "A Different View"; Leslie J. Francis, Mandy Robbins and Susan H. Jones, "The Psychological-Type Profile of Clergywomen in Ordained Local Ministry in the Church of England: Pioneers or Custodians?" *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 15, no. 9 (2012): 919-932.

51 Van Leeuwen, *My Brother's Keeper*, 213.

52 Lebacqz and Barton, *Sex in the Pulpit*, 133-135.

53 Ibid., 139.

54 Rob Clucas and Keith Sharpe, "Women Bishops: Equality, Rights and

that “the pervasive nature of structural male advantage in broader society and especially in the Church makes heteronormative regulation of women’s ministry inevitable in the absence of serious critical reflection.”⁵⁵

Conclusion

As the “female ordination” issue is once again on the agenda at the 2015 Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, to convene in the United States, this investigation is significant. For the first time—in a privileged position—we have had the opportunity to hear and engage with narratives from female pastors in the South Pacific Division. The women revealed painful conflict in regard to call and ministerial identity formation—they exposed an educational system that is prescribed and male-directed and revealed both hostile church settings and church organisation. The picture they collectively paint is disturbing—yet these women have made and continue to make valuable contributions in their faith communities.

Twenty-five years ago Zikmund, Lummis and Chang reflected that clergywomen, against great odds, have made unique contributions, and have expanded the traditional understanding of religious life in ministry. They stated:

The experience and sense of calling among clergy women in the 1990s shows that clergy women are not merely survivors, nor are they breaking down barriers simply to get into a vocation shaped and still dominated by male perspectives. Rather, clergywomen are reinventing ministry for the future.⁵⁶

I would like to thank all the women who participated, who openly and honestly shared their lifeworlds and who place their trust in the wider organisation to make positive changes that will enable them to function better in their “called” pastoral roles. I would also like to thank the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for addressing already significant issues that were revealed by this research project,⁵⁷ and which

Disarray,” *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* 15 (May 2013): 167.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 173.

⁵⁶ Zikmund, Lummis and Chang, *Clergy Women*, 133.

⁵⁷ This paper is part of a doctoral thesis that was completed in 2008 with Middlesex University in London, England. The educational institution in Australia acted as a primary stakeholder to this project. From this project various initiatives took place, some are outlined below:

1. Educational Institution in Australia: Library was resourced to house a Feminist/Womanist perspectives, the theology curriculum was revised that added feminist epistemology to units, a gender focused unit was developed TH230

today still continues to do. Their actions acknowledge that there is a bigger picture that needs to be addressed globally and ordination for women is just one part of it. No doubt this small but significant study offers to Adventism some insight, a starting point and a framework for constructive dialogue and future direction.

Gender, Theology and Ministry, a female lecturer was added to the faculty and a letter from the faculty was written to the South Pacific Division outlining concerns for female graduates in theology and placement issues.

2. Australian Union Conference (AUC) and South Pacific Division (SPD): A conference was organised for female theological students that openly discussed issues they would face. The Division and the Union Ministerial Directors were invited to hear concerns and seek future directions, and the researcher was invited to present research findings at the AUC Ministers Conference 2008.

3. The South Pacific Division: The researcher and SPD looked at policies in relation to maternity issues, mentoring and volunteer positions in ministry.